

The second and last part of Conny-catching. 1592.

Robert Greene

Note on the e-text: this [Renascence Edition](#) was transcribed, September 2007, by Risa Stephanie Bear, from Robert Greene, *A notable discovery of coosnage, 1591, The second part of conny-catching, 1592*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co. London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd. (The Bodley Head Quartos) 1923. See also the [first](#) of this two-pamphlet series by Robert Greene.

This is the 212th text in RE and marks the fourteenth anniversary of the establishment of Renascence Editions, which was then known as the [Edmund Spenser Home Page](#), now at Cambridge University, under the able care of Andrew Zurcher.

Content unique to this presentation is copyright © 2007 The University of Oregon. For nonprofit and educational uses only. Send comments and corrections to the publisher, rbear[at]uoregon.edu

for Ted & Windy Riggs

The
S E C O N D
and last part of Conny-catching.

*With new additions containing many merry tales of
all lawes worth the reading, because they are wor-
thy to be remembered.*

Discoursing strange cunning in Coosnage, which if you reade with-
out laughing, Ile giue you my cap for a Noble.

Mellem nonesse quam non prodesse patriæ.

R. G.

LONDON

Printed by Iohn Wolfe by William Wright.

159 [2].

THE
SECOND
and last part of Conny-catching.

*With new additions containing many merry tales of
all lawes worth the reading, because they are wor-
thy to be remembered.*

*Discourfing strange cunning in Coofnage, which if you reade with-
out laughing, he giue you my cap for a Noble.*

Mellem nonesse quam non prodesse patriæ.

R. G.



LONDON.
Printed by Iohn Wolfe for William Wright.
1597.

A Table of the lawes contain-
ed in this second part.

- 1 Blacke arte. {Picking of lockes.
2 Courbing Law. {Hooking at windowes.
3 Vincents Law. {Coosenage at Bowls.
4 Prigging Law. {Horse stealing.
5 Lifting law. {Stealing of any parcels.

*The discoverie of the words of art, vsed
in these lawes.*

- In blacke
Arte. The gaines gotten, Pelfrey.
The pickelocke is called a Charme.
He that watcheth, a Stond.
Their Engines, Wrestlers.
Picking the lock, Farsing.
- In Curb
-ing Law. He that hookes, the Curber.
The hooke, the Curbe.
The goods, Snappingses.
The gin to open the window the Tricker.
- In lifting
Law. He that first stealeth, the lift.
He that receives it, the Markar.
He that standeth without and caries it away, the Santar.
The goodes gotten, Garbage.
- In Vincents
law. They which play bootie, the Bankars.
He that betteth, the Gripe.
He that is coosened, the Vincent.
Gaines gotten, Termage.
- In Prigging
Law. The horse-stealer, the Proggar.
The horse, the Prancar.
The toulng place, All hallowes.
The towler, the Rifter.
The Suerties, Quetries.

For the foist and the Nip, as in the first Booke.

TO AL YOONG GENTLMEN,
Marchants, citizens, apprentices, yeomen,
and plaine countrey farmers,

HEALTH

WHEN *Sceuola*, Gentlemen, saw his native citie besieged by Porsenna, and that Rome the mistresse of the world was readie to be maistred by a professed foe to the publicke estate: hee entred boldly into the enemies camp, and in the Tent of the king (taking him for the king) slew the kings Secretarie, whereupon condemned, brought to the fire, he thrust his right hand into the flame burning it off voluntarie, because it was so infortunat to misse the fatal stab he had in-tended to his coutries enimies, and then with an honourable resolution, breathd out this. *Mallem nan esse qua[m] non prodesse patria*. This insta[n]ce of *Sceuola* greatly hath emboldened mee to thinke no pains nor danger too great that groweth to the benefit of my countrie, & though I cannot as he mannadge with my courtlax, nor attempt to vnleager Porsenna: yet with my pen I will indeuour to display the nature and secrets of diuers coosenages more preiudiciall to England then the inuasion of Porsenna was to Rome. For when that valiant king saw the resolutio[n] of *Sceuola*, as one dismaid at the honour of his thoughtes, he sor-rowed so braue a man had so desperatly lost his hand, and thereupon grewe friends with the Romans. But gentlemen these Conny-catchers, these vultures, these fatall Harpies, that putrifie with their infections, this flourishing estate of England, as if they had their consciences sealed with a hot iron, & that as men deliuered vp into a reprobate sence, grace were vtterly exild from their harts, so with the deafe Adder they not only stop their eares against the voice of the charmer, but dissolutely without any sparke of remorse stand vpon their brauados, and openly in words & actions maintain their palpable and manifest coosenages, swearing by no lesse then their enemies bloud, eue[n] by God him selfe, that they will make a massacre of his bones, and cut off my right hand for penning downe their abhominable practises: but alas for the poore snakes, words are wind, & looks but glances: euery thunderclap hath not a bolt, nor euery Conny-catchers oath an execution. I liue still, & I liue to display their villanies, which, gentlemen you shal see set down in most ample maner in this small treatise, but

heere by the way, giue me leaue to answeere an obiection, that some inferred against me; which was, that I shewed no eloquent phrases, nor fine figuratiue conueiance in my first booke as I had done in other of my workes, to which I reply that τὸ πρῶτον a certaine decorum is to bee kept in euerie thing, and not to applie a high stile in a base subiect beside the facultie is so odious, and the men so seruile and slauish minded, that I should dishonor that high misterie of eloquence, and derogate from the dignitie of our English toonge, eyther to employ any figure or bestow one choyce English word vpon such disdained rakehels as those Conny-catchers. Therefore humbly I craue pardon, and desire I may write basely of such base wretches, who liue onely to liue dishonestly. For they seeke the spoyle and ruine of all, and like droanes eate away what others labor for. I haue set downe diuers other laws vntoucht in the first, as their Vincents law, a notable coosenage at bowles, when certain idle companions stand and make bettes, being compacted with the bowlers, who looke like honest minded citizens, either to win or loose, as their watch-ворde shall appoint, then the Prigger or Horsestealer, with all his ginnes belonging to his trade, and theyr subtill cawtels to amend the statute, next the curbing law, which some call but too basely hookers, who eyther diue in at windows, or else with a hook, which they call a curb doe fetch out whatsoever, either apparell, linnen, or wollen, that be left abroad. Beside I can set downe the subtiltie of the blacke Art, which is picking of lockes, a coosenage as preiudiciall as any of the rest, and the nature of the Lift, which is he that stealeth any parcels, and sliely taketh them away. This (Gentlemen) haue I searcht out for your commodities, that I might lay open to the world, the villanie of these coosening caterpillers, who are not onely abhorred of men, but hated of God, liuing idley to themselues, &

odiously to the worlde, they be those foolish children that Salomon speakes of, that feedes themselues fatte with iniquitie, those vntamed heifers, that will not breake the yoke of labor, but get their liuinges by the painfull thrift of other mens hands. I cannot better compare them, then vnto Vipers, who while they liue are hated & shunned of all men as most preiudiciall creatures, they feed vpon hemlocke and Aconiton, and such fatall & impoisoned herbs, but the learned apo-thecaries takes them, cuts off their heades, and after they be imbowelled of their flesh, they make the most pretious Mithridate: so these Conny-catchers, Foists, Nips, Priggars, & Lifts, while they liue are most improfitable members of the common-wealth: they glut themselues as Vipers vpon the most lothsome, and detestable sinnes, seeking after folly with greedinesse, neuer doing any thing that is good, till they be trust vp at Tiburn: and then is a most wholesome Mithridate made of the[m], for by their deaths others are fore-warned for falling into the like enormities. And as the Gangrena is a disease incurable by the censure of the Chirugians, vnlesse the member where it is fixt be cut off: so this vntoward generation of loose Libertines, can by no wholesome counsailes, nor aduised perswasions be dissuaded from their lothsom kind of life, till by death they be fatally, and finally cut off from the common-wealth, whereof spake *Ouid* well in his *Metamorphosis*.

