

The First Part of the Contention

2.1

*Enter King Henry, Queen Margaret with her hawk
on her fist, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, Cardinal
Beaufort, and the Duke of Suffolk, with falconers
hollering*

QUEEN MARGARET

Believe me, lords, for flying at the brook
I saw not better sport these seven years' day;
Yet, by your leave, the wind was very high,
And, ten to one, old Joan had not gone out.

KING HENRY *(to Gloucester)*

But what a point, my lord, your falcon made, 5
And what a pitch she flew above the rest!
To see how God in all his creatures works!
Yea, man and birds are fain of climbing high.

SUFFOLK

No marvel, an it like your majesty,
My Lord Protector's hawks do tower so well; 10
They know their master loves to be aloft,
And bears his thoughts above his falcon's pitch.

GLOUCESTER

My lord, 'tis but a base ignoble mind
That mounts no higher than a bird can soar.

CARDINAL BEAUFORT

I thought as much; he would be above the clouds. 15

GLOUCESTER

Ay, my lord Cardinal, how think you by that?
Were it not good your grace could fly to heaven?

KING HENRY

The treasury of everlasting joy.

CARDINAL BEAUFORT *(to Gloucester)*

Thy heaven is on earth; thine eyes and thoughts
Beat on a crown, the treasure of thy heart, 20
Pernicious Protector, dangerous peer,
That smooth'st it so with King and common weal!

GLOUCESTER

What, Cardinal? Is your priesthood grown
peremptory?

Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?

Churchmen so hot? Good uncle, hide such malice
With some holiness±±can you do it?

25

SUFFOLK

No malice, sir, no more than well becomes
So good a quarrel and so bad a peer.

GLOUCESTER

As who, my lord?

SUFFOLK Why, as you, my lord±±

An't like your lordly Lord's Protectorship. 30

GLOUCESTER

Why, Suffolk, England knows thine insolence.

QUEEN MARGARET

And thy ambition, Gloucester.

KING HENRY

I prithee peace,

Good Queen, and whet not on these furious peers±±
For blesseÁd are the peacemakers on earth.

CARDINAL BEAUFORT

Let me be blesseÁd for the peace I make 35
Against this proud Protector with my sword.

*[Gloucester and Cardinal Beaufort speak privately to
one another]*

GLOUCESTER

Faith, holy uncle, would't were come to that.

CARDINAL BEAUFORT

Marry, when thou dar'st.

GLOUCESTER

Dare? I tell thee, priest,

Plantagenets could never brook the dare!

CARDINAL BEAUFORT

I am Plantagenet as well as thou, 40
And son to John of Gaunt.

GLOUCESTER In bastardy.

CARDINAL BEAUFORT I scorn thy words.

GLOUCESTER

Make up no factious numbers for the matter,
In thine own person answer thy abuse. 45

CARDINAL BEAUFORT

Ay, where thou dar'st not peep; an if thou dar'st,
This evening on the east side of the grove.

KING HENRY

How now, my lords?

CARDINAL BEAUFORT (*aloud*) Believe me, cousin Gloucester,
Had not your man put up the fowl so suddenly,
We had had more sport. (*Aside to Gloucester*) Come
with thy two-hand sword. 50

GLOUCESTER (*aloud*) True, uncle.
(*Aside to Cardinal Beaufort*)
Are ye advised? The east side of the grove.

CARDINAL BEAUFORT (*aside to Gloucester*)
I am with you.

KING HENRY Why, how now, uncle Gloucester?

GLOUCESTER
Talking of hawking, nothing else, my lord.
(*Aside to the Cardinal*)
Now, by God's mother, priest, I'll shave your crown
for this, 55
Or all my fence shall fail.

CARDINAL BEAUFORT (*aside to Gloucester*) *Medice, teipsum±±*
Protector, see to't well; protect yourself.

KING HENRY
The winds grow high; so do your stomachs, lords.
How irksome is this music to my heart!
When such strings jar, what hope of harmony? 60
I pray, my lords, let me compound this strife.
Enter one crying 'a miracle'

GLOUCESTER What means this noise?
Fellow, what miracle dost thou proclaim?

ONE
A miracle, a miracle!

SUFFOLK
Come to the King±±tell him what miracle. 65

ONE (*to King Henry*)
Forsooth, a blind man at Saint Alban's shrine
Within this half-hour hath received his sight±±
A man that ne'er saw in his life before.

