

SUMMARY: Gabriel Harvey's *Four Letters and Certain Sonnets* was entered in the Stationers' Register on 4 December 1592, and printed by John Wolfe. There was a long background behind Gabriel Harvey's vindictive attack on the dead Robert Greene in *Four Letters* (see the account of the Harvey-Nashe quarrel on this website). However the immediate cause of Harvey's outrage was Greene's jibe at the Harveys in *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, entered in the Stationers' Register on 20 July 1592, and printed by John Wolfe. The fact that Wolfe printed both Greene's *Quip for an Upstart Courtier* and Harvey's *Four Letters*, as well as Harvey's *Pierce's Supererogation* and *A New Letter of Notable Contents* is significant because Wolfe also printed *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, and Chettle's *Kind-Heart's Dream* in conjunction with the printer John Danter, while Danter printed *The Repentance of Robert Greene*, Greene's *The Black Book's Messenger*, and Thomas Nashe's *Strange News* and *Have With You to Saffron Walden*. Thus, between them, Wolfe and Danter printed almost every tract connected with Greene's death and the Harvey-Nashe quarrel. Moreover the printer and compositor Henry Chettle, the alleged author of *Kind-Heart's Dream*, had strong ties to Danter. Chettle was Danter's partner in 1591, and later Danter's compositor, and in *Kind-Heart's Dream*, Chettle, in the person of Robert Greene's ghost, 'advertised' Nashe's *Strange News* by urging Nashe to revenge himself on Harvey for the publication of *Four Letters*, which had been entered in the Stationers' Register on 4 December, just four days prior to the entry on 8 December of Chettle's *Kind-Heart's Dream*. Notice must also be taken of the fact that Gabriel Harvey, after coming up to London at the end of August in 1592, lived with the printer John Wolfe until the middle of the following year (see McKerrow, Ronald B., *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, vol. V, pp. 80-1). Since Gabriel Harvey admits in *Four Letters* that he was 'altogether unacquainted' with Robert Greene, and had 'never once saluted him by name', the defamatory hearsay concerning Greene which Harvey vindictively retails in *Four Letters* likely came to him through Wolfe, Danter and Chettle. The three printers may have fanned Harvey's fury for financial reasons, or because his credulous acceptance of their stories was a source of amusement, but whatever their reasons, the strong connections among Wolfe, Danter and Chettle, and Harvey's presence in Wolfe's house for three-quarters of a year, suggest that caution must be exercised in accepting any of the hearsay concerning Robert Greene recounted by Harvey in *Four Letters*.

The first of Harvey's four letters is dated 29 August 1592 and purports to be a letter from Christopher Bird of Saffron Walden introducing Harvey to Emanuel Demetrius (perhaps the merchant and historian Emanuel van Meteren?) Nashe was convinced that Harvey, not Bird, was the letter's author, and it seems likely that if Harvey really did have a letter of introduction from Bird, it was not originally in the form in which it later appeared in *Four Letters*. A postscript to the letter indicates that Harvey had by that time read *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, and an accompanying sonnet castigates Robert Greene, then said to be lying sick.

The second letter, addressed by Harvey to Christopher Bird, is dated 5 September 1592, two days after Greene's death on 3 September. However if Harvey really did write the entire letter on 5 September, it must have taken two days for the news of Greene's death

to reach him because in the first part of the letter Harvey still envisages Greene as alive, and not only alive, but likely to recover from his illness and again attack Harvey in print. Should this occur, Harvey threatens that he himself will publish his own 'poor letter' if Titius (Greene) continue to 'upbraid' Caius (Harvey) 'with everything and nothing'. But while Harvey was in the midst of writing to Bird, and obviously fearful of 'a new civil war' if Greene recovered, news reached him of Greene's death. This news obviously caught Harvey very much by surprise because he writes: 'While I was thus, or to like effect, resolving with myself, and discoursing with some special friends, not only writing unto you, I was suddenly certified that the king of the paper stage (so the gentleman termed Greene) had played his last part, and was gone to Tarleton'. Suddenly freed by news of Greene's death from apprehension about what might Greene might do to him if he were to publish his letter, Harvey let his pen run free for the next several pages repeating to his correspondent, Christopher Bird, every derogatory thing concerning Greene which 'they say' or 'one' or 'another' says, or about which Harvey had been 'credibly informed', all of it admitted hearsay. When Harvey's comments concerning the dead Robert Greene in this second letter are read objectively, it is clear that he was surrounded by a number of informants who were egging him on and encouraging him to write vituperatively against Greene by feeding him with 'information'. It has been considered by some modern commentators, including Jenkins, that Harvey's statements concerning Greene's character and the manner of his death are reliable because Harvey mentions that Greene's 'hostess', a Mistress Isam, showed him Greene's bond for £10 to her husband with a letter to Greene's wife written beneath the terms of the bond. However there are glaring inconsistencies in Harvey's story which suggest that he was deliberately misled by Mistress Isam. In the first place, there is no indication that Harvey ever went to the poor shoemaker or cordwainer or journeyman's house at which Greene was allegedly lying ill, either before or after Greene's death. Secondly, Harvey says at the beginning of this second letter that the poor shoemaker's house was near Dowgate, and later in the letter claims that he learned from Mistress Isam that Robert Greene was buried 'in the new churchyard near Bedlam'. Since Dowgate and the old Bethlehem hospital near Bishopsgate were at opposite ends of London, it is improbable that Greene was really buried at Bedlam, and this story, which was fed to Harvey by Mistress Isam, seems designed simply to blacken Greene's name by associating it with the notorious reputation of Bedlam. It is noteworthy that there is considerable confusion concerning Mistress Isam's identity in Harvey's letter. On the one hand, she seems by implication to be the poor shoemaker's wife, but Harvey never specifically names the shoemaker or his wife, and it is highly improbable that a poor shoemaker would have had £10, a very large sum in those days, to lend Robert Greene. Moreover Harvey calls Mistress Isam Greene's 'hostess', which implies that, like Shakespeare's Mistress Quickly, she ran an inn, a public place of lodging and entertainment. This inference is supported by other details, such as the claim that Greene would 'beg a penny pot of malmsey'. It also seems clear from Harvey's comments that Mistress Isam deliberately sought Harvey out to impart information to him concerning Greene's death, and one can only wonder at this circumstance as it is inconceivable that Mistress Isam, who according to Harvey's own testimony adored Robert Greene and crowned him with laurel after his death, would seek out Harvey, Greene's avowed enemy, to impart to him every discreditable thing she could think of regarding Greene's manner of life and his death. It is

also noteworthy that Harvey gives no indication that he ever met the man to whom Greene allegedly had given the bond for £10, so the only authority for the authenticity of this bond and for the alleged one-line letter to Greene's wife written at the bottom of it, is Mistress Isam, and in fact the idea that Greene would have been able to borrow £10, a very large sum at the time, from anyone if Greene was as impoverished as Harvey's informants made him out to be is preposterous. Moreover, a variant of the letter to Greene's wife given by Harvey in *Four Letters* is printed at the end of *The Repentance of Robert Greene*. The authenticity of this variant is vouched for by an anonymous individual who purports to have been an eye-witness to Greene's last hours, a claim which is directly contradicted by Harvey's statement that no-one visited Greene in his last illness apart from two women, Greene's mistress and Mistress Appleby. Moreover this anonymous individual states that he saw Greene take a sheet of paper and write the letter to his wife, a circumstance which is at variance with Harvey's statement that the letter was written at the bottom of Greene's bond for £10, a type of legal document which Harvey, a lawyer, would clearly have recognized. The letter printed at the end of *The Repentance of Robert Greene* makes no mention whatever of Greene's bond, but merely mentions a debt of £10 owed by Greene to the letter's 'bearer', also referred to as 'my host', a term which again suggests a public place of lodging and entertainment rather than the shoemaker's house in Dowgate. Since the bond and the letter written beneath it were apparently shown to Harvey by Mistress Isam in the printer John Wolfe's house, where Harvey was living at the time, and since Harvey's *Four Letters* was printed by Wolfe while *The Repentance of Robert Greene* was printed by John Danter, with whom Wolfe printed *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, there should be no difference at all between the two printed copies of the letter to Greene's wife allegedly written beneath the terms of Greene's bond for £10. Since the two versions of the letter do differ significantly, and are irreconcilable, it seems clear that some sort of deception is responsible either for Harvey's version of the letter in *Four Letters* or for the version in *The Repentance of Robert Greene*, or both, particularly since both these versions of the letter to Greene's wife are remarkably different from Greene's alleged last letter to his wife printed by Wolfe and Danter in *Groatsworth*. All these circumstances, taken together, suggest that Harvey was deliberately fed disinformation by Mistress Isam, and that nothing Harvey says concerning Greene's life or the manner of his death and burial can be relied upon. It would appear that Harvey's letter to Bird dated 5 September, replete with this disinformation concerning Robert Greene, was published immediately as a separate pamphlet although the augmented *Four Letters* itself was not entered in the Stationers' Register until 4 December. The evidence for McKerrow's conclusion that this second letter was published immediately is that in *Strange News* Nashe speaks of Harvey's 'short pamphlet of six leaves' to which Harvey later added 'eight sheets more', and in *Have With You to Saffron Walden* Nashe similarly speaks of Harvey's 'first butterfly pamphlet against Greene' (see McKerrow, vol. IV, p.153, vol. V, pp.81-2). No copy of this short pamphlet/ butterfly pamphlet of 'six leaves', which appears to have consisted solely of this second letter of Harvey's to Christopher Bird dated 5 September 1592, survives (but see McKerrow, vol. V, p.18). However McKerrow's conclusion that it was published near the beginning of September makes it clear that the first printed notice of Greene's death came, not from *Groatsworth*, but from Gabriel Harvey's 'first butterfly

pamphlet' of 'six leaves', and that Wolfe and Danter capitalized on Harvey's 'first butterfly pamphlet' by issuing *Groatsworth* towards the end of September.

Harvey's third letter, dated 8 and 9 September, contains Harvey's excuses for the injudicious publication in 1580 of his correspondence with Edmund Spenser in *Three Proper and Witty Familiar Letters*, and the difficulties his allusion in *Three Letters* to his 'old controller' at Cambridge, the 'old fox' Dr. Andrew Perne, had involved him in in 1580 with Sir James Croft, Controller of the Household, who took the allusion as a disparaging reference to himself, and for which, in *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, Greene claimed Harvey had been 'orderly clapped in the Fleet' prison. This third letter also blames John Lyly for incensing the 17th Earl of Oxford against Harvey with respect to the English hexameter verses entitled 'Speculum Tuscanismi' in *Three Letters*. Harvey's third letter of 8 and 9 September continues with an attack on Thomas Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse*, which had been entered in the Stationers' Register on 8 August 1592. As McKerrow says, the publication of *Pierce Pennilesse*, which contains a lengthy attack on Gabriel Harvey's brother Richard, seems to have caught Harvey by surprise, since Harvey's brief mention of Nashe in his second letter of 5 September 1592 had been couched in mild terms which appear confusing in light of Harvey's scornful attack on Nashe in his third letter. The explanation would appear to be that since Harvey had already published his second letter as a butterfly pamphlet near the beginning of September, he could not revise this second letter when he republished it as part of *Four Letters* near the beginning of December.

Harvey's fourth letter, dated 11 and 12 September, deals more in generalities than the preceding letters, although Nashe is once more aimed at, and ends with twenty-four sonnets and some Latin verses of Harvey's, some critical of Greene, as well as a sonnet written to Harvey in 1586 by Spenser.

As the foregoing discussion of *Four Letters* indicates, Harvey appears to have been the unwitting dupe of the printers Wolfe, Danter and Chettle. As mentioned earlier, Harvey first published his second letter announcing Greene's death as a butterfly pamphlet of six leaves near the beginning of September, and the printers John Wolfe and John Danter followed this up with the publication of *Groatsworth* towards the end of September. Danter then published *The Repentance of Robert Greene* near the beginning of October. In early December, Harvey augmented his butterfly pamphlet of six leaves by adding to it the letter allegedly written by Christopher Bird introducing Harvey to the London merchant Emanuel Demetrius, and two additional letters addressed to the 'indifferent reader', and published the material as *Four Letters and Certain Sonnets*, while Wolfe and Danter simultaneously published *Kind-Heart's Dream*, allegedly written by Henry Chettle, which served as an advertisement for the sale of both Harvey's *Four Letters* and Nashe's forthcoming *Strange News*. Despite McKerrow's brilliant analysis several decades ago of the circumstances of the publication of *Four Letters*, the work has been little read because Harvey's peculiar personality, combined with the prolixity and allusiveness of his style, render him inaccessible to modern readers. The modern spelling version of *Four Letters and Certain Sonnets* below was prepared from the edition of 1884 by Alexander B. Grosart based on the copy in the British Library.

