

# Renascence Editions

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Editions

## A Notable Discouery of Coosnage

Robert Greene

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A  
Notable Discouery of Coosnage,  
*Now daily practised by sundry lewd per-*  
*sons, called Connie-catchers, and*  
Crosse-biters.

Plainely laying open those pernicious sleights that hath brought many ignorant men to confusion.

*Written for the general benefit of all Gentlemen, Citizens, Aprentises, Countrey Farmers and yeomen, that may hap to fall into the company of such coosening companions.*

*With a delightfull discourse of the coosnage of colliers.*

Nascimur pro patria. By R. Greene, Maister of Arts.

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L O N D O N

Printed by Iohn Wolfe for T.N. and are to be sold ouer  
against the great South doore of Paules. 1 5 9 1.

TO THE YONG GENTLEMEN,  
Marchants, Apprentises,  
*Farmers, and plain Countyreymen*  
HEALTH

DIOGENES, *Gentlemen, from a counterfeit Coiner of money, became a currant corrector of manners, as absolute in the one, as dissolute in the other: time refineth mens affects, and their humors grow different by the distinction of age. Poore Ouid that amorously writ in his youth the art of loue, complained in his exile amongst the Getes of his wanto[n] follies. And Socrates age was vertuous thogh his prime was licentious. So, Gentlemen, my younger yeeres had vncertaine thoughtes, but now my ripe daies cals on to repentant deedes, and I sorrow as much to see others wilful, as I delighted once to be wanton. The odde mad-caps I haue beene mate too, not as a companion, but as a spie to haue an insight into their knaueries, that seeing their traines I might eschew their snares : those mad fellowes I learned at last to loath, by their owne gracelesse villenies, and what I saw in them to their confusion, I can forewarne in others to my countries commodity. None could decipher Tyranisme better then Aristippus, not that his nature was cruell, but that he was nurtured with Dionisius: The simple swaine that cuts the Lapidaries stones, can distinguish a Ruby from a Diamond onely by his labour: though I haue not practised their deceits, yet conuersing by fortune, and talking vppon purpose with such copes-mates, hath geuen mee light into their conceiptes, and I can decipher their qualities, though I utterly mislike of their practises. To be briefe Gentlemen, I haue seen the world and rounded it, though not with trauell, yet with experience, and I crie out with Salomon, Omnia sub sole vanitas. I haue smyled with the Italian, and worne the vipers head in my hand, and yet stopt his venome. I haue eaten Spanishe Mirabolanes, and yet am nothing the more metamorphosed. Fraunce, Germanie, Poland, Denmarke, I knowe them all, yet not affected to any in the fourme of my life; onelie I am English borne, and I haue English thoughts, not a deuill incarnate because I am Italianate, but hating the pride of Italic, because I know their peeuishnes : yet in all these Countreyes where I haue trauelled, I haue not seene more excesse of vanitie then wee Englishe men practise through vain glory: for as our wits be as ripe as any, so our willes are more ready then they all, to put in effect any of their licentious abuses : yet amongst the rest, letting ordinary sinnes passe, because custome hath almost made them a law, I will onely speake of two such notable abuses, which the practitioners of th[m] shadow wiith the name of Arts, as neuer haue been heard of in any age before. The first and chiefe, is called the Art of Cunny catching; the second, the Arte of Cros-biting; two such pestilent and preiudiciall practises, as of late haue been the ruine of infinite persons, and the subuersion and ouerthrow of many Marchaunts, Farmers, and honest minded yeomen. The first is a deceit at Cardes, which growing by enormitie into a Coosenage, is able to draw (by the subtill shewe thereof) a man of great iudgement to consent to his owne confusion. Yet Gentlemen when you shall reade this booke, written faithfullie to discover these coosening practises, thinke Igoe not about to disproue or disalow the most auncient and honest pastime or recreation of Card play, for thus*

*much I know by reading : When the Cittie of Thebes was besieged by them of Lacedemonia, being girt within strong fenced walles, and hauing men enough, and able to rebat the enemie, they found no inconuenience of force to breed their ensuing bane, but famine, in that when victuals waxed scant, hunger would either make them yeeld by a fainting composition, or a miserable death. Whereuppon to wearie the foe with wintering at the siedge, the Thebanes deuised this pollicie, they found out the Method of Cards and Dice, and so busied their braines with the pleasantnesse of that new inuention, passing away the time with strange recreations and pastimes, beguyling hunger with the delight of the new sports, and eating but euery third day, and playing two, so their frugal sparing of victuals kept them from famine, the Cittie from sacking, and raysed the foe from a mortall siedge. Thus was the vse of Cards and Dice first inuented, and since amongst Princes highly esteemed, and allowed in all commonwealths, as a necessarie recreation for the mind: But as in time and malice of mans nature hatcheth abuse, so good things by ill wits are wrested to the worse, and so in Cardes: for from an honest recreation, it is grown to a preiudiciall practise, and most high degree of coosenage, as shalbe discovered in my Art of Cuny-catching, for not onely simple swaines, whose wits is in their hands, but yoong Gentlemen, and Marchants, are all caught like Gunnies in the hay, and so led like lambs to their confusion.*

*The poore man that commeth to the Tearme to trie his right, and layeth his land to morgadge to gette some Crownes in his purse to see his Lawyer, is drawn in by these diuelish Gunny-catchers, that at one cut at Gardes looseth all his money, by which meanes, he, his wife and children, is brought to vtter ruine and miserie. The poore Prentice, whose honest minde aymeth only at his Maisters profiles, by these pestilent vipers of the commonwealth, is smoothly intised to the hazard of this game at Cardes, and robd of his Maisters money, which forceth him oft times eyther to run away, or banckrout all, to the ouerthrow of some honest and wealthy Cittizen. Seeing then such a daungerous enormity groweth by them, to the discredite of the estate of England, I would wishe the iustices appoynted as seuerer Censors of such fatall mischiefes, to shewe themselues patres patriæ, by weeding out such worms as eat away the sappe of the Tree, and rooting this base degree of Cooseners out of so peaceable and prosperous a countrey, for of all diuelish practises this is the most preiudicial. The high Lawyer that challengeth a purse by the high way side, the foist, the nip, the stale, the snap, I meane the pick-pockets and cut-purses are nothing so daungerous to meete with all, as these Coosening Gunny-catchers. The Chetors that voith their false Dice make a hande, & strike in at Hazard or Passage with their Dice of aduauntage, are nothing so daungerous as these base minded Cater-pillers. For they haue their vies and their reuies vppon the poore Cunnies backe, till they so ferrette beate him, that they leaue him neither haire on his skin, nor hole to harbour in. There was before this many yeeres agoe, a practise put in vse by such shifting companions, which was called the Earnards Law, wherein as in the Arte of Gunny-catching, four persons were required to perfourm their coosning commodity. The Taker vp, the Verser, the Barnard and the Rutter, and the manner of it indeed was thus. The Taker vp seemeth a skilful man in al things, who hath by long trauell learned without Booke a thousand pollicies to insinuate himselfe into a mans acquaintance: Talke of matters in law, he hath plenty of Casis at his fingers ends, and he hath seene, and tryed, and ruled in the Kinges Courtes: Speake of grasing and husbandry, no man knoweth more shires than hee, nor better which way to raise a gainefull commodity, and how the abuses and ouerture of prices might be redressed. Finally, enter into what discourse they list, were it into a Brommemans facultie, hee knoweth what gaines they haue for olde Bootes and Shooes: Yea, and it shall scape him hardly, but that ere your talke breake off, hee will be your Countrey man at least, and peradventure either of kinne, aly, or some stale sib to you, if your reach farre surmount not his. In case hee bring to*