*Immedicabile vulnus,
Ense resecandum est ne pars sincera trahatur.*

Sith then this cursed crue, these Machaulians, that neither care for God nor deuill, but set with the Epicures gaine, and ease, their *summum bonum* cannot be called to anie honest course of liuing: if the honorable and worshipfull of this land looke into their liues, and cut off such vpstarting suckars that consume the sap from the roote of the Tree, they shall neither loose their reward in heauen, nor passe ouer anie day wherein there wil not be many faithful praiers of the poore, exhibited for their prosperous successe and welfare: so deeply are these monstrous cooseners hated in the common wealth. Thus Gentlemen I haue discouered in briefe, what I meane to prosecute at large: though not eloquently, yet so effectually, that if you be not altogether carelesse, it may redownd to your commoditie: forewarned, forearmed: burnt chil-dren dread the fire, and such as neither counsaile, nor other mens harmes may make to beware, are worthie to liue long, and still by the losse. But hoping these secrets I haue set abroach, and my labours I haue taken in searching out those base villanies, shall not be onely taken with thanks, but applied with care: I take my leaue with this farewell. God either confound, or conuert such base minded Cooseners.

Yours R. G.

A TALE OF A NIP

I WIL tel you, gentlemen, a pleasant tale of a most singuler experienced and approued Nip, and yet I will not name any, although I coulde discourse of one that is *magister in Artibus*, both a Nip, and a Foist, and a Cros-biter. But I will tell you a merry Jigge of a notable Nip, named (no more of y^t if you loue me.) Who taking a proper youth by S. Dauie to his prentice to teach him the order of striking, and foisting: so wel instructed him in his misterie that he could as wel skil of a cuttle-boong as a barber of a rasier, and being of a prompt wit, knew his places, persons, and circum-stances, as if hee had beene a morrall philosopher. The old colte, this graund Cut-purse by Saint Laurence let that suffise, did (as the tale was told to me) supply Mannerings place at the buriall of the olde ladie Rich, and comming thither

verie deuout to heare the sermon, thrust with his apprentice amidst y^e throng, and lighted upo a rich parson in Essex not far off from Rochford hundred, the Priest was facst afore with Veluet, & had a good boong, which the Nip espying, began to iustle the priest very hard at the entrance of the doore, and his apprentice strooke the strings, and took his boong cleere: the Priest litle suspecting it, fell to his praiers, and yet for all his other medita-tions, he felt for his purse, which when he mist, he fetcht a great sigh, and said, Lord haue mercie vpon me: what ayle you sir, said one that stooode by: nothing said the priest, but I thinke vpon the sinnes of the people, and so past it ouer with silence. Well it so fell out that when the boong came to sharing, the prentise and his maister fel out, and the maister controld him, and said, art not my prentise, and hast not bound thy selfe to me for three yeares? is not thy gettinges my gaines? then why doest thou stand vpon the Snap? Why saies the prentise, brag you so of my yeeres, shall I be made a slaue because I am bound to you: no, no, I can quittance my indenture when I list: his maister in a great rage asked how, marry saies the prentise, I will nip a boong, or draw a pocket openly, and so betaken, arraigned, and condemned and then Bull shall cancell my indentures at Tiburne, and so I will not serue you, a day after: at this his maister laught, and was glad for further aduantage, to yeeld the bucklers to his prentise, and to become frends. For approuing the trueth of this, my self conferd with the Priest, and he told me thus much.

*The discouery of the Prigging Law, or nature
of horse stealing.*



TO the effecting of this base villany of Prigging or horse-stealing, there must of necessity be two at the

least, and that is the Priggar and the Martar. The Priggar is he that steales the horse, and the Martar is he that receiues him, and chops and changeth him away in any Faire, Mart, or other place where any good rent for horses is: and their method is thus. The Priggar if he be a Launce-man, that is, one that is already horst, then he hath more followers with him, and they ride like Gentlemen, and commonly in the form of Drouers, and so comming into pasture grounds, or inclosures, as if they ment to suruey for Cattell, doe take an especiall and perfect view, where prankers or horses be, that are of worth, & whether they haue horse-locks or no, then lie they houering about till fit oportunitie serue, & in the night they take him or them away, and are skilfull in the blacke Art, for picking open the tramels or lockes, and so make hast till they be out of those quarters. Now if the Priggars steale a horse in Yorkeshire, commonly they haue vent for him in Surrey, Kent, or sussex, and their Martars that receiue them at his hand, chops them away in some blind Faires after they haue kept them a moneth or two, till the hue and crie be ceast and past ouer. Now if their horse be of any great value, and sore sought after, and so branded or eare-markt, that they can hardly sell him without extreame daunger, either they brand him with a crosse brand vpon the former, or take away his eare-marke, & so keepe him at hard-meat till he be whole, or els sel him in Corne-wall or Wales, if he be in Cumberland, Lincoln-shire, North-folke or Suffolke: but this is, if the horse bee of great valour & worthie the keeping: Mary if hee be onely coloured and without brands, they will straight spotte him by sundry pollicies, and in a blacke horse, marke saddle spots, or star him in the forehead, and change his taile, which secrets I omit, least I shuld giue too great a light to others to practise such leud villanies. But againe to our Launce-men Priggars, who as before I saide, cry with the Lapwing farthest from their nest, and from their place of residence, where their most abode is, furthest from thence they steal their horses, and then in another quarter as far of they make sale of them by the Martars means, without it be some base Priggar that steales of meere necessity, and beside is a Trailer. The Trailer is one that goeth on foot, but meanelly attired like some plaine gran of the Countrey, walking in a paire of boots without spurs, or else without boots, hauing a long staffe on his necke, and a blacke buckram bag at his back, like some poore client that had some writing in it, and there he hath his saddle, bridle and spurs, stirhops & stirhop-leathers, so quaintly and artificially made, that it may bee put in y^e slop of a mans hose: for his sadle is made without any tree, yet hath it cantle and bolsters, only wrought arteficially of cloth and bombast, with foldes to wrap vp in a short roome: his stirhops are made with vices and gins, that one may put them in a paire of glooues, and so are his spurs, & then a little white leather head-stal and rains, with a small scotish brake or snaffle, all so featlie formed, that as I said before, they may be put in a buckram bag. Now, this Trailer he bestrides the horse which he priggeth, and saddles and bridles him as orderly as if he were his own, and then carieth him far from the place of his breed, and ther sels him. Oh will some man say, it is easier to steale a horse then to sel him, con-sidering that her Maiesty & the honorable priuy Counsail, hath in the last Act of Parliament made a strickt statute for hors-stealing, and the sale of horses, whose Prouiso is this: that no man may buy a horse vntould, nor the toule be taken with-out lawful witnesses, that the party that selleth the horse is the true owner of him, vpon their oath and special knowledg, & that who buyeth a horse without this certificat or prooffe, shalbe within the nature of felony, as well as the party that stealeth him. To this I aunswere, that there is no act, statute, nor law so strickt conueid, but there be straight found starting holes to auoid it, as in this. The prigar when he hath stolne a horse, & hath agreed with his Martar, or with any other his confederate, or with an honest person to sel his horse, bringeth to the toulter, which they call the rifler, two honest men, either appparelled like cittizens, or plaine countrey yeomen, & they not onely affirme, but offer to depose, that they know the hors to be his, vpon their proper knowledg, although perhaps they neuer saw man nor horse before, and these periurde knaues, bee commonly old

Knights of the post, that are foisted off from being taken for baile at the Kings bench, or other places, & seeing for open periuries they are refused, there they take that course of life, and are wrongly called querries: but it were necessary, and verie much expedient for the common wealth, that such base rogues should be lookt into, and be punished as well with the pillory, as the other with the halter. And thus haue I reuealed the nature of Priggars, or horse-stelers briefly, which if it may profit, I haue my desire, but that I may recreate your minds with a pleasant historic, marke the sequel.

A pleasant storie of a horse-stealer.

