

The Play
of
Wit and Science
by
John Redford

Edited by
Ben Byram-Wigfield

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Preface

JOHN Redford is most noted as a composer of early English keyboard music, but there are very few surviving details of his life. He was already a vicar-choral at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1534, when he signed Henry's VIII's Act of Supremacy. He died in 1547.

The Play of Wit and Science survives, barely, in a manuscript in the British Library, Additional 15233. The book, bound along the short edge, starts with pages of organ music, before being turned on its side to accommodate text in the style of a policeman's notebook. The play is, unfortunately, missing the beginning part; and while a synopsis of the opening can be gleaned from the remainder, it cannot be certain how great a portion has been lost.

It is deeply lamentable that, as well as the beginning of the play, none of the music for the songs survives, and the text of the final song is also missing. That having been said, we are fortunate for having what remains. The Play of Wit and Science is a morality play, with each of the characters being a personification of human characteristics. As with many other allegorical dramas of the era, the story takes the form of a journey, which is only completed after the lead character has undergone a transformation, having grown in experience and understanding along the way.

The drama was written for the choristers of St. Paul's Cathedral to perform at court. The tradition of choristers from St. Paul's (and also the Chapel Royal at Windsor) performing dramatically as well as musically had been established some twenty years earlier and was to continue into the seventeenth century. As the Almoner and Master of the Choristers, Redford was in overall charge of the choristers' education.

This play is a highly important work on two counts: firstly, as a fragmentary morality play of the mid-sixteenth century, to be performed by children. Secondly, it offers a rare example of the literary skill of a musician (there is no record of Redford's having attended University.) The manuscript also contains verse by Redford, including a chorister's lament at the beatings dealt out by, presumably, Redford himself; and the macaronic poem, *Nolo mortem peccatoris*, later set to music by Thomas Morley, Organist at St. Paul's some fifty years later.

The Play of Wit & Science

Editorial Treatment

There is almost no punctuation in the original, save for a handful of oblique strokes, which do not adequately represent a coherent punctuation scheme. The spelling is arbitrary, and varies even amongst repetitions of the same word. The handwriting is not the clearest, with many superscript abbreviations, and it uses an alphabet that omits j and u, and also includes an extra symbol for the possessive s, derived from a Latin shorthand. There is a good deal of subsequent insertion and deletion, some of which would suggest that the text was copied from another written source. Many of the stage directions appear to have been written as an afterthought to the text.

Ambiguity is therefore easily incurred in interpreting the dialogue, and different eyes many find alternatives that are equally plausible — or indeed more so than those presented here. All the punctuation, including sentence division, is therefore editorial. Spelling has been standardized. Those stage directions which are either necessary or desirable, but absent, have been added, enclosed by square brackets. The definitions of archaic words have been compiled in a glossary.

Synopsis

The missing portion has been summarised as follows:

Wit, the son of Reason and Nature, expresses to his mother his affection for Science, the daughter of Reason and Experience. Nature provides him with a servant, Confidence, to help him win the lady. Through this go-between, Science sends Wit a coat, as a token of her affection, and Wit gives Confidence a portrait of himself to send to Science. Wit then presents his case to Reason, and is told that he must first vanquish the monster Tediousness, Science's greatest enemy. To help him in his task, Reason appoints Instruction, Diligence and Study as his guides.

The surviving text continues the story.

Reason further assists Wit with the gift of a mirror, and arranges for Honest Recreation to provide additional assistance. Wit, with Diligence, Study and Instruction, heads off on his journey. Instruction warns Wit not to approach Tediousness without the sword of Comfort, from Science. Wit ignores the advice and continues with the others towards Tediousness. The monster kills Wit, and his companions flee. However, he is soon revived by Honest Recreation, with Comfort, Quickness and Strength, by the singing of a song. Wit then falls into the arms of Idleness, who lulls him to sleep and blackens his face. Honest Recreation de-

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parts, leaving the stage for a comic routine in which Idleness tries to school Ignorance, using a contrived aide memoire by which he is taught his own name. Idleness then swaps Wit's coat for that of Ignorance.

Meanwhile, Confidence searches for Wit, whilst Fame, Riches, Favour and Worship sing a song, heralding the arrival of Experience and Science. Wit accosts them, but they do not recognise him, despite having his portrait, because he has on Ignorance's coat and has a face marked by Idleness. He flies into a rage, swearing and insulting the ladies, who leave. He cannot understand their behaviour, until he looks into the mirror of Reason. Reason then appears, with Shame, who whips Wit into contrition. Reason forgives Wit, and return to him his companions, including Instruction. Confidence then gives Wit the sword of Comfort, and takes a heart of gold from him to give to Science. Wit and his companions set off to do battle with Tediousness. This time, they overcome the monster using tactics and teamwork. Wit is given a gown of knowledge in celebration.

Science witnesses the battle from a distance, and rushes to meet Wit. All agree to the marriage, a song is sung, and then Science issues a warning to Wit that he should not mistreat her. In return, he promises that he could not bear to misuse Science, and calls upon Experience and Reason to help him keep this promise. Joy and long life is wished for King Henry and his Queen, and for all people. A song is sung.

Critical Notes

It has been suggested by Dr. Hillary Nunn that Redford's play contains a thinly disguised re-telling of Henry's rejection of Anne of Cleves. This would date it between 1540 and Redford's death in 1547. If it had been staged at court, the final lines of the play might suggest that it was performed at a celebration for one of Henry's later wives.

There are two major elements of debate: firstly, whether Wit is on stage at the start of the extant text; and secondly, whether the portrait of Wit is a true likeness or not. Most readings conclude that Wit is on stage, and that the portrait does not resemble him. In this light, the play is not only a morality play detailing the correct way to an education, but is also a lesson in the distinction between appearance and inner qualities. At the start, Reason states that Wit's inner graces make him a suitable match for his daughter, almost in spite his outward appearance. Confidence then shows the audience a portrait of Wit, and his speech has much comic value if the portraiture is inaccurate.

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Dr. Nunn has shown that this would have an extra resonance for a courtly audience, as they would have been involved in the furore over Holbein's portrait of Anne of Cleves. Henry, having seen the portrait and being assured by his courtiers of its accuracy, consented to marry her; however, he was less than impressed with the reality. By showing the courtiers another false portrait, and asking them for their opinion, Redford is embarrassing his audience for a second time. Alternatively, if the portrait is accurate, then it draws attention to the missing inner qualities of an individual that a painting cannot represent.

Wit's journey of transformation continues, as he ignores Instruction and is killed by Tediousness. Upon his revival, Reason comments on how Wit's personality has changed, and Wit then allows himself to be distracted, firstly by Honest Recreation, and then by Idleness, who transforms Wit by blackening his face and changing his clothes. Next, the comic exchange between Idleness and her pupil, Ignorance, presents a satire upon lazy educators who teach their charges mechanically.

Wit remains sleeping on the stage while Confidence searches for him; Experience and Science are unable to recognise him, even by comparing him to his portrait. This is the first time that the audience can compare the portrait and the subject at one time. Science and Experience both deny any comparison, as Wit is both outwardly different, and also inwardly changed with his constant swearing and foolish behaviour. Science then gives an accurate assessment of Wit's appearance and character, which astounds Wit.

Wit checks himself in Reason's mirror, which he condemns as faulty until he turns it on the audience, and sees them as "fair and clear". Only then does he realise what he has become. But Wit's comments on the audience's reflection can also be seen in the context of outward appearance and true nature: Redford is again asking the audience to make a judgment, but this time it is self-judgment.

