

The First Part of the Contention

1.3

*Enter Peter, the armourer's man, with two or three
other Petitioners*

FIRST PETITIONER My masters, let's stand close. My Lord
Protector will come this way by and by and then we
may deliver our supplications in the quill.

SECOND PETITIONER Marry, the Lord protect him, for he's
a good man, Jesu bless him. 5

Enter the Duke of Suffolk and Queen Margaret

[FIRST PETITIONER] Here a comes, methinks, and the Queen
with him. I'll be the first, sure.

He goes to meet Suffolk and the Queen

SECOND PETITIONER Come back, fool±±this is the Duke of
Suffolk and not my Lord Protector.

SUFFOLK *(to the First Petitioner)*

How now, fellow±±wouldst anything with me? 10

FIRST PETITIONER I pray, my lord, pardon me±±I took ye
for my Lord Protector.

QUEEN MARGARET *[seeing his supplication, she reads]* `To my
Lord Protector'±±are your supplications to his lordship?
Let me see them. 15

[She takes First Petitioner's supplication]

What is thine?

FIRST PETITIONER Mine is, an't please your grace, against
John Goodman, my lord Cardinal's man, for keeping
my house and lands and wife and all from me.

SUFFOLK Thy wife too? That's some wrong indeed. *[To the 20
Second Petitioner]* What's yours?

He takes the supplication

What's here? *(Reads)* `Against the Duke of Suffolk for
enclosing the commons of Melford'! *[To the Second
Petitioner]* How now, Sir Knave?

SECOND PETITIONER Alas, sir, I am but a poor petitioner of 25
our whole township.

PETER *[offering his petition]* Against my master, Thomas
Horner, for saying that the Duke of York was rightful
heir to the crown.

QUEEN MARGARET What sayst thou? Did the Duke of York 30
say he was rightful heir to the crown?

PETER That my master was? No, forsooth, my master said
that he was and that the King was an usurer.

QUEEN MARGARET An usurper thou wouldst say.

PETER Ay, forsooth±±an usurper. 35

SUFFOLK (*calling within*) Who is there?

Enter a servant

Take this fellow in and send for his master with a
pursuivant presently. (*To Peter*) We'll hear more of your
matter before the King.

Exit the servant with Peter

QUEEN MARGARET (*to the Petitioners*)

And as for you that love to be protected 40
Under the wings of our Protector's grace,
Begin your suits anew and sue to him.

[She] tears the supplication

Away, base cullions! Suffolk, let them go.

ALL PETITIONERS Come, let's be gone.

Exeunt Petitioners

QUEEN MARGARET

My lord of Suffolk, say, is this the guise? 45

Is this the fashions in the court of England?

Is this the government of Britain's isle,

And this the royalty of Albion's king?

What, shall King Henry be a pupil still

Under the surly Gloucester's governance? 50

Am I a queen in title and in style,

And must be made a subject to a duke?

I tell thee, Pole, when in the city Tours

Thou rann'st a-tilt in honour of my love

And stol'st away the ladies' hearts of France, 55

I thought King Henry had resembled thee

In courage, courtship, and proportion.

But all his mind is bent to holiness,

To number Ave-Maries on his beads.

His champions are the prophets and apostles, 60

His weapons holy saws of sacred writ,

His study is his tilt-yard, and his loves

Are brazen images of canonizeÁd saints.

I would the college of the cardinals
Would choose him Pope, and carry him to Rome, 65
And set the triple crown upon his head±±
That were a state fit for his holiness.

SUFFOLK

Madam, be patient±±as I was cause
Your highness came to England, so will I
In England work your grace's full content. 70

QUEEN MARGARET

Beside the haught Protector have we Beaufort
The imperious churchman, Somerset, Buckingham,
And grumbling York; and not the least of these
But can do more in England than the King.

SUFFOLK

And he of these that can do most of all 75
Cannot do more in England than the Nevilles:
Salisbury and Warwick are no simple peers.

