

Thomas Deloney

d. in or before 1600

For a biography of Deloney, as well as a discussion of and selections from his other works, see the print anthology, pp. 1238-69.

EDITION: *The pleasant historie of John Winchcomb in his yonger yeares called Jack of Newbury*. London: Printed by H[umphrey] Lownes for Cuthbert Wright, 1626. STC 6560.



[from *Jack of Newbury*]

The Pleasant History of John Winchcombe, in
His Younger Years Called Jack of Newbury¹

To All Famous Clothworkers in England,
I wish All Happiness of Life, Prosperity,
and Brotherly Affection.

Among all manual arts used in this land, none is
more famous for desert, or more beneficial to the
commonwealth, than is the most necessary art of
clothing.² And therefore as the benefit thereof is
5 great, so are the professors of the same to be
both loved and maintained. Many wise men,
therefore, having deeply considered the same,
most bountifully have bestowed their gifts for
upholding of so excellent a commodity, which
10 hath been, and yet is, the nourishing of many
thousands of poor people. Wherefore to you,
most worthy clothiers, do I dedicate this my rude³
work, which hath raised out of the dust of for-
getfulness a most famous and worthy man,⁴

¹ The title continues: "The Famous and Worthy Clothier of England; Declaring His Life and Love, Together with His Charitable Deeds, and Hospitality. And How He Set Continually Five Hundred Poor People at Work, to the Great Benefit of the Commonwealth." It is followed by the Latin epigram *Haud curio invidiam* ("I pay no attention at all to envy").

² *clothing* the making and selling of cloth.

³ *rude* lacking in elegance or polish; unsophisticated.

⁴ *out of the dust ... man* Proverbial (*Reuter*, no. 101).

15 whose name was John Winchcombe, alias Jack of
Newbury,⁵ of whose life and love I have briefly
written, and in a plain and humble manner, that it
may be the better understood of those for whose
sake I took pains to compile it: that is, for the
20 well-minded clothiers, that herein they may
behold the great worship and credit which men of
this trade have in former time come unto. If
therefore it be of you kindly accepted, I have the
end of my desire, and think my pains well recom-
25 pensed; and, finding your gentleness answering
my hope, it shall move me shortly to set to your
sight the long hidden history of Thomas of
Reading, George of Gloucester, Richard of
Worcester, and William of Salisbury,⁶ with divers⁷
30 others; who were all most notable members in the

⁵ *John Winchcombe, alias Jack of Newbury* actually John Smallwood, the elder (d. 1520), originally of Winchcombe, but whose career as a clothier in Newbury, a town about 40 miles W of London, became a part of local lore. After a successful apprenticeship, he married his master's widow, and amassed a great fortune, employing large numbers of men and women. Henry VIII is reported to have stayed in Newbury's house when he visited the town, if true a tribute to the economic importance of the clothier and his trade in early sixteenth-century England (E.P. Wright, *Thomas Deloney* [Boston, 1981], pp. 59-60). However, there is no independent corroboration in contemporary sources of this story or the other legends about Winchcombe which appear in Deloney's fiction and in the popular literature of the period: Winchcombe's provision of a large number of men-at-arms for the battle of Flodden Field, his refusal of a knighthood, and the practical jokes played by Will Sommers, the King's jester, during the King and Queen's sojourn in Winchcombe's house (*DNB*, p. 625).

⁶ Cf. the somewhat different character list at the beginning of *Thomas of Reading* (print anthology, p. 1242, ll.29-34).

⁷ *divers* several.

commonwealth of this land, and men of great
fame and dignity. In the mean space, I commend
you all to the most high God, who ever increase,
in all perfection and prosperous estate, the long
honoured trade of English clothiers.

Yours in all humble service,

T.D.

Chapter I.

In the days of King Henry VIII, that most noble
and victorious prince, in the beginning of his
reign, John Winchcombe, a broadcloth¹ weaver,
dwelt in Newbury, a town in Berkshire, who, for
that he was a man of a merry disposition and
honest conversation,² was wondrous well-
beloved of rich and poor, specially because in
every place where he came, he would spend his
money with the best, and was not at any time
found a churl of his purse.³ Wherefore being so
good a companion, he was called of old and
young *Jack of Newbury*, a man so generally well-
known in all his country⁴ for his good fellowship
that he could go in no place but he found
acquaintance; by means whereof, Jack could no
sooner get a crown, but straight he found means
to spend it. Yet, had he ever this care: that he
would always keep himself in comely and decent
apparel; neither at any time would he be over-
come in drink, but so discreetly behave himself
with honest mirth and pleasant conceits that he
was every gentleman's companion.

After that Jack had long led this pleasant life,
being (though he were but poor) in good estima-
tion, it was his master's⁵ chance to die, and his
dame to be a widow, who was a very comely,
ancient woman, and of reasonable wealth. Where-

¹ *broadcloth* a fine, plain-woven, black cloth, used chiefly for men's garments.

² *conversation* conduct, behaviour, mode or course of life.

³ *a churl of his purse* Proverbial (*Reuter*, no. 43); *churl* miser.

⁴ *country* i.e., county.

⁵ *master's* Jack is a journeyman, employed by his master, who would have the status of a master-weaver.

fore she, having a good opinion of her man John,⁶
committed unto his government the guiding of all
her work-folks for the space of three years
together. In which time, she found him so careful
and diligent that all things came forward and prospered
wondrous well. No man could entice him
from his business all the week, by all the entreaty
they could use. Insomuch that in the end some of
the wild youths of the town began to deride and
scoff at him.

"Doubtless," quoth⁷ one, "I think some female
spirit hath enchanted Jack to his treadles,⁸ and
conjured him within the compass⁹ of his loom,
that he can stir no further."

"You say true," quoth Jack, "and if you have
the leisure to stay till the charm be done—the
space of six days and five nights—you shall find
me ready to put on my holy-day-apparel, and on
Sunday morning for your pains I will give you a
pot of ale over against the maypole."¹⁰

"Nay," quoth another, "I'll lay my life that as
the salamander cannot live without the fire,¹¹ so
Jack cannot live without the smell of his dame's
smock."

"And I marvel," quoth Jack, "that you being of
the nature of a herring (which so soon as he is
taken out of the sea presently¹² dies)¹³ can live so
long with your nose out of the pot."

"Nay, Jack, leave thy jesting," quoth another,
"and go along with us. Thou shalt not stay a jot."

"And because I will not stay, nor make you a
liar," quoth Jack, "I'll keep me here still; and so
farewell."

⁶ *John* 'John' and 'Jack' were interchangeable in the period, with 'Jack' being a familiar by-form of the name 'John.'

⁷ *quoth* said.

⁸ *treadles* Looms were operated by levers worked with the foot.

⁹ *compass* bounds, limits, circumscribed area.

¹⁰ *maypole* a high pole, painted with spiral stripes of different colours and decked with flowers, set up on a green or other open space, for merrymakers to dance around on May day.

¹¹ *as the salamander ... fire* It was popularly believed that the salamander, a lizard-like creature, could easily endure or even live within fire.

¹² *presently* immediately, at once.

¹³ Proverb, "As dead as a herring" (*Tilley* H446).

Thus then they departed. And after they had
 for half a score¹ times tried him to this intent, and
 100 saw he would not be led by their lure, they left him
 to his own will. Nevertheless, every Sunday in the
 afternoon and every holiday, Jack would keep
 them company, and be as merry as a pie,² and
 105 having still good store of money in his purse, one
 or other would ever be borrowing of him, but
 never could he get penny of it again; which when
 Jack perceived, he would never after carry above
 twelve pence at once in his purse, and that being
 110 spent, he would straight return home merrily,
 taking his leave of the company in this sort:

My masters, I thank you, it's time to pack home,
 For he that wants money is counted a mome:³
 And twelve pence a Sunday being spent in good
 cheer
 To fifty-two shillings amounts in the year;
 115 Enough for a craftsman that lives by his hands,
 And he that exceeds it shall purchase no lands.
 For that I spend this day, I'll work hard tomor-
 row,
 For woe is that party that seeketh to borrow.⁴
 My money doth make me full merry to be;⁵
 120 And without my money none careth for me:
 Therefore wanting money, what should I do
 here?
 But haste home, and thank you for all my good
 cheer.

Thus was Jack's good government and discre-
 tion noted of the best and substantiallest men of
 125 the town, so that it wrought his great commenda-
 tions, and his dame thought herself not a little
 blest to have such a servant, that was so obedient
 unto her, and so careful for her profit; for she had
 never a prentice that yielded her more obedience

¹ *half a score* ten.

² *pie* i.e., a magpie, a bird characterized as saucy and chattering.

³ Proverb, "He that wants [i.e., lacks] money wants all things" (*Tilley* M1046); *mome* blockhead, dolt, fool.

⁴ Proverb, "He that goes a borrowing, goes a sorrowing" (*Tilley* B545).

⁵ Proverb, "Money is a great comfort" (*Tilley* M1057).