FOUR LETTERS
AND CERTAIN SONNETS

Especially touching Robert Greene and other parties by him abused, but incidently of
divers excellent persons, and some matters of note

To all courteous minds that will vouchsafe the reading

London
Imprinted by John Wolfe
1592

To all courteous minds that will vouchsafe the reading

May I crave pardon at this instant, as well for inditing that is unworthy to be published, as for publishing that was unworthy to be indited. I will hereafter take precise order either never to importune you more, or to solicit you for more especial cause. I was first exceeding loath to pen that is written, albeit in mine own enforced defence (for I make no difference between my dearest friends and myself), and am now much loather to divulge that is imprinted, albeit against those whose own pamphlets are readier to condemn them than my letters forward to accuse them. Vile acts would in some respects rather be concealed than recorded, as the darkness of the night better fitteth the nature of some unlucky birds than the brightness of the day, and Herostratus, in a villainous bravery, affecting a most notorious & monstrous fame, was in the censure of the wisest judgments rather to be overwhelmed in the deepest pit of oblivion than to enjoy any relic or shadow of his own desperate glory. But Greene (although pitifully blasted, & how woefully faded?) still flourisheth in the memory of some green wits wedded to the wantonness of their own fancy and enamoured upon every newfangled toy, and Pierce Penilesse (although the devil's orator by profession, and his dam's poet by practice), in such a flush of notable good-fellows cannot possibly want many to read him, enough to excuse him, a few to commend him, some to believe him, or to credit any that tickleth the right vein and feedeth the riotous humour of their licentious vanity. To stop the beginning is no bad purpose where the end may prove pernicious or perilous. Venom is venom, and will infect; when the dragon's head spitteth poison, what mischief may lurk in the dragon's tail? If any distress be miserable, defamation is intolerable, especially to minds that would rather deserve just commendation than be any way blemished with unjust slander. They that use to speak well of other, and endeavour to do well themselves (the defects of disability are not to be imputed to endeavour), would be sorry to hear amiss without cause of complaint or suspicion, and he that like a Lacedaemonian or Roman accounteth infamy worse than death would be loath to improve his courage or to employ his patience in digesting the pestilent bane of his life. That is done cannot *de facto* be undone, but I appeal to wisdom, how discreetly, and to justice, how deservedly, it is done, and request the one to do us reason in shame of impudency, and beseech the other to do us right in reproach of calumny. It was my intention so to demean myself in the whole, and so to temper my style in every part, that I might neither seem blinded with affection, nor enraged with passion, nor partial to friend, nor prejudicial to enemy, nor injurious to the worst, nor offensive to any, but mildly & calmly show how discredit reboundeth upon the authors as dust flieth back into the wag's eyes that will needs be puffing it up. Which, if I have altogether attained without the least oversight of distempered phrase, I am the gladder; if failed in some few incident terms (what tongue or pen may not slip in heat of discourse?), I hope a little will not greatly break the square, either of my good meaning with humanity, or of your good acceptance with indifferency. Favour is a courteous reader & a gracious patron, and no man loveth favour where it is to be loved, or honoureth it where it is to be honoured, more affectionately than I, yet here I neither desire favour toward lovingest friend, nor wish disfavour toward spitefullest foe, but only request reason toward both, and so briefly recommend both to your foresaid indifferency, as to an equal balance of upright judgment. London, this 16th of September.

Your thankful debtor, G.H.

 THE FIRST LETTER

To the worshipful, my very good friend, Master Emanuel Demetrius, at his house by the church in Lime Street in London

Master Demetrius, I earnestly commend this bearer, Master Doctor Harvey, my good friend, unto you, being a very excellent general scholar who is desirous of your acquaintance and friendship, especially for the sight of some of your antiquities & monuments, and also for some conference touching the state of foreign countries, as your leisure may conveniently serve. You shall assuredly find the gentleman very honest and thankful, and me ready to requite your courtesy and favour to him so shown, in that I possibly may. And so with the remembrance of my hearty recommendations, with like thanks for your two letters of foreign news received the last week, I commit you to the protection of the Almighty. Walden, this 29th of August, 1592.

Your loving friend, Christopher Bird

Instead of other novels, I send you my opinion in a plain but true sonnet upon the famous new work intituled *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, or, forsooth, *A Quaint Dispute Between Velvet-Breeches and Cloth-Breeches*, as fantastical and fond a dialogue as I have seen, and, for some particulars, one of the most licentious and intolerable invectives that ever I read. Wherein the lewd fellow and impudent railer, in an odious and desperate mood, without any other cause or reason, amongst sundry other persons notoriously defamed, most spitefully and villainously abuseth an ancient neighbour of mine, one Master Harvey, a right honest man of good reckoning, and one that above twenty years since bare the chiefest office in Walden with good credit, and hath maintained four sons in Cambridge and elsewhere with great charges, all sufficiently able to answer for themselves, and three (in spite of some few Greenes) universally well reputed in both universities and through the whole realm. Whereof one, returning sick from Norwich to Lynn in July last, was past sense of any such malicious injury before the publication of that vile pamphlet. *Liur post fata quiescat & bene a singulis audiant, qui omnibus volunt bene.*

A due commendation of the quipping author

*Greene the cony-catcher, of this dream the author,
For his dainty device deserveth the halter,
A rake-hell, a makeshift, a scribbling fool,
A famous Bayard in city and school,
Now sick as a dog, and ever brainsick,
Where such a raving and desperate Dick?
Sir-reverence, a scurvy Master of Art,
Answered enough with a Doctor's fart.
He scorns other answer, and Envy salutes*

With shortest vowels, and with longest mutes.

For farther trial, himself he refers

To proof and sound judgment, that seldom errs.

Now good Robin Good-fellow, and gentle Greene-sleeves,

Give him leave to be quiet that none aggrieves.

Miserrima Fortuna, quae caret inimico [=The fortune of that man must be wretched indeed who has not an enemy]

THE SECOND LETTER

To my loving friend, Master Christopher Bird of Walden

Master Bird, in the absence of Master Demetrius, I delivered your letter unto his wife, whom I found very courteous. My next business was to enquire after the famous author, who was reported to lie dangerously sick in a shoemaker's house near Dowgate, not of the plague or the pox, but of a surfeit of pickle herring and Rhenish wine or, as some suppose, of an exceeding fear. For in his extremest want he offered ten, or rather than fail, twenty shillings to the printer (a huge sum with him at that instant) to leave out the matter of the three brothers, with confession of his great fear to be called coram for those forged imputations. A conscious mind and undaunted heart seldom dwell together; he was not the first that bewrayed and punished his own guiltiness with blushing for shame, or trembling for dread, or drooping for woe. Many can heap misery enough upon their own heads, and need no more penalty but their own contrition and the censure of other. I would not wish a sworn enemy to be more basely valued or more vilely reputed than the common voice of the city esteemeth him that sought fame by defamation of other, but hath utterly discredited himself and is notoriously grown a very proverb of infamy and contempt. I little delight in the rehearsal of such paltry, but who like Elderton for ballading, Greene for pamphleting, both for good-fellowship and bad conditions? Railing was the hippocras of the drunken rimester, and quipping the marchpane of the mad libeller. They scape fair that go scot-free in such saucy reckonings. I have known some, read of many, and heard of more, that wantonly quipped other and soundly nipped themselves. The hottest blood of choler may be cooled, and as the fiercest fury of wildfire, so the fiercest wildfire of fury consumeth itself. Howbeit a common mischief would be prevented, and it generally concerneth all, and particularly behoveth every one, to look about him when he heareth the bells ringing backward and seeth the fire running forward and beholdeth even Death in person, shooting his peremptory bolts. You understand me without a gloss.

And here is matter enough for a new civil war, or shall I say for a new Troyan siege, if this poor letter should fortune to come in print. I deal directly, and will plainly tell you my fancy if Titius continue to upbraid Caius with everything and nothing. I neither name Martin Marprelate, nor shame Pap With A Hatchet, nor mention any other but Elderton and Greene, two notorious mates, and the very ringleaders of the riming and scribbling crew. But Titius, or rather Zoilus, in his spiteful vein will so long flirt at Homer, and Thersites in his peevish mood so long fling at Agamemnon, that they will become extremely odious and intolerable to all good learning and civil government, and in attempting to pull down or disgrace other without order, must needs finally overthrow themselves without relief. Orators have challenged a special liberty, and poets claimed an absolute licence, but no liberty without bounds, nor any licence without limitation. Invectives, by favour, have been too bold, and satires, by usurpation, too presumptuous. I overpass Archilochus, Aristophanes, Lucian, Julian, Aretine, and that whole venomous and viperous brood of old and new railers. Even Tully and Horace otherwhiles overreached, and I must needs say *Mother Hubbard*, in heat of choler, forgetting the pure sanguine of her sweet *Faerie Queen*, wilfully overshot her malcontented self, as elsewhere

I have specified at large, with the good leave of unspotted friendship. Examples in some ages do exceeding much hurt. Salust and Clodius learned of Tully to frame artificial declamations and pathetical invectives against Tully himself and other worthy members of that most flourishing state. If Mother Hubbard in the vein of Chaucer happen to tell one canicular tale, Father Elderton and his son Greene, in the vein of Skelton or Scogan, will counterfeit an hundred dogged fables, libels, calumnies, slanders, lies for the whetstone, and what not, and most currishly snarl and bite where they should most kindly fawn and lick. Every private excess is dangerous, but such public enormities incredibly pernicious and insupportable. And who can tell what huge outrages might amount of such quarrellous and tumultuous causes? Honour is precious, worship of value, fame invaluable; they perilously threaten the commonwealth that go about to violate the inviolable parts thereof. Many will sooner lose their lives than the least jot of their reputation. Lord, what mortal feuds, what furious combats, what cruel bloodshed, what horrible slaughterdom have been committed for the point of honour and some few courtly ceremonies? Though meaner persons do not so highly overprize their credit, yet who taketh not discourtesy unkindly, or slander displeasingly? For mine own part, I am to make an use of my adversaries' abuse, and will endeavour to reform any default whereof I may justly, or probably, be impeached. Some emulation hath already done me good, but for supply of great imperfections and for increase of small perfections, I have, and who hath not, found it better to be tickled and stinged of a busy enemy than to be coyed and lulled of an idle friend. Plutarch is gravely wise and Machiavel subtilly politic, but in either of them, what sounder or finer piece of cunning than to repay commodity by him that seeketh my displeasure, and to play upon the advantage of his detection of my infirmities? Other cavilling or mote-spying malice confoundeth itself, and I continue my accustomed simplicity to answer vanity with silence, though peradventure not without danger of inviting a new injury by entertaining an old. Patience hath trained me to pocket up more heinous indignities, and even to digest an age of iron. They that can do little must be contented to suffer much. My betters need not take it grievously to be taunted or reproached in that book where Saint Peter and Christ himself are Lucianically and scoffingly alleged, the one for begging, the other for granting a foolish boon (pretended ever since the fatal destiny of the gentle craft). Some men will have their swinge and their bug's-words, though it be against all God's-forbid, and what Caesar's might, or Cato's integrity, or what saint's devotion, can stop such mouths? Yet neither themselves the better, nor other the worse, that depend not on their allowance, but rely on their own justification, and desire to confute their impudency not with words but with deeds. Howbeit I am not to prejudice my brother alive, or to smother the wrong offered to my brother deceased, or to tolerate the least defamation of my good father, whom no ill-willer could ever touch with any dishonesty or discredit in any sort. Nothing more dear or inestimable than a man's good name, and albeit I contemn such pelting injuries vainly devised against myself, yet am I not to neglect so intolerable a wrong so notoriously published against them. There is law for desperatest outlaws, and order for most disorderly fellows. They that cannot govern themselves must be ruled by other, and pay for their folly.

While I was thus, or to like effect, resolving with myself, and discoursing with some special friends, not only writing unto you, I was suddenly certified that the king of the

paper stage (so the gentleman termed Greene) had played his last part, and was gone to Tarleton, whereof I protest I was nothing glad, as was expected, but unfeignedly sorry, as well because I could have wished he had taken his leave with a more charitable farewell, as also because I was deprived of that remedy in law that I intended against him in the behalf of my father, whose honest reputation I was in many duties to tender. Yet to some conceited wit that could take delight to discover knaveries, or were a fit person to augment the history of cony-catchers, O Lord, what a pregnant occasion were here presented to display lewd vanity in his lively colours, and to decipher the very mysteries of that base art? Petty cozeners are not worth the naming. He, they say, was the monarch of crossbiters, and the very emperor of shifters. I was altogether unacquainted with the man, and never once saluted him by name, but who in London hath not heard of his dissolute and licentious living, his fond disguising of a Master of Art with ruffianly hair, unseemly apparel, and more unseemly company, his vainglorious and Thrasonical braving, his piperly extemporizing and Tarletonizing, his apish counterfeiting of every ridiculous and absurd toy, his fine cozening of jugglers and finer juggling with cozeners, his villainous cogging and foisting, his monstrous swearing and horrible forswearing, his impious profaning of sacred texts, his other scandalous and blasphemous raving, his riotous and outrageous surfeiting, his continual shifting of lodgings, his plausible mustering and banqueting of roisterly acquaintance at his first coming, his beggarly departing in every hostess' debt, his infamous resorting to the Bankside, Shoreditch, Southwark, and other filthy haunts, his obscure lurking in basest corners, his pawning of his sword, cloak and what not when money came short, his impudent pamphleting, fantastical interluding and desperate libelling when other cozening shifts failed, his employing of Ball (surnamed Cutting Ball), till he was intercepted at Tyburn, to levy a crew of his trustiest companions to guard him in danger of arrests, his keeping of the foresaid Ball's sister, a sorry ragged quean of whom he had his base son Infortunatus Greene, his forsaking of his own wife, too honest for such a husband. Particulars are infinite, his contemning of superiors, deriding of other, and defying of all good order. Compare base fellows and noble men together, and what in a manner wanted he of the ruffianly and variable nature of Catiline or Anthony but the honourable fortunes of Catiline and Anthony? They that have seen much more than I have heard (for so I am credibly informed) can relate strange and almost incredible comedies of his monstrous disposition wherewith I am not to infect the air or defile this paper. There be enough and enough such histories, both dead and living, though youth be not corrupted or age accloyed with his legendary. Truly I have been ashamed to hear some ascertained reports of his most woeful and rascal estate, how the wretched fellow, or shall I say the prince of beggars, laid all to gage for some few shillings, and was attended by lice, and would pitifully beg a penny pot of malmsey, and could not get any of his old acquaintance to comfort or visit him in his extremity but Mistress Appleby and the mother of Infortunatus. Alas, even his fellow-writer, a proper young man, if advised in time, that was a principal guest at that fatal banquet of pickle herring (I spare his name, and in some respects wish him well) came never more at him, but either would not, or happily could not, perform the duty of an affectionate and faithful friend. The poor cordwainer's wife was his only nurse, and the mother of Infortunatus his sole companion but when Mistress Appleby came, as much to expostulate injuries with her as to visit him. God help good-fellows when they cannot help themselves. Slender relief in the predicament of

privations and feigned habits. Miserable man, that must perish or be succoured by counterfeit or impotent supplies. I once bemoaned the decayed and blasted estate of Master Gascoigne, who wanted not some commendable parts of conceit and endeavour, but unhappy Master Gascoigne, how lordly happy in comparison of most unhappy Master Greene? He never envied me so much as I pitied him from my heart, especially when his hostess Isam, with tears in her eyes and sighs from a deeper fountain (for she loved him dearly), told me of his lamentable begging of a penny pot of malmsey, and, sir-reverence, how lousy he and the mother of Infortunatus were (I would her surgeon found her no worse than lousy), and how he was fain, poor soul, to borrow her husband's shirt whiles his own was a-washing, and how his doublet and hose and sword were sold for three shillings, and beside the charges of his winding-sheet, which was four shillings, and the charges of his burial yesterday in the new churchyard near Bedlam, which was six shillings and fourpence, how deeply indebted he was to her poor husband, as appeared by his own bond of ten pounds, which the good woman kindly showed me and beseeched me to read the writing beneath, which was a letter to his abandoned wife in the behalf of his gentle host, not so short as persuasible in the beginning, and pitiful in the ending:

Doll, I charge thee by the love of our youth and by my soul's rest, that thou wilt see this man paid, for if he and his wife had not succoured me, I had died in the streets.