Wit, now duly contrite and once more transformed by a coat of knowledge, kills Tediousness, and celebrates his union with Science. He has now become the idealised Wit whose qualities have been spoken about by Reason, Confidence and Science throughout the play. At the very end of the celebration, Science gives a dark warning to Wit against her ill-treatment. This is a strange and risky comment to make if the play was indeed performed in front of Henry VIII; however, if it was at a wedding celebration, then perhaps the voice of Experience reassures the bride that her husband has learned from past errors.

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Notes for Performance

The play requires a cast of twenty, though eight of the minor rôles could be doubled-up, reducing the number to only sixteen. Originally, boys would have performed all the parts, but four of the rôles are female, nine are male, and seven are of unspecified gender, though in classical mythology, Fame, Riches, Favour and Worship are represented as female. (The rôle of Nature, if it existed, has been lost.)

Prop List

The following items are necessary, being mentioned in the text.

- I hand mirror of Reason
- I portrait of Wit
- I sword of Comfort
- I sword
- I mall (hammer) of Tediousness
- I garment of Science
- I gown of knowledge
- I fool's coat
- I heart of gold
- I helmet / monster's head
- I whistle

The Play of Wit & Science

Dramatis Personae *in order of appearance*

Reason
Instruction
Confidence
Wit
Diligence
Study
Tediousness
Honest Recreation
Comfort
Quickness
Strength
Idleness
Ignorance
Fame
Favour
Riches
Fame
Experience
Science
Shame

The Play of Wit and Science

by

John Redford

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[*Wit, Reason, Instruction, Diligence and Study are already on Stage.*]

REASON. Then, in remembrance of Reason, hold ye
A glass of Reason, wherein behold ye
Yourself to yourself. Namely, when ye
Come near my daughter, Science, then see
That all things be clean and trick about ye; 5
Lest of some sluggishness she might doubt ye.
This glass of Reason shall show ye all;
While ye have that, ye have me, and shall.
Get ye forth now. Instruction, farewell!

INSTRUCTION. Sir, God keep ye. 10

(Here all go out save Reason.)

REASON. And ye from all peril.
If any man now marvel that I
Would bestow my daughter thus basely,
Of truth, I, Reason, am of this mind:
Where parties together be inclined
By gifts of graces to love each other, 15
There let them join, the one with the other.
This Wit such gifts of graces hath in him
That maketh my daughter to wish to win him:
Young, painful, tractable, and capax —
These be Wit's gifts which Science doth ax. 20
And, as for her, as soon as Wit sees her,
For all the world he would not then leese her;
Wherefore, since they both be so meet matches

The Play of Wit & Science

To love each other — straw for the patches
Of worldly muck! Science hath enow 25
For them both to live. If Wit be through
Stricken in love, as he signs hath showed,
I doubt not my daughter well bestowed.
The end of his journey will prove all:
If Wit hold out, no more proof can fall; 30
And, that the better hold out ye may,
To refresh my son¹, Wit, now by the way,
some solace for him I will provide:
An honest woman dwelleth here beside,
whose name is Honest Recreation. 35
As men report, for Wit's consolation
She hath no peer — if Wit were half dead
She could revive him, thus it is said.
Wherefore, if money or love can hire her,
To hie after Wit I will desire her. [Exit.] 40

(Confidence comes in, with a picture of Wit.)

CONFIDENCE. Ah, Sir! What time of day is't? Who can tell?
The day is not far past, I wot well.
For I have gone fast, and yet I see
I am far from where as I would be.
Well! I have day enough yet, I spy. 45
Wherefore, e'er² I pass hence, now must I
See this same token here — a plain case—
What Wit hath sent to my good lady's grace.
Now, will ye see a goodly picture
Of Wit himself? His own image sure: 50
Face, body, arms, legs, both limb and joint
As like him as can be, in every point.
It lacketh but life; well I can him thank:
This token indeed shall make some crank!
For what with this picture, so well favour'd, 55
And what with those sweet words, so well savour'd,
Distilling from the mouth of Confidence,
Shall not this appease the heart of Science?

John Redford

Yes, I thank God I am of that nature,
Able to compass this matter sure, 60
As ye shall see now, who list to mark it,
How neatly and featly I shall work it.

[*Exit Confidence.*]

(*Wit cometh in without Instruction, with Study and Diligence.*)

WIT. Now, sirs, come on! Which is the way now?
This way or that way? Study, how say you?
Speak, Diligence, while he hath bethought him. 65

DILIGENCE. That way, belike, most usage hath wrought him.

STUDY. Ye hold your peace! Best we here now stay

For Instruction: I like not that way.

WIT. Instruction? Study, I ween we have lost him.

(*Instruction cometh in.*)

INSTRUCTION. Indeed, full gently about ye have tossed him! 70

What mean you, Wit, still to delight

Running before, thus still out of sight;

And thereby out of your way now quite?

What do ye here except ye would fight?

Come back again, Wit! For I must choose ye 75

An easier way than this, or else lose ye.

WIT. What aileth this way? Peril here is none.

INSTRUCTION. But as much as your life standeth upon;

Your enemy, man, lieth here before ye:

Tediousness, to brain or to gore ye. 80

WIT. Tediousness? Doth that tyrant rest

In my way now? Lord, how am I blest,

That occasion so near me stirs,

For my dear heart's sake to win my spurs?

Sir, would ye fear me with that foul thief 85

With whom to meet my desire is chief?

INSTRUCTION. And what would ye do, you having nought

For your defence? For though ye have caught

Garments of Science upon your back

Yet weapons of Science ye do lack. 90

WIT. What weapons of Science should I have?

The Play of Wit & Science

INSTRUCTION.	Such as all lovers of their loves crave: A token from Lady Science, whereby Hope of her favour may spring, and thereby Comfort, which is the weapon doubtless That must serve you against Tediousness.	95
WIT.	If hope or comfort may be my weapon, Then never with Tediousness me threaten: For as for hope of my dear heart's favour —and thereby comfort— enough I gather.	100
INSTRUCTION.	Wit, hear me! Till I see Confidence Have brought some token from Lady Science, That I may feel that she fav'reth you, Ye pass not this way, I tell you true.	
WIT.	Which way then?	
INSTRUCTION.	A plainer way, I told ye; Out of danger from your foe to hold ye.	105
WIT.	Instruction, hear me! Or my sweetheart Shall hear that Wit from that wretch shall start One foot, this body and all shall crack! Forth I will, sure, whatever I lack.	110
DILIGENCE.	If ye lack weapon, sir, here is one.	
WIT.	Well said, Diligence — thou art alone! How say ye, sir, is not here a weapon?	
INSTRUCTION.	With that weapon your enemy never threaten: For without the return of Confidence, Ye may be slain, sure, for all Diligence.	115
DILIGENCE.	Good sir! And Diligence, I tell you plain, Will play the man or my master be slain.	
INSTRUCTION.	Yea, but what saith Study? No word to this?	
WIT.	No sir! Ye know Study's office is Meet for the chamber, not for the field. But tell me, Study, wilt thou now yield?	120
STUDY.	My head acheth sore; I would we returned.	
WIT.	Thy head ache now? I would it were burned! Come on, walking may hap to ease thee.	125
INSTRUCTION.	And will ye be gone then — without me?	

