

Renascence Editions

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

Robert Greene

Note on the e-text: this [Renascence Edition](#) was transcribed, October 2007, by Risa Stephanie Bear, from Robert Greene, *The thirde and last part of Conny-catching. With the newly devised knauish Art of Foole-taking. The like Cosenages and Villenies neuer before discovered. A Dispvttation Betweene a Hee Conny-catcher and a Shee Conny-catcher.* New York: E. P. Dutton and Co. London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd. (The Bodley Head Quartos) 1923, ed. G.B. Harrison.

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"The original of this text is in the Bodleian Library (Malone 575). A very few misprints have been corrected in the text. G.B.H."

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and last Part of Conny-
catching.
WITH THE NEW DEVISED
knauish Art of Foole-taking.
*The like Cosenages and Villenies neuer before
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By R. G.

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By B. G.



Imprinted at London by *Thomas Scarlet* for
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Argument, and to all beſide, that deſire
to know the wonderful ſlie de-
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Conny-catchers.*

IN the time of king Henrie the fourth, as our English Chronyclers haue kept in remembrance, liued diuerse sturdie and loose companions, in sundrie places about the Citie of London, who gaue themselues to no good course of life, but because the time was somewhat troublesome, watched diligently, when by the least occasion of mutinie offered, they might praie upon the goods of honest Citizens, and so by their spoile inrich themselues. At that time likewise liued a worthie Gentleman, whose many very famous deedes (whereof I am sorie I may here make no rehearsal, because neither time nor occasion will permitte me) renowne his name to all ensuing posterities: he, being called sir **Richard Whittington**, the founder of Whittington Colledge in London, and one that bare the office of Lord Maior of this Citie three seuerall times. This worthie man wel noting the dangerous disposition of that idle kinde of people, tooke such good and discreete order (after hee had sent diuers of them to serue in the kings warres, and they loath to doe so well returned to their former vomite) that in no place of or about London they might haue lodging, or entertainment, except they applied themselues to such honest trades and exercises, as might wisse their maintaining was by true and honest meanes. If any to the contrarie were founde, they were in iustice so sharply proceeded against, as the most hurtfull and dangerous enemies to the commonwealth.

In this quiet and most blissefull time of peace, when all men (in course of life) should shew themselues most thankfull for so great a benefit, this famous citie is pestered with the like, or rather worse kinde of people, that beare outward shew of ciuill, honest, and gentlemanlike disposition, but in very deed their behaiour is most infamous to be spoken of. And as now by their close villanies they cheate, cosen, prig, lift, nippe, and such like tricks now vsed in their Conie-catching Trade, to the hurt and vndoing of many an honest Citizen, and other: So if God should in iustice be angrie with vs, as our wickednesse hath well deserued, and (as the Lorde forfend) our peace should be molested as in former time, euen as they did, so will these be the first in seeking domesticall spoile and ruine: yea so they may haue it, it skilles not how they come by it. God raise such another as was worthie Whittington, that in time may bridle the headstrong course of this hellish crew, and force them liue as becommeth honest Subiects, or els to abide the reward due to their loosenesse.

By reading this little treatise ensuing, you shall see to what marueylous subtill pollicies these deceiuers haue atteyned, and how daylie they practise strange driftes for their purpose. I say no more, but if all these forewarnings may be regarded, to the benefite of the well minded, and iust controll of these carelesse wretches, it is all I desire, and no more then I hope to see.

Yours in all he may

R. G.

The third and last part of Conny-
CATCHING WITH THE NEW
devised knauish Arte of Foole-
taking.

BEING by chance inuited to supper, where were present diuers, both of worship and good accompt, as occasion serued for enter-course of talke, the present trecheries and wicked deuises of the world was called in question. Amongest other most hatefull and well worthy reprehension, the woondrous villanies of loose and lewd persons, that beare the shape of men, yet are monsters in condition, was specially remembred, and not only they, but their complices, their confederates, their base natured women and close compacters were noted: Namely, such as tearme themselues Conny-catchers, Crosse-biters with their appertayning names to their seuerall coosening qualities, as already is made knowne to the worlde, by two seuerall imprinted books, by meanes whereof, the present kind of conference was occasioned. Quoth a Gentleman sitting at the Table, whose deepe step into age deciphered his experience, and whose grauitie in speeche reported his discretion, quoth he, by the two published bookes of Conny-catching: I haue seene diuers things wherof I was before ignorant, notwithstanding, had I beene acquainted with the author: I could haue giuen him such notes of notorious matters that way intending, as in neither of the pamphlets are the like set downe. Beside, they are so necessarie to be knowne, as they will both fore-arme anie man against such trecherous vipers, and forewarne the simpler sort from conuersing with them. The Gentleman being knowne to be within commission of the peace, and that what hee spake of either came to him by examinations, or by riding in the circuits as other like officers do: was intreated by one man aboue the rest (as his leisure serued him) to acquaint him with those notes, and hee woulde so bring it to passe, as the writer of the other two bookes, should haue the sight of them, and if their quantitie would serue, that hee should publishe them as a third, and more necessarie part then the former were. The Gentleman replied, all suche notes as I speake, are not of mine owne knowledge, yet from suche men haue I receiued them, as I dare assure their truth: and but that by naming men wronged by such mates, more displeasure would ensue then were expedient, I coulde set downe both time, place and parties. But the certaintie shall suffice without anie such offence. As for such as shall see their iniuries discovered, and (byting the lip) say to themselues, thus was I made a Conny: their names being shadowed, they haue no cause of anger, in that the example of their honest simplicitie beguiled, may shield a number more endangered from tasting the like. And seeing you haue promised to make them knowne to the author of the former two Bookes, you shall the sooner obtaine your request: assuring him thus muche vpon my credite and honestie, that no one vntrueth is in the notes, but euerie one credible, and to be iustified if neede serue. Within a fortnight or thereabout afterward, the Gentleman performed his promise, in seuerall papers sent the notes, which heere are in our booke compiled together: when thou hast read, say, if euer thou heardest more notable villanies discovered. And if thou or thy friends receiue anie good by them, as it cannot be but they will make a number more carefull of themselues: thanke the honest Gentleman for his notes, and the writer that published both the other and these, for generall example.

A pleasant tale howe an honest substantiall Citizen was made a Connie, and simply entertained a knaue that carried awaie hys goods very politickely.

WHAT lawes are vsed among this hellish crew, what words and termes they giue themselues and their copesmates, are at large set downe in the former two bookes: let it suffice yee then in this, to read the simple true discourses of suche as haue by extraordinarie cunning and trecherie beene deceiued, and

remembering their subtle meanes there, and slie practises here, be prepared against the reaches of any such companions.

Not long since, a crewe of Conny-catchers meeting together, and in conference laying downe such courses as they seuerally should take, to shunne suspect, and returne a common benefit among them: the Carders receiued their charge, the Dicers theirs, the hangers about the court theirs, the followers of Sermons theirs, and so the rest to their offices. But one of them especiallie, who at their woonted meetinges, when reporte was made howe euerie purchase was gotten, and by what pollicie eache one preuailed: this fellowe in a kinde of priding scorne, would vsuallie saye.