NOT far from *Tenro* in *Cornwel*, a certain prigar, a horse-stealer being a lance-man, surueying the pastures thereabouts, spied a faire blacke horse without any white spot at al about him, the horse was faire and lusty, wel propor-tioned, of a high crest, of a lusty coutenance, well buttokt, & strongly trust, which set the priggars teeth a water to haue him: wel he knew the hardest hap was but a halter, & therefore he ventred faire, and stole away the prauncer: and seeing his stomacke was so good as his lims, he kept him wel, and by his policy seared him in the forehead, and made him spotted in the backe, as if he had bin sadle bitten, and gaue him a marke in both eares, whereas he had but a mark in one. Dealing thus with his horse, after a quarter of a yere, that al hurly burly was past for the horse, hee came riding to *Tenro* to the market, and there offered him to be sold: the gentleman that lost the horse was there present, and looking on him with other gentlemen, likte him passing well, and commended him, in so much that hee bet the price of him, bargained, & bought him: and so when hee was tould, and the horse-stealer clapt him good lucke: wel my frend, quoth the gentleman, I like the horse the better, in that once I lost one, as like him as might be, but mine wanted these sadle spots, and this star in the forehead. It may be so sir said the priggar, & so the gentleman and he parted. The next day after, he caused a letter to be made, and sent the gentleman word that hee had his horse againe that he lost, onely he had giuen him a mark or two, and for that hee was well rewarded, hauing twentie marke for his labour. The gentleman hearing how hee was cosened by a horse-stealer, and not onely robd, but mockt, let it passe till hee might conueniently meete with him to reuenge it. It fortun'd not long after, that this Launce-man priggar was brought to *Tenro* Gaile for some such matter, and indeede it was about a mare that he had stolne: but as knaues haue friends, especially when they are well monied, he found diuers that spake for him, and who sayde it was the first fault, and the party plaintife gaue but slender euidence against him, so that the iudge spake fauourably in his behalfe: the Gentleman as then sat on the bench, & calling to mind the Priggars countenance, how hee had stolne his horse and mockt him, remembred he had the letter in his pocket that he sent him, and therefore rising vp, spake in his behalf, and highly commended the man, and desired the iudges for one fault he might not be cast away, & besides, may it please you (quoth hee) I had this morning a certificate of his honestie and good behauior sent me, and with that he deliuered them the letter, and the iudge with the rest of the bench, smiled at this conceit, and askt the fellow if he neuer stole horse from that gentleman: no quoth the priggar, I know him not, your honors mistakes me: sayd the gentleman, he did borrow a black horse of me, & markt him with a starre in the forehead, and askt twenty marke of mee for his labour, and so discourst the whole matter: whereupon the quest went vpon him, and condemned him, and so the priggar went to heauen in a string, as many of his faculty had don before.

The vincent's Law, with the discouery therof.

THE Vincents Law is a common deceit or cosenage vsed in Bowling-allies, amongst the baser sort of people, y^t commonlie haunt such leud and vnlawfull places, for although I will not discommend altogether the nature of bowling, if the time, place, person, and such necessary circumstances be obserued: yet as it is now vsed, practised & suffered, it groweth altogether to the maintenance of vnthrifts, that idley and disorderly make that recreation a cosenage. Now the manner and forme of their deuise is thus effected: the Bawkers, for so the common hanter of the Ally are tearmed, aparelled like very honest and substantiall cittizens come to bowle, as though rather they did it for sport then gaines, and vnder that colour of carelesnes, doe shadow their pretended knauery: wel to bowls they go, and then there resort of all sortes of people to beholde them, some simple men brought in of purpose by som cosening companions, to be stript of his crownes, others, Gentlemen, or Marchants, that delighted with the sport, stand there as beholders to passe away the time: amongst these are certaine old sokers, which are lookers on, and listen for bets, either euen or od, and these are called Gripes: and these fellowes will refuse no lay, if the ods may grow to their aduantage, for the gripes and the bawkers are confederate, and their fortune at play euer sorts according as the gripes haue placed their bets, for the Bawker, he marketh how the laies goes, and so throes his casting, so that note this, the bowlers cast euer booty, and doth win or loose as the bet of the gripe leadeth them: for suppose 7. be vp for the game, and the one hath three and the other none, then the vincent, for that is the simple man that stands by, and not acquainted with their cosenage, nor doth so much as once imagine that the bawkers that carry the countenance of honest substantial men, would by any meanes, or for any gaines, be perswaded to play booty. Well, this vincent, (for so the cooseners or gripes please to terme him) seeing three to none, beginneth to offer ods on that side that is fairest to win: what ods saies the gripe? three to one saies the vincent, no saies the gripe it is more, and with that they come to foure for none, then the vincent offers to lay 4. to one, I take six to one saies the gripe, I lay it saies the vincent, and so they make a bet of some six crownes, shillings, or pence, as the vincent is of ability to lay, and thus will sundrie take their ods of him: wel, then the baw-kers go forward with their bowles, and winne another cast, which is fiue, then the vincent growes proud, and thinks both by the ods and goodnes of the play, that it is impossible for his side to loose, and therefore takes and laies bets freely, then the bawkers fortune begins to change, and perhaps they come to three for fiue, and still as their lucke changes, diuersity of bets growes on, till at last it comes to fiue & fiue, and then the gripe comes vpon the vincent and offers him ods, which if the vincent take, he loseth all, for vpon what side the gripe laies, that side euer wins, howe great soeuer the ods bee at the first in the contrary part, so that the cosenage growes in playing booty, for the gripe and the bawker meet together at night, and there they share whatsoever tearmage they haue gotten, for so they call the money that the pore vincent loseth vnto them. Now, to shadow the matter the more, the bawker that wins and is afore-hand with the game, will lay franckly that he shall win, and wil bet hard, and lay great ods, but with whome? either with them which play with him, that are as crafty knaues as himselfe, or els with the gripe, & this makes the vincent stoop to the blow, and to loose all the money in his purse. Besides, if anie honest men that holdes themselues skilfull in bowling, offer to play any set match against these common Bawkers, if they feare to haue the worse or suspect the others play to bee better then theirs, then they haue a tricke in watering of the alley, to giue such a moisture to the banke, that hee that offers to strike a bowle with a shore, shal neuer hit it whilst hee liues, because the moisture of the banke hinders the proportion of his aiming. Diuers other practises there are in bowling tending vnto coosenage, but the greatest is booty, and therefore

would I wish all men that are carefull of their coyne, to beware of such coseners, & none to come in such places, where a haunt of such hel-rakers are resident, & not in any wise to stoope to their bets, least he be made a vincent, for so manifest & palpable is their cosenage, that I haue seene men stone-blind offer to lay bets franckly, although they can see a bowl no more then a post, but onely hearing who plaies, and how the old Gripes make their lais: seeing then as the game is abused to a deceit, that is made for an honest recreation, let this little be a caueat for men to haue an insight into their knauerie.

For the Foist and the Nip, as in the first booke.



