

**The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Third and Last Part of Conny-Catching.
(1592), by Robert Greene**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE THIRD AND LAST PART OF CONNY-CATCHING. (1592) ***

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THE
Third and last part of Conny-catching.

With the new deuised knauish arte of
Foole-taking.

The like coosnages and villanies never before discovered.

By R.G.

[Illustration]

Printed by *T.Scarlet* for *C.Burby*, and are to be solde at his shop vnder S.Mildreds Church in the Poultry. 1592.

TO ALL SVCH AS HAVE receiued either pleasure or profite by the two former published bookes of this Argument: And to all beside, that desire to know the wonderfull slie deuises of this hellish crew of Conny-catchers.

[Illustration: I]

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

contrarie were founde, they were in iustice so sharply proceeded against, as the most hurtfull and dangerous enemies to the commonwealth.

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

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

Yours in all he may

R. G.

[Illustration:]

The third and last part of Conny-catching with the new deuifed knauish Arte of Fooletaking.

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

A pleasant tale howe an honest substantiall Citizen was made a Connie, and simplie entertained a

knaue that carried awaie his goods verie politickly.

What laws are used among this helish crew, what words and termes they give themselves and their copesmates, are at large set downe in the former two Bookes: let it suffise yee then in this, to read the simple true discourses of such as have by extraordinary cunning and treachery beene deceived, and remembering their subtle meanes there, and slye practises here, be prepared against the reaches of any such companions.

Not long since, a crew of Conny-catchers meeting together, and in conference, laying downe such courses as they severally should take, to shunne suspect, and returne a common benfit among them: the Carders received their charge, the Dicers theirs, the hangers about the court theirs, the followers of Sermons theirs and so the rest to their offices. But one of them especiallie, who at their woonted meetings, when reporte was made howe every purchase was gotten, and by what pollycie each one prevailed: this fellowe in a kinde of priding scorne, would usually say.

In faithe Maisters these thinges are prettily done, common sleights, expressing no deepe reache of witte, and I woonder men are so simple to bee so beguiled. I would fayne see some rare and artificall feate indeede, that some admiration and fame might insue the dooing thereof: I promise yee, I disdayne these base and pettie paltries, and may my fortune iumpe with my resolution, yee shall heare my boyes with in a day or two, that I will accomplish a rare stratagem indeed, of more value then fortie of yours, and when it is done shall carry some credit with it. They wondring at his wordes, desired to see the successe of them, & so dispersing themselves as they were accustomed, left this frolicke fellow pondering on his affaires. A Cittizens house in London, which hee had diligently eyed & aymed at for a fortnights space, was the place wherein he must performe this exploit, and having learned one of the servant maides name of the house, as also where shee was borne and her kindred. Upon a sonday in the afternone, when it was her turne to attend on her maister and mistres to the garden in Finsbury fields, to regard the children while they sported about, this craftie mate having dulie watched their comming forth, and seeing that they intended to goe downe S. Laurence lane, stepped before them, ever casting an eye back, least they should turne some contrarie way: but their following still fitting his owne desire, neere unto the Conduit in Aldermanbury, he crossed the way and came unto the maid, and kissing her sayd. Coosen Margeret, I am verie glad to see you well, my unckle your father, and all your friends in the Countrey are in good health God be praised. The Maide hearing herselfe named, and not knowing the man, modestly blushed, which hee perceiving, held way on with her amongst her fellow apprentices, and thus began againe. I see Coosen you knowe mee not, and I doe not greatlie blame you, it is so long since you came foorth of the Countrey, but I am such a ones sonne, naming her Uncle right, and his sonnes name, which she very well remembred, but had not seene him in eleven yeares. Then taking foorth a bowed groat, and an olde pennie bowed, he gave it her as being sent from her Uncle and Aunt, whome hee tearmed to bee his father and mother: Withall (quoth he) I have a Gammon of bacon and a Cheese from my Uncle your Father, which are sent to your Maister and Mistresse, which I received of the Carrier, because my Uncle enioyned me to deliver them, when I must intreat your mistres, that at Whitsontide next shee will give you leave to come downe into the Countrey. The Maide thinking simplie all hee said was true, and as they so farre from their parents, are not onely glad to heare of their welfare, but also rejoyce to see any of their kindred: so this this poor Maid, wel knowing her Uncle had a sonne so named as he called himself, and thinking from a boy (as he was at her leaving the Countrey) he was now growne such a proper handsome young man, was not a little joyful to see him: beside, shee seemed proud, that her kinsman was so neat a youth, and so shee held on questioning with him about her friends: hee soothing each matter so cunningly, as the maide was confidently perswaded of him. In this time, one of the children stepped to her mother and said, Our Marget (mother) hath a fine coosen come out of the Country, and he hath a Cheese for my Father and you: whereon shee looking backe, said: Maide, is that your kinsman? yes forsooth mistresse quoth shee, my Uncles sonne, whome I left a little one when I came forth of the countrey.

The wilye Treacher, beeing maister of his trade, would not let slippe this opportunitie, but courteouslie stepping to the Mistresse (who loving her maid wel, because indeed shee had been a very good servant, and from her first comming to London had dwelt with her, tould her husband therof) coyned such a smooth tale unto them both, fronting it with the Gammon of Bacon and the Cheese sent from their maides Father, and hoping they would giue her leaue at Whitsontide to visit the countrey, as they with verie kinde words entertained him, inuiting him the next night to supper, when he promised to bring with him the Gammon of Bacon and the Cheese. Then framing an excuse of certaine busines in the town, for that time he tooke his leaue of the Maister and Mistresse, and his new Cosen Margaret, who gave many a looke after him (poore wench) as he went, ioying in her thoughts to haue such a kinsman.

