

*🔥 Giving credit where credit is due, for Poetrie, Hystories,
Musyke, Wyne, Vyneyards, Bere, Hoores, Daunsyng, Maiyng, Mummyng,
☞ Midsomer Bonefyres 🔥*

Introduction

The following excerpts are from *An Abridgemēt of the notable worke of POLIDORE VIRGILE conteignyng the deuisers and fyrst fynders out aswell of Artes, Ministeries, Feactes and ciuil ordinaunces, as of Rites, and Ceremonies, commonly used in the churche: and the originall beginnyng of the same. Compendiously gathered by Thomas Langley. Imprinted at London vvithin the precincte of the late dissolved house of the grey Friers, by Richarde Grafton Printer to the Princis grace, the xxv. daie of Ianuarie, the yere of Our Lorde, M.D.XLVI. [1546]*

Polidore Virgile was Polidoro Virgilio (1470-1555), a native of Urbino, who came to England in 1502. His *De Inventoribus Rerum*, of which this is an English-language abridgement, was a Renaissance best-seller, going on to at least 110 different editions in a half-dozen languages.

The first printed version of it was published in 1499, although expanded editions appeared for years later; and it was written originally at the request of the Duke of Urbino, Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, son of Federigo da Montefeltro, who had made Urbino the quintessential symbol of enlightened Quattrocento culture, and made his own *Palazzo Ducale* the symbol of Urbino.

Still, when I was last in Urbino myself, I arrived just in time for the “Day of Solidarity with the Comanche Tribe of Aztec Indians,” at the highpoint of which a member of the “tribe” floated down from the sky in a hang-glider powered by an outsized sort of sputtering model-airplane motor, wearing a superbly generic “Indian headdress” that reminded me only of the observation that “*English-women’s shoes look at though they were designed by someone who had heard shoes described, but had never actually seen any.*” He landed in front of the *Palazzo Ducale* amidst the cries and war-whoops of his tribemates, all similarly feathered, all somewhat other than Comanche, who opened a bottle of wine, cheered, and went back to selling souvenirs to the audience.

So, while Polidoro’s book was of course intended to provide a serious survey of the origins and first instances of nearly all things, I think it’s perfectly fair to read him with an eye to the Italian genius for public festivals of the marvellous and the strange, particularly given the splendidly archaic & sonorous Tudor prose of his translator, Thomas Langley. Furthermore, I suspect that Langley,

former chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer and later Canon of Winchester Cathedral, may have had quite a bit more to do with the text's more sulfuric fulminations against *Daunsyng, maiyng, mummyng & Midsomer bonefyres* than did Polidoro himself, who, good son of Urbino, I prefer to think enjoyed such things.

The original text is in a Gothic typeface I have not tried to imitate; but I have kept the long “s” (ſ), and the scribal (¨), indicating that an “n” or “m” is understood to follow. Thus, (mã) = (man), (drũ) = (drum). And as usual with early printed texts, the “u” substitutes for “v” in the body of a word, whereas the “v” substitutes for “u” at the beginning. Thus, “inuentiue” = “inventive”, but “vnusual” = “unusual”. It's not hard to read once you get the hang of it.