Robert Greene.

O what a notable matter were here for a green head or Lucianical conceit, that would take pleasure in the pain of such sorry distressed creatures, whose afflicted case, to every charitable or compassionate mind, cannot but seem most commiserable, if not for their own cause, yet for God's sake, who desireth infinitely of them whom he acquitteth, not according to judgment, but according to mercy. I rather hope of the dead as I wish to the living, that grace might finally abound where wickedness did overflow, and that Christ in his divine goodness should miraculously forgive the man, that in his devilish badness blasphemously reviled God. The dead bite not, and I am none of those that bite the dead. When I begin to conflict with ghosts, then look for my confutation of his fine *Quip* or quaint *Dispute*, whom his sweet hostess, for a tender farewell, crowned with a garland of bays to show that a tenth muse honoured him more, being dead, than all the nine honoured him alive. I know not whether Skelton, Elderton, or some like flourishing poet were so interred; it was his own request, and his nurse's devotion, and happily some of his favourites may imitate the example. One that wished him a better lodging than in a poor journeyman's house, and a better grave than in that churchyard in Bedlam, hath performed a little piece of greater duty to a laureate poet:

*Here lies the man whom Mistress Isam crowned with bays;
She, she, that joyed to hear her nightingale's sweet lays.*

Which another no sooner read but he immediately subscribed, as speaking to the ignorant passenger:

Here Bedlam is, and here a poet garish,

Gaily bedecked like fore-horse of the parish.

Other epitaphs and funeral devotions I am promised by some that deeply affect inspired bards and the adopted sons of the muses, but you may imagine I have small superfluity of leisure to intend such business, and yet nothing of friend or foe can be unwelcome unto me that savoureth of wit, or relisheth of humanity, or tasteth of any good. In the mean, as ever before for a general defence, so still for a special apology, I refer myself to every indifferent judgment, and presume they will conceive well that perceive no ill. Charity recommendeth favour to superiors, amity to equals, and goodwill to all that either reverence divinity or regard humanity. Friends have affection, and the wiser sort, reason to value men, not by others' report, but by their own desert or probable hope, which I would willingly nourish as I honestly may till it shall please God to afford some convenient occasion of more actual proof. And as for envy or hatred to any party, I did ever abhor them both, and I imagine there is not any that either more resolutely disdaineth the one or more peremptorily detesteth the other, as perhaps may yet long visibly appear if some other requisites concur with my intention or fall out answerable to my expectation. Promise is debt, and I had rather perform, than promise anything but a mind desirous to pleasure friends, to reconcile foes, to displease few, to displease none. They that have little else to win or continue credit had need have humanity in supply of other defects. Let the world deal with simple men as it pleaseth. I loathe to be odious to any, and would be loath to be tedious to you. The next week you may happily have a letter of such French occurrences and other intelligences as the credible relation of inquisitive friends or employed strangers shall acquaint me withal. That most valorous and brave King wanteth no honourable praises or zealous prayers. Redoubted Parma was never so matched. And in so many worthy histories, as well new as old, how few comparable either for virtue or fortune? The Spaniard, politic enough, and not over-rashly audacious, will be advised before he entangle himself with more wars at once, knowing how the brave Earl of Essex, worthy Sir John Norris, and their valiant knights have fought for the honour of England, and for the right of France, of the Low Countries, and of Portugal. Thrice happy France, though how unhappy France, that hath such a sovereign head, such resolute hearts, and such invincible hands to fight for thee, that will either recover thee most mightily, or die for thee most honourably. Were I of sufficient discourse to record the valiantest and memorablest acts of the world, I would count it a felicity to have the opportunity of so egregious and heroic an argument, not pleasurably devised in counterfeit names, but admirably represented to the eye of France and the ear of the world in the persons of royal and most puissant knights, how singularly worthy of most glorious and immortal fame. Gallant wits and brave pens may honourably bethink themselves, and even ambitiously frame their style to a noble emulation of Livy, Homer and the divinest spirits of all ages. I return to my private business. Good Master Bird, commend me to my good friends, and fare you heartily well. London, this 5 of September.

Your ever assured, Gabriel Harvey

THE THIRD LETTER

To every reader favourably or indifferently affected

Albeit for these twelve or thirteen years no man hath been more loath or more scrupulous than myself to underlie the censure of every curious conceit or rigorous judgment that pretendeth a deep insight in the perfections of wits and styles, insomuch that even actions of silence and patience have been commenced against me, and although I still dwell in the same opinion, that nothing would be committed to a public view that is not exactly laboured both for matter and manner, and that importeth not some notable use to one or other effectual purpose, yet partly the vehement importunity of some affectionate friends, and partly mine own tender regard of my father's and my brothers' good reputation, have so forcibly overruled me that I have finally condescended to their passionate motion, and in an extraordinary case have respectively yielded my consent to an extraordinary course, which I would unpartially commend to the reasonable allowance of every indifferent peruser that carrieth courtesy in his tongue or honesty in his heart. For mine own injury, the more I consider, the less I estimate the same, as one born to suffer, and made to contemn, injuries. He that in his youth flattered not himself with the exceeding commendations of some greatest scholars in the world cannot, at these years, either be discouraged with misreport or daunted with misfortune. A premeditate and resolute mind lightly shaketh off the heaviest crosses of malice, and easily passeth over a thousand grievances with a smile. Some have learned of reason, some of philosophy, some of history, some of divinity, some of experience, some of all, to endure patiently whatsoever befalleth, and even to make the cruellest pain pleasant, as some make the sweetest pleasure painful. I had rather name Titius or Sempronius than myself, but the urgent entreaty of friends, and your eager expectation, have suddenly obtained that which no personal impeachment or real enforcement could in many years extort. Howbeit I shall hardly content them to satisfy you, that am neither to offend any but in case of notoriety, nor to defend myself but in case of necessity or honesty. If any have charged me, or do charge me, with insufficiency, I confess (perfection is no common gift); if with ignorance, I grant (many seem, few are, learned); if with simplicity, I yield (wondrous wits are rare birds); if with ill luck, I deny not (good luck is not every man's lot), yet whoever heard me complain of ill luck, or once say, *Fortune my foe?* But in the plainness of my nature, and simplicity of my art, I can easily defy the proudest that dareth call my credit in question, or accuse me of any dishonest or scandalous part, either in deed or in word. Many things are made offensive in the handling that are tolerable enough in their own nature, or fie on an odious circumstance where the substance itself might be more gracious. Letters may be privately written that would not be publicly divulged. I was then young in years, fresh in courage, green in experience and, as the manner is, somewhat overweening in conceit, and for variety of study, and some deeper intelligence in the affairs of the world, otherwhiles reading invectives and satires artificially amplified in the most exaggerate and hyperbolical kind, I could hardly refrain from discovering some little part of my reading. I had curiously laboured some exact and exquisite points of study and practice, and greatly misliked the preposterous and untoward courses of divers good wits, ill directed; there wanted not some sharp undeserved discourtesies to exasperate my mind. Shall I touch the ulcer? It is no such mystery but it may be revealed. I was supposed not unmeet for

the oratorship of the university, which in that spring of mine age, for my exercise and credit, I earnestly affected, but mine own modest petition, my friends' diligent labour, our high chancellor's most honourable and extraordinary commendation, were all peltingly defeated by a sly practice of the old fox whose acts and monuments shall never die. Some like accidents of dislike, for brevity I overslip. Young blood is hot, youth hasty, ingenuity open, abuse impatient, choleric stomachous, temptations busy, the invective vein a stirring and tickling vein, the satirical humour a puffing and swelling humour. Conceit penneth, leisure peruseth, and courtesy commendeth many needless discourses; idleness, the greatest author and variablest reader in the world. Some familiar friends pricked me forward, and I, neither fearing danger nor suspecting ill measure (poor credulity soon beguiled), was not unwilling to content them, to delight a few other, and to avenge or satisfy myself after the manner of shrews, that cannot otherwise ease their curst hearts but by their own tongues and their neighbours' ears. Signior Immerito (for that name will be remembered) was then, and is still, my affectionate friend, one that could very well abide Gascoigne's *Steel Glass*, and that stood equally indifferent to either part of the state demonstrative; many communications and writings may secretly pass between such, even for an exercise of speech and style, that are not otherwise convenient to be disclosed. It was the sinister hap of those infortunate letters to fall into the left hands of malicious enemies or indiscreet friends, who adventured to imprint in earnest that was scribbled in jest (for the moody fit was soon over), and requited their private pleasure with my public displeasure, oh, my inestimable and infinite displeasure. When there was no remedy but melancholy patience, and the sharpest part of those unlucky letters had been over-read at the Council table, I was advised by certain honourable and divers worshipful persons to interpret my intention in more express terms, and thereupon discoursed every particularity by way of articles or positions in a large apology of my dutiful and entire affection to that flourishing university, my dear mother, which apology, with not so few as forty such academical exercises and sundry other politic discourses, I have hitherto suppressed as unworthy the view of the busy world or the entertainment of precious time, but peradventure these extraordinary provocations may work extraordinarily in me, and though not in passion, yet in conceit, stir me up to publish many tracts and discourses that, in certain considerations, I meant ever to conceal, and to dedicate unto none but unto obscure darkness or famous Vulcan. It were pity but wondrous wits (give enemies their due) should become more wondrous by comparison; conference maketh excellent things appear more admirable, and I am so far from being a Saturnist by nature, or a Stoic by discipline, that I can easily frame a certain pleasurable delight unto myself by ministering some matter unto them that now are fain to make something of nothing and wittily to play with their own shadows. It goeth somewhat hard in my harsh legend when the father of music must be mocked, not Tubalcain, as he mistermeth him, but Tubal, whom Genesis vouchsafeth honourable mention, and the hexameter verse flouted, whereof neither Homer in Greek, nor Virgil in Latin (how valorous authors?), nor Alexander in conquest, nor Augustus in majesty (how puissant princes?) were ashamed, but accounted it the only gallant trumpet of brave and heroical acts, and iwis the English is nothing too good to imitate the Greek or Latin or other eloquent languages that honour the hexameter as the sovereign of verses and the high controller of rimes. If I never deserve any better remembrance, let me rather be epitaphed the inventor of the English hexameter, whom learned Master Stanyhurst imitated in his Virgil, and excellent Sir Philip

Sidney disdained not to follow in his *Arcadia* and elsewhere, than be chronicled master of the black art, or the founder of ugly oaths, or the father of misbegotten Infortunatus, or the scrivener of crossbiters or, as one of his own sectaries termed him, the patriarch of shifters. Happy man I, if these two be my heinouslest crimes and deadliest sins, to be the inventor of the English hexameter, and to be orderly clapped in the Fleet for the foresaid letters, where he that saw me, saw me at Constantinople. Indeed, Sir James Croft (whom I never touched with the least tittle of detractions) was cunningly incensed and reincensed against me, but at last pacified by the voluntary mediation of my honourable favourers, Master Secretary Wilson and Sir Walter Mildmay, unrequested by any line of my hand or any word of my mouth. Neither did I otherwise solicit or entreat Sir James till I had assured notice of his better satisfaction, when I writ unto him, as became me, in respective and dutiful sort, not for fear of any danger, but for love of honourable favour. Which letters, albeit not so ceremoniously pleasing as effectually contenting, the wise knight not only received courteously, but accepted favourably and commended honourably, and for myself, affirmed I was first wronged by other, and then mistaken by him, but now found another man than I was supposed. As for my old controller, Doctor Perne (for he indeed was the man that otherwhiles flattered me exceedingly, otherwhiles overthwarted me crossly, always played fast and loose with me), he was old enough to answer for himself, and should not be defended by him. Only he wished me to proceed lovingly with the university, howsoever I dealt with that doctor. And that was all the Fleeting that ever I felt, saving that another company of special good-fellows (whereof he was none of the meanest that bravely threatened to conjure up one which should massacre Martin's wit, or should be lambacked himself with ten years' provision), would needs forsooth very courtly persuade the Earl of Oxford that something in those letters, and namely the *Mirror of Tuscanismo*, was palpably intended against him, whose noble Lordship I protest I never meant to dishonour with the least prejudicial word of my tongue or pen, but ever kept a mindful reckoning of many bounden duties toward the same, since in the prime of his gallantest youth he bestowed angels upon me in Christ's College in Cambridge, and otherwise vouchsafed me many gracious favours at the affectionate commendation of my cousin, Master Thomas Smith, the son of Sir Thomas, shortly after colonel of the Ardes in Ireland. But the noble Earl, not disposed to trouble his Jovial mind with such Saturnine paltry, still continued like his magnificent self, and that Fleeting also proved, like the other, a silly bull-bear, a sorry puff of wind, a thing of nothing. But a strong imagination pierceth deeply, and the paper Fleet will not be so answered. Jesu, what would such notable fellows write, or rather would they not write, if they could probably say or fantastically surmise by me as I can evidently prove by them? But I seek not the condemnation of the dead or the disgrace of the living, but the good amendment of the one by the naughty example of the other. And for mine own farther justification in the premises, or otherwise, I had rather my larger writings and other actions should plead for me than this, or any, slight letter, wherein I am not to inform pregnant conceits that may imagine more by a little, or to address any piece of mine own history, though wiser men in case of unworthy reproach have not made nice to undertake their own defence, and even to labour their own commendation. The plausible examples of Tully, Cato, Marius, Scipio, divers such virtuous Romans and sundry excellent Greeks are famously known, but not greatly fit for every man's imitation. Were other of my disposition, small time should be lost in avenging or debating verbal injuries, especially to

