

**ANTIEN DROLLERIES. (NO. I.) COBBES
PROPHECIES, HIS SIGNES AND TOKENS,
HIS MADRIGALLS, QUESTIONS, AND
ANSWERES, WITH HIS SPIRITUALL
LESSON, IN VERSE, RIME, AND PROSE.
1614**

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Antient drolleries. (No. I.) Cobbes prophecies, his signes and tokens, his madrigalls, questions, and answers, with his spirituall lesson, in verse, rime, and prose. 1614 by A. H. Bullen & Charles Praetorius

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A. H. BULLEN & CHARLES PRAETORIUS

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(No. 1.)

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AND PROSE.

1614.

REPRODUCED IN FACSIMILE

BY

CHARLES PRAETORIUS,

WITH A PREFACE

BY

A. H. BULLEN.

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PREFACE.

JOHN DUNTON warned the readers of the *Rare Adventures of Don Kainophilus* that they would find the narrative "such a hodgpotch of stuff as would make a hermit tear his beard to hear of it." The description is not inapplicable to the drolling prophecies of Master Cobbe.

The preface is signed "Richard Rablet," who is evidently a fictitious personage. Mr. Bertram Dobell plausibly suggests that the author styled himself "Rablet" after François Rabelais, whose *Pantagrueline Prognostication* is familiar to everybody. It was not uncommon to issue these mock prognostications under assumed names. For instance, *Friar Bahons Prophetie*, published ten years before *Cobbes Prophecies*, purports to be by "William Terilo." *The Owles Almanacke*, 1618 (attributed without evidence to Dekker), bears on the title-page the name of "Mr. Jocundary Merrie-braines."

A mild Shakespearean interest attaches to *Cobbes Prophecies* from the resemblance that some of the

1584. 7

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pieces bear to the Fool's prophecy in *Lear* (III. 2); but the whimsical madrigals that follow the prophecies are the salt of our curious tract. The verses on the morrice-dance give a lively description of that old English merriment; they should be compared with the madrigal, in Thomas Morley's collection of 1594, beginning—"Ho! who comes there with bagpiping and drumming?" Richard Rablet was no puritan; he loved

"a pot of good Ale
And a merry old tale."

By the fire-side among his cronies in winter,

"When a Cup of good Sacke,
That hurts not the backe,
will make the cheeks red as a Cherry,"

he would be ready with his jests and quips; and we may be sure that in summer-time he was a welcome guest at shearing-feasts and harvest-homes. His talk is occasionally somewhat free, but doubtless he was regarded as a privileged person. Besides, he has stores of admirable counsel. How delicately he warns impulsive maids to be chary of their favours at the feast of St. Valentine!—

"When the Grasse doth spring,
And the Birds gin to sing,
take heed of St. Valentines day;
Least while ye reioyce,
In lighting on your choyce,
ye make not ill worke before May."