John Redford

- WIT. Yea, by my faith, except ye hie after,
Reason shall know ye are but an hafter.
(Exeunt Wit, Study and Diligence.)
- INSTRUCTION. Well, go your way! When you father, Reason,
Heareth how ye obey me at this season, 130
I think he will think his daughter now
May marry another man for you.
When wits stand so in their own conceit,
Best lest them go; till pride, at his height,
Turn and cast them down headlong again; 135
As ye shall see proved by this Wit plain.
If Reason hap not to come, the rather
His own destruction he will sure gather.
Wherefore to Reason will I now get me,
Leaving that charge whereabout he set me. 140
(Exit Instruction. Tediousness cometh in, with a visor over his head.)
- TEDIOUSNESS. O, the body of me!
What catiffs be those
That will not once flee
From Tediousness' nose;
But thus disease me 145
Out of my nest,
When I should ease me,
This body to rest?
That Wit, that villain,
That wretch — a shame take him! 150
It is he plain
That thus bold doth make him
Without my licence
To stalk by my door,
To that drab, Science, 155
To wed that whore!
But I defy her
And for that drab's sake,
E'er Wit come nigh her,
The knave's head shall ache! 160

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These bones, this mall
Shall beat him to dust,
E'er that drab shall
Once quench that knave's lust.
But hah! Methinks 165
I am not half lusty;
These joints, these links
Be rough and half rusty;
I must go shake them,
Supple to make them. 170
Stand back, ye wretches!
Beware the fetches
Of Tediousness,
These caitiffs to bless.
Make room! I say, 175
Round every way:
This way! That way!
What care I what way?
Before me, behind me,
Round about wind me! 180
Now I begin
To sweat in my skin;
Now I am nimble
To make them tremble.
Pash head, pash brain, 185
The knaves are slain.
All that I hit!
Where are thou, Wit?
Thou are but dead:
Off goeth thy head 190
At the first blow!
Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!

(Wit speaketh at the door.)

WIT.

Study?

STUDY.

Here off!

WIT.

How doth thy head ache?

John Redford

STUDY.	Yea, God wot, sir — much pain do I take.		
WIT.	Diligence?		
DILIGENCE.	Here, sir, here!		
WIT.	How dost thou?	195	
	Doth thy stomach serve thee to fight now?		
DILIGENCE.	Yea, sir, with yonder wretch — a vengeance on him that threat'neth you thus. Set even upon him!		
STUDY.	Upon him, Diligence? Better nay.		
DILIGENCE.	Better nay, Study? Why should we fray?	200	
STUDY.	For I am weary; my head acheth sore.		
DILIGENCE.	Why, foolish Study, thou shalt do no more But aid my master with thy presence.		
WIT.	No more shalt thou neither, Diligence, Aid me with your presence, both you twain; And for my love myself shall take pain.	205	
STUDY.	Sir, we be ready to aid you so.		
WIT.	I ask no more, Study. Come then, go!		
	<i>(Tediousness riseth up.)</i>		
TEDIOUSNESS.	Why art thou come?		
WIT.	Yea, wretch, to thy pain!		
TEDIOUSNESS.	Then have at thee!		
WIT.	Have at thee again!	210	
	<i>(Here Wit falleth down and dieth.)</i>		
	<i>[Exeunt Study and Diligence.]</i>		
TEDIOUSNESS.	Lie thou there! Now have at ye, caitiffs! Do ye flee, yfaith? A whoreson thieves! By Mahound's bones! Had the wretches tarried, Their necks without heads they should have carried! Yea, by Mahound's nose! might I have patted them, In twenty gobbets I should have squatted them, To teach the knaves to come near the snout Of Tediousness! Walk further about I trow now they will. And as for thee, Thou wilt no more now trouble me! Yet, lest the knave be not safe enough, The whoreson shall bear me another cuff!		215
		220	

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Now lie still, caitiff, and take thy rest,
while I take mine in mine own nest.

(Exit Tediuousness.

Here cometh in Honest Recreation,

Comfort, Quickness and Strength, and go about Wit...³

HONEST RECREATION, COMFORT, QUICKNESS, AND STRENGTH.

Give place, give place to Honest Recreation; 225
Give place, we say now for thy consolation.

When travels great, in matters thick
Have dulled your wits and made them sick,
What medicine then, your wits to quick?
If ye will know, the best physic 230
Is to give place to Honest Recreation;
Give place, we say now for thy consolation.

Where is that Wit that we seek, then?
Alas, he lieth here, pale and wan;
Help him at once now, if we can. 235
O wit, how dost thou? Look up, man!
O Wit, give place to Honest Recreation;
Give place, we say now for thy consolation.

After place given, let ear obey.
Give an ear, O Wit, now we thee pray. 240
Give an ear to that we sing and say;
Give an ear and help will come straightway!
Give an ear to Honest Recreation;
Give an ear now for thy consolation.

After ear given, now give an eye. 245
Behold! Thy friends about thee lie:
Recreation I, and Comfort I,
Quickness am I, and Strength, hereby.
Give an eye to Honest Recreation;
Give an eye now for thy consolation. 250

John Redford

After eye given, an hand give ye!
Give an hand, O Wit, feel that ye see!
Recreation feel; feel Comfort free;
Feel Quickness here; feel Strength to thee.
Give an hand to Honest Recreation; 255
Give an hand now for thy consolation.

Upon his feet, would God he were!
To raise him now we need not fear.
Stay you his hands, while we him bear;
Now, all at once, upright him rear. 260
O Wit, give place to Honest Recreation;
Give place we say now for thy consolation.

...and at the last verse, raiseth him up upon his feet, and so make an end.

And then Honest Recreation saith as followeth:)

HONEST REC. Now, Wit, how do ye? Will ye be lusty?
WIT. The lustier for you, needs be must I.
HONEST REC. Be ye all whole yet, after your fall? 265
WIT. As ever I was, thanks to you all.

(Reason cometh in, and saith as followeth.)

REASON. Ye might thank Reason that sent them to ye;
But since they have done that they should do ye,
Send them home soon, and get ye forward.
WIT. O Father Reason! I had an hard 270
Chance since ye saw me.

REASON. I wot well that,
The more to blame ye, when ye would not
Obey Instruction, as Reason willed ye.
What marvel though Tediousness had killed ye?
But let us pass. Now, since ye are well again, 275
Set forward again, Science to attain.

WIT. Good Father Reason, be not too hasty.
In honest company no time waste I.
I shall to your daughter all at leisure.

REASON. Yea? Wit, is that the great love ye raise her? 280

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I say if ye love my daughter, Science,
Get ye forth at once, and get ye hence!

(Here all go out, save Honest Recreation, Reason and Wit.)

WIT. Nay, by Saint George! They go not all yet!

REASON. No? Will ye disobey Reason, Wit?

WIT. Father Reason, I pray ye, content ye: 285
For we part not yet.

REASON. Well, Wit, I went ye

Had been no such man as now I see.

Farewell. *(Exit.)*

HONEST REC. He is angry.

WIT. Yea, let him be!

I do not pass!

Come now, a bass! 290

HONEST REC. Nay sir: as for basses,

From hence none passes

But in a gage

Of marri-age.

WIT. Marry, even so! 295

A bargain, lo!

HONEST REC. What, without licence

Of Lady Science?

WIT. Shall I tell you truth?

I never loved her.

300

HONEST REC. The common voice go'th

That marriage ye moved her.

WIT. Promise hath she none

If we shall be one;

Without more words, grant! 305

HONEST REC. What, upon this sudden?

Then might ye plain

Bid me avaunt.

