

Peacham, Henry. The Art of Living in
London. 1642. The Complete
Gentleman, The Truth of Our Times,
and The Art of Living in London.
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*The Art of Living in London*¹

It is a greater piece of skill to live in a populous place, where multitudes of people reside, than in a solitary and private place among a few. Yet some natures are so carried and led away with variety of acquaintance and company that it is a death unto them to live by and to themselves, which indeed is the happiest life of all and hath ever been most contenting and pleasing to the best and wisest men.

Now our most populous places are cities, and among us London or *κατ' ἐξοχήν*,² the city whither all sorts reside, noble and simple, rich and poor, young and old, from all places and countries, either for pleasure (and let me add besides, to save the charge of housekeeping in the country) or for profit, as lawyers to the terms, countrymen and women to Smithfield and the markets; or for necessity, as poor young men and maids to seek services and places; servingmen, masters; and some others, all manner of employment.

Now the city being like a vast sea, full of gusts, fearful-dangerous shelves and rocks, ready at every storm to sink and cast away the weak and unexperienced bark with her fresh-

¹ This essay was published in four leaves quarto with the following title: *The Art of Living in London; or, A caution how gentlemen, countrymen, and strangers, drawn by occasion of business, should dispose of themselves in the thriftiest way, not only in the city, but in all other populous places. As also, A direction to the poorer sort that come thither to seek their fortunes. By H. P. Printed for John Gyles, and are to be sold by Samuel Rand at his shop at Barnard's Inn in Holborn. 1642.*

² "Par excellence."

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water soldiers, as wanting her compass and her skillful pilot, myself, like another Columbus or Drake, acquainted with her rough entertainment and storms, have drawn you this chart or map for your guide as well out of mine own as my many friends' experience.

Who therefore soever shall have occasion to come to the city for the occasions before mentioned, the first thing he is to do is to arm himself with patience and to think that he is entered into a wood where there is as many briars as people, everyone as ready to catch hold of your fleece as yourself. For we see that sheep, when they pass through a thorny or a bushy place, they leave locks of³ wool behind them; so imagine a populous city could not live nor subsist (like the stomach) except it have help and nourishment from the other parts and members. Therefore the first rule I give you, next to the due observation of God and the Sabbath and at other times, is the choice of your company and acquaintance. For according to that, every man finds his own valuation high or low. That is, we are esteemed to be such as we keep company withal, as well in estate as condition. If you cannot find such fitting for you, apply yourself to your friends, if you have any, or the friends of your friend. If you have not them neither (I speak to the meaner and more inferior), be sure that you take your lodging at least in some honest house of credit, whether it be inn, alehouse, or other private house, which latter⁴ I could rather wish because in the other the multiplicity of resort and company of all sorts will draw you to much needless and vain expense, as in pots of beer or ale, tobacco, perhaps cards, dice, the shovelboard table, etc.

But first of all have an eye to and a care of your main business or the end of your coming to town; as it were, at what mark you would shoot your arrow; which, being thoroughly considered, for your purse sake pursue it with all expedition. For

³ Original: or.

⁴ Original: which I.

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the city is like a quicksand: the longer you stand upon it the deeper you sink, if here money or means to get it be wanting.

But imagine you have money of your own and come hither only for your pleasure, as being tired and weary of your country. If you husband it not thriftily you may quickly take a nap upon penniless-bench—so many are the occasions here offered that are ready every hour to pick your purse: as perpetual visits of vain and useless acquaintance; necessitous persons ever upon borrowing hand with you; clothes in the fashion; this or that new play; play at ordinaries, tavern feasts, and meetings; horse and coach hire, besides those brittle commodities they carry; boat hire to Kingston, Windsor, and other places; with the like. For an antidote to these several poisons let me prescribe to my city-country gentleman these receipts or remedies.