In faith Maisters, these things are pretily done, common sleights, expressing no deep reach of wit, and I wonder men are so simple to be so beguiled. I would fain see some rare artificiall feat indeed, that som admiration and fame might ensue the doing thereof: I promise ye, I disdaine these base and pettie paltries, and may my fortune iumpe with my resolution, ye shal heare my boies with in a day or two, that I will accomplish a rare stratageme indeed, of more value then forty of yours, and when it is done shall cary some credit with it.

They wondring at his wordes desired to see the successe of them, and so dispersing themselues as they were accustomed, left this frolicke fellow pondering on his affaires. A Cittizens house in London, which he had diligently eied and aimed at for a fortnights space, was the place wherein he must performe this exploit, and hauing learned one of the seruant maids name of the house, as also where shee was borne and her kindred: Vpon a Sunday in the afternone, when it was her turne to attend on her maister and mistres to the garden in Finsbury fields, to regard the children while they sported about, this craftie mate hauing dulie watched their comming foorth, and seeing that they intended to goe downe S. Laurence lane, stepped before them, euer casting an eie back, least they should turn some contrarie way. But their following still fitting his owne desire, neere vnto the Conduit in Alderman-bury, hee crossed the waye and came vnto the maid, and kissing her said: Cosen Margaret, I am very glad to see you well, my vnckle your father, and all your friends in the Countrey are in good health God be praised. The Maid hearing herselfe named, and not knowing the man, modestly blushed, which hee perceiuing, helde way on with her amongst her fellowe Apprentises, and thus began a gaine. I see Cosen you knowe mee not, and I doe not greatlie blame you, it is so long since you came forth of the Countrey: but I am such a ones sonne, naming her Vnckle right, and his sonnes name, which shee very well remembred, but had not seene him in eleuen yeares. Then taking foorth a bowed goat, and an olde pennie bowed, hee gaue it her as being sent from her Vnckle and Aunt, whome hee tearmed to bee his Father and Mother: Withall (quoth hee) I haue a Gammon of bacon and a Cheese from my Vnckle your Father, which are sent to your Maister and Mistresse, which I receiued of the Carrier, because my Vnckle enioynde mee to deliuer them, when I must intreat your mistres, that at Whit-sontide next shee will giue you leaue to come downe into the Countrey. The Maide thinking simplie all hee sayd was true, and as they so farre from their parents, are not onely glad to heare of their welfare, but also reioyce to see any of their kindred: so this poore Maid, well knowing her Vnckle had a sonne so named as hee called himselfe, and thinking from a boy, (as he was at her leauing the Countrey) hee was now growen such a proper handsome young man, was not a little ioyfull to see him: beside, shee seemed proud that her kinsman was so neat a youth, and so shee helde on questioning with him about her friendes: hee soothing each matter so cunningly, as the maide was confidently perswaded of him. In this time, one of the children stepped to her mother and sayd, Our marget (mother) hath a fine coosen come out of the Country, and he hath a Cheese for my Father and you: whereon shee looking backe, said:

maid, is that your kinsman? Yea forsooth mistres, quoth shee, my Vncles son, whome I left a litle one when I came forth of the countrey.

The wily Treacher, beeing maister of his trade, woulde not let slippe this opportunitie, but courteslie stepping to the Mistresse, (who louing her maid well, because indeed shee had bene a very good seruant, and from her .first comming to London had dwelt with her, tould her husband thereof) coyned such a smooth tale vnto them both, fronting it with the Gammon of Bacon and the Cheese sent from their maides Father, and hoping they would giue her leaue at Whitsontide to visite the countrey, as they with verie kinde wordes entertained him, inuiting him the next night to supper, when he promised to bring with him the Gammon of bacon and the cheese. Then framing an excuse of certaine busines in the town, for that time hee tooke his leaue of the Maister and Mistresse, and his newe Cosen Magaret, who gaue manie a looke after him (poore wench) as hee went, ioying in her thoughts to haue such a kinseman.

On the morrow hee prepared a good Gammon of bacon, which he closed vp in a soiled linnen cloath, and sewed an old card vpon it, whereon he wrote a superscription vnto the Maister of the Maide, and at what signe it was to be deliuered, and afterward scraped some of the letters halfe out, that it might seeme they had bene rubd out in the carriage. A good Cheese hee prepared likewise, with inscription accordingly on it, that it could not bee discerned, but that some vnskillfull writer in the Country had done it, both by the grosse pro-portio of the letters, as also the bad Ortographie which amongst plaine husband-men is verie common, in that they haue no better instruction. So hiring a Porter to carrie them betweene fiue and sixe in the euening hee comes to the Cittizens house, and entring the shop, receiues them of the Porter, whome the honest meaning Cittizen woulde haue paied for his paines, but this his maids new-found Cosen saide hee was satisfied alreadie, and so straining courtesie would not permit him: well, vp are carried the Bacon and the Cheese, where God knowes, Margaret was not a little busie, to haue all things fine and neat against her Cosens comming vp, her mistresse likewise, (as one well affecting her seruaunt) had prouided verie good cheere, set all her plate on the Cub-boorde for shewe, and beautified the house with Cusheons, Carpets, stools and other deuises of needle worke, as at such times diuers will doo, to haue the better report made of their credite amongst their seruants friends in the Countrey, albeit at this time (God wot) it turned to their owne after-sorrowing. The maister of the house, to delay the time while Supper was readie, hee likewise shewes this dissembler his shop, who seeing thinges fadge so pat to his purpose, could question of this sort, and that wel enough I warrant you, to discerne the best from the worst and their appointed places, purposing a further reach then the honest Cittizen dreamed of: and to bee plaine with ye, such was this occupiers trade, as though I may not name it, yet thus much I dare vtter, that the worst thing he could carry away, was worth about 20 nobles, because hee dealt altogeahter in whole and great sale, which made this companion forge this kindred and acquaintaunce, for an hundred pound or twaine was the very least hee aimed at. At length the mistresse sendes worde supper is on the Table, where vpon vppe hee conducts his guest, and after diuers welcomes, as also thanks for the Cheese and Bacon: To the Table they sit, where let it suffice, hee wanted no ordinarie good fare, wine and other knackes, beside much talke of the Countrey, how much his friendes were beholding for his Cosen Margaret, to whome by her mistresse leaue hee dranke twise or thrise, and shee poore soule dooing the like againe to him with remembrance of her Father and other kindred, which he still smoothed very cunningly. Countenance of talke made them careles of the time, which slipped from them faster then they were aware of, nor did the deceiuer hasten his departing, because he expected what indeed followed, which was, that being past tenne of the clocke, and hee