On the morrow hee prepared a good Gammon of bacon, which he closed up in a soiled linnen cloth, and sewed an old card vpon it, whereon he wrote a superscription vnto the Maister of the Maide, and at what signe it was to be deliuered, and afterward scraped some of the letters halfe out, that it might

seeme they had bin rubd out in the carriage. A good Cheese he prepared likewise, with inscription accordingly on it, that it could not be discerned, but that some unskillfull writer in the country had done it, both by the grosse proportion of the letters, as also the bad ortographie which amongst plaine husbandmen is verie common, in that they haue no better instruction. So hiring a Porter to carrie them betweene flue and fire in the evening he comes to the cittizens house, and entring the shop, receives them of the Porter, whome the honest meaning Cittizen would have paid for his pains, but this his maids new-found Cosen sayd hee was satisfied already, and so straining courtesse would not permit him: well, vp are carried the Bacon and the Cheese, where God knowes, Margaret was not a little busse, to haue all things fine and neat against her Cosens comming vp, her Mistresse like wise, (as one well affecting her seruant) had prouided verie good cheere, set all her plate on the Cubboorde for shewe, and beautified the house with Cusheons, carpets, stooles and other deuises of needle worke, as at such times diuers will do, to haue the better report made of their credite amongst their seruants friends in the Country, albeit at this time (God wot) it turned to theyr owne after-sorrowing. The maister of the house, to delay the time while Supper was readye, hee likewise shewes this dissembler his shop, who seeing things fadge so pat to his purpose, could question of this sort, and that well enough I warrant you, to discern the best from the worst and their appointed places, purposing a further reache then the honest Cittizen dreamed of: and to bee plaine with ye, such was this occupiers trade, as though I may not name it, yet thus much I dare vtter, that the worst thing he could carry away, was aboue twentie nobles, because hee dealt altogether in whole and great sale, which made this companion forge this kindred and acquaintance, for an hundred pound or twaine was the very least he aimed at. At length the mistresse sendes word supper is on the Table, where vpon vp hee conducts his guest, and after diuers welcomes, as also thanks for the Cheese and Bacon: To the Table they sit, where let it suffice, hee wanted no ordinarie good fare, wine and other knackes, beside much talke of the Countrey, how much his friends were beholding for his Cosen Margaret, to whome by her mistresse leaue hee dranke twise or thrise, and she poore soule dooing the like againe to him with remembrance of her father and other kindred, which he stil smoothed very cunningly. Countenance of talke made them careles of the time which slipped from them faster then they were aware of, nor did the deceiuer hasten his departing, because he expected what indeed followed, which was, that being past tenne of the clocke, and he feigning his lodging to be at Saint Gyles in the field, was intreated both by the goodman and his wife to take a bed there for that night, for fashion sake (though very glad of this offer) hee said he would not trouble them, but giuing them many thanks, would to his lodging though it were further. But wonderfull it was to see how earnest the honest Citizen and his wife laboured to perswade him, that was more willing to staye then they could bee to bid him, and what dissembled willingnesse of departure hee vsed on the other side, to couer the secret villanie intended. Well, at the length with much ado, he is contented to stay, when Margaret and her Mistresse presently stirred to make ready his bed, which the more to the honest mans hard hap, but all the better for this artificial Conny-catcher, was in the same room where they supped, being commonly called their hall, and there indeed stood a verie faire bed, as in such sightly rouses it may easily bee thought, Citizens vse not to haue any thing meane or simple. The mistresse, least her guest should imagine shee disturbed him, suffered all the plate to stand still on the cupbord: and when she perceiued his bed was warmed, and euery thing els according to her mind, shee and her husband bidding him good night: tooke themselues to their chamber, which was on the same floore but inward, hauing another chamber betweene them and the hall, wherw the maides and children had their lodging. So desiring him to call for any thing hee wanted, and charging Margaret to looke it should bee so, to bed are they gone: when the Apprentises hauing brought vp the keyes of the street dore, & left them in their maisters chamber as they were wont to do, after they had said praiers, their evening exercise, to bed go they likewise, which was in a Garret backward ouer their maisters chamber. None are nowe vp but poore Margaret and her counterfeit coosen, whom shee loth to offend with long talke, because it waxed late: after some few more speeches, about their parents and friends in the countrey, shee seeing him laid in bed, and all such thinges by him as shee deemed needfull, with a low courtesie I warrant ye, commits him to his quiet, and so went to bed to her fellowes the maidseruants. Well did this hypocrite perceive the keyes of the doores carried into the goodmans chamber, wherof he being not a litle glad, thought now they would imagine all things sure, and therefore doutlesse sleep the sounder: as for the keyes, hee needed no helpe of them, because such as hee go neuer vnprouided of instruments fitting their trade, & so at this time was this notable trecher. In the dead time of the night when sound sleepe makes the eare vnapt to heare the verie least noyse, he forsaketh his bed, & hauing gotten al the plate bound up together in his cloke, goeth down into the shop, where well remembring both the plate & parcels, maketh vp his pack with some twenty pounds worth of goods more. Then setting to his engin, he getteth the doore off the hinges, and being forth, lifteth close to againe, and so departs, meeting with in a doozen paces, three or foure of his companions that lurked therabouts for the purpose. Their word for knowing each other, as is said, was Quest, and this villains comfortable newes to them, was Twag, signifiyng hee had sped: ech takes a fleece for easier carriage, and so away to Belbrow, which as I haue heard is as they interpret it, the house of a theefe receiuer, without which they can do nothing, and this house with an apt porter to it, standes ready for them al houres of the night: too many such are there in London, the

maisters whereof beare countenance of honest substantiall men, but all their living is gotten in this order, the end of such (though they scape awhile) will be sailing westward in a Cart to Eiborn. Imagine these villanies there in their iollitie, the one porting point by point his cunning deceipt, and the other (fitting his humour) extolling the deede with no meane commendations. But returning to the honest Citizen, who finding in the morning how dearly he paid for a gammon of bacon, and a cheese, and how his kinde courtesie was thus trecherously requited: blames the poore maide, as innocent herein as himselfe, and imprisoning her, thinking so to regaine his owne: grieffe with ill cherishing there shortens her life: And thus ensueth one hard hap upon another, to the great grieffe both of maister and mistresse, when the trueth was knowne, that they so wronged their honest servant: how it may forewarne others, I leave to your owne opinions, that see what extraordinarie devises are now avayed, to beguile the simple and honest liberall minded.

Of a notable knave, who for his cunning deceiving a gentleman of his purse: scorned the name of a Conny-catcher, and would needs be termed a Foole-taker, as maister and beginner Of that new found Arte.

