AMONG the richest sources on the social life of Elizabethan England are the works of one Thomas Nash or Nashe. In his short life of 34 years (1567–1601) Nash produced a number of novels, plays, essays and polemic epistles. These form a veritable treasury of observations on the national manners of his time. The student of inebriety who peruses his writings in the hope of finding material on the drinking habits of the sixteenth-century Englishman will be amply rewarded.

The writings of Nash did not have the depth, the significance, or breadth of conception of his friend Christopher Marlowe, not to speak of his great contemporary William Shakespeare, but the consensus of the experts is that he was the most brilliant knight of the pen of his times. In contrast with the literary conventions of that age, he did not seek inspiration in the lives of the great of past centuries but was attracted by the mode of life that he saw around him and the people whom he saw living this life. The column and the columnist did not exist in those times, but because of his style and the topical nature of his writings he may be called a forerunner of the present-day columnist.

While much information may be gained from Nash, little information is available about him. Much of the time of his adult life he spent in hiding because of debts, political involvements, epidemics, and various and sundry escapades. His whereabouts for considerable periods of time are entirely unknown. It is typical for the scantiness of his biography that there is no record of his death and no tombstone marks the place of his earthly remains. Some letters show that in 1601 he was alive, and the next thing we know is that in 1602 Fitzgeffrey in his Affaniae refers to him as dead.

Thomas Nash was a Cambridge man. In 1581 and 1582 he had been at St. John’s College, and then became scholar of the Lady Margaret foundation. He graduated with the degree of B.A. in 1585–86, and stayed in Cambridge probably until 1588. He left before obtaining the degree of M.A. His enemies alleged that he had to leave Cambridge because of some indiscretion, but there is no evidence of this in the
records of his college. More likely, he ceased graduate studies because of lack of funds. In any event, the indications from his educational record, as well as from his writings, are that he had all the educational advantages that his time afforded. While he does not seem to have been free of those weaknesses of society which he castigated, it would appear that his troubles were ascribable more to political radicalism than to moral escapades. His play The Isle of Dogs (now lost) was branded as "seditious and slanderous matter." The theatre in which it was produced was closed because of this and Nash had to go into hiding.

Royalties were hardly a source of livelihood for even the most popular writers of the Elizabethan age. Authors, if they had no means of their own, were dependent on "patrons." Not only did Nash lack royalties but it seems that he was only rarely able to find patrons, and then no very generous ones. His precarious means of livelihood was the cause of much bitterness to him; and it was a source of continuous discontent to him that the gift of the pen could not furnish him with those simple comforts of life which a cobbler or tailor could gain from his work. Gabriel Harvey,* his arch enemy, said of him: "... Pinched with want, vexed with discreeite, tormented with other mens felicitie, and overwelmed with his owne misery; in a raving, and frantick moode, most desperately exhibiteth his supplication to the Diuell."

In view of the bitter feud between Nash and the entire Harvey family, one would not be inclined to accept this at face value, but this judgment is confirmed by Nash himself in the first paragraph of his Pierce Peniess:†

Having spent many yeeres in studying how to live, and liu'de a long time without mony: hauing tired my youth with follie, and surfeit my minde with vanitie, I began at length to looke backe to repentance, & addressse my endeauors to prosperitie: But all in vaine, I sate vp late, and rose earely, contended with the colde, and conuersed with scarcitie: for all my labours turned to losse, my vulgar Muse was despised & neglected, my paines not regarded, or slightly rewarded, and I my selfe (in prime of my best wit) laid open to poueritie. Whereupon (in a malecontent humor) I accused my fortune, raild on my patrones, bit my pen, rent my papers, and ragde in all points like a mad man.

Nash's censorious attitude may be attributed more to frustration than to a true moral indignation. His references to inebriety and to

†This and all subsequent direct quotations from Nash are taken from The Works of Thomas Nashe (R. B. McKerrow, ed.). London; A. H. Bullen, 1904–10.
drinking habits in general are numerous and scattered over many of 
his works. Apparently he had collected much folklore material on 
drinking but it is not the object of this presentation to show what he 
had gathered about former times but rather what he had observed 
about his contemporaries. 

Nash was not a teetotaler, and his wrath is not directed at the use 
of alcoholic beverages but at inebriety. In his Anatomy of Absurdity 
(1589) he gives various examples of the sobriety or entire abstentiousness practised by great men of classic times and then says:

I doo not allege these examples, to the end I might condene the moderate vse of wine as vnlawfull, but to shew by the comparison, how farre we excceede them in excesse, whose banquets are furnisht with such wastfull superfluitie.