myself, who can very well suffer poor spite to shoot at me and to hit himself, and sometime smile at the silly fly that will needs martyr itself in my candle. But methinks the wildest head and desperatest mind should consider they that speak ill must not look to hear well. The world is not given to pocket up infamies; who cannot return home a quip, or requite one libel with another? Nothing more common in books, or more reasonable in mouths, than the invective vein and the whole art of railing. Some scholars have choice of nimble pens and smooth tongues at commandment, and there was a time when peradventure I could speak with them that talked with me. Though the case be altered, and I now none of the hastiest to strive for those bucklers, yet a general, a special, a glowing, a piercing indignity may rekindle some little sparks of courage, and affection will be affection, though not in proper revenge, yet the common duty. I am not to dispute the nature of force, or the force of nature; who knoweth not how violently force provoketh force, or how mightily nature worketh in compatible natures? But how far public objections or famous imputations require public answers, or how insufficient the formallest judicial remedy in any one court may seem in case of a printed defamation, that with the wings of malice in some, of envy in more, and of levity in most, flieth through the realm and over the sea, be it indifferently decided by every discreet judgment or reasonable consideration, especially when the guilty part [sic?] is deceased, and the injury not the less, but the more, notorious. The best is, the persons abused are not altogether unknown; they have not so evil a neighbour that ever read or heard those opprobrious villainies (it is too mild a name for my brother Richard's most abominable legend, who frameth himself to live as chastely as the lewd writer affected to live beastly), but hath presently broken out into some such earnest, or more passionate, speeches: *O pestilent knavery! Who ever heard such arrant forgeries and rank lies? A mad world where such shameful stuff is bought and sold, and where such roisterly varlets may be suffered to play upon whom they lust, and how they lust. Is this Greene with the running head and the scribbling hand, that never lins putting forth new, newer, and newest books of the maker? If his other books be as wholesome gear as this, no marvel though the gay man conceive trimly of himself, and stately scorn all besides. Greene, vile Greene, would thou werest half so honest as the worst of the four whom thou upbraidest, or half so learned as the unlearnedest of the three. Thank other for thy borrowed and filched plumes of some little Italianated bravery, and what remaineth but flat impudency and gross detraction, the proper ornaments of thy sweet utterance?* I allege not mine own inventions (who cannot forget the two Athenian temples of impudency and calumny when I remember him?); I could nominate the gentlemen and substantial yeomen, gentlemen's fellows, that utter much more by his life, and can hardly forbear him since his death, and who of acquaintance with him, or them whom he depraveth, could either partially excuse the one, or reasonably accuse the other? Their lives effectually speak for themselves, and he that lived not to see nine and twenty years died not till the University of Cambridge had bestowed upon him a grace to be a doctor of his faculty, and till he was reputed in Northfolk, where he practised physic, a proper toward man, and as skilful a physician for his age as ever came there, how well beloved of the chiefest gentlemen and gentlewomen in that shire, themselves testify. That is gone to heaven that cannot be recovered on earth; it is our comfort that he lived in good credit and died in good mind. I must ever remember some of his notable sayings (for indeed so they were) and can never forget that sweet voice of the dying cygnet: *O frater Christus est optimus medicus, & meus solus medicus.*

Vale Galene, valete humanae artes: nihil divinum in terris, praeter animum aspirantem ad coelos. That best and his only Physician knoweth what spiritual physic I commended unto him when I beheld in his meagre and ghastly countenance that I cannot rehearse without some fit of compassion. We must in order follow him, that should in nature have gone before him, and I know not by what destiny he followed him first that fooled him last. How he departed, his ghostly mother Isam can truliest, and will favourabliest, report; how he lived, London remembereth. O, what a lively picture of vanity. But O, what a deadly image of misery. And O, what a terrible caveat for such and such. I am not to extenuate or prejudice his wit, which could not any way be great, though someway not the least of our vulgar writers, and many ways very ungracious, but whoever esteemed him either wise, or learned, or honest, or any way credible? How many gentlemen and other say of him: *Let the paltry fellow go. Lord, what a lewd companion was he. What an egregious makeshift. Where should cony-catchers have gotten such a secretary? How shall cozenage do for a new register, or fantasticality for a new author? They wrong him much with their epitaphs and other solemn devices that entitle him not at the least the second Toy of London, the stale of Paul's, the ape of Euphues, the vice of the stage, the mocker of the simple world, the flouter of his friends, the foe of himself, and so forth. What durst not he utter with his tongue, or divulge with his pen, or countenance with his face? Or whom cared he for but a careless crew of his own associates? Peruse his famous books, and instead of Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci (that forsooth was his professed posy), lo, a wild head full of mad brain and a thousand crotchets, a scholar, a discourser, a courtier, a ruffian, a gamester, a lover, a soldier, a traveller, a merchant, a broker, an artificer, a botcher, a pettifogger, a player, a cozenor, a railer, a beggar, an omnigatherum, a gay nothing, a storehouse of bald and baggage stuff unworth the answering or reading, a trivial and triobolar author for knaves and fools, an image of idleness, an epitome of fantasticality, a mirror of vanity, Vanitas vanitatum & omnia vanitas.* Alas, that any should say, as I have heard divers affirm, his wit was nothing but a mint of knavery, himself a deviser of juggling feats, a forger of covetous practices, an inventor of monstrous oaths, a derider of all religions, a contemner of God and man, a desperate Lucianist, an abominable Aretinist, an arch-atheist, and he arch-deserved to be well hanged seven years ago. Twenty and twenty such familiar speeches I overpass, and bury the whole legendary of his life and death in the sepulchre of eternal silence. I will not contemn or censure his works, which I never did so much as superficially overrun but as some few of them occursively presented themselves in stationers' shops and some other houses of my acquaintance. But I pray God they have not done more harm by corruption of manners than good by quickening of wit, and I would some buyers had either more reason to discern, or less appetite to desire, such novels. The world is full enough of fooleries, though the humour be not feasted with such luxurious and riotous pamphlets. How unlike Tully's sweet *Offices*, or Isocrates' pithy instructions, or Plutarch's wholesome morals, or the delicate dialogues of Xenophon and Plato, or the sage tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides, or the fine comedies of the daintiest Attic wits, or other excellent monuments of antiquity never sufficiently perused? Yet the one as stale as oldest fashions, and what more freshly current for awhile than the other? Even Guicciardine's silver history, and Ariosto's golden cantos grow out of request, and *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* is not green enough for queasy stomachs but they must have Greene's *Arcadia*, and I believe most eagerly longed for Greene's *Faerie Queen*. O

strange fancies. O monstrous newfangledness. The wittier sort tasteth and flieth, as the dog from Nilus; other wantons find experience the mistress of fools, and need no other penance but their own repentance. The very time confuteth vanity, and the very place requireth sobriety. No public security without private moderation, and the more bonds of government, the more indefeasible assurance. Due circumspection may do much good, and an abundant cautel can do little hurt. Youth is youth, and age corruptible; better an hundred Ovids were banished than the state of Augustus endangered, or a sovereign empire infected, especially in a tumultuous age and in a world of war wherein not Bacchus but Mars, not Venus but Mercury, not riot but valour, not fancy but policy, must strike the stroke. Gallant gentlemen, bethink yourselves of the old Roman discipline and the new Spanish industry, and I am not to trouble you with any other accusation of them that condemn themselves, and need no other shame or punishment but their own works. Only I request some busy pens to stay their wisdoms, and either to publish a justifiable truth, or to conceal their bad disposition. Woe to that study that mis-spendeth precious time, and consumeth itself in needless and bootless quarrels. Comparisons, they say, are odious, but invectives more odious, and what so abominable as forged and suborned calumnies? One or two miserable examples may stand for an hundred; I will not aggravate or discourse particulars. A pitiful case that such lusty beginnings should have such sorry ends, and who can tell what doughty younker may next gnash with his teeth? Terrible creatures, and the curst cow, have sometimes short horns. The wildest colt is soon tamed, and belike neither death, nor shame, nor misery are afraid of them that vaunt themselves like unto death and Will Sommer in sparing none. God help, and charity pity, them that have neither hability to help, nor wit to pity themselves, but will needs try a conclusion between their heads and the next wall. I have heard of giants in conceit and pygmies in performance, young Phaetons, young Icarus, young Choroebi, and I shall say young Babingtons, and how many millions of green youths have, in overmounting, most ruefully dismounted, and left behind them full lamentable histories? For the very mention of some direful tragedies were horrible, and what so wretched as headlong enterprises, or so hideous as the desperate attempt of impossibilities? Philostratus in his *Icons* pleasurably reporteth, according to the tradition of Greek poets, how on a time a resolute band of doughty Pygmies triumphantly marched to invade Hercules asleep. Woe to such brave adventures. Aesop's toad, a proud aspiring creature, shamefully overmatched her swelling and bursten self. Great and small things may in some proportion be compared together, and behold as miserable a spectacle in their kind. Flourishing Master Greene is most woefully faded, and whilst I am bemoaning his over-piteous decay, and discoursing the usual success of such rank wits, lo, all on the sudden, his sworn brother, Master Pierce Penilesse (still more paltry, but what remedy? we are already over-shoes, and must now go through), lo, his inwardest companion, that tasted of the fatal herring, cruelly pinched with want, vexed with discredit, tormented with other men's felicity, and overwhelmed with his own misery, in a raving and frantic mood most desperately exhibiteth his *Supplication to the Devil*. A strange title, an odd wit, and a mad whoreson, I warrant him; doubtless it will prove some dainty device, quaintly contrived by way of humble supplication to the high and mighty Prince of Darkness, not dunsically botched up, but right formally conveyed according to the style and tenor of Tarleton's precedent of *The Seven Deadly Sins*, which most deadly, but most lively, play I might have seen in London, and was very gently invited thereunto at Oxford by Tarleton himself, of whom I

merrily demanding which of the seven was his own deadly sin, he bluntly answered after this manner: *By God, the sin of other gentlemen, lechery. O, but that, Master Tarleton, is not your part upon the stage. You are to blame, that dissemble with the world, and have one part for your friends' pleasure, another for your own. I am somewhat of Doctor Perne's religion,* quoth he, and abruptly took his leave. Surely it must needs be current in matter, and authentical in form, that had first such a learned precedent, and is now pleasantly interlaced with divers new-found phrases of the tavern, and pathetically intermixed with sundry doleful pageants of his own ruinous and beggarly experience. For the poor tenement of his purse (quoth himself, gramercy, good Tarleton) hath been the devil's dancing-school any time this half year, and I pray God (quoth another) the poor tenement of his heart hath not also been the devil's fencing-school twice as long. Particulars and circumstances are tedious, especially in sorrowful and forlorn causes; the sum of sums is, he tossed his imagination a thousand ways and, I believe, searched every corner of his grammar school wit (for his margin is as deeply learned as *Fauste precor gelida*), to see if he could find any means to relieve his estate, but all his thoughts and marginal notes consorted to his conclusion, that the world was uncharitable, and he ordained to be miserable. It were cruelly to add affliction to affliction; what flinty heart would not sigh, or rather melt, to hear the bewailful moan of that sobbing and groaning muse, the daughter of most pregnant, but most wretched Niobe?

*Why is't damnation to despair and die,
When life is my true happiness' disease?*

And a little after:

*Divines and dying men may talk of hell,
But in my heart her several torments dwell.*

And so forth, most hideously.

For the text is much more doleful than the gloss, and who would not be moved with more pitiful compunction to hear the lamentable farewell:

*England adieu, the soil that brought me forth,
Adieu unkind, where skill is nothing worth.*

Then to read the profound quotation:

Hei mihi, quam paucos haec mea dicta mouent?

Which was thought pathological out of cry,

*Forgive him, God, although he curse his birth,
Since misery hath daunted all his mirth.*

Now good sweet muse, I beseech thee by thy delicate wit and by all the quaintest inventions of thy deviseful brain, cast not thy dreary self headlong into the horrible gulf of desperation, but being a creature of so singular and wonderful hope as thy inspired courage divinely suggesteth, and still rear up mountains of highest hope, and either gallantly advance thy virtuous self, maugre Fortune (what impossible to inspiring industry?), or mightily enchant some magnificent Maecenas (for thou canst do it) to honour himself in honouring thee, and to bliss the eyes of the gazing world with beholding those miracles which some round liberality and thy super-thankful mind would hugely enable thee to work. Let it never be said that the minion of the muses should forsake himself, or abandon them whose very shadows he adareth. A grave heart, in extremest distress, never languisheth; no such affrighting death or gnashing hell as the devouring abyss of despair. Yet better a man without money than money without a man. *Penillesse* is not his purse, but his mind, not his revenue, but his resolution. A man is a man though he have but a hose upon his head. For every curse, there is a blessing; for every malady, a remedy; for every winter, a summer; for every night, a day; a dog hath a day.

Nocte pluit tota: redeunt spectacula mane.

