



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

The History Of English Poetry

From The Close of the Eleventh To The Commencement of the Eighteenth
Century

Warton, Thomas

London, 1781

Section XXIV. John Heywood the epigrammatist. His works examined.
Antient unpublished burlesque poem of Sir Penny.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51323](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51323)

S E C T. XXIV.

JOHNS HEYWOOD, commonly called the epigrammatist, was beloved and rewarded by Henry the eighth for his buffooneries. At leaving the university, he commenced author, and was countenanced by sir Thomas More for his facetious disposition. To his talents of jocularly in conversation, he joined a skill in music, both vocal and instrumental. His merriments were so irresistible, that they moved even the rigid muscles of queen Mary; and her sullen solemnity was not proof against his songs, his rhymes, and his jests. He is said to have been often invited to exercise his arts of entertainment and pleasantry in her presence, and to have had the honour to be constantly admitted into her privy-chamber for this purpose*.

Notwithstanding his professional dissipation, Heywood appears to have lived comfortably under the smiles of royal patronage. What the FAIRY QUEEN could not procure for Spenser from the penurious Elizabeth and her precise ministers, Heywood gained by puns and conceits.

His comedies, most of which appeared before the year 1534, are destitute of plot, humour, or character, and give us no very high opinion of the festivity of this agreeable companion. They consist of low incident, and the language of ribaldry. But perfection must not be expected before its time. He is called our first writer of comedies. But those who say this, speak without determinate ideas, and confound comedies with moralities and interludes. We will allow, that he is among the first of our

* Wood, ATH. OXON. i. 150.

dramatists who drove the Bible from the stage, and introduced representations of familiar life and popular manners. These are the titles of his plays. *The PLAY called the four P. s, being a new and merry ENTERLUDE OF A PALMER, PARDONER, POTICARY, AND PEDLAR*, printed at London in quarto, without date or name of the printer, but probably from the press of Berthelette or Rastell. *The PLAY of LOVE, or a new and very merry ENTERLUDE of all maner of WEATHERS*, printed in quarto by William Rastell, 1533, and again by Robert Wyer^b. *A merry PLAY betweene the PARDONER and the FRERE, the CURATE, and neybour PRATTE*, in quarto, by William Rastell, dated the fifth day of April, 1533. *The PLAY of Gentlenes and Nobilitie*, in two parts, at London, without date. *The PINNER of Wakefeld, a COMEDIE. Philotas Scotch, a COMEDIE. A merry PLAY betweene JOHAN JOHAN the husband, TYB the wife, and syr JOHAN the preeffe*, by William Rastell, in quarto, 1533.

His EPIGRAMS, six hundred in number^c, are probably some of his jokes versified; and perhaps were often extemporaneous sallies, made and repeated in company. Wit and humour are ever found in proportion to the progress of politeness. The miserable drolleries and the contemptible quibbles, with which these little pieces are pointed, indicate the great want of refinement, not only in the composition but in the conversation of our ancestors. This is a specimen, on a piece of humour of Wolsey's Fool, *A saying of PATCHE my lord Cardinale's FOOLE*.

^b In duodecimo. No date. Pr. "Jupiter ryght far so far longe as now were to recyte."

^c See three hundred Epigrammes on three hundred Proverbes. Pr. "If every man mend one" London, without date, but certainly before 1553. Again, 1577.—1587.—1598. The first hundred Epigrammes. Pr. "Ryme without reason." Lond. 1566.—1577.—1587. 4to. The fourth hundred of Epigrammes, Lond.

without date. Again, 1577.—1587.—1597. 4to. Pr. PROL. "Ryme without reason, and reason." The fifth and sixth hundredth of Epigrammes. Pr. "Were it as perillous to deal cards as play," Lond. 1566.—1577.—1587.—1597. 4to. See JOHN HAYWOODS WOORRES, Anno domini 1576. Imprinted at London in Fleete-streate, etc. by Thomas Marthe. In quarto. The colophon has 1577. This edition is not mentioned by Ames.

Maister

Maister Sexton ^d, a person of knowen wit,
 As he at my lord Cardinale's boord did sit,
 Gredily raught ^e at a goblet of wine:
 Drinke none, sayd my lord, for that fore leg of thyne:
 I warrant your Grace, faith Sexton, I provide
 For my leg: I drinke on the tother side ^f.