THE professors of this Law, beeing somewhat dasht, and their trade greatly impouerished, by the late editions of their secret villanies, seeke not a new meanes of life, but a new method how to fetch in their Conies, and to play their pranckes: for as greeuous is it for them to let slip a country farmer come to the terme, that is wel aparelled, & in a dirty paire of boots, (for that is a token of his newe comming vp, & a full purse) as it was for the boies of Athens, to let *Diogenes* passe by without a hisse. But y^e country men hauing had partly a caueat for their cosenage, feare their fauorable speches & their curteous salutations, as deadly as the Greekes did y^e whistle of *Poliphemus*. The cony-catcher now no sooner commeth in company, & calleth for a paire of cards, but straight the pore cony smoaks him, & sais: Masters, I bought a booke of late for a groat, y^t warnes me of Card-play, least I fall among Conny-catchers. What, doost thou thinke vs to be such, saies the verser? no Gentlemen saies the Conny, you may be men of honest disposition, but yet pardon me, I haue forsworne cards euer since I read it: at this reply, God wot, I haue many a coosening curse at these Conny-catchers hands, but I solemnly sticke to the old prouerbe: the Foxe, the more he is curst, the better hee fares: but yet I will discouer some of their newest deuises, for

these caterpillers resemble the Syrens, who sitting with their watching eies vppon the rockes, to allure Sea-passengers to their extreame preiudice, sound out most heauenly melodic in such pleasing cords, that who so listens to their harmony, lends his eare vnto his own bane & ruine: but if any wary Ullisses passe by and stop his eares against their inchauntments, then haue they most delightfull iewels to shew him, as glorious obiects, to inueigle his eie with such pleasant vanities, that comming more nigh to beholde them, they may dash their ship against a rocke and so vtterly perish. So these Conny catchers, for that I smoakt them in my last booke, and laid open their plots & policies, wherewith they drew poore connies into their hay, seeking with the Orators *Beneuolentiam captare*, & as they vse rethorical tropes and figures, the better to draw their hearers with the delight of varietie: so these moathes of the Commonwealth, apply their wits to wrappe in wealthy farmers with strange and vncoth conceits. Tush, it was so easie for the Setter to take vp a Cony before I discovered their cosenage, that one stigmaticall shameles companion amongst the rest, would in a brauerie weare parsly in his hat, and said, he wanted but *Aqua vitæ* to take a cony with, but since he hath lookt vpon his feet, and valed his plumes with the peacock, and swears by all the shooes in his shop, I shall be the next man he means to kil, for spoyling of his occupation: but I laugh at his brauados, and though he speaks with his Enuches voice, and weares a long sword like a morice pike, were it not I thinke he would with *Batillus* hang himselfe at my inuectiue, his name should be set downe, with the nature of his follies: but let him cal himselfe home from this course of life, and this cosenage, and I shall be content to shadow what he is with pardon, but from this digression again, to the double dili-gence of these Cony-catchers whose new sleights, because you shal the more easily perceiue, I will tell you a storie pleasant and worth the noting.

*A -pleasant tale of a hors, how at Vxbridge he
cosened a Cony-catcher, and had like to brought
him to his neckeurse.*

IT fortun'd that not long since, certaine Conny-catchers met by hap, a Franker or hors-stealer at Vxbridge, who took vp his Inne where those honest crue lodged, and as one vice followes another, was as ready to haue a cast at cards, as he had a hazard at a horse: the Conny catchers who supt with him, feeling him pliant to receiue the blow, began to lay the plot how they might make him stoope all the money in his purse, and so for a pint of wine drewe him in at cardes, by degrees as these rake-hels do, *Lento gradu*, measure all things by minutes, he fell from wine to money, and from pence to pounds, that hee was stript of all that euer he had, as well crownes, apparel, as iewels: that at last to maintaine the maine, and to check vies with reuies, he laid his horse in the hazard and lost him: when the priggard had smoakt the game, and perceiued he was bitten of all the bite in his bung, and turned to walke penny-lesse in Mark-lane, as the prouerb is, he began to chafe, and to swear, and to rap out gogs Nownes, and pronounes, while at voluntarie hee had sworne through the eight parts of speach in the Accidence, auowing they had cosened him both of his money and horse. Whereuppon the grosse Asse more hardy then wise, vnderstanding the Conny-catchers were gone, went to the Constable and made hue and crie after them, saying: They had robd him of his horse: at this the Headborowes followed amaine, and by chance met with an other hue and cry that came for him that had stollen, which hue and crie was serued vpon the horse-stealer, and at that time as farre as I can either coniecture or calculate, the Conny-catchers were taken suspicious for the same horse, and the rather for that they were found loose liuers, and could yeeld no honest methode or means of their maintenance, vppon this, for the horse they were apprehended, and bound ouer to the Sessions at Westminster, to answeere what might be objected against

them in her Maiesties behalfe. Well, the horse-stealer brake from his keepers, and got away, but the rest of the rascall crue, the Conny-catchers I meane, were brought to the place of iudgment, and there like valiant youthes, they thrust twelue men into a corner, who found them guiltlesse for the fact, but if great fauour had not bene shoven, they had beene condemned, and burnt in the eares for rogues. Thus the horse-stealer made hue and crie after the Conny-catchers, and the man that had lost the horse, he pursued the hors-stealer, so that a double hue and crie passed on both sides, but the Conny catchers had the worse, for what they got in the bridle they lost in the saddle, what they coosened at cards, had like to cost them their neckes at the Sessions, so that when they were free and acquitted, one of the Conny-catchers in a merry vaine, said, he had catcht many Connies, but now a horse had like to caught him, and so deepely quoth hee, that *Miserere mei*, had like to haue beene my best mattins. Thus we may see, *Fallere fallentem non est fraus*, euery deceit hath his due, he that maketh a trap falleth into the snare himselfe, and such as couet to coosen all, are crost themselues oftentimes almost to the crosse, and that is ye next neighbour to the gallows. Wel Gentlemen, thus I haue bewraied much and got litle thanks, I mean of the dishonest sort, but I hope such as measure vertue by her honours, will iudge of me as I deserue. Marry the goodman Conny-catchers, those base excrements of dishonesty, report they haue got one, () I will not bewray his name, but a scholler they say he is, to make an inuectiue against me, in that he is a fauourer of those base reprobats: but let them, him, and al know, the proudest pesant of them all, dare not lift his plumes in disparagement of my credit, for if he doo, I wil for reuenge only appoint the iakes-farmers of London, who shall case them in their filthy vessels, and carry them as doong to manure the baren places of Tiborne, and so for Conny-catchers an end.

A discourse, or rather discouery of a Nip and the Foist, laying open the nature of the Cutpurse and Pickpocket.



NOW Gentlemen, Marchants, Farmers, and Tearmers, yea whatsoever he be that vseth to cary money about him, let him attentiuely heare what a peece of new-found Philosophie, I will lay open to you whose opinions, principles, aphorismes, if you carefully note and retaine in memory, perhaps saue some crownes in your purse ere the yeare passe, and therefore thus: The Nip and the foyst, although their subiect is one which they worke on, that is, a well lined purse, yet their manner is different, for the nip vseth his knife, and the foist his hand: the one cutting the purse, the other drawing the pocket: but of these two scuruy trades, the Foist holdeth himself of the highest degree, and therefore, they tearme themselues Gentlemen foists, and so much disdain to be called Cut-purses, as the honest man that liues by his hand or occupation, in so much that the Foist refuseth euen to weare a knife about him to cut his meat withal, least he might be suspected to grow into the nature of the nip, yet as I said before is their subiect and haunt both a like, for their gaines lies by all places of resort and assemblies therefore their chiefe walkes is Paules, Westminster, the exchange, Plaies, Bear-garden, running at Tilt, the L. Maiors day, any festiuall meetings, fraies, shootings, or great faires: to bee short, wheresoeuer is any extraordinary resort of people, there the nip and the foist haue fittest oportunity to shew their iugling agilitie. Commonly, when they spy a Farmer or marchant, whome they suspect to be well monied, they follow him hard vntill they see him drawe his purse, then spying in what place he puts it vp, the stall or shadow beeing with the Foist or Nip, meets the man at some straight turne, and iustles him so hard, that the man marueiling, and perhaps quarrelling with him, the whilest the foist hath his purse, and bids him far-wel. In Paules (especially in the tearme time) between x. and xi., then is their howers, and there they walke, and perhaps, if there be great presse, strike a stroke in the middle walke, but that is vpon some plaine man that stands gazing about, hauing neuer seene the Church before, but their chieftest time is at diuine seruice, when men deuoutly giuen do go vp to heare either a sermon, or els the harmony of the Queere and the Organes: there the nip, and the foist as deuoutly as if he were som zealous person, standeth soberly, with his eies eleuated to heauen, when his hand is either on the purse or in the pocket, surueying euery corner of it for coyne, then when the seruice is done, & the people prese away, he thrusteth amidst the throng, and there worketh his villanie. So like wise in the markets, they note how euery one putteth vp his purse, and there either in a great presse, or while the partie is cheapning of meat, the Foist is in their pocket, & the Nip hath the purse by the strings, or somtimes cuts out the bottome, for they haue stil their stals following them, who thrusteth or iustleth him or her whome the foist is about to draw: So likewise at Plaies, the nip standeth there leaning like some mannerly gentleman against the doore as men go in, and there finding talke with some of his com-panions, spieth what euery man hath in his purse, & wher in what place, and in which sleeue or pocket he puts the bounge, and according to that so hee worketh, either where the thrust is great within, or els as they come out at the doores: but suppose that the foist is smoakt, and the man misseth his purse, and apprehendeth him for it, then straight, he either conueith it to his stall, or els droppeth the bounge, and with a great braue, hee defieth his accuser: and though the purse be found at his feet yet because hee hath it not about him, hee comes not within compasse of life.