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LACTANTIVS writeth that certain philosophers of Epicures sect did fore bewayle the estate of manne, as weke and far vnder the degre of beastes, bicause thei wer by nature fensed as well frō all displeasures & grefes of vnseasonable ayre, as armed againste the affautes and inuasions of their enemies, and onely man destitute & voide of fuche and (1.u.) other like succours & purueighaunces: for bothe beastes & birdes haue euery one accordyng to their kynde skynnes, hides, or fethers, to sustein the sharpenes of the cold, and to bere of the stormi raynes and tēpestes, & also weapōs as hornes, tuskes, and other like munimentes too resist their foes, or at the least thei haue agilitee and swiftnes, to escape and preferue them selves frō daunger Cōtrarywise mankynd is of his nature so delicate and tēder that he can abyde no heate, no colde, no raynes, nor tempestuous wether: so feble also he is that his membres be not able to helpe his owne wekenesse, muche lesse too understād or auoide the power of his enemies. But if these grosse and carnal Philosophiers hadde (2.r.) withdrawē their heartes frō vewyng the behauour of the body, and applied their mynde to the contemplacion of the worthines of the folle, they should haue wel perceiued their owne erreure, the base and vile cōdicion of beastes the high dignitie of the folle, & the excellent noblenes of man. For albeit this frayle and yearthly body of oures is not so strong as the brutishe carkeses of beastes be, yet by reason of their grosnes they be vnfit to receiue the spiritual folle of man, or to be mete instrumentes of the same, where as the imperfection of mannes bodye is abled by the inuentiue and politike reason of the folle which deuiseeth all necessaries, for the vse of the sayd body by all endeouere and industrye. And (2.v.) that manne, whiche can shifte for himself, decline frō thynges hurtfull, forsee also thynges to come, is iudged & reputed worthy the title and name of a manne, so he likewise farre excelleth al kindes of liuyng creatures, whiche althoughe thei bee better armed with the giftes of nature, yet for defaute of reason to gouerne the same, thei be far inferiours to the noblenes of manne, whiche knoweth through the dotes & qualites of the folle too deuise all necessaries fit for his affaires and businesse.

Wherefore me thynke them worthy of high commendacion, that haue bent them selues wholly to adorne and garnishe this life mortal, with their inuencions, & to accomplishe the feble indigēce (3.r.) of our condicion, by the diligence of

their prouision: as theiye haue excogitated & imagined any arte whereby the com-
men welth of the worlde is preferued, or any other handy craftes or ministeries too
the maintenaunce ayde and comferte of the body. Howbeit thei be worthy to
haue greateft laude and praife, that by their deuifes haue found out the sciences
liberall, wherewith the diuine and imperiall parte called the folle of manne is
bewtified: yet maie we not therefore forgette writers of meaner thynges, but be of
deutie bound to make some worthy memoriall of their benefites declaryng our
kindnes toward thē: to the intente other might bee incorage to enterprife the
acheuyng of like endeoures to the great (3.v.) ayd and preferment of the whole
common wealth, confidryng that their fuche deuifes ſhal bee regeſtered to their
perpetuall fame & renoune. And ſeeyng that the artes & craftes, with other like
feates, whoſe inuentours be contained in this booke, are in this realme of
Englande occupied & put in daily exerciſe to the profet of many and eaſe of all
menne, it were in myne opnion bothe a poynt of deteſtable vnkyndnes, and a
parte of extreme inhumanitie too defraude them of their praife and perpetuall
memorie, that wer autours of ſo great benefites to the vniuerfall worlde. For as a
beneficiall gift conferrred to a man that hath nede thereof, is of the owne propre
nature commēdable, ſo if the receiuer of (4.r.) that ſo liberall benignitee, ſhewe
hymſelf in mynde inwardly obliuious and forgetfull, or in dedes outwardly
vnthankfull, it is naturally hated, and as an vnnaturall vice abhorred. *(from the
Preface, 1.r.-4r.)*

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🌿 *Poetrie* 🌿

☞ The.viii.Chapiter.

☞ Of Poetrie, and Meter, and ſun-
dery kyndes of the ſame.

POETRIE is a goodly arte: aſwell becauſe no other diſcipline can bee
perceyued, excepte a manne ſtudie it vehemently, for it comprehendeth al
other ſciences: as for that where other faculties be deuifed by the pregnance,
of mannes witte, this art onely is geuen of a nature by a diuine inſpiracion, without
whiche Democritus (f.xvi.r) affirmeth ther could neuer be excellent Poete: for it

procedeth not of art or preceptes, but of a natural inspiracion, and spiritual power. And therefore Ennius called Poetes holy, because they be by a special prerogatiue cōmended & praised to vs of God. The beginnyng of the arte is very ancient and as Eusebius saieth, it florished fyrst among the Hebrues, that were long afore the Grekes.

