

Sure enough Nashe picked up on Florio's quarrel with H. S. at his next opportunity, in his publication the following year of 'Lenten Stuff'. Nashe had instantly identified with "he that will be witty in another man's book" and further acknowledged the fact by lighting upon Florio's reference to Martial. The "knavish name" the Roman writer devised for such a one was "putre halec" a rotten herring that spoils the rest of the barrel.

Nashe was then living in the town of Yarmouth, famous for its herring industry, having fled London in the wake of the row about the banned play 'Isle of Dogs' in which he'd had a hand. Students of Nashe's writing who may have wondered why he devoted so much energy in his last published work to praising the fine qualities of the Yarmouth herring may now see a mystery solved. Nashe jokes that Martial must surely have had a greasy Scottish herring in mind when he used the phrase putre halec; not a sound, long-keeping Yarmouth specimen.

Nashe's dedication suggests that Florio was somehow connected with a pamphlet entitled: 'An Halfpenny-worth of Wit in a Pennyworth of Paper' published as the work, indeed as far as we know the only work, of a certain 'Humphrey King' by Florio's regular publishing partners, Thomas Thorpe and Edward Blount.

Florio had opened the epistle to the reader in 'World of Words' with numerous nautical metaphors, likening his publication to another venture upon the high-seas, undertaken in a dangerously critical environment among "those pirates in this our paper sea, those sea-dogs, or land-critics, monsters of men, if not beasts rather than men, whose teeth are canibals', their tongues adder-forks, their lips asps-poison, their eyes basilisks, their breath the breath of a grave, their words like the swords of Turks, that strive which shall dive deepest into a Christian lying bound before them."

Happy to play the part of a swash-buckling pirate and wholesome Yarmouth herring, Nashe gleefully runs up the Jolly Roger aboard his own vessel by opening 'Lenten Stuff' with an apt Latin proverb, 'Famam peto per undas' (I seek fame through the waves) and launches into a series of nick-names in a mock dedication of his work to 'Humphrey King' of whom we shall hear more in a moment.

The first paragraph of Nashe's letter begins in a vein reminiscent of the bogus dedication to Southampton in 'The Unfortunate Traveller', "Most courteous, unlearned lover of poetry, and yet a poet thyself, of no less price than H. S., that in honour of Maid Marian gives sweet Margaret (marjoram) for his Empress and puts the sow most saucily upon some great personage, whatever she be, bidding her (as it runs in the old song) 'Go from my garden, go, for there no flowers for thee doth grow': these be to notify to your Diminutive Excelsitude and Compendiate Greatness what my zeal is towards you, that in no straiter bonds would be pounded and enlisted, than in an Epistle Dedicatory."

This reaffirms the identification of H. S. as Hugh Sanford. This was the conclusion reached by the leading editor of Nashe's works Dr. R. B. McKerrow and affirmed by Florio's biographer Dame Frances Yates. Hugh Sanford's arms-device, a hog and a majoram bush, appear on the title page of the 1593 revised version of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia. It follows that Nashe's "Maid Marian" is the Countess of Pembroke, who undertook the revision of her brother's work and employed her sons' tutor Sanford to edit the text. Yates hit on the likely cause of animosity

between Florio and Sanford, pointing to their apparent involvement in the rival versions of Sidney's 'Arcadia', published respectively in 1590 and 1593.

The 'Arcadia' had been circulated in manuscript form only during Sidney's lifetime, but after his death, his lifelong friend Fulke Greville decided it would be a fitting posthumous tribute to publish the work. His problem was in deciding which version to proceed into print. Just before his death, Sidney had been working on the notion of revising the 'Arcadia'. It's widely believed now that Greville called on his former Italian tutor, Florio and his friend Matthew Gwinne to help with the task. (Gwinne and Florio later worked together on the translation of Montaigne's Essays too.) In later comments in the prefaces to the Montaigne, Florio betrayed an intimate knowledge of the particular manuscript editions used in composing the first version of Sidney's Arcadia and stoutly defended it as preferable to the subsequent edition edited by Sanford. The 1593 version, commissioned by the Countess of Pembroke, who had apparently become convinced that a better job could be made of it, resorted to Sidney's revisions and altered the sequences to provide an 'ending' which the earlier version lacked. Sanford himself scorned the earlier version in his preface, protesting that its 'face' was 'disfigured' with errors, which he, Sanford, had corrected and improved.