Nay, let me see

In honesty

310

What ye can do

To win Recreation:

John Redford

Upon that probation
 I grant thereto.
 WIT. Small be my doings, 315
 But apt to all things
 I am, I trust.
 HONEST REC. Can ye dance then?
 WIT. Even as I can.
 Prove me, ye must. 320
 HONEST REC. Then for a while
 Ye must exile
 This garment cumb'ring.
 WIT. Indeed, as ye say,
 This cumbrous array 325
 Would make Wit slumb'ring.
 HONEST REC. It is gay gear
 Of Science, clear —
 It seemeth her array.
 WIT. Whose ever it were, it lieth now there. 330
 [Taketh off his gown.]
 HONEST REC. Go to, my men! Play!
*Here they dance, and in the meanwhile, Idleness cometh in and sitteth down.
 And when the galliard is done, Wit saith as followeth,
 and so falleth down in Idleness' lap.*
 WIT. Sweet heart, grammercys!
 HONEST REC. Why, whether now have ye done since?
 WIT. Yea, in faith! With weary bones ye have possessed me;
 Among these damsels now will I rest me. 335
 HONEST REC. What, there?
 WIT. Yea, here: I will be so bold.
 IDLENESS. Yea; and welcome, by him that God sold.
 HONEST REC. It is an harlot, may ye not see?
 IDLENESS. As honest a woman as ye be!
 HONEST REC. Her name is Idleness, Wit. What mean you? 340
 WIT. There, go to. Lo, now for the best game:
 While I take my ease, your tongues now frame.
 HONEST REC. Yea, Wit, by your faith is that your fashion?

John Redford

What unthriftiness therein is twiddling? 380
Search the taverns, and ye shall hear clear
Such bawdry as best would spew to here!
And yet this is called Honest Recreation;
And I, poor Idleness, abomination.
But which is worst of us twain? Now judge, Wit! 385
WIT. By our lady! Not thou, wench, I judge yet.
HONEST REC. No? Is your judgment such then, that ye
Can neither perceive that beast, how she
Go'th about to deceive you? Nor yet
Remember how I saved your life, Wit? 390
Think you her meet with me to compare
By whom so many curèd are?
When will she do such an act as I did,
Saving your life, when I you revivèd?
And, as I saved you, so save I all 395
That in like jeopardy change to fall.
When Tediousness to ground hath smitten them,
Honest Recreation up doth quicken them
With such honest pastimes, sports or games
As unto mine honest nature frames; 400
And not, as she saith, with pastimes such
As to be abused, little or much:
For where honest pastimes be abused,
Honest Recreation is refused.
Honest Recreation is present never 405
But where honest pastimes be well-used ever.
But indeed, Idleness: she is cause
Of all such abuses. She, lo, draws
Her sort to abuse mine honest games,
And thereby full falsely my name defames. 410
Under the name of Honest Recreation
She brings in all her abomination;
Destroying all wits that her embrace
As your self shall see within short space.
She will bring you to shameful end, Wit, 415

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Except the sooner from her ye flit.

Wherefore come away, Wit, out of her paws.

Hence, drab! Let him go out of thy claws!

IDLENESS.

Will you get ye hence? Or, by the mace!

These claws shall claw you by your drab's face!

420

HONEST REC.

It shall not need, since Wit lieth as one

That neither heareth nor seeth. I am gone.

(Exit.)

IDLENESS.

Yea, so? Farewell! And well fare thou, tongue

Of a short peal! This peal was well-rung

To ring her hence, and him fast asleep:

425

As full of sloth as the knave can creep.

How, Wit, awake! How doth my baby?

*neque vox neque sensus,*⁵ by'r lady!

A meet man for Idleness, no doubt.

Hark my pig! How the knave doth rout!

430

Well, while he sleepeth in Idleness' lap,

Idleness' mark on him shall I clap!

Some say that Idleness cannot work,

But those that so say, now let them mark.

I trow they shall see that Idleness

435

Can set herself about some business;

Or, at least, ye shall see her tried

Neither idle, nor yet well-occupied.

Lo, sir, yet ye lack another toy:

Where is my whistle to call my boy?

440

(Here she whistleth and Ignorance cometh in.)

IGNORANCE.⁶

I come! I come!

IDLENESS.

Come on, ye fool!

All this day e'er ye can come to school.

IGNORANCE.

Umm. Mother will not let me come.

IDLENESS.

I would thy mother had kissed thy bum!

She will never let thee thrive, I trow.

445

Come on, goose! Now lo, men shall know

That Idleness can do somewhat; yea,

And play the schoolmistress too, if need be.

Mark what doctrine by Idleness comes:

The Play of Wit & Science

IDLENESS.	Ran.	
IGNORANCE.	Ran.	
IDLENESS.	Forth, now. What saith the goose?	485
IGNORANCE.	Lag, lag.	
IDLENESS.	Hiss, whoreson! Hiss.	
IGNORANCE.	Hiss! Hissssss!	
IDLENESS.	Go to: Put together: Ing.	
IGNORANCE.	Ing.	490
IDLENESS.	No.	
IGNORANCE.	No.	
IDLENESS.	Ran.	
IGNORANCE.	Ran.	
IDLENESS.	Hiss.	495
IGNORANCE.	Hissssss!	
IDLENESS.	Now, who is a good boy?	
IGNORANCE.	! ! ! ! ! ! ! !	
IDLENESS.	Go to. Put together: Ing.	
IGNORANCE.	Ing.	500
IDLENESS.	No.	
IGNORANCE.	No.	
IDLENESS.	Ran.	
IGNORANCE.	Ran.	
IDLENESS.	Hiss.	505
IGNORANCE.	Hissssss!	
IDLENESS.	I.	
IGNORANCE.	I.	
IDLENESS.	Ing, no, ran, hiss, I.	
IGNORANCE.	Ing, no, ran, hiss.	510
IDLENESS.	I.	
IGNORANCE.	I.	
IDLENESS.	Ing.	
IGNORANCE.	Ing.	
IDLENESS.	Forth.	515
IGNORANCE.	Hissssss!	
IDLENESS.	Yea? No! Whoreson, No!	
IGNORANCE.	No! No! No! No!	

John Redford

IDLENESS.	Ing, no.	
IGNORANCE.	Ing, no.	520
IDLENESS.	Forth now.	
IGNORANCE.	Hisssss!	
IDLENESS.	Yet again: ran, whoreson! Ran! Ran!	
IGNORANCE.	Ran, whoreson, ran, ran.	
IDLENESS.	Ran, whoreson!	525
IGNORANCE.	Ran, whoreson.	
IDLENESS.	Ran.	
IGNORANCE.	Ran.	
IDLENESS.	Ing, no, ran.	
IGNORANCE.	Ing, no, ran.	530
IDLENESS.	Forth now, what said the goose?	
IGNORANCE.	Dog bark?	
IDLENESS.	Dog bark. Hiss, whoreson! Hiss!	
IGNORANCE.	Hisssss!	
IDLENESS.	I.	535
IGNORANCE.	I.	
IDLENESS.	Ing, no, ran, hiss, I.	
IGNORANCE.	Ing, no, ran, hisssss!	
IDLENESS.	I.	
IGNORANCE.	I.	540
IDLENESS.	How sayst now, fool? Is not there thy name?	
IGNORANCE.	Yea.	
IDLENESS.	Well then, come me that same Which thou hast learned.	
IGNORANCE.	Ich can not tell.	
IDLENESS.	“Ich can not tell”! Thou sayst even very well: For if thou couldst tell, then had not I well Taught thee thy lesson, which must be taught To tell all, when thou canst tell right naught.	545
IGNORANCE.	Ich can my lesson.	
IDLENESS.	Yea, and therefore Shalt have a new coat, by God I swore.	
IGNORANCE.	A new coat?	
IDLENESS.	Yea, a new coat, by and by.	550

The Play of Wit & Science

Off with this coat: a new coat, cry!
IGNORANCE. A new coat ! A new coat! A new coat!
IDLENESS. Peace! Whoreson, fool!
Wilt thou wake him now? Unbutton thy coat.
Fool, canst thou do nothing?