Also, in many of his writings, Nash mentions that good beer or good 
wine makes good blood.

An interesting comparison between the mixing of foods and the 
mixing of drinks, in the Anatomy of Absurdity, gives an explanation of 
the alleged ill effects of mixing drinks and at the same time reveals 
some dietetic theories of his times:

Thirdly they object, that the nourishment of diuers meates is no lesse 
noysome, then the drinking of diuers kinds of Wines is daangerous. Evry 
one knowes that he that washeth his braines with diuers kinds of wines, is 
the next doore to a drunken man, and he like (say they) to be endangered 
by diseases, who affecteth variety in his diet. Here doe I denie the coherence 
of the comparison, for what is hee that by eating ouermuch, doth incurrre the 
like inconueniencel that he dooth, that drinketh much? hee that hath 
ouerloded his stomacke with sundry meates, is pained a little perhaps in his 
bellie, hee that hath ouercharged his braine with wyne, is no better then a 
mad man for the time; which the rather seemes to me, because the groenes 
of ye meate remaining in one place, expecteth the administration of diges-
tion, and beeing thorowly consumed, is suddainly voided, but Wine beeing 
by nature lighter, ascended higher, and tickleth the braine placed in the 
top, with the inflamation of a hote fume, and therefore diuersitie of wines 
at once, is shunned of them that are wise, least the matter which is readie to 
posesse the head on a suddaine, in a moment ouerturne the seate of reason, 
which daunger in the diuersitie of meates, no reason can be rendred why 
we shoulde dread.

Nash's main discourse on inebriety is contained in Pierce Penilesse 
His Supplication to the Diuell, which was first published in 1592 under 
the formidable title "Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Diuell. De-
scribing the ouer-spreading of Vice, and suppression of Virtue. Pleasantly
interlac'd with variable delights: and pathetically intermixt with con-
cerpted reproofes." It appears that this first edition went to press in the
author's absence, and thus without the benefit of his supervision. From
a letter to the publisher it is clear that Nash was not all too pleased,
and that he objected in particular to the title of his work. In requesting
changes to be made in the second edition, he wrote: "Now this is that
I would have you to do in this second edition; First, cut off that
long-tayld Title, and let mee not in the forefront of my Booke, make a
tedious Mountebanks Oration to the Reader, when in the whole there
is nothing praise-worthie." It seems that the imposition of an
embarrassingly sensational title on an author by his publisher is not a
modern invention but an old tradition of the trade.

There are many conjectures relative to the relation of the name
"Pierce" to "purse" and "Percy," but these are of no particular
interest here. It is sufficient to mention that the name Pierce had come
to stand for plain-spoken countryman. Whether Pierce in connection
with penniless had been used before Nash or whether it was his own
combination, is not known.

The Supplication to the Diuell is a petition that the gold in the strong-
holds of the rich might be set free and that Pierce might receive his
legitimate share of this gold. This supplication, which is forwarded to
the devil by a "knight of the post," occupies only one page of the
book, and the rest is devoted to the motivation of the petition. The
motivation consists of a violent attack on greed, pride, envy, wrath,
drunkenness, and similar vices. Inebriety is given an entire section
under the heading "The Complaint of Drunkennes." But there is
also a short passage relating to inebriety in an earlier section, which
reads as follows:

The chiefe spur vnto wrath is Drunkennes, which, as the touch of an
Ashen bough causeth a giddinesse in the Vipers head, and the Batte, lightly
strooke with the leafe of a Tree, loseth his remembrance: so they, being but
lightly sprinkled with the iuyce of the Hop, become senselesse, and haue
their reason stroken blind, as soone as euer the Cup scaleth the Fortresse
of their Nose. Then run their words at random, like a dog that hath lost his
master, and are vppe with this man and that man, and generally inuay
against al men, but those that keep a wet corner for a friend, and will not
chinke scorne to drinke with a good fellowe and a Souldiour: and so long do
they practise this vaine on their Ale-bench, that when they are sober, they
cannot leue it.

