

# The First Part of the Contention

## 4.7

*Alarums. [Excursions, wherein] Matthew Gough is slain, and all the rest of his men with him.*

*Then enter Jack Cade with his company, among them the Butcher, the Weaver, and John, a rebel*

**CADE** So, sirs, now go some and pull down the Savoy;  
others to th' Inns of Court±±down with them all.

**BUTCHER** I have a suit unto your lordship.

**CADE** Be it a lordship, thou shalt have it for that word.

**BUTCHER** Only that the laws of England may come out of 5  
your mouth.

**JOHN** *(aside to his fellows)* Mass, 'twill be sore law then,  
for he was thrust in the mouth with a spear, and 'tis  
not whole yet.

**WEAVER** *(aside to John)* Nay, John, it will be stinking law, 10  
for his breath stinks with eating toasted cheese.

**CADE** I have thought upon it±±it shall be so. Away! Burn  
all the records of the realm. My mouth shall be the  
Parliament of England.

**JOHN** *(aside to his fellows)* Then we are like to have biting 15  
statutes unless his teeth be pulled out.

**CADE** And henceforward all things shall be in common.  
*Enter a Messenger*

**MESSENGER** My lord, a prize, a prize! Here's the Lord Saye  
which sold the towns in France. He that made us pay  
one-and-twenty fifteens and one shilling to the pound 20  
the last subsidy.

*Enter a rebel with the Lord Saye*

**CADE** Well, he shall be beheaded for it ten times. *(To Saye)*  
Ah, thou say, thou serge±±nay, thou buckram lord!  
Now art thou within point-blank of our jurisdiction  
regal. What canst thou answer to my majesty for giving 25  
up of Normandy unto Mounsieur Basimecu, the  
Dauphin of France? Be it known unto thee by these  
presence, even the presence of Lord Mortimer, that I  
am the besom that must sweep the court clean of such  
filth as thou art. Thou hast most traitorously corrupted 30

the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school;  
and, whereas before, our forefathers had no other books  
but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing  
to be used and, contrary to the King his crown and  
dignity, thou hast built a paper-mill. It will be proved 35  
to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually  
talk of a noun and a verb and such abominable words  
as no Christian ear can endure to hear. Thou hast  
appointed justices of peace to call poor men before them  
about matters they were not able to answer. Moreover, 40  
thou hast put them in prison, and, because they could  
not read, thou hast hanged them when indeed only for  
that cause they have been most worthy to live. Thou  
dost ride on a foot-cloth, dost thou not?

**SAYE** What of that? 45

**CADE** Marry, thou ought'st not to let thy horse wear a  
cloak when honest men than thou go in their hose  
and doublets.

**BUTCHER** And work in their shirts, too; as myself, for  
example, that am a butcher. 50

**SAYE** You men of Kent.

**BUTCHER** What say you of Kent?

**SAYE** Nothing but this±±'tis *bona terra, mala gens*.

**CADE** *Bonum terrum±±*zounds, what's that?

**BUTCHER** He speaks French. 55

**[FIRST REBEL]** No, 'tis Dutch.

**[SECOND REBEL]** No, 'tis Out-talian, I know it well enough.

**SAYE** Hear me but speak, and bear me where you will.  
Kent, in the commentaries Caesar writ,

Is termed the civil'st place of all this isle; 60

Sweet is the country, because full of riches;

The people liberal, valiant, active, wealthy;

Which makes me hope you are not void of pity.

I sold not Maine, I lost not Normandy;

Yet to recover them would lose my life. 65

Justice with favour have I always done,

Prayers and tears have moved me±±gifts could never.