*passee that you be glad of his acquaintance, then doeth hee carry you to the Tauernes, and with him goes the Verser, a man of more worshipping then the Taker vp, and hee hath the countenance of a landed man. As they are set, comes in the Barnard stumbling into your compaign, like some aged Farmer of the Countrey, a stranger vnto you all, that had beene at some market Towne therabout, buying and selling, and there tyled so much Malmesie, that he had neuer a ready woord in his mouth, and is so carelesse of his money, that out he throweth some fortie Angels on the boards end, and standing somewhat aloofe, calleth for a pint of wine, and saith : Masters, I am somewhat bold with you, I pray you be not grieued if I drinke my drinke by you: and thus ministers such idle drunken talke, that the Verser who counterfeited the landed man, comes and drawes more neare to the plaine honest dealing man, and prayeth him to call the Barnard more neare to laugh at his follie. Betweene them two the matter shal be so workemanly conueied and finely argued, that out commeth an old paire of Cardes, whereat the Barnard teacheth the Verser a new game, that hee saies cost him for the learning two pots of Ale not two houres agoe, the first wager is drinke, the next two pence or a groat, and lastly to be briefe they use the matter so, that he that were an hundred yeere olde, and neuer played in his life for a penny, cannot refuse to be the Versers halfe, and consequently at one game at Cardes, hee looseth all they play for, be it a hundred pound. And if perhaps when the mony is lost (to vse their word of Arte) the poore Countrey man beginne to smoake them, and swears the drounken knaue shall not gette his money so, then standeth the Rutter at the doore and draweth his sword and picketh a quarrell at his owne shadowe, if he lacke an Osier or a Tapster or some other to brabble with, that while the streets and company gather to the fray, as the manner is, the Barnard steales away with all the coine, and gets him to one blinde Tauerne or other, where these Cooseners had appointed to meete.*

*Thus Gentlemen I haue glaunst at the Barnardes Lawe, which though you may perceiue it to bee a preiudiciall insinuating coosenage, yet is the Art of Gunny-catching so farre beyond it in subtiltie, as the deuill is more honest then the holiest Angell: for so vnlikelie is it for the poore Cunny to leese, that might he pawn his stake to a pound, he would lay it that he cannot be crosbitten in the cut at cards, as you shall perceiue by my present discoverie. Yet Gentlemen am I sore threatned by the hucksters of that filthie facultie, that if I sette their practises in print, they will cut off that hande that writes the Pamphlet, but how I feare their brauadoes, you shall perceiue by my plaine painting out of them, yea, so little doe I esteeme such base minded braggardes, that were it not I hope of their amendment, I would in a schedule set downe the names of such coosening Cunny-catchers. Well, leauing them and their course of life to the honourable and the worshipfull of the lande, to be censors of with iustice, haue about for a blowe at the Art of Cros-biting: I meane not Cros biters at dice, when the Chetor with a langret, cut contrarie to the vantage, will cros-bite a bard cater tray: Nor I meane not when a broaking knaue cros-biteth a Gentleman with a bad commoditie : nor when the Foyst, the pick-pockets (sir reuerence I meane) is cros-bitten by the Snap, and so smoakt for his purchase: nor when the Nip, which the common people call a Cut-purse, hath a cros-bite by some brybing officer, who threatening to carry him to prison, takes away all the mony, and lets him slippe without any punishment: But I meane a more dishonourable Arte, when a base Roague, eyther keepeth a whore as his friende, or marries one to be his mainteyner, and with her not onely cros-bites men of good calling, but especially poore ignoraunt countrey Farmers, who God wotte be by them ledde like sheep to the slaughter. Thus gentle Readers, haue I giuen you a light in briefe, what I meane to prosecute at large, and so with an humble sute to all Justices, that they will seeke to root out these two roagish Artes, I commit you to the Almighty.*

Yours Rob. Greene.

## THE ART OF CON- ny Catching

**T**HERE be requisit effectually to act the Art of Cony-catching three seueral parties: the Setter, the Verser, and the Barnackle. The nature of the Setter, is to draw any person familiarly to drinke with him, which person they call the Conie, & their methode is according to the man they aime at: if a Gentleman, Marchant, or Apprentice, the Connie is the more easily caught, in that they are soone induced to plaie, and therefore I omit the circumstance which they vse in catching of them. And for because the poore cuntry farmer or Yeoman is the marke which they most of all shoote at, who they knowe comes not emptie to the Terme, I will discouer the means they put in practise to bring in some honest, simple & ignorant men to their purpose. The Conny-catchers, apparalled like honest ciuil gentlemen, or good fellows, with a smooth face, as if butter would not melt in their mouthes, after dinner when the clients are come from Westminster hal and are at leasure to walke vp and downe Paules, Fleet-street, Holborne, the sttrond, and such common hanted places, where these cosning companions attend onely to spie out a prairie: who as soone as they see a plaine cuntry felow well and cleanly apparelled, either in a coat of home spun russet, or of freeze, as the time requires, and a side pouch at his side, there is a connie, saith one. At that word out flies the Setter, and ouertaking the man, begins to salute him thus: Sir, God saue you, you are wel-com to London, how doth all our good friends in the cuntry, I hope they be all in health? The cuntry man seeing a man so curteous he knowes not, halfe in a browne studie at this strange salutation, perhaps makes him this aunswere. Sir, all our friends in the cuntry are well thanks bee to God, but trully I know you not, you must pardon me. Why sir, saith the setter, gessing by his tong what country man hee is, are you not such a cuntry man, if he say yes, then he creeps vpon him closely: if he say no, the straight the setter comes ouer him thus: in good sooth sir, I know you by your face & haue bin in your companie before, I prairie you (if without offence) let me craue your name and the place of your abode. The simple man straight tels him where he dwels his name, and who be his next neighbors, and what Gentlemen dwell about him. After he hath learned al of him then he comes ouer his fallowes kindly: sir, though I haue bin somewhat bold to be inquisitiue of your name, yet holde me excused, for I tooke you for a friend of mine, but since by mistaking I haue made you slacke your busines, wele drinke a quart of wine, or a pot of Ale together: if the foole be so readie as to go, then the Connie is caught: but if he smack the setter, and smels a rat by his clawing, and will not drinke with him, then away goes the setter, and discourseth to the verser the name of the man, the parish hee dwels in, and what gentlemen are his near neighbours, with that away goes he, & crossing the man at some turning, meets him ful in the face, and greetes him thus.

What goodman Barton, how fare al our friends about you? you are well met, I haue the wine for you, you are welcome to town. The poore countryman hearing himselfe named by a man he knows not, maruels, & answers that he knowes him not, and craues pardon. Not me goodman Barton, haue you forgot me? why I am such a ma[n]s kinsman, your neighbor not far off: how doth this or that good gentleman my friend? good Lord that I should be out of your remembrance, I haue beene at your house diuers times. Indeede, sir, saith the farmer, are you such a mans kinsman, surely sir if you had not

challenged acquaintance of me, I should neuer haue knowen you, I haue clean forgot you, but I know the good gentleman your cosin well, he is my very good neighbor: & for his sake saith ye verser, weel drink afore we part, haply the man thanks him, and to the wine or ale they goe, then ere they part, they make him a cony, & so feret-claw him at cardes, y<sup>t</sup> they leaue him as bare of mony, as an ape of a taile: thus haue the filthie felows their subtle fetches to draw on poor men to fal into their cosening practises: thus like consuming moths of the common welth, they pray vpon the ignorance of such plain soules, as measure al by their own honesty, not regarding either conscience, or the fatal reuenge thats thretened for such idle & licentious persons, but do imploy all their wits to ouerthrow such as with their handy thrifte satisfie their harty thirst: they preferring cosenage before labor, and chusing an idle practise before any honest form of good liuing. Wel, to y<sup>e</sup> method again of taking vp their conies. If the poore cuntryman smoake them still, and wil not toupe vnto either of their lures: then one, either the verser, or the setter, or some of their crue, for there is a general fraternity betwixt them, steppeth before the Cony as he goeth, and letteth drop twelue pence in the high way, that of force the cony must see it. The cuntryman spying the shilling, maketh not daintie, for *quis nisi mentis inops ollatum respuit aurum*, but stoupeth very mannerlie and taketh it vp: then one of the cony catchers behind crieth halfe part, and so chalengeth halfe of his finding. The countriman content, offreth to change the mony. Nay faith frend, saith the verser, tis ill luck to keep founde mony, wele go spend it in a pottle of wine, or in a breake-fast, dinner or supper, as the time of day requires: If the conye say he wil not, then answeres the verser, spende my part: if stil the cony refuse, he taketh halfe and away, if they spy the countriman to be of a hauing and couetous mind, then haue they a further policie to draw him on: another that knoweth the place of his abode, meeteth him and saith Sir, wel met, I haue run hastely to ouertake you, I pray you dwel you not in Darbshire, in such a village? Yes marry doe I frend saith the cony, then replies the verser, truly sir I haue a sute to you, I am going out of town, & must send a letter to the parson of your parish, you shall not refuse to do a stranger such a fauor as to cary it him, haply, as men may in time meet, it may lie in my lot to do you as good a turn, and for your paines I wil giue you xii. pence. The poor cony in meer simplicity saith, sir, Ile do so much for you with al my hart, where is your letter? I haue it not good sir redy written, but may I entreate you to step into some tauern or alehouse, wele drinke the while, and I wil write but a line or two: at this the cony stoupes, and for greediness of the mony, and vpon courtesie goes with the setter vnto the tauerne. As they walke they meet the verser, and then they all three goe into the tauern together.