The following is rather a humorous tale than an epigram, yet with an epigrammatic turn.

Although that a Fox have been seene there feelde ^g,
 Yet there was lately in Finsbery Feelde ^h
 A Fox fate in fight of certaine people,
 Noddinge, and bliflinge ⁱ, staring on Paules steeple.
 A Maide toward market with hennes in a band
 Came by, and with the Fox she fell in hand ^k.
 "What thing is it, Rainard, in your braine ploddinge,
 "What bringeth this busy bliflinge, and noddinge?
 "I nother ^l nod for sleepe sweete hart, the Foxe saide,
 "Nor blisse for spirytes ^m, except the divell be a maide:
 "My noddinge and bliflinge breedth of wonder ⁿ
 "Of the witte ^o of Poules Weathercocke yonder.
 "There is more witte in that cockes onely head
 "Than hath bene in all mens heds that be dead.
 "And thus—by all common report we fynde,
 "All that be dead, died for *lacke of wynde*:
 "But the Weathercockes wit is not so weake
 "To *lacke winde*—the *winde is ever in his beake*.
 "So that, while any winde blowth in the skie,
 "For *lacke of winde* that Weathercocke will not die."

^d The real name of PATCH, Wolsey's Fool.

^e Reached.

^f FIRST HUNDRED. Epigr. 44.

^g Seldom.

^h Finsbury field.

ⁱ Bowing and Blessing.

^k Joined company.

^l Neither.

^m To drive away evil spirits.

ⁿ Proceeds from wonder.

^o Wisdom.

She cast downe hir hennes, and now did she blis^r,
 "Jesu, quod she, in *nomine patris*!
 "Who hath ever heard, at any season,
 "Of a Foxe forging so feat a reason?"
 And while she prayesd the Foxes wit so,
 He gat her hennes on his necke, and to go^r.
 "Whither away with my hennes, Foxe, quoth she?
 "To Poules pig^r as fast as I can, quoth he.
 "Betwixt these Hennes and yond Weathercocke,
 "I will assay to have chickens a flocke;
 "Which if I may get, this tale is made goode,
 "In all christendome not so *Wife a broode*!"^r——

The other is on the phraze, *wagging beards*.

It is mery in hall, when beardes wagge all.
 Husband, for this these woordes to mind I call;
 This is ment by men in their merie eatinge,
 Not to wag their beardes in brawling or threatinge:
 Wyfe, the meaning hereof differeth not two pinnes,
 Betweene wagginge of mens beardes and womens chinnes^r.

On the fashion of wearing *Verdingales*, or farthingales.

Alas! poore verdingales must lie ith' streete,
 To house them no doore ith' citee made meete.
 Syns at our narrow doores they in cannot win^r,
 Send them to Oxforde, at brodegate to gett in^r.

Our author was educated at Broadgate-hall in Oxford, so called from an uncommonly wide gate or entrance, and since

^r Cross herself.
^s Began to steal off.
^t Pike, i. e. spire, or steeple.
^u The FIRST HUNDRED. Epigr. 10.
 There are six more lines, which are superfluous.

^v EPIGRAMMES ON PROVERBES. Epigram 2.

^w Enter in. WIN is probably a contraction for *go in*. But see Tyrwhitt's GLOSS. Ch.

^x FIFTE HUNDRED. Epigr. 55.

converted

converted into Pembroke college. These EPIGRAMS are mentioned in Wilson's RHETORIKE, published in 1553.

Another of Heywood's works, is a poem in long verse, entitled, *A DIALOGUE containning in effect the number of al the PROVERBES in the English tongue compact in a matter concerning two marriages.* The first edition I have seen, is dated 1547^r. All the proverbs of the English language are here interwoven into a very filly comic tale.

The lady of the story, an old widow now going to be married again, is thus described, with some degree of drollery, on the bridal day.