IGNORANCE. I note how choold be. 555
IDLENESS. "I note how choold be"! A fool betide thee!
So wisely it speaketh. Come on now! When?
Put back thine arm, fool.

IGNORANCE. Put back?
IDLENESS. So. Lo. Now let me see how this gear
Will trim this gentleman that lieth here. 560
Ah, God save it! So sweetly it doth sleep!
While on your back, this gay coat can creep
As feat as can be for this one arm.
[Putteth Wit's garment upon Ignorance.]

IGNORANCE. Oh, ch'am a cold!
IDLENESS. Hold fool! Keep thee warm
And come hither! Hold this head here. Soft now, for 565
[waking!
Ye shall see one here, brought in such taking
That he shall soon scanty know himself.
Here is a coat, as fit for this elf
As it had been made even for this body;
So it beginneth to look like a noddy! 570

IGNORANCE. Ummmmmmmm.
IDLENESS. What ailest now, fool!
IGNORANCE. New coat is gone.
IDLENESS. And why is it gone?
IGNORANCE. Twool not bide on. 575
IDLENESS. "Twool not bide on"? 'Twould if it could.
But marvel it were, that bide it should:
Science's garment on Ignorance's back.
But now, let's see, sir, what ye do lack.
Nothing but even to buckle here this throat; 580
So well this Wit's becometh a fool's coat.

John Redford

IGNORANCE: He is I now.
IDLENESS: Yea! How lik'st him now?
Is he not a fool as well as thou?
IGNORANCE: Yes.
IDLENESS: Well then, one fool keep another;
Give me this, and take thou that brother. 585
IGNORANCE: Ummmmm....
IDLENESS: Pike thee home! Go!
IGNORANCE: Chy'll tell my mother. (Exit.)
IDLENESS: Yea, do!
But yet to take my leave of my dear, lo,
With a skip or twain here, lo, and here, lo,
And here again. And now this heel 590
To bless this weak brain, now are ye weel
By virtue of Idleness' blessing tool,
Conjured from Wit unto a stark fool! (Exit.)
(Confidence cometh in, with a sword by his side and saith as followeth:)
CONFIDENCE: I seek and seek, as one on no ground
Can rest, but like a masterless hound, 595
Wand'ring all about seeking his master.
Alas, gentle Wit, I fear the faster
That my true service cleaveth unto thee,
The slacker thy mind cleaveth unto me.
I have done thy message in such sort 600
That I, not only for thy comfort
To vanquish thine enemy, have brought here
A sword of comfort from thy love dear;
But also further, I have so inclined her,
In her own person, halfway to meet thee; 605
And hitherward she came for to greet thee.
And sure, except she be turned again,
Hither will she come, or be long plain
To seek to meet thee here in this coast.
But now, alas, thyself thou hast lost; 610
Or, at the least, thou wilt not be found.
Alas, gentle Wit, how dost thou wound

The Play of Wit & Science

Thy trusty and true servant, Confidence?
To leese my credence to Lady Science,
Thou leeseest me too: for if I cannot
Find thee shortly, longer live I may not,
But shortly get me even into a corner,
And die for sorrow through such a scorner. *(Exit.)*
(Here Fame, Favour, Riches and Worship come in with viols.)

FAME. Come, sirs! Let us not disdain to do
That the world hath appointed us to. 620
FAVOUR. Since, to serve Science, the world hath sent us,
As the world willeth us, let us content us.
RICHES. Content us we may, since we be assigned
To the fairest lady that liveth, in my mind.
WORSHIP. Then let us not stay mute and mum, 625
But taste we these instruments till she come.
(Here they sing Exceeding Measure.)

ALL. Exceeding measure, with pains continual,
Languishing in absence. Alas, what shall I do?
Unfortunate wretch! Devoid of joys all.
Sighs upon sighs, redoubling my woe; 630
And tears down falling from mine eyes too.
Beauty with truth so doth me constrain
Ever to serve where I may not attain.

Truth bindeth me ever to be true,
Howso that fortune favoureth my chance? 635
During my life, none other but you
Of my true heart shall have the governance.
O, good sweet heart, have you remembrance
Now of your own, which for no smart
Exile shall you from my true heart? 640

[Experience and Science enter while they sing.]

EXPERIENCE. Daughter, what meaneth that ye did not sing?
SCIENCE. Oh Mother, for here remaineth a thing.
Friends, we thank you for these your pleasures,

John Redford

Taken on us as chance to us measures.

WORSHIP. Lady, these our pleasures, and persons too, 645
Are sent to you, your service to do.

FAME. Lady Science, to set forth your name,
The world, to wait on you, hath sent me, Fame.

FAVOUR. Lady Science, for your virtues most plenty,
The world, to cherish you, Favour hath sent ye. 650

RICHES. Lady Science, for your benefits known,
The world, to maintain you, Riches hath thrown.

WORSHIP. And, as the world hath sent you these three,
So he sendeth me, Worship, to advance your degree.

SCIENCE. I thank the world, but chiefly God be praised 655
That in the world such love to Science hath raised.
But yet to tell you plain: ye four are such
As Science looketh for little nor much:
For being as I am, a lone woman,
Need of your service I neither have nor can. 660
But, thanking the world and you for your pain,
I send ye to the world even now again.

WORSHIP. Why, lady, set ye no more store by me,
Worship? Ye set nought by yourself I see.

FAME. She setteth nought by Fame; whereby I spy her, 665
She careth not what the world saith by her.

FAVOUR. She setteth nought by Favour; whereby I try her,
She careth not what the world saith or doeth by her.

RICHES. She setteth nought by Riches, which doth show,
She careth not for the world. Come, let us go. 670
[exeunt Fame, Favour, Riches and Worship.]

SCIENCE. Indeed, small cause given to care for the world's favouring,
Seeing the wits of the world be so wavering.

EXPERIENCE. What is the matter, daughter, that ye
Be so sad? Open your mind to me.