See Gentlemen what great logicians these cony-catchers be, that haue such rethoricall perswasions to induce the poor cuntry man to his confusion, and what varietie of villany they haue to strip the poore farmer of his money. Wel, imagine the conie is in the tauern, then sits down the verser, and saith to the setter, what sirrha, wilt thou geue mee a quart of wine, or shall I geue thee one? wele drink a pint saith the setter, & play a game at cards for it, respecting more the sport then the losse: content q<sup>d</sup>. the verser, go cal for a paire, and while he is gone to fetch the[m], he saith to the cony, you shall see me fetch ouer my yong master for a quart of wine finely, but this you must do for me, when I cut the cards, as I wil not cut aboue fiue off, mark then of al the greatest pack which is vndermost, & when I bid you cal a card for me, name that, and you shall see wele make him pay for a quart of wine straight, truly saith the cony, I am no great player at cards, and I do not wel vnderstand your meaning, why, saith he, it is thus: I wil play at mum-chaunce, or decoy, that hee shal shuffle the cards, and I wil cut: now eyther of vs must call a card, you shal call for me, and he for himselfe, and whose card comes first wins, therefore when I haue cut y<sup>e</sup> cards, then mark the nethermost of the greatest heap, that I set vpon the cards which I cut off, &

always call that for me. O now saith the cony, I vnderstand you, let mee alone, I warrant Ile fit your turne, with that in comes the setter with his cards, and asketh at what game they shal play, why saith the verser, at a new game called mum-chance, that hath no policie nor knauerie, but plain as a pike staf, you shal shuffle and Ile cut, you shal call a carde, and this honest man, a stranger almost to vs both, shal call another for me, and which of our cards comes first, shal win, conte[n]t saith the setter, for thats but meer hazard, & so he shuffels the cards, and the verser cuts of some four cards, and then taking vp the heape to set vpon them, geueth the conny a glance of the bottom card of that heap, and saith, now sir, call for me. The cony to blind the setters eyes, asketh as though he were not made priuy to the game, what shal I cut? what card saith the verser? why what you wil, either hart, spade, club or diamond, cote-card or other. O is it so, saith the

connie? why then you shal haue the four of harts, which was the card he had a glaunce of, and saith the setter (holding the cards in his hand, and turning vp the vppermost card, as if hee knew not wel the game) Ile haue the knaue of trumpes. Nay saith the verser, there is no trump, you may call what card you wil: then saith he, Ile haue the ten of spades, with that he draws, and the four of harts comes first: wel saith the setter, tis but hazard, mine might haue come as wel as yours, fiue is vp, I fear not y<sup>e</sup> set: so they shuffle and cut, but the verser winnes. Well saith the setter, no butter wil cleaue on my bread, what, not one draught among fiue: drawer, a freshe pinte, Ile haue another bout with you: but sir I beleeeue, saith he to the cony, you see some card, that it goes so cros on my side. I saith the cony, nay I hope you think not so of me, tis but hazard and chaunce, for I am but a meere stranger vnto the game, as I am an honest man I neuer saw it before.

Thus this simple cony closeth vp smoothly to take the versers part, only for greediness to haue him winne the wine: wel answeres the setter, then Ile haue one cast more, and to it they go, but he loseth all, and beginneth to chafe in this maner: were it not quoth he, that I care not for a quart of wine, I could swear as many othes for anger, as there be haire on my head, why shoulde not my luck be as good as yours, and fortune fauor me as wel as you? what, not one cald card in ten cuttes, Ile forswear the game for euer. What, chafe not man, saith the Verser, seeing we haue your quart of wine. Ile shew you the game, and with that discourseth all to him, as if he knew it not. The setter, as simply as if the knaue were ignorant, saith, I mary, I thinke so, you must needes winne, whe[n] he knowes what card to call, I might haue plaid long enough before I had got a set. Truely saies the cony, tis a pretie game, for tis not possible for him to lose that cuts the cardes: I warrant the other that shuffles may loose Saint Peters cope if he had it. Wel, Ile carrie this home with me into the cuntrie, and win many a pot of ale with it. A fresh pint, sayth the Verser, and then wele away: but seeing sir, you are going homeward, Ile learne you a trick worth the noting, that you shall win many a pot with in the winter nights: with that he culs out the four knaues, & prickes one in the top, one in the midst, and one in the bottome. NOW sir, saith he, you see these three knaues apparantly, thrust them downe with your hand, & cut where you will, & though they be so far asunder, Ile make them all come together. I praie you lets see that trick, sayth the connie, me thinkes it should be impossible. So the Verser drawes, and all the three knaues comes in one heap: this he doth once or twice, then the connie wonders at it, and offers him a pint of wine to teach it him. Nay, saith the verser, Ile do it for thanks, and therefore marke me where you haue taken out the four knaues, lay two together aboue, and draw vp one of them that it may be seene, then prick the other in the midst, & the third in the bottome, so when any cuts, cut he neuer so warily, three knaues must of force come together, for the bottom knaue is cut to lie vpon both the vpper knaues. I marrie, saith the setter, but then the 3. knaues you shewed come not together. Truth saith the verser, but one among a thousand marke not y<sup>t</sup>, it requires a quick eie, a sharp wit, and a reaching head to spy at the first. Now gramercie sir for this

