

Penny-worth of Wit,

IN THREE PARTS.

Part I. *Shewing how a Merchant was deluded from his Lady by a Harlot.*

Part II. *And how he sailed to a far Country.*

Part III. *How he returned to the British Shore.*



A PENNY-WORTH OF WIT.

P A R T I.

HERE is a penny-worth of wit,
for those that ever went astray;
If warning they will take by it,
'twill do them good another day.

It is a touch-stone of true love,
betwixt a Harlot and a Wife;
The former doth destructive prove,
the latter yields the joys of life.

As in this book you may behold,
set forth by William Lane ;
A wealthy merchant brave and bold,
who did a harlot long maintain.

Although a virtuous Wife he had,
likewise a youthful daughter dear,
Which might have made his heart full glad,
yet seldom would he them come near.

The treasure which he traded for,
on the tempestuous ocean wide,
His Harlot had, he brought it her,
but nothing to his virtuous Bride.

The finest silks that could be bought,
nay, jewels, rubies, diamonds, rings,
He to his wanton Harlot brought,
with many other costly things.

She'd still receive them with a smile,
when he came from the raging seas,
And said with words as smooth as oil,
my dearest come and take thy ease ;

To thy soft bed of linen fine,
thou art right welcome, love, said she,
Both I, and all that e'er was mine,
shall still at thy devotion be.

He brought two hundred pounds of gold,
and after that two hundred more,
With chains and jewels many fold,
and bid her lay them up in store.

Ay that I will 'thou needs not fear,
and so embrac'd him with a kiss ;
Then took the wealth, and said, my dear,
I'll have a special care of this.

Then did they banquet many days,
feasting on rich delicious fare ;
Thus by her false deluding ways,
he drew him in a fatal snare.

When he had liv'd sometime on shore,
he must go to the sea again,
With traffic to increase his store,
the wantoh harlot to maintain.

To whom he said, my joy, my dear,
with me, what venture wilt thou send ?

A good return thou need not fear,
I'll be thy factor and thy friend.

In goods, my dear, I'll send above,
ten pounds, which you shall take on board,
I know that unto me, my love,
a treeples gain thou wilt afford.

This said, next to his Wife he goes,
and ask'd her in a scornful way,

What venture she would now propose,
to send with him for merchandize.

I'll send a penny, love, by thee,
be sure you take good care of it ;

When you're in foreign parts, said she,
pray buy a penny-worth of wit.

She laid the penny in his hand,
and said, I pray now, don't forget,

When you are in a foreign land,
to buy a penny-worth of wit.

He put the penny up secure,
and said, I'll take a special care,

To lay it out you may be sure,
so to his Miss he did repair.

And told her what he was to buy,
at which she laugh'd his Wife to scorn ;

On board he went immediately,
and set to sea that very morn.

P A R T . II.

NOW were they gone with merry hearts,
the merchant and his jovial crew,
From port to port in foreign parts,
to trade as they were won't to do.

At length when he had well bestow'd,
 the cargo which was outward bound,
 He did his trading vessel load,
 with richer treasures which he found.

As he his merchandize did vend,
 they turn'd to gems and golden bar,
 Which crown'd his labour with content,
 he never was so rich before.

The wanton Harlot's venture then,
 did run to great account likewise,
 For every pound she would have ten,
 such was their lucky merchandize.

For joy of which the merchant cry'd,
 one merry bout my lads shall have ;
 A splendid supper I'll provide,
 of all the dainties you can crave.

Before we set to sea again,
 this said, they to a tavern went,
 Where they did feast and drink amain,
 till many crowns and pounds were spent.

The merchant then, with laughter mov'd,
 said, he for wit had never sought,
 My Harlot's venture is improv'd,
 but of my Wife's I never thought,

One single penny and no more,
 she has a venture sent with me,
 I was to lay it out therefore,
 in what you'll think a raritie.

She bid me use my utmost skill,
 to buy a penny-worth of wit,
 But I have kept the penny still,
 and ne'er so much as thought of it.

Where shall I go and lay it out ?
 true wit is scarce and hard to find,
 But come my lads lets drink about,
 my Wife's small venture we'll not mind.

There is a proverb often us'd,
 wit's ne'er good till bought too dear,
 Where I right well may be excus'd,
 there's little for a penny here.

An aged Father sitting by
 whose venerable looks were gray,
 Straight made the merchant this reply,
 hear me a word or two I pray.

Thy Harlot in prosperity,
 she will embrace thee for thy gold,
 But if in want and misery,
 you'll nought but frowns from her behold.

And ready to betray thy life,
 when wretched, naked, poor and low,
 But thy true-hearted, faithful Wife,
 will stand by thee in well or woe.