A Crew of these wicked companions, being one day met together in Pauls Church (as that is a usual place of their assemblie, both to determin on their drifts, as also to speed of many a bootie) seeing no likelihood of a good afternoone, so they tearme it either fore-noone or after, when ought is to be done: some dispersed themselves to the plaies, other to the bowling allies and not past two or three stayed in the Church. Quoth on of them, I have vowed not to depart, but something or other Ile haue before I go: my minde giues me, that this place yet will yeelde us all our suppers this night, the other holding like opinion with him, there likewise walked vp and downe, looking when occasion would serue for some Cash. At length they espyed a Gentleman towarde the lawe entring in at the little North doore, and a countrey Clyent going with him in verye hard talke, the Gentleman holding his gowne open with his armes on eyther side as very manie doe, gaue sight of a faire purple velvet purse, which was halfe put vnder his girdle: which I warrant you the resolute fellow that would not depart without some thing, had quicklye espyed. A game, quote hee to his fellows, marke the stand, and so separating themselves walked aloofe, the Gentleman going to the nether steppe of the staires that ascend vp into the Quire, and there he walked still with his client. Oft this crew of mates met together, and said there was no hope of nipping the bong because he held open his gowne so wide, and walked in such an open place. Base knaves, quoth the frolik fellowe, if I say I will have it, I must have it, though hee that owes it had sworne the contrarie. Then looking aside, hee spyed his trugge or queane comming vppe the Church: away, quoth hee to the other, go looke you for some other purchase, this wench and I are sufficient for this. They goe, he lessons the drab in this sort, that shee should to the Gentleman, whose name shee verye well knew, in that shee had holpe to coosen him once before, & pretending to be sent to him from one he was well acquainted with for his councill should give him his fee for auoiding suspition, & so frame some wrong done hir as well inough she could: when her mate (taking occasion as it serued) would woorke the meane, shee should strike, & so they both preuaile. The queane well inured with such courses, because she was one of the most skilful in that profession, walked up and downe alone in the Gentlemans sight, that he might discerne shee stayed to speake with him, and as he turned toward her, hee saw her take money out of her purse, whereby hee gathered some benefite was toward him: which made him the sooner dispatch his other clyent, when shee stepping to him, told such a tale of commendations from his verie friend, that had sent her to him as she said, that hee entertained her very kindly, and giving him his fee, which before her face he put up into his purse, and thrust under his girdle againe: she proceeded to a very sound discourse, whereto he listened with no little attention. The time serving fit for the fellows purpose, he came behind the Gentleman, and as many times one friend wil familiarly with another, clap his hands over his eyes to make him guesse who he is, so did this companion, holding his hands fast over the Gentlemans eyes, sayde: who am I: twise or thrise, in which time the drab had gotten the purse and put it up. The Gentleman thinking it had been some merrie friend of his, reckoned the names of three or foure, when letting him go, the crafty knave dissembling a bashful shame of what he had done, said: By my troth sir I crie ye mercy, as I came in at the Church doore, I took ye for such a one (naming a man) a verie friend of mine, whome you very much resemble: I beseech ye be not angrie, it was verie boldlye done of me, but in penance of my fault, so please yee to accept it, I will bestow a gallon or two of Wine on yee, and so laboured him earnestly to go with him to the taverne, stil alledging his sorow for mistaking him. The Gentleman little suspecting how who am I had handled him, seeing how sorie he was, and seeming to be a man of no such base condition: tooke all in good part, saying: No harme sir, to take one for another, a fault wherein any man may easily erre, and so excusing the acceptation of his wine, because he was busie there with a gentlewoman his friend: the trecher with courtesie departed, & the drab (having what shee would) shortning her tale, hee desiring her to come to his Chamber the next morning, went to the place where her copes-mate and she met, and not long after, divers other of the crue, who bearing in what manner this act was performed,

smiled a good therat, that she had both got the Gentlemans purse, her owne money againe, and his advise for iust nothing. He that had done this tall exploit, in a place so open in view, so hardly to be come by, & on a man that made no meane esteem of his wit: bids his fellowes keepe the worthles name of a Conny-catcher to themselves: for he hence-foorth would bee termed a Foole-taker, and such as could imitate this quaint example of his, (which he would set down as an entrance into that art) should not thinke scorne to become his schollers.

Night drawing on apace, the Gentleman returned home, not al this while missing his purse, but being set at supper, his wife intreated a pint of Sack, which hee minding to send for: drewe to his purse, and seeing it gone, what strange lookes (beside sighs) were betweene him and his wife. I leave to your supposing, and blame them not: for as I have heard, there was seven pound in gold, beside thirtie shillings and od white money in the purse. But in the middle of his grieffe, hee remembered him that said, who am I: Wherewith hee brake foorth into a great laughter, the cause whereof his wife beeing desirous to know, he declared all that passed between him and the deceiuer, as also how sone afterward the queane abreuiated her discourse and followed: so in troth wife (quoth he) betweene who am I and the drab, my purse is gone: let his lesse teach others to looke better to theirs.

An other Tale of a coosening companion, who would needs trie his cunning in this new inuentcd arte, and how by his knauerie (at one instant) he beguiled halfe a dozen and more.