Right magnanimity never droopeth, sweet music requickeneth the heaviest spirits of dumpish melancholy, fine poetry abhorreth the loathsome and ugly shape of forlorn pensiveness. What gentle mind detesteth not cursed and damnable desperation? All abject dolefulness is woefully base, and basely woeful. The die, the ball, the sponge, the sieve, the wheel of Fortune, Fortune herself, a trifle, a jest, a toy in philosophy and divine resolution. Be a musician and poet unto thyself, that art both, and a ringleader of both unto other; be a man, be a gentleman, be a philosopher, be a divine, be thy resolute self, not the slave of Fortune, that for every flea-biting crieth out, *Alas*, and for a few hungry meals, like a Greek parasite, misuseth the tragedy of Hecuba, but the friend of virtue, that is richest in poverty, freest in bondage, bravest in jeopardy, cheerfullest in calamity. Be rather wise and unfortunate, with the silver swan than fortunate and unwise with the golden ass. Remember thine own marginal emblem, *Fortuna favet fatuis*. O solace thy miraculous self, and cheer the muses in cheering thy dainty soul, sweetly drunken with their delicious Helicon and the restorative nectar of the gods. What can I say more? That cordial liquor and that heavenly restorative be thy sovereign comfort, and scorn the baseness of every crazed or fainting thought that may argue a degenerate mind. And so much briefly touching thy dear self, whom I hope never to find so pathetically distressed, or so tragically disguised, again. Now a word or two concerning him who in charity kisseth thy hand, and in pity wisheth thee better luck. May it please gentle Pierce, in the divine fury of his ravished spirit, to be graciously good unto his poor friends, who would be somewhat loath to be silly sheep for the wolf or other sheep-biter. I dare undertake, the abused author of the *Astrological Discourse* (every page thereof, under correction of inspired and supernatural conceits, discovereth more art and judgment than the whole *Supplication* of the parturient mountain), notwithstanding the notorious diabolical discourse of the said Pierce, a man better acquainted with the devils of hell than with the stars of heaven, shall unfeignedly pray for him, and only pray him to report the known truth of his approved learning and living without favour. Otherwise, it were not greatly amiss a little to consider that he which in the ruff of his freshest jollity was fain to cry

Master Churchyard a-mercy in print, may be orderly driven to cry more peccavis than one. I would think the Counter, Master Churchyard, his hostess Penia, and such other sensible lessons might sufficiently have taught him that *Penillesse* is not lawless, and that a poet's or painter's licence is a poor security to privilege debt or defamation. I would wish the burned child not to forget the hot element, and would advise overweening youths to remember themselves, and the good ancient oracle of sage Apollo. There is a certain thing called modesty, if they could light upon it, and by my young master's leave, some pretty smack or [sic for 'of'] discretion would relish well. The Athenians were noted for lavish amplifying, the Cretensians for crafty lying, the Thessalians for subtle cogging, the Carthaginians for deceitful perfidy, Hannibal, Fabius, Agathocles, Iphicrates, Ulysses, and a thousand such for counterfeit policy, but all their forgeries were seasoned with the salt of probability, and only used at occasions of advantage, and although the Grecians generally were over light-headed and vain-spoken, yet their levities savoured of elegant wittiness, and the flying bird carried meat in the mouth. Even Lucian's true tales are spiced with conceit, and neither his, nor Apuleius', ass is altogether an ass. It is a piece of cunning in the most fabulous legends to interlace some credible narrations and very probable occurrences to countenance and authorize the excessive licentiousness of the rest. Unreasonable fictions palpably bewray their odious grossness, and he that will be a famous deviser in folio must be content with the reward of a notable liar, not to be credited when he avoweth a truth. The pleasant man talketh of a bachelor's hood turned over his ears for abusing of Aristotle, and imagineth goodly matters of casting the heavens' water, of anatomizing the sky's entrails, of the universal adultery of planets, of the bawd of those celestial bodies, how Saturn and Jupiter proved honest men than all the world took them for. O brave Tarleton, thou wert he, when all is done. Had not Aretine been Aretine when he was, undoubtedly thou hadst been Aretine, gramercy capricious and transcendent wit, the only high pole Arctic and deep mineral of an incomparable style. Yet Tarleton's jests not sufficient, but Roscius must have his stale to make him more admirable; all were nothing unless Elderton's ale-crammed nose had been consumed to nothing in bear-baiting him with whole bundles of ballads, that forsooth is not so good a gentleman (for every heir of a Nashe is a good gentleman, at the least, as the beard of Thomas Nashe, the master butler of Pembroke Hall, whose grave countenance, like Cato, able to make him run out of his wits for fear if he look sternly upon him), and I wot not what, and what trumpery else, as childish and garish stuff as ever came in print, yet what pack of vanity is not in print? I will not cry, *Absurd, absurd*, as he madly exclaimeth, *Monstrous, monstrous*. But who in that university can deny but Master Harvey read the public philosophy lecture with special good-liking, and, many will say, with singular commendation, when this mighty lashing gentleman (now well read in the late exploits of Untruss, and for Tarleton's amplification, A per se A) was not so much as *idoneus auditor civilis scientiae*. What he is improved since, excepting his good old *Flores Poetarum*, and Tarleton's surmounting rhetoric, with a little Euphuism and Greenness enough, which were all prettily stale before he put hand to pen, I report me to the favourablest opinion of those that know his prefaces, rimes, and the very tympany of his Tarletonizing wit, his *Supplication to the Devil*. O, that is the devil and all. I am so far from doting upon mine own or my brothers' writings, in any matter of moment, that I use to censure them with a more curious and rigorous judgment than I examine anything else, wherein my ear is so loath to flatter me, and my conceit so afraid to cozen me, that my

mind ever remaineth unsatisfied, and nothing hitherto could fulfil my desire, insatiably covetous to do better. But as those perfunctory discourses are (which were more hastily than speedily published without my privity), let the best of them go for waste-paper, and serve the basest shops, if the worst of them import not more public or private use than his gayest flower that may thank Greene and Tarleton for his garland. Were my brother not my brother, but some familiar acquaintance, I might in truth, and should in reason, make other comparisons with applause enough (for what indifferency seeth not the difference? or what so silly as he could make Pierce with voice or pen, notwithstanding those miracles of the white raven in the clouds?). But the university, the city, the whole realm, all good learning and civil government be their judge, and my mouth especially in this Martinish and counter-Martinish age, wherein the spirit of contradiction reigneth, and every one superaboundeth in his own humour, even to the annihilating of any other without rime or reason. Some would be mutes if they might be suffered to be, as were meetest for them, and only to dwell in the excellent monuments of divine wits whose sweet company they cannot enjoy enough, but what is to be done when vowels are coursed, and mutes haunted, and that heavenly conference hellishly disturbed? God or good order circumcise the tongues and pens that slander without cause, and rail without effect, even in the superlative degree of raving. Aretine and the devil's orator might very well be spared in Christian or politic commonwealths, which cannot want contagion enough, though they be not poisoned with the venomous potions of ink-horn witches. Fine pleasant wit was ever commendable, and judicial accusation lawful, but fie on gross scurrility and impudent calumny, that will rather go to hell in jest than to heaven in earnest, and seek not to reform any vice, to backbite and deprave every person that feedeth not their humorous fancy. A vile mind, and what a pestilenter villainy? But some odd wits, forsooth, will needs be accounted terrible bull-beggars, and the only kill-cows of their age, for how should they otherwise keep the simple world in awe, or scare multitudes of plain folk like idiot crows and innocent doves? All the invective and satirical spirits are their familiars, scoffing and girding is their daily bread. Other profess other faculties, they profess the art of railing: noble, reverend, or whatsoever, all peasants and clowns, gouty devils and buckram giants, Midases and golden asses, cormorants and drones, dunces and hypocritical hotspurs, earthworms and pinch-fart penny-fathers, that feed not their hungry purses and eager stomachs. They have terms, quoth a marvellous doer, steeped in aquafortis, and gunpowder that shall rattle through the skies and make earthquakes in such peasants' ears as shall dare to send them away with a flea in their ear (how might a man purchase the sight of those puissant and hideous terms?). They can lash poor slaves, and spur-gall asses, mightily. They can tell parlous tales of bears and foxes as shrewdly as *Mother Hubbard*, for her life. They will domineer in taverns and stationers' shops, to die for't. They will be as egregiously famous as ever was Herostratus or Pausanias, or Kett, or Scogan. Agrippa and Rabelais but ciphers to them; they have it only in them. Would Christ they had more discretion in them, and less rancour against other, that never wished them the least evil, but still beseech God to increase the best and to pardon the worst in them. The *Quip* knoweth his reward, and the *Supplication to the Devil*, expressly dedicated to the Prince of Darkness, I commit to the censure of wisdom and justice with favour, only requesting that mighty bombarder of terms to spare quiet men that mean him no harm, and to keep the huge main shot of his rattling babies for buckram giants. Alas, what should I touch their parents, or twit them

by their other friends? Let it be one of their jollities to offer, and one of our simplicities to suffer, that injury which neither impaireth the reputation of the father, nor abaseth the credit of the sons, nor argueth anything but the impudent despitefulness of the libeller. Few sons have feelinger cause to love or reverence or defend their fathers than myself, but his dealing is such where he tradeth, and his living such where he converseth, that he may easily shame himself which goeth about to shame him, or us in him. I will not trouble you with the rehearsal of his inheritance, which I could have wished more than it was, yet was it more, by the favour of that terrible thunder-smith of terms, than the inheritances of both their fathers together. Put case I have inquired what special cause the Penillesse gentleman hath to brag of his birth, which giveth the woeful poveretto good leave, even with his Stentor's voice, and in his rattling terms, to revive the pitiful history of Dom Lazarello de Tormes, to contend with cold, to converse with scarcity, to be laid open to poverty, to accuse Fortune, to rail on his patrons, to bite his pen, to rend his papers, to rage in all points like a madman, to torment himself in that agony a long time, to be miserable, to be *vacuus viator*, to have *opus* and *usus* knocking at his door twenty times a week when he is not within, to seek his dinner in Paul's with Duke Humphrey, to lick dishes, to be a beggar,

To ban the air, wherein he breathes, a wretch,

to be the devil's distressed orator, to proclaim his own desolate and abject estate, in these and such other most base and shameful complaints, scarcely beseeming the rascaldest sizar in an university, or the beggarliest mendicant friar in a country.

Forgive him, God, although he curse his birth.

Aye, but who so excessively thankful to his other friends? One kind friend more worth than two unfriendly kinsmen. Affection will relieve where nature faileth; he must needs abound in devoted and bountiful friends that showeth himself so meritoriously friendly, and so unspeakably grateful:

*O friends, no friends, that then ungently frown,
When changing fortune casts us headlong down.*

I had nigh hand overskipped the learned allegation in the margin, solemnly avouched with a very pathetic Pol, *Pol me occidistis amici*. All which, and most of the premises, I had altogether omitted, but that the two unmeet companions, a lord's heart and a beggar's purse, must somewhat remember themselves, or be a little, as it were, pulled by the ragged sleeve. Young scholars can tell how Ulysses handled Irus, and old truants have not altogether forgotten how saucy the harpies were, till they were entertained accordingly. But what though the decayed gentleman so commendeth his own worshipful birth and trusty friends? Many noble houses have seen their own ruins, and sometime the brothers of the prodigal son will not stick to curse where they should reverently bless. The table-fellow of Duke Humphrey and Tantalus might learn of him to curse Jupiter, and to ban, not only the four elements, but also the seven planets, and even the twelve houses of heaven.

And what though the other sorry magnifico, as very a Bezonian as he for his life, would swear in a bravery his father was of four and twenty religions, and himself a divine from his mother's womb, an image of both churches and both synagogues too, a natural Perne artificially improved, the thrice and thrice learned son of his four-and-twenty times learned father? So Greene would flourish. Every man is to answer for his own defaults; my trespass is not my father's, nor my father's mine. A Ghibelline may have a Guelph to his son, as Barthol saith, and hath never a saint had a reprobate to his father? Are all worthy minds the issue of noble houses, or all base minds the offsprings of rascal stocks? Were it not a felicity to be the worst of a thousand that being descended of meanest parentage have proved, as histories testify, and the world daily confirmeth? Or might not Greene and his complices have been much better than they were, or are, although their parents had been much worse than they were, or are? What saith the afflicted suppliant himself?

*Ah, worthless wit, to train me to this woe,
Ill thrive the folly that bewitched me so.*

Have we not a number of excellent industrious men and valorous knights not greatly beholding unto Fortune for their progeny?

Malo pater tibi sit Thersites, who knoweth not that only art of heraldry?

Quam te Thersitae similem producat Achilles. The argument of nobility is a gallant and plausible argument, but what commonplace so brave and honourable as the commonplace of virtue? Can anything be obscure where desert is famous, or anything famous where desert is obscure? Gramercy, sweet margin, for that notable poesy: *Meritis expendite causam*; in earnest, a singular rule of infallible judgment, and I imagine himself deserveth something, that specially allegeth desert. It is long since I declaimed upon any theme, but who would not plead virtue's cause in whatsoever subject? Or what honest eloquence is not furnished with Catilinarie and Philippic against vice? Not the father, and the son, but virtue and vice, the efficiencies of honour and dishonour. He only base, he only simple, he only contemptible, that hath vice to his father and ignorance to his mother, the only parents of rascality. And may I not truly affirm that not only Osorius or Patritius gallantly prove, but all wise authors seriously approve, and even virtue and skill themselves with their own sovereign mouth honourably profess? No right son and heir apparent of theirs, either un noble in himself, or obscure in the world, or despised in the highest, or unregarded of the lowest, or dishonourable in his life, or inglorious after his death. I speak not for any person, but for the matter, and cannot either condignly praise the valorous seed of the one, or sufficiently bless the fruitful womb of the other. And what so ungentle in nature, or so un noble in fortune, as their contraries; how barbarously opposed against that divine race and heavenly generation that cannot stir unaccompanied with envy and a world of moths? Yet neither the unhappiest creature, utterly devoid of all graces (I praise something in Elderton and Greene), nor the excellentest personage thoroughly accomplished with all perfections (ah, that Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Philip Sidney had been as cautelous as adventurous), nor they that object, nor we that

answer, nor any but a few singular men, the miracles of the world, either for wit wondrous or for art exquisite, or for action admirable, or for integrity notable. I wis we little need to be charged with our fathers' offences; it is enough for one, yea, for the best one, to carry the burden of his own transgressions and errors. Errors are infinite, and follies, how universally rife, even of the wisest sort? Oh, that virtues were as like the stars of heaven or the birds of the air as vices are like the sands of the sea and the beasts of the earth. He that seeth least, seeth much amiss; the fine discoverer and curious intelligencer go invisible, & stratagematically descry many hidden privities of public and private misgovernment. There is an eye that pierceth into the secretest sins and most inscrutable thoughts of profoundest hypocrisy, in whose pure sight nothing is justifiable but by pardon. Divinity flieth high and wadeth deep, but even in humanity, & in the view of the world, who liveth inculpable, or who is not obnoxious to some criminal or civil actions, or

*Where should I find that I seek, a person clear as a crystal?
 Where man God to man? where one not devil to another?
 Where that zeal divine, whose heavenly sunshine acheereth
 The dreariest drooping, and fellest rancour allayeth?
 Where those same melting bowels of tender agreement,
 That mildly conquer most rough and hideous outrage?
 Where Moses' meekness? where David's sweetness Olympic?
 Where that same gentle kindness, that bounty renowned,
 That gracious favour, that whilom beautified honour,
 That love advanced, that abandoned odious hatred,
 That sirenized furies, that rocks adamant
 Mollified, arreared pillars of glory triumphant?*

And so forth, for the verse is not unknown, & runneth in one of those unsatirical satires which Master Spenser long since embraced with an over-loving sonnet, a token of his affection, not a testimony of his judgment.