130 than he did, or was more dutiful, so that by his
 good example, he did as much good as by his dili-
 gent labour and painful travail.⁶ Which his singu-
 lar virtue being noted by the widow, she began to
 cast a very good countenance to her man John,
 135 and to use very much talk with him in private. And
 first, by way of communication, she would tell
 unto him what suitors she had, as also the great
 offers they made her, what gifts they sent her, and
 the great affection they bore her, craving his
 140 opinion in the matter.

When Jack found the favour to be his dame's
 secretary, he thought it an extraordinary kindness;
 and guessing by the yarn it would prove a good
 web,⁷ began to question with his dame in this sort:

145 "Although it becometh not me, your servant, to
 pry into your secrets, nor to be busy about matters
 of your love, yet for so much as it hath pleased you
 to use conference with me in those causes, I pray
 you, let me entreat you to know their names that be
 150 your suitors, and of what profession they be."

"Marry,⁸ John," sayeth she, "that you shall, and
 I pray thee take a cushion and sit down by me."

155 "Dame," quoth he, "I thank you, but there is no
 reason I should sit on a cushion till I have
 deserved it."

"If thou hast not, thou mightest have done,"
 said she, "but some soldiers never find favour."

160 John replied: "That maketh me indeed to want
 favour, for I never durst try maidens because they
 seem coy, nor wives for fear of their husbands,
 nor widows doubting their disdainfulness."

"Tush, John!" quoth she. "He that fears and
 doubts womankind cannot be counted mankind.
 And take this for a principle: all things are not as
 165 they seem.⁹ But let us leave this, and proceed to
 our former matter. My first suitor dwells at
 Wallingford,¹⁰ by trade a tanner, a man of good

⁶ *painful travail* painstaking or careful work.

⁷ *web* a woven fabric; in particular, a whole piece of cloth in process
 of being woven or after it comes from the loom

⁸ *Marry* 'indeed' or 'to be sure.'

⁹ Proverb, "Things are not as they seem" (*Tilley* T199).

¹⁰ *Wallingford* market town in Berkshire, 15 miles NW of Reading
 (*Topographical Dict.*, p. 555).

wealth, and his name is Crafts, of comely person-
age and very good behaviour, a widower, well
170 thought of among his neighbours. He hath proper
land, a fair house well-furnished, and never a child
in the world, and he loves me passing¹ well.”

“Why then, dame,” quoth John, “you were best
to have him.”

175 “Is that your opinion?” quoth she. “Now trust
me, so it is not mine, for I find two special reasons
to the contrary: the one is, that he being overworn
in years makes me overloath to love him; and the
other, that I know one nearer hand.”

180 “Believe me, dame,” quoth Jack, “I perceive
store is no sore,² and proffered ware is worse by
ten in the hundred than that which is sought.³ But
I pray who is your second suitor?”

185 “John,” quoth she, “it may seem immodesty in
me to bewray⁴ my lovers’ secrets, yet seeing thy
discretion, and being persuaded of thy secrecy, I
will show thee. The other is a man of middle
years, but yet a bachelor, by occupation a tailor,
and dwelling at Hungerford,⁵ by report a very
190 good husband,⁶ such a one as hath crowns⁷ good
store, and to me he professes much good will. For
his person,⁸ he may please any woman.”

“Aye, dame,” quoth John, “because he pleaseth
you.”

195 “Not so,” said she, “for my eyes are impartial
judges in that case; and albeit my opinion may be
contrary to others, if his art deceive not my eye-
sight, he is worthy of a good wife, both for his
person and conditions.”

200 “Then trust me, dame,” quoth John, “for so
much as you are without doubt of yourself that

you will prove a good wife, and so well persuaded
of him, I should think you could make no better a
choice.”

205 “Truly, John,” quoth she, “there be also two
reasons that move me not to like of him: the one,
that being so large a ranger,⁹ he would at home be
a stranger:¹⁰ and the other, that I like better of one
nearer hand.”

210 “Who is that?” quoth Jack.

Sayeth she: “The third suitor is the parson of
Spinhom-land,¹¹ who hath a proper living;¹² he is
of holy conversation¹³ and good estimation,
whose affection to me is great.”

215 “No doubt, dame,” quoth John, “you may do
wondrous well with him, where you shall have no
care but to serve God, and to make ready his
meat.”

220 “Oh, John,” quoth she, “the flesh and the spirit
agrees not: for he will be so bent to his book that
he will have little mind of his bed;¹⁴ for one
month’s studying for a sermon will make him
forget his wife a whole year!”

225 “Truly, dame,” quoth John, “I must needs speak
in his behalf, and the rather for that he is a man of
the Church and your near neighbour, to whom (as
I guess) you bear the best affection. I do not think
that he will be so much bound to his book, or
subject to the spirit, but that he will remember a
woman at home or abroad.”

230 “Well, John,” quoth she, “Iwis,¹⁵ my mind is
not that way, for I like better of one nearer hand.”

235 “No marvel,” quoth Jack, “you are so peremp-
tory, seeing you have so much choice. But I pray
ye, dame, (quoth he) let me know this fortunate
man that is so highly placed in your favour?”

¹ *passing* exceedingly, extremely.

² *store is no sore* Proverbial (*Tilley* S903), meaning “It is never a bad thing to have plenty” or “Plenty in store will never cause a person trouble.”

³ Proverb, “Proffered ware (service) stinks” (*Tilley* S252).

⁴ *bewray* reveal, disclose.

⁵ *Hungerford* a town on the borders of Berkshire and Wiltshire about 60 miles W of London (*Topographical Dict.*, p. 258).

⁶ *good husband* a man who manages his domestic and business affairs with skill and thrift; a frugal or provident man.

⁷ *crowns* money.

⁸ *person* physical appearance.

⁹ *ranger* rover, wanderer.

¹⁰ Proverb, “He who is a ranger will at home be a stranger” (*Tilley* R48).

¹¹ *Spinbom-land* Speenhamland, near Newbury in Berkshire (M. Gelling, *The Place-names of Berkshire*, 2 Parts [Cambridge, 1973], Part 1, p. 259).

¹² *proper living* i.e., there is good revenue attached to his ecclesiastical position.

¹³ *conversation* behaviour; manner or mode of living.

¹⁴ *so bent ... bed* Proverbial (*Reuter*, no. 27).

¹⁵ *Iwis* indeed.

240 “John,” quoth she, “they are worthy to know nothing that cannot keep something. That man (I tell thee) must go nameless, for he is lord of my love and king of my desires. There is neither tanner, tailor, nor parson may compare with him; his presence is a preservative to my health, his sweet smiles my heart’s solace, and his words heavenly music to my ears.”

245 “Why then, dame,” quoth John, “for your body’s health, your heart’s joy, and your ears’ delight delay not the time, but entertain him with a kiss, make his bed next yours, and chop up¹ the match in the morning.”

250 “Well,” quoth she, “I perceive thy consent is quickly got to any, having no care how I am matched so I be matched. Iwis, iwis, I could not let thee go so lightly, being loath that anyone should have thee, except I could love her as well as myself.”

255 “I thank you for your kindness and good will, good dame,” quoth he, “but it is not wisdom for a young man that can scantily keep himself to take a wife; therefore, I hold it the best way to lead a single life, for I have heard say that many sorrows follow marriage,² especially where want³ remains; and beside, it is a hard matter to find a constant woman,⁴ for as young maids are fickle, so are old women jealous: the one a grief too common, the other a torment intolerable.”

265 “What, John,” quoth she, “consider that maidens’ fickleness proceeds of vain fancies, but old women’s jealousy of super-abounding love, and therefore the more to be borne withal.”

270 “But, dame,” quoth he, “many are jealous without cause, for is it sufficient for their mistrusting natures to take exceptions at a shadow, at a word, at a look, at a smile, nay at the twinkle of an eye, which neither man nor woman is able to

¹ *chop up* an unusual usage, since people are more commonly said “to clap up” matches (to make, settle, or concoct hastily [a match, agreement, etc.]).

² *many sorrows follow marriage* Proverbial; cf. “Marry today, repent tomorrow” (Tilley M694).

³ *want* lack of abundance of the necessities of life; poverty.

⁴ *it is a hard matter to find a constant woman* Proverb; cf. : “A woman is always mutable” (Tilley W674).

275 expel. I knew a woman that was ready to hang herself for seeing but her husband’s shirt hang on a hedge with her maid’s smock.”⁵

280 “I grant that this fury may haunt some,” quoth she, “yet there be many other that complain not without great cause.”

“Why, is there any cause that should move jealousy?” quoth John.