Of late time there hath a certaine base kinde of trade beene vsed, who though diuers poore men, and doubtles honest, apply themselues onely to relieue their need: yet are there some notorious varlets do the same, being compacted with such kinde of people, as this present treatise manifesteth to the world, and what with outward simplicity on the one side, and cunning close treachery on the other, diuers honest Cittizens and day-labouring men, that resort to such places as I am to speake of, onely for recreation as opportunitie serueth, haue beene of late sundry times deceyed of their purses. This trade, or rather vnsufferable loytring qualitie, in singing of Ballets, and songs at the doores of such houses where playes are vsed, as also in open markets and other places of this Cittie, where is most resort: which is nothing els but a slie fetch to draw many together, who listning vnto an harmelesse dittie, afterwarde walke home to their houses with heauie hearts: from such as are heereof true witnesses to their cost, doo I deliuer this example. A subtill fellow, belike imboldned by acquaintance with the former deceit, or els being but a beginner to practise the same, calling certain of his companions together, would try whether he could attaine to be maister of his art or no, by taking a great many of fools with one traine: but let his intent and what els beside, remaine to abide the censure after the mater is heard, and come to Gracious street, where this villanous pranke was performed. A roging mate, & such another with them were there got vpon a stal singing of balets, which belike was some prety toy, for very many gathered about to heare it, & diuers buying, as their affections serued, drew to their purses, & paid the singers for them. The slie mate and his fellowes, who were dispersed among them that stood to hear the songs well noted where euerie man that bought, put up his purse againe, and to such as would not buy, counterfeit warning was sundrie times giuen by the roge and his associate, to beware of the cut-purse, & take to their purses, which made them often feel where their purses were, either in sleeue, hose, or at girdle, to know whether they were safe or no. Thus the crafty copesmates were acquainted with what they most desired, and as they were scatered by shouldring, thrusting, feining to let fall somthing, and other wilie tricks fit for their purpose: heere one lost his purse, there another had his pocket pickt, & to say all in briefe, at one instant, vpon the complaint of one or two that saw their purses were gone, eight more in the same companie, found themselues in like predicament. Some angrie, others sorrowfull, and all greatly discontented, looking about them, knewe not who to suspect or challenge, in that the villaines themselues that had thus beguiled them, made shew that they had sustained like losse. But one angry fellow, more impacient then all the rest, he falls vpon the ballad singer, and beating him with his fists well favouredly, sayes, if he had not listned his singing, he had not lost his purse, and therefore would not be otherwise perswaded, but that they two and the cutpurses were compacted together. The rest that had lost their purses likewise, & saw that so many complaine together: they iump in opinion with the other fellow, & begin to tug & hale the ballad singers when one after one, the false knaves began to shrink away with the purses, by means of some officer then being there present, the two Roges were had before a iustice, and upon his discreete examination made, it was found, that they and the cut-purses were compacted together, and that by this unsuspected villanie, they had deceived many. The one Foole-taker himself, with one or two more of that companie, was not long after apprehended: when I doubt not but they had their reward answerable to their deseruing: for I heare of their iorney westward, but not of their returne: let this forewarne those that listen singing in the streets.

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

A friend of mine sent mee this note, and assuring me the truth thereof, I thought necessary to let it

downe amongst the rest: both for the honest simplicitie on the one side and most cunning knavery used on the other, and thus it was. Two young men of familiar acquaintance, who delighted much in musicke, because themselves therein were somewhat expert, as on the virginals, bandora, lute and such like: were one evening at a common inne of this town (as I have heard) where the one of them shewed his skil on the virginals to the no little contentment of the hearers. Now as divers guests of the house came into the roome to listen, so among the rest entered an artificial Cony-catcher, who as occasion served, in the time of ceasing between the severall toies and fancies he plaid: very much commended his cunning, quick hand, and such qualities praiseworthy in such a professor. The time being come, when these young men craved leaue to depart, this politique varlet stepping to them, desired that they would accept a quarte of Wine at his hande, which hee would most gladlie bestow upon them: besides, if it liked him that played on the Virginals to instruct, hee would helpe him to so good a place, as happily might advantage him for ever. These kind words, delivered with such honest outward shewe, caused the yong men, whose thoughts were free from any other opinion, than to bee as truely and plainly dealt withall as themselves meant, accepted his offer, because hee that played on the Virginals was desirous to have some good place of seruice: & hereupon to the Tauerne they goe, and being set, the wily companion calleth for two pintes of wine, a pinte of white, and a pinte of claret, casting his cloake upon the table, and falling to his former communication of preferring the yong man. The wine is brought, and two cuppes withall, as is the vsuall manner: when drinking to them of the one pinte, they pledge him, not unthankfull for his gentlesse. After some time spent in talke, and as he perceived fit for his purpose, hee takes the other cup, and tastes the other pinte of wine: wherewith he finding fault, that it dranke somewhat harde, sayd, that Rose-water and Sugar would do no harme: whereupon he leaves his seate, saying he was well acquainted with one of the seruants of the house, of whom he could have two penny worth of Rose-Water for a penny, and so of Sugar likewise, wherefore he would step to the barre unto him, so taking the cup in his hand, hee did: the young men neuer thinking on any such treacherie as ensued, in that he seemed an honest man, and beside left his cloake lying on the table by them. No more returns the yonker with Rose-water and Sugar, but stepping cut of doores, unseene of any, goes away roundly with the cup. The young men not a little wondering at his long tarrying, by the comming of the seruants to see what they wanted, who tooke no regarde of his sudden departure, finde themselves there left, not onely to pay for the wine, but for the Cuppe also, being rashlye supposed by the maister and his seruants to be copartners with the treacherous villaine: but their honest behaviour well knowne, as also their simplicity too much abused, well witnessed their innocencie: notwithstanding they were faine to pay for the cup, as afterwarde they did, hauing nothing towards their charge but a thred bare cloake not worth two shillings. Take heede how you drinke wine with any such companions.

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

Not farre from Charing Crosse dwelleth an honest young man, who being not long since married, and having more roomes in his house than himselfe occupyeth, either for terme time, or the Court lying so neere, as divers do, to make a reasonable commoditie, and to ease house-rent, which (as the worlde goeth now to none of the cheapest) letteth forth a chamber or two, according as it may be spared. In an evening but a while since, came one in the manner of a Seruing man to this man and his wife, and he must needes have a Chamber for his Maister, offering so largely, as the bargaine was soone concluded betweene them. His intent was to have fingered some bootie in the house, as by the sequele it may bee likeliest gathered: but belike no fit thing lying abroad, or hee better regarded then happily he would be, his expectation that way was frustrated, yet as a resolute Conny-catcher indeed, that scorneth to attempt without some successe, and rather will pray upon small commoditye, then returne to his fellows disgraced with a lost labor: he summons his wits together, & by a smooth tale over-reached both the man and his wife. He tels them, that his Maister was a captaine late come from the Sea, and had costly apparel to bring thither, which for more earlie carriage, he entreats them lend him a sheet to bind it vp in, they suspecting no ill, because he required their boy should goe with him to helpe him cary the stuffe, the good wife steppes vnto her Chest, where her linnen lay finelie sweetned with Rose leaves and Lavender, and lends him a very good sheete in deed.