Thus haue they their shifts for the Lawe, and yet at last so long the pitcher goeth to the brooke that it commeth broken home: and so long the foists put their villanie in practise, that West-ward they goe, and there solemnly make a rehearsall sermon at tiorne. But againe, to the places of resort, Westminster, I marry, that is their chieftest place that brings in their profite, the tearm-time is their haruest, and therefore like prouident husbandmen they take time while time serues, & make hay while the sun shines, following

their clients, for they are at the Hall very early, and there worke like bees, haunting euerie court, as the Exchequer-chamber, the Starchamber, the kings bench, common-plees, and euery place where the poore client standeth to heare his Lawier handle his matter, for the poore man is so busied with his causes, and so carefull to see his counsell, and to ply his Attorney, that hee thinketh least of his purse, but the Foist or Nip he watcheth, and seeing the Client draw his purs to pay some charges or fees necessary for the court, marketh where he putteth it, and then when hee thrusteth into the throng, either to answer for himselfe, or to sta[n]d by his Counseller to put him in minde of his cause, the Foyst drawes his pocket and leaues the poore client pennilisse. This do they in al courts, and go disguised like seruing-men, wring-ing the simple people by this iugling subtity: well might therefore the Honourable and Worshipfull of those Courtes doe, to take order for such vilde and base-minded Cut-purses, that as the Lawe hath prouided death for them, if they be taken, so they might bee rooted out, especiallie from West-minster, where the poore Clients are vndone by such Rogish catchers.

It boots not to tell their course at euerie remooue of her Maiestie, when the people flock together, nor at Bartholomew Faire, on the Queenes day at the Tilt-yard, and at all other places of assemblie: for let this suffice, at any great presse of people or meeting: There the foist and the Nip is in his kingdome. Therefore let all men take this caueat, that when they walke abroad amid any of the forenamed places, or like assemblies, that they take great care for their purse, how they place it, and not leaue it carelesse in their pockets or hose, for the Foist is so nimble-handed, that he exceeds the iugler for agilitie, and hath his *legiar de maine* as perfectly. Therefore an exquisite Foist must haue three properties that a good Surgeon should haue, and that is, an Eagles eie, a Ladies hand, and a Lions heart. An Eagles eie to spy out a purchase, to haue a quicke insight where the boung lies, and then a Lions heart, not to feare what the end will bee, and then a Ladies hande to be little and nimble, the better and the more easie to diue into any mans pocket.

These are the perfect properties of a Foist: but you must note that there be diuersities of this kind of people, for ther be Citty Nips and Countrey Nippes, which haunt from faire to faire, and neuer come in London, vnlesse it be at Bartholomew faire, or some other great and extraordinarie as-semblies. now there is a mortall hate betweene the country foist and the city foist: for if y^e citie foist spy one of the country foists in London, straight he seeks by som means to smoke him. And so the countrey Nip, if he spy a Citty Nip in any faire, then hee smoakes him straight, and brings him in danger, if he flee not away the more speedilie. Beside, there be women Foists and women Nippes, but the woman foyst is the most dangerous, for commonly there is some olde, Bawde, or Snout-faire strumpette, who inueigleth either some ignorant man, or some yong youth to folly, shee hath straight her hand in the pocket, and so foists him of all that he hath. But let all men take heed of such common harlots, who either sit in the streets in euenings, or els dwel in bawdy houses, and are pliant to euery mans lure. Such are alwaies Foists and Pickpockets, and seek the spoile of all such as meddle with them, and in coosening of such base-minded leachers, as giue themselues to such lewd companie, are worthy of whatsoever befallles, and sometimes they catch such a Spanish pip, that they haue no more hair on their heads, then on their nailes.

But leauing such Strumpets to their soules con-fusion, and bodies correction in Bride-wel: Againe to our nips and foists, who haue a kind of fraternity or brother-hood amongst them, hauing a hall or place of meeting, where they confer of waightie matters, touching their workemanship, for they are prouident in that, euery one of them hath some trustie frend whom he calleth his Treasurer, and with him hee laies vp some ratable portion of euery purse hee drawes, that when neede requires, and hee is brought in danger, hee may haue money to make composition with the partie. But of late there hath bin a great scourge

fallen among them: for now if a purse be drawn of any great value, straight the party maketh freindes to some one or other of the Counsell, or other inferior her Maiesties Justices, and then they send out warrants if they cannot learne who the Foist is, to the keepers of Newgate, that they take vp all the nips and foists about the Citty, and let them lie there while the money be reanswered vnto the partie, so that some pay three pound, nay fiue pound at a time, accord-ing as the same losse did amount vnto, which doth greatly impouerish their trade, and is likewise an hinderaunce to their figging law.

Therefore about such causes grow their meet-ings, for they haue a kind of corporation, as hauing Wardens of their company, and a hall. I remember their Hall was once about Bishopsgate, neere vnto Fishers folly, but because it was a noted place, they haue remooued it to Kent-street, and as far as I can learne, it is kept at one *Laurence Pickerings* house, one that hath bene, if he be not still, a notable Foist. A man of good calling he is, and well allied, brother in law to *Bul* the hangman. There keep they their feasts and weekly meetings, fit for their company.

Thus haue I partly set downe the nature of the Foist, and the Nippe, with their special haunts, as a caueat to all estates to beware of such wicked persons, who are as preiudiciall vnto the Common-wealth, as any other faculty whatsoever: and although they be by the great discretion of the Judges and Justices daily trust vp, yet stil there springeth vp yong that grow in time to beare fruit fit for the gallows: let then euery man be as care-full as possiblie he may: and by this caueat take heed of his purse, for the pray makes the theefe, and there [an] end.

*A merrie tale, how a Miller had his purse cut
in Newgat-market.*

IT fortun'd that a Nip and his staull drinking at the three tuns in Newgate market, sitting in one of the roomes next to the street, they might perceiue where a meal-man stood selling of meale, and had a large bag by his side, where by coniecture was some store of mony: the old cool, the old cut-purse I mean, spying this, was delighted with the shew of so glorious an obiect, for a full purse is as pleasing to a cutpurse eie, as the curious phisnomy of *Venus* was to the amorous God of warre: and entring to a mery vain (as one that counted that purchase his own) discover'd it to the nouice and bad him goe and nip it: the young toward scholler, although perhaps hee had striken som few strokes before, yet seeing no great press of people, & the meal-mans hand often vpon his bag, as if he had in times past smokt some of their facultie, was halfe afraid, and doubted of his own experience, and so refused to do it. Away villaine said the old nip, art thou faint harted, belongs it to our trade to despaire? if thou wilt onely do com-mon worke and not make experience of some hard matters to attempt, thou wilt neuer be maister of thine occupation, therefore trie thy wits and doe it. At this the yong strippling stalks me out of the Tauerne, and feeling if his cuttle boong were glib and of a good edge, went to this meal-man to enter combat hand to hand with his purse: but seeing the meale-mans eie was still abroad, and for want of other sport that he plaid with his purse, he was afraid to trust either to his wit or fortune, and therefore went backe againe without any act atchieued. How now saith the old Nip, what hast thou done? nothing q^d. hee, the knaue is so wary, that it is vnpossible to get any purchase there, for hee standes playing with his purse for want of other exercise. At this his fellowe lookes out and smiles, making this reply, and doost thou count it impossible to haue the meal-mans bounge? lend me thy knife, for mine is left at home, and thou shalt see me strike it straight, and I will shew thee a method, how perhaps hereafter to do the like by my example, and

