

**THE DEBATE
BETWEEN PRIDE
AND LOWLINESS**

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The Debate Between Pride and Lowliness by Francis Thynn

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FRANCIS THYNN

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BETWEEN
PRIDE AND LOWLINESS :

BY FRANCIS THYNN.

REPRINTED FROM THE EDITION BY JOHN CHARLWOOD.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY J. PAYNE COLLIER, ESQ., F.S.A.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE most remarkable circumstance about the ensuing poem is, that Robert Greene, the celebrated dramatist, poet, and pamphleteer, one of the predecessors of Shakespeare, stole the whole substance of it, and, putting it into prose, published it in 1592, in his own name, and as his own work, under the title of "A Quip for an Upstart Courtier, or a quaint Dispute between Velvet-breeches and Cloth-breeches." In his dedication to Thomas Barnabie, Esq. Greene says not one word of any obligation to a preceding writer.

This fact presents Greene's character in a new light, and affords ground for suspecting, if not for believing, that it was not the only time he had offended in this way. It is known, indeed, that he frequently resorted to foreign sources, particularly to the Italian novelists; but, until recently, it was not supposed that he appropriated to himself the work of any native author. He is the poet who, in his "Groatsworth of Wit," 1592, sneered at our great dramatist, as "the only Shake-scene in a country," and called him "an upstart crow, beautifixed with our feathers." (Dyce's *Greene's Works*, i., lxxxii.) This certainly did not come with a good grace from Greene, especially after having in the very same year plucked all the "feathers" out of "The Debate betwene Pride and Lowlines," in order to "beautify" one of his own compositions. A more

wholesale or barefaced piece of plagiarism is not, perhaps, to be pointed out in our literature.

The question then arises, how it happened that Greene ventured thus to appropriate to himself the work of another?

But one copy of "The Debate betweene Pride and Lowlines" is known, and that is preserved at Bridgewater House. We shall say something about the author of it presently; but it is very possible that it was never published for sale: the copy in question was, doubtless, presented to the then head of the family, and it has been handed down, through the Earls and Dukes of Bridgewater, to its present possessor, Lord Francis Egerton. Greene had, perhaps, lighted accidentally upon a copy of "The Debate," and as many years had elapsed between the printing of it, and the period when he wished to avail himself of its contents, he might imagine that he could do so without much fear of detection. The initials F. T. only are upon the title-page of "The Debate," and it is doubtful if Greene, even in that day, knew who was the writer of it. That the offence Greene had committed, in this respect, was not discovered at the time, we have this evidence:—Greene and Gabriel Harvey were bitter enemies: the latter brought all sorts of charges against the former for calling him the son of a rope-maker, in the "Quip for an Upstart Courtier;"*

* The Rev. Mr. Dyce is of opinion, and he seldom arrives at a conclusion without sufficient grounds, that the "Quip for an Upstart Courtier" has not come down to us in the state in which it originally issued from the press, and that the page containing the passage respecting Gabriel Harvey was cancelled at the instance of Greene. If so, it renders Harvey's rancour less pardonable, especially recollecting

and, if Harvey, (a man extremely well versed in contemporary literature) had been aware of the fact that Greene's "Quip" had been purloined from "The Debate," he would not have failed to make abundant use of the fact against his adversary. Harvey's silence renders it still more likely that "The Debate" was never published. We are to recollect also, that it was a severely, though humorously satirical work, that it especially made free with the wealthy and powerful, and that the author might not wish to run the risk of giving offence, however desirous he might be to see himself in print. For this and other reasons he perhaps had only a few copies struck off for his immediate friends, among whom was Mr. Thomas Egerton, who subsequently advanced, through the offices of Solicitor and Attorney General, to be Keeper of the Great Seal to Queen Elizabeth, and Lord High Chancellor of England to James the First.

In a question of this kind dates are manifestly important. Greene's "Quip," as we have stated, appeared in 1592; and, although there cannot be a moment's doubt that it was considerably posterior to the time when "The Debate" was printed, we cannot fix the precise period when the latter piece came from the press, as it is without any note of the year. The "Quip" was printed by John Wolfe; "The Debate" by John Charlwood, and Charlwood was the older printer of the two, but we must also look to ex-

that it did not break out in full force until after the premature death of Greene. A most amusing and well-digested account of the dispute between Greene, Nash, and Harvey, may be found in Mr. D'Israeli's *Calamities of Authors*."

traneous circumstances, in order to decide the point of priority.

In the first place, to any body accustomed to early typography, it would be quite obvious, from mere inspection, that there was, perhaps, an interval of fifteen or twenty years between the appearance of the two works. Not only has the letter employed by Charwood a more antiquated appearance than that used by Wolfe, but the whole style of ornament is of a kind which had become somewhat obsolete in 1592.

The facts connected with the authorship of "The Debate" strongly support the same conclusion. The initials F. T. only are given, and they are those of Francis Thynn, in whose hand-writing F. Th. is also found upon the title-page of the copy, which we presume was presented to Lord Ellesmere, then Mr. Thomas Egerton. It is ascertained to be Thynn's autograph, by the resemblance between it and a manuscript by him of a later date, also presented to Lord Ellesmere, preserved in the library at Bridgewater House. That manuscript appears to have been prepared for publication, though never printed, and the dedication of it is thus subscribed by its author.

*Copy hand written in page to
Wolfe*
Francis Thynn