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

These liberall promises, prevailing with them that lightlie beleueed, and withall were somewhat couetous of the Sugar and spices: The woman demanded if a couple of pillow-beeres would not serue to bring the sugar and spices in: yes marry (quoth hee) so the Sugar may best be kept by it self, and the spices by themselves. And (quoth hee) because there are many craftie knaues abroad, (greeving that any should be craftier then himselfe) and in the evening the linnen might quicklie bee snatched from the boy: for the more safety, he would carry the sheet and pillow-beeres himselfe, & within an hower or

little more returne with the boy againe, because he would have all things redy before his maister came, who (as he said) was attending on the Councell at the court. The man and his wife crediting his smooth speeches, sends their boy with him, and so along toward Zuie-bridge go they. The Conny-catcher seeing himselfe at free libertie, that he had gotten a very good sheet, and two fine pillow-beeres: steps to the wall, as though he would make water, bidding the boye goe faire and softly on before. The boy doubting nothing, did as hee willed him, when presently he stept into some house hard by fit to entertaine him: and neuer since was hee, his Maister, the Sugar, spices, or the linnen heard off. Manie have beene in this manner deceived, as I heare, let this then giue them warning to beware of any such unprofitable guests.

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

One of the cunning Nippes about the towne, came unto a poore Cutler to have a Cuttle made according to his owne minde, and not aboue three inches would he have both the knife and the haft in length: yet of such pure mettall, as possibly may bee. Albeit the poore man never made the like before, yet being promised foure times the value of his stuffe and paines, he was contented to doe this, and the day being come that hee should deliuer it, the partie came, who liking it exceedingly, gaue him the money promised, which the poore man gladly put up into his purse, that hung at a button hole of his wascoate before his brest, smiling that he was so well paid for so small a trifle: the partie perceiuing his merry countenance, and imagining he gest for what purpose the knife was, sayde, honest man, whereat smile you? By my troth sir (quoth the Cutler) I smile at your knife, because I never made one so litle before: and were it not offensive unto you, I would request to know to what use you will put it too? Wilt thou keepe my counsaile (quoth the Nipe) yea on mine honestie (quoth the Cutler.) Then hearken in thy eare said the Nip, and so rounding with him, cut the poore mans purse that houg at his bosom, he neuer faeling when he did it: with this knife (quoth the Nippe) meane I to cut a purse, marry GOD forbid (quoth the Cutler) I cannot thinke you to be such a kind of man, I see you loue to iest, and so they parted.

The poore man, not so wise as to remember his owne purse, when by such a warning hee might haue taken the offendour dooing the deede, but rather proud (as it were) that his money was so easily earned: walkes to the Alehouse, which was within a house or two of his owne, and finding there three or foure of his neighbors with whom he began to iest very pleasantly: sweares by cocke and pie hee would spend a whole groat uppon them, for hee had gotten it and more, cleerely by a good bargaine that morning.

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

Blanck and all amort sits the poore Cutler, and with such a pittifull countenance, as his neighbours did not a little admire his solemne alteration, and desirous to know the cause thereof, from point to point he discourseth the whole manner of the tragedie, neuer naming his new customer, but with such a farre fetcht sigh, as soule and body would have parted in sunder. And in midst of all his grieffe, he brake forth into these termes. Ile belieue a man the better by his word while I know him, the knife was bought to cut a purse indeed, and I thanke him for it, hee made the first prooffe of the edge with mee. The neigbbours greeving for his losse, yet smiling at his folly to be so overreached, were faine to pay the groate the Cutler called in, because he had no other money about him, and spent as much more beside to driue away his heauinesse.

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

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

A good fellow that was newly entered into the nipping craft, and had not as yet attained to any acquaintance with the chiefe and cunning maisters of that trade: In the Christmas holy-dayes last, came to see a playe at the Bull within Bishops gate, there to take his benefit as time and place would permit him. Not long had hee stayed in the prease, but hee had gotten a yoong mans purse out of his pocket, which when he had, hee stepped into the stable to take out the money, and to conuey away the purse.

But looking on his commoditie, hee founde nothing therein but white counters, a thimble and a broken three pence, which belike the fellowe that ought it, had doone of purpose to deceiue the cutpurse withall, or else had plaide at the Cardes for counters, and so carried his winnings about him till his next sitting to playe. Somewhat displeas'd to be so ouertaken, he looked aside, and spied a lustie youth entring at the doore, and his drab with him; this fellowe he had heard to bee one of the finest Nippers about the towne, and euer caried his queane with him, for conueiance when the stratagem was performed: he puts up the counters into the purse againe, and follows close to see some peece of their seruice. Among a companie of seemely men was this lustie companion and his minion gotten, where both they might best beholde the playe, and work for aduantage, and ever this young Nip was next to him, to mark when he should attempt any exployte, standing as it were more then halfe between the cunning Nip and his drab, onely to learne some part of their skill. In short time the deed was performed, but how, the young Nip could not easily discern, only he felt him shift his hand toward his trug, to convey the purse to her, but she being somewhat mindful of the play, because a merriment was then on the stage, gaue no regarde: whereby thinking he had puld her by the coat, hes twicht the young Nip by the cloke, who taking advantage of this offer, put downe his hand and receiued the purse of him: then counting it discourtesse to let him loose al his labour, he softly pluckt the queane by the coate, which shee feeling, and imagining it had beene her companions hand: receiued of him the first purse with the white counters in it. Then fearing least his stay should hinder him, and seeing the other intended to have more purses ere he departed: away goes the young Nip with the purse he got to eastiy, wherein (as I haue heard) was xxvii. shillings and odde mony, which did so much content him, as that he had beguiled so ancient a stander in that profession: what the other thought when he found the purse, and could not gesse howe hee was coosened: I leave to your censures, onely this makes me smile, that one false knave can beguile another, which biddes honest men looke the better to their purses.

How a Gentleman was craftily deceived of a Chayne of Golde and his pursse, in Paules Church in London.