feigning his lodging to be at Saint *Gyles* in the field, was intreated both by the good man and his wife, to take a bed there for that night, for fashion sake (though verie glad of this offer) hee said he would not trouble them, but giuing the many thanks, would to his lodging though it were further. But woonderfull it was to see howe earnest the honest Citizen and his wife laboured to perswade him, that was more willing to stay then they could bee to bidde him, and what dissembled willingnesse of departure hee vsed on the other side, to couer the secret villanie intended. Well, at the length, with much ado, he is contented to stay, when *Margaret* and her mistresse presently stirred to make ready his bed, which the more to the honest mans hard hap, but all the better for this artificiall Conny-catcher, was in the same rounge where they supped, being commonly called their hall, and there indeede stode a verie faire bed, as in such sightly rounes it may easily bee thought, Citizens vse not to haue anie thing meane or simple. The mistresse, least her guest shoulde imagine shee disturbed him, suffered all the plate to stand still on the cupbord: and when she perceiued his bed was warmed, and euery thing els according to her mind, she and her husband bidding him good night: tooke themselues to their chamber, which was on the same floore, but inward, hauing another chamber betweene them and the hall, where the maides and children had their lodging. So desiring him to call for anything hee wanted, and charging *Margaret* to looke it should be so, to bed are they gone: when the Apprentises hauing brought vp the keyes of the street dore, and left them in their maisters chamber as they were wont to do, after they had said praiers, their euening exercise, to bed go they likewise, which was in a Garret backward ouer their maisters chamber. None are nowe vp but poore *Margaret* and her counterfeit coosen, whom shee loth to offend with long talke, because it waxed late: after some fewe more speeches, about their parentes and friendes in the countrey, shee seeing him laid in bed, and all such things by hym as shee deemed needfull, with a low courtesie I warrant ye, commits him to his quiet, and so went to bed to her fellowes the maidseruantes. Well did this hypocrite perceiue the keyes of the doores carried into the good mans chamber, whereof he being not a little glad, thought now they would imagine all things sure, and therefore doubtlesse sleep the sounder: as for the keyes, hee needed no helpe of them, because such as he go neuer unprouided of instrume[n]ts fitting their trade, and so at this time was this notable trecher. In the dead time of the night, when sound sleep makes y^e eare vnapt to heare the verie least noyse, he forsaketh his bed, & hauing gotten all the plate bound vp together in his cloke, goeth downe into the shop, where well remembring both the place and percells, maketh vp his pack with some twenty poundsworth of goods more. Then setting to his engin, he getteth the doore off the hindges, and being forth, lifteth close to againe, and so departes, meeting within a dozen paces, three or foure of his companions that lurked therabouts for the purpose. Their word for knowing ech other, as is said, was *Quest*, and this villaines comfortable newes to them, was *Twag*, signifying he had sped: ech takes a fleece for easier carriage, and so away to *Bell brow*, which, as I haue heard is as they interpret it, the house of a theefe receiuer, without which they can do nothing, and this house with an apt porter to it, stands redie for them all houres of the night: too many such are there in London, the maisters whereof beare countenance of honest substantiall men, but all their liuing is gotten in this order, the end of such (though they scape awhile) will be sayling westward in a Cart to Tiborn. Imagine these villaines there in their iollitie, the one reporting point by point his cunning deceit, and the other (fitting his humour) extolling the deede with no meane commendations. But returning to the honest Citizen, who finding in the morning how deerly he paid for a gammon of Bacon, and a cheese, and how his kinde courtesie was thus trecherously requited: blames the poore maid, as innocent herein as himselfe, and imprisoning her, thinking so to regaine his owne: grieue with ill cherishing there shortens her life: And thus ensueth one

hard hap vpon another, to the great grieffe both of maister and mistresse, when the trueth was knowne, that they so wronged their honest seruant: how it may forewarne others, I leaue to your own opinions, that see what extraordinarie deuises are now adayes, to beguile the simple and honest liberall minded.

Of a notable knaue, who for his cunning deceiuing a Gentleman of his purse: scorned the name of a Conny-catcher, and woulde needes be termed a Foole-taker, as master and beginner of that new found Arte.

A CREW of these wicked companions being one day met together in Pauls Church, (as that is a vsuall place of their assembly, both to determine on their driftes, as also to speede of manie a bootie) seeing no likelihood of a good afternoone, so they tearme it either forenoone or after, when ought is to be done: some dispersed themselues to the plaies, other to the bowling Allies, and not past two or three stayed in the Church. Quoth on of them, I haue vowed not to depart but something or other Ile haue before I go: my minde giues me, that this place yet will yeelde vs all our suppers this night, the other holding like opinion with him there likewise walked vp and downe, looking when occasion would serue for some Cash. At length they espied a Gentleman toward the lawe entring in at the little North doore, and a countrey Clyent going with him in very hard talke, the Gentleman holding his gowne open with his armes on either side as verie manie doe, gaue sight of a faire purple veluet purse, which was halfe put vnder his girdle: whiche I warrant you the resolute fellowe that woulde not depart without something, had quickly espied. A game, qd. he to his fellows, marke the stand, and so separating themselues walked aloofe, the Gentleman going to the nether steppe of the staires that ascend vp into the Quire, and there he walked still with his clyent. Oft this crew of mates met together, and said there was no hope of nipping the boung because he held open his gowne so wide, and walked in such an open place. Base knaues, quoth the frolicke fellowe, if I say I will haue it, I must haue it, though hee that owes it had sworne the contrarie. Then looking aside, hee spied his trugge or queane comming vp the Church: Away, quoth he to the other, go looke you for some other purchase, this wench and I are sufficient for this. They go, he lessons the drab in this sorte, that shee should to the Gentleman, whose nme shee verie well knew, in that shee had holpe to coosen him once before, & prete[n]ding to be sent to him from [m] one he was wel acquainted with for his councill, shoulde giue him his fee for auoiding suspition, and so frame some wrong done her, as well inough she coulde: when her mate (taking occasion as it serued) would worke the meane, she should strike, & so they both preuaile. The queane well inured with such courses, because she was one of y^e most skilfull in that profession, walked vp and downe alone in the Gentlemans sight, that he might discerne shee staid to speake with him, and as he turned too-ward her, he saw her take money out of her purse, whereby he gathered some benefite was toward him: which made him the sooner dispatch his other clyent, when shee stepping to him, tolde such a tale of commendations from his verie friend, that had sent her to him as shee said, that hee entertained her very kindly, and giuing him his fee, which before her face he put vp into his purse, and thrust it vnder his girdle againe: she proceeded to a verie sound discourse, whereto he listened with no litle attention. The time seruing fit for the fellows purpose, he came behind the Gentleman, and as many times one friend will familiarly with another, clap his handes ouer his eyes to make him guesse who he is, so did this companion, holding his handes fast ouer the Gentlemans eyes, saide: who am I? twise or thrise, in whiche time the drab had gotten the purse and put it vp. The Gentleman thinking it had beene some