285 “Aye, by St. Mary is there!” quoth she. “For would it not grieve a woman (being one every way able to delight her husband) to see him forsake her, despise and contemn⁶ her, being never so merry as when he is in other company, sporting abroad from morning till noon, from noon till night, and when he comes to bed, if he turns to his wife, it is in such solemnness and wearisome, drowsy lameness that it brings rather loathsomeness than any delight? Can you then blame a woman in this case to be angry and displeased? I’ll tell you what: among brute beasts it is a grief intolerable, for I heard my grandam tell that the bell-wether⁷ of her flock, fancying one of the ewes above the rest, and seeing Gratis the Shepherd abusing her in abominable sort (subverting the law of nature) could by no means bear that abuse; but watching opportunity for revenge, on a time found the said shepherd sleeping in the field, and suddenly ran against him in such violent sort that by the force of his wreathen horns he beat the brains out of the shepherd’s head and slew him.⁸ If then a sheep could not endure that injury, think not that women are so sheepish to suffer it.”

300 “Believe me,” quoth John, “if every hornmaker⁹ should be so plagued by a horned beast, there should be less horns made in Newbury by many in a year. But, dame, (quoth he) to make an end of

⁵ *smock* a woman’s undergarment; a shift or chemise.

⁶ *contemn* scorn, slight.

⁷ *bell-wether* the leading sheep of a flock, around whose neck a bell is hung.

⁸ Thomas Beard also recounts this story in *The Theatre of God’s Judgments* (1597), his popular anthology of tales of sinners punished. There, he attributes it to Caelius and Volaterranus, and goats rather than sheep feature (ch. 32).

⁹ *hornmaker* one who makes “horn,” a man who, by seducing another man’s wife, makes the deceived husband a cuckold.

this prattle, because it is an argument too deep to
be discussed between you and I, you shall hear me
sing an old song, and so we will depart to supper:

315 A maiden fair I dare not wed,
For fear to have Acteon's head.¹
A maiden black² is often proud;
A maiden little will be loud.
A maiden that is high of growth,
They say is subject unto sloath.
320 Thus fair or foul, little or tall,
Some faults remain among them all.
But of all the faults that be,
None is so bad as jealousy.
For jealousy is fierce and fell,³
325 And burns as hot as fire in Hell.
It breeds suspicion without cause,
And breaks the bonds of reason's laws.
To none it is a greater foe
Than unto those where it doth grow.
330 And God keep me both day and night,
From that fell, fond and ugly spright.⁴
For why of all the plagues that be,
The secret plague is jealousy.
Therefore I wish all women kind,
335 Never to bear a jealous mind."

"Well said, John!" quoth she. "Thy song is not
so sure, but thy voice is as sweet. But seeing the
time agrees with our stomachs,⁵ though loath, yet
will we give over for this time, and betake our-
selves to our suppers."

Then calling the rest of her servants, they fell
to their meat merrily, and after supper the good-
wife⁶ went abroad for her recreation, to walk

¹ *to have Acteon's head* i.e., to be made a cuckold, a man known to be sexually-deceived by his wife; the appellation derives from the classical tale of Actaeon, a hunter who gazed upon the goddess Diana as she was bathing naked in a pool; Diana transformed him into a stag, and he was then hunted down and torn apart by his own hounds. A cuckold is traditionally depicted with horns, like those of a stag.

² *A maiden black* i.e., a black-haired maiden.

³ *fell* savage, ruthless, terrible (often coupled with 'fierce').

⁴ *fond* foolish; *spright* spirit.

⁵ Proverbial; cf. "My stomach has truck twelve" (*Tilley* S872).

⁶ *goodwife* the mistress of a house or other establishment.

345 awhile with one of her neighbours. And in the
mean space,⁷ John got him up into his chamber,
and there began to meditate on this matter,
bethinking with himself what he were best to do,
for well he perceived that his dame's affection was
great towards him. Knowing, therefore, the
350 woman's disposition, and withal that her estate
was reasonable good, and considering beside that
he should find a house ready furnished, servants
ready taught, and all other things for his trade nec-
essary, he thought it best not to let slip that good
355 occasion,⁸ lest he should never come to the like.
But again, when he considered her years to be
unfitting to his youth, and that she that sometime
had been his dame would (perhaps) disdain to be
governed by him that had been her poor servant,
360 and that it would prove but a bad bargain, doubt-
ing⁹ many inconveniences¹⁰ that might grow
thereby, he therefore resolved to be silent rather
than to proceed further. Wherefore, he got him
straight to bed, and the next morning settled
365 himself close¹¹ to his business.

His dame coming home, and hearing that her
man was gone to bed, took that night but small
rest, and early in the morning hearing him up at
his work, merrily singing, she by and by¹² arose,
and in seemly sort attiring herself, she came into
the workshop, and sat her down to make quills.¹³

Quoth John: "Good morrow, dame. How do
you today?"

"God a mercy, John," quoth she, "even as well
375 as I may, for I was sore troubled in my dreams.
Methought two doves walked together in a corn-
field, the one (as it were) in communication with
the other, without regard of picking up anything
to sustain themselves. And after they had with
380 many nods spent some time to their content, they
both fell hard with their pretty bills to peck up the

⁷ *mean space* meantime.

⁸ Proverb, "Take occasion when it comes" (*Tilley* T311).

⁹ *doubting* suspecting, fearing.

¹⁰ *inconveniences* troubles.

¹¹ *close* strictly, with full attention to.

¹² *by and by* soon, shortly.

¹³ *quill* a piece of reed or other hollow stem on which yarn is wound; a bobbin or spool.

scattered corn, left by the weary reaper's hand. At length (finding themselves satisfied) it chanced another pigeon to light in that place, with whom
 385 one of the first pigeons at length kept company; and after returning to the place where she left her first companion, perceived he was not there. She kindly¹ searching up and down the high stubble to find him, lights at length on a hog fast asleep,
 390 wherewith, methought, the poor dove was so dismayed that presently she fell down in a trance. I, seeing her legs fail and her wings quiver, yielding herself to death, moved with pity ran unto her,
 395 and thinking to take up the pigeon, methought I had in my hands my own heart, wherein methought an arrow stuck so deep that the blood trickled down the shaft and lay upon the feathers, like the silver-pearled dew on the green grass, which made me to weep most bitterly. But
 400 presently, methought there came one to me crowned like a queen, who told me my heart would die in time, except I got some of that sleeping hog's grease to heal the wounds thereof. Whereupon I ran in all haste to the hog with my
 405 heart bleeding in my hand, who (methought) grunted at me in most churlish sort, and vanished out of my sight. Whereupon coming straight home, methought I found this hog rustling among the looms, wherewith I presently awaked, suddenly after midnight, being all in a sweat and very ill. And I am sure you could not choose but hear me groan."

"Trust me, dame, I heard you not," quoth John, "I was so sound asleep."

415 "And thus," quoth she, "a woman may die in the night before you will have the care to see what she ails, or ask what she lacks. But truly, John, (quoth she) all is one: for if thou shouldest have come, thou couldest not have got in, because my chamber door was locked. But while I live this
 420 shall teach me wit, for henceforth I will have no other lock but a latch till I am married."

¹ *kindly* i.e., in keeping with her nature or kind. Pigeons like turtle-doves were thought to mate for life, and were emblems of marital fidelity.

"Then Dame," quoth he, "I perceive though you be curious² in your choice, yet at length you will marry."

"Aye, truly," quoth she, "so thou wilt not hinder me."

"Who, I?" quoth John. "On my faith, dame, not for a hundred pounds, but rather will further you to the uttermost of my power."

"Indeed," quoth she, "thou hast no reason to show any discourtesy to me in that matter, although some of our neighbours do not stick to say that I am sure to thee already."³

435 "If it were so," quoth John, "there is no cause to deny it, or to be ashamed thereof, knowing myself far unworthy of so high a favour."

"Well, let this talk rest," quoth she, "and take there thy quills, for it is time for me to go to market."

440 Thus the matter rested for two or three days, in which space she daily devised which way she might obtain her desire, which was to marry her man. Many things came in her head, and sundry sleights in her mind, but none of them did fit her fancy, so that she became wondrous sad, and as civil as the nine Sibyls;⁴ and in this melancholy humour continued three weeks or a month, till at last it was her luck upon a Bartholomew day⁵ (having a fair in the town) to spy her man John give a pair of gloves to a proper maid for a fairing,⁶ which the maiden with a bashful modesty kindly accepted, and requited it with a kiss, which kindled in her an inward jealousy, but notwithstanding very discreetly she covered it, and
 455 closely⁷ passed along unspied of her man or the maid.

² *curious* particular, cautious; perhaps, also, with the sense of "fastidious" or "picky."

³ *sure to thee already* i.e., already betrothed or promised in marriage to you.

⁴ I.e., the dame is seriously-minded ("sad") and as sober or grave ("civil") as the divinely-inspired prophetesses of the classical world ("the Sibyls").

⁵ *Bartholomew day* August 24th.

⁶ *fairing* a present given at or brought from a fair.

⁷ *closely* unobtrusively, secretly.

