

KIND-HEART'S DREAM

To the gentlemen readers

It hath been a custom, gentlemen (in my mind commendable) among former authors (whose works are no less beautified with eloquent phrase than garnished with excellent example) to begin an exordium to the readers of their time; much more convenient, I take it, should the writers in these days (wherein that gravity of inditing by the elder exercised is not observed, nor that modest decorum kept which they continued), submit their labours to the favourable censures of their learned overseers. For seeing nothing can be said that hath not been before said, the singularity of some men's conceits (otherways excellent well deserving) are no more to be soothed than the peremptory posies of two very sufficient translators commended. To come in print is not to seek praise, but to crave pardon. I am urged to the one, and bold to beg the other. He that offends, being forced, is more excusable than the wilful faulty; though both be guilty, there is difference in the guilt. To observe custom, and avoid as I may cavil, opposing your favours against my fear, I'll show reason for my present writing, and after proceed to sue for pardon.

About three months since died M. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry booksellers' hands, among other his *Groatsworth of Wit*, in which a letter written to divers play-makers is offensively by one or two of them taken, and because on the dead they cannot be avenged, they wilfully forge in their conceits a living author, and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy but it must light on me. How I have, all the time of my conversing in printing, hindered the bitter inveighing against scholars, it hath been very well known, and how in that I dealt I can sufficiently prove. With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be. The other, whom at that time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had, for that as I have moderated the heat of living writers, and might have used my own discretion (especially in such a case), the author being dead, that I did not, I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes. Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art. For the first, whose learning I reverence, and, at the perusing of Greene's book, struck out what then in conscience I thought he in some displeasure writ, or had it been true, yet to publish it was intolerable, him I would wish to use me no worse than I deserve. I had only in the copy this share; it was ill written, as sometime Greene's hand was none of the best. Licenced it must be ere it could be printed, which could never be if it might not be read. To be brief, I writ it over, and as near as I could, followed the copy; only in that letter I put something out, but in the whole book not a word in, for I protest it was all Greene's, not mine nor Master Nashe's, as some unjustly have affirmed. Neither was he the writer of an epistle to the second part of *Gerileon*, though by the workman's error T.N. were set to the end; that I confess to be mine, and repent it not. Thus, gentlemen, having noted the private causes that made me nominate myself in print, being as well to purge Master Nashe of that he did not, as to justify what I did, and withal to confirm what M. Greene did, I beseech ye accept the public cause, which is both the desire of your delight and common benefit, for though the toy be shadowed under the title of *Kind-Heart's Dream*, it discovers the false hearts of divers that wake to commit mischief. Had not the former reasons been, it had come forth without a father, and then should I have had no cause to fear offending, or reason to sue for favour. Now am I in doubt of the one,

though I hope of the other, which, if I obtain, you shall bind me hereafter to be silent till I can present ye with something more acceptable

Henry Chettle