What should I labour a needless point, or what should I weary you with tediousness, that may much better bestow your vacant hours? Enough to any is enough; to some, overmuch. God knoweth, and who knoweth not, how sensually corrupt some good-fellows were, and are, that so sharply and bitterly noted, and do note, so many imaginative corruptions in other. Would God they had been as quietly disposed as their parents, or as advisedly stayed as some of their friends that wished them a milder course, & some of our pens might have been employed to better use than this idle business, or rather, busy idleness. Whereof I desire no other fruit but some little contentation of friends, and some reasonable mitigation of well-willers, unto whose good I am diligently to address, & even affectionately to dedicate, any my endeavour. If in some terms I have used a little plain dealing, albeit not without respect (but everyone seeth not into another's considerations, & divers circumstances alter the case), I crave pardon for the least oversight, and will be as ready to commend any little good, even in an adversary, as I was unwilling, but enforced, to touch some palpable bad, which I would wish amended where it may be redressed, and quite forgotten where it ought to be buried. My meaning

was not to displeasure or discredit any, but only to satisfy the pleasure and maintain the credit of those unto whom I owe many duties, as well in special consideration as in natural affection. Had I not been more deeply stinged in them than in myself, who have made comedies of such tragedies, and with pleasure given such hotspurs leave to run themselves out of breath, what folio of folly might not for me have passed untouched, or who, for me, might not have flourished or lashed in Paul's Churchyard *Cum gratia & privilegio*? It were good that they which have a dexterity in writing trimly upon every matter, white or black, should also have a felicity in speaking well upon every person that deserveth not ill, especially such as can say something, and think more. The terriblest terms may be repaid home with advantage; I have known the railingest sophister in university set nonplus, and have seen the mad-brainest roister-doister in a country dashed out of countenance. There is logic enough to answer carter's logic, and play enough to tame horse-play. Wronged men are seldom tongue-tied; the patientest creature wanteth not blood in his heart or ink in his pen, and although his blood be not wildfire, yet it is blood, that will not be cooled with a card or daunted with bug's-words, and although his ink be not pitch or poison, yet it is ink, that will neither blush for shame nor wax pale for fear, but will hold his own when perhaps gayer colours shall lose their colour, and aquafortis valiantly eat his own heart. Good sweet masters, quiet yourselves, or think not much to bear a little for company, that are so forward to load other without mercy. No man loather than myself to contend with desperate malcontents, or to overthwart obstinate humourists, or to encounter ink-horn adventures, nor to quarrel with any sort of wrangling companions (scolding is the language of shrews, and railing the style of rake-hells), or so much as to call busy heads by their usual and proper names (the things are paltry, and the very names savour of rascality), but there is a time when such doughty warriors must be appeased, & such wise men answered according to their wisdom. Howbeit in favour of a private and public quietness, I will thank the honest fellows the more, the less occasion they give me to interrupt better exercises, to trouble the world with trifling discourses upon pelting matters, to disease themselves, to pleasure none but the printer & idle creatures, the only busy readers of such novelets. I would gladly be specially beholding unto them for this courtesy, and dare undertake it shall redound more to their credit to approve their desire of reconciliation by silence, than to continue the opinion of their rooted despite by stirring more coals. I hope this wind hath not shaken any such corn, but fellow-scholars (as Doctor Caius would say), and now, forsooth, fellow-writers may be made friends with a cup of white wine and some little familiar conference in calm and civil terms. I offer them my hand, and request their, which I will accept thankfully, & kiss lovingly, and ever commend the good nature that would, and the better government that could, master affection with reason, and sweeten gall with humanity. For it is not my energetical persuasion, but their own pathological motion, that must do it, as the enchanting muse of Orpheus redeemed the ghastly ghost of his own Eurydice out of hell. Such an experiment of profound and divine art as I would compassionately recommend to every amiable mind disguised with hellish passion, the foulest deformity of any fair wit. Otherwise, if it stand more with their credit to be reputed wilful than wise, or if a perverse and froward resolution be the better policy, they are free men, and have ink at will and paper at commandment, and a number of greedy ears that eagerly long, and, as it were, dance attendance, to hear those dreadful invincible terms steeped in aquafortis & gunpowder. The intoxicate sprite of the grisly Eurydice (I

speak to a poet, and cannot more mildly term that infernal fury) may eftsoons return to her accursed lodging, and instead of heavenly Orpheus, embrace the hellish orator of the Black Prince, whom I will not any way make worse, but would wish infinitely better than he hath made himself. For I thank God I am neither so profanely uncharitable as to send him to the sance bell to truss up his life with a trice, nor so abjectly timorous as, for extreme fearfulness, to wish, with a professed devotion: *So be it, pray, pen, ink and paper on their knees, that they may not be troubled with him any more.* Good Lord, what fantastical pangs are these? Who ever indited in such a style but one divine Aretine in Italy, and two heavenly Tarletons in England, the sole platformers of odd elocution, and only singularities of the plain world? Two of them that so wantonly played with the highest and deepest subjects of spiritual contemplation, heaven and hell, paradise and purgatory, know their local repose, and seriously admonish the third to be advised how he lavish in such dalliance. No variety or infinity so infinite as invention, which hath a huge world and a main ocean of scope to disport and range itself, though it arrear not vain hyperboles of the reverend mysteries of God. Good sweet orator, be a divine poet indeed, and use heavenly eloquence indeed, and employ thy golden talent with amounting usance indeed, and with heroicall cantos honour right virtue & brave valour indeed, as noble Sir Philip Sidney and gentle Master Spenser have done with immortal fame, and I will bestow more compliments of rare amplifications upon thee than ever any bestowed upon them, or this tongue ever afforded, or any Aretinish mountain of huge exaggerations can bring forth. Right artificiality (whereat I once aimed to the uttermost power of my slender capacity) is not mad-brained, or ridiculous, or absurd, or blasphemous, or monstrous, but deep-conceited, but pleasurable, but delicate, but exquisite, but gracious, but admirable, not according to the fantastical mould of Aretine or Rabelais, but according to the fine model of Orpheus, Homer, Pindarus, and the excellentest wits of Greece, and of the land that flowed with milk and honey. For what festival hymns so divinely dainty as the sweet psalms of King David, royally translated by Buchanan, or what sage gnomes so profoundly pithy as the wise proverbs of King Solomon, notably also translated? But how few Buchanans? Such lively springs of streaming eloquence, & such right Olympical hills of amounting wit, I cordially recommend to the dear lovers of the muses, and namely to the professed sons of the same: Edmund Spenser, Richard Stanyhurst, Abraham Fraunce, Thomas Watson, Samuel Daniel, Thomas Nashe, and the rest, whom I affectionately thank for their studious endeavours, commendably employed in enriching and polishing their native tongue, never so furnished or embellished as of late. For I dare not name the honourabler sons and nobler daughters of the sweetest & divinest muses that ever sang in English or other language, for fear of suspicion of that which I abhor, and their own most delectable and delicious exercises (the fine handiwork of excellent nature and excellenter art combined) speak incomparably more than I am able briefly to insinuate. Gentle minds and flourishing wits were infinitely to blame if they should not also, for curious imitation, propose unto themselves such fair types of refined and engraced eloquence. The right novice of pregnant and aspiring conceit will not overskip any precious gem of invention or any beautiful flower of elocution that may richly adorn or gallantly bedeck the trim garland of his budding style. I speak generally to every springing wit, but more specially to a few, and at this instant singularly to one, whom I salute with a hundred blessings, and entreat, with as many prayers, to love them that love all good wits, and hate none but the devil and his incarnate imps, notoriously professed. I

protest, it was not thy person that I any way disliked, but thy rash and desperate proceeding against thy well-willers, which in some had been unsufferable, in an youth was more excusable, in a reformed youth is pardonable, and rather matter of concordance than of aggrivance. I persuade myself rather to hope the best than to fear the worst, & ever wish unto other as I would wish other to wish unto me. It is my earnest desire to begin and end such frivolous altercations at once, and were it not more for other than for myself, assuredly I would be the first that should cancel this impertinent pamphlet, and throw the other two letters, with the sonnets annexed, into the fire. Let them have their swinge that affect to be terribly singular. I desire not to be a black swan, or to leave behind me any period in the style of the devil's orator, or any verse in the vein of his dam's poet, but rather covet to be nothing in print, than anything in the stamp of needless or fruitless contention. As I am overruled at this present, and as it standeth now, I am not to be mine own judge or advocate, but am content to be sentenced by every courteous or indifferent peruser that regardeth honesty in persons, or truth in testimonies, or reason in causes. Or seeing some matters of fame are called in question, I am not only willing, but desirous, to underlie the verdict, even of Fame herself, and to submit our whole credits to the voice of the people, as to the voice of equity and the oracle of God, to whose gracious favours he recommendeth your courtesy, that neither flattereth the best, nor slandereth the worst, nor wilfully wrongeth any, but professeth duty to his superiors, humanity to his equals, favour to his inferiors, reason to all. And by the same rule, oweth you amends for the premises. Not speedily dispatched, but hastily bungled up, as you see. London, this 8 and 9 of September.

The friend of his friends, & foe of none.

THE FOURTH LETTER

To the same favourable or indifferent reader

Honest gentlemen (for unto such I especially write), give me leave in this slender pamphlet only to fulfil the importune requests of a few, with your small delight and mine own less contentment, and pardon me though I no way affect to feed the dainty humour of curious conceits carried with an insatiable expectation of I wot not what imagined perfection, which may easily display itself where it is, but cannot possibly appear where it is not. I presume I cannot less satisfy any than I have satisfied myself, who, having wedded myself to private study, and devoted my mind to public quietness, took this troublesome pen in hand with such an alacrity of courage as the sorry bear goeth to the stake, & now rejoice in that which with more haste than speed is dispatched, as Aesop's hart, with more affection than reason, gloried in his horns till he found his fugitive legs his surer friends. For in many cases I take it a better policy to use the flying leg than the cumbersome horn, and at this instant I should much more have pleased myself if I had still practised my former resolution to scorn the stinging of a peevish wasp, or the biting of an elvish gnat, or the quip of a mad companion, and rather to pocket up a pelting injury than to entangle myself with trifling business, or any way to accrue to the most contemptible fellowship of the scribbling crew that annoyeth this age and never more accloyed the world. Alas, he is pitifully bestead that in an age of policy and in a world of industry (wherein the greatest matters of government and valour seem small to aspiring capacities) is constrained to make woeful Greene and beggarly Pierce Penilesse (as it were a grasshopper and a cricket, two pretty musicians, but silly creatures) the arguments of his style, and enforced to encounter them who only in vanity are something; in effect, nothing; in account, less than nothing, howsoever the grasshopper, enraged, would be no less than a green dragon, and the cricket, malcontented, not so little as a black bell-wether, but the only unicorn of the muses. Some in my case would perhaps be content for their own credit to have them notoriously so reputed, and in cunning would peradventure not stick to strain at a gnat as it were at a camel, but plain dealing useth no such rhetoric. They that have eyes can see, and they that have ears can hear as sensibly as I, and I must in reason leave them as in proof I find them, either mere paper-bugs and ink-horn pads, or a great deal worse, so far as the ringleaders of lewd licentiousness are more pestilent than the platformers of vain fantasticality, or the poison of corrupted minds is more pernicious than the venom of disguised wits. Any slightness curious enough, and any cost too much, upon such an argument, a subject of loss to the writer, of gain to none, but duty must obey and courtesy yield, and it is the luck of some pelting comedies to busy the stage as well as some graver tragedies. Were nothing else discursively inserted (as some little else occasionally presented itself), what paper more currently fit for the basest mechanical uses than that which containeth the vile misdemeanours (and truth will say) the abominable villainies of such base shifting companions, good for nothing (in the opinion of good minds) but to cast away themselves, to spoil their adherents, to prey upon their favourers, to dishonour their patrons, to infect the air where they breathe. Might Pierce be entreated to qualify his distempered vein and to reclaim his unbridled self, as some bold Gawains, upon milder consideration, have been glad to do (good Pierce, be good to thy good friends, and gentle to thy gentle self), I assuredly would be the first that should

