

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00311-7 - *Worke for Cutlers: A Merry Dialogue betweene Sword, Rapier and Dagger*

Albert Forbes Sieveking

Frontmatter

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Worke for Cutlers

This edition of *Worke for Cutlers* was edited by Albert Forbes Sieveking and published in 1904, shortly after it had been staged (probably for the first time in 300 years) at Trinity Hall. The play was originally published anonymously in 1615, and was then described as 'Acted in a Shew in the famous Universitie of Cambridge'. Sieveking gives reasons to believe that Thomas Heywood, whose most famous work is *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603), had at least a part in its writing, and points out the topicality of a 'Merry Dialogue betweene Sword, Rapier and Dagger' at a time when James I was issuing edicts against duelling, which was punishable by heavy fines or even death. The short play is provided with a 'glossarial epilogue' containing explanatory notes.

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By the King.



A Proclamation against priuate Challenges and Combats : With Articles annexed for the better directions to be vsed therein, and for the more iudiciall proceeding against Offenders.



He slaughters which We find to haue bene strangely multiplied and encreased in these later times, by the boldnesse which many of Our subiects take, to challenge any man into the field, towards whom they carry either grudge or malice in their minds, vnder the pretext of satisfaction to pretended wrongs, without imploing aide either of the Lawes, or Civil Magistrates: haue moued vs, out of the tender care which we take of Our loyall Subjects liues, to enter into some speedie course for the stopping of a Course that bleeds both incessantly, and inwardly. For to speake trueth, to what purpose serue the Lawes of God, the prouisionall instructions of men, and the course of ordinarie Justice in the Common wealch (whether we respect the Court of Chualne, or the Civill Courts,) if it be free for Subjects out of the distemper of their owne distempered conceits, either to rate the quality of the wrong supposed, or the satisfaction that belongs to it: Besides, it were great pittie, that so many Judgements as in other things held grauitie and moderation, should be so strangely beturched, and as it were enchanted in this kinde with the very drugges of Circes Cup, (transforming consideration into passion, reason into appetite, and men into beasts) as to thinke that any greatness of worth or reputation, or true honour, can be drawne out of any act that is absolutely repugnant to all such Lawes (as well Diuine as humane) as they both Religions and Politiques. For as no man accompts his Armour of high proofe, before it haue bene tried by shot no more are Gentlemen esteemed for their valour by the greater part of giddie censours at this day, that haue not almost altoone as they can hold a sword in their hand, put themselves vpon their proofe, either in S. Georges fields, or at Finsbury, without the least respect to the Justice of the ground that should make good the pursuit or euent of the quarrell.

We are not ignorant in what degree slaughters vpon priuate Challenges are ranked by the Lawes of the land, (howsoever sturie be made the make) nor how earnest many busie persons are to make their owne wills absolute in some point, since they know not by what colour or pretence to command in all: nor how runningly some argue for excuse of Challenges, by imputing weaknesse (as they would haue vs apprehend) to the Lawes and Statutes of the Realme; in that they forbear either out of intolubilitie or neglect, to give satisfaction to some certaine termes and reproches. As for example to that of the Eye, which the custome and construction of the dayes in which wee liue hath matched with those wrongs that are reputed to be most croakitant: For though no priuate Challenge to the perill of a loyall Subjects life, be either iust or compatible with

Reduced Facsimile of first page of King James I.'s Proclamation A.D. 1613. (From a photograph by Mr George Clinch, with permission of the Society of Antiquaries.)

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WORKE FOR CVTLERS

Or A Merry Dialogue betweene
Sword, Rapier and Dagger.

Acted in a Shew in the famous Universitie of Cambridge A.D. 1615.

Edited, with Historical Prologue and Glossarial Epilogue,

BY

ALBERT FORBES SIEVEKING,

F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S., S.S.C., and Author of "The Praise of Gardens."

With Introductory Note by

DR A. W. WARD,

Facsimiles of Proclamation of 1613, and Two Play Bills.

It is a common practice nowadayes amongst a sort of shifting companions, that runne through euery art, and thriue by none, to leaue the trade of *Nouerint* whereto they were borne, and busie themselues with the indeuors of art.

NASH's Address prefixed to GREENE's *Arcadia or Menaphon*.

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TO THE GENTLEMEN STUDENTS OF THE FAMOUS
UNIVERSITIE OF CAMBRIDGE,

and to the Fellows of Trinity Hall and the Royal Historical Society,
who, as shewn in the two Play Bills, most hospitably welcomed
“Worke for Cutlers” back to dramatic life.

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A sweet touch, a quick venew of wit,—snip snap, quick and home!

Love's Labour's Lost.

Fungar vice cotis, acutum

Reddere quae ferrum valet exsors ipsa secandi.

HORACE.

Yet in writing this book, some men will marvel perchance, why that I, being an unperfect Shooter, should take in hand to write of making a perfect Archer: the same man, peradventure, will marvel how a whetstone, which is blunt, can make the edge of a knife sharp.

Then in fence also, men are taught to go about that thing, which the best of them all knoweth he shall never attain unto.

ROGER ASCHAM'S *Toxophilus*, 1545.