merrie friend of his, reckened the names of three or foure, when letting him go, the craftie knaue dissembling a bashfull shame of what he had done, said: By my troth sir I crie ye mercy, as I came in at the Church doore, I tooke ye for such a one (naming a man) a verie friend of mine, whome you very much resemble: I beseech ye be not angrie, it was verie boldly done of me, but in penance of my fault, so please ye to accept it, I will bestow a gallon or two of wine on ye, and so laboured him earnestly to go with him to the tauerne, still alledging his sorrow for mistaking him. The Gentleman litle suspecting how who am I had handled him, seeing how sorie he was, and seeming to be a man of no such base condition: tooke all in good part, saying: No harme sir, to take one for another, a fault wherein any man may easily erre, and so excusing the acceptation of his wine, because he was busie there with a Gentlewoman his friend: the Trecher with courtesie departed, and the drab (hauing what shee would) shortning her tale, he desiring her to com to his chamber the next morning, went to the place where her copes-mate & she met, and not long after, diuers other of the crue, who hearing in what manner this act was perfourmed, smiled a good thereat, that she had both got the Gentlemans purse, her owne money againe, and his aduise for iust no thing. He that had done this tall exploit, in a place so open in view, so hardly to be com by, and on a man that made no mean esteeme of his wit: bids his fellowes keepe the woorthlesse name of a Conny-catcher to themselues: for hee hence-foorth would be tearmed a Foole-taker, and such as could imitate this quaint example of his, (which hee would set downe as an entrance into that art) should not thinke scorne to become his schollers. Night drawing on apace, the Gentleman returned home, not all this while missing his purse, but beeing set at supper, his wife intreated a pint of Secke, which hee minding to send for: drewe to his purse, and seeing it gone, what straunge lookes (beside sighs) were between him and his wife, I leaue to your supposing, and blame them not: for as I haue heard, there was seuen pound in Golde, beside thirty shillings and odde white money in the purse. But in the middest of his grieffe, hee remembred him that said, who am I ? Wherewith hee brake foorth into a great laughter, the cause whereof his wife beeing desirous to know, hee declared all that passed betweene him and the deceiuer, as also how sone afterward the queane abreuiated her discourse and followed: so by troth wife (quoth he) betweene who am I and the drab, my purse is gone: let his losse teach others to looke better to theirs.

An other Tale of a coosening companion, who would needs trie his cunning in this new inuented art, and how by his knauery (at one instant) he beguiled half a dozen and more.

OF late time there hath a certaine base kind of trade been vsed, who though diuers poor men, & doubtles honest apply themselues to, only to relieue their need: yet are there some notorious varlets do the same, beeing compacted with such kind of people, as this present treatise manifesteth to the worlde, and what with outward simplicity on the one side, and cunning close trechery on the other, diuers honest Cittizens and day-labouring men, that resort to such places as I am to speake of, onely for recreation as opportunity serueth, haue bin of late sundry times deceiued of their purses. This trade, or rather vnsufferable loytring qualitie, in singing of Ballets, and songs at the doores of such houses where plaies are vsed, as also in open markets and other places of this Cittie, where is most resort: which is nothing els but a sly fetch to draw many togeather, who listning vnto an harmelesse dittie, after warde walke home to their houses with heauie hearts: from such as are heereof true witnesses to their cost, do I deliuer this example. A subtil fellow, belike im-boldned by acquaintance with the former deceit, or els

beeing but a beginner to practise the same, calling certaine of his companions together, would try whether he could attaine to be maister of his art or no, by taking a great many of fools with one traine. But let his intent and what els beside, remaine to abide the censure after y^e mater is heard, & com to Gracious street, wher this villanous pranke was performed. A roging mate, & such another with him, were there got vpo[n] a stal singing of balets which belike was som prety toy, for very many gathered about to heare it, & diuers buying, as their affections serued, drew to their purses & paid the singers for the[m]. The slye mate and his fellowes, who were dispersed among them that stoode to heare the songes: well noted where euerie man that bought, put vp his purse againe, and to such as would not buy, counterfeit warning was sundrie times giuen by the rogue and his associate, to beware of the cut pursse, and looke to their purses, which made them often feel where their purses were, either in sleeue, hose, or at girdle, to know whether they were safe or no. Thus the craftie copesmates were acquainted with what they most desired, and as they were scattered, by shouldring, thrusting, feigning to let fall something, and other wilie tricks fit for their purpose: heere one lost his purse, there another had his pocket pickt, and to say all in briefe, at one instant, vpon the complaint of one or two that sawe their purses were gone, eight more in the same companie, found themselues in like predicament. Some angrie, others sorrowfull, and all greatly discontented, looking about them, knewe not who to suspect or challenge, in that the villaines themselues that had thus beguiled them, made shewe that they had sustained like losse. But one angrie fellow, more impacient then al the rest, he falles vpon the ballade singer, and beating him with his fists well faouredly, sayes, if he had not listened his singing, he had not lost his purse, and therefore woulde not be other wise perswaded, but that they two and the cutpurses were compacted together. The rest that had lost their purses likewise, and saw that so ma[n]y complaine together: they iumpe in opinion with the other fellow, & begin to tug & hale the ballad singers, when one after one, the false knaues began to shrinke awaie with y^e purses. By means of some officer then being there prese[n]t, the two roges wer had before a Justice, and vpon his discrete examination made, it was found, that they and the Cut-purses were compacted together, and that by this vnsuspected villanie, they had deceiued many. The fine Foole-taker himselve, with one or two more of that companie, was not long after apprehended: when I doubt not but they had their reward aunswerable to their deseruing: for I heare of their iourney westward, but not of their returne: let this forewarne those that listen singing in the streets.

Of a craftie mate, that brought two young men vnto a Tauerne, where departing with a Cup, he left them to pay both for the wine and Cup.

A FRIEND of mine sent me this note, and assuring me the truth therof, I thocht necessary to set it downe amongst the rest: both for the honest simplicitie on the one side and most cunning knauerye vsed on the other, and thus it was. Two young men of familiar acquaintaunce, who delighted much in musicke, because themselues therein were somewhat expert, as on the virginals, Bandora, Lute and such like: were one euening at a common Inne of this town (as I haue heard) where the one of them shewed his skill on the Virginals, to the no little contentment of the hearers. Nowe as diuers guests of the house came into the room to listen, so among the rest entered an artificiall Conny-catcher, who as occasion serued, in the time of ceissing betweene the seueral toyes and fancies hee plaid: very much commended his cunning, quicke hand, and such qualities praiseworthy in such a professour. The time

being come, when these young men craued leaue to depart, this politique varlet stepping to them, desired that they would accept a quart of wine at his hand, which he would most gladlie he would bestow vpon them: besides, if it liked him that played on the Virginals to instruct, he would helpe him to so good a place, as happily might aduauntage him for euer. These kind words, deliuered with such honest outward shew, caused the yoong men, whose thoughts were free from any other opinion, than to be as truely and plainely dealt withall as themselues meant, accepted his offer, because he that played on the Virginalles was desirous to haue some good place of seruice, and here vpon to the Tauerne they goe, and being set, the wily companion calleth for two pintes of wine, a pinte of white, and a pinte of claret, casting his cloake vpon the Table, and falling to his former communication of preferring the yoong man. The wine is brought, and two cuppes withall, as is the vsuall manner: when drinking to them of the one pinte, they pledge him, not vnthankfull for his gentlenesse. After some time spent in talke, and as he perceiued fit for his purpose, hee takes the other cup, and tastes the other pinte of wine: wherewith he finding fault, that it dranke somewhat harde, sayde, that Rose-water and Sugar would do no harme, whereupon he leaues his seate, saying he was well acquainted with one of the seruants of the house, of whom he could haue two pennywoorth of Rose-water for a peny, and so of Sugar likewise, wherefore he would step to the barre vnto him, so taking the cup in his hand, he did, the yoong men neuer thinking on any such treachery as ensued, in that he seemed an honest man, and beside left his cloke lying on the table by them. No more returns the yonker with Rose-water and Sugar, but stepping out of doores, vn-seene of any, goes away roundly with the cup. The yoong men not a little wondering at his long tarrying, by the comming of the seruants to see what they wanted, who tooke no regarde of his sudden departure, find themselues there left, not onelie to pay for the wine, but for the Cuppe also, beeing rashly supposed by the maister and his seruantes to be copartners with the treacherous villaine: but their honest behauiour well knowen, as also their simplicitie too much abused well witnessed their innocencie: notwithstanding they were faine to pay for the cuppe, as afterward they did, hauing nothing towards their charge but a threede bare cloake not woorth two shillings. Take heede howe you drinke wine with any such companions.