First, being come to the city, avoid idleness, which commonly draws after a train of many vices. I call idleness keeping your chamber, consuming the day lying in bed, or, risen, in walking up and down from street to street, to this or that gentleman's chamber, having no business at all, and cannot meet with useful company. Let the Bible and other books of piety such as treat of philosophy, natural or moral, history, the mathematics, as arithmetic, geometry, music, sometimes heraldry, and the like, be your chief company. For you shall find books no flatterers, nor expensive in your converse with them. Besides, you shall meet with those who can instruct you in all those arts which Tully calls *venales*, which are taught for money, as the mathematics themselves, dancing, fencing, riding, painting, and the like.

Next, have a care of saving and improving your money to the best, as who would bespeak a supper or a dinner at all adventure at a tavern, and not know the price of every dish, as the Italians and other nations do, while they laugh at our English for their vain profuseness and simplicity, who, when the dinner

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is ended, must stand to the courtesy of a nimble-tongued drawer or of a many-ringed whistling mistress, whether they or you should be masters of your money. Besides, one dish, well dressed, gives a good stomach more and better content than a variety of twenty.

And above all things beware of beastly drunkenness, which, as Horace truly saith, doth *affigere humo divinae particulam aerae*.⁵ And well he may *affigere humo*, or "nail to the ground," for some are found sometimes so drunk, who, being fallen upon the ground or, which is worse, in the kennel, are not able to stir or move again. Drinking begets challenges and quarrels and occasioneth the death of many, as is known by almost daily experience. Hence are Newgate, the Counters, and other prisons filled with our young heirs and swaggering gallants, to the sorrow of their friends and joy of their jailers. Again, men, when they are in drink, are apt to say or do anything, as become sureties for decayed companions or lending them ready money out of their purses, which, when they have slept upon it, they curse and are ready to hang themselves—besides the terror of conscience and extreme melancholy which sticks by them a long time after. Drunken men are apt to lose their hats, cloaks, or rapiers, not to know what they have spent, how much money they have, and full oft have their pockets picked by whores and knaves. There is less danger in outdoor recreations then, as shooting, bowls, riding, tennis, etc.

Next, let every man beware of play and gaming, as cards, especially dice, at ordinaries and other places, for in the city there are many who, when they live only by cheating, are so cunning that they will so strip a young heir or novice but lately come to town, and woodcocklike so pull his wings that he shall in a short time never be able to fly over ten acres of his own land.

These and the like errors are the cause why so many fair estates, being near or not very far from the city, have been so

⁵ "Fasten upon the ground a part of a divine being."

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often bought and sold. And the truth is, very few have held out in a name to the third generation.

Let a moneyed man or gentleman especially beware in the city, *ab istis calidis solis filiabus*,⁶ as Lipsius saith,⁷ these over-hot and crafty daughters of the sun, your silken and gold-laced harlots everywhere, especially in the suburbs, to be found. These have been and are daily the ruin of thousands. And if they happen to allure and entice him, which is only to cheat him and pick his pocket to boot, with the bargain she makes, but let him resolutely say, as Diogenes did to Lais of Corinth, *Non tanti emam poenitentiam*, I will not buy repentance at such a rate.

Let him also in the city have a special care whom he entertains into his service. Let him or them⁸ have friends of his acquaintance who may undertake⁹ for them, but not at all adventure every straggler. What says old Tusser in his book of good husbandry?

Take runagate Robin to pity his need,
And look to be filched as sure as thy creed.

And if you bring one with you out of the country, except you have a great eye over him he will quickly be corrupted in the city with much acquaintance. Then shall you help yourself to bed, see your horse starved in the stable and never rubbed, your linen lost at the laundresses; in a word, yourself everywhere neglected. Think it therefore no disgrace in a city inn to see your horse every day yourself, and to see him well meated, rubbed, and watered. He shall make you amends in your journey: *Occhio di patrono ingrassa lo cavallo*, the master's eye makes the horse fat. Besides, remember what Solomon saith: "The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the ungodly have cruel hearts." I saw, I remember, a carrier flay his

⁶ Cf. above, pp. 162, 218.

⁸ Original: they.

⁷ Original: Lipsius, these.

⁹ Assume responsibility.

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horse alive, being able to go on the way no farther, his too heavy burden having broken his back, insomuch that he tumbled raw in his own skin.