She had not gone far but she met with one of
 her suitors, namely the tailor, who was very fine
 460 and brisk in his apparel, and needs he would
 bestow the wine upon the widow. And after some
 faint denial, meeting with a gossip¹ of hers, to the
 tavern they went, which was more courtesy than
 the tailor could ever get of her before, showing
 465 herself very pleasant and merry; and finding her in
 such a pleasing humour,² the tailor, after a new
 quart of wine, renewed his old suit. The widow
 with patience heard him, and gently answered, that
 in respect of his great goodwill long time borne
 470 unto her, as also in regard of his gentleness,³ cost,
 and courtesy at that present bestowed, she would
 not flatly deny him:

“Therefore,” quoth she, “seeing this is not a
 place to conclude of such matters, if I may entreat
 475 you to come to my poor house on Thursday next,
 you shall be heartily welcome, and be further sat-
 isfied of my mind.” And thus preferred to a touch
 of her lips, he payed the shot⁴ and departed.

The tailor was scant out of sight when she met
 480 with the tanner, who albeit he was aged, yet lustily
 he saluted her, and to the wine she must, there was
 no nay. The widow, seeing his importunacy,⁵ calls
 her gossip, and along they walked together. The
 old man called for wine plenty and the best cheer
 485 in the house, and in a hearty manner he bids the
 widow welcome. They had not sitten long, but in
 comes a noise⁶ of musicians in tawny coats, who
 (putting off their caps) asked if they would have
 any music. The widow answered, no, they were
 490 merry enough.

“Tut!” quoth the old man. “Let us hear, good
 fellows, what you can do, and play me ‘The Begin-
 ning of the World.’”⁷

¹ *gossip* familiar acquaintance or friend (usually only applied to women).

² *humour* mood.

³ *gentleness* affability.

⁴ *shot* the bill or reckoning.

⁵ *importunacy* extreme persistence [in pressing his request].

⁶ *noise* company or band (collective noun).

⁷ “The Beginning of the World,” also known as “Sellenger’s Round,” was an extremely popular and well-known country-dance and tune, and there were a number of ballads sung to its tune: the

“Alas,” quoth the widow, “you had more need
 495 to hearken to the ending of the world.”

“Why, widow,” quoth he, “I tell thee the begin-
 ning of the world was the begetting of children,⁸
 and if you find me faulty in that occupation, turn
 me out of thy bed for a bungler, and then send for
 500 the sexton.”⁹

He had no sooner spoken the word, but the
 parson of Speen with his corner-cap,¹⁰ popped in
 at the door, who seeing the widow sitting at the
 table, craved pardon and came in.

Quoth she: “For want of the sexton, here is the
 priest if you need him.”

“Marry,” quoth the tanner, “in good time, for
 by this means we need not go far to be married.”

“Sir,” quoth the parson, “I shall do my best in
 convenient place.”

“Wherein?” quoth the tanner.

“To wed her myself,” quoth the parson.

“Nay, soft!” said the widow. “One swallow
 makes not a summer,¹¹ nor one meeting a mar-
 riage; as I lighted on you unlooked for, so came I
 hither unprovided for the purpose.”

“I trust,” quoth the tanner, “you came not
 without your eyes to see, your tongue to speak,
 your ears to hear, your hands to feel, nor your legs
 515 to go?”

“I brought my eyes,” quoth she, “to discern
 colours, my tongue to say ‘No’ to questions I like
 not, my hands to thrust from me the things that I
 love not, my ears to judge twixt flattery and friend-
 ship, and my feet to run from such as would
 520 wrong me.”

three listed by W. Chappell are all songs of wooing, although not all were current at the time Deloney was writing (*The Ballad Literature and Popular Music of the Olden Times*, 2 vols. [London, 1859; rept., New York, 1965], 1.69-71).

⁸ *the beginning ... children* Proverbial (*Reuter*, no. 20).

⁹ *and then send for the sexton* i.e., because the only reason that the tanner can imagine for not being able to perform his sexual duties in marriage is his own death; the *sexton* was the church officer responsible for, among other things, the digging of graves.

¹⁰ *corner-cap* a cap with four (or three) corners, worn by divines and members of the universities in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

¹¹ *One swallow makes not a summer* Proverbial (*Tilley* S1025), meaning that a single indicator of something is not in itself significant.

“Why then,” quoth the parson, “by your gentle¹ abiding in this place, it is evident that here are none but those you like and love.”

530 “God forbid I should hate my friends,” quoth the widow, “whom I take all these in this place to be.”

“But there be divers sorts of loves,” quoth the parson.

535 “You say truth,” quoth the widow. “I love yourself for your profession, and my friend the tanner for his courtesy and kindness, and the rest for their good company.”

540 “Yet,” quoth the parson, “for the explaining of your love, I pray you drink to them you love best in the company.”

“Why,” quoth the tanner, “have you any hope in her love?”

545 “Believe me,” sayeth the parson, “as much as another.”

“Why then, parson, sit down,” said the tanner, “for you that are equal with me in desire, shall surely be half with me in the shot; and so widow, on God’s name, fulfil the parson’s request.”

550 “Seeing,” quoth the widow, “you are so pleasantly bent, if my courtesy might not breed contention between you, and that I may have your favour to show my fancy, I will fulfil your request.”

555 Quoth the parson: “I am pleased howsoever it be.”

“And I,” quoth the tanner.

“Why then,” quoth she, “with this cup of claret wine and sugar, I heartily drink to the minstrels’ boy.”

560 “Why, is it he you love best?” quoth the parson.

“I have reason,” said she, “to like and love them best that will be least offended with my doings.”

565 “Nay, widow,” quoth they, “we meant you should drink to him whom you loved best in the way of marriage.”

Quoth the widow: “You should have said so at first. But to tell you my opinion, it is small discretion for a woman to disclose her secret affection in an open assembly. Therefore, if to that purpose

¹ *gentle* courteous, affable.

570 you spoke, let me entreat you both to come home to my house on Thursday next, where you shall be heartily welcome, and there be fully resolved of my mind; and so, with thanks at this time, I’ll take my leave.”

575 The shot being paid, and the musicians pleased, they all departed, the tanner to Wallingford, the parson to Speen, and the widow to her own house, where in her wonted² solemnness she settled herself to her business.

580 Against³ Thursday she dressed her house fine and brave, and set herself in her best apparel. The tailor, nothing forgetting his promise, sent to the widow a good fat pig and a goose. The parson, being as mindful as he, sent to her house a couple of fat rabbits and a capon; and the tanner came himself, and brought a good shoulder of mutton and half a dozen chickens, beside he brought a good gallon of sack,⁴ and half a pound of the best sugar. The widow, receiving this good meat, set her maid to dress it incontinent,⁵ and when dinner time⁶ drew near the table was covered, and every other thing provided in convenient and comely sort.

595 At length the guests being come, the widow bade them all heartily welcome. The priest and the tanner, seeing the tailor, mused what he made there; the tailor, on the other side, marvelled as much at their presence. Thus looking strangely one at another, at length the widow came out of the kitchen in a fair train gown⁷ stuck full of silver pins, a fine white cap on her head, with cuts of curious needlework⁸ under the same, and an apron before her as white as the driven snow. Then very modestly making curtsy to them all, she requested

² *wonted* accustomed, customary.

³ *Against* in preparation for, in anticipation of.

⁴ *sack* a dry white wine imported from Spain and the Canary Islands.

⁵ *dress it incontinent* prepare it immediately or without delay.

⁶ *dinner time* around the middle of day; dinner was the main meal in the period.

⁷ *train gown* a fashionable and expensive gown with a train.

⁸ *cuts of curious needlework* i.e., the cap is fashionably decorated with embroidered cuts, usually aimed at showing off some rich under-cloth material.

605 them to sit down. But they straining courtesy the
one with the other,¹ the widow with a smiling
countenance took the parson by the hand, saying,

610 “Sir, as you stand highest in the church, so it is
mete² you should sit highest at the table, and
therefore, I pray you, sit down there on the bench
side. And, sir, (said she to the tanner) as age is to
be honoured before youth for their experience,³
so are they to sit above bachelors for their gravity.”

615 And so she set him down on this side the table,
over against⁴ the parson.

Then coming to the tailor, she said, “Bachelor,
though your lot be the last, your welcome is equal
with the first, and seeing your place points out
itself, I pray you take a cushion and sit down. And
620 now (quoth she) to make the board equal, and
because it hath been an old saying, that three
things are to small purpose, if the fourth be away,⁵
if so it may stand with your favour, I will call in a
gossip of mine to supply this void place.”

625 “With a good will.” quoth they.

With that she brought in an old woman with
scant ever a good tooth in her head, and placed
her right against the bachelor. Then was the meat
brought to the board in due order by the widow’s
630 servants, her man John being chiefest servitor.
The widow sat down at the table’s end, between
the parson and the tanner, who in very good sort
carved meat for them all, her man John waiting on
the table.