In this late old widow, and than old new wife,
Age and Appetite fell at a stronge strife.
 Her lust was as yong, as her lims were olde.
 The day of her wedding, like one to be solde,
 She sett out herself in fyne apparell :
 She was made like a beere-pott, or a barell.
 A crooked hooked nose, beetle browde, blere eyde,
 Many men wisht for beautifying that bryde.
 Her wast to be gyrde in, and for a boone grace,
 Some wel favoured visor on her yll favoured face ;
 But with visorlike visage, such as it was,
 She smirkt and she smyld, but so lispd this las,
 That folke might have thought it done onely alone
 Of wantonneffe, had not her teeth been gone.
 Upright as a candle standeth in a socket,
 Stoode she that day, *so sumpre de cocket*^r.
 Of auncient fathers she tooke no cure ne care,
 She was to them *as koy as Crokers mare.*
 She tooke the entertainment of yong men,
 All in daliaunce, *as nice as a nunnes ben*^r.

^r In quarto. Others followed, 1566.—1576.—1587.—1598. 4to.

^r I do not understand this, which is marked for a proverb.

^r An admirable proverbial simile. It is used in Wilson's ARTE OF RHETORIKE,
 " I knewe a priest that was *as nice as a*
 " *Nunnes Hen*, when he would say masse he
 " would

I suppose, That day her *cares* might wel *glow*,
 For all the town talkt of her high and low.
 One sayde a wel favoured old woman she is :
 The divill she is, sayde another : and to this
 In came the third *with his five egges*, and sayde,
 Fifty yere ago I knew her a trim mayde.
 Whatever she were then, sayde one, she is nowe,
 To become a bryde, *as meete as a sowe*,
To beare a saddle. She is in this marriage,
As comely as a cowe in a cage.
Gup with a gald back, Gill, come up to supper,
 What my *old mare* would have a new *crupper*,
 And now mine olde hat must have a new band, &c^a.

The work has its value and curiosity as a repertory of proverbs made at so early a period. Nor was the plan totally void of ingenuity, to exhibit these maxims in the course of a narrative, enlivened by facts and circumstances. It certainly was susceptible of humour and invention.

Heywood's largest and most laboured performance is the SPIDER AND THE FLIE, with wooden cuts, printed at London by Thomas Powell, in 1556^b. It is a very long poem in the octave stanza, containing ninety-eight chapters. Perhaps there never was so dull, so tedious, and trifling an apologue: without fancy, meaning, or moral. A long tale of fictitious manners will always be tiresome, unless the design be burlesque: and then the ridiculous, arising from the contrast between the solemn and the light, must be ingeniously supported. Our author seems to have intended a fable on the burlesque construction: but we know not when he would be serious and when witty, whether he means to make the reader laugh, or to give him advice. We must indeed acknowledge, that the age was not yet sufficiently

^a would never saie DOMINUS VOBIS-
 cum, but *Dominus Vobiscum.*" fol. 112.
 a. edit. 1567. 4to.

^b SECOND PART. ch. i.
 b In quarto.

refined,

refined, either to relish or to produce, burlesque poetry^c. Har-
rison, the author of the DESCRIPTION OF BRITAIN, pre-

^c But I must not forget Chaucer's SIR THOPAS: and that among the Cotton manuscripts, there is an anonymous poem, perhaps coeval with Chaucer, in the style of allegorical burlesque, which describes the power of money, with great humour, and in no common vein of satire. The hero of the piece is SIR PENNY. MSS. Cott. CAL. 7. A. 2.

INCIPIT NARRACIO DE DNO DENARIO.

In erth it es a litill thing,
And regnes als^a a riche king,
Whare he es lent in land;
SIR PENI es his name calde,
He makes both yong and alde^b
Bow untill^c his hand:
Papes, kinges, and empoures,
Bisshoppes, abbottes, and priowres,
Person, prest, and knyght,
Dukes, erles, and ilk barowne,
To serue him er^d thai ful boune^e,
Both biday and nyght.
SIR PENI chaunges man's mode,
And gers them off do down thaire hode^f
And to rise him agayne^g.
Men honors him with grete reuerence,
Makes ful mekill obedience
Vnto that litill swaine.
In kinges court es it no bote^h,
Ogaines SIR PENI for to moteⁱ,
So mekill es he of myght,
He es so witty and so frang,
That be it neuer so mekill wrang,
He will mak it right.