The following is the full text of the section on inebriety:
From Gluttony in meates, let me descend to superfluitie in drinke; a sinne, that ever since we haue mixt our selues with the Low-countries, is counted honourable: but before we knew their lingring warres, was held in the highest degree of hatred that might be. Then, if we had seene a man goe wallowing in the streetes, or line sleeping vnder the boord, we would haue spet at him as a toade, and cald him foule drunken swine, and warned al our friends out of his company: now, he is no body that cannot drinke super nagulum,* carouse the Hunters hoop, quaffe vpsey freze crosse, with healthes, glouses, mumpes, mumples, frolickes, and a thousand such dominiiering inuentions. He is reputed a pesaunt and a boore that wil not take his licour profoundly. And you shall heare a Cauallier of the first feather, a princockes that was but a Page the other day in the Court, and now is all to be frenceified in his Souldiers sute, stand yppon termes with, Gods wounds, you dishonour me sir, you do me the disgrace if you do not pledge me as much as I drunke to you: and, in the midst of his cups, stand vaunting his manhood, beginning euerie sentence with When I first bore Armes, when he never bare any thing but his Lords rapier after him in his life. If he haue beene ouer and visited a towne of Garrison, as a travauiler or passenger, he hath as great experience as the greatest Commander and chiefe Leader in England. A mightie deformer of mens manners and features, is this vnnecessary vice of all other. Let him bee indued with neuer so many vertues, and haue as much goodly proportion and fauour as nature can bestow yppon a man: yet if he bee thirstie after his owne destruction, and hath no ioy nor comfort, but when he is drowning his soule in a gallon pot, that one beastly imperfection will ytterlie obscure all that is commendable in him; and all his good qualities sinke like lead down to the bottome of his carrowings cups, where they will lie, like lees and dregges, dead and vnregarded of any man.

Clim of the clough, thou that wsest to drinke nothing but scalding lead and sulphur in hell, thou art not so greedie of thy night geare. O, but thou hast a foule swallow, if it come once to carousing of humane bloud; but thats but seldome, once in seauen yeare, when theres a great execution, otherwise thou art tide at rack and manger, and drinkest nothing but the Aqua vitae of vengeance all thy life time. The Prouerbe giues it forth, thou art a knaue, and therefore I haue more hope thou art some manner of good fellow: let mee intreat thee (since thou hast other inquities inough to circumuent vs withall) to wipe this sin out of the catologe of thy subtllies: helpe to blast the Vines, that they may beare no more grapes, and sowe the wines in the cellers of Marchants storehouses, that our Countrey-men may not pisse out all their witte and thrift against the walles.

King Edgars Ordinance Against Drinking

King Edgar, because his subiects should not offend in swilling, and bibbing,

*Drinking super nagulum, a devise of drinking new come out of Fraunce; which is, after a man hath turned vp the bottom of the cup, to drop it on his naile, & make a pearle with that is left; which, if it shed, & he cannot make stand on, by reason thes too much, he must drinke againe for his pennance.
as they did, caused certaine yron cups to be chained to every fountaine and wells side, and at every Vintners doore, with yron pinnes in them, to stinte every man how much he should drinke: and he that went beyond one of those pinnes forfeited a penny for every draught. And, if Stories were well searecht, I beleue hoopes in quart pots were inuented to that ende, that every man should take his hoope, and no more. I haue heard it justifie for a trueuth by great Personages, that the olde Marquesse of Pisana (who yet liues) drinks not once in seauen yeare: and I haue read of one Andron of Argos, that was so seldome thirstie, that he travailed ouer the hote burning sands of Lybia, and neuer dranke. Then why should our colde Clime bring forth such fierie throates? Are we more thirstie than Spaine and Italy, where the Sunnes force is doubled? The Germaines and lowe Dutch, me thinkes, should bee continually kept moist with the foggie aere and stinking mistes that arise out of their fenne soyle: but as their Countrey is over-flowen with water, so are their heads alwaies over-flowen with wine, and in their bellies they haue standing quag-mires and bogs of English beere.

The Priuay Lawes Amongst Drunkards

One of their breede it was that writ the Booke De Arte bibendi, a worshipfull treatise, fitte for none but Silenus and his Asse to set forth: besides that volume, we haue generall rules and injunctions, as good as printed precepts, or Statutes set downe by Acte of Parliament, that goe from drunkard to drunkard; as still to keepe your first man, not to leaue any flockes in the bottome of the cup, to knock the glasse on your thumbe when you haue done, to haue some shooyng horne to pul on your wine, as a rashier of the coles, or a redde herring, to stirre it about with a candles ende to make it taste better, and not to holde your peace whyles the pot is stirring.