635 After they had sitten awhile and well refreshed
themselves, the widow, taking a crystal glass filled
with claret wine, drunk unto the whole company,
and bade them welcome. The parson pledged her,⁶
and so did all the rest in due order, but still in their
640 drinking the cup passed over the poor old
woman’s nose, insomuch that at length the old

woman (in a merry vein) spoke thus unto the
company:

645 “I have had much good meat among you, but as
for the drink I can nothing commend it.”

“Alas, good gossip,” quoth the widow, “I per-
ceive no man hath drunk to thee yet.”

650 “No, truly,” quoth the old woman, “for church-
men have so much mind of young rabbits, old
men such joy in young chickens, and bachelors in
pig’s flesh take such delight, that an old sow, a
tough hen, or a grey cony⁷ are not accepted. And
so it is seen by me, else I should have been better
remembered.”

655 “Well, old woman,” quoth the parson, “take
here the leg of a capon⁸ to stop thy mouth.”

“Now, by St. Anne, I dare not,” quoth she.

“No? Wherefore?” said the parson.

660 “Marry, for fear lest you should go home with
a crutch,”⁹ quoth she.

The tailor said, “Then taste here a piece of a
goose.”

665 “Now, God forbid!” said the old woman. “Let
goose go to his kind! You have a young stomach;
eat it yourself, and much good may it do your
heart, sweet young man.”

“The old woman lacks most of her teeth,”
quoth the tanner, “and therefore a piece of a
tender chick is fittest for her.”

670 “If I did lack as many of my teeth,” quoth the
old woman, “as you lack points of good hus-
bandry,¹⁰ I doubt¹¹ I should starve before it were
long.”

675 At this the widow laughed heartily, and the men
were stricken into such a dump¹² that they had not
a word to say.

Dinner being ended, the widow with the rest
rose from the table, and after they had sitten a
pretty while¹³ merrily talking, the widow called her

¹ I.e., they insisted too much on the due observance of courtesy, and thus none of them sat down, each fearing to seem to usurp a place at table that he was not entitled to.

² *mete* fitting, appropriate.

³ Proverb, “Age is to be honoured before youth” (*Reuter*, no. 6).

⁴ *against* directly opposite or facing.

⁵ *three things ... away* Proverbial (*Reuter*, no. 407). There are apparently no other instances of this usage in the period.

⁶ *pledged her* drank a toast to her.

⁷ *grey cony* old rabbit.

⁸ *capon* a castrated cockerel, a delicacy.

⁹ *crutch* perhaps, a symbol of old age and thus of impotence.

¹⁰ *good husbandry* good management of a household or resources.

¹¹ *doubt* suspect, fear.

¹² Proverb, “To be in the dumps” (*Tilley* D640); *dump* dejection.

¹³ *a pretty while* a considerable time.

680 man John to bring her a bowl of fresh ale, which
he did.

Then said the widow, “My masters, now for
your courtesy and cost I heartily thank you all, and
in requital of all your favour, love and goodwill, I
685 drink to you, giving you free liberty when you
please to depart.”

At these words her suitors looked so sourly one
upon another as if they had been newly champ-
ing of crabs.¹ Which, when the tailor heard, shaking
690 up himself in his new russet jerkin,² and setting
his hat on one side, he began to speak thus:

“I trust, sweet widow,” quoth he, “you remem-
ber to what end my coming was hither today: I
have long time been a suitor unto you, and this day
695 you promised to give me a direct answer.”

“’Tis true,” quoth she, “and so I have. For your
love I give you thanks, and when you please you
may depart.”

“Shall I not have you?” said the tailor.
700 “Alas,” quoth the widow, “you come too late.”

“Good friend,” quoth the tanner, “it is manners
for young men to let their elders be served before
them. To what end should I be here if the widow
should have thee? A flat denial is mete³ for a saucy
705 suitor.⁴ But what sayest thou to me, fair widow?”
(quoth the tanner).

“Sir,” said she, “because you are so sharp-set,⁵
I would wish you as soon as you can to wed.”

“Appoint the time yourself.” quoth the tanner.

710 “Even as soon,” quoth she, “as you can get a
wife, and hope not after me, for I am already
promised.”

“Now, tanner, you may take your place with the
tailor,” quoth the parson, “for indeed the widow is
715 for no man but myself.”

“Master Parson,” quoth she, “many have run
near the goal and yet have lost the game, and
I cannot help it though your hope be in vain.

¹ Proverb, “As sour as a crab” (*Tilley* C783); *champing of crabs* i.e., munching crab-apples, known for their sour and harsh taste.

² *jerkin* a close-fitting jacket, usually made of leather.

³ *mete* fitting, suitable.

⁴ *A flat ... suitor* Proverbial (*Reuter*, no. 87).

⁵ *sharp-set* keen or eager; here, desirous of sexual indulgence.

Besides, parsons are but newly suffered to have
720 wives, and for my part I will have none of the first
head.”⁶

“What,” quoth the tailor, “is your merriment
grown to this reckoning? I never spent a pig and a
goose to so bad a purpose before! I promise you,
725 when I came in, I verily thought that you were
invited by the widow to make her and I sure
together,⁷ and that this jolly tanner was brought to
be a witness to the contract, and the old woman
fetched in for the same purpose, else I would
never have put up so many dry bobs⁸ at her
hands.”

“And surely,” quoth the tanner, “I knowing thee
to be a tailor did assuredly think that thou wast
appointed to come and take measure for our
735 wedding apparel.”

“But now we are all deceived,” quoth the
parson, “and therefore as we came fools, so we
may depart hence like asses.”⁹

“That is as you interpret the matter,” said the
740 widow, “for I ever doubting¹⁰ that a concluding
answer would breed a jar in the end among you
every one, I thought it better to be done at one
instant and in mine own house, than at sundry
times and in common taverns. And as for the meat
you sent, as it was unrequested of me, so had you
745 your part thereof, and if you think good to take
home the remainder, prepare your wallets and you
shall have it.”

⁶ *parsons ... wives* even after the Reformation, allowing priests to marry remained a matter of some controversy. It was first allowed in the reign of Edward VI (Stat. 2 and 3, c. 21); however, Elizabeth I was famously uncomfortable with married clergy, especially married bishops (C. Hibbert, *The Virgin Queen* [New York, 1991], p. 91); *of the first head* said of a deer, etc. at the age when the antlers are first developed. Although usually used figuratively to denote a man newly ennobled or raised in rank, here the widow seems to be suggesting that the parson, like a barely sexually-mature stag, has not yet proved his sexual prowess and she would rather not take a chance on a male so inexperienced.

⁷ *to make her and I sure together* i.e., to make her and I an officially betrothed couple.

⁸ *dry bobs* literally, a firm rap; a blow that does not break the skin; thus, a sarcastic or hurtful joke or comment.

⁹ Proverb, “To come a fool and go a fool” (*Tilley* F460).

¹⁰ *ever doubting* always suspecting or fearing.

750 “Nay, widow,” quoth they, “although we have
lost our labours,¹ we have not altogether lost our
manners. That which you have, keep; and God
send to us better luck, and to you your heart’s
desire.” And with that they departed.

755 The widow, being glad she was thus rid of her
guests, when her man John with all the rest sat at
supper, she sitting in a chair by, spoke thus unto
them:

760 “Well, my masters, you saw that this day your
poor dame had her choice of husbands, if she had
listed² to marry, and such as would have loved and
maintained her like a woman.”

“Tis true,” quoth John, “and I pray God you
have not withstood your best fortune.”

765 “Trust me,” quoth she, “I know not, but if I
have, I may thank mine own foolish fancy.”

770 Thus it passed on from Bartholomewtide,³ till
it was near Christmas, at what time the weather
was so wonderful cold that all the running rivers
round about the town were frozen very thick. The
widow being very loath any longer to lie without
company, in a cold winter’s night made a great fire,
and sent for her man John; having also prepared a
chair and a cushion, she made him sit down
therein, and sending for a pint of good sack, they
775 both went to supper.

780 In the end, bedtime coming on, she caused her
maid in a merriment to pluck off his hose and
shoes, and caused him to be laid in his master’s
best bed, standing in the best chamber, hung
round about with very fair curtains. John, being
thus preferred, thought himself a gentleman, and
lying soft, after his hard labour and a good supper,
quickly fell asleep.

785 About midnight, the widow being cold on her
feet crept into her man’s bed to warm them. John
feeling one lift up the clothes,⁴ asked ‘who was
there?’

“Oh, good John, it is I!” quoth the widow. “The
night is so extreme cold, and my chamber wall so

¹ Proverb, “To lose one’s labour” (*Tilley* L9).

² *listed* desired, wished.

³ *Bartholomewtide* St. Bartholomew’s Day (August 24th).

⁴ *clothes* bedclothes or bed-linen.

790 thin, that I am like to be starved⁵ in my bed;
wherefore, rather than I would any way hazard my
health, I thought it much better to come hither
and try your courtesy, to have a little room beside
you.”