- a As.
b Old.
c Unto.
d Are.
e Ready.
f Makes, Causes, Compels.
g Against. Before.
h Use.
i Dispute.
k Approach. Gain.
l Make them walk.
m Buy.
n Loose.
o Meddle.
p Weak.
q All you want is soon done.

With PENY may men wemen till^k
Be thai neuer so strange of will,
So oft may it be sene,
Lang with him will thai nocht chide,
For he may ger tham trayl syde^l
In gude skarlet and grene.
He may by^m both heuyn and hell,
And ilka thing that es to fell.
In erth has he swilk grace,
He may leseⁿ and he may bind.
The pouer er ay put bihind,
Whare he comes in place.
When he bigines him to mell^o,
He makes meke that are was fell.
And waik^p that bald has bene.
All ye nedes ful sone er sped^q,
Bath withowten borgh and wed^r,
Whare PENI gafe bitwene^s.
The domes men^t he mafe^t so blind
That he may nocht the right find
Ne the futh^u to fe.
For to gif dome^w tham es ful lath^x,
Tharwith to mak SIR PENI wrath.
Ful dere with tham es he,
Thare^y strif was PENI makes pese^z,
Of all angers he may relese,
In land whare he will lende,
Of fafe^a may he mak frendes sad,
Of counsail thar tham neuer be rad^b,
That may haue him to frende.
That SIRE es set on high dese^c,
And serued with mani riche mese^d
At the high burde^e.
The more he es to men plente,
The more zernid^f alway es he:

- r Borrowing or pledging.
s Goes between.
t Judges.
u Monks.
v Truth.
w Judgement.
x Loath.
y Where.
z Peace.
a Foes.
b Void.
c Sect.
d Mese.
e High-table.
f Coveted.

And

fixed to Hollinshed's Chronicle, has left a sensible criticism on this poem. "One hath made a boke of the SPIDER AND

And halden dere in horde.
He makes mani be forsworne,
And sum life and saul forlorne^z,
Him to get and wyn.
Other god will thai none haue,
Bot that litil round knaue,
Thaire bales^h for to blinⁱ.
On him halely^k thaire hertes sett,
Him for to luf^l will thai nocht let^m,
Nowther for gude ne ill.
All that he will in erth haue done,
Ilka man grantes it ful sone,
Right at his awin will.
He may both leneⁿ and gyf;
He may ger both fla and lif^o,
Both by frith and fell^p.
PENY es a gude felaw,
Men welcums him in dede and saw^q.
Cum he neuer so oft,
He es nocht welkumd als a gest,
Bot euermore serued with the best,
And made at^r fit ful soft.
Who so es sted in any nede^s,
With SIR PENY may thai spede.
How so euer they betyde^t.
He that SIR PENY es with all,
Sal haue his will in fcede and stall.
When other er fet byside^u,
SIR PENY gers, in riche wede,
Ful mani go and ride on stede^w,
In this werlde wide.
In ilka^x gamin and ilka play,
The maystri es gifen ay
To PENY, for his pride.

z Despise. Quit.
h Eyes.
i Blind.
k Wholly.
l Love.
m Never cease.
n Lend.
o Kill and save.
p Sea and land.
q Doing and speaking.
r To fit.
s Under any difficulty.
t Whatever happens.
u Despised.
w Causes many to ride, &c.
x Every.

SIR PENY over all gettes the gre^y,
Both in burgh and in cete^z,
In castell and in towre.
Withowten owther spere or schelde^a,
Es he the best in frith or felde,
And stalwortheft in stowre^b.
In ilka place, the futh es sene^c,
SIR PENY es ouer albidene,
Maister most in mode.
And all es als he will cumand:
Ogains his steyn^d dar no man stand,
Nowther by land ne flode.
SIR PENY mai ful mekill auail^e
To tham that has nede of cownfail,
Als sene es in affize^f:
He lenkethes^g life and saues fro ded^h.
Bot luf it nocht ouer wele I redeⁱ,
For sin of couaityse^k.
If thou haue happ trefore to win,
Delite the nocht to mekill tharin^l.
Ne nything^m thareof be,
But spend it als wele als thou can,
So that thou luf both god and man
In perfite charite.
God grante vs grace with hert and will,
The gudes that he has gifen vs tillⁿ,
Wele and wisly to spend.
And so oure liues here for to lede,
That we may haue his blis to mede^o,
Euer withowten end. Amen.