SCIENCE. My marvel is no less, my good mother, 675
Than my grief is great. To see, of all other,
The proud scorn of Wit, son to Dame Nature,
Who sent me a picture of his stature

The Play of Wit & Science

- With all the shape of himself there opening,
His amorous love thereby betokening, 680
Borne toward me in abundant fashion,
And also further to make right relation
Of this his love, he put in comission
Such a messenger as no suspicion
Could grow in me of him, Confidence. 685
- EXPERIENCE. Um.
- SCIENCE. Who, I ensure ye, with such vehemence
And faithful behaviour in his moving
Set forth the pith of his master's loving
That no living creature could conject
But that pure love did that Wit direct. 690
- EXPERIENCE. So?
- SCIENCE. Now, this being since the space
Of three times, sending from place to place
Between Wit and his man, I hear no more,
Neither of Wit nor his love so sore.
How do you think by this, my own dear mother? 695
- EXPERIENCE. Daughter, in this I can think none other
But that it is true this proverb old:
"Hasty love is soon hot and soon cold".
Take heed, daughter, how you put your trust
To light lovers, too hot at the first. 700
For had this love of Wit been grounded,
And on a sure foundation founded,
Little void time would have sent or seen ye.
- SCIENCE. I think so.
- EXPERIENCE. Ye think so, or no?
Your mother, Experience, proof shall show 705
That Wit hath set his love, I dare say,
And make ye warrantise another way.
- WIT. But your warrantise warrant no troth!
Fair Lady, I pray you be not wroth
Till you hear more. For, dear Lady Science, 710
- (Wit cometh before.)*

John Redford

Had your lover, Wit —yea, or Confidence
His man— been in health all this time spent
Long e'er this time Wit had come or sent;
But the truth is they have been both sick,
Wit and his man; yea, and with pains thick 715
Both stayed by the way, so that your lover
Could neither come, nor send by none other.
Wherefore blame him not, but chance of sickness.
Who is this?
SCIENCE.
EXPERIENCE. Ignorance, or his likeness.
SCIENCE. What, the common fool?
EXPERIENCE. It is much like him. 720
SCIENCE. By my sooth! His tongue serveth him now trim!
What sayst thou, Ignorance? Speak again!
WIT. Nay, lady, I am not Ignorance, plain,
But I am your own dear lover, Wit,
That hath long loved you and loveth you yet. 725
Wherefore I pray thee now, mine own sweeting,
Let me have a kiss at this our meeting.
SCIENCE. Yea, so ye shall anon, but not yet!
Ah sir! This fool here hath got some wit.
Fall you to kissing, sir, nowadays? 730
Your mother shall charm you: go your ways.
WIT. What needeth this, my love of long grown?
Will ye be so strange to me, your own?
Your acquaintance to me was thought easy,
But now your words make my heart all queasy; 735
Your darts at me so strangely be shot.
SCIENCE. Hear ye what terms this fool hath got!
WIT. Well, I perceive my foolishness now.
Indeed, ladies, no dastards allow!
I will be bold with mine own darling: 740
Come now, a bass, my own proper sparring!
SCIENCE. What wilt thou, arrant fool?
WIT. Nay, by the mass!
I will have a bass, e'er I hence pass.

The Play of Wit & Science

SCIENCE.	What wilt thou, arrant fool? ⁷ Hence, fool, I say!	
WIT.	What? Nothing but fool, and fool all this day?	745
	By the mass, Madam! Ye can no good!	
SCIENCE.	Art a-swearing too! Now by my hood, Your foolish knave's breech six stripes shall bear!	
WIT.	Yea? God's bones! 'Fool' and 'knave' to be? Ye there! By the mass! Madam, call me fool once again,	750
	And thou shalt sure call a blow or twain!	
EXPERIENCE.	Come away, daughter: the fool is mad.	
WIT.	Nay, not yet, neither hence ye shall gad; We will gree better, e'er ye pass hence. I pray thee now, good sweet Lady Science,	755
	All this strange manner now hide and cover, And play the goodfellow with thy lover.	
SCIENCE.	What good fellowship would ye of me, Whom ye know not, neither yet I know ye?	
WIT.	Know ye not me?	
SCIENCE.	No. How should I know ye?	760
WIT.	Doth not my picture my person show ye?	
SCIENCE.	Your picture?	
WIT.	Yea, my picture, lady, That ye spake of — who sent it but I?	
SCIENCE.	If that be your picture, then shall we Soon see how you and your picture agree.	765
	Lo, here the picture that I named is this.	
WIT.	Yea! Marry, mine own likeness this is. You, having this, lady; and so loath To know me, which this so plain show'th.	
SCIENCE.	Why, you are nothing like, in mine eye!	770
WIT.	No? How say ye?	
EXPERIENCE.	As she saith, so say I.	
WIT.	By the mass! Then are ye both stark blind! What difference between this and this can ye find?	
EXPERIENCE.	Marry! This is fair, pleasant and godly; And ye are foul, displeasent and ugly.	775
WIT.	Marry! Avaunt thou, foul, ugly whore!	

John Redford

- SCIENCE. So, lo? Now I perceive ye more and more.
WIT. What? Perceive you me as ye would make me,
A natural fool?
- SCIENCE. Nay, ye mistake me. 780
I take ye for no fool natural;
But take ye thus — shall I tell all?
- WIT. Yea. Marry, tell me your mind, I pray ye,
Whereto I shall trust, no more delay ye.
- SCIENCE. I take ye for no natural fool, 785
Brought up amongst the innocent's school;
But for a naughty, vicious fool,
Brought up with Idleness in her school:
Of all arrogant fools, thou art one.
- WIT. Yea? Gog's body!
- EXPERIENCE. Come, let us be gone.
[Exit Science and Experience.]
- WIT. My sword! Is it gone? A vengeance on them! 790
Be they gone too, and their heads upon them?
But, proud queens, the devil go with you both!
Not one point of courtesy in them go'th.
A man is well at ease by suit to pain him.
So mocked, so louted, so made a sot — 795
Never was I erst, since I was begot!
Am I so foul as those drabs would make me?
Where is my glass that Reason did take me?
Now shall this glass of Reason soon try me
As fair as those drabs that so doth belie me. 800
Ha! Gog's soul! What have we here? A devil?
This glass, I see well, hath been kept evil.
Gog's soul! A fool, a fool, by the mass!
What — a very vengeance — aileth this glass?
Either this glass is shamefully spotted, 805
Or else am I too shamefully blotted!
Nay, by Gog's arms! I am so, no doubt.
How look their faces here round about?
All fair and clear they, everyone;

The Play of Wit & Science

And I, by the mass, a fool alone, 810
Decked, by Gog's bones, like a very ass!
Ignorance's coat, hood, ears, — yea, by the mass!
Cockscomb and all: I lack but a bauble!
And as for this face, it is abominable:
As black as the devil! God, for his passion! 815
Where have I been rayed after this fashion?
This same is Idleness — a shame take her!
This same is her work — the devil in hell rake her!
The whore hath shamed me forever, I trow!
I trow? Nay, verily, I know. 820
Now it is so, the stark fool I play
Before all people; now see it I may.
Every man I see laugh me to scorn.
Alas, alas, that ever I was born!
It was not for nought, now well I see, 825
That those two ladies disdainéd me.
Alas! Lady Science, of all other —
How have I railed on her and her mother!
Alas! That lady I have now lost
Whom all the world loveth and honoureth most! 830
And those four gifts which the World gave her
I had won too, had I kept her favour.
Where now, instead of that lady bright,
With all those gallants seen in my sight
—Favour, Riches, yea, Worship and Fame— 835
I have won Hatred, Beggary and Open Shame!
(Shame cometh in, with a whip. Reason followeth him.)
Out upon thee, Shame! What dost thou here?
Marry! I, Reason, bade him here appear.
Upon him, Shame! With stripes enow smitten
While I rehearse his faults herein written. 840
First, he hath broken his promise formerly
Made to me, Reason, my daughter to marry;
Next, he hath broken his promise promised
To obey Intruction, and him despised.

REASON.

John Redford

Thirdly, my daughter, Science, to reprove, 845
Upon Idleness he hath set his love.
Fourthly, he hath followed Idleness' school
Till she hath made him a very stark fool.
Lastly, offending both God and man,
Swearing great oaths as any man can, 850
He hath abused himself, to the great shame
Of all his kindred and loss of his good name.
Wherefore, spare him not, Shame! Beat him well there!
He hath deserved more than he can bear.