795 John, being a kind young man, would not say
her nay, and so they spent the rest of the night
both together in one bed. In the morning betime,⁶
she arose up and made herself ready, and willed
her man John to run and fetch her a link⁷ with all
speed:

“For,” quoth she, “I have earnest business to
do this morning.”

800 Her man did so. Which done, she made him to
carry the link before her, until she came to Saint
Bartholomew’s Chapel, where Sir John the priest,
with the clerk and sexton,⁸ stood waiting for
her.

805 “John,” quoth she, “turn into the chapel, for
before I go further, I will make my prayers to St.
Bartholomew, so shall I speed the better in my
business.”

When they were come in, the priest according
to his order came to her, and asked ‘where the
bridegroom was?’

810 Quoth she: “I thought he had been here before
me. Sir (quoth she) I will sit down and say over my
beads,⁹ and by that time he will come.”

820 John mused at this matter, to see that his dame
should so suddenly be married, and he hearing
nothing thereof before. The widow rising from
her prayers, the priest told her that the bridegroom
was not yet come.

“Is it true?” quoth the widow. “I promise you I
will stay no longer for him, if he were as good as

⁵ *starved* benumbed or “killed” by exposure to the cold.

⁶ *betime* at an early hour.

⁷ *link* a torch (it is so early that it is still dark outside).

⁸ *Sir John the priest* familiar name for a priest; *clerk* one of the most
important lay officers in the parish church; *sexton* another church lay
officer, generally responsible for bell-ringing and grave-digging.

⁹ *say over my beads* i.e., to say the Catholic prayer known as the
Rosary, which consists of a set number of “Our Fathers” and “Hail
Marys” counted out on a string of beads.

825 George a Green:¹ and therefore dispatch² (quoth she), and marry me to my man John.”

“Why, dame,” quoth he, “you do but jest.”

830 “I trow,³ John,” quoth she, “I jest not, for so I mean it shall be, and stand not strangely,⁴ but remember that you did promise me on your faith not to hinder me when I came to the church to be married, but rather to set it forward. Therefore, set your link aside, and give me your hand, for none but you shall be my husband.”

835 John, seeing no remedy, consented, because he saw the matter could not otherwise be amended; and married they were presently.

840 When they were come home, John entertained his dame with a kiss, which the other servants seeing thought him somewhat saucy. The widow caused the best cheer in the house to be set on the table, and to breakfast they went, causing her new husband to be set in a chair at the table’s end, with a fair napkin laid on his trencher.⁵ Then she called out the rest of her servants, willing them to sit down and take part of their good cheer. They, wondering to see their fellow John sit at the table’s end in their old master’s chair, began heartily to smile and openly to laugh at the matter, especially because their dame so kindly sat by his side; which she perceiving, asked if that were all the manners they could show before their master?

850 “I tell you,” quoth she, “he is my husband, for this morning we were married, and therefore henceforward look you acknowledge your duty towards him.”

The folks looked one upon another, marvelling at this strange news; which when John perceived, he said:

860 “My masters, muse not at all. For although by God’s providence and your dame’s favour I am preferred from being your fellow to be your

865 master, I am not thereby so much puffed up in pride that any way I will forget my former estate. Notwithstanding, seeing I am now to hold the place of a master, it shall be wisdom in you to forget what I was, and to take me as I am, and in doing your diligence, you shall have no cause to repent that God made me your master.”

870 The servants hearing this, as also knowing his good government before time, passed their years with him in dutiful manner.

875 The next day, the report was over all the town that Jack of Newbury had married his dame, so that when the woman walked abroad, everyone bade God give her joy;⁶ some said that she was matched to her sorrow, saying that so lusty a young man as he would never love her being so ancient. Whereupon the woman made answer, that she would take him down in his wedding shoes,⁷ and would try his patience in the prime of his lustiness, whereunto many of her gossips did likewise encourage her. Every day, therefore, for the space of a month after she was married, it was her ordinary custom to go forth in the morning among her gossips and acquaintance to make merry, and not to return home till night, without any regard of her household. Of which, at her coming home, her husband did very oftentimes admonish her in very gentle sort, showing what great inconvenience would grow thereby, the which sometime she would take in gentle part, and sometime in disdain, saying:

885 “I am now in very good case, that he that was my servant but the other day will now be my master. This it is for a woman to make her foot her head.⁸ The day hath been when I might have gone forth when I would, and come in again when it had pleased me without controlment,⁹ and now I must be subject to every Jack’s check. I am sure

¹ Proverb, “As good as George a Green” (*Tilley* G83); *George a Green* otherwise known as Pindar of Wakefield, George a Green was a popular figure in sixteenth-century romances.

² *dispatch* hasten, be quick.

³ *I trow* “believe me” or “indeed.”

⁴ *strangely* in an unfriendly, unfavourable, or coldly distant way.

⁵ *trencher* a plate or platter of wood, metal, or earthenware.

⁶ *God give her joy* the traditional congratulation for marriages, births, etc.

⁷ Proverb, “To take a wife (husband) down in her (his) wedding shoes” (*Reuter*, no. 442); *take him down* humble him.

⁸ Proverb, “Do not make the foot the head” (*Tilley* F562).

⁹ *without controlment* without restraint, check, or control (a common sixteenth-century phrase).

(quoth she) that by my gadding abroad and care-
 less spending I waste no goods of thine. I, pitying
 thy poverty, made thee a man and master of the
 house, but not to the end I would become thy
 905 slave. I scorn, I tell thee true, that such a
 youngling¹ as thyself should correct my conceit²
 and give me instructions, as if I were not able to
 guide myself. But i'faith,³ i'faith, you shall not use
 me like a babe nor bridle me like an ass;⁴ and
 910 seeing my going abroad grieves thee, where I have
 gone forth one day, I will go abroad three; and for
 one hour, I will stay five."

"Well," quoth her husband, "I trust you will be
 better advised." And with that he went from her
 915 about his business, leaving her sweating in her
 fustian furies.⁵

Thus the time passed on, till on a certain day
 she had been abroad in her wonted manner, and
 staying forth very late, he shut the doors and went
 920 to bed. About midnight, she comes to the door,
 and knocks to come in. To whom, he, looking out
 of the window, answered in this sort:

"What? Is it you that keeps such a-knocking? I
 pray you get hence, and request the constable to
 925 provide you a bed, for this night you shall have no
 lodging here."

"I hope," quoth she, "you will not shut me out
 of doors like a dog, or let me lie in the streets like
 a strumpet."

"Whether like a dog or drab," quoth he, "all is
 one to me, knowing no reason but that as you have
 stayed out all day for your delight, so you may lie
 forth all night for my pleasure. Both birds and
 930 beasts at the night's approach repair to their rest,
 and observe a convenient time to return to their
 habitation. Look but upon the poor spider, the
 935 frog, the fly, and every other silly⁶ worm, and you

¹ *youngling* a young and inexperienced man.

² *conceit* conception, apprehension, understanding; perhaps, 'judgment.'

³ *i'faith* in faith.

⁴ Cf. the proverb, "It is good to hold the ass by the bridle" (*Tilley* A364).

⁵ *fustian furies* great displays of wrath or anger.

⁶ *silly* a synonym for "poor": deserving of pity, compassion, or sympathy.

shall see all these observe time to return to their
 home; and if you, being a woman, will not do the
 like, content yourself to bear the brunt of your
 own folly,⁷ and so farewell."

The woman hearing this made piteous moan,
 and in very humble sort entreated him to let her in
 and to pardon this offence, and while she lived
 vowed never to do the like. Her husband, at length
 945 being moved with pity towards her, slipped on his
 shoes and came down in his shirt; the door being
 opened, in she went quaking, and as he was about
 to lock it again, in very sorrowful manner she said,

"Alack, husband, what hap⁸ have I? My
 wedding ring was even now in my hand, and I
 have let it fall about the door! Good, sweet John,
 come forth with the candle, and help me to seek
 it."

The man incontinent⁹ did so, and while he
 sought for that which was not there to be found,
 she whipped into the house, and quickly clapping
 to the door she locked her husband out. He stood
 calling with the candle in his hand to come in, but
 955 she made as if she heard not. Anon, she went up
 into her chamber, and carried the key with her. But
 when he saw she would not answer, he presently
 began to knock as loud as he could at the door. At
 last she thrust her head out at the window, saying:

"Who is there?"

"Tis I," quoth John. "What mean you by this? I
 pray you come down and open the door that I may
 come in."

"What, sir," quoth she, "is it you? Have you
 nothing to do but dance about the streets at this
 time of night, and like a spright of the buttery¹⁰
 hunt after crickets? Are you so hot that the house
 cannot hold you?"

⁷ *bear ... folly* Proverbial (*Reuter*, no. 33).

⁸ *hap* fortune, luck.

⁹ *incontinent* straightaway, at once.

¹⁰ *spright of the buttery* "The spirit of the buttery" is a sixteenth-century phrase for the "spirit of wine"; the buttery was a household space for the storage of liquor. "Hunt after crickets" is more obscure, although Dekker suggests that crickets were believed particularly to infest brew-houses ("The Honest Whore," *Works*, 2.96). The widow implies that her husband's behaviour will identify him as a drunkard.

