

A giving hand, though foul, shall have fair praise.
But come, the bow. Now mercy goes to kill,
And shooting well is then accounted ill. 25
Thus will I save my credit in the shoot,
Not wounding±±pity would not let me do't.
If wounding, then it was to show my skill,
That more for praise than purpose meant to kill.
And, out of question, so it is sometimes±± 30
Glory grows guilty of detested crimes
When for fame's sake, for praise, an outward part,
We bend to that the working of the heart,
As I for praise alone now seek to spill
The poor deer's blood that my heart means no ill. 35

BOYET

Do not curst wives hold that self-sovereignty
Only for praise' sake when they strive to be
Lords o'er their lords?

PRINCESS

Only for praise, and praise we may afford
To any lady that subdues a lord. 40

Enter Costard the clown

BOYET

Here comes a member of the commonwealth.

COSTARD God dig-you-de'en, all. Pray you, which is the
head lady?

PRINCESS Thou shalt know her, fellow, by the rest that
have no heads. 45

COSTARD Which is the greatest lady, the highest?

PRINCESS The thickest and the tallest.

COSTARD

The thickest and the tallest±±it is so, truth is truth.
An your waist, mistress, were as slender as my wit
One o' these maids' girdles for your waist should be fit. 50
Are not you the chief woman? You are the thickest
here.

PRINCESS What's your will, sir? What's your will?

COSTARD

I have a letter from Monsieur Biron to one Lady
Rosaline.

PRINCESS

O, thy letter, thy letter! (*She takes it*) He's a good

friend of mine.

(To Costard) Stand aside, good bearer. Boyet, you can
carve. 55

Break up this capon.

She gives the letter to Boyet

BOYET I am bound to serve.

This letter is mistook. It importeth none here.

It is writ to Jaquenetta.

PRINCESS We will read it, I swear.

Break the neck of the wax, and everyone give ear.

BOYET (*reads*) `By heaven, that thou art fair is most 60
infallible, true that thou art beauteous, truth itself that
thou art lovely. More fairer than fair, beautiful than
beauteous, truer than truth itself, have commiseration
on thy heroical vassal. The magnanimous and most
illustrate King Cophetua set's eye upon the penurious 65

and indubitate beggar Zenelophon, and he it was that
might rightly say ^a*Veni, vidi, vici*^o, which to
annothanize in the vulgar±±O base and obscure
vulgar!±±*videlicet* ^aHe came, see, and overcame.^o He 70
came, one; see, two; overcame, three. Who came? The
King. Why did he come? To see. Why did he see? To
overcome. To whom came he? To the beggar. What
saw he? The beggar. Who overcame he? The beggar.

The conclusion is victory. On whose side? The King's.
The captive is enriched. On whose side? The beggar's. 75
The catastrophe is a nuptial. On whose side? The
King's±±no, on both in one, or one in both. I am the
King±±for so stands the comparison±±thou the beggar,
for so witnesseth thy lowliness. Shall I command thy
love? I may. Shall I enforce thy love? I could. Shall I 80
entreat thy love? I will. What shalt thou exchange for
rags? Robes. For tittles? Titles. For thyself? Me. Thus,
expecting thy reply, I profane my lips on thy foot, my
eyes on thy picture, and my heart on thy every part.

Thine in the dearest design of industry, 85
Don Adriano de Armado.

Thus dost thou hear the Nemean lion roar
'Gainst thee, thou lamb, that standest as his prey.
Submissive fall his princely feet before,

And he from forage will incline to play. 90
But if thou strive, poor soul, what art thou then?
Food for his rage, repasture for his den.'

PRINCESS

What plume of feathers is he that indited this letter?
What vane? What weathercock? Did you ever hear
better?

BOYET

I am much deceived but I remember the style. 95

PRINCESS

Else your memory is bad, going o'er it erewhile.

BOYET

This Armado is a Spaniard that keeps here in court,
A phantasim, a Monarcho, and one that makes sport
To the Prince and his bookmates.

PRINCESS (*to Costard*) Thou, fellow, a word.
Who gave thee this letter?

COSTARD

I told you±±my lord. 100

PRINCESS

To whom shouldst thou give it?

COSTARD

From my lord to my lady.

PRINCESS

From which lord to which lady?

COSTARD

From my lord Biron, a good master of mine,
To a lady of France that he called Rosaline.

PRINCESS

Thou hast mistaken his letter. Come, lords, away. 105
(*To Rosaline, giving her the letter*)
Here, sweet, put up this, 'twill be thine another day.
Exit attended

BOYET

Who is the suitor? Who is the suitor?

ROSALINE

Shall I teach you to

know?

BOYET

Ay, my continent of beauty.

ROSALINE

Why, she that bears the bow.

Finely put off.

BOYET

My lady goes to kill horns, but if thou marry, 110

Hang me by the neck if horns that year miscarry.
Finely put on.

ROSALINE

Well then, I am the shooter.

BOYET

And who is your deer?

ROSALINE

If we choose by the horns, yourself come not near.
Finely put on indeed! 115

MARIA

You still wrangle with her, Boyet, and she strikes at
the brow.

BOYET

But she herself is hit lower±±have I hit her now?

ROSALINE

Shall I come upon thee with an old saying that
was a man when King PeÂpin of France was a little boy,
as touching the hit it? 120

BOYET

So I may answer thee with one as old that was a
woman when Queen Guinevere of Britain was a little
wench, as touching the hit it.

ROSALINE (*sings*)

Thou canst not hit it, hit it, hit it,
Thou canst not hit it, my good man. 125

BOYET (*sings*)

An I cannot, cannot, cannot,
An I cannot, another can.

Exit Rosaline

COSTARD

By my troth, most pleasant! How both did fit it!

MARIA

A mark marvellous well shot, for they both did hit it.

BOYET

A mark±±O mark but that mark! A mark, says my
lady. 130

Let the mark have a prick in't to mete at, if it may be.

MARIA

Wide o' the bow hand±±i'faith, your hand is out.

COSTARD

Indeed, a must shoot nearer, or he'll ne'er hit the clout.

BOYET

An if my hand be out, then belike your hand is in.

COSTARD

Then will she get the upshoot by cleaving the pin. 135

MARIA

Come, come, you talk greasily, your lips grow foul.

COSTARD

She's too hard for you at pricks, sir. Challenge her to
bowl.

BOYET

I fear too much rubbing. Goodnight, my good owl.

Exeunt Boyet, Maria, [and Catherine]

COSTARD

By my soul, a swain, a most simple clown.

Lord, Lord, how the ladies and I have put him down! 140

O' my troth, most sweet jests, most incony vulgar
wit,

When it comes so smoothly off, so obscenely, as it
were, so fit!

Armado o'th' t'other side±±O, a most dainty man!±±

To see him walk before a lady and to bear her fan!

To see him kiss his hand, and how most sweetly a
will swear, 145

And his page o' t'other side, that handful of wit±±

Ah heavens, it is a most pathological nit!

Shout within

Sola, sola!

Exit