to make thee a good scholler, and therefore goe with me, and doe as I shal instruct thee, begin but a fained quarrel, and when I giue thee a watch-word, then throwe flower in my face, and if I do misse his purse, let me be hanged for my labour: with that hee gaue him certaine principles to obserue, and then paid for the wine and out they went together. Assone as they were come vnto the meal-man, the olde Nip began to iest with the other about the Millers sacke, and the other re-plied as knaushly. At last the elder called the younger Rogue. Rogue, thou Swaine quoth he, doest thou, or darest thou dishonour me with such a base title? And with that taking a whole handfull of meale out of the sacke, threw it ful in the olde Nips necke, and his brest, and then ranne his way. He being thus dusted with meale, intreated the meale-man to wipe it out of his necke, and stoupt down his head. The meal-man laugh-ing to see him so raied and whited, was willing to shake off the meale, and the whilst hee was busie about that, the Nip had stroken the purse and done his feat, and both curteouslie thanked the meale-man, and closely went away with his purchase. The pore man thinking little of this cheat, began againe to play with his purse strings, and suspected nothing till he had sold a peck of meale, and offered for to change money, and then he found his purse bottomlesse, which stroke such a quandary to his stomacke, as if in a frostie morning hee had droonke a draught of small beere next his heart, hee began then to exclaime against such villains, and cald to minde, how in shaking the dust out of the Gentlemans necke, hee shaked his money out of his purse, and so the pore meal-man fetcht a great sigh, knit vp his sacke and went sorrowing home.

A kinde conceit of a Foist performed in Paules.

WHILE I was writing this discouery of foysting, & was desirous of any intelligence that might be giuen mee, a Gentleman, a friend of mine, reported vnto me this pleasant tale of a foist, and as I well remember it grewe to this effect. There walked in the midle walke a plaine Country far-mer, a man of good wealth, who had a well lined purse, onely barely thrust vp in a round slop, which a crue of foists having perceiued, their hearts were set on fire to haue it, & euery one had a fling at him, but all in vaine, for he kept his hand close in his pocket, and his purse fast in his fist like a subtil churle, that either had been forwarnd of Pauls, or els had afortime smokt some of that faculty. Well, howsoever it was impossible to do any good with him he was so warie. The foists spying this, strained their wits to the highest string how to compasse this bounge, yet could not al their politike conceits fetch the farmer ouer, for iustle him, chat with him, offer to shake him by the hand, all would not serue to get his hand out of his pocket. At last one of the crue that for his skill might haue bene Doctorat in his misterie, amongst them all choose out a good foist, one of a nimble hand and great agility, and said to the rest thus: Masters it shall not be said such a base pesant shall slip away from such a crue of Gentlemen foists as wee are, and not haue his purse drawn, and there-fore this time He play the staull my selfe, and if I hit him not home, count mee for a bungler for euer, and so left them and went to the farmer and walkt directly before him and next him three or foure turnes, at last standing still, he cried alas honest man helpe me, I am not well, & with that sunck downe suddenly in a sown, the pore Farmer seeing a proper yong Gentleman (as hee thought) fall dead afore him, stept to him, helde him in his armes, rubd him & chaft him: at this there gathered a great multitude of people about him, and the whilest the Foiste drewe the farmers purse and away: by that the other thought the feat was done, he began to come something to himselfe againe, and so halfe staggering, stumbled out of Paules, and went after the crue where they had appointed to meet, and their boasted of his wit and experience. The farmer little suspecting this villany, thrust his had into his pocket and mist his purse, searcht for it, but lining and shels & all was gone, which made the Country

man in a great maze, that he stood stil in a dumpe so long, that a Gentleman perceiuing it asked what he aild: what aile I sir quoth he, truly I am thinking how men may long as wel as women, why doest thou coniecture that honest man quoth he? marry sir answers the farmer, the gentleman euen now that sowned heer, I warrant him breeds his wiues childe, for the cause of his sodaine qualme that he fel down dead grew of longing: the gentleman de-manded how he knew that, wel enough sir quoth he and hee hath his longing too, for the poore man longed for my purse, and thanks be to God he hath it with him. At this all the hearers laught, but not so merrily as the foist and his fellows, that then were sharing his money.

A quaint conceit of a Cutler and a Cut-purse.

ANIP hauing by fortune lost his cutle bounge, or hauing not one fit for his purpose, went to a cunning Cuttler to haue a new made, and prescribed the Cutler such a method and form to make his knife, and the fashion to bee strong, giuing such a charge of the finenes of the temper, and setting of the edge, that the Cuttler wondred what the Gentleman would do with it, yet because he offered so largely for the making of it, the cutler was silent and made few questions, onely he appointed them the time to come for it, and that was three daies after: wel, the time being expired, the gentleman nip came, & seeing his knife liked it passing wel, and gaue him his money with aduantage. The Cutler desirous to knowe to what vse hee would put it, saide to the Cutpurse thus, sir quoth hee, I haue made manye kniues in my daies, and yet I neuer saw any of this forme, fashion, temper, or edge, and therefore if without offence I pray you tell me how or to what will you vse it? While thus he stood talking with the nip, he spying y^e purse in his aprone, had cut it passing cunningly, and then hauing his purchase close in his hand, made answer, in faith my friend, to dissemble is a folly, tis to cut a purse withal and I hope to haue good handsel: you are a merry gentleman quoth the Cutler, I tell true q^d. the cutpurse and away he goes. No sooner was hee gone from the stall, but there came another and bought a knife, and should haue single money againe, the cutler thinking to put his hand in his bag, thrust it quite through at the bottome, all his money was gone and the purse cut: perceiuing this, & remembring how the man praid he might haue good handsel, he fetcht a great sigh, & said, now I see, hee that makes a snare, first fals into it himselfe. I made a knife to cut other mens purses, and mine is the first hansell, well, reuenge is fallen vpon me, but I hope the rope will fall vpon him, and so hee smoothed vp the matter tohimselpe, least men shuld laugh at his strange fortune.

The discouery of the Lifting Law.

THE Lift, is he that stealeth or prowleth any plate, iewells, boults of saten, veluet, or such parcels from any place, by a sleight conueyance vnder his cloke, or so secretly that it may not be espied: of lifts there be diuers kinds as there natures be different, some base rogues, y^t lift when they com into alehouses, quart pots, platters, clokes, swords, or any such paltry trash, which commonly is called pilfering or petulacery, for vnder ye cullor of spending two or three pots of ale, they lift away any thing that commeth within the compasse of their reach, hauing a fine & nimble agility of the hand as the foist had: these ar the common and raskall sort of lifts, but the higher degrees & gentlemen lifts haue to the performance of their faculty 3. parties of necessity: the Lift, the Marker & the Santar: the lift attired in