For Moses the great captain of the Jewes, what time he led them out of Egypte into the land of promise, passyng the red sea, which by the power of GOD gaue place to them, inspired by the holy ghost made a song of Exameter verses, to rendre thanks to God for that benefite.

AND David the holy Prophete of GOD, after he was dispatched of all his affayres to warre, and escaped the assaultes and daungers of treason, liuyng in great peace, deuised many pleasaunt balades and tuneable Hymnes, of the praise of God in fundrey kyndes of Meter. For as sainct Jerome saieth, the Pfalter of Dauid goeth in a good nombre and (*f.xvi.v.*) measures, as either ye Greke Planudes, or ye Latine Horacius, sometyme in Alcæus numbers, sometyme in the meter of Sappho, sometyme with halfe measures. What is godlyer then the song of Moses in Dentronomie and of Esaias? more auncient then Salamon? more perfecte thē Job? And we maye worthely ascribe the inuencion of it to the Hebrues, but in deede Orpheus and Linus, and after them Homere and Hesiodus dyd fyrst polyshe and adorne the Arte with all kynde of furnature. The Romaines receiued it not tyll of latter tyme, for Liuis Andronicus (as Tully wryteth) CCCCC.xii. yere after the cytie was builded, Caius Claudius, Cæto and Marcus Tuditanus beyng cōsullles, fet furth the fyrste Enterlude or fable a yere before Ennius was borne. Afore those dayes it was had in suche dispyte, that if one had professed him selfe to be a Poete, he was takē for a murtherer or ruffian. The beginner of meter was God, which proporcioned the world, with all the contentes of the same, with a certain order, as it were a meter, for there is (*f.xvii.r.*) noone (as Pithagoras taught) that douteth, but that there is in thynges heauenly and yearthly a kynd of armonye, and oneles it were gouerned with a fourmal concorde and discribed nombre, howe could it long continue? Al other instrumētes, that we occupye, be all fashioned by a maner of measure. And Diodorus assigneth the inuencion of Meter, whiche the Poetes fulfilled with a spiritual influence, vse in their workes, to Iupiter as to almightie God.

Of Meters there be diuers kindes that hath theyr name, either of the thyng that is discribed therein, as heroical Meter is so called of the valiaunt deades of armes of noble men, that be cōteined in it, wherin also Apollo gaue his Oracles, therefore

Plinie saieth we haue that Meter of Pithius Oracle: or of the inuentoure as Æsclepiadical or of the quantitee as Iambus, becaufe it standeth of a shorte and a long, whiche Archilocus founde fyrst, or of the nombre of feete, as Exameter and Pentameter whiche is also called Elegiacal the sheppehardes songes, Daphnis the *(f.xvii.u.)* sonne of Mercurie founde, and other diuysed other songes, whiche I let passe for my purpose is only to speke of the Inuentours of the Meter, and not to persecute the particulars. *(ff.xv.u. - xvii.u.)*

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🌿 *Hystories* 🌿

... The fyrst office of an historiographer is to write no lye, the seconde that he shal conzel no trueth, for faouere, displeasure, or feare. The perfection of an historie resteth in matter and words. The order of the matter requyreth, obseruaunce of tymes, disciprions of places, the maners, lyues of men, theyr behauoures, purposes, occacions, dedes, saiynge, casualtes, acheuynge, & finishyng of thynges. The tenour of the wordes asketh a brefe perspicuite and syncere trueth, with moderate and peaceable ornamentes. *(f.xx.v.)*

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🌿 *Musyke* 🌿

☪ The.xi.Chapiter.

Who founde Musyke, and what efficacie
it is of in humayne affayres.

MVSICKE, by the testimonye of auncient Poetes, is verye antique, for Orpheus & Linus bothe borne of the lineage of the goddes were very excellent *(f.xxii.r.)* Musicians. And becaufe the one by the swetenesse of his armonie dilinited & modiefied the grosse heartes, and rude myndes of men, it was fayned that he made the wylde beastes, as Lyons and Tygres to folowe him:

And the praisynge of Goddes valiaunt prowes, and deedes of armes of Lordes were vsed to be song with Lutes at the royall feastes, as Iompas in Virgil and Demodocus in Homere beare wytnes.