(Wit kneeleth down.)

WIT. Oh, Father Reason, be good unto me! 855

Alas, these stripes of Shame will undo me!

REASON. Be still awhile, Shame! Wit, what sayst thou?

WIT. Oh sir, forgive me, I beseech you!

REASON. If I forgive thee thy punishment,
Wilt thou then follow thy first intent 860

And promise made, my daughter to marry?

WIT. Oh, sir! I am not worthy to carry
The dust out where your daughter should sit.

REASON. I wot well that; but if I admit
Thee, unworthy, again to her wooer, 865

Wilt thou then follow thy suit unto her?

WIT. Yea sir! I promise you, while life endureth!

REASON. Come near, masters! Here is one ensureth
(Here cometh Instruction, Study, and Diligence in.)

In words to become an honest man!
Take him, Instruction: do what ye can. 870

INSTRUCTION. What, to the purpose he went before?

REASON. Yea, to my daughter prove him once more!
Take him and trim him in his new apparel,
And give that to Shame there to his farewell.

[Exit Shame.]

INSTRUCTION. Come, on your way, Wit! Be of good cheer! 875
After stormy clouds cometh weather clear.

(Instruction, Study, Wit and Diligence go out.)

The Play of Wit & Science

REASON. Who list to mark now this chance here done,
May see what Wit is without Reason.
What was this Wit better than an ass,
Being from Reason strayed, as he was? 880
But, let pass now, since he is well punished;
And thereby, I trust, meetly well monished.
Yea, and I like him never the worse, I,
Though Shame hath handled him shamefully;
For like as if Wit had proudly bent him 885
To resist Shame, to make Shame absent him,
I would have thought then that Wit had been
—as the saying is, and daily seen—
“Past Shame once, and past all amendment”.
So, contrary, since he did relent 890
To Shame, when Shame punished him even ill,
I have, I say, good hope in him still.
I think, as I thought —if join they can—
My daughter well bestowed on this man.
But all the doubt now is to think how 895
My daughter taketh this: for I may tell you
I think she knew this Wit, even as well
As she seemed here to know him no deal:
For lack of knowledge in Science there is none.
Wherefore, she knew him and thereupon 900
His behaviour, perchance even striking
Her heart against him, she, now misliking
—as women oft-times will be hard-hearted—
Will be the stranger to be reverted.
This must I help; Reason must now walk, 905
On Wit’s part with my Science to talk.
A near way to her know I, whereby
My son’s coming prevent now must I.
Perchance, I may bring my daughter hither;
If so, I doubt not to join them together. 910
(Exit Reason. Confidence cometh in.)

CONFIDENCE. I thank God, yet at last I have found him!

John Redford

I was afraid some mischance had drowned him,
My master, Wit, with whom I have spoken,
Yea, and deliveréd token for token,
And have another to Science again — 915
A heart of gold, signifying plain
That Science hath won Wit's heart forever;
Whereby, I trust, by my good endeavour,
To that good lady, so sweet and so sortly,
A marriage between them ye shall see shortly. 920
(Exit Confidence. Instruction cometh in, with Wit, Study, and Diligence.)

INSTRUCTION. Lo, sir! Now ye be entered again
Toward that passage where doth remain
Tediousness, your mortal enemy.
Now may ye choose whether ye will try
Your hands again on that tyrant stout, 925
Or else walking a little about.

WIT. Nay! For God's passion, sir, let me meet him.
Ye see I am able now for to greet him.
This sword of comfort, sent from my love,
Upon her enemy needs must I prove! 930

INSTRUCTION. Then forth there! And turn on your right hand
Up that mount, before ye shall see stand.
But hear ye! If your enemy chance to rise,
Follow my counsel in anywise.
Let Study and Diligence flee their touch 935
—the stroke of Tediousness— and then couch
Themselves as I told ye: ye wot how.

WIT. Yea sir! For that how, mark the proof now.

INSTRUCTION. To mark it, indeed, here will I abide,
To see what chance of them will betide: 940
For here cometh the pith, lo, of this journey.
That mountain, before which they must assay,
Is called in Latin *Mons Parnassus*;
Which mountain, as old authors discuss,
Who attaineth once to sleep on that mount, 945
Lady Science his own he may count.

The Play of Wit & Science

But, e'er he come there, ye shall see fought
A fight with no less policy wrought
Than strength, I trow, if that may be praised.

- TEDIOUSNESS. Oh! ho! ho!
- INSTRUCTION. Hark!
- TEDIOUSNESS. [*Entering.*] Out, ye caitiffs!
- INSTRUCTION. The fiend is raised! 950
- TEDIOUSNESS. Out, ye villains! Be ye come again?
Have at ye, wretches!
- WIT. Flee, sirs, ye twain!
- TEDIOUSNESS. They flee not far hence!
- DILIGENCE. Turn again, Study!
- STUDY. Now, Diligence!
- INSTRUCTION. Well said! Hold fast now!
- STUDY. He fleeth!
- DILIGENCE. Then follow! 955
[*Exeunt Tediousness and Wit.*]
- INSTRUCTION. With his own weapons, now work him sorrow!
Wit lieth at receipt!
- TEDIOUSNESS. (*dieth*) Oh! ho! ho!
- INSTRUCTION. Hark! he dieth!
Where strength lacketh, policy supplieth.
(*Here Wit cometh in, and bringeth in the head upon his sword,
and saith as followeth:*)
- WIT. I can ye thank, sirs! This was well done!
- STUDY. Nay, yours is the deed. 960
- DILIGENCE. To you is the thank.
- INSTRUCTION. I can ye thank all; this was well done.
(*Confidence cometh running in.*)
- WIT. How say ye, man? Is this field well won?
- CONFIDENCE. Yea, by my faith, so saith your dear heart.
- WIT. Why, where is she, that here now thou art? 965
- CONFIDENCE. Upon yonder mountain, on high,
She saw ye strike that head from the body;
Whereby ye have won her, body and all;
In token whereof, receive here ye shall

John Redford

A gown of knowledge, wherein you must
Receive her here straight. 970

WIT. But sayst thou just?

CONFIDENCE. So just I say that, except ye hie ye,
E'er ye be ready, she will be by ye.

WIT. Hold! Present unto her this head here,
And give me warning when she cometh near. 975

(Exit Confidence.)

Instruction! Will ye help to devise
To trim this gear now in the best wise?

INSTRUCTION. Give me that gown, and come with me all.

DILIGENCE. Oh, how this gear to the purpose doth fall!

(Confidence cometh running in.)

CONFIDENCE. How, master! Master! Where be ye now? 980

WIT. Here, Confidence! What tidings bring'st thou?

CONFIDENCE. My lady at hand doth abide ye.
Bid her welcome! What, do you hide ye?

Here Wit, Instruction, Study, and Diligence sing "Welcome mine own", and Science, Experience, Reason and Confidence come in at Left, and answer every second verse.

WIT AND HIS COMPANY.

Welcome, mine own! Welcome mine own!

O lady dear, 985

Be ye so near
to be known?

My heart you cheer,

Your voice to hear:

Welcome, mine own! 990

SCIENCE AND HER COMPANY.

As ye rejoice

to hear my voice

from me thus blown;

The Play of Wit & Science

So in my choice,
I show my voice
to be your own. 995

WIT AND HIS COMPANY.

Then draw we near,
to see and hear
my love long grown. 1000
Where is my dear?
Here I appear,
to see mine own.