trick, saith the connie, Ile dominere with this amo[n]gst my neibors. Thus doth the verser and the setter feine friendship to the conie, offering him no shew of cosnage, nor once to draw him in for a pint of wine, y<sup>e</sup> more to shadow their vilany, but now begins the sporte: as thus they sit tipling, comes the Barnacle and thrusts open the doore, looking into the roome where they are, and as one bashfull steppeth back againe, and saith, I crie you mercie gentlemen, I thoght a friend of mine had bin here, pardon my boldnes. No harme saith the Verser, I praie you drinke a cup of wine with vs and welcome: so in comes the Barnacle, and taking the cup drinks to the Connie, and then saith, what at cards gentlemen? were it not I should be offensiue to the company I would play for a pint till my friend come that I looke for. Why sir, saith the Verser, if you will sit downe you shalbe taken vp for a quart of wine. With all my heart, saith the Barnacle, what will you play at, at Primero, Primo visto, Sant, one and thirtie, new cut, or what shall be the game? Sir, saith the Verser, I am but an ignorant man at cards, & I see you haue them at your fingers end, I will play with you at a game wherein can be no deceit, it is called mum-chance at cardes, and it is thus: you shall shuffle the cards, and I will cut, you shal cal one, and this honest countrie yoman shal call a card for me, and which of our cards comes first shal win: here you see is no deceit, and this Ile play. No truly, saith the Connie, me thinkes there can be no great craft in this: well saith the barnacle, for a pint of wine haue at you: so they play as before, fiue vp, and the verser wins. This is hard luck, sayth the Barnacle, and I beleue the honest man spies some carde in the bottom, and therefore Ile make this, alwais to prick the bottom card: content saith the verser, and the Connie to cloak the matter, saith: sir, you offer me iniury to think that I can call a card, when I neither touch them, shuffle, cut, nor draw them: Ah sir, saith the barnacle, giue losers leaue to speak: wel, to it they go againe, and then the barnacle knowing the game best, by chopping a card winnes two of the fiue, but lets the verser win the set, then in a chafe he sweareth tis but his ill luck, and he can see no deceit in it, and therefore he will play xii.d. a cut. The verser is content, & wins ii. or iii.s. of the barnacle, whereat hee chafes, and saith, I came hether in an ill houre: but I will win my monie again, or loose al in my purse: with that he draws out a purse with some three or four pound, & claps it on the bord: the verser asketh the conie secretly by signs if he will be his halfe, he saies I, and straight seeks for his purse: well, the barnacle shuffles the cards throughly, and the verser cuts as before, the Barnacle when he hath drawn one card, saith, Ile either win somthing or loose something, therefore He vie and reuie euery card at my pleasure, till either yours or mine come out, and therefore twelue pence vpon this card, my card coms first for twelue pence: no saith the Verser, I saith the Connie, and I durst holde twelue pence more, why, I holde you, saith the Barnacle, and so they vie and reuie till some ten shillings bee on the stake: and then next comes forth the versers card, that the Connie called, and the Barnacle loseth: wel, this flesheth the so Conny, the sweetnes of gaine maketh him frolike, and no man is more readie to vie and reuie then he. Thus for three or four times the barnacle looseth, at last to whet on the Connie, he striketh his chopt card, and winneth a good stake. Awaie with the witch, cries the Barnacle, I hope the cards will turne at last. I much, thinketh the connie, twas but a chance that you askt so right, to aske one of the fiue that was cut off, I am sure there was forty to one on my side, and ile haue you on the lurch anone, so stil they vie and reuie, and for once that the barnacle winnes, the conie gets fiue, at last when they mean to shaue the conie cleane of all his coine, the barnacle chafeth, and vpon a pawne borroweth some monie of the Tapster, & swears he wil vie it to the vttermost, then thus he chops his card to cros-bite the connie. he first lookes on the bottome carde, and shuffles often, but still keeping that bottome Carde which he knowes to be vppermost, then sets he downe the cards, and the Verser to encourage the Connie, cut of but three cards, whereof the barnacles card must needs be the vppermost, then shewes he the bottome



carde of the other heape cut off to the connie, and sets it vpon the barnacles card which he knowes, so that of force the carde that was laide vppermost, must come forth first, and then the barnacle calles that carde: they drawe a carde, and then the Barnacle vies, and the countriman vies vpon him: for this is the law, as often as one vies or reuies, the other must see it, els he loseth the stake: wel, at last the barnacle plies it so, that perhaps he vies more mony then the cony hath in his purse. The cony vpon this, knowing his card is the third or fourth card, and that hee hath forty to one against the Barnacle, pawnes his rings if hee haue any, his sword, his cloke, or els what he hath about him, to maintaine the vie, and when he laughs in his sleeue, thinking he hath fleest the barnacle of all, then the barnacles card comes forth, and strikes such a cold humor vnto his heart, that hee sits as a man in a traunce, not knowing what to doe, and sighing while his hart is redy to breake, thinking on the mony that he hath lost, perhaps the man is very simple and patient, and whatsoeuer he thinks, for feare goes his way quiet with his losse, while the conny-catchers laugh and deuide the spoyle, and being out of the doores, poore man, goes to his lodging with a heauy hart, pensieue & sorrowful, but too late, for perhaps his state did depend on that mony, and so he, his wife, his children, and his familie, are brought to extream miserie. Another perhaps more hardy and subtil, smokes the conycatchers, and smelleth cosenage, and saith, they shal not haue his mony so, but they answere him with braues, and thogh he bring them before an officer, yet the knaues are so fauored, that the man neuer recouers his mony, and yet he is let slippe vnpunished. Thus are the poore conies robbed by these base minded caterpillers: thus are seruing men oft entised to play, and lose al: thus are prentises induced to be Connies, and so are cosened of their masters mony, yea yoong gentlemen, merchants, and others, are fetcht in by these damnable rakehels, a plague as ill as hell, which is, present losse of money, & ensuing miserie. A lamentable case in england, when such vipers are suffred to breed and are not cut off with the sword of iustice. This enormity is not onely in London, but now generally dispersed through all england, in euery shire, city, and town of any receipt, and many complaints are heard of their egregious cosenage. The poore farmer simply going about his busines, or vnto his attorneys chamber, is catcht vp & cosened of all. The seruing-man sent with his Lordes treasure, loseth oftentimes most part to these worms of the commonwelth, the prentice hauing his masters mony in charge, is spoiled by them, and from an honest seruant either driuen to run away, or to liue in discredit for euer. The gentleman loseth his land, the marchant his stock, and all to these abhominable conny-catchers, whose meanes is as ill as their liuing, for they are all either wedded to whores, or so addicted to whores, that what they get from honest men, they spend in bawdy houses among harlots, and consume it as vainly as they get it villanously. Their eares are of adamant, as pitiles as they are trecherous, for be the man neuer so poore, they wil not return him one peny of his los. I remember a merry iest done of late to a welchman, who being a meere stranger in Londo[n], and not wel acquainted with the English tongue, yet chaunced amongst certaine cony-catchers, who spying the gentleman to haue mony, they so dealt with him, that what by signes, and broken english, they got him in for a cony, and fleest him of euery peny that he had, and of his sword, at last the ma[n] smoakt them, and drew his dagger vpon them at Ludgate, for thereabouts they had catcht him, and would haue stabde one of them for his mony, people came and stopt him, and the rather because they could not vnderstand him, though he had a card in one hand, and his dagger in the other, and said as wel as he could, a card, a card, Mon dieu. In the meane while the conny-catchers were got into Paules, and so away. The welchman folowed them, seeking them there vp and down in the church stil with his naked dagger and the card in his hand, and the gentlemen marueld what he meant thereby, at last one of his countrimen met him, and enquired the cause of his choler, and then he told him how he was cosened at cards, and robbed of all hys mony, but as his losse was voluntary, so his seeking them was meer vanity, for they were stept into some blind ale house to

deuide the shares. Neere to S. Edmunds Burie in Suffolk, there dwelt an honest man a Shomaker, that hauing some twenty markes his purse, long a gathering, and neerly kept, in came to the market to buy a dicker of hides, and by chaunce fel among cony-catchers, whose names I omit, because I hope of their amendment. This plain countriman drawn in by these former deuises was made a cony, and so straight stript of all his xx. marke, to his vtter vndoing: the knaues scapt, and he went home a sorowful man. Shortly after, one of these cony-catchers was taken for a suspected person, and laid in Bury gaole, the sessions comming, and he produced to the bar, it was the fortune of this poore shomaker to be there, who spying this roague to be arained, was glad, and said nothing vnto him, but lookt what would be the issue of his appeeraunce, at the laste hee was brought before the iustices, where he was examined of his life, and being demanded what occupation he was, said none, what profession then are you of, how liue you? Marry quoth he, I am a gentleman, and liue of my frends. Nay that is a lie quoth the poor shoemaker, vnder correction of the worshipful of the bench, you haue a trade, and are by your art a Cony-catcher. A cony-catcher said one of the iustices, and smiled, what is he a warriner fellow, whose warren keepeth hee, canst thou tel? Nay sir, your worship mistaketh me qd. the shoemaker, he is not a wariner, but a conny-catcher: the bench, that neuer heard this name before, smilde, attributing the name to the mans simplicitie, thought he meant a warriner, which the shomaker spying, aunswered, that some conies this fellow catcht, were worth twenty mark a peece, and for proof quoth he, I am one of them: and so discourst the whole order of the art, and the basenes of the cosening: wherupon the Justices looking into his life, appointed him to be whipt, and the shomaker desired that he might geue him his paiment, which was graunted: when he came to his punishment, the shomaker laught, saying, tis a mad world when poor conies are able to beate their catchers, but he lent him so frendly lashes, that almost he made him pay an ounce of bloud for euery pounce of siluer. Thus we see how the generation of these vipers increase, to the confusion of many honest men, whose practises to my poore power I haue discouered, and set out, with the villanous sleights they vse to intrap the simple, yet haue they clokes for the raine, and shadowes for their vilanies, calling it by the name of art or law: as conny-catching art, or cony-catching law. And herof it riseth, y<sup>t</sup> like as law, when the terme is truely considered, signifieth y<sup>e</sup> ordinance of good men, established for the commonwelth, to repress al vicious liuing, so these cony-catchers turne the cat in the pan, geuing to diuers vile patching shiftes, an honest & godly title, calling it by the name of a law, because by a multitude of hateful rules, as it were in good learning, they exercise their villanies to the destructio of sundry honest persons. Hervpon they geue their false conueyance, the name of cony-catching law, as there be also other lawes; as high law, sacking lawe, figging law, cheting law and barnards law. If you maruail at these misteries and queynt words, consider, as the Carpe[n]ter hath many termes familiar inough to his prentices, that other vnderstand not at al, so haue the cony-catchers not without great cause: for a falshood once detected, can neuer compasse the desired effect. Therefore will I presently acquaint you with the signification of the termes in a Table. But leauing them til time and place. Coming downe Turnmil street the other day, I met one whom I suspected a conycatcher, I drew him on to y<sup>e</sup> tauern, and after a cup of wine or two, I talkt with him of the maner of his life, & told him I was sorry for his frends sake, y<sup>t</sup> he tooke so bad a course, as to liue vpon the spoile of poore men, and specially to deserue the name of cony-catching, disswading him from that base kind of life, that was so ignominious in the world, and so lothsome in the sight of God. Tut sir, quoth he, calling me by my name, as my religion is smal, so my deuotion is lesse, I leaue God to be disputed on by diuines, the two ends I aime at, are gaine and ease, but by what honest gaines I may get, neuer comes within y<sup>e</sup> compasse of my thoughts. Thogh your experience in trauaile be great, yet in home matters mine be more, yea, I am sure