An old Scotch poem called SIR PENNY has been formed from this, printed in ANTIEN SCOTTISH POEMS, p. 153. Edinb. 1770. [See supr. vol. i. 9.]

y Degree. Pre-eminence.
z Town and city.
a Either.
b Stoutest in battle.
c Truth is seen.
d Voice. Sound.
e Be of much power.
f As appears in the place of judicature. Or, in passing sentence.
g Lengthens.
h Death.
i Love money not too much, I advise.
k Covetousness.
l Too much therein.
m Nyding. Be not too careless of it.
n To us. o Our reward.

“ FLIE,

“FLIE, wherein he dealeth so profoundly, and beyond all measure of skill, that neither he himself that made it, neither any one that readeth it, can reach unto the meaning thereof.” It is a proof of the unpopularity of this poem, that it never was reprinted. Our author's EPIGRAMS, and the poem of PROVERBS, were in high vogue, and had numerous editions within the year 1598. The most lively part of the SPIDER and FLIE is perhaps the mock-fight between the spiders and flies, an awkward imitation of Homer's BATRACHOMUOMACHY. The preparations for this bloody and eventful engagement, on the part of the spiders, in their cobweb-castle, are thus described.

Behold! the battilments in every loope:
How th' ordinance lieth, flies far and nere to fatch:
Behold how everie peace, that lieth there in groope*,
Hath a spider gonner, with redy-fired match.
Behold on the wals, spiders making ware wach:
The wach-spider in the towre a larum to strike,
At aproch of any number shewing warlike.

Se th' enprenabill^f fort, in every border,
How everie spider with his wepon doth stand,
So thorowlie harnest*, in so good order:
The capital^b spider, with wepon in hand,
For that fort of fowdiers so manfully mand,
With copwebs like casting nets all flies to quell:
My hart shaketh at the sight: behold it is hell!¹

The beginning of all this confusion is owing to a fly entering the poet's window, not through a broken pane, as might be presumed, but through the lattice, where it is suddenly entangled in a cobweb*. The cobweb, however, will be allowed to be suf-

* DESCRIPT. BRIT. p. 226. Hollinsh.
CHRON. tom. i.

^e In rows.

^f Impregnable.

^z Clad in armour.

^b Perhaps, Capitayne.

¹ Cap. 57. Signat. B b.

^k Cap. i.

ficiently descriptive of the poet's apartment. But I mention this circumstance as a probable proof, that windows of lattice, and not of glafs, were now the common fashion¹.

John Heywood died at Mechlin in Brabant about the year 1565. He was inflexibly attached to the catholic cause, and on the death of queen Mary quitted the kingdom. Antony Wood remarks^m, with his usual acrimony, that it was a matter of wonder with many, that, considering the great and usual want of principle in the profession, a poet should become a voluntary exile for the sake of religion.

¹ See his *EPIGRAMMES*. Epig. 82. *FIRST HUNDRED*. And Puttenham's *ARTE OF ENGLISH POESIE*, Lib. i. c. 31. p. 49. One of Heywood's Epigrams is descriptive of his life and character. *FIFTE HUNDRED*, Epigr. 100.

OF HEYWOOD.

Art thou Heywood with the mad mery
wit?
Yea forfooth, mayster, that same is even
hit.
Art thou Heywood that applieth mirth
more than thrift?
Ye fir, I take mery mirth a golden gift.
Art thou Heywood that hath made many
mad Playes?

Yea many playes, few good woorkes in
all my dayes.

Art thou Heywood that hath made men
mery long?

Yea and will, if I be made mery longe.
Art thou Heywood that would be made
mery nowe?

Yea, fir, help me to it now I beseech yow.

In the *CONCLUSION* to the *SPIDER* and *FLIE*, Heywood mentions queen Mary and king Philip. But as most of his pieces seem to have been written some time before, I have placed him under Henry the eighth.

^m *ATH. OXON.* i. 150.