the forme of a ciuill Countrey Gentleman, comes with the Marker into some mercers shop, haberdashers, goldsmiths, or any such place where any particular parcels of woorth are to be conuaid, and there he cals to see a boult of Saten, veluet, or any such commoditie, and not liking the pile, culler or bracke, he cals for more, & the whiles he begins to resolue which of the[m] most fitly may be lifted, and what Garbage (for so he cals the goods stolne) may be most easilie conuaid, then he calles to the Mercers man and saies, sirrha, reach me that peece of veluet or satten, or that iewell, chaine, or peece of plate, and whilest the fellow turns his back, he commits his garbage to the marker: for note, the Lift is without his cloake, in his doublet and hose, to auoid the more suspition: The Marker which is the receyuer of the Lifts luggage, giue a winke to the Santar that walkes before the window, and then the Santar going by in great hast, the Marker cals him and saies, sir a word with you. I haue a message to do vnto you from a verie friend of yours, and the errand is of some importance: truly sir saies the santar I haue verie vrgent busines in hand, and as at this time I cannot stay, but one woorde and no more saies the Marker, and then hee deliuers him whatsoeuer the Lift hath conuaid vnto him, and then the Santar goes his way, who neuer came within the shop, and is a man vnknownen to them all: suppose he is smoakt and his lifting lookt into, then are they vpon their pantophels, because there is nothing found about them: they defie the world for their honestie, because they be as dishonest as any in the world, and sweare as God shall iudge them they neuer saw the parcel lost, but oathes with them are like wind out of a bellowes, which being coole kindleth fire, so their vowes are with-out conscience, and so they call for reuenge: Therefore let this be a caueat to all occupations, sciences and misteries, that they beware of the Gentleman Lift, and to haue an eie to such as cheapen their wares, and not when they call to see new stufte to leaue the old behinde them, for the fingers of Lifts are fourmed of Adamant, though they touch not yet they haue vertue attractiue to draw any pelfe to them, as the adamant doth the Iron. But yet these Lifts haue a subtill shift to blinde the world, for this close kind of coosenage they haue when they want money: one of them apparels himselfe like a Countrey Farmer, and with a Memorandum drawn in some legall forme, comes to the chamber of some Counsaier or Sargeant at Lawe, with his Marker and his Santar, and there tels the Lawyer his case and desires his counsaile, the whilest the Marker and the Santar lay the platforme for any rapier, dagger, cloake, gowne or any other parcell of worth, that is in the withdrawing or vtter chamber, and assoone as they haue it they go their way: then whe[n] the lawier hath giuen his opinion of the case the lift requires, then hee puts in some demurre or blind, and saies he will haue his cause better discovered and then he wil come to his worship againe, so taking his leaue without his ten shillings fee, he goes his waies to share what his co[m]panions had gotte: the like method they vse with Scriueners, for comming by the shop and seeing any garbage worth the lifting, one starteth in to haue an obliga-tion or bill made in hast, and while the Scriuener is busie, the Lift bringeth the marker to the blow, & so the luggage is caried away. Now, these Lifts haue their speciall receiuers of their stolne goods, which are two sundrie parties, either some notori-ous Bawds in whose houses they lie, and they keepe commonlie tapping houses, and haue yong trugs in their house which are consorts to these Lifts and loue them so deere, that they neuer leaue them till they come to the gallows, or els they bee Brokers, a kind of idle sort of leud liuers, as pernitious as the lift, for they receiue at their hands whatsoeuer Garbage is conuaid, be it linnen, wollen, plate, Jewels, and this they doe by a bill of sale, making the bill in the name of iohn a Nokes or iohn a Stiles, so that they shadow the Lift, & yet keepe them selues without the danger of the law. Thus are these brokers and bawds as it were, efficient causes of the Lifters villany, for were it not their alluring speeches, and their secret consealings, the Lift for want of receiuers should bee faine to take a new course of life, or els be continually driuen into great extreames for selling his garbage: and thus much breifly for the nature of the lift.

The discovery of the courbing law.

THE Courber, which the common people call the Hooker, is he that with a Curb (as they tearm it) or hook, doth pul out of a window any loose linnen cloth, apparell, or els any other household stuffe whatsoeuer, which stolne parcels, they in their Art cal snappings: to the performance of this law there be required, duly two persons, the Curber and the Warpe: the curber his office is to spye in the day time fit places wher his trade may be practised at night, and comming unto anie window if it be open, then he hath his purpose, if shut, then growing into the nature of the blacke Art, hath his trickers, which are engins of Iron so cunningly wrought, that he wil cut a barre of Iron in two with them so easily, that scarcely shal the standers by heare him: then when hee hath the window open and spies any fat snappings worth the Curbing, then streight he sets the Warp to watch, who hath a long cloke to couer what soeuer he gets: then doth the other thrust in a long hooke some nine foote in length (which he calleth a curbe) that hath at the end a crooke, with three tyenes turned contrary, so that tis vnpossible to misse, if there be any snappings abroad. Nowe this long hooke they call a Curbe, and because you shall not woonder how they carrie it for being spied, know this that it is made with ioyntes like an angle rod, and can be conueyed into the forme of a truncheon, and worne in the hand like a walking staffe vntill they come to their purpose, and then they let it out at the length, and hook or curb whatsoeuer is lose and within the reach, and then he conueies it to the warp, and from thence (as they list) their snappings go to the Broker or to the Bawd, and there they haue as readie money for it, as merchantes haue for their ware in the exchange: beside, there is a Diuer, which is in the verie nature of the Curber, for as he puts in a hooke, so the other puts in at the windowe some little figging boy, who plaies his part notably, & perhaps the youth is so wel instructed, that he is a scholler in the black art, and can picke a lock if it be not too crosse warded, & deliuer to the Diuer what snap-pinges he finds in the chamber. Thus you heare what the Curber doth and the Diuer, and what inconuenience growes to many by their base villanies: therefore I wish all menseruants and maids, to be carefull for their maisters commodities, & to leaue no loose ends abroad, especially in chambers where windows open to the streete, least the Curber take them as snappings, and conuey them to the cooseninge broker. Let this suffise, and nowe I well recreate your wits with a merry tale or two.

Of a Courber, and how cunningly he was taken.

IT fortuned of late that a Courber and his Warp went walking in the dead of the night to spie out some window open for their purpose, and by chaunce came by a noblemans house about London, and saw the windowe of the Porters lodge open, and looking in, spied fat snappings, and bade his Warpe watch carefully, for there woulde be purchase, and with that tooke his Courbe, and thrust it into the chamber, and the Porter lying in his bed, was awake and sawe all, and so was hys bedfellow that was yeoma[n] of the wineseller. The Porter stole out of his bed to see what woulde be done: the firste snapping the courber light on was his liuery coate: as he was drawing it unto the window, the porter easily lifted it off, & so the courber drew his hooke in vaine, the whilest his bedfellowe stole out of the chamber, and raised vp two or three more, and we[n]t about to take them, but still the roague plyed his businesse, and lighted on a gowne that he vsed to sit in in the porters lodge, and warily drew it, but when it came to the

window, the porter drew it off so lightly, that the hooker perceiued it not: then when he sawe his courbe woulde take no holde, he swore and chafte, and tolde the Warpe he had hold of two good snaps, and yet mist them both, and that the fault was in the courbe: then he fell to sharpening and hammer-ing of the hooke, to make it holde better, and in againe he thrusts it, and lightes vppon a payre of buffe hose: but when he had drawne them to the window, the porter tooke them off againe, which made the courber almost mad, and swore he thought the diuel was abroad to night he had such hard fortune: nay sayes the yeoman of the seller, there is three abroad, and we are come to fetch you and your hookes to hell: so they apprehended these base rogues and carried them into the Porters lodge and made that their prison. In the morning a crue of Gentlemen in the houses, sate for Judges (in that they woulde not trouble their Lord with such filthie Caterpillers) and by them they were found guiltie, and condemned to abide forty blowes apeece with a bastinado, which they had solemnly paid, and so went away without any further damage.

Of the subtiltie of a Courber in coosoning a Maid.

A MERRY iest and as subtile, was reported to me of a cunning Courber, who had apparreld himselfe maruellous braue, like some good wel-fauoured yong Gentleman, & in stead of a man had his Warp to wait vpon him: this smooth faced rogue comes into moore fields, and caused his man to cary a pottle of Ipocras vnder his cloke, and there had learned out amongst others that was drying of cloaths, of a very wel fauoured maid that was there with her Flasket of linnen, what her Maister was, where she dwelt, and what her name: hauing gotten this intelligence, to this maid he goes, courteously salutes her, and after some pretie chat, tels her how hee saw her sundrie times at her Maisters doore, and was so besotted with her beautie, y^t he had made inquirie what her qualities were, which by the neighbours he gene-rally heard to bee so vertuous, that his desire was the more inflamed, and therevpon in signe of good wil, and in further acquaintance, hee had brought her a pottle of Ipocras: the maid seeing him a good proper man, tooke it very kindly, and thankt him, and so they drunke the wine, and after a little louers prattle, for that time they parted.