SCIENCE AND HER COMPANY.

To see and try
your love truly, 1005
till death be flown.
Lo, I am here,
that ye may spy
I am your own.

WIT AND HIS COMPANY.

Then let us meet, 1010
my love so sweet,
half-way here thrown.

SCIENCE AND HER COMPANY.

I will not fleet
my love to greet
Welcome, mine own. 1015

And when the song is done, Reason sendeth Instruction, Study, and Diligence and Comfort out, and then, standing in the middle of the place, Wit sayst as followeth:

WIT. Welcome, mine own! With all my whole heart
Which shall be your own, till death us depart.
I trust, lady, this knot even since knit.

SCIENCE. I trust the same: for since ye have smit
Down my great enemy, Tediousness, 1020

John Redford

Ye have won me forever, doubtless,
Although ye have won a clog withal.
WIT. A clog, sweetheart? What?
SCIENCE. Such as doth fall
To all men that join themselves in marriage,
In keeping their wives: a careful carriage! 1025
WIT. Careful? Nay, lady. That care shall employ
No clog, but a key of my most joy.
To keep you, sweetheart, as shall be fit
Shall be no more care, but most joy to Wit.
SCIENCE. Well, yet I say —mark well what I say!— 1030
My presence bringeth you a clog, no nay!
Not in the keeping of me only,
But in the use of Science chiefly:
For I, Science, am in this degree
As all, or most part, of woman be: 1035
If ye use me well, in a good sort,
Then shall I be your joy and comfort.
But if you use me not well, then doubt me,
For sure ye were better then without me.
WIT. Why, lady! Think you me such a wit, 1040
As being affianced by you, and yet
Would misuse ye? Nay, if ye doubt that,
Here is one loveth thee more than somewhat:
If Wit misuse ye at any season,
Correçt me then your own father, Reason. 1045
REASON. Ho, daughter! Can ye desire any more?
What need these doubts? Avoid them, therefore!
EXPERIENCE. By'r Lakin, sir! But under your favour,
This doubt our daughter doth well to gather:
For a good warning now, at beginning, 1050
What Wit, in the end, shall look for in winning;
Which shall be this, sir: if Science here,
Which is God's gift, be used mere
Unto God's honour and profit both
Of you and your neighbour, which go'th 1055

The Play of Wit & Science

In her, of kind, to do good to all:
This seen to, Experience, I, shall
Set you forth, Wit, by her to employ
Double increase to your double joy.
But if you use her contrariwise 1060
To her good nature, and so devise
To evil effect to wrest and to wry her,
Yea, and cast her off and set nought by her,
Be sure I, Experience, shall then
Declare you so before God and man: 1065
That this talent from you shall be taken
And you punish'd for your gain forsaken.
WIT. "Once warned, half-armed," folk say. Namely, when
Experience shall warn a man, then
Time to take heed. Mother Experience! 1070
Touching your daughter, my dear heart, Science:
As I am certain that to abuse her
I breed mine own sorrow, and well to use her
I increase my joy; and so to make it
God's grace is ready if I will take it: 1075
Then —but ye count me no wit at all—
Let never these doubts into your head fall;
But, as yourself, Experience, clearing
All doubts at length; so, till time appearing,
Trust ye with me in God. And, sweetheart, 1080
While your father, Reason, taketh with part
To receive God's grace as God shall send it,
Doubt ye not our joy till life's end [end]⁸ it.
SCIENCE. Well, then, for the end of all doubts past,
And to that end which ye spake of last 1085
Among our wedding matters here rend'ring,
Th'end of our lives would be in rememb'ring;
Which remembrance, Wit, shall sure defend ye
From the misuse of Science, and send ye
The gain my mother to mind did call: 1090
Joy without end — that wish I to all!

John Redford

REASON.

Well said! And as ye, daughter, wish
That joy to all folk in general,
So wish I, Reason, the same. But yet,
First in this life, wish I here to fall
To our most noble King and Queen in especial,
To their honourable Council, and then to all the rest,
Such joy as long may rejoice them all best!

1095

ALL.

Amen.

*Here cometh in four with viols and sing "Remembrance",
and at the last quire, all make curtsey and so go forth singing.⁹*

Thus endeth the play of Wit and Science
made by Master John Redford.

Finis

Endnotes

1. Written *me soon* in the ms.
2. Spelt *or* wherever the word appears in the ms. Whether the word is represented as *or* or *e'er* has been decided editorially by context.
3. The lyrics for the songs appear after the play. They have been inserted into the text for the sake of continuity.
4. Written *damⁿ* in the ms.
5. Neither voice, nor sense.
6. The character's name is originally spelt *Ignorance* throughout, in order to match the contrived method by which he is taught his name. It has been altered for the sake of idiomatic conformity.
7. The line *What wilt thou, arrant fool?* appears here in the ms, but it could possibly be a copyist's error, as it is identical to Science's previous line.
8. The second instance of the word *end* is not in the ms.
9. The text of the final song, *Remembrance*, is missing.

Glossary

- avaunt*: (v.) to go away
ax: (v.) archaic form of ask
bass: (n.) kiss
belike: (adv.) perhaps
betide: (v.) to happen (to)
by'r Lakin: an oath on the Virgin Mary: by our Lady-kin.
caitiff: (n.) mean, despicable person
callet: (n.) lewd woman
capax: (adj.) capacious
clog: (n.) burden, impediment
concupiscence: (n.) lust
conject: (v.) conclude
crank: (n.) deceit, wile; whim or caprice
cuff: (n.) blow
cumber: (v.) to hamper, hinder
dam: (n.) woman
daſtard: (n.) malicious coward
deal: (n.) amount, part
drab: (n.) slut, strumpet
erſt: (adv.) formerly, before (in time)
feat: (adj.) becoming; graceful; proper; apt
featly: (adv.) deftly
fetch: (n.) contrivance, trick
fleet: (v.) to move quickly
fray: (v.) to be afraid
gad: (v.) to rove, wander, go about idly
gage: (n.) pledge
gobbet: (n.) fragment, broken piece, cut of meat
gree: (v.) to reconcile, come into accord
hafter: (n.) wrangler, dodger, haggler
leese: (v.) to lose
liſt: (v.) to desire, want, wish
lout: (v.) to mock, treat with contempt

The Play of Wit & Science

by the mace: said by the House of Commons Searjeant of Arms, as his warrant for demanding obedience.

mall: (n.) mallet, club

noddy: (n.) fool, simpleton

painful: (adj.) careful, considerate

pash: (v.) to bludgeon, bash

pike: (v.) to go away quickly

policy: (n.) prudence; cunning

poppet: (n.) false idol; puppet

prevent: (v.) to act in anticipation

prove: (v.) to try, test

ray: (v.) to array

rout: (v.) to snore

sortly: (adv.) appropriate, suitable

sparling: (n.) a small fish. (The OED cites this play as the only example of the word as a term of endearment.)

taking: (n.) fright, dilemma

taste: (v.) to attempt, try

tractable: (adj.) easily influenced; not stubborn

trick: (adj.) clever, smart

trim: (v.) to dress, adorn

troth: (n.) truth, confidence, good faith

trow: (v.) to hold as true, believe, trust

twiddle: (v.) to pursue trifling matters

warrantise: (v.) to guarantee, give assurance

weel: (adv.) archaic form of well

ween: (v.) to suppose

wend: (v.) to think, suppose

wise: (n.) way, manner

wot: (v.) to know