Of an honest housholder which was cunningly deceyued by a subtill companion, that came to hire a Chamber for his Maister.

NOT farre from Charing crosse dwelleth an honest yoong man, who beeing not long since married, and hauing more roomes in his house than himselfe occupyeth, eyther for terme time, or the Court lying so neere, as diuers do, to make a reasonable commoditie, and to ease house-rent, which (as the worlde goeth now is none of the cheapest) letteth foorth a chamber or two, according as it may be spared. In an euening but a while since, came one in the manner of a Seruing man to this man and his wife, and he must needs haue a Chamber for his Maister, offering so largely, as the bargaine was soone concluded betweene them. His intent was to haue fingered some bootie in the house, as by the sequele it may be likeliest gathered: but belike no fit thing lying abroad, or hee better regarded then happily he would be, his expectation that way was frustrate: yet as a resolute Conny-catcher indeede, that scorneth to attempt without some successe, and rather will pray vpon small commodity, then returne to his fellows disgraced with a lost labour: he summons his wits together, and by a smooth tale ouer-reached both the man and his wife. He tels them, that his Maister was a captaine late come from the Sea, and had costly

apparell to bring thither, which for more easie carriage, he entreats them lend him a sheet to binde it vp in: they suspecting no ill, because hee required their boy should goe with him to helpe him cary the stuffe, the good wife steppes vnto her Chest, where her linnen lay finelie sweetned with Roseleaues and Lauender, and lends him a very good sheet in deed.

This successe made him bolde to venter a little further, and then he tels them, his Maister had a great deal of broken Sugar, and fine spices that lay negligently abroad in his lodging as it was brought from the Shippe, all which hee was assured his Maister would bestow on them, so hee could deuise howe to get it brought thither.

These liberall promises, preuailing with them that lightlie beleued, and withall were somewhat couetous of the Sugar and spices: The woman demaunded if a couple of pillow-beeres would not serue to bring the Sugar and spices in ? Yes marry (quoth hee) so the Sugar may best be kept by it selfe, and the spices by themselues. And (quoth hee) because there are many craftie knaues abroad, (greeuing that any should bee craftier then himselfe) and in the euening the linnen might quicklie bee snatched from the boy: For the more safety, hee would carry the sheet and pillow-beeres himselfe, and within an hower or little more, returne with the boye againe, because he would haue all things ready before his Maister came, who (as hee said) was attending on the Councell at the court. The man and his wife crediting his smooth speeches, sends their boy with him, and so along toward Iuie-bridge goe they. The Conny-catcher seeing himselfe at free libertie, that hee had gotten a very good sheet, and two fine pillow-beeres: steps to the wall, as though he would make water, bidding the boy go faire and softlie on before. The boy doubting nothing, did as hee willed him, when presently he stepped into some house hard by fit to entertaine him: and neuer since was hee, his Maister, the Sugar, spices, or the linnen heard off. Manie haue beene in this manner deceiued, as I heare, let this then giue them warning to beware of any such vnprofitable guests.

Of one that came to buy a knife, and made first prooffe of his trade on him that solde it.

ONE of the Conning Nippes about the Towne, came vnto a poore Cutler to haue a Cuttle made according vnto his owne mind, and not aboue three inches would hee haue both the knife and the haft in length: yet of such pure mettall, as possible may be. Albeit the poore man neuer made the like before, yet being promised foure times the value of his stuffe and paines, he was contented to doe this, and the day beeing come that hee should deliuer it, the partie came, who liking it exceedingly, gaue him the mony promised, which the poore man gladly put vp into his purse, that hung at a button hole of his wascoat before his brest smiling that he was so wel paid for so small a trifle. The partie perceiuing his merry countenance, and imagining hee gest for what purpose the knife was, sayde, honest man, whereat smile you ? By my troth sir (quoth the Cutler) I smile at your knife, because I neuer made one so little before: and were it not offensiue vnto you, I would request to knowe to what vse you will put it too: Wilt thou keepe my counsaile (quoth the Nip?) yea on mine honestie (quoth the Cutler.) Then hearken in thy eare saide the Nip, and so rounding with him, cut the poore mans purse that houg at his bosome, he neuer feeling when hee did it: with this knife (quoth the Nippe) meane I to cut a purse: marry god forbid (quoth the Cutler) I cannot thinke you to be such a kind of man, I see you loue to iest, and so they parted.

The poore man, not so wise as to remember hys owne purse, when by such a warning he might haue

taken the offendour dooing the deede, but rather proud (as it were) that his money was so easily earned: walkes to the Alehouse, which was within a house or two of his owne, and finding there three or foure of his neighbors, with whome hee began to iest very pleasantly: swears by cocke and pie hee would spend a whole groat vppon them, for hee had gotten it and more, cleerly by a good bargaine that morning.

Though it was no maruel to see him so liberall, because indeede hee was a good companion: yet they were loth to put him vnto such cost, notwithstanding he would needs doe it, and so farre as promise stretcht, was presently fild in and set vpon the boord. In the drinking time often he wisht to meet with more such customers as hee had done that morning, and commended him for a verie honest Gentleman I warraunt you. At length, when the reckoning was to be paied, hee drawes to his purse, where finding nothing left but a peece of the string in the button hole: I leaue to your Judgement, whether hee was now as sorie as he was merrie before.

Blancke and all amort sits the poore Cutler, and with suche a pittifull countenance, as his neighbours did not a little admire his solemn alteration, & desirous to know the cause thereof, from point to point he discourseth the whole maner of the tragedie, neuer naming his new customer, but with such a farre fetcht sigh, as soule and body would haue parted in sunder. And in midst of all his grieffe, he brake forth into these tearmes. He beleue a man the better by his worde while I knowe him, the knife was bought to cut a purse indeed, and I thank hym for it he made the first prooffe of the edge with me. The neighbours greeuing for his losse, yet smiling at his folly to be so ouerreached, were faine to pay the groat the cutler called in, because he had no other money about him, and spent as much more beside to driue away his heauinesse.

This tale, because it was somewhat misreported before, vpon talke had with the poore Cutler himselfe, is set downe now in true forme and maner howe it was done, therefore is there no offence offered, when by better consideration, a thing may be enlarged or amended, or at least the note be better confirmed. Let the poore Cutlers mishap example others, that they brag not ouer hastily of gaine easily gotten, least they chance to pay as deerely for it, as hee did.

Of a yoong Nip that cunningly beguiled an antient professor of that trade, and his queane with hym, at a play.