The fynders of Musyke as Plinie supposeth was Amphion the sonne of Iupiter by Antiope. The Gretians ascribe the findyng of it to Dionisius. Eusebius saith that Zephus and Amphion, which were in Cadmus dayes, inuented Musyke: Solinus contendeth that the study of this arte came out of Crete, and was perceyued by the tynge & shryl sounde of brasse, and so brought and traduced into numbers and measures. Polybius affirmeth that it came frō the Archadiens, whiche haue an exceedyng mynde to that science, and Diodorus wryteth that Mercury founde (*f.xxii.u.*) the concordes of singyng. Albeit, it is like that these onely were the fyrst setters out of it in Grece of late time for Iosephus telleth that Tubelcain an Hebrue the sonne of Lamech, whiche was many ages a fore them, vsed muche to syng to the Pfaltrie and Lute, notwithstanding who was fyrst procurer of it, and when it was founde, it is yet uncertayne, for it semeth to haue bene geuen of nature to mankynde at the begynnyng for a special rewarde, to mittigate the cruell paynes, wherein man is bewrapped and compassed on all handes, for a chylde newe borne ceafeth of his lamentable crye at the singyng and lullyng of his nurffe. In all kyng of laboures song is comfortable, the Galiman, the Plowman, the carter, ease the tediousnes of theyr laboure and journey with carolynges, leies, and whistlyng: yea, the brute beastes be delighted with songes and noyses, as Mules with belles, Horses with trompettes and shalmes are of a fearfer stomake to theyr appointed ministerye. And of whom I pray you learned the Byrdes theyr diuersitie (*f.xxiii.r.*) of tunes? Who taught the nightyngale so sundry nootes? Doubtes euen nature was of this agreable Harmonye the onely scolemasters.

But the Egiptians dyd forbyd theyr yong folkes learnyng of Musicke be cause it seduceth and maketh effeminate the hardye courage of men, and Ephorus sayeth: it was ordeyned to delude and deceyue men. Neuerthelesse, Socrates was not ashamed in his olde age to learne to play on the Harp, and Themistocles, because he refused the Harpe at a bancket, was reckened vnlearned, the priestes of Mars in Rome, called Saliu song verses aboute the Cytie. And speciallye the great Prophete Dauid, whiche song the misteries of God in Meter, frequented syngyng.

☞ The.xii.Chapiter.

Who found Musical instrumentes and
brought them into Italy.

IT is sayde that Marcurye founde the Harpe fyrst. For as he walked by the Ryuer Nilus after an ebbe, he fouūd (*f.xxiii.u.*) a Tortyse al wythered, and nothyng remainyng but the fenewes, whiche as he fortunēd to strycke on them, made a certayne sounde: And after the patrone of that he fashioned an Harpe, and accordyng to the thre tymes of the yeaere, Sommer, Wynter, and Spryngtyme, he putte to it thre Strynges, a Treble, a Base, and a Meane.

Thys intrumente he gaue to Apollo, and Apollo delyuered it to Orpheus: Some thyncke Amphion founde it. I fynde that the Harpe hadde seuen strynges to resemble the seuen doughters of Atlas, whereof Maia Mercurie his mother was one. And then after that were twoo other putte to, to represente the nyne Muses.

Some referre the orygynall of the Harpe and Pype too Apollo, for his Image in Delos (as the faye,) hath in the right hande a bowe, and in the lefte hande the goddes of fauour. Whereof one hath a harpe, an other a shalme, & third a pype. Shalmes were at the beginnyng made of Cranes legges, & after of great reed: (*f.xxiiii.r.*) Dardanus Trezenius vsed fyrst to play & syng with them. Panne an vplandyfhe god, found the pype of smal reed fyrst to solace his loue. Eusebius saith Cibeles found it, and some suppose it was Apollo. Timarias played on the Harpe or Lute, fyrst withoute ditty, and Amphion song fyrst to the Lute, but the Harpe was found afore by Tubal and fashioned like the Greke letter delta.