KING HENRY
Now God be praised, that to believing souls
Gives light in darkness, comfort in despair! 70
*Enter the Mayor and aldermen of Saint Albans,
with music, bearing the man, Simpcox, between two
in a chair. Enter Simpcox's Wife [and other*

townsmen] with them

CARDINAL BEAUFORT

Here comes the townsmen on procession
To present your highness with the man.

[The townsmen kneel]

KING HENRY

Great is his comfort in this earthly vale,
Although by sight his sin be multiplied.

GLOUCESTER *(to the townsmen)*

Stand by, my masters, bring him near the King.
His highness' pleasure is to talk with him.

75

They [rise and] bear Simpcox before the King

KING HENRY *(to Simpcox)*

Good fellow, tell us here the circumstance,
That we for thee may glorify the Lord.
What, hast thou been long blind and now restored?

SIMPCOX

Born blind, an't please your grace.

SIMPCOX'S WIFE

Ay, indeed, was he. 80

SUFFOLK What woman is this?

SIMPCOX'S WIFE His wife, an't like your worship.

GLOUCESTER Hadst thou been his mother
Thou couldst have better told.

KING HENRY *(to Simpcox)* Where wert thou born?

SIMPCOX

At Berwick, in the north, an't like your grace. 85

KING HENRY

Poor soul, God's goodness hath been great to thee.
Let never day nor night unhallowed pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done.

QUEEN MARGARET *(to Simpcox)*

Tell me, good fellow, cam'st thou here by chance,
Or of devotion to this holy shrine? 90

SIMPCOX

God knows, of pure devotion, being called
A hundred times and oftener, in my sleep,
By good Saint Alban, who said, 'Simon, come;
Come offer at my shrine and I will help thee.'

SIMPCOX'S WIFE

Most true, forsooth, and many time and oft
Myself have heard a voice to call him so. 95

CARDINAL BEAUFORT *(to Simpcox)*

What, art thou lame?

SIMPCOX Ay, God almighty help me.

SUFFOLK

How cam'st thou so?

SIMPCOX A fall off of a tree.

SIMPCOX'S WIFE *(to Suffolk)*

A plum tree, master.

GLOUCESTER How long hast thou been blind?

SIMPCOX

O, born so, master.

GLOUCESTER What, and wouldst climb a tree? 100

SIMPCOX

But that in all my life, when I was a youth.

SIMPCOX'S WIFE *(to Gloucester)*

Too true—and bought his climbing very dear.

GLOUCESTER *(to Simpcox)*

Mass, thou loved'st plums well that wouldst venture
so.

SIMPCOX

Alas, good master, my wife desired some damsons,
And made me climb with danger of my life. 105

GLOUCESTER *[aside]*

A subtle knave, but yet it shall not serve.

(To Simpcox) Let me see thine eyes: wink now, now
open them.

In my opinion yet thou seest not well.

SIMPCOX Yes, master, clear as day, I thank God and Saint
Alban. 110

GLOUCESTER

Sayst thou me so? *(Pointing)* What colour is this cloak
of?

SIMPCOX

Red, master; red as blood.

GLOUCESTER Why, that's well said.

(Pointing) And his cloak?

SIMPCOX

Why, that's green.

GLOUCESTER *(pointing)*

And what colour's

His hose?

SIMPCOX Yellow, master; yellow as gold.

GLOUCESTER

And what colour's my gown?

SIMPCOX Black, sir; coal-black, as jet. 115

KING HENRY

Why, then, thou know'st what colour jet is of?

SUFFOLK

And yet I think jet did he never see.

GLOUCESTER

But cloaks and gowns before this day, a many.

SIMPCOX'S WIFE

Never before this day in all his life.

GLOUCESTER Tell me, sirrah, what's my name? 120

SIMPCOX Alas, master, I know not.

GLOUCESTER (*pointing*) What's his name?

SIMPCOX I know not.

GLOUCESTER (*pointing*) Nor his?

SIMPCOX No, truly, sir. 125

GLOUCESTER (*pointing*) Nor his name?

SIMPCOX No indeed, master.

GLOUCESTER What's thine own name?

SIMPCOX

Simon Simpcox, an it please you, master.

GLOUCESTER

Then, Simon, sit thou there the lying'st knave 130

In Christendom. If thou hadst been born blind

Thou mightst as well have known our names as thus

To name the several colours we do wear.

Sight may distinguish colours, but suddenly

To nominate them all±±it is impossible. 135

Saint Alban here hath done a miracle.

Would you not think his cunning to be great

That could restore this cripple to his legs again?

SIMPCOX O master, that you could!