A GOOD fellowe that was newly entered into the nipping craft, and had not as yet attained to any acquaintance with y^e chiefe and cunning maisters of that trade: In the Christmas holydaies last came to see a play at the Bull within Bishops gate, there to take his benefit as time and place would permit him. Not long had hee staid in the prease, but he had gotten a yoong mans purse out of his pocket, which when he had, hee stepped into the stable to take out the mony, and to conuey away the purse. But looking on his commoditie, he found nothing therin but white counters, a thimble and a broken threepence, which belike the fellowe that ought it, had done of purpose to deceiue the cutpurse withall, or else had plaid at the cardes for counters, and so carried his winnings about him till his next sitting to play. Somewhat displeased to be so ouertaken, he looked aside, and spied a lustie youth entring at the doore, and his drab with him: this fellow he had heard to be one of the finest Nippers about the towne, and euer carried his queane with him, for conueiance when the stratageme was performed: he puts vp the counters into the purse againe, and follows close to see some peece of their seruice. Among a

companie of seemely men was this lustie companion and hys minion gotten, where both they might best beholde the play, and worke for aduantage, and euer this yoong Nip was next to him, to marke when he should attempt any exployt, standing as it were more then halfe betweene the cunning Nip and his drab, onely to learne some part of their skill. In short time the deed was performed, but how, the yoong Nip could not easily discerne, onely he felt him shift his hand toward his Trug, to conuey the purse to her, but she being somewhat mindfull of the play, because a merriment was then on the stage, gaue no regard: whereby thinking hee had puld her by the coat, he twitcht the yoong Nip by the cloke, who taking aduantage of this offer, put downe his hand and receiued the purse of him. Then counting it discourtesie to let him loose all his labour, he softly pluckt the queane by the coate, which she feeling, and imagining it had beene her companions hand: receiued of him the first purse with the white counters in it. Then fearing least his stay should hinder him, and seeing the other intended to haue more purses ere he departed: away goes the yoong Nip with the purse he got so easily, wherin (as I haue heard) was xxxvii. shillings, and odde mony, which did so much content him, as that he had beguiled so ancient a stander in that profession. What the other thought when he found the purse, and could not guesse how hee was coosened: I leaue to your censures, onely this makes me smile, that one false knaue can beguile another, whiche biddes honest men looke the better to their purses.

How a Gentleman was craftily deceiued of a Chaîne of Golde and his pursse in Paules Church in London.

A GENTLEMAN of the Cuntrye, who (as I haue heard since the time of his mishap, wherof I am now to speake) had about halfe a yeer before buiried his wife & belike thinking well of some other Gentlewoma[n], whom he ment to make account of as his second choise: vpo[n] good hope or otherwise perswaded, he came vp to London to prouide himselfe of such necessaries as the Cuntry is not vsually stored withall. Besides, silkes, veluets, cambrickes and such like, he bought a Chaîne of Golde that cost him lvij. pounds and odde money, wher of because he would haue the mayden-head or first wearing himselfe, he presently put it on in the Gold smiths shop, and so walked therewith about London as his occasions serued. But let not the Gentleman be offended, who if this Booke come to his handes, can best auouch the trueth of this discourse, if here by the way I blame his rash pride, or simple credulitie: for betweene the one and other, the Chaîne he paide so deere for about ten of the clock in the morning, the Cunny catchers the same day ere night shared amongst them, a matter whereat he may well greeue, and I be sorie, in respect he is my very good freend: but to the purpose. This Gentleman walking in Paules, with his Chaîne faire glittering about his necke, talking with his man about some busines: was well viewed and regarded by a crewe of Cony catchers, whose teeth watred at his goodly Chaîne, yet knew not how to come by it hanging as it did, and therefore entred into secret conspiracy among themselues, if they could not come by all the Chain, yet how they might make it lighter by halfe a score poundes at the least. Still had they their eyes on the honest Gentleman, who little doutd any such treason intended againste his so late bought bargaine: and they hauing laid their plot, eche one to be assistant in this enterprise, sawe when the Gentleman dismissed his seruant, to go about such affaires as he had appointed him, him selfe still walking there vp and downe the middle Isle. One of these mates, that stode most on his cunning in these exploytes, folowed the seruingman foorth of the Church calling him by diuers names, as John, Thomas, William, &c. as though he had knowne his right name,

but could not hit on it: which whether he did or no I know not, but well I wot the seruingma[n] turned back againe, and seeing him that called him seemed a Gentleman, booted and cloaked after the newest fashion, came with his hat in his hand to him, saying: Sir, do ye call me? Marie do I my freend quoth the other, doost not thou serue such a Gentleman? and named one as himselfe pleased. No truely Sir, answered the seruingman, I knowe not any such Gentleman as you speake of. By my troth replied the Connycatcher, I am assured I knew thee and thy Master, though now I cannot suddenly remember my selfe. The seruingman fearing no harme, yet fitting the humour of this trecherous companion, tolde right his Masters name whome he serued, and that his Master was euen then walking in Paules. O Gods will (quoth the Cony catcher, repeating his masters name) a very honest Gentleman, of such a place is he not? naming a shire of the Country: for he must knowe both name, Country and somtimes what Gentlemen dwell neere the partie that is to be ouer reached, ere he can proceed. No in deed Sir (answered the seruingman, with such reuerence as it had beene to an honest Gentlema[n] in deed) my Master is of such a place, a mile from such a Towne, and hard by such a knights house: by which report the deceiuer was halfe instructed, because though he was ignorant of the fellows Master, yet well he knew the Country, and the knight named. So crauing pardon that he had mistaken him, he returnes againe into the Church, and the seruingman trudgeth about his assigned busines. Beeing come to the rest of the crewe, he appointes one of them (whome he knewe to be expert in deed) to take this matter in hand, for him selfe might not do it, least the seruingman should return and knowe him, he schooled the rest likewise what euery man should do when the pinch came, and changing his cloke with one of his fellowes, walked by him selfe attending the feate: and euery one being as ready, the apointed fellow makes his sallye foorth, and comming to the Gentleman, calling him by his name, giues him the courtesie and embrace, likewise thanking him for good cheere he had at his house, which he did with such seemly behaiour and protestatio[n], as the Gentleman (thinking the other to be no lesse) vsed like action of kindenes to him. Now as Country Gentlemen haue many visiters both with neere dwelling neighbours, and freends that iourney from farre, whome they can hardly remember, but some principall one that serues as countenance to the other: so he not discrediting the cunning mates woordes, who still at euery point alleaged his kinred to the knight neighbour to the Gentleman, which the poor seruing man had (doubting no ill) reuealed before, and that both there and at his own house in hawking time with that knight and other Gentlemen of the Cuntrey he had liberally tasted his kindnes: desiring pardon that he had forgotten him, and offered him the curtesie of the Citie. The Conny catcher excused him selfe for that time, saying, at their next meeting he would bestow it on him. Then seeming to haue espyed his Chaine, and commending the fairenes and woorkmanship thereof: sayes, I pray ye sir take a litle cou[n]sel of a freend, it may be you will returne thanks for it. I wonder quoth he, you dare weare such a costly iewell so open in sight, which is euen but a baite to entice bad men to aduenture time and place for it, and nowhere sooner then in this Cittie, where (I may say to you) are such a number of Connycatchers, Cossoners and such like, that a man can scarcely keep any thing from them, they haue so many reaches and sleights to beguile withall: which a very especiall freend of mine found too true not many daies since. Heervpon he tolde a very solemne tale, of villanies and knaueries in his owne profession, wherby he reported his freend had lost a watch of golde: shewing how closely his freende wore it in his bosome, and how strangely it was gotten from him, that the gentleman by that discourse waxed halfe affraide of his Chaine. And giuing him many thanks for this good warning, presently takes the Chaine from about his necke, and tying it vp fast in a handkercher, put it vp into his sleeue, saying. If the Connycatcher get it heere, let him not spare it. Not a little did the tletcher smile in his sleeue,