QUEEN MARGARET

Not all these lords do vex me half so much
As that proud dame, the Lord Protector's wife.
She sweeps it through the court with troops of ladies 80
More like an empress than Duke Humphrey's wife.
Strangers in court do take her for the queen.
She bears a duke's revenues on her back,
And in her heart she scorns our poverty.
Shall I not live to be avenged on her? 85
Contemptuous base-born callet as she is,
She vaunted 'mongst her minions t'other day
The very train of her worst-wearing gown
Was better worth than all my father's lands,
Till Suffolk gave two dukedoms for his daughter. 90

SUFFOLK

Madam, myself have limed a bush for her,
And placed a choir of such enticing birds
That she will light to listen to their lays,
And never mount to trouble you again.
So let her rest; and, madam, list to me, 95
For I am bold to counsel you in this:
Although we fancy not the Cardinal,
Yet must we join with him and with the lords

Till we have brought Duke Humphrey in disgrace.
As for the Duke of York, this late complaint 100
Will make but little for his benefit.
So one by one we'll weed them all at last,
And you yourself shall steer the happy helm.

Sound a sennet. [Enter King Henry with the Duke of York and the Duke of Somerset on either side of him whispering with him. Also enter Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, Dame Eleanor the Duchess of Gloucester, the Duke of Buckingham, the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick, and Cardinal Beaufort Bishop of Winchester]

KING HENRY

For my part, noble lords, I care not which:
Or Somerset or York, all's one to me. 105

YORK

If York have ill demeaned himself in France
Then let him be denied the regentship.

SOMERSET

If Somerset be unworthy of the place,
Let York be regent±±I will yield to him.

WARWICK

Whether your grace be worthy, yea or no, 110
Dispute not that: York is the worthier.

CARDINAL BEAUFORT

Ambitious Warwick, let thy betters speak.

WARWICK

The Cardinal's not my better in the field.

BUCKINGHAM

All in this presence are thy betters, Warwick.

WARWICK

Warwick may live to be the best of all. 115

SALISBURY

Peace, son; (to Buckingham) and show some reason,
Buckingham,

Why Somerset should be preferred in this.

QUEEN MARGARET

Because the King, forsooth, will have it so.

GLOUCESTER

Madam, the King is old enough himself
To give his censure. These are no women's matters. 120

QUEEN MARGARET

If he be old enough, what needs your grace
To be Protector of his excellence?

GLOUCESTER

Madam, I am Protector of the realm,
And at his pleasure will resign my place.

SUFFOLK

Resign it then, and leave thine insolence. 125
Since thou wert king±±as who is king but thou?±±
The commonwealth hath daily run to wrack,
The Dauphin hath prevailed beyond the seas,
And all the peers and nobles of the realm
Have been as bondmen to thy sovereignty. 130

CARDINAL BEAUFORT *(to Gloucester)*

The commons hast thou racked, the clergy's bags
Are lank and lean with thy extortions.

SOMERSET *(to Gloucester)*

Thy sumptuous buildings and thy wife's attire
Have cost a mass of public treasury.

BUCKINGHAM *(to Gloucester)*

Thy cruelty in execution 135
Upon offenders hath exceeded law
And left thee to the mercy of the law.

QUEEN MARGARET *(to Gloucester)*

Thy sale of offices and towns in France±±
If they were known, as the suspect is great±±
Would make thee quickly hop without thy head. 140

Exit Gloucester

Queen Margaret lets fall her fan

(To the Duchess)

Give me my fan±±what, minion, can ye not?

She gives the Duchess a box on the ear

I cry you mercy, madam! Was it you?

DUCHESS

Was't I? Yea, I it was, proud Frenchwoman!
Could I come near your beauty with my nails,
I'd set my ten commandments in your face. 145

KING HENRY

Sweet aunt, be quiet±±'twas against her will.

DUCHESS

Against her will? Good King, look to't in time!