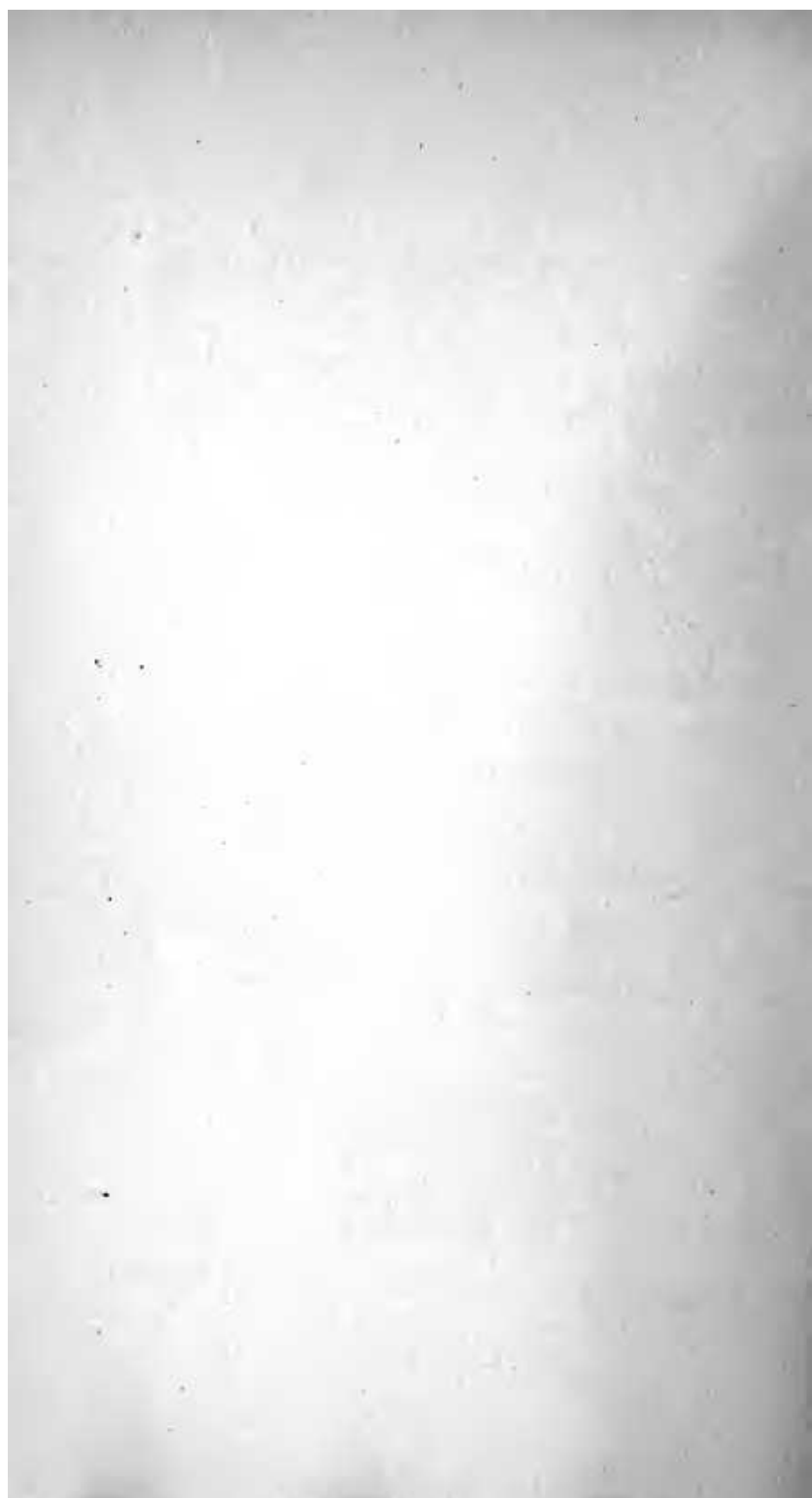
Honest mirth is what he advocated. Time, that blunts the lion's paws, will too soon dull the briskness of our lustiest springals. So let the youngers frisk it while they may. "Nunc levis est tractanda Venus," as gentle Tibullus urges. Does not Ovid remind us (though, sooth to say, the reminder is hardly needed) that crookt age comes with noiseless step, "Jam veniet tacito curva senecta pede"? Our cheerful moralist prescribes for old and young—

“ When a man is old,
And the wether blowes cold,
 well fare a fire and a fur'd Gowne :
But when he is young,
And his blood new sprung,
 his sweete hart is worth half the Towne.

When a Maid is faire,
In her smocke and haire,
 who would not be glad to woe her ? ”

A graver note is struck in the poem, "When Youth and Beauty meet together"; and "Cobs talke with Wisedome" affords matter for serious reflection. But, take it all in all, the book is mere drollery; a tale of a roasted horse, a riot of mad rhymes, a pleasant piece of tomfoolery.

1, *Yelverton Villas, Twickenham,*
25th June, 1890.





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sweres, with his spirituall Lesson, in
Verse, Rime, and Prose.

Pleasant, and not vnprofitable.

*Reade that will, Iudge that can, Like
that list.*



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at his Shop at *Grayes-Inne Gate*.

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