When have I aught exacted at your hands,

But to maintain the King, the realm, and you?  
 Large gifts have I bestowed on learneÁd clerks 70  
 Because my book preferred me to the King,  
 And seeing ignorance is the curse of God,  
 Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven.  
 Unless you be possessed with devilish spirits,  
 You cannot but forbear to murder me. 75  
 This tongue hath parleyed unto foreign kings  
 For your behoof±±

**CADE** Tut, when struck'st thou one blow in the field?  
**SAYE**  
 Great men have reaching hands. Oft have I struck  
 Those that I never saw, and struck them dead. 80

**REBEL** O monstrous coward! What, to come behind folks?  
**SAYE**  
 These cheeks are pale for watching for your good±±

**CADE** Give him a box o'th' ear, and that will make 'em  
 red again.  
*[One of the rebels strikes Saye]*

**SAYE**  
 Long sitting to determine poor men's causes 85  
 Hath made me full of sickness and diseases.

**CADE** Ye shall have a hempen caudle, then, and the  
 health o'th' hatchet.

**BUTCHER** (to Saye) Why dost thou quiver, man?  
**SAYE**  
 The palsy, and not fear, provokes me. 90

**CADE** Nay, he nods at us as who should say `I'll be even  
 with you'. I'll see if his head will stand steadier on a  
 pole or no. Take him away, and behead him.

**SAYE**  
 Tell me wherein have I offended most?  
 Have I affected wealth or honour? Speak. 95  
 Are my chests filled up with extorted gold?  
 Is my apparel sumptuous to behold?  
 Whom have I injured, that ye seek my death?  
 These hands are free from guiltless bloodshedding,  
 This breast from harbouring foul deceitful thoughts. 100  
 O let me live!

**CADE** (aside) I feel remorse in myself with his words, but

I'll bridle it. He shall die an it be but for pleading so  
well for his life. (*Aloud*) Away with him±±he has a  
familiar under his tongue; he speaks not a God's name. 105  
Go, take him away, I say, to the Standard in Cheapside,  
and strike off his head presently; and then go to Mile  
End Green±±break into his son-in-law's house, Sir James  
Cromer, and strike off his head, and bring them both  
upon two poles hither. 110

**ALL CADE'S FOLLOWERS** It shall be done!

**SAYE**

Ah, countrymen, if, when you make your prayers,  
God should be so obdurate as yourselves,  
How would it fare with your departed souls?  
And therefore yet relent and save my life! 115

**CADE** Away with him, and do as I command ye!

*Exeunt [the Butcher and] one or two with the  
Lord Saye*

The proudest peer in the realm shall not wear a head  
on his shoulders unless he pay me tribute. There shall  
not a maid be married but she shall pay to me her  
maidenhead, ere they have it. Married men shall hold 120  
of me *in capite*. And we charge and command that their  
wives be as free as heart can wish or tongue can tell.

*Enter a Rebel*

**REBEL** O captain, London Bridge is afire!

**CADE** Run to Billingsgate and fetch pitch and flax and  
quench it. 125

*Enter the Butcher and a Sergeant*

**SERGEANT** Justice, justice, I pray you, sir, let me have  
justice of this fellow here.

**CADE** Why, what has he done?

**SERGEANT** Alas, sir, he has ravished my wife.

**BUTCHER** (*to Cade*) Why, my lord, he would have 'rested 130  
me and I went and entered my action in his wife's  
proper house.

**CADE** Dick, follow thy suit in her common place. (*To the  
Sergeant*) You whoreson villain, you are a sergeant±±  
you'll take any man by the throat for twelve pence, 135  
and 'rest a man when he's at dinner, and have him to  
prison ere the meat be out of his mouth. (*To the Butcher*)

Go, Dick, take him hence: cut out his tongue for  
cogging, hough him for running, and, to conclude,  
brain him with his own mace. 140

*Exit the Butcher with the Sergeant*

**REBEL** My lord, when shall we go to Cheapside and take  
up commodities upon our bills?

**CADE** Marry, presently. He that will lustily stand to it  
shall go with me and take up these commodities  
following±±item, a gown, a kirtle, a petticoat, and a 145  
smock.