you are not so ignorant, but you know that few men can liue vprightly, vnlesse hee haue some prety way more then the world is witnes to, to helpe him withall: Think you some lawyers could be such purchasers, if all their pleas were short, and their proceedinges Justice and conscience? that offices would be so dearely bought, and the buiers so soone enriched, if they counted not pilage an honest kind of purchase? or doe you think that men of hadie trades make all their commodities without falshood, when so many of them are become daily purchasers? nay what wil you more, who so hath not some sinister way to help himselfe, but foloweth his nose alwaies straight forward, may wel hold vp the head for a yeare or two, but y<sup>e</sup> third he must needs sink, and gather the wind into begers hauen, therefore sir, cease to perswade me to the contrarie, for my resolution is to beat my wits, and spare not to busie my braines to saue and help me, by what meanes soeuer I care not, so I may auoide the danger of the lawe: wherupon, seeing this cony-catcher resolued in his forme of life, leauing him to his lewdnes I went away, wondering at the basenes of their minds, that would spend their time in such detestable sort. But no maruell, for they are geuen vp into a reprobate sence, and are in religion meere atheists, as they are in trade flat dissemblers, if I shoulde spend many sheets in deciphering their shifts, it were friuelous, in that they be many, and ful of variety, for euery day they inuent new tricks, and such queint deuises as are secret, yet passing dangerous, that if a man had *Argus* eyes, he could scant prie into the bottom of their practises. Thus for the benefit of my cuntry I haue briefly discovered the law of Cony-catching, desiring all lustices, if such coseners light in their precinct, euen to vse *summum ius* against them, because it is the basest of all villanies. And that London prentices, if they chance in such conny-catchers companie, may teach them London law, that is, to defend the poore men that are wronged, and learn the caterpillers the highway to Newgate, where if Hind fauour them with the heauiest irons in all the house, & giue the his vnkindest entertainment, no doubt his other pety sinnes shalbe halfe pardoned for his labour: but I woulde it might be their fortune to happen into Nobles Northward in white chappel, there in faith round Robin his deputie, would make them, like wretches, feel the waight of his heauiest fetters. And so desiring both honourable and worshipful, as well lustices, as other officers, and all estates, from the prince to the beggar, to rest professed enemies to these baseminded conycatchers, I take my leaue.

*Nascimur pro patria.*

A table of the words of art, vsed in the effecting  
*these base villanies.*

*Wherein is discovered the nature of euery terme, being proper to none but to the professors thereof.*

- |                   |                                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 High law        | <i>robbing by the highway side.</i> |
| 2 Sacking law     | <i>lecherie.</i>                    |
| 3 Cheting law     | <i>play at false dice.</i>          |
| 4 Cros-biting law | <i>cosenage by whores.</i>          |

- 5 Cony-catching law      *cosenage by cards.*
- 6 Versing law      *cosenage by false gold.*
- 7 Figging law      *cutting of purses, & picking of pockets.*
- 8 Barnards law      *a drunken cosenage by cards.*

These are the eight lawes of villanie, leading the high waie to infamie.

The Theefe is called a High lawier.

He that setteth the Watch, a Scrippet.

In high Lawe. He that standeth to watch, an Oake

He that is robd the Martin

When he yeeldeth, stouping.

The Bawd if it be a woman, a Pander

In sacking Law. The Bawd, if a man, an Apple squire

The whoore, a Commoditie

The whoore house, a Trugging place.

In cheating law. Pardon me Gentlemen for although no man could better then my self discover this lawe and his tearmes, and the name of their Cheats, Barddice, Flats, Forgers, Langrets, Gourds, Demies, and many other, with their nature, & the crosses and contraries to them vpon aduantage, yet for some speciall reasons, herein I will be silent.

In Cros-biting lawe The whore, the Traffique

The man that is brought in, the Simpler.

The villaines that take them, the Cros-biters.

The partie that taketh vp the Connie, the Setter.

In Coni-catch- He that plaieth the game, the Verser

He that is coosned the Connie,

ing law.                   He that comes in to them, the Barnackle  
                                  The monie that is wonne, Purchase

In Versing                He that bringeth him in, the Verser  
law.                        The poore Countrie man, the Coosin  
                                  And the dronkard that comes in, the Suffier

                                  The Cutpurse, a Nip  
                                  He that is halfe with him, the Snap  
                                  The knife, the Cuttle boung

In Figging                The picke pocket, a Foin  
law.                        He that faceth the man, the Stale  
                                  Taking the purse, Drawing  
                                  Spying of him, Smoaking  
                                  The purse, the Bong  
                                  The monie, the Shels  
                                  The Act doing, striking

                                  He that fetcheth the man, the Taker

In                            He that is taken, the Coosin  
Barnards                 The landed man the Verser  
lawe.                      The dronken man the Barnard  
                                  And he that makes the fray, the Rutter.

*Cum multis aliis quæ nunc præscribere longum est.*

These quaint termes do these base arts vse to shadow their villanie withall: for, *multa latent quæ non patent*, obscuring their filthie crafts with these faire colours, that the ignorant may not espie what their subtiltie is: but their end wil be like their beginning, hatcht with Cain, and consumed with Iadas: and so bidding them adue to the deuil, and you farewell to God, I end. And now to the art of Cros-biting.

### The art of Cros-biting.

**T**HE Cros-biting law is a publique profession of shameles cosenage, mixt with incestuous whoredomes, as il as was practised in Gomorha or Sodom, though not after the same vnnatural manner: for the method

of their mischieuous art (with blushing chekes & trembling hart let it be spoken) is, that these villanous vipers, vnworthy the name of men, base roagues (yet why doe I tearme them so well) being outcasts from God, vipers of the world, and an excremental reuersion of sin, doth consent, nay constrayne their wiues to yeeld the vse of their bodies to other men, that taking them together, he may cros-bite the party of all the crownes he can presently make, and that the world may see their monstrous practises, I wil brifly set downe the manner.