The Eight Kinds of Drunkennesse

Nor haue we one or two kinde of drunkards onely, but eight kindes. The first is Ape drunken, and he leapes, and sings, and hollowes, and daunceth for the heavens: the second is Lion drunken, and he flings the pots about the house, calls his Hostesse whore, breakes the glasse windowes with his dagger, and is apt to quarrell with any man that speaks to him: the third is Swine drunken, heavy, lumpish, and sleepe, and cries for a little more drinke, and a fewe more cloathes: the fourth is Sheepe drunken, wise in his owne conceit, when he cannot bring forth a right word: the fifth is Mawdlen drunken when a fellowe will weep for kindnes in the midst of his Ale, and kisse you; saying; By God, Captaine, I loue thee; goe thy waies, thou dost not thinke so often of me as I do of thee, I would (if it pleased GOD) I could not loue thee so well as I doo; and then he puts his finger in his eie, and cries: the sixt is Martin drunken, when a man is drunken, and drinks himself sober ere he stirre: the seventh is Goate drunken, when, in his drunkennes, he hath no minde but on Lechery: the eighth is Foxe drunken, when he is craftie drunken, as many of the Dutch men bee, that will neuer bargain but when they are drunken. All these species, and more, I haue seene practised in one Company at one sitting, when I haue beene permitted to remaine sober amongst them, onely to note their seuerall humors. Hee
that plies any one of them harde, it will make him to write admirable verses, and to have a deepe casting head, though hee were neuer so verie a Dunce before.

_The Discommodities of Drunkennesse_

Gentlemen, all you that will not haue your braines twise sodden, your flesh rotten with the Dropse, that loue not to goe in greasie dublets, stockings out at the heeles, and weare alehouse daggers at your backes, forsware this slauering brauery, that will make you have stinking breathes, and your bodies smell like Brewers aprons: rather keepe a snuife in the botomme of the glasse to light you to bed withall, then leaue neuer an eye in your head to lead you over the threshold. It will bring you, in your olde age, to be companions with none but Porters and Car-men, to talke out of a Cage, railing as drunken men are wont, a hundred boies wondering about them; and to die sodainly, as _Fol Long_, the Fencer, did, drinking _Aqua vita_. From which (as all the rest) good Lord deliuer _Pierce Penilese_.

The nurse of this enormitie (as of all euills) is Idlenes, or sloth, which, haung no painfull Prouidence to set himselfe a worke, runnes headlong, with the raines in his owne hand, into all lasciuouisnesse and sensualitie that may be. Men, when they are idle, and know not what to do, saith one, let vs goe to the Stilliard, and drinke Rhenish wine. Nay, if a man knew where a good whorhouse were, saith another, it were somewhat like. Nay, saith the third, let vs goe to a dicing-house or a bowling alley, and there we shall haue some sport for our money. . . .

In the above text it will be noted that Nash attributes the spread of inebriety to an importation from "the Low-countries" by soldiers returning from the wars there. It is interesting that excessive drinking habits are ascribed by the individual as well as by nations to bad company. It would appear that the idea of the influence of the wars in the Netherlands on the drinking habits of the English was not original with Nash. The historian William Camden, in his _Britannia_ (1586), said: "The English, who had hitherto, of all the Northern nations, shown themselves the least addicted to immoderate drinking, and been commended for their sobriety, first learned in these wars with the Netherlands to swallow a large quantity of intoxicating liquor, and to destroy their own health by drinking that of others."*

Since John of Salisbury had said in the twelfth century that "the habits of drinking made the English famous among all foreign nations," the allegations of Camden and of Nash do not seem to be particularly cogent. They are in a class with the assertion of Sebastian Franck†

that the Germans learned to drink excessively from the French, although Tacitus had already described the Germans as heavy imbibers.

The description of *The Eight Kinds of Drunkenness*, which is frequently quoted at second hand in the alcohol literature, is practically the only passage from Nash with which students of inebriety are acquainted. Apparently Nash elaborated a passage from the *Ship of Fools*, one of the most popular books of the sixteenth century, which reads as follows:

Some sowe dronke, swaloyenge mete without measure
Some mawdelayne dronke, mournyng lowdy and hye

Some are Ape dronke full of lawghter and of Toyes
Some mery dronke syngynge with wynches and boyes.

This passage does not appear in the German original, *Das Narrenschiff* (1494) by Sebastian Brandt or Brant, but appears to be an addition by the English imitator Alexander Barclay, whose *Ship of Fools* was published in 1509. It is apparently based on popular versions of old legends which had migrated from the Orient. The significance of Thomas Nash's work lies not so much in this well-known passage on types of drunkards as in the description of the drinking manners of his time.

E. M. J.