975 “Nay, I pray thee, sweetheart,” quoth he, “do
not gibe¹ no longer, but let me in.” 1015

“Oh, sir, remember,” quoth she, “how you
stood even now at the window, like a judge on the
bench, and in taunting sort kept me out of mine
own house. How now, Jack, am I even with you?
980 What, John my man, were you so lusty² to lock
your dame out of doors? Sirrah, remember you
bade me go to the constable to get lodging; now
you have leisure to try if his wife will prefer you to
a bed. You, Sir Sauce, that made me stand in the
985 cold till my feet did freeze and my teeth chatter,
while you stood preaching of birds and beasts,
telling me a tale of spiders, flies, and frogs! Go, try
now if any of them will be so friendly to let thee
have lodging. Why go you not, man? Fear not to
990 speak with them, for I am sure you shall find them
at home; think not they are such ill husbands as
you, to be abroad at this time of night.” 1020

With this John’s patience was greatly moved,
insomuch that he deeply swore that if she would
995 not let him in, he would break down the door. 1035

“Why, John,” quoth she, “you need not be so
hot—your clothing is not so warm—and because
I think this will be a warning for you against
another time, how you shut me out of my house:
1000 catch, there is the key; come in at thy pleasure, and
look thou go to bed to thy fellows, for with me
thou shalt not lie tonight.” 1040

With that she clapped to the casement, and got
her to bed, locking the chamber door fast. Her
1005 husband that knew it was in vain to seek to come
into her chamber, and being no longer able to
endure the cold, got him a place among his pre-
ntices and there slept soundly. In the morning his
wife rose betime, and merrily made him a caudle,³
1010 and bringing it up to his bedside, asked him how
he did?

Quoth John: “Troubled with a shrew, who the
longer she lives, the worse she is;⁴ and as the

¹ *gibe* jeer, taunt, scoff.

² *lusty* insolent, arrogant.

³ *caudle* a warm drink consisting of thin gruel, mixed with wine or
ale, sweetened and spiced, given chiefly to sick people

⁴ Proverb, “The older, the worse” (*Tilley* O38).

people of Illyris kill men with their looks,⁵ so she
kills her husband’s heart with untoward condi-
tions.⁶ But trust me, wife, (quoth he) seeing I find
you of such crooked qualities that (like the spider)
ye turn the sweet flowers of good counsel into
venomous poison,⁷ from henceforth I will leave
you to your own wilfulness, and neither vex my
mind, nor trouble myself to restrain you, the
which if I had wisely done last night, I had kept
the house in quiet, and myself from cold.”

“Husband,” quoth she, “think that women are
like starlings that will burst their gall before they
will yield to the fowler, or like the fish scolopendra
that cannot be touched without danger.⁸ Notwith-
standing, as the hard steel doth yield to the
hammer’s stroke, being used to his kind, so will
women to their husbands, where they are not too
much crossed. And seeing ye have sworn to give
me my will, I vow likewise that my wilfulness shall
not offend you. I tell you, husband, the noble
nature of a woman is such that for their loving
friends they will not stick (like the pelican) to
pierce their own hearts to do them good.⁹ And
therefore forgiving each other all injuries past,
having also tried one another’s patience, let us
quench these burning coals of contention with the
sweet juice of a faithful kiss, and shaking hands
bequeath all our anger to the eating up of this
caudle.”

⁵ *as the people of Illyris kill men with their looks* According to Isogonus,
“the Triballians and Illyrians possess this power, who with their very
eyesight can witch, yea, kill those whom they look wistly [i.e., intently]
upon any long time, especially if they be angered, and that their eyes
betrayer their anger: and more subject to this danger be men grown,
than children under fourteen years of age” (Pliny, *Natural History*,
1.155).

⁶ *untoward conditions* intractable, unruly, or perverse ways, behaviour,
or temper.

⁷ *sweet flowers ... poison* proverbial; cf. *Reuter*, no. 19 and *Tilley* B208:
“Where the bee sucks honey, the spider sucks poison.”

⁸ *the fish scolopendra ... danger* When this fish swallows a hook, “she
cast[s] up all her guts within, until she hath discharged herself of the
said hook, and then she suppeth them in again” (Pliny, *Natural*
History, 1.262).

⁹ (*like the pelican*) ... *good* The pelican was thought to feed her young
with blood from her own breast; she is a common Renaissance
emblem of selfless love and sacrifice.

Her husband courteously consented. And after
 this time, they lived long together, in most godly,
 1045 loving and kind sort, till in the end she died,
 leaving her husband wondrous wealthy.

Chapter XI

How One of Jack of Newbury's Maids
 Became a Lady.¹

At the winning of Morlesse in France, the noble
 Earl of Surrey, being at that time lord high admiral
 of England, made many knights. Among the rest
 1050 was Sir George Rigley, brother to Sir Edward
 Rigley, and sundry other,² whose valours far sur-
 passed their wealth, so that when peace bred a
 scarcity in their purse, and that their credits grew
 weak in the city,³ they were enforced to ride into
 1055 the country, where at their friends' houses they
 might have favourable welcome, without coyne⁴
 or grudging.

Among the rest, Jack of Newbury, that kept a
 table for all comers, was never lightly without
 1060 many such guests, where they were sure to have
 both welcome and good cheer, and their mirth no
 less pleasing than their meat was plenty. Sir
 George having lain long at board⁵ in this brave

¹ The following story of the scorned woman who gains her lover as a husband through pretending to be someone else is common in the literature of the period. See, for example, similar stories in Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* (where the scorned wife gains her husband as a lover) and *Measure for Measure*.

² These details along with an account of the winning of Morlaix (Morleis) appear in Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* [1587], ed. H. Ellis, 6 vols., London, 1807-08, rept. New York, 1965, 3.678-79; *the noble Earl of Surrey* Thomas Howard, third duke of Norfolk (1473-1554), was appointed lord high admiral in 1513, and created earl of Surrey in 1514. Among those whom Holinshed records Surrey as having knighted after the taking of Morlaix was Sir Edward Ringleie (3.679). The Rigley family is not in the DNB.

³ *city* London.

⁴ *coyne* either "coin," and thus "without demanding payment for" or a variant of "coynye," the practice of billeting military followers upon private persons, and thus "without [resorting to] this practice and the grumbling [attendant upon it]."

⁵ *lain long at board* i.e., long enjoyed the hospitality (bed and board).

yeoman's⁶ house, at length fell in liking of one of
 his maidens, who was as fair as she was fond.⁷
 This lusty wench he so allured with hope of mar-
 riage that at length she yielded him her love, and
 therewithal bent her whole study to work his
 content. But, in the end, she so much contented
 1070 him that it wrought altogether her own discontent:
 to become high, she laid herself so low that the
 knight suddenly fell over her, which fall became
 the rising of her belly. But when this wanton per-
 ceived herself to be with child, she made her
 moan unto the knight in this manner:

"Ah, Sir George, now is the time to perform
 your promise, or to make me a spectacle of infamy
 to the whole world forever. In the one, you shall
 discharge the duty of a true knight, but in the
 other show yourself a most perjured person. Small
 honour will it be to boast in the spoil of poor
 maidens, whose innocency all good knights ought
 much rather to defend."

"Why, thou lewd, paltry thing!" quoth he.
 1085 "Comest thou to father thy bastard upon me?
 Away, ye dunghill carrion, away! Hear you, good
 huswife:⁸ get you among your companions, and
 lay your litter where you list, for if you trouble me
 anymore, by Heaven I swear thou shalt dearly
 abide it!"⁹ And so bending his brows like the
 angry god of war, he went his ways, leaving the
 child-breeding wench to the hazard of her
 fortune, either good or bad.

This poor maiden, seeing herself for her kind-
 1095 ness thus cast off, shed many tears of sorrow for
 her sin, inveighing with many bitter groans against
 the inconstancy of love-alluring men. But in the
 end, when she saw no other remedy, she made her
 case known unto her mistress,¹⁰ who, after she had
 given her many bitter checks and taunts,¹¹ threat-

⁶ *yeoman* a commoner or countryman of respectable standing, under the rank of gentleman.

⁷ *fond* foolish.

⁸ *huswife* a light, worthless, or pert woman or girl; a hussy.

⁹ *dearly abide it* keenly suffer for it.

¹⁰ In chapter 2, Jack remarries after the death of the widow, taking one of his own virtuous but penniless maidservants to wife.

¹¹ *checks* rebukes; *taunts* scornful reproaches.

ening to turn her out of doors, she opened the matter to her husband.

So soon as he heard thereof, he made no more to do, but presently posted¹ to London after Sir

1105 George, and found him at my lord admiral's.

"What, Master Winchcombe," quoth he, "you are heartily welcome to London, and I thank you for my good cheer. I pray you, how doth your good wife and all our friends in Berkshire?"