They haue sundry praies that they cal simplers, which are men fondly and wantonly geuen, whom for a penaltie of their lust, they fleece of al that euer they haue: some marchants, prentices, seruing-men, gentlemen, yeomen, farmers, and all degrees, and this is their forme: there are resident in London & the suburbes, certain men attired like Gentlemen, braue fellowes, but basely minded, who liuing in want, as their last refuge, fal vnto this cros-biting law and to maintein themselues, either marry with some stale whore, or els forsooth keep one as their fre[n]d: and these persons be com[m]only men of the eight lawes before rehearsed: either high Lawiers, Versers, Nips, Conny-catchers, or such of the like fraternitie. These when their other trades fail, as the Cheater, when he has no cosin to grime with his stop dice, or ye high lawier, when he hath no set match to ride about, and the Nip when there is no tearme, faire, nor time of great assemblie, then to maintaine the maine chance, they vse the benefite of their wiues or friends, to the cros-biting of such as lust after their filthie enormities: some simple men are drawn on by subtill meanes, which neuer intended such a bad matter. In summer euenings, and in the winter nightes, these trafickes, these common truls I meane, walke abroad either in the fields or streetes that are commonly hanted, as stales to drawe men into hell, and a farre of, as attending applesquires, certaine cross-biters stand aloofe, as if they knew them not: now so many men so many affections. Some vnruely mates that place their content in lust, letting slippe the libertie of their eies on their painted faces, feede vpon their vnchast beauties, till their hearts be set on fire: then come they to these minions, and court them with many sweet words: alas their loues needs no long sutes, for they are forthwith entertained, and either they go to the Tauerne to scale vp the match with a pottle of Ipocras, or straight she carries him to some bad place, and there picks his pocket, or else the Cross-biters comes swearing in, & so out-face the dis-maied companion, that rather then hee would be brought in question, he would disburse all that he hath present. But this is but an easie cosnage. Some other meeting with one of that profession in the street, wil question if she will drinke with him a pint of wine, theyr trade is neuer to refuse, and if for manners they doe, it is but once: & then scarce shall they be warme in the roome, but in comes a terrible fellow, with a side haire & a fearefull beard, as though he were one of Polyphemus cut, & he comes frowning in & saith, what hast thou to doe base knaue, to carrie my sister or my wife to the tauern: by his ownes you whore, tis some of your co[m]panions, I wil haue you both before the iustice, Deputie, or Constable, to bee examined. The poore seruingman, apprentice, farmer, or whatsoever he is, seeing such a terrible huffe snuffe, swearing with his dagger in his hand, is fearefull both of him and to be brought in trouble, and therefore speakes kindly and courteously vnto him, and desires him to be content he meant no harm. The whore, that hath teares at commaund, fals a weeping, and cries him mercy. At this submission of them both he triumphs like a bragard, and will take no compassion: yet at last, through intreaty of other his companions comming in as strangers, hee is pacified with some forty shillings, and the poor man goes sorrowful away, sighing out that which Salomon hath in his prouerbs, *A shameles woman hath hony in her lippes, and her throte as sweet as hony, her throte as soft as oyle : but the end of her is more bitter than Aloes, and her tongue is more sharp then a two edged sword, her feet go vnto death, and her steppes leade vnto hell.*

Again these truls when they haue got in a nouice, then straight they pick his purse, and then haue they

their cros-biters redy, to whom they conuey the mony and so offer themselues to be searcht: but the poore man is so outfaced by these cros-biting Ruffians, that hee is glad to goe away content with his losse, yet are these easie practises. O might the iustices send out spials in the night, they shold see how these street walkers wil iet in rich garded gowns, quaint periwigs, rufs of the largest size, quarter and halfe deep, gloried richly with blew starch, their cheekes died with surfuling water, thus are they trickt vp, and either walke like stales vp and down the streets, or stande like the deuils *Si quis* at a tauern or alehouse, as if who shoulde say, if any be so minded to satisfie his filthie lust, to lende me his purse, and the deuil his soule, let him come in and be welcome. Now W sir comes by a countrey farmer, walking from his inne to perform some busines, and seeing such a gorgeous damzell, hee wondring at such a braue wench, stands staring her on the face, or perhappes doth but cast a glance, and bid her good speed, as plain simple swains haue their lustie humors as well as others: the trull straight beginning her *exordium* with a smile, saith, how now my friend, what want you, would you speake with anie body here? If the felow haue anie bolde spirit, perhaps he will offer the wine, & then he is caught, tis inough: in he goes, and they are chamberd: then sends she for her husband, or hir friend, and there either the farmers pocket is stript, or else the cros-biters fall vpon him, and threaten him with bride-will and the law: then for feare he giues them all in his purse, and makes them some bill to paie a summe of monie at a certaine daie. If the poore Farmer bee bashfull, and passeth by one of these shamelesse strumpets, then will she verse it with him, and claime acquaintance of him, and by some pollicie or other fall aboard on him, and carrie him into some house or other: if he but enter in at the doores with her (though the poore Farmer neuer kist her) yet then the cros-biters, like vultures, will pray vpon his purse, and rob him of euerie pennie. If there bee anie yong gentleman that is a nouice and hath not seene theyr traines, to him will some common filth (that neuer knew loue) faine an ardent and honest affection, till she and her cros-biters haue verst him to the beggers estate. Ah gentlemen, marchants, yeomen and farmers, let this to you all, and to euery degree else, be a caueat to warn you from lust, that your inordinate desire be not a meane to impouerish your purses, discredit your good names, condemne your soules, but also that your wealth got with the sweat of your browes, or left by your parents as a patrimonie, shall be a prairie to those coosning cros-biters. Some fond men are so farre in with these detestable trugs, that they consume what they haue vpon them, and find nothing but a Neapolitan fauor for their labor. Reade the seuenth of Salomons prouerbs, and there at large view the description of a shameles and impudent curtizan: yet is there an other kind of cros-biting which is most pestilent, and that is this. There liues about this towne certaine housholders, yet meere shifters and coosners, who learning some insight in the ciuill law, walke abroad like parators, sumners and informers, beeing none at all either in office or credit, and they go spying about where any marchant, or marchants prentise, citizen, wealthie farmer, or other of credit, either accompany with anie woman familiarly, or else hath gotten some maide with child, as mens natures be prone to sin, straight they come ouer his fallows thus: they send for him to a tauern, & ther open the matter vnto him, which they haue cunningly larned out, telling him he must be presented to the Arches, & the scitation shalbe peremptorily serued in his parish church. The partie afraid to haue his credit crackt with the worshipfull of the Citie, and the rest of his neighbors, & grieuing highly his wife should heare of it, straight takes composition with this cosner for some twentie markes, nay I heard of forty pound cros-bitten at one time, & the[n] the cosning informer or cros-biter promiseth to wipe him out of the booke, & discharge him from the matter, when it was neither knowen nor presented: so go they toil the woman, and fetch her off if she be married, and though they haue this grosse sum yet oft times they cros-bite hir for more: nay thus do they feare citizens, prentises, & farmers, that they find but any waie suspicious of the like fault. The cros-biting bauds, for no better can I tearme them, in that for