She'll pamper thee and dandle thee like a baby.
Though in this place most master wear no breeches,
She shall not strike Dame Eleanor unrevenge'd! 150

Exit

BUCKINGHAM (*aside to Cardinal Beaufort*)

Lord Cardinal, I will follow Eleanor
And listen after Humphrey how he proceeds.
She's tickled now, her fury needs no spurs±±
She'll gallop far enough to her destruction.

Exit

Enter Duke Humphrey of Gloucester

GLOUCESTER

Now, lords, my choler being overblown 155
With walking once about the quadrangle,
I come to talk of commonwealth affairs.
As for your spiteful false objections,
Prove them, and I lie open to the law.
But God in mercy so deal with my soul 160
As I in duty love my King and country.
But to the matter that we have in hand±±
I say, my sovereign, York is meetest man
To be your regent in the realm of France.

SUFFOLK

Before we make election, give me leave 165
To show some reason of no little force
That York is most unmeet of any man.

YORK

I'll tell thee, Suffolk, why I am unmeet:
First, for I cannot flatter thee in pride;
Next, if I be appointed for the place, 170
My lord of Somerset will keep me here
Without discharge, money, or furniture,
Till France be won into the Dauphin's hands.
Last time I danced attendance on his will
Till Paris was besieged, famished, and lost. 175

WARWICK

That can I witness, and a fouler fact
Did never traitor in the land commit.

SUFFOLK Peace, headstrong Warwick.

WARWICK

Image of pride, why should I hold my peace?
Enter, guarded, Horner the armourer and Peter his man

SUFFOLK

Because here is a man accused of treason±± 180
Pray God the Duke of York excuse himself!

YORK

Doth anyone accuse York for a traitor?

KING HENRY

What mean'st thou, Suffolk? Tell me, what are these?

SUFFOLK

Please it your majesty, this is the man

He indicates Peter

That doth accuse his master *(indicating Horner)* of high
treason. 185

His words were these: that Richard Duke of York
Was rightful heir unto the English crown,
And that your majesty was an usurper.

KING HENRY *(to Horner)* Say, man, were these thy words?

HORNER An't shall please your majesty, I never said nor 190
thought any such matter. God is my witness, I am
falsely accused by the villain.

PETER *[raising his hands]* By these ten bones, my lords, he
did speak them to me in the garret one night as we
were scouring my lord of York's armour. 195

YORK

Base dunghill villain and mechanical,
I'll have thy head for this thy traitor's speech!
(To King Henry) I do beseech your royal majesty,
Let him have all the rigour of the law.

HORNER Alas, my lord, hang me if ever I spake the words. 200
My accuser is my prentice, and when I did correct him
for his fault the other day, he did vow upon his knees
he would be even with me. I have good witness of this,
therefore, I beseech your majesty, do not cast away an
honest man for a villain's accusation. 205

KING HENRY *(to Gloucester)*

Uncle, what shall we say to this in law?

GLOUCESTER

This doom, my lord, if I may judge by case:
Let Somerset be regent o'er the French,

Because in York this breeds suspicion.

(Indicating Horner and Peter)

And let these have a day appointed them 210

For single combat in convenient place,

For he *(indicating Horner)* hath witness of his servant's
malice.

This is the law, and this Duke Humphrey's doom.

KING HENRY

Then be it so. *(To Somerset)* My lord of Somerset,

We make you regent o'er the realm of France 215

There to defend our rights 'gainst foreign foes.

SOMERSET

I humbly thank your royal majesty.

HORNER

And I accept the combat willingly.

PETER *[to Gloucester]* Alas, my lord, I cannot fight; for
God's sake, pity my case! The spite of man prevaieth 220
against me. O Lord, have mercy upon me±±I shall never
be able to fight a blow! O Lord, my heart!

GLOUCESTER

Sirrah, or you must fight or else be hanged.

KING HENRY

Away with them to prison, and the day
Of combat be the last of the next month. 225

Come, Somerset, we'll see thee sent away.

Flourish. Exeunt