A Gentleman of the countrey, who (as I have herd since the time of his mishap, whereof I am now to speake) had about halfe a yeere before buryed his wife, and belike thinking wel of some other Gentlewoman, whom hee ment to make account of as his second choice: upon good hope or other wife persuaded, he came up to London to provide himselfe of such necessaries as the Countrey is not usually stored withall. Besides, silkes, veluets, cambricks and such like, he bought a Chaine of Golde that cost him fiftie and seaven pounds and odde money, whereof because he would have the mayden head or first wearing himselfe, hee presently put it on in the Goldsmiths shop, and so walked therewith about London, as his occasions serued. But let not the Gentleman bee offended, who if this Booke come to his handes, can best auouch the trueth of this discourse, if heere by the ways I blame his rash pride, or simple credulitie: for betweene the one and other, the Chaine hee paide so deere for about ten of the clock in the morning, the Cunny catchers the same day ere night shared amongst them, a matter whereat hee may well greeve and I be sorie, in respect hee is my very good friend: but to the purpose. This Gentleman walking in Paules, with his Chaine faire glittering about his necke, talking with his man about some businesse: was well viewed and regarded by a crewe of Conny-catchers, whose teeth watred at his goodly Chaine, yet knew not how to come by it hanging as it did, and therefore entred into secret conspiracy among themselves, if they could not come by all the Chaine, yet how they might make it lighter by halfe a score poundes at the least. Still had they their eyes on the honest Gentleman, who little doubted any such treason intended against his so late bought bargaine: and they hauing laid their plot, ech one to be assistant in this enterprise, saw when the Gentleman dismissed his servant, to go about such affaires as hee had appointed him, himselfe still walking there up and downe the middle Isle. One of these mates, that stood most on his cunning in these exploytes, folowed the serving man foorth of the Church calling him by diuers names, as John, Thomas, William, &c. as though he had knowne his right name, but could not hit on it: which whether he did or no I know not, but wel I wot the seruingman turned back again, and seeing him that called him seemed a Gentleman, booted and cloaked after the newest fashion, came with his hat in his hand to him, saying: Sir, do ye call me? Marie doe I my frend quoth the other, doost not thou serue such a Gentleman? and named one as himselfe pleased. No truly Sir, answered the seruingman, I know not any such Gentleman as you speake of. By my troth replied the Conny-catcher, I am assured I knew thee and thy Maister, though now I cannot suddenly remember my selfe. The seruingman fearing no harme, yet fitting the humour of this trecherous companion, tolde right his Masters name whome he served, and that his Master was even then walking in Paules. O Gods will (quoth the Conny-catcher, repeating his masters name) a very honest Gentleman, of such a place is he not? naming a shire of the Country: for hee must knowe both name, Country and sometimes what Gentlemen dwell neere the partie that is to bee over reached, ere hee can proceed. No in deede Sir (answered the seruingman, with such reverence as it had beene to an honest Gentleman indeed) my Master is of such a place, a mile from such a Towne, and heard by such a knights house: by which report the deceiver was halfe instructed, because though he was ignorant of the fellows Master, yet wel he knew the Country, and the knight named. So crauing pardon that he had

mistaken him, he returns againe into the Church, and the servingman trudgeth about his assigned busines. Being come to the rest of the crew, he appointes one of them (whome he knew to be expert in deed), to take this matter in hand, for him self might not do it, least the servingman should return and know him, he schooled the rest likewise what euery man should do when the pinch came, and changing his cloke with one of his fellowes, walked by himselve attending the feate: and every one being as ready, the apointed fellow makes his sally foorth, and comming to the Gentleman, calling him by his name, giues him the courtesie and embrace, likewise thanking him for good choere he had at his house, which he did with such seemly behaviour & protestation, as the Gentleman (thinking the other to be no lesse) used like action of kindnesse to him. Now as Country Gentlemen haue many visiters both with neere dwelling neighbours, and freends that iourney from farre, whom they can hardly remember, but some principall one that serues as countenance to the other: so hee not discrediting the cunning mates words, who still at every point alleaged his kinred to the knight neighbor to the Gentleman, which the poore serving man had (doubting no ill) reuealed before, and that both there and at his owne house in hawking time with that knight and other Gentlemen of the countrey he had liberally tasted his kindnes: desiring pardon that he had forgotten him, and offered him the curtesie of the citie. The Conny-catcher excused himselve for that time, saying, at their next meeting hee would bestow it on him. Then seeming to have espyed his chaine, and commending the fairenes and woorkemanship thereof: saies, I pray ye sir take a litle counsel of a friend, it may be you will returne thanks for it. I wonder quoth he, you dare weare such a costly Jewell so open in sight, which is euen but a baite to entice bad men to adventure time and place for it, and no where sooner then in this cittie, where (I may say to you) are such a number of Connycatchers, Cossoners and such like, that a man can scarcely koepe any thing from them, they have so many reaches and sleights to beguile withall: which a very especiall freend of mine found too true not manye dayes since. Weereupon he tolde a very solemne tale, of villanies and knaveries in his own profession, whereby he reported his freeend had lost a watch of gold; shewing how closely his friend wore it in his bosome, and howe straungely it was gotten from him, that the gentleman by that discourse wared halfe affraid of his chaine. And giving him many thanks for his good warning, presently takes the Chaine from about his necke, and tying it up fast in a handkercher put it up into his sleeue saying. If the Conny-catcher get it heere, let him not spare it. Not a little did the tretcher smile in his sleeue, hearing the rashe securitie, but in deede simplicitie of the Gentleman, and no sooner sawe he it put vp, but presently he counted it sure his owne, by the assistance of his complices, that lay in an ambuscado for the purpose: with embraces and courtesies on either side, the Conny-catcher departs, leaving the gentleman walking there still: whereat the crewe were not a little offended, that he still kept in the Church, and would not goe abroad. Well, at length (belike remembring some businesse) the Gentleman taking leave of an other that talked with him, hasted to go forth at the furthest west doore of Paules, which he that had talked with him, and gave him such counsell perceiuing, hied out of the other doore, and got to the entrance ere hee came foorth, the rest following the gentleman at an inche. As hee was stepping out, the other stept in, and let fall a key, hauing his hat so low ouer his eyes, that he could not well discerne his face, and stooping to take up the key, kept the Gentleman from going backward or forward, by reason his legge was ouer the threshold. The formost Conny-catcher behind, pretending a quarrell vnto him that stooped, rapping out an oth, and drawing his dagger, saide: Doe I meete the villaine? Nay, he shall not scape me now, and so made offer to strike him.

The gentleman at his standing up, seeing it was he that gaue him such good counsaile, and pretended himselve his verie friend, but neuer imagining this traine was made for him: stept in his defence, when the other following tript vp his heeles: so that hee and his counsellour were downe together, and two more uppon them, striking with their daggers verie eagerly, marry indeed the gentleman had most of the blowes, and both his handkercher with the chaine, and also his pursse with three and fiftie shillings in it, were taken out of his pocket in this strugling, euen by then man that himself defended.