lucre they conceale the sin, and smother vp lust, do not onely enrich themselues mightily thereby, but also discredite, hinder, and preiudice the court of the Arches, and the Officers belonging to the same. There are some pore blinde patches of that facultie, that haue their Tenements purchased, and their plate on the boorde verie solemnly, who onely get their gaines by cros-biting, as is afore rehearsed. But leauing them to the deepe insight of such as be appointed with Justice to correct vice, againe to the crue of my former cros-biters, whose fee simple to liue vpon, is nothing but the folowing of common, dishonest and idle truls, and thereby maintain themselues braue, and the strumpets in handsome furniture. And to end this art with an English demonstration, ile tel you a pretie tale of late performd in bishopgate street, there was there fiue traffiques, pretty, but common huswiues, that stood fast by a tauern dore, loking if some pray would passe by for their purpose, anone the eldest of them, and most experienced in that law, called Mal B. spied a master of a ship coming along: here is a simpler quoth she, Ile verse him, or hang me. Sir, sayde shee, God euen, what, are you so liberal to bestow on three good wenches that are drie, a pint of wine. In faith, faire women qd. he, I was neuer nigard for so much, and with that he takes one of them by the hand, and caries them all into the tauern, there he bestowed cheare and ipocras vpon them, drinking hard til the shot came to a noble, so that they iii. carousing to the gentleman, made him somewhat tipsy, and then & *venus in vinis, ignis in igne fuit*, wel, night grew on, and hee would away, but this mistres Mall B. stopt his iorney thus, gentleman, qd. she, this vnderdeserued fauor of yours makes vs so deeplie beholding to you, that our abilitie is not able any way to make sufficient satisfaction, yet to shew vs kind in what we can, you shall not deny me this request, to see my simple house before you go. The gentleman a litle whitled, consented, & went with them, so the shot was paid, & away they goe: Without the tauern dore stood two of their husbands, J. B. & J. R. and they were made priuy to the practise. Home goes the gentleman with these lusty huswiues, stumbling, at laste hee was welcome to M. Mals house, and one of the three went into a chamber, and got to bed, whose name was A. B. After they had chatted a while, the gentleman would haue been gone, but she told him that before he went, hee shoulde see al the roomes of her house, and so ledde him vp into the chamber where the party lay in bed: who is here saide the Gentleman. Marie saith Mal, a good pretie wench sir, and if you be not well, lie downe by her, you can take no harm of her: dronkennes desires lust, and so the Gentleman begins to dallie, and awaie goes she with the candle, and at last he put of his clothes and went to bed: yet he was not so dronke, but he could after a while remember his mony, and feeling for his purse all was gone, and three linkes of his whistle broken off: the sum that was in his purse was in gold and siluer twentie nobles. As thus hee was in a maze, though his head were well laden, in comes J. B. the good man of the house, and two other with him, and speaking somewhat loud, peace husband quoth she, there is one in bed, speak not so loud. In bed, saith he, gogs nownes ile go see, and so will I, saith the other: you shall not saith his wife, but stroue against him, but vp goes he and his cros-biters with him, & seeing the Gentleman in bed, out with his dagger, and asked what base villain it was that there sought to dishonest his wife: well, he sent one of them for a constable, and made the gentleman rise, who halfe dronk yet had that remembrance to speake faire, and to intreate him to keep his credit: but no intreatie could serue, but to the Counter he must, & the Constable must be sent for: yet at the last one of them intreated that the gentleman might be honestly vsed, and caried to a Tauerne to talke of the matter till a constable come. Tut, saith J. B. I wil haue law vpon him: but the base cros-biter at last stoopt, and to the Tauerne they go, where the Gentleman laide his whistle to pawne for mony, & there bestowed as much of them as came to ten shillings, and sate drinking and talking vntill the next morrow. By that the Gentleman had stolne a nap, and waking it was daie light, and then seeing himselfe compassed with these cros-biters, and remembring his nights worke, soberly smiling, asked them if they knew what he



was: they answered, not wel. Why then quoth he, you base coosning rogues, you shall ere we part: and with that drawing his sword, kept them into the chamber, desiring that the constable might be sent for: but this braue of his could not dismay M. Mall, for shee had bidden a sharper brunt before, witnes the time of her martirdome, when vpon her shoulders was engrauen the history of her whorish qualities: but she replying, swore, sith he was so lusty, her husband should not put it vp by no meanes. I will tel thee thou base cros-biting baud, quoth he, and you coosening companions, I serue a noble man, & for my credit with him, I refer me to the penaltie hee will impose on you, for by God I wil make you an example to al cros-biters ere I ende with you, I tel you villaines, I serue, and with that he namde his Lord. When the guilty whores and coseners heard of his credite and seruice, they began humbly to intreat him to be good to the[m]: then quoth he, first deliuer me my mony, they vpon that gladly gaue him all, and restored the linkes of his chaine. When hee had all, he smiled, and sware afresh that he would torment them for al this, that the seueritie of their punishment might be a caueat to others to beware of the like coosenage: and vpon that knockt with his foote, and sayde hee would not let them go till he had a constable. Then in general they humbled themselues, so recompencing the partie, that he agreed to passe ouer the matter, conditionallie beside, that they would pay the sixteene shillinges hee had spent in charges, which they also performed. The Gentleman stept his way, and said, you may see the olde prouerbe fulfilled, *Fallere fallentem non es tfraus*. Thus haue I deciphered an odious practise not worthy to be named: and now wishing al, of what estate soeuer, to beware of filthy lust, and such damnable stales as drawes men on to inordinate desires, and rather to spend their coine amongst honest companie, then to bequeath it to such base cros-biters, as praie vpon men, like rauens vpon dead carcasses, I end with this praier, that Cros-biting and Conny-catching may be as little knowen in England, as the eating of swines flesh was amongst the Jewes. Farewel.

*Nascimur pro patria.*

FINIS.

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## A PLEASANT DISCOVERY OF the coosenage of Colliars.

**ALTHOUGH** (courteous Readers) I did not put in amongst the lawes of cosening, the law of *legering*, which is a deceit wherewith colliers abuse the commonwelth, in hauing vnlawful sacks, yet take it for a pettie kinde of craft or mystery, as preiudicial to the poore, as any of the other two. for I omitted diuers other diuelish vices; as the nature of the *lift*, the *black art*, & the *curbing law*, which is the *filchers* and *theeues* that come into houses or shops, & lift away anything: or picklocks, or hookers at windowes, thogh they be as *species* and branches to the table before rehearsed. But leauing them, again to our law of *legering*. Know therefore, that there be inhabiting in & about London, certaine caterpillers (coliers I should say) that terme the[m]selues (among themselues) by the name of *legers* who for that the honorable the L. Maior of the cite of *London*, & his officers, looke straitly to the measuring of coales,

doe (to preuent the execution of his Justice,) plant themselues in & about the suburbs of London, as *Shorditch, White-chappel, Southwark,* & such places, and there they haue a house or yard, that hath a back gate, because it is the more conuenient for their cosening purpose, and the reason is this; the *Leger*, the crafty collier I meane, riseth very early in the morning, and either goeth towardes *Croyden, Whetstone, Greenwitch,* or *Romford*, and there meeteth the countrey Colliers, who bring coles to serue the marktete: there, in a forestalling manner, this *leger* bargayneth with the Countrey Collier for his coales, and paieth for them nineteene shillings or twentie at the most, but commonly fifteene and sixteene, and there is in the load 36. sakes: so that they paie for euerie couple about fourteen pence. Now hauing bought his coales, euerie sacke containing full foure bushels, he carrieth the Countrey Collier home to his legering place, and there at the backe gate causeth him to vnloade, and as they saie, shoote the coales downe. As soone as the Countrey Collier hath dispatcht and is gone, then the Leger who hath three or foure hired men vnder him, bringeth forth his own sacks, which be long & narrow, holding at the most not three bushels, so that they gaine in the change of euerie sacke a bushell for their pains. Tush, yet this were somewhat to be borne withal, although the gaine is monstrous, but this sufficeth not, for they fill not these sacks full by far, but put into them some two bushels & a halfe, laying in the mouth of the sacke certaine great coles, which they call fillers, to make the sack shew faire, although the rest be small wilow coles, and halfe dros. Whe[n] they haue thus not filled their sacks, but thrust coles into the[m], that which they lay vppermost, is best filled, to make the greater shew: then a tall sturdie knaue, that is all ragd, and durtie on his legs, as thogh he came out of the Countrey (for they durtie theyr hose and shoos on purpose to make themselues seem countrey colliers:) Thus with two sacks a peece they either go out at the back gate, or steal out at the street side, and so go vp and downe the suburbs, & sel their coales in summer for four-teene and sixteene pence a couple, and in winter for eighteene or twentie. The poore cookes & other citizens that buy them, thinke they be countrey colliers, that haue left some coles of their load, and would gladly haue monie, supposing (as the statute is) they be good and lawfull sacks, are thus coosned by the legers, & haue but two bushels and a halfe for foure bushels, and yet are extreamlie rackt in the price, which is not onely a great hinderance to her Maiesties poore comons, but greatly preiudiciall to the master Colliers, that bring true sacks & measure out of the countrey. Then consider (gentle readers) what kind of coosnage these legers vse, that make of thirty sacks some 56. which I haue seen, for I haue set downe with my pen how many turnes they haue made of a load, and they make 28. euerie turne being two sacks, so that they haue got an intollerable gains by their false measure. I could not be silent seeing this abuse, but thought to reueal it for my countries commoditie, and to giue light to the worshipfull iustices, and other her Maiesties officers in Middlesex, Surrey, and elsewhere, to looke to such a grosse coosnage, as contrarie to a direct statute, doth defraud & impouerish her Maiesties poore commo[n]s. Well may the honorable and worshipful of London flourish, who carefully looke to the countrey coales, & if they finde not 4. bushels in euerie sacke, do sell the[m] to the poore as forfeit, & distribut the mony to them that haue need, burning the sacke, & honoring or rather dishonoring the pillerie with the Colliers durty faces: & wel may the honorable & worshipfull of the suburbs prosper, if they loke in iustice to these legers who deserue more punishment than the statute appoints for them, which is whipping at a carts taile, or with fauor the pillerie.

