

Love's Labour's Lost

4.2

Enter Dull, Holofernes the pedant, and Nathaniel the curate

NATHANIEL Very reverend sport, truly, and done in the testimony of a good conscience.

HOLOFERNES The deer was, as you know *±±sanguis±±* in blood, ripe as the pomewater who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of *caelo*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven, 5 and anon falleth like a crab on the face of *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth.

NATHANIEL Truly, Master Holofernes, the epithets are sweetly varied, like a scholar at the least. But, sir, I assure ye it was a buck of the first head. 10

HOLOFERNES Sir Nathaniel, *haud credo*.

DULL 'Twas not a `auld grey doe', 'twas a pricket.

HOLOFERNES Most barbarous intimation! Yet a kind of insinuation, as it were *in via*, in way, of explication, *facere*, as it were, replication, or rather *ostentare*, to 15 show, as it were, his inclination after his undressed, unpolished, uneducated, unpruned, untrained, or rather unlettered, or ratherest unconfirmed, fashion, to insert again my `haud credo' for a deer.

DULL I said the deer was not a `auld grey doe', 'twas a 20 pricket.

HOLOFERNES Twice-sod simplicity, *bis coctus*!
O thou monster ignorance, how deformed dost thou look!

NATHANIEL

Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book.

He hath not eat paper, as it were, he hath not drunk 25 ink. His intellect is not replenished, he is only an animal, only sensible in the duller parts,
And such barren plants are set before us that we thankful should be,

Which we of taste and feeling are, for those parts that do fructify in us more than he.

For as it would ill become me to be vain, indiscreet,
or a fool, 30
So were there a patch set on learning to see *him* in a
school.

But *omne bene* say I, being of an old father's mind:
'Many can brook the weather that love not the wind.'

DULL

You two are bookmen. Can you tell me by your wit
What was a month old at Cain's birth that's not five
weeks old as yet? 35

HOLOFERNES *Dictynna*, Goodman Dull, *Dictynna*, Goodman
Dull.

DULL What is '*Dictima*'?

NATHANIEL A title to Phoebe, to *luna*, to the moon.

HOLOFERNES

The moon was a month old when Adam was no
more, 40
And raught not to five weeks when he came to five
score.

Th'allusion holds in the exchange.

DULL 'Tis true, indeed, the collusion holds in the
exchange.

HOLOFERNES God comfort thy capacity, I say th'allusion 45
holds in the exchange.

DULL And I say the pollution holds in the exchange, for
the moon is never but a month old±±and I say beside
that 'twas a pricket that the Princess killed.

HOLOFERNES Sir Nathaniel, will you hear an extemporal 50
epitaph on the death of the deer? And to humour the
ignorant call I the deer the Princess killed a pricket.

NATHANIEL *Perge*, good Master Holofernes, *perge*, so it
shall please you to abrogate scurrility.

HOLOFERNES I will something affect the letter, for it argues 55
facility.

The preyful Princess pierced and pricked a pretty
pleasing pricket.

Some say a sore, but not a sore till now made sore
with shooting.

The dogs did yell; put 'l' to 'sore', then 'sorel' jumps
from thicket±±

Or pricket sore, or else sorel. The people fall a-
hooting. 60

If sore be sore, then `l' to `sore' makes fifty sores±±O
sore `l'!

Of one sore I an hundred make by adding but one
more `l'.

NATHANIEL A rare talent!

DULL If a talent be a claw, look how he claws him with
a talent. 65

HOLOFERNES This is a gift that I have, simple, simple±±a
foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes,
objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions, revolutions.
These are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished
in the womb of *pia mater*, and delivered upon the 70
mellowing of occasion. But the gift is good in those in
whom it is acute, and I am thankful for it.

NATHANIEL Sir, I praise the Lord for you, and so may my
parishioners; for their sons are well tutored by you,
and their daughters profit very greatly under you. You 75
are a good member of the commonwealth.

HOLOFERNES *Mehercle*, if their sons be ingenious they shall
want no instruction; if their daughters be capable, I
will put it to them. But *Vir sapit qui pauca loquitur*; a
soul feminine saluteth us. 80

Enter Jaquenetta, and Costard the clown

JAQUENETTA God give you good-morrow, Master Parson.