Next let the gentleman living in the city have a care to keep himself out of debt. Let him owe as little as he can to his tailor for following the fashion, than which there can be no greater misery. For then, if he walks abroad he is ready to be snapped up at every lane's end by sergeants, marshal's men, or bailies¹⁰ or, keeping his chamber, let him stir never so little, be betrayed by some false knave or other. In the meantime his creditors, if they be of the inferior sort, nay, their scolding and clamorous wives and every saucy apprentice, will be ready to disgrace him. And if arrested, he shall be hauled to prison many times like a dog if he returns but the least ill word. If he be a landed man, let him take heed of usurers and their factors, of whom he shall find as much mercy in cities as an oxcheek from a butcher's cur. But I will turn my discourse now to such as accidentally make their abode here, either through business, to see friends, or sent for by authority.

Next after the setting up of their horses and seeing them well used, which should be your chiefest care at your first alighting in the city, with all diligence follow your business. Let not vain and by-occasions take you off from it, as going to taverns, seeing plays, and now and then to worse places—so lose your time, spend your money, and sometimes leave your business uneffected. To avoid these, take a private chamber wherein you may pass your spare time in doing something or other, and what you call for, pay for, without going upon the score, especially in city alehouses, where in many places you shall be torn out of your skin, if it were possible, even for a debt of twopence. And though you have spent twenty or forty pounds in one of their houses, your host, especially your hostess, will hardly bid you drink in a twelvemonth; but if they be at dinner

¹⁰ Bailiffs.

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or supper, never to eat a bit with them, for that were an undoing to them in their opinion.

Again, walking abroad, take heed with what company you sort yourself withal. If you are a countryman and but newly come to town, you will be smelt out by some cheaters or other, who will salute, call you by your name—which perhaps one of their company meeting you in another street hath learned by way of mistaking you for another man, which is an old trick—carry you to a tavern, saying they are akin to someone dwelling near you, etc. But all tricks of late years have been so plainly discovered and are so generally known almost to every child that their practice is out of date and now no great fear of them. Yet an *item* can do you no hurt.

You shall not do amiss if you send for your diet to your own chamber a hot joint of meat, of mutton, veal, or the like; what you leave covered with a fair napkin will serve you to breakfast the next morning, or when you please. Keep out of throngs and public places where multitudes of people are—for saving your purse. The fingers of a number go beyond your sense of feeling. A tradesman's wife of the Exchange one day, when her husband was following some business in the city, desired him he would give her leave to go see a play, which she had not done in seven years. He bade her take his apprentice along with her and go, but especially to have a care of her purse, which she warranted him she would. Sitting in a box among some gallants and gallant wenches and returning when the play was done, she¹¹ returned to her husband and told him she had lost her purse. "Wife," quoth he, "did I not give you warning of it? How much money was there in it?" Quoth she, "Truly, four pieces, six shillings, and a silver toothpicker." Quoth her husband, "Where did you put it?" "Under my petticoat, between that and my smock." "What," quoth he, "did you feel nobody's hand there?" "Yes," quoth she, "I felt one's hand there, but I

¹¹ Original: done, returned.

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did not think he had come for that." So much for the guard of the purse.

Now for such as are of the poorest condition and come to the city, compelled by necessity to try their fortunes, to seek services or other means to live. Let them presently provide themselves if they can—for here is employment for all hands that will work—or return home again before they find or feel the extremity of want. Here are more occasions to draw them into ill courses than there, as being constrained to steal and to shorten their days; to seek death in the error of their lives, as Solomon saith; young maids, who never knew ill in their lives, to be enticed by impudent bawds to turn common whores; and the like. But if they can provide themselves and take honest courses, by the blessing of God they may come to as great preferment as aldermen and aldermen's wives. For poverty of itself is no vice, but by accident. Whom hath the city more advanced than poor men's children? the city itself being the most charitable place of the whole, and having done more good deeds than half the land beside. In a word, for a conclusion, let me give all comers, not only to London, but all other populous places, this only rule never to be forgotten, which is: To serve God, avoid idleness, to keep your money, and to beware of ill company.

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