It was maruellous to behold, how not regarding the Villaines wordes uttered before in the Church, nor thinking uppon the charge about him (which after hee had thus treacherouslye lost unwittingly): he stands pacifyng them that were not discontented, but onely to beguile him. But they vowing that they would presently go for their weapons, and so to the field, told the Gentleman he laboured but in vaine, for fight they must and would, and so going downe by Paules Chaine, left the gentleman made a Conny going up toward Fleet-street, sorry for his new Counsellor and freend, and wishing him good lucke in the fight: which in deede was with nothing but wine pots, for ioy of their late gotten bootie. Neere to Saint Dunstones church the Gentleman remembred himself, and feeling his pocket so light had suddenly more greefe at his hart, then euer happen to him or any man againe. Backe he comes to see if hee could espye anye of them, but they were farre inoughe from him: God send him better hap when he goes next a wooing, and that this his losse may bee a warning to others.

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

Within the Cittie of London, dwelleth a worldly man, who hath very great dealing in his trade, and his shoppe very well frequented with customers: had such a shrewd mischance of late by a Conny-catcher, as may well serue for an example to others least they haue the like. A cunning villaine, that had long time haunted this Cittizens house, and gotten many a cheat which he carryed away safely: made it his custome when hee wanted money, to helpe him selfe euer where hee had so often, diuers things he had which were neuer mist, especially such as appertained to the Cittizens trade, but when anye were found wanting, they could not deuise which way they were gone, so pollitiquely this fellowe alwayes behaued himselfe, well knew hee what times of greatest businesse this Cittizen had in his trade, and when the shop is moft stored with Chapmen: then would he step up the stares (for there was and is another doore to the house besides that which entreth into the shoppe) and what was next hand came euer away with. One time above the rest, in an evening about Candlemas, when day light shuts in about five of the clocke, hee watched to doe some feate in the house, and seeing the mistresse goe foorth with her maide, the goodman and his folkes very busie in the shop: up the staires he goes as he was wonte to doo, and lifting up the latch of the hall portall doore, saw no body neere to trouble him, when stepping into the next chamber, where the Cittizen and his Wife usually lay, at the beds feete there stood a handsome truncke, wherein was verye good linnen, a faire gilte Salte, two silver French bowles for Wine, two silver drinking pots, a stone Jugge covered with silver, and a doosen of silver spoones. This truncke hee brings to the stayres head, and making fast the doore, againe, drawes it downe the stepes so softlye as hee could, for it was so bigge and heavy, as he could not easilie carry it, hauing it out at the doore, unseene of anye neighbour or any body else, he stood strugling with it to lift it up on the stall, which by reason of the weight trobled him very much. The goodman comming foorth of his shop, to bid a customer or two farwell, made the fellowe affraide he should now bee taken for all together: but calling his wittes together to escape if he could, he stoode gazing up at the signe belonging to the house, as though hee were desirous to know what signe it was: which the Cittizen perceiving, came to him and asked him what he sought for? I looke for the signe of the blew bell sir, quoth the fellowe, where a gentleman hauing taken a chamber for this tearme time, hath sent me hether with this his Troncke of apparrell: quoth the Citizen I know no such signe in this street, but in the next (naming it) there is such a one indeed, and there dwelleth one that letteth foorth Chambers to Gentlemen. Truly sir quoth the fellowe, thats the house I should goe to, I pray you sir lend me your hand, but to help the Trunck on my back, for I thinking to ease me a while vpon your stall, set it shorte, and now I can hardly get it vp againe. The Cittizen not knowing his owne Truncke, but indeede neuer thinking on any such notable deceite: helps him vp with the Truncke, and so sends him away roundly with his owne goods. When the Truncke was mist, I leaue to your conceits what housholde greefe there was on all sides, especially the goodman himselfe, who remembring how he helpt the fellow vp with a Truncke, perceiued that heereby hee had beguiled himselfe, and loste more then in haste hee should recouer againe. Howe this may admonish others, I leaue to the iudgement of the indifferent opinion, that see when honest meaning is so craftily beleagerd, as good foresight must bee vsed to preuent such daungers.

How a Broker was cunningly ouer-reached by as craftie a knaue as himselfe, and brought in danger of the Gallowes.

It hath beene vsed as a common by-word, a craftie knaue needeth no Broker, whereby it should appeare that there can hardlie bee a craftier knaue than a Broker. Suspend your iudgements till you haue heard this Discourse ensuing, and then as you please, censure both the one and the other.

A Ladie of the Countrie sent vp a seruant whome she might well put in trust, to prouide hir of a gowne answerable to such directions as she had giuen him, which was of good price, as may appear by the outside and lace, whereto doubtlesse was euerie other thing agreeable: for the Tayler had seuenteen yards of the best black satten could be got for monie, and so much golde lace, beside spangles, as valued thirteene pound, what else was beside I know not, but let it suffice, thus much was lost, and therefore let vs to the manner bow.

The satten and the lace being brought to the Tayler that should make the gowne, and spread abroade on the shop boord to be measured, certaine good fellowes of the Conny-catching profession chanced to go by, who seeing so rich lace, and so excellent good satten, began to commune with themselues how they might make some purchase of what they had seene: and quickly it was to bee done or not at al. As euer in a crew of this quality, there is some one more ingenious and politique then the rest, or at least wise that couets to make himselfe more famous then the rest: so this instant was there one in this companie that did sweare his cunning should deepelie deceiue him, but he would haue both the lace and satten, When hauing laid the plot with his companions, how and which waie their helpe might stand them in stead, this they proceeded.

Well noted they the seruing-man that stood in the shoppe with the Tailer, and gathered by his diligent attendance, that he had some charge of the gowne there to be made, wherefore by him must they worke their trecherie intended, and vse him as an instrument to beguile himselfe. One of them sitting

in a seate nere vnto the Tailers stall, could easily heare the talke that passed betweene the seruing-man and the Tayler, where among other communication, it was concluded that the gowne should be made of the selfe same fashion in euery point, as another Ladies was who then lay in the citie, and that measure being taken by her, the same would sirlie serue the Lady for whome the gowne was to bee made: now the seruingman intended to go speake with the Ladie, and uppon a token agreed betweene them (which he careleslie spake so lowd, that the Conny-catcher heard it) he would as her leisure serued, certifie that Tailer, and he should bring the stuffe with him, to haue the Ladies opinion both of the one and the other.