HOLOFERNES Master Parson, *quasi* `pierce one'? And if one
should be pierced, which is the one?

COSTARD Marry, Master Schoolmaster, he that is likeliest
to a hogshead. 85

HOLOFERNES `Of piercing a hogshead'±±a good lustre of
conceit in a turf of earth, fire enough for a flint, pearl
enough for a swine±±'tis pretty, it is well.

JAQUENETTA Good Master Parson, be so good as read me
this letter. It was given me by Costard, and sent me 90
from Don Armado. I beseech you read it.

She gives the letter to Nathaniel, who reads it

HOLOFERNES (*to himself*) `Facile precor gelida quando pecas
omnia sub umbra ruminat', and so forth. Ah, good old
Mantuan! I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of

Venice:

95

*Venezia, Venezia,
Chi non ti vede, chi non ti prezia.*

Old Mantuan, old Mantuan±±who understandeth thee
not, loves thee not. (*He sings*) Ut, re, sol, la, mi, fa. (*To
Nathaniel*) Under pardon, sir, what are the contents? 100
Or rather, as Horace says in his±±what, my soul±±
verses?

NATHANIEL Ay, sir, and very learned.

HOLOFERNES Let me hear a staff, a stanza, a verse. *Lege,*
domine. 105

NATHANIEL (*reads*)

‘If love make me forsworn, how shall I swear to love?

Ah, never faith could hold, if not to beauty vowed.

Though to myself forsworn, to thee I'll faithful prove.

Those thoughts to me were oaks, to thee like

osiers

bowed.

Study his bias leaves, and makes his book thine eyes, 110

Where all those pleasures live that art would

comprehend.

If knowledge be the mark, to know thee shall suffice.

Well learneÁd is that tongue that well can thee

commend;

All ignorant that soul that sees thee without wonder;

Which is to me some praise that I thy parts admire. 115

Thy eye Jove's lightning bears, thy voice his

dreadful

thunder,

Which, not to anger bent, is music and sweet fire.

Celestial as thou art, O pardon, love, this wrong,

That singeth heaven's praise with such an

earthly

tongue.'

HOLOFERNES You find not the apostrophus, and so miss 120

the accent. Let me supervise the canzonet. Here are

only numbers ratified, but for the elegancy, facility,

and golden cadence of poesy±±*caret*. Ovidius Naso was

the man. And why indeed ‘Naso’ but for smelling out

the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention? 125

Imitari is nothing. So doth the hound his master, the ape his keeper, the tired horse his rider. But *domicella*±± virgin±±was this directed to you?

JAQUENETTA Ay, sir.

HOLOFERNES I will overglance the superscript. `To the 130 snow-white hand of the most beauteous Lady Rosaline.' I will look again on the intellect of the letter for the nomination of the party writing to the person written unto. `Your ladyship's in all desired employment, Biron.' Sir Nathaniel, this Biron is one of the votaries 135 with the King, and here he hath framed a letter to a sequent of the stranger Queen's, which, accidentally or by the way of progression, hath miscarried. (*To Jaquenetta*) Trip and go, my sweet, deliver this paper into the royal hand of the King. It may concern much. 140 Stay not thy compliment, I forgive thy duty. Adieu.

JAQUENETTA Good Costard, go with me.±±Sir, God save your life.

COSTARD Have with thee, my girl.

Exit with Jaquenetta

NATHANIEL Sir, you have done this in the fear of God 145 very religiously, and, as a certain father saith±±

HOLOFERNES Sir, tell not me of the father; I do fear colourable colours. But to return to the verses±±did they please you, Sir Nathaniel?

NATHANIEL Marvellous well for the pen. 150

HOLOFERNES I do dine today at the father's of a certain pupil of mine where, if before repast it shall please you to gratify the table with a grace, I will on my privilege I have with the parents of the foresaid child or pupil undertake your *benvenuto*, where I will prove those 155 verses to be very unlearned, neither savouring of poetry, wit, nor invention. I beseech your society.

NATHANIEL And thank you too, for society, saith the text, is the happiness of life.

HOLOFERNES And certes the text most infallibly concludes 160 it. (*To Dull*) Sir, I do invite you too. You shall not say me nay. *Pauca verba*. Away, the gentles are at their game, and we will to our recreation.

Exeunt