wrap up such memorials, not in a sheet of waste-paper, but in the winding-sheet of oblivion, and will not stick to embalm the dead corps of a professed enemy to sweeten the living spirit of a wished friend, howsoever extremely mean or famously obscure. The gracious law of amnesty a sovereign law, but the divine law of charity the law of laws. Who cannot contemn the insolentest arrogancy, but who must not condescend to any reasonable accord? He that was never dismayed with any necessary distress, yet ever escheweth all unnecessary trouble, and he that least feareth the sword of unjust calumny, yet most dreadeth the scabbard of just infamy, and would gladly avoid the lightest suspicion of that which he abhorreth. Though the painted sheath be as it is (for it needeth no other painter to portray itself), yet never child so delighted in his rattling baby as some old lads of the castle have sported themselves with their rapping bauble. It is the proper weapon of their profession; they have used it at large, and will use it at pleasure, howsoever the patient heal himself at their cost. It were a work of importance to answer that weapon; I long since gave them over in the plain field, and am now become a suitor to their towardest scholars to remember the glorious conquest of their witty masters. I would willingly please, or not displease, as I may, but no life without self-contentment, no performance of any action without resolution. The least may think upon Fabius Maximus, who with an honourable obstinacy pursued the course of his own platform, notwithstanding a thousand impeachments, & although slowly, with much murmuring, yet effectually, with more reputation, achieved his politic purpose, like an expert pilot that in a hideous tempest regardeth not the foolish shriekings or vain outcries of disorderly passengers, but bestirreth himself, and directeth his mariners according to the wise rules of orderly navigation. A wavering and fleeting mind seldom or never accomplisheth any negotiation of value. It is none of the least comforts in distress that patience is an excellent quality, and constancy the honourablest virtue in the world. I am not to dilate where a sentence is a discourse, and a word more than enough. It hath been my desire to conform my intentions to my quality, and my exercises to my intentions, but as they are, it shall go very hard before I begin to abandon hope or relent to frivolous motions, or forget myself and my friends to remember my enemies, who are best remembered when they are most forgotten. Some are cunning, & can imaginatively cast beyond the moon, but he is a simple temporizer that would attempt to raise a fantastical or putative opinion in an active world, and who so kindly cozeneth himself as that he that seeketh a cloak to cover his own sluggish idleness or unwieldy insufficiency? Let them affect mystical commendation that profess occult philosophy, and let them crossbite themselves that can find no other cony-catchers to play that part. It was a principal maxim in Socrates' discipline that everyone should contend to be indeed whatsoever he would covet to seem in apparance; some that have often recommended that maxim unto other, and often called it the sovereign rule of sound and honourable proceeding, were never forwarder to allow his precept in discourse than ready to follow his example in practice. There be other enough to make a gallant show, and some trim fellows will not stick to maintain a brave paradox that the opinion and semblance of things neither ever was, nor is now, inferior to the very things themselves, but in preferment and reputation many times superior. I am not here to argue the case. Fortune is a favourable lady to some forward adventurers; they may easily swim that are holden up by the chin. Such & such have lived in estimation, & purchased lands, but what did they ever effectuate of any worth, or wherein appeared their sufficiency to discharge any weighty function, or to

perform any notable act? A reed is a sorry staff, & fortune as changeable as the moon; no counterfeit or pretended commendation endureth long. Only desert holdeth out infallibly when many a goodly gentleman beshreweth himself. I must not stand upon particularities; no education to the trainment of Cyrus, nor any proceeding to the employment of Caesar. Pregnant rules avail much, but visible examples amount incredibly. Experience, the only life of perfection, & only perfection of life. Whatsoever occasion causeth me to be mistaken as overmuch addicted to theory without respect of action (for that is one of the especiallest points which I am importuned to resolve), I never made account of any study, meditation, conference or exercise that importeth not effectual use, & that aimeth not altogether at action as the singular mark whereat every art & every virtue is to level. I love method, but honour practice. Must I show the difference? Either art is obscure, or the quickest capacity dull, and needeth method, as it were the bright moon to illuminate the darksome night, but practice is the bright sun that shineth in the day, & the sovereign planet that governeth the world, as elsewhere I have copiously declared. To excel, there is no way but one: to marry studious art to diligent exercise, but where they must be unmarried or divorced, give me rather exercise without art than art without exercise. Perfect use worketh masteries, and disgraceth unexperienced art. Examples are infinite, and daily display themselves. A world without a sun, a body without a soul, nature without art, art without exercise: sorry creatures. Singular practice the only singular and admirable workman of the world. Must I dispatch the rest that is exacted? It is no fit place, and the least little will seem too much. As in other things, so in arts, formality doth well, but materiality worketh the feat. Were artists as skilful as arts are powerful, wonders might be achieved by art improved, but they that understand little write much, and they that know much write little. The vain peacock with his gay colours, and the prattling parrot with his ignorant discourses (I am not to offend any but the peacock and the parrot), have garishly disguised the worthiest arts, and deeply discredited the profoundest artists, to the pitiful defacement of the one and the shameful prejudice of the other. Rudolph Agricola, Philip Melancthon, Ludovic Vives, Peter Ramus, and divers excellent scholars have earnestly complained of arts corrupted, and notably reformed many absurdities, and still corruption engendereth one vermin or other, and still that precious trainment is miserably abused which should be the fountain of skill, the root of virtue, the seminary of government, the foundation of all private and public good. The methodist & discourser might be more material, the theorist and practitioner more formal, all four more effectual, or how cometh it to pass that much more is professed, but much less performed, than in former ages, especially in the mathematics and in natural magie, which being cunningly and extensively employed (after the manner of Archimedes, Archytas, Apollonius, Regiomontanus, Bacon, Cardan, and suchlike industrious philosophers, the secretaries of art and nature) might wonderfully bestead the commonwealth with many puissant engines and other commodious devices for war and peace. In actual experiments and polymechny, nothing too profound; a superficial slightness may seem fine for sheets, but proveth good for nothing. As in other business, so in learning: as good never a whit, according to the proverb, as never the better. One perfect mechanician worth ten unperfect philosophers; an ignorant man less shameth himself, less beguileth his friend, less disableth the commonwealth, than a putative artist. A whole natural wit more serviceable and more sufficient than a demi-scholar, who, presuming on that which he hath not, abaseth the force of that which he hath. He must

not dream of perfection that improveth not the perfectest art with most perfect industry. A snatch and away with Neoptolemus and the common sort of students may please a little but profiteth nothing. It is the body, not the shadow, that dispatcheth the business. The flower delighteth today and fadeth tomorrow, the fruit edifieth and endureth; the vizard, the painted sheath, and such terrible braveries can best report their own entertainment. The peacock and the parrot have good leave to prank up themselves, and leisure enough to revive and repolish their expired works. *What can last always?* quoth the neat tailor, when his fine seams began to crack their credit at the first drawing on. I appeal to Paul's Churchyard whether lines be like unto seams, and whether the deft writer be as sure a workman as the neat tailor. There may be a fault in the reader as well as in the weaver, but every man content himself to bear the burden of his own faults, and, good sweet authors, inform yourselves before you undertake to instruct other. Excellent effects must flow from the spring of excellent causes, and nothing notable without notable endeavour. The print is abused that abuseth, and earnestly beseecheth flourishing writers not to trouble the press but in case of urgent occasion or important use. Or if you conceive extraordinarily of your own pregnancy and will needs employ your youthful talent, remember that corruptions in manners and absurdities in art have too lately overflowed the banks of all good modesty and discretion. He that hath but half a tongue may say more; I only note by the way that hindereth many a gallant wit in the way, and, without impeachment to any, wish all rather to be excellent with Socrates than to seem famous with the philosopher of the court. My meaning is not to teach, but to touch, & albeit I have cursorily spoken something for myself, and something as it were against other, yet the one little, and the other less, are both uttered with a mind that will rather excuse other than myself, and rather accuse myself than other, wheresoever I find the least reason for them, or the least cause against myself, and if in anything I am anything, it is in nothing so much as in a zealous desire to see learning flourish, virtue prosper, the good proceed from better to better, the bad amend, the body cherish the members, the members tender the body, all generally maintain concord with all, everyone particularly nourish accord with everyone. Howbeit at this instant I must crave licence to stand upon such terms, not as I would most willingly choose, but as the present occasion forcibly suggesteth. No man loather to minister the least, or to take the greatest, occasion of public contention or private discontentment; choler is as soon inflamed as flax, and small sparkles of dissension have kindled horrible fires of faction. There be wrangling & quarrelling hotspurs enough, though I be none. *Ignis fatuus* never so spritishly busy; never so many threatening comets, never such a terrible sky of blazing and falling stars, never such lusty stirring of lively coals and dead cinders, every Martin Junior and Puny Pierce a monarch in the kingdom of his own humour, every pert and crank wit, in one odd vein or other, the only man of the university, of the city, of the realm, for a flourish or two. Who but he, in the flush of his overweening conceit? Give him his peremptory white rod in his hand, and good night all distinction of persons and all difference of estates. His pen is his mace; his lance, his two-edged sword; his scepter, his Hercules club; and will bear a predominant sway in despite of vainglorious titles and ambitious degrees. Lords must take heed how they lord it in his presence, but he, forsooth, may play the lord great master *cum gratia*, & a saucy sophister take upon him, like a mighty tyrant, *cum privilegio*. God help when ignorance and want of experience, usurping the chair of scrupulous and rigorous judgment, will in a fantastical imagination, or percase in a

melancholy mood, presume farther by infinite degrees than the learnedest men in a civil commonwealth or the sagest counsellors in a prince's court. Our new-new writers, the loadstones of the press, are wonderfully beholding to the ass, in a manner the only author which they allege. The world was ever full enough of fools, but never so full of asses in print: the very elephant, a great ass; the camel, a huge ass; the bear, a monstrous ass; the horse, an absurd ass; the fox himself, a little ass, or, for variety, an ape. Who not an ass or an ape in good plain English that chanceth to come in the wise ass-maker's & mighty ape-dubber's way? They are fine men, & have many sweet phrases; it is my simplicity that I am so slenderly acquainted with that dainty style, the only new fashion of current eloquence *in esse*, far surpassing the stale vein of Demosthenes or Tully, Jewel or Harding, Whitgift or Cartwright, Sidney or Spenser. But I could wish ignorance would favour itself, & it were not amiss that want of experience should be content to be a little modest or somewhat quiet, & both enforce less occasion to be termed as they will needs notoriously proclaim themselves, as it were with a public oyez, or a general *Noverint universi per praesentes*. For if anything indeed be a right ass in print, it is the one, and if anything indeed be a right calf in print, it is the other: ignorance, the famossest ass, and want of experience, the notablest calf in the world. Yet the one, the terrible controller, the other, the singular reformer of the world; both, the busiest adventurers and doughtiest doers in a world. They trouble many, much; some, exceedingly; themselves, most; me, little, who can very well leave them to the jollity of their own swinge, or only pray them to stay the nimble course of their forward wisdoms till they have soberly read and heard a little, and a little more (for iwis something resteth unconsidered), and till they have effectually seen and tried a great deal, and a great deal more (for much remaineth unapproved). I love not to solicit them greatly that love to importune all other excessively. That little I have done, I have done compelled, and would wish undone rather than any storm of debate or the least fit of malice should ensue thereof. Let them glory in pen-scolding and paper-brabbling that list; I must not, I cannot, I will not. I hate to intend such arrant paltry, not for fear but for contempt, not for laziness but for weightier business. Good honest youths, spare an old truant, meeter now to play the dumb dog with some ancients than the bawling cur or the hissing snake with you springals. A thousand examples pierce deep, and over-sensibly teach me the miserable inconvenience of such mischief, and the miserable mischief of such inconvenience. Better a peck of troubles than a load of agonies; no plague to irksome vengeance, no joy or treasure to industrious employment; no felicity to a commodious intercourse of sweet study, sweeter conversation, and sweetest action. That wanteth must be supplied, as sufficient as it may; extraordinary encumbrances little need. Time is precious, and would not be prodigally wasted in waste-paper, or contemptuously thrust out by the shoulders. My first letter was in a manner voluntary; my second, in sort necessary; this, wholly superfluous, but violently extorted after the rest; all wearisome unto me, but this most tedious, and anything more would seem intolerable, especially in the invective vein, the little fury of this age & great incendiary of the world, whose unmeasurable outrage I would rather mitigate with twenty insinulative & persuasive orations than any way aggravate with one offensive or defensive letter. Some comical jars may be endured, but no act so joyful as the plaudite, & whatsoever the beginning happeneth to be, I would always wish a pleasant or amicable end, the scope whereat I as diligently aim as any that most religiously affecteth unity. Only my determination is rather to be a sheep in Wolfe's

print than to suffer myself, or my dearest friends, to be made sheep in the wolf's walk, and only my request is that every discreet and courteous mind will as considerately weigh the cause as censoriously note the effect. I hope there neither is, nor shall be, any default committed but may in convenient time be redressed with some reasonable amends, until which time I am not to dedicate anything unto any personage of name but a mind affectionately desirous to honour the worthiest, to reverence the wisest, to commend the learnedest, to embrace the best, to appease the worst, to injury none, to render everyone the uttermost of his desert or other quality. Which mind I entirely recommend unto you all, and you all unto God, whom I beseech to accomplish that which I cannot effect, and even to work a miracle upon the deaf. London, this 11 and 12 of September.

Your affectionate friend, G.H.

GREENE'S MEMORIAL
or
Certain Funeral Sonnets

To the foresaid Master Emanuel Demetrius, Master Christopher Bird, and all gentle wits
that will vouchsafe the reading

SONNET I

His repentance, that meant to call Greene to his answer.

*Alas that I so hastily should come
To terrify the man with fatal dread
That deemed quiet pens or dead or dumb,
And stoutly knocked poor silence on the head.
Enough can say: Dead is the dog of spite;
I that for pity praised him alive,
And smiled to hear him gnar and see him bite,
Am not with sorry carcasses to strive.
The worst I list of famous him report:
Paul's hath the only pregnant author lost.
Ay me, quoth Wit in lamentable sort:
What worthy wight shall now command the roost?
Fame heard the plaint, and pointed at a man
As green as Greene, and white as whitest swan.*

SONNET II

His misfortune, in being spitefully injured by some whom he partially commended.

*Unlucky I, unhappiest on earth,
That fondly doting upon dainty wits,
And deeply ravished with their luring fits,
Of gentle favours find so hard a dearth.
Is it my fate or fault that such fine men
Should their commender so unkindly bite,
That loves to love in spite of rankest spite,
And hates to hate with heart or tongue or pen?
Sweet writers, as ye covet to be sweet,
Nor me, nor other, nor yourselves abuse;
Humanity doth courteously peruse
Each act of friend or foe with favour meet.
Foul devil, and fouler malice, cease to rave;*

For every fault I twenty pardons crave.