### A plaine Discouerie.

For fewell or firing being a thing necessary in a common wealth, and charcole vsed more then any other, the poore not able to buy by the load, are fain to get in their fire by the sacke, & so are greatly coosned by the retaile. Seeing therefore the carefull lawes her Maiestie hath appointed for the wealth of her commons, and succor of the poore, I would humbly entreat all her Maiesties officers, to looke into the life of these legers, and to root them out, that the pore feele not the burden of their incoscionable gaines. I heard with my eares a pore woman of Shorditch who had bought coles of a leger, with weeping teares co[m]plain and raile against him in the streete, in her rough eloquence calling him coosning knaue, & saying, tis no maruell, villain (quoth she) if men compare you colliers to the deuill, seeing your consciences are worser then the deuilles, for hee takes none but those souls whom God hates: and you vndo the poore whome God loues.

What is the matter good wife (quoth I) that you vse such inuectiue words against the collier: a collier sir (saith she) he is a theefe and a robber of the common people. Ile tel you sir, I bought of a Countrie collier two sackes for thirteene pence & I bought of this knaue three sackes, which cost me 22. pence: and sir, when I measured both their sackes, I had more in the two sackes by three pecks, then I had in the three. I would (quoth she) the Justices would looke into this abuse, and that my neighbors would ioyne with me in a supplication, and by God I would kneele before the Queene, and intreate that such coosening Colliers might not onlie bee punished with the bare pillerie, (for they haue such blacke faces, that no man knowes them again, and so are they careles) but that they might leaue their eares behinde them for a forfeit: & if that would not mend them, that *Bul* with a faire halter might root them out of the world, that liue in the world by such grosse and dishonest coosnage. The collier hearing this, went smiling awaie, because he knew his life was not lokt into, & the woma[n] wept for anger that she had not some one by that might with iustice reuenge her quarrell. There be also certaine Colliers that bring coles to London in Barges, and they be called Gripers, to these comes the leger, & bargens with him for his coles, & sels by retaile with the like cosnage of sackes as I rehearsed before. But these mad Legers (not content with this monstrous gaine) do besides mix among their other sackes of coales, store of shruffe dust and small cole, to their great aduantage. And for prooffe hereof, I will recite you a matter of truth, lately performed by a Cookes wife vpon a coosning Collier.

*How a Cookes wife in London did lately serue a Collier for his coosnage.*

**I**T chanced this Summer that a load of coles came forth of Kent to Billingsgate, and a Leger bought them, who thinking to deceiue the Citizens, as he did'those in the suburbs, furnisht himselfe with a couple of sackes, and comes vp Saint Marie hill to sell them: a Cookes wife bargained with the collier and bought his coales, and they agreed vppon fourteene pence for the couple: which beeing done, hee carried the coales into the house, and shot them: and when the wife sawe them, and perceiuing there was scarce fiue bushels for eight, she cals a little girle to her, and bad her go for the Constable: for thou coosening rogue, quoth she, (speaking to the collier) I wil teach thee how thou shalt coosen me with thy false sacks, whatsoever thou doest to others, and I wil haue thee before my Lord Maior: with that she caught a spit in her hand, and swore if he offered to stir, shee would therewith broach him; at which words the Collier was amazed, and the feare of the pillerie put him in such a fright, that he said he would go to his boat, & returne againe to answeere whatsoever she durst obiect against him, and for pledge heereof (quoth the Collier) keepe my sackes, your mony, and the coales also. Wherupon the woman let him go, but as soone as the collier was out of doores, it was

needles to bid him runne, for downe he gets to his boate, & awaie he thrusts from Billingsgate, and so immediately went downe to Wapping, and neuer after durst returne to the Cookes wife to demand either monie, sakes or coales.

*How a Flaxewife and her neighbours vsed a coosning Collier.*

**N**OW Gentlemen by your leaue, and heare a mery iest : There was in the suburbes of London a Flaxe wife that wanted coles, and seeing a leger come by with a couple of sakes, that had before deceiued her in like sorte, cheated, bargained & bought them, & so went in with her to shoote them in her colehouse. As soone as she saw her coles she easily gest there was scarce sixe bushels, yet dissembling the matter, she paid him for the[m], and bad him bring her two sakes more: the Collier went his waie, & in the mean time the flax wife measured the coles, and there was iust fiue bushels and a peck. Hereupon she cald to her neighbours ; being a companie of women, that before time had also bene pincht in their coles, and shewed them the cosnage, & desired their aide to her in tormenting the Collier, which they promist to performe, & thus it fell out. She conueid them into a back roome (some sixteen of them) euerie one hauing a good cudgell under her apron; straight comes the Collier, and saith, Mistres, here be your coles: welcome good Collier, quoth she, I praie thee follow me into the backe side, & shoot them in an other roome. The Collier was content, and went with her. but as soone as he was in, the good wife lockt the doore, and the Collier seeing such a troupe of wiues in the roome, was amazed, yet said God speed you all shrews, welcome quoth one iolly Dame, being appointed by them all to giue sentence against him : who so soone as the collier had shot his sakes, said SIRRHA collier, know that we are here all assembled as a gra[n]d Iurie, to determine of thy villanies, for selling vs false sakes of coales, & know that thou art here indited upon cosnage, therefore hold vp thy hand at the bar, & either saie, guiltie, or not guiltie, and by whom thou wilt be tried, for thou must receiue condigne punishment for the same ere thou depart. The Collier who thought they had but iested, smiled & said Come on, which of you shall be my iudge? Marry, quoth one iolly Dame, that is I, and by God you knaue, you shall finde I will pronounce sentence against you seuerely, if you be founde guiltie. When the Colliar sawe they were in earnest, he said, Come, come, open the doore, and let me go: with that fiue or six started vp, and fell vpon the Collier, and gaue vnto him halfe a score of sound lambeakes with their cudgels, and bad him speake more reuerently to their Principall.

The Collier feeling it smart, was afraid, & thought mirth & courtesie would be the best mean to make amends for his villany, and therefore said he would be tried by the verdit of the smock. Vpon this they panneld a iurie, and the flax-wife gaue euidence; and because this unaccustomed iury requir'd witnes, she measured the coles before the colliers face, vppon which he was found giilty, & she that sat as principal to giue iudgement upon him, began as followeth.

Collier, thou art condemned here by prooffe, of flatte cosenage, and I am now appointed in conscience to giue sentence against thee, being not only moued therevnto because of this poor woman, but also for the general commodie of my countrey, and therefore this is my sentence: we haue no pillery for thee, nor cart to whip thee at, but here I do award that thou shall haue as many bastinadoes as thy bones will beare, and then to be turned out of doores without sakes or money. This sentence being pronounced, she rose vp, and gaue no respite of time for the execution, but according to the sentence before expressed, al the women fel vpo[n] him, beating him extremely, among whom he lent some lusty buffets. But might ouercomes right, and therefore Ne Hercules contra duos. The women so crusht him, that he was not able

*to lift his handes to his head, and so with a broken pate or two, he was paid, & like Iack Drum, faire and orderly thrust out of dores.*

*This was the reward that the collier had, and I pray God all such colliers may be so serued, and that good wiues when they buy such sacks, may geue them such payments, and that the honorable and worshipful of this land, may look into this gros abuse of Coliers, as well for charity sake, as also for the benefit of the poore: and so wishing colliers to amende their deceitfull and disordered dealings herein, I end.*

FINIS



Renaissance  
Editions