**ALL CADE'S FOLLOWERS** O brave!

*Enter two with the Lord Saye's head and Sir James  
Cromer's upon two poles*

**CADE** But is not this braver? Let them kiss one another,  
for they loved well when they were alive.

*[The two heads are made to kiss]*

Now part them again, lest they consult about the giving 150  
up of some more towns in France. Soldiers, defer the  
spoil of the city until night. For with these borne before  
us instead of maces will we ride through the streets,  
and at every corner have them kiss. Away!

*[Exeunt two with the heads. The others begin to  
follow]*

Up Fish Street! Down Saint Magnus' Corner! Kill and 155  
knock down! Throw them into Thames!

*Sound a parley*

What noise is this? Dare any be so bold to sound retreat  
or parley when I command them kill?

*Enter the Duke of Buckingham and old Lord Clifford*

**BUCKINGHAM**

Ay, here they be that dare and will disturb thee!  
Know, Cade, we come ambassadors from the King 160  
Unto the commons, whom thou hast misled,  
And here pronounce free pardon to them all  
That will forsake thee and go home in peace.

**CLIFFORD**

What say ye, countrymen, will ye relent  
And yield to mercy whilst 'tis offered you, 165  
Or let a rebel lead you to your deaths?  
Who loves the King and will embrace his pardon,

Fling up his cap and say `God save his majesty'.  
Who hateth him and honours not his father,  
Henry the Fifth, that made all France to quake, 170  
Shake he his weapon at us, and pass by.

*They [fling up their caps and] forsake Cade*

**ALL CADE'S FOLLOWERS** God save the King! God save the  
King!

**CADE** What, Buckingham and Clifford, are ye so brave?  
(*To the rabble*) And you, base peasants, do ye believe 175  
him? Will you needs be hanged with your pardons  
about your necks? Hath my sword, therefore, broke  
through London gates that you should leave me at the  
White Hart in Southwark? I thought ye would never  
have given out these arms till you had recovered your 180  
ancient freedom. But you are all recreants and dastards,  
and delight to live in slavery to the nobility. Let them  
break your backs with burdens, take your houses over  
your heads, ravish your wives and daughters before  
your faces. For me, I will make shift for one, and so 185  
God's curse light upon you all.

**ALL CADE'S FOLLOWERS** We'll follow Cade! We'll follow  
Cade!

*They run to Cade again*

**CLIFFORD**

Is Cade the son of Henry the Fifth  
That thus you do exclaim you'll go with him? 190  
Will he conduct you through the heart of France  
And make the meanest of you earls and dukes?  
Alas, he hath no home, no place to fly to,  
Nor knows he how to live but by the spoil±±  
Unless by robbing of your friends and us. 195  
Were't not a shame that whilst you live at jar  
The fearful French, whom you late vanquisheÁd,  
Should make a start o'er seas and vanquish you?  
Methinks already in this civil broil  
I see them lording it in London streets, 200  
Crying `Villiago!' unto all they meet.  
Better ten thousand base-born Cades miscarry  
Than you should stoop unto a Frenchman's mercy.  
To France! To France! And get what you have lost!

Spare England, for it is your native coast. 205  
Henry hath money; you are strong and manly;  
God on our side, doubt not of victory.

**ALL CADE'S FOLLOWERS** A Clifford! A Clifford! We'll follow  
the King and Clifford!

*They forsake Cade*

**CADE** (*aside*) Was ever feather so lightly blown to and fro 210  
as this multitude? The name of Henry the Fifth hales  
them to an hundred mischiefs, and makes them leave  
me desolate. I see them lay their heads together to  
surprise me. My sword make way for me, for here is  
no staying. (*Aloud*) In despite of the devils and hell, 215  
have through the very midst of you! And heavens  
and honour be witness that no want of resolution in  
me, but only my followers' base and ignominious  
treasons, makes me betake me to my heels.

*He runs through them with his staff, and flies  
away*

**BUCKINGHAM**

What, is he fled? Go, some, and follow him, 220  
And he that brings his head unto the King  
Shall have a thousand crowns for his reward.

*Exeunt some of them after Cade*

*(To the remaining rebels)*

Follow me, soldiers, we'll devise a mean  
To reconcile you all unto the King.

*Exeunt*