The maids hart was set on fire, that a Gentleman was become a suter to her, and she began to thinke better of her selfe then euer she did before, and waxed so proud that her other suters were counted too base for her & there might be none welcome but this newcom gentlema[n] her louer: wel, diuers times they appointed meetings, that they grew very familiar, and he oftentimes would come to her Maisters house, when all but she & her fellow maids were in bed, so that he and the Warpe his man did almost knowe euery corner of the house: it fortunued that so long he dallied, that at length he meant earnest, but not to marry the maid whatsoever he had done els, and comming into the fieldes to her on a washing day, saw a mighty deale of fine Linnen, worth 20. pound as he coniectured: wherupon he thought this night to set downe his rest, and therefore he was very pleasant with his louer, and told her that that night after her Maister and mistres were in bed, he would come, & bring a bottle of Sacke with him and drinke with her, the maid glad at these newes, promised to sit vp for him and so they parted: till about ten a clocke at night, when he came and brought his man with him, and one other Courber with his tooles, who should stand without the dores: to be briefe, welcom he came, & so welcome as a man might be to a maid: hee that had more mind to spy the clothes, then to look on her fauour, at last perceiued them in a Parlor that stood to the street-ward, and there would the maid haue had him sit, no sweeting quoth he, it is too neere the street, we can neither laugh nor be merry, but euerie one that passeth by must hear vs: vpon that they

remoued into another roome and pleasant they were, and tippled the Secke round, til all was out, and the gentleman swore that he would haue another pottle, and so sent his man, who tolde the other Courber that stood without, where the window was he should worke at, and away goes he for more secke and brings it very orderly, & then to their cups they fall againe, while the courber without had not left one rag of Linnen behinde. Late it grew, and the morning began to wax gray, and away goes this curber and his man, leauing the maid very pleasant with his flattering promises vntill such time as poore soule, she went into the Parlor, and mist all her mistres Linnen, then what a sorrowful hart she had, I refer to them that haue greeued at the like losse.

The Discouerie of the blacke Art.

THE Black Art is picking of Locks, and to this busie trade two persons are required, the Charme and the Stand: the Charm is he that doth the feat, and the Stand is he that watcheth: there be more that do belong to the burglary for conuauing away the goods, but only two are imploid about the lock: the charme hath many keies and wrests, which they call picklocks, and for euery sundry fashion they haue a sundry terme, but I am ig-norant of their words of art, and therefore I omit them, onely this, they haue such cunning in open-ing a Locke, that they will vndoo the hardest lock though neuer so wel warded, euen while a man may turn his back: some haue their instruments from Italy made of steele, some are made heere by Smiths, that are partakers in their villanous occupatio[n]s: but howsoeuer, well may it be called the blacke art, for the Deuill cannot do better then they in their faculty. I once saw the experience of it my selfe, for being in the Counter vpon com-andement, there came in a famous fellowe in the blacke Art, as strong in that qualitee as Samson: The partie now is dead, and by fortune died in his bed, I hearing y^t he was a charme began to enter familiarity with him, and to haue an insight into hys art, after some acquaintance, he told me much, and one day being in my chamber I shewed him my Deske, and askt him if he could picke that litle lock that was so wel warded, & too little as I thought for any of his gins. Why sir saies he, I am so experienced in the black Art, that if I do but blow vpon y^t lock, it shall fly open, and there-fore let me come to your Deske, & do but turne fiue times about, and you shal see my cunning, with that I did as hee bad me, and ere I had turned fiue times, his hand was rifling in my Deske verye orderly, I wondred at it, and thought verily that the Deuil and his dam was in his fingers, much discommodity grows by this blacke art in shops & noble mens houses for their plate, therefore are they most seuerely to be lookt into by the honour-able and worshipfull of England, and to end this discourse as pleasantly as the rest, I wil reherse you a true tale done by a most worshipful knight in Lancashire, against a Tincker that professed the black art.

*A true and merry tale of a Knight and a Tincker
that was a Picklocke.*

NOT far off from Bolton in the moors, there dwelled an ancient Knight, who for curtesie & hospitality was famous in those parts: diuers of his Tenaunts making repaire to his house, offred diuers complaints to him, how their locks were pickt in the night, and diuers of them vtterlye

vndone by that meanes, and who it should bee they could not tell, onely they suspected a Tinker that went about the Countrey, and in all places did spend verye lauishly: the Knight willingly heard what they exhibited, and promised both redresse and reuenge, if he or they could learne out the man. It chanced not long after their complaints, but this iolly Tinker (so expert in the black art) came by the house of this Knight, as the old gentleman was walking before the gate and cried for worke: the Knight straight coiecturing this should be that famous rogue that did so much hurt to his Tenants, cald in and askt if they had any worke for the Tinker, the cooke answered there was three or foure old Ketles to mend, come in Tinker, so this fellow came in, laid downe his budget & fell to his worke, a black Jacke of beere for the tinker sais the Knight, I know tinkers haue dry soules: the tinker hee was pleasant and thankt him humbly, the Knight sate downe with him and fell a ransacking his budget, and asked wherefore this toole serued and wherefore that, the tinker told him all, at last as he tumbled among his old brasse, the Knight spied 3. or 4. bunches of picklocks, he turnd them ouer quickly as though hee had not seene them and said, wel tinker I warrant thou art a passing cunning fellow and well skild in thine occupation by the store of thy tools thou hast in thy budget: in faith if it please your worship quoth he, I am thanks be to God my crafts master: I, so much I perceiue that thou art a passing cunning fellowe quoth the Knight therefore let vs haue a fresh iacke of beere and that of the best and strongest for the tinker: thus he past away the time pleasantly, and when hee had done his worke he asked what hee would haue for his paines? but two shillings of your worship quoth the tinker: two shillings saies the Knight, alas tinker it is too little, for I see by thy tooles thou art a passing cunning workeman, hold there is 2. shillings, come in thou shalt drink a cup of wine before thou goest, but I pray thee tell mee which way trauelest thou: faith sir quoth the tinker all is one to me, I am not much out of my way wheresoeuer I go, but nowe I am going to Lancaster: I pray thee Tinker then quoth the K. carry me a letter to the Jailor, for I sent in a fellon thither the other day and I would send word to the Jailor he should take no bale for him, mary that I wil in most dutifull maner quoth he, and much more for your worship then that: giue him a cup of wine quoth the Knight, and sirrha (speaking to his Clarke) make a letter to the Jailor, but then he whispered to him and bad him make a *mittimus* to send the tinker to prison, y^e clark answered he knew not his name, He make him tel it thee him selfe saies the Knight, and therefore fall you to your pen: the Clarke began to write his *mittimus*, and the Knight began to aske what countrey man he was, where he dwelt, what was his name, the tinker told him all, and the Clarke set it in with this *prouiso* to the Jailor, that he should keepe him fast bolted, or else he would breake away. Assoone as the *mittimus* was made, sealed & subscribed in forme of a letter, the Knight took it and deliuered it to the Tinker and said, giue this to the chief Jailor of Lancaster, and here is two shillings more for thy labour, so the tinker took the letter and the mony, and with manie a cap and knee thanked the olde Knight and departed: and made hast till he came at Lancaster, and Staid not in the town so much as to tast one cup of nappy Ale, before hee came to the Jailor, and to him very briefly he deliuered his letter, the Jailor tooke it and read it, and smilde a good, and said tinker thou art welcome for such a Knights sake, he bids me giue thee the best intertainment I may, I sir quoth the Tinker, the knight loues me well, but I pray you hath the courteous Gentleman remembred such a poore man as I? I marry doth he Tinker, and therefore sirra quoth he to one of his men, take the tinker into the lowest ward, clap a strong paire of bolts on his heeles, and a basill of 28. pound weight, and then sirra see if your pick-locks will serue the turne to bale you hence? at this the tinker was blank, but yet hee thought the Jailor had but iested: but when he heard the *Mittimus*, his heart was cold, and had not a word to say, his conscience accused him, and there hee lay while the next Sessions, and was hanged at Lancaster, and all his skill in the black Art could not serue him.

FINIS