The seruingman being gone about his affaires, the subtile mate that has listned to all their talke, acquaints his fellows both with the determination and token appointed for the Tailers comming to the Lady. The guide and leader to all the rest for villany, though there was no one but was better skilde in such matters then honestie: he appoints that one of them should go to the tauerne, which was not farre off, & laying two fagots on the fire in a roome by himselfe, and a quarte of wine filled for countenance of the treacherie: another of that crue should giue atteudance on him, as if hee were his maister, being bare headed, and sir humblie answering at euery word. To the tauern goes this counterfet gentleman, and his seruant waiting on him, where euery thing was performed as us before rehearsed. When the master knaue calling the drawer, demanded if there dwelt neere at hand a skillfull Tailer, that could make a suite of veluet for himselfe, marry it was to be doone with very great speed.

The Drawer named the Tailer that we now speake of, & upon the drawers commending his cunning, the man in all hast was sent for to a gentleman, for who he must make a sute of veluet forthwith. Upon talke had of the stuffe, how much was to be bought of everything appertayning thereto: he must immediatly take measure of this counterfet gentleman, because he knew not when to returne that waye againe, afterward they would go to the Mercers. As the Tailer was taking measure on him bare headed, as if he had bin a substantiall gentleman indeed, the craftie mate had cunningly gotten his pursse out of his pocket, at the one string whereof was fastened a little key, and at the other his signet ring: This bootie he was sure of all readie, whether he should get any thing els or no of the mischief intended, stepping to the window he cuts the ring from the pursse, and by his supposed man (rounding him in the eare) sendes it to the plot-layer of this knauerie, minding to traine the tailer along with him, as it were to the mercers, while he the meane time tooke order for the other matter. Afterward speaking alowde to his man, Sirrha, quoth hee, dispatch what I bad you, and about foure of the clock meet me in Paules, by that time I hope the tailer and I shall have dispatch. To Cheapside goeth the honest Tailer with this notorious dissembler, not missing his pursse for the space of two houres after, in lesse then halfe which time the satten and golde lace was gotten likewise by the other villain from the Taylers house in this order.

Being sure the Tayler should bee kept absent, hee sends another mate home to his house, who abused his servants with this devise: that the ladies man had met their master abroad, and had him to the other Ladie to take measure of her, and least they should delaye the time too long, hee was sent for the satten and lace, declaring the token appointed, and with all giving their masters signet ring for better confirmation of his message, The servants could doe no lesse then deliuer it, being commanded (as they supposed) by so credible testimony: neither did the leasure of anie one serue to goe with the the messenger, who seemed an honest young Gentleman and carried no cause of distrust in his countenance: wherefore they delivered him the lace and satten folded up together as it was, and desired him to will their master to make some speede home, both for cutting out of worke, and other occassions.

To a Broker fit for their purpose, goes this deceiuer with the satten lace, who knowing well they could not come honestly by it, nor anie thing else hee bought of that crew, as often before he had dealt much with them: either gaue them not so much as they would haue, or at least as they iudged they could haue in another place, for which the ring-leader of this coosnage, vowed in his mind to be reuenged on the Broker. The master knaue who had spent two houres and more in vaine with the Tailer, and would not like of anie veluet he saw, when he percieued that he mist his purse, and could not deuise how or where he had lost it, shewed himselfe verie sorrie for his mishap, and said in the morning he would send the veluet home to his house, for he knew where to speed of better then anie he had seene in the shops. Home goes the Tailer verie sadly, where he was entertained with a greater mischance, for there was the Ladies seruing-man swearing and stamping, that he had not seen their master since the morning they parted, neither had hee sent for the satten and lace, but when the seruantes insisted their innocencie, beguiled both with the true token rehearsed, and their masters ring, it exceedeth my cunning to set downe answerable wordes to this exceeding grieffe and amazement on their part, but most of al the honest Tailer, who sped the better by the Brokers wilfulnes, as afterward it happened, which made him the better brooke the losse of his purse. That night all means were used that could bee, both to the Mercers, brokers, goldsmiths, goldfiners, & such like, where happily such things doe come to bee solde: but all was in vaine, the onely helpe came by the inuenter of this villanie, who scant

sleeping all night, in regard of the brokers extreme gaining, both by him and those of his profession: the next morning he came to the Tailers house, at what time hee espied him with the Ladies seruing-man, comming forth of the doores, and into the tauern he went to report what a mishap hee had upon the sending for him thether the daie before.

As he was but newly entered his sadde discourie, in comes the partie offended with the broker, and hauing heard all (whereof none could make better report than himselfe) he takes the tailer and seruing-man aside, and pretending great grieffe for both their causes, demands what they would thinke him worthy of that could help them to their good againe. On condition to meete with such a friend, offer was made of fiue pound, and after sundrie speeches passing between them alone, he seeming that he would worke the recouerie thereof by arte, and they premising not to disclose the man that did the good, he drew forth a little booke out of his bosome, whether it was latine or english it skilled not, for hee could not reade a word on it, then desiring them to spare him alone a while, they shoulde perceiue what hee woulde doe for them. Their heartes encouraged with some good hope, kept all his wordes secret to themselues: and not long had they sitten absent out of the roome, but he called them in againe and seeming as though he had been a scholler in deed, sayd he found by his figure that a broker in such a place had their goods lost, and in such a place of the house they should finde it, bidding them go thether with all speed, and as they found his wordes, so (with referring to themselues how they came to knowledge therof) to meet him there againe in the euening, and reward him as he had deserued.

Awaie in hast goes the Tailor and the seruing-man, and entering the house with the Constable, found them in the place where hee that reueald it, knew the broker alwaie laid such gotten goods. Of their ioy againe, I leaue you to coniecture, and thinke you see the broker with a good paire of bolts on his heele, readie to take his farewell of the worlde in a halter, when time shall serue. The counterfet cunning man, and artificial conny-catcher, as I heard, was paide his fiue poundes that night. Thus one craftie knaue beguiled another, let each take heed of dealing with anie such kind of people.

FINIS.

[Illustration]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE THIRD AND LAST PART OF CONNY-CATCHING. (1592) ***

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