If thou wilt prove the truth of this,
 strip off thy gaudy rich array,
 And so return to thy proud Miss,
 declare that thou was cast away.

Thy riches buried in the main,
 besides as you pass'd through a wood,
 One of your servants you had slain,
 for which your life in danger stood,

Beseech her for to shelter thee,
 declare on her you do depend:
 And then, alas! full soon you'll see,
 how far she'd prove a faithful friend.

Then if she frowns, go to thy Wife;
 tell her this melancholy thing,
 Who labours most to save thy life,
 let her be most in thy esteem.

Father, the merchant then reply'd,
 you must this single penny take,
 When I have past the ocean wide,
 a proof of this I mean to take.

And loving friends, for ought I know,
 I mean this single penny prize,
 It may be the best I did bestow,
 in all my wealthy merchandize.

Taking his leave away they came,
 both he and his brave hearts of gold,
 To whom he said, I'll prove the same,
 when I my native land behold.

P A R T III.

WITH full spread sail to sea they went,
 Neptune the golden cargo bore,
 Through roaring waves to their content,
 at length they reach'd the British shore.

The merchant put on poor array ;
 the very worst of ragged clothes,
 And then without the least delay,
 he to his wanton Harlot goes.

When she beheld him in distress,
 she cry'd, What is the matter now ?
 said he, I'm poor and penny-less,
 with that he made a courteous bow.

Crying, no man was e'er so crost,
 as I have been sweet heart's delight,
 My ship and all I had is lost,
 without thy help I'm ruin'd quite.

My loss is great, yet that's not all,
 one of my servants I have slain,
 As we did both at variance fall ;
 some shelter let me here obtain.

I dare not now go to my Wife,
 whom I have wrong'd for many years,
 Into thy hands I'll put my life,
 take pity on my melting tears.

Ye bloody villain she reply'd,
 don't in the least on me depend,
 Begone, or as I live, she cry'd,
 I for an officer will send.

I'll give you neither meat nor drink,
 nor any shelter shall you have,
 Of musty, lousy rags you stink,
 begone you base perfidious slave.

Don't think that I'll your counsel keep,
 or harbour any such as you :
 He turn'd away and seem'd to weep,
 and bid the wanton Jilt adieu.

Then to his loving Wife he came,
 both poor and naked in distress,
 He told her all the very same,
 yet she reliev'd him ne'er the less.

My dear, she cry'd, since it is so,
 take comfort in thy loving Wife,
 All that I have shall freely go,
 to gain a pardon for thy life,

I'll lodge thee in a place secure,
 where I will daily nourish thee ;
 Believe me love, you may be sure,
 to find a faithful friend in me.

When he this perfect proof had made,
 which of them two did love him best,
 Unto his virtuous Wife he said,
 my jewel, set thy heart at rest.

Behold I have no servant slain !
 nor have I suffer'd any loss,
 Enough I have us to maintain,
 the ocean seas no more I'll cross.

My loaded ship lies near the shore,
 with gold and jewels richly fraught,
 So much I never had before,
 thy penny-worth of wit I've bought.

Once more he to his Harlot goes,
 with fourteen sailors brave and bold,
 All cloth'd with new and costly clothes,
 of silk and embroider'd gold.

The Miss when she this pomp beheld,
 did offer him a kind embrace,
 But he with wrath and anger fill'd,
 did straight upbraid her to her face.
 But she with smiles, these words exprest,
 I have a faithful love for thee,
 Whate'er I said, was but in jest,
 why didst thou go so soon from me.

It was full time to go from thee,
 you have another love in store,
 Whom you have furnish'd with my gold,
 and jewels which I brought on shore.
 'Tis false, she cry'd, I have them all,
 with that the merchant straight reply'd,
 Lay them before me, then I shall,
 be soon convinc'd and satisfy'd.

Then up she ran and fetch'd them down,
 his jewels, gold, and rubies bright,
 He seiz'd them all, and with a frown,
 he bid the wanton Jilt good night.

When he had seiz'd the golden purse,
 and swept up ev'ry precious stone,
 She cry'd, What, will you rob me thus?
 Yes, that I will of what's my own.

You wanted to betray my life,
 but thanks to God, there's no such fear,
 These jewels shall adorn my Wife;
 henceforth your house I'll not come near.

Home he return'd to his sweet Wife,
 and told her all that he had done,
 E'er since they live a happy life,
 and he'll to harlots no more run.

Thus he the wanton Harlot bit,
 who long had his destruction sought;
 Thus was the Penny-worth of Wit
 the best that e'er a merchant bought.