1110 "All well and merry, I thank you, good Sir George," quoth he. "I left them in health, and I

hope they do so continue. And trust me, sir, (quoth he) having earnest occasion to come up to

1115 talk with a bad debtor, in my journey it was my chance to light in company of a gallant widow. A

gentlewoman she is, of wondrous good wealth, whom grisly death hath bereft of a kind husband,

1120 making her a widow ere she had been half a year a wife. Her land, Sir George, is as well worth a

hundred pound a year as one penny, being as fair and comely a creature as any of her degree in our

1125 whole country.² Now sir, this is the worst: by the reason that she doubts³ herself to be with child, she hath vowed not to marry these twelve months.

But, because I wish you well and the gentlewoman

1130 no hurt, I came of purpose from my business to tell you thereof. Now, Sir George, if you think her

a fit wife for you, ride to her, woo her, win her, and wed her."⁴

1135 "I thank you, good Master Winchcombe," quoth he, "for your favour ever toward me, and

gladly would I see this young widow, if I wist⁵ where."

"She dwelleth not half a mile from my house,"

1135 quoth Master Winchcombe, "and I can send for her at any time if you please."

Sir George hearing this thought it was not best to come there, fearing Joan would father a child

1140 upon him, and therefore answered, 'he had no leisure to come from my lord.'

¹ *presently* immediately; *posted* travelled with speed or haste.

² *country* county.

³ *doubts* suspects.

⁴ Proverb, "Woo, wed, and bed (wear) her" (*Tilley* W731).

⁵ *wist* knew.

"But," quoth he, "would I might see her in London, on the condition it cost me twenty nobles."⁶

"Tush, Sir George," quoth Master Winch-

1145 combe, "delays in love are dangerous,⁷ and he that will woo a widow must take time by the forelock⁸

and suffer none other to step before him, lest he leap without the widow's love. Notwithstanding,

1150 seeing now I have told you of it, I will take my gelding and get me home. If I hear of her coming

to London, I will send you word, or perhaps come myself. Till when, adieu, good Sir George."

Thus parted Master Winchcombe from the knight. And being come home, in short time he

1155 got a fair taffeta gown and a French hood for his maid, saying: "Come, ye drab, I must be fain⁹ to

cover a foul fault with a fair garment,¹⁰ yet all will not hide your great belly! But if I find means to

1160 make you a lady, what will you say then?"

"O master," quoth she, "I shall be bound while I live to pray for you."

"Come then, minion," quoth her mistress, "and put you on this gown and French hood, for seeing

1165 you have lain with a knight, you must needs be a gentlewoman."

The maid did so, and, being thus attired, she was set on a fair gelding, and a couple of men sent

1170 with her up to London. And being well instructed by her master and dame what she should do, she took her journey to the city in the term time,¹¹ and

lodged at the Bell in the Strand,¹² and Mistress Loveless must be her name, for so her master had

warned her to call herself. Neither did the men that waited on her know the contrary, for Master

⁶ *nobles* a fairly valuable piece of gold currency, worth about 6s, 8d. by 1550.

⁷ Proverb, "Delay in love is dangerous" (*Tilley* D196).

⁸ *take time by the forelock* Proverb (*Tilley* T311), meaning to seize an opportunity immediately when it presents itself. Cf. W338: "Marry a widow before she leaves mourning"

⁹ *fain* content (as the course of action is the lesser of two evils).

¹⁰ Proverb, "To cover a foul fault with a fair garment" (*Tilley* C419).

¹¹ *term time* the period during which the law courts were in session.

¹² *the Bell in the Strand* an inn on the N side of the Strand, near the end of Little Drury Lane (*Topographical Dict.*, p. 56). The Bell was a common name for inns and taverns in the period.

1175 Winchcombe had borrowed them of their master
to wait upon a friend of his to London, because
he could not spare any of his own servants at that
time. Notwithstanding, they were appointed for
the gentlewoman's credit to say they were her own
1180 men. This being done, Master Winchcombe sent
Sir George a letter, that the gentlewoman which
he told him of was now in London, lying at the
Bell in the Strand, having great business at the
term.

1185 With which news Sir George's heart was on
fire till such time as he might speak with her.
Three or four times went he thither, and still she
would not be spoken withal, the which close
keeping of herself made him the more earnest in
1190 his suit.

At length he watched her so narrowly that
finding her going forth in an evening he followed
her, she having one man before and another
behind. Carrying a very stately gait in the street, it
1195 drove him into the greater liking of her, being the
more urged to utter his mind. And suddenly step-
ping before her, he thus saluted her:

"Gentlewoman, God save you! I have often
been at your lodging, and could never find you at
1200 leisure."

"Why, sir," quoth she, counterfeiting her
natural speech, "have you any business with me?"

"Yes, fair widow," quoth he. "As you are a client
to the law, so am I a suitor for your love; and may
1205 I find you so favourable to let me plead my own
case at the bar of your beauty, I doubt not but to
unfold so true a tale, as I trust will cause you to
give sentence on my side."

"You are a merry gentleman," quoth she, "but
1210 for my own part, I know you not; nevertheless, in
a case of love, I will be no let¹ to your suit, though
perhaps I help you little therein. And therefore, sir,
if it please you to give attendance at my lodging,
upon my return from the Temple,² you shall know
1215 more of my mind." And so they parted.

¹ *let* hindrance, obstacle.

² *Temple* either the Inner or Middle Temple, where one could consult with a lawyer.

Sir George, receiving hereby some hope of
good hap,³ stayed for his dear at her lodging door,
whom at her coming she friendly greeted, saying:

"Surely, sir, your diligence is more than the
profit you shall get thereby. But I pray you, how
shall I call your name?"

"George Rigley," quoth he, "I am called, and
for some small deserts⁴ I was knighted in France."

"Why then, Sir George," quoth she, "I have
done you too much wrong to make you thus dance
attendance on my worthless person. But let me be
so bold to request you to tell me how you came to
know me; for my own part, I cannot remember
that ever I saw you before."

"Mistress Loveless," said Sir George, "I am well
acquainted with a good neighbour of yours, called
Master Winchcombe, who is my very good friend,
and, to say the truth, you were commended unto
me by him."

"Truly, Sir George," said she, "you are so much
the better welcome. Nevertheless, I have made a
vow not to love any man for this twelve months'
space. And therefore, sir, till then I would wish
you to trouble yourself no further in this matter
till that time be expired; and then, if I find you be
not entangled to any other, and that by trial I find
out the truth of your love, for Master Winch-
combe's sake your welcome shall be as good as any
other gentleman's whatsoever."

Sir George having received this answer was
wondrous woe, cursing the day that ever he
meddled with Joan, whose time of deliverance
would come long before a twelve month were
expired, to his utter shame and overthrow of his
good fortune, for by that means should he have
Master Winchcombe his enemy, and therewithal
the loss of this fair gentlewoman. Wherefore to
prevent this mischief, he sent a letter in all haste to
Master Winchcombe, requesting him most
earnestly to come up to London, by whose per-
suasion he hoped straight to finish the marriage.
Master Winchcombe fulfilled his request, and then

³ *hap* fortune.

⁴ *deserts* meritorious actions.

presently¹ was the marriage solemnized at the
 1260 Tower of London,² in presence of many gentle-
 men of Sir George's friends. But when he found it
 was Joan whom he had gotten with child, he
 fretted and fumed, stamped and stared like a devil. 1280

1265 "Why," quoth Master Winchcombe, "what
 needs all this? Came you to my table to make my
 maid your strumpet? Had you no man's house to
 dishonour but mine? Sir, I would you should well
 know that I account the poorest wench in my 1285
 house too good to be your whore, were you ten
 knights; and seeing you took pleasure to make her
 your wanton, take it no scorn to make her your
 1270 wife, and use her well too, or you shall hear of it.³
 And hold thee, Joan, (quoth he) there is a hundred
 pounds for thee, and let him not say thou camest
 to him a beggar."

1275 Sir George seeing this, and withal casting in his
 mind what friend Master Winchcombe might be

to him, taking his wife by the hand, gave her a
 loving kiss, and Master Winchcombe great thanks.
 Whereupon he willed him for two years' space to
 take his diet and his lady's at his house, which the
 knight accepting, rode straight with his wife to
 Newbury.

Then did the mistress make curtsy to the maid,
 saying, "You are welcome, madam," giving her the
 upper hand in all places.

And thus they lived afterward in great joy; and
 our King hearing how Jack had matched Sir
 George, laughing heartily thereat, gave him a
 living⁴ forever, the better to maintain my lady, his
 wife.

FINIS.

—1st edition, 1596-97; 1st extant print edition,
 1619

¹ *presently* straightaway, at once.

² The Tower of London was a royal palace as well as a prison in
 Deloney's time, and had a number of chapels.

³ *you shall hear of it* i.e., you shall be called to account about it.

⁴ *living* property in general, a landed estate.