hearing the rash securitie, but in deed simplicitie of the gentleman, and no sooner sawe he it put vp, but presently he counted it sure his owne, by the assistance of his complices, that lay in an ambuscado for the purpose, with embraces and courtesies on either side, the Conny catcher departes, leauing the gentleman walking there still: whereat the crew were not a little offended, that he still kept in the Church, and would not goe abroad. Well, at length (belike remembring some businesse) the Gentleman taking leaue of an other that talked with him, hasted to go forth at the furthest west doore of Paules, which he that had talked with him, and gaue him such counsell perceyuing, hied out of the other doore, and got to the entraunce ere he came foorth, the rest following the gentleman at an inch. As hee was stepping out, the other stept in, and lette fall a keie, hauing his hat so low ouer his eyes, that he could not wel discerne his face, and stooping to take vp the keie, kepte the gentleman from going backward or forward, by reason his legge was ouer the threshold. The for-most Conny-catcher behind, pretending a quarrell vnto him that stooped, rapping out an oath, and drawing his dagger, saide: Doe I meete the villaine? Nay, hee shall not scape mee now, and so made offer to strike him.

The gentleman at his standing vp, seeing it was hee that gaue him so good counsaile, and pretended himselfe his verie friend, but neuer imagining this traine was made for him: stept in his defence, when the other following tript vp his heeles: so that hee and his counsellour were downe together, and two more vppon them, striking with their daggers verie eagerly, marie indeede the gentleman had most of the blowes, and both his hand-kercher with the chaine, and also his purse with three and fiftie shillings in it, were taken out of his pocket in this strugling, euen by the man that himselfe defended.

It was maruellous to behold, how not regarding the villanes wordes vttered before in the Church, nor thinking vppon the charge about him (which after hee had thus treacherously lost vnwittingly:) hee stands pacifying them that were not discontented but onely to beguyle him. But they vowing that they would presently goe for their weapons, & so to the field, tolde the Gentleman he labourd but in vaine, for fight they must and would, and so going downe by Paules Chaine, left the Gentleman made a Conny going vp toward Fleet street, sorry for his new Counsellor and freend, and wishing him good lucke in the fight: which in deede was with nothing but wine pots, for ioy of their late gotten bootie. Neere to Saint Dunstones Church the Gentleman remembred himselfe, and feeling his pocket so light had suddenly more greefe at his hart, than euer happen to him or any man againe. Backe he comes to see if he could espye any of them, but they were farre inough fro[m] him: God send him better happe when he goes next a wooing, and that this his losse may be a warning to others.

How a cunning knaue got a Truncke well stuffed with linnen and certaine parcelles of plate out of a Cittizens house, and how the Master of the house holpe the deceiuer to carry away his owne goods.

WITHIN the Cittie of London, dwelleth a worthy man who hath very great dealing in his trade, and his shop very well frequented with Customers: had such a shrewd mischaunce of late by a Conny catcher, as may well serue for an example to others leaste they haue the like. A Cunning villaine, that had long time haunted this Cittizens house, and gotten many a cheat which he carried away safely: made it his custome when he wanted money, to helpe him selfe euer where he had sped so often, diuers thinges he had which were neuer mist, especially such as appertained to the Cittizens trade, but when anye were found wanting, they could not deuise which way they were gone, so pollitiquelye this fellow alwayes behaued himselfe, well knew he what times of greatest busines this Cittizen had in his trade,

and when the shop is most stored with Chapmen: then would he step vp the staires (for there was and is another door to the house besides that which entreth into the shop) and what was next hand came euer away with. One time aboue the rest, in an euening about Candlemas, when daylight shuts in about six of the clock, he watched to do some feate in the house, and seeing the mistresse goe foorth with her maid, the goodman and his folkes very busie in the shop: vp the staires he goes as he was wonte to doo, and lifting vp the latch of the hall portall doore, sawe no body neere to trouble him, when stepping into the next chamber, where the Citizen and his wife vsually lay, at the beds feete there stood a handsome truncke, wherein was very good linnen, a faire gilt sake, two siluer french bowles for wine, two siluer drinking pots, a stone lugge couered with siluer, and a dosen of siluer spoons. This trucke he brings to the staires head, and making fast the doore againe, drawes it downe the steppes so softlye as he could, for it was so bigge and heauy, as he could not easily carry it, hauing it out at the doore, vnseene of any neighbour or any body else, he stood strugling with it to lift it vp on the stall, which by reason of the weight trobled him very much. The goodman comming foorth of his shop, to bid a customer or two far well, made the fellowe affraide he should now be taken for all together: but calling his wittes together to escape if he could, he stood gazing vp at the signe belonging to the house, as though he were desirous to knowe what signe it was: which the Cittizen perceiuing, came to him and asked him what he sought for? I looke for the signe of the blew bell sir, quoth the fellowe, where a gentleman hauing taken a chamber for this tearme time, hath sent me hether with this his Troncke of apparell (quoth the Citizen) I know no such signe in this streete, but in the next (naming it) there is such a one indeede, and there dwelleth one that letteth foorth chambers to gentlemen. Truely sir quoth the fellowe, thats the house I should goe to, I pray you sir lend me your hand, but to help the Truncke on my back, for I thinking to ease me a while vpon your stall, set it shorte, and now I can hardly get it vp againe. The Citizen not knowing his owne Truncke, but indeede neuer thinking on any such notable deceite: helps him vp with the Truncke, and so sends him away roundly with his owne goods. When the Truncke was mist, I leaue to your conceits what housholde greefe there was on all sides, especiallye the goodman himselfe, who remembring how hee helpt the fellow vp with a Truncke, perceiued that heereby hee had beguyled himselfe, and loste more then in haste hee should recouer againe. How this may admonish others, I leaue to the iudgement of the indifferent opinion, that see when honest meaning is so craftily beleagerd, as good foresight must be vsed to preuent such daungers.

How a broker was cunninglie ouer-reached by as craftie a knaue as himselfe and brought in danger of the Gallowes.

IT hath bene vsed as a common byword, a craftie knaue needeth no Broker, wherby it shoulde appeare that there can hardlie bee a craftier knaue then a Broker. Suspende your iudgements till you haue heard this Discourse ensuing, & then as you please censure both the one and the other.

A Ladie of the Countrie sent vp a seruant whom she might well put in trust, to prouide her of a gowne answerable to such directions as she had geuen him, which was of good price, as may appeare by the outside and lace, wherto doubtles was euery other thing agreeable. For the Tayler had seenteene yardes of the best black satten could be got for monie, and so much gold lace, beside spangles, as valued thirteene pound, what els was beside I know not, but let it suffice thus much was lost, and therefore let vs to the maner how.

The satten and the lace beeing brought to the Tayler that should make the gown, and spread abroad on the shop boord to be measured, certain good felows of the Conny-catching profession chaunced to goe by, who seeing so rich lace, and so excellent good satten, began to commune with themselues how they might make some purchase of what they had seene: and quickly it was to be done or not at all. As euer in a crewe of this qualitie, there is some one more ingenious and politick then the rest, or at leastwise that couets to make himselfe more famous then the rest, so this instant was there one in this companie that did swear his cunning should deepelie deceiue him, but he would haue both the lace and satten. When hauing layd the plot with his companions, how and which way their helpe might stand him in stead, this way they proceeded.