Sharp glances at Florio pepper the text of 'Lenten Stuff'. Florio's 'Second Fruits' reference to his "medicinal simples" and praise of Mithridates impressive command of more than twenty languages becomes, in Nashe's hands, an evil-smelling apothecary's collection of "their Mithridates forty several poisons"; another of Martial's epigrams tells how Mithridates took daily minute doses of poison to build up his immunity. Nashe dips into Florio's dictionary: "Noble Caesarian Charlemagne herring, Pliny and Gesner were to blame they slubbered thee over so negligently. I do not see why any man should envy thee, since thou art none of these lurcones or epulones, gluttons or fleshpots of Egypt (as one that writes of the Christians' captivity under the Turk enstyleth us English men)." which recalls Florio's bitter remark about critics and his regular comments about the dietary excesses of the English. Modern editions of 'Lenten Stuff' note that the meanings of the words 'lurcones' and 'epulones' are unknown, but in Florio's dictionary one finds the definitions necessary to comprehend their mysteries. A 'lurcone' is 'a glutton, a cormorant, an epicure, a gourmand' and an 'epulone' is defined as 'a glutton, a gourmand, a smell-feast, a tall trencher-man, a banquetter.' Nashe had plainly had some fun sifting through Florio's collection in search of appropriate Italian novelties of vocabulary and prepared his readers for them in his opening epistle: "Let me speak to you about my huge words which I use in this book, and then you are your own men to do what you list."

Nashe returns to Florio's 'Second Fruits' and the lengthy morning toilette described in the Nolano dialogue to draw a picture of his subject. Like Florio's character 'Torquato' he has heavily overslept after a night on the town and takes an age to prepare himself to meet the day.

He spends more in a day than he can earn from the "grazierly gentility thou followest" in a year, according to Nashe, and puts on a show of wealth with "all his trunks opened to show his rich suits". But Nashe adds that such a one is not so generous to his friends, that his learning of "the seven liberal sciences", the university courses of the Trivium and Quadrivium, has been turned to profit and self indulgence. He adds that in the hands of this fellow, love poetry, of the

sort Florio called "a pretty thing to give unto my Lady" in 'Second Fruits' is reduced to clownish sensuality: "if it were not a trick to please my Lady, (poetry) would be excluded out of Christian burial, and, instead of wreaths of laurel to crown it with, have a bell with a cock's-comb clapped on the crown of it by old Iohannes de Indagines and his choir of dorbellists." This is a reference to a fifteenth century monk and the followers of a contemporary scholar named Dorbellus, but the inference is that the Iohannes being described here has prostituted his learning to public entertainment.

What does Nashe seek from his 'patron' as recompense for his offering of 'Lenten Stuff'? "Give me good words I beseech thee," and goes on to relate Florio's explanation of his grammatical engineering in 'Worlde of Wordes' to another of Martial's epigrams. Florio had quoted an Italian proverb translated as: "words they are women, and deeds they are men" adding, "but let such know that Detti and fatti words and deeds with me are all of one gender." This reminded Nashe of one of Martial's epigrams, from Book 2, number 20,

"Carmina Paulus emit, recitat sua carmina Paulus,  
nam quod emas possis iure vicare tuum"

Here is James Michie's translation for the Penguin Classics series selection:

"He buys up poems for recital,  
and then as 'author' reads.  
Why not? The purchase proves the title  
Our words become his 'deeds'."

So Martial's verse contains an inference about literary theft and plagiarism. In a complex sequence punning on words and deeds, this is how Nashe tied the two allusions together: "Give me good words I beseech thee, though thou givest me nothing else, and thy words shall stand for thy deeds; which I will take as well in worth, as if they were the deeds and evidences of all the land thou hast." It scarcely needs to be added at this point that Florio was no landowner, so such deeds would of course have been worthless. Then, recalling the 'Second Fruits' reference to "ale or beer mouth" critics Nashe thinks Florio might also at least stand him a draught of 'merry-go-round' (strong ale) for his pains.

In the 'Worlde of Wordes' dedication, Florio said no critic or jealous rival would prevent him from persuing his work: "I were very weak-minded if they could anything move me. And that husbandman might be counted very simple, that for the ominous shrieks of an unlucky, hoarse-voiced, dead-devouring night-raven or two, or for fear of the malice of his worse conditioned neighbours, would neglect either to till and sow his ground, or after in due time to reap and thresh out his harvest."

From Nashe's point of view, it's not such a great triumph to compile a dictionary, and no great difficulty lies in reaping a good harvest where a man has the backing of a wealthy patron like the Earl of Southampton. However to keep writing and publishing from patron-less poverty is a neat trick if you can do it: "Every man can say Bee to a Battledore, (quoting from the Humphrey King pamphlet) and write in praise of virtue and the seven liberal sciences, thresh corn out of the full sheaves and fetch water out of the Thames; but out of dry stubble, to make an after-harvest and

a plentiful crop without sowing, and wring juice out of a flint, that's Pierce-a-God's name, and the right trick of a workman."

Once again the notion that Florio had used his influence to deny Nashe the benefit of the Earl of Southampton's patronage is implicit here.

Nashe died not long after the publication of 'Lenten Stuff' and although Florio appears to have made no further reference to him, his 'Worlde of Wordes' comments make a suitable epitaph. Here are Florio's last words on Thomas Nashe: "It is a foul blemish that Paterculus finds in the face of the Gracchi, they had good wits, but used them ill. But a fouler blot than a Jews letter is it in the foreheads of Caelius and Curio that he sets, Ingeniose nequam, they were wittily wicked."