SONNET III

His admonition to Greene's companions

*The flourishing and gaily springing wight
That vainly me provoked with vile reproach
Hath done his worst, and hath no more to broach,
Maugre the devil of villainous despite.
I cannot rail, whatever cause to rail;
For charity, I lovingly embrace
That me, for envy, odiously deface,
But in their highest rage extremely fail.
I can do him no harm that is in heaven,
I can do him no good that is in hell,
I wish the best to his survivors fell,
Deeply acquainted with his six and seven;
O be not like to death, that spareth none;
Your greenest flower, and peacock's tail, is gone.*

SONNET IIII

The miserable end of wilful desperateness

*The jolly fly dispatched his silly self;
What stories quaint of many a doughty fly
That read a lecture to the venturous elf,
Yet he will have his lusty swinge, to die.
Courage and stirring wit in time do well,
But that same obstinate desperation,
A furious fiend of self-devouring hell,
Rushing with terrible commination,
(What storm so hideous as rage's spell?)
Concludes with horrible lamentation.
Each blessed tongue accurse malediction,
The ugly mouth of ruthless confusion;
Nothing so dulcetly sweet or kindly dear
As sugared lips and heart's delicious cheer.*

SONNET V

The learned should lovingly affect the learned

*I am not to instruct where I may learn,
 But where I may persuasively exhort,
 Nor over-dissolute, nor over-stern,
 A courteous honesty I would extort.
 Good loathes to damage or upbraid the good;
 Gentle, how lovely to the gentle wight?
 Who seeth not how every blooming bud
 Smileth on every flower fairly dight,
 And biddeth foul ill-favouredness good night.
 Would Alciat's emblem, or some scarlet hood,
 Could teach the pregnant sons of shiny light
 To interbrace each other with delight;
 Fine Mercury conducts a dainty band
 Of charities and muses hand in hand.*

SONNET VI

His palace of pleasure

*I wot not what these cutting huff-snuffs mean.
 Of ale-house daggers I have little skill;
 I borrow not my phrase of knave or quean,
 But am a debtor to the civil quill.
 It is restorative unto my heart
 To hear how gentle Cheke and Smith conversed;
 No daintier piece of delicatest art
 Than cordial stories charmingly rehearsed,
 That whilom rudest woods and stones empierced.
 Who now begins that amiable part?
 Haddon, farewell, and Ascham, thou art stale,
 And every sweetness tastes of bitter bale;
 Oh let me live to interview the face
 Of fair humanity and bounteous grace.*

SONNET VII

His unfeigned wish

*Never Ulysses or Aeneas tired
 With toiling travails and huge afflictions
 As arrant pen and wretched page bemired
 With nasty filth of rank maledictions.
 I seldom call a snarling cur a cur,*

*But wish the gnarring dog as sweet a mouth
 As bravest horse that feeleth golden spur,
 Or shrillest trump that soundeth north or south,
 Or most enchanting siren's voice uncouth.
 Self-gnawing hearts and gnashing teeth of murr,
 How fain would I see Orpheus revived,
 Or Suada's honey-bees in you rehived?
 O most delicious honey-dews, infuse
 Your daintiest influence into their muse.*

SONNET VIII

A continuation of the same wish

*Let them forget their cankered peevishness,
 And say to choler fell: Thou wert our fall;
 Hadst thou not boiled in fretting waywardness,
 We might have laughed at Fortune's tossing ball.
 Choler, content thy malcontented self,
 And clearest humour of right sanguine pure,
 Neatly refined from that felonious elf,
 With Jovial graciousness thyself enure.
 If ever silver conduits were abroach
 Of streaming wit and flowing eloquence,
 Ye floods of milk and honey re-approach,
 And bounteously pour out your quintessence.
 Gently assemble delicacies all,
 And sweetly nectarize this bitter gall.*

SONNET IX

His revival of a former motion, added at the instance of an especial friend

*Were I as meet, as willing, to advise,
 I would in amicable terms entreat
 Some forward wits to change their headlong guise,
 And less in print, and more in mint, to sweat.
 Pythagoras and Apollonius sage,
 Two wonders of capacity divine,
 Trained their followers to temper rage,
 And tongue with curious silence to refine.
 There is a time to speak, a time to write,
 But blessed be the time that sees and hears;
 Let petty stars suppress their twinkling light,*

*And glorious sun advance his beamy peers.
O you of golden mould that shine like sun,
Display your heavenly gifts, and I have done.*

SONNET X

A more particular declaration of his intention

*Yet let affection interpret self;
Arcadia brave and doughty Faerie Queen
Cannot be stained by Ghibelline or Guelph
Or goodliest legend that wit's eye hath seen.
The dainty hand of exquisitest art
And nimble head of pregnantest receipt
Never more finely played their curious part
Than in those lively crystals of conceit.
Other fair wits I cordially embrace,
And that sweet muse of azure dye admire,
And must in every sonnet interlace
The earthly sovereign of heavenly fire.
A fitter place remaineth to implore
Of deepest artists the profoundest lore.*

SONNET XI

His desire to honour excellent perfections in the best

Another addition, inserted at the request of one that might command

*Black art, avaunt! and hail, thrice graceful grace,
That whitest white on earth or heaven exceeds
In purity and sovereignty immense;
Or lock my mouth, or school my infant lips
Resplendent lights of Milky Way to sing,
Rare subjects of thy indulgence supreme.
Yet what should I conspicuous mirrors sing,
That radiantly display their beauteous beams
Of glistening virtue and reshining wit,
The luminaries great of little world?
Folly impossibilities attempts;
Astonishment such brightness best becomes;
Or lend me, Pegasus, thy mounting wings,
And let me hear how choir of angels sings.*

SONNET XII

His court of honour

*Were fine Castilio the heir of grace,
What gallant port more graciously fine,
As dainty Petrarch was sweet siren's son,
What witching tune more Orpheusly sweet,
Him, him, the idee high and deep abyss
Of noble excellence I would proclaim.
But what should drowsy muse of phantoms dream?
Cast glancing eye into Queen Pallas' court,
And scorn the dimness of thy dazzled sight,
Astound with lord and lady grace's view,
Idees how high, abysses how profound
Of valour brave, and admirable worth?
Poor glimmering gems and twinkling stars adieu;
Here, here, the sun and moon of honour true.*

SONNET XIII

His intercession to fame

*Live ever, valorous renowned knights,
Live ever, Smith and Bacon, peerless men,
Live ever, Walsingham, and Hatton wise,
Live ever Mildmay's honourable name.
Ah that Sir Humphrey Gilbert should be dead,
Ah that Sir Philip Sidney should be dead,
Ah that Sir William Sackville should be dead,
Ah that Sir Richard Grenville should be dead,
Ah that brave Walter Devereaux should be dead,
Ah that the flower of knighthood should be dead,
Which, maugre deadliest deaths and stoniest stones
That cover worthiest worth, shall never die.
Sweet fame, adorn thy glorious triumph new,
Or virtues all, and honours all, adieu.*

SONNET XIII

A repetition of the former petition

But virtues all, and honours all, survive,

*And virtues all, and honours all, inflame
 Brave minds to platform, and redoubted hands
 To do such deeds, and such exploits achieve
 As they and they courageously performed,
 Egregious men and memorable knights.
 Ay, memorable knights, whiles sun shall shine
 And teach industrious worth to shine like sun,
 To live in motion and action hot,
 To eternize entelechy divine,
 Where Plutarch's Lives, where Argonautics brave,
 Where all heroic wonderments concur.
 Oh, oh, and oh a thousand times,
 That thirsty ear might hear archangels' rimes.*

SONNET XV

A continuation of the same petition

*Then would I so my melody addulce,
 And so attune my harmony to theirs,
 That fellest fury should confess herself
 Enchanted mightily with charms divine,
 And in the sweetest terms of sacred leagues,
 With pure devotion reconcile her rage.
 Meanwhile I seek and seek, but cannot find
 That jewel rare of preciouslest worth,
 Gentle accord and sovereign repose,
 The paradise of earth and bliss of heaven.
 Be it in earth, O heaven, direct my course;
 Be it in heaven alone, O earth, farewell,
 Or well fare patience, that sweetens sour,
 And rears on hellish earth an heavenly bower.*

SONNET XVI

His professed disdain to answer vanity in some, or to envy prosperity in any

*Some me have spited with a cruel spite,
 But fount of mercy so recleanse my sin,
 As I nor them malign, nor any wight,
 But all good minds affect like dearest kin.
 Small cause I have to scorn in any sort,
 Yet I extremely scorn to answer some
 That banish conscience from their report,*

*And over-wantonly abuse the dumb.
 God keep low countrymen from high disdain,
 Yet I disdain with haughtiest contempt
 To envy any person's fame or gain,
 Or any crooked practice to attempt.
 Jesu, that we should band, like John O'Neill,
 That tenderly should melt in mutual zeal.*

SONNET XVII

His exhortation to atonement and love

*O minds of heaven, and wits of highest sphere,
 Molten most tenderly in mutual zeal,
 Each one with cordial indulgence forbear,
 And bonds of love reciprocally enseal.
 No rose, no violet, no fragrant spice,
 No nectar, no ambrosia so sweet
 As gracious love, that never maketh nice,
 But everyone embraceth, as is meet.
 Magnets and many things attractive are,
 But nothing so allecitive under skies
 As that same dainty amiable star
 That none but grisly mouth of hell defies.
 That star illuminate celestial hearts,
 And who, but rancour, feeleth irksome smarts?*

SONNET XVIII

John Harvey's welcome to Robert Greene

*Come, fellow Greene, come to thy gaping grave,
 Bid vanity and foolery farewell,
 Thou over-long has played the mad-brained knave,
 And over-loud hast rung the bawdy bell.
 Vermin to vermin must repair at last,
 No fitter house for busy folk to dwell;
 Thy cony-catching pageants are past,
 Some other must those arrant stories tell.
 These hungry worms think long for their repast.
 Come on, I pardon thy offence to me,
 It was thy living; be not so aghast;
 A fool and a physician may agree.
 And for my brothers, never vex thyself:*

They are not to disease a buried elf.

SONNET XIX

His apology of himself and his brothers

*Yet fie on lies, and fie on false appeals,
No minister in England less affects
Those wanton kisses that lewd folly steals
Than he whom only ribaldry suspects.
Were I a fool (what man plays not the fool?
The world is full of fools, and full of sects),
Yet was John never spoiled with the tool
That Richard made, and none, but none infects.
The third is better known in court and school
Than thy vain Quip, or my defence shall be.
Whose eye but his that sits on slander's stool
Did ever him in Fleet or prison see?
Loud mentery small confutation needs;
Avaunt, black beast that sows such cursed seeds.*

SONNET XX

His apology of his good father

*Ah my dear father and my parent sweet,
Whose honesty no neighbour can impeach,
That any ruffian should in terms unmeet
To your discredit shamefully outreach.
O rake-hell hand that scribbled him a knave
Whom never enemy did so appeach,
Repent thy wicked self, that didst so rave,
And cancel that which slander's mouth did teach.
Nor every man nor every trade is brave;
Malt, hairs, and hemp and sackcloth must be had.
Truth him from odious imputations save,
And many a gallant gentleman more bad.
Four sons him cost a thousand pounds at least,
Well may he fare, and thou enjoy thy rest.*

SONNET XXI

His charitable hope, and their eternal repose

*Let memory of gross abuses sleep;
 Who overshooteth not in reckless youth?
 Were sins as red as reddest scarlet deep,
 A penitential heart preventeth ruth;
 Well-wishing charity presumes the best,
 Nothing impossible to powerful truth;
 Body to grave, and soul to heaven, addressed,
 Leave upon earth the follies of their youth.
 Some penury bewail, some fear arrest,
 Some Parma's force, some Spaniards' gold adread,
 Some underlie the terrible inquest,
 Some carry a jealous, some a climbing head.
 We that are dead, released from living woes,
 Soundly enjoy a long and long repose.*

SONNET XXII

Lenvoy, or an answer to the gentleman that drunk to Chaucer upon view of the former sonnets and other cantos in honour of certain brave men

*Some tales to tell would I a Chaucer were,
 Yet would I not even now an Homer be,
 Though Spenser me hath often Homer termed,
 And Monsieur Bodin vowed as much as he.
 Envy and Zoilus, two busy wights;
 No petty shade of Homer can appear
 But he the devil, and she, his dam, display,
 And furies fell annoy sweet muses' cheer.
 Nor Martins I, nor counter-Martins, squib;
 Enough ado to clear my simple self,
 Momus gainst heaven, and Zoilus gainst earth,
 A Quip for Ghibelline, and whip for Guelph;
 Or purge this humour, or woe worth the state
 That long endures the one, or other, mate.*

Robertus Grenus, Vtriusq{ue} Academiae Artium Magister, de seipso

*Ille ego, cui risus, rumores, festa, puellae,
 Vana libellorum scriptio, vita fuit:
 Prodigus vt vidi Ver, Aestatemq{ue} furoris,
 Autumno, atque Hyemi, cum Cane dico vale.
 Ingenii bullam; plumam Artis, fistulam Amandi;
 Ecquae non misero plangat auena tono?*

Gabriel Harueius, desideratissimae animae Ioannis fratris

*At Iunioris erat, Seniori pangere carmen
 Funebre, ni Fati lex violenta vetet.
 Quid frustra exclamem, Frater, fraterrime Frater?
 Dulcia cuncta abeunt: tristia sola manent.
 Totus ego Funus, pullato squallidum amictu,
 Quamvis caelicolae, flebile dico vale.*

To the right worshipful, my singular good friend, Master Gabriel Harvey, Doctor of the Laws

*Harvey, the happy above happiest men
 I read, that sitting like a looker-on
 Of this world's stage, dost note with critic pen
 The sharp dislikes of each condition,
 And as one careless of suspicion,
 Ne fawnest for the favour of the great,
 Ne fearest foolish reprehension
 Of faulty men, which danger to thee threat,
 But freely dost of what thee list, entreat,
 Like a great lord of peerless liberty,
 Lifting the good up to high honour's seat,
 And the evil damning evermore to die,
 For life and death is in thy doomful writing,
 So thy renown lives ever by inditing.*

Dublin, this 18th of July, 1586.

Your devoted friend during life, Edmund Spenser.

FINIS