Hermophilus fyrst distributed the pulse and beatyng of the vaynes too certayne measures of Musicke. And the Prophete Dauid found dyuerse instrumentes, as Regalles and Nables. The Troglodites founde the Dulcimers. Pisēs Terrenes found the Brafen trompe, whiche the Terrenes footemenne vsed in theyr warres, some thyncke it was Tyrteus or Dyrceus an Athenian. For what tyme the Lacedemonians made war agaynst the Messenians, and the warres were long differred, they had answere of Apollo, that if they would wyne the felde, they should haue a capitayne of Athens.

AND the Athenians in dyspyte (*f.xxiiii.u.*) sent to them one Dyrceus a lame and one eyed felowe, and all out of shape: albeit thei receiued him and vsed his

counfaill, and he taught them to play on trumpes, whiche were so feareful to ye Messenians, by reason of straūgenes of the noyse that they fled furth with, and so they obeyned victorie, but in dede (as Josephus witneffeth) Moses the valiaunt capitaine of the Hebrues founde the Troumpe and made it of siluer. The Archadiēs did fyrst bryng al Musical instrumentes into Italye, where afore that tyme thei vsed only vplādifhe pypes. Thucydides writeth that ye Lacedemonians vsed fyrst in war Shalmes, Clarions and Rebeckes, to thentent that when they were ready to the warres by sūche playiing they myght better kepe array. The Romaines foteman ioyned Droumflades with Trumpettes. Haliattes kyng of the Lydians had in the battail againste the Milesians Pipers and fiders playiing together, the Gretians, as thei went to warre had Lutes goyng afore them to modifie theyr pafe, all other countries (as wee dooe nowe) vsed trumpettes. *(ff. xxi.v.-xxiii.v.)*

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🌿 *Wyne, vyneyards, & bere* 🌿

The.ii.Chapiter.

☞ Wyne, oyle, honye, chefe, and strange trees brought into Italy.

DIODORVS saieth ye Dionisius dyd fyrst perceiue the nature of the vyne, and taught men at Grece to plant it, and to presse vyne out of the Grape as Saturnus dyd in Italye: Some saye it was Icarus father of Penelope that founde it in Athens, And was afterward slain of the husbandmen, when they were dronken. Athenæus in one place writeth that Oresteus sonne to Deucalion fyrst fouūd the vyne about the moūt Ætna in Sicilie: In another place he saieth that it was found a ye cytie Plithina in Egypt. Aruntes *(f.lxvi.v.)* a Tirhene banished out of his coūtre by Lucinon, whō he brought up of a chyld, caried fyrst vyne into Fraūce. Seculus the sōne of Ventus inuented the fyrst food of men of the trees, and Eumolphus an Athenian taught the maner of orderyng them, but afore all these Noe was the fyrst that either tyllled the lande, or planted the vyneyarde. And when he had dronke of the fruit of ye grape, he was dronken. Wyne tauernes were set vp fyrst by the Lidians a people of Asia,

whiche also found diuerse games. Staphilus (as Plinie sayeth) deleied wyne fyrst. Drynke that is made of barlye whiche we cal ale, and was the common drynke of the Egyptians, was diuised by Bacchus: And he taught it to suche nacions, as had no grapes growyng. And for ye cause England, Scotlande, Irelande, Fraunce, and Germany, and all tha border on the west and north seas vse this drynke, Albeit, the Germanes put hoppes in it, and cal it bere. *(f.lxvi.r.&v.)*

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🌿 *Hoores & bonefyres* 🌿

The.xii.Chapiter.

Who intituted stewes, diyng of heare,
barbours with other thinges.