Wel noted they the seruingman that stood in the shop with the Tailer, and gathered by his diligent attendance, that he had some charge of the gowne there to be made, wherefore by him must they worke their trecherie intended, and vse him as an instrument to beguile himselfe. One of them sitting on a seate neere the Tailers stal, could easilie heare the talke that passed between the seruingman and the Tailer, where among other communication, it was concluded that the gowne should be made of the selfesame fashion in euery poynt, as another Ladies was who then lay in the Citie, and that measure being taken by her, the same would fitlie serue the Lady for whom the gown was to be made. Now the seruingman intended to go speake with the Ladie, and vppon a token agreed betweene them (which he carelesslie spake so lowd, that the Conny-catcher heard it) hee would as her leysure serued, certifie the Tayler, and hee shoulde bring the stuffe with him, to haue the Ladies opinion both of the one and the other.

The seruingman being gone about his affaires, the subtil mate that had listned to al their talke, acquaints his felows both with the determination and token appointed for the Tailers comming to y^e Lady. The guid and leader to al the rest for villanie, though there was no one but was better skilde in such matters then honestie: he appoints that one of them should go to the tauern, which was not farre off, and laying two fagots on the fire in a roome by himselfe, and a quart of wine filled for countenance of the trecherie: another of that crue should geue attendance on him, as if he were his master, being bareheaded, and Sir, humblie answering at euery worde. To the tauern goes this counterfet gentleman, and his seruaut waiting on him, where euery thing was performed as is before rehearsed. When the master knaue calling the drawer, demanded if there dwelt neere at hand a skilful Tayler, that could make a suite of veluet for himselfe, mary it was to be done with very great speed.

The Drawer named the Tayler that wee nowe speake of, and vpon the drawers commending his cunning, the man in all hast was sent for to a gentleman, for whom he must make a sute of veluet foorthwith. Vpon talke had of the stuffe, how much was to be bought of euery thing appertayning thereto: hee must immediatly take measure of this counterfette gentleman, because hee knewe not when to returne that way againe: afterward they woulde goe to the Mercers.

As the Tayler was taking measure on him bare headed, as if he had been a substantiall gentleman indeede, the craftie mate had cunningly gotten his purse out of his pocket, at the one string whereof was fastened a little key, and at the other his signet ring: This bootie he was sure of alreadie, whether he should get any thing els or no of the mischife intended, stepping to the window he cuts the ring from the purse, and by his supposed man (rounding him in the eare) sends it to the plot-layer of this knauerie, minding to trayne the tayler along with him, as it were to the mercers, while he the mean time took order for y^e other matter.

Afterwarde speaking alowd to his man, Sirrha, quoth he, dispatch what I bad you, and about foure of

the clock meete me in Paules, by that time I hope the Tayler and I shal haue dispatcht. To Cheapside goeth the honest Tailer with this notorious dissembler, not missing his purse for the space of two houres after, in lesse then halfe which time the satten and golde lace was gotten likewise by the other villaine from the Taylers house in this order.

Being sure the Tayler should be kept absent, hee sends another mate home to his house, who abused his seruants with this devise: That the Ladies man had met their master abroad, and had him to the other Ladie to take measure of her, and lest they should delay the time too long, hee was sent for the satten and lace, declaring the token appointed, and withall geuing their masters signet ring for better confirmation of his message. The seruants could doe no lesse then deliuer it, being commaunded (as they supposed) by so credible testimonie: Neither did the leysure of any one serue to goe with the messenger, who seemed an honest young Gentleman, and caried no cause of distrust in his countenance: Wherefore they deliuered him the lace and satten foulded vp together as it was, and desired him to will their master to make some speede home, both for cutting out of worke, and other occasions.

To a Broker fit for their purpose, goes this deceiuer with the Satten lace, who knowing wel they could not come honestly by it, nor anie thing else hee bought of that crew, as often before he had delt much with them: either gaue them not so much as they would haue, or at least as they iudged they could haue in another place, for which the ring-leader of this coosnage, vowed in his minde to be reuenged on the Broker. The maister knaue, who had spent two houres and more in vaine with the Tailer, & would not like of anie veluet hee sawe, when hee perceiued that he mist his purse, and coulde not devise howe or where he had lost it, shewed himselfe very sory for his mishap, and said in the morning hee would sende the veluet home to his house, for he knew where to speed of better than anie he had seene in the shops. Home goes the Tailer verie sadly, where he was entertayned with a greater mischance, for there was the Ladies seruing-man swearing and stamping, that hee had not seene their maister since the morning they parted, neither had he sent for the satten and lace, but when the seruants iustified their innocencie, beguiled both with the true token rehearsed, and their maisters signet ring, it exceedeth my cunning to sette downe answerable wordes, to this exceeding grieffe and amazement on either part, but most of all the honest Tailer, who spead the better by the Brokers wilfulnes, as afterward it happened, which made him the better brooke the losse of his purse. That night all meanes were vsed that could bee, both to the Mercers, Brokers, Goldsmiths, Goldfiners, and such like, where happelie such things doe come to bee sold: but all was in vaine, the only helpe came by the inuenter of this villanie, who scant sleeping al night, in regard of the brokers extreame gayning, both by him, and those of his profession: the next morning he came by the Taylers house, at what time hee espyed him with the Ladies seruing-man, comming foorth of the dores, and into the tauern he went to report what a mishap he had vpon the sending for him thether the day before. As he was but newlie entred his sad discourse, in comes the partie offended with the Broker, and hauing heard all, (whereof none could make better report then himselfe) he takes the Tayler & seruingman aside, and pretending great grieffe for both their causes, demaunds what they would thinke him worthie off that could help them to their good again. On condition to meet with such a frende offer was made of fiue pound, and after sundry speeches passing between them alone, he seeming that he would worke the recouerie thereof by arte, and they promising not to disclose the man that did them good, he drew foorth a litle booke out of his bosom, whether it were latin or english it skilled not, for he could not read a worde on it, then desiring them to spare him alone a while, they should perceiue what he would do for them. Their hearts encouraged with some

good hope, kept all his words secrete to themselues: and not long had they sitten absent out of the roome, but he called them in againe, and seeming as though he had bin a scholler indeed, said he found by his figure that a Broker in such a place had their goods lost, and in such a place of the house they should find it, bidding them goe thether with al speed, and as they found his wordes, so (with reseruing to themselues how they came to knowledge thereof) to meet him there againe in the euening, and reward him as he had deserued.

Away in hast goes the tayler and the seruingman, and entring the house with the constable, found them in the place where he that reueald it, knew the broker alway laid such gotten goods. Of their ioy againe, I leaue you to conjecture, and think you see the Broker with a good paire of bolts on his heeles, readie to take his farewel of the world in a halter, when time shall serue. The counter-fette cunning man, and artificiall Cony-catcher, as I heard, was payd his fiue ponde that night. Thus one craftie knaue beguiled another, let each take heede of dealing with any such kinde of people.

FINIS