GLOUCESTER (*to the Mayor and aldermen*)

My masters of Saint Albans, have you not 140

Beadles in your town, and things called whips?

MAYOR

We have, my lord, an if it please your grace.

GLOUCESTER Then send for one presently.

MAYOR (*to a townsman*)

Sirrah, go fetch the beadle hither straight.

Exit one

GLOUCESTER

Bring me a stool.

A stool is brought

(*To Simpcox*) Now, sirrah, if you mean 145

To save yourself from whipping, leap me o'er

This stool and run away.

SIMPCOX

Alas, master,

I am not able even to stand alone.

You go about to torture me in vain.

Enter a Beadle with whips

GLOUCESTER

Well, sirrah, we must have you find your legs. 150

(*To the Beadle*) Whip him till he leap over that same stool.

BEADLE I will, my lord.

(*To Simpcox*) Come on, sirrah, off with your doublet quickly.

SIMPCOX Alas, master, what shall I do? I am not able to stand. 155

After the Beadle hath hit him once, he leaps over the stool and runs away. [Some of] the townsmen follow and cry, 'A miracle! A miracle!'

KING HENRY

O God, seest thou this and bear'st so long?

QUEEN MARGARET

It made me laugh to see the villain run!

GLOUCESTER [*to the Beadle*]

Follow the knave, and take this drab away.

SIMPCOX'S WIFE

Alas, sir, we did it for pure need.

[Exit the Beadle with the Wife]

GLOUCESTER [*to the Mayor*]

Let them be whipped through every market-town 160

Till they come to Berwick, from whence they came.

Exeunt the Mayor [and any remaining townsmen]

CARDINAL BEAUFORT

Duke Humphrey has done a miracle today.

SUFFOLK

True: made the lame to leap and fly away.

GLOUCESTER

But you have done more miracles than I±±

You made, in a day, my lord, whole towns to fly. 165

Enter the Duke of Buckingham

KING HENRY

What tidings with our cousin Buckingham?

BUCKINGHAM

Such as my heart doth tremble to unfold.

A sort of naughty persons, lewdly bent,

Under the countenance and confederacy 170

Of Lady Eleanor, the Protector's wife,

The ringleader and head of all this rout,

Have practised dangerously against your state,

Dealing with witches and with conjurors,

Whom we have apprehended in the fact,

Raising up wicked spirits from under ground, 175

Demanding of King Henry's life and death

And other of your highness' Privy Council.

And here's the answer the devil did make to them.

Buckingham gives King Henry the writings

[KING HENRY] *(reads)*

'First of the King: what shall of him become?

The Duke yet lives that Henry shall depose, 180

But him outlive and die a violent death.'

God's will be done in all. Well, to the rest.

(Reads) 'Tell me what fate awaits the Duke of Suffolk?

By water shall he die, and take his end.'

SUFFOLK *[aside]*

By water must the Duke of Suffolk die? 185

It must be so, or else the devil doth lie.

KING HENRY *(reads)*

'What shall betide the Duke of Somerset?

Let him shun castles. Safer shall he be

Upon the sandy plains than where castles mounted

stand.'

CARDINAL BEAUFORT *(to Gloucester)*

And so, my Lord Protector, by this means 190

Your lady is forthcoming yet at London.

(Aside to Gloucester)

This news, I think, hath turned your weapon's edge.

'Tis like, my lord, you will not keep your hour.

GLOUCESTER

Ambitious churchman, leave to afflict my heart.
Sorrow and grief have vanquished all my powers, 195
And, vanquished as I am, I yield to thee
Or to the meanest groom.

KING HENRY

O God, what mischiefs work the wicked ones,
Heaping confusion on their own heads thereby!

QUEEN MARGARET

Gloucester, see here the tainture of thy nest, 200
And look thyself be faultless, thou wert best.

GLOUCESTER

Madam, for myself, to heaven I do appeal,
How I have loved my King and common weal;
And for my wife, I know not how it stands.
Sorry I am to hear what I have heard. 205

Noble she is, but if she have forgot
Honour and virtue and conversed with such
As, like to pitch, defile nobility,
I banish her my bed and company,
And give her as a prey to law and shame 210
That hath dishonoured Gloucester's honest name.

KING HENRY

Well, for this night we will repose us here;
Tomorrow toward London back again,
To look into this business thoroughly,
And call these foul offenders to their answers, 215
And poise the cause in justice' equal scales,
Whose beam stands sure, whose rightful cause
prevails.

Flourish. Exeunt