VENVS, which was begotten of the froth of the sea (as Poetes faine) was a common harlot, and brothel of her body, and had many children by sundry men, as by Mars she had Harmonia, by Mercury, Hermaphroditus, by Iupiter, Cupido, by Anchises, Æneas: And bycause she alone wold not seme to be a hore, she ordeyned in Cypres that women did prostitute the selfes *(f.lxvii.)* for mony to al that came. Iustine telleth, that the maner of the maides of Cypres was to get their mariage good, by suche fylthy baudry. And to helpe furth the matter, one Melápus brought out of Egypt into Grece the rites of Bacchus sacrifices, wherein men vse to company dissolutely with women in the nyght, in suche wyse that it is shame for christen menne to speake of, muche like our shewes or daunces called maskes in Englande & bonefyres, as the be used in some partes of the realme. But Spu. Posthumius, Albinus, and Q. Martius, abolyshed those feastes. I would all maskes and bonefyres were likewise banished from among us christians. Albeit comon women were long afore Venus tyme. For it appeareth in Genesis, that Judas sone to Jacob medled with Thamer his doughter in law, bycause he supposed she had bene an hore by reason of her apparel. But to let that passe, yet it is pytie to se among christen men stewes & baudrye maynteyned, as though it were for a comon weale: & honorable matrimony so neglected & polluted without any *(f.lxvi.r.)* feare of God. This is a doctrin of the deuil, if there be any.[...] Medea found the diyng and coloryng of heare, and our women of England haue not forgotten it, and

befide that make their foreheades by theyr medicines broder then God made them, with other enormities, wherein some of the phisicians be greatly to blame, that teache sūche thynkes to ye frayle creature. They be ashamed of Gods creacion & handy worke in thē felues or els they would not amend it.

[...]

There be many other thynges, whose auctours for antiquitie can not be knownen, & some bicause of the negligence of men that wyl not write sūche thynges.

As no man can tel who beganne clockes, belles, the shypmans compasse, the gones styrops, cappes or bonettes, for that is but newly inuented: bycause in olde tyme men wente bare heade, water mylles, organnes, & claricymbals, talow-candels, reclaimyng of haukes, rynges, with many other, whiche for the auncientie, or ouersight of men be in extreme obliuion. (*ff.lxv.r.-lxvi.v.*)

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‡ *Daunsyng, maiyng, mummyng & Midsomer bonefyres* ‡

THE vse of daūsyng Liuie saieth came from the Heiruscanes to Rome whiche we exercise muche on holye daies as they did, not without flaunder of our religion, and hurte and damage of chastitee, as for maskes they be so deuilish that none honestly can be pretended to coloure them: Zacharias bishoppe of Rome made a decree agaynst it, but that auaieth nothyng. At the calendes of Maie the youthe as well menne as women are wonte to go a maiyng into the felde and bryng home boughes & floures to garnishe their houses and gates, and in some places the churches, whiche fashon is deriued of the Romaynes, that vse the same to honor their godeffe Flora with sūche ceremonies whom thei named godeffe of fruites.

THE christenmas lordes, that be cōmonly made at the natiuitee of our lorde, to whom all the housholde and familie with the master him self must be obedient, began of the equabilitie that the seruantes had with their (*f.C.iii.r.*) masters in Saturnus feastes, that were called Saturnalia: wherein the seruantes haue like autorite with their masters duryng the tyme of the sayde feastes.

And this furnisshyng of our bellies with delicates, that we vse on fastingham tuiesday, what tyme some eate tyl they be enforced to forbear all again, sprong of Bacchus feastes, that were celebrated in Rome with great ioy and deliciouse fare.

AND oure Midsomer bonefyres may seme to haue comne of the sacrifices of

Ceres goddesse of corne, that menne did solemnife with fyres, trusting therby to haue more plenty and aboundance of corne: And the disguisfing and mummyng that is vsed in christenmas tyme in the Northe partes came out of the feastes of Pallas, that were done with vifats and painted vifages named Quinquatria of the Romaynes. (*ff. C.ii.v. & C.iii.r.*)

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