

The First Part of the Contention

4.2

Enter two Rebels [with long staves]

FIRST REBEL Come and get thee a sword, though made of a lath; they have been up these two days.

SECOND REBEL They have the more need to sleep now then.

FIRST REBEL I tell thee, Jack Cade the clothier means to dress the commonwealth, and turn it, and set a new nap upon it. 5

SECOND REBEL So he had need, for 'tis threadbare. Well, I say it was never merry world in England since gentlemen came up. 10

FIRST REBEL O, miserable age! Virtue is not regarded in handicraftsmen.

SECOND REBEL The nobility think scorn to go in leather aprons.

FIRST REBEL Nay more, the King's Council are no good workmen. 15

SECOND REBEL True; and yet it is said `Labour in thy vocation'; which is as much to say as `Let the magistrates be labouring men'; and therefore should we be magistrates. 20

FIRST REBEL Thou hast hit it; for there's no better sign of a brave mind than a hard hand.

SECOND REBEL I see them! I see them! There's Best's son, the tanner of Wingham±±

FIRST REBEL He shall have the skins of our enemies to make dog's leather of. 25

SECOND REBEL And Dick the butcher±±

FIRST REBEL Then is sin struck down like an ox, and iniquity's throat cut like a calf.

SECOND REBEL And Smith the weaver±± 30

FIRST REBEL Argo, their thread of life is spun.

SECOND REBEL Come, come, let's fall in with them.

Enter Jack Cade, Dick the Butcher, Smith the Weaver, a sawyer, [and a drummer,] with infinite numbers, [all with long staves]

CADE We, John Cade, so termed of our supposed father±±

BUTCHER (*to his fellows*) Or rather of stealing a cade of herrings. 35

CADE For our enemies shall fall before us, inspired with the spirit of putting down kings and princes±±command silence!

BUTCHER Silence!

CADE My father was a Mortimer±± 40

BUTCHER (*to his fellows*) He was an honest man and a good bricklayer.

CADE My mother a Plantagenet±±

BUTCHER (*to his fellows*) I knew her well, she was a midwife.

CADE My wife descended of the Lacys±± 45

BUTCHER (*to his fellows*) She was indeed a pedlar's daughter and sold many laces.

WEAVER (*to his fellows*) But now of late, not able to travel with her furred pack, she washes bucks here at home.

CADE Therefore am I of an honourable house. 50

BUTCHER (*to his fellows*) Ay, by my faith, the field is honourable, and there was he born, under a hedge; for his father had never a house but the cage.

CADE Valiant I am±±

WEAVER (*to his fellows*) A must needs, for beggary is 55 valiant.

CADE I am able to endure much±±

BUTCHER (*to his fellows*) No question of that, for I have seen him whipped three market days together.

CADE I fear neither sword nor fire. 60

WEAVER (*to his fellows*) He need not fear the sword, for his coat is of proof.

BUTCHER (*to his fellows*) But methinks he should stand in fear of fire, being burned i'th' hand for stealing of sheep. 65

CADE Be brave, then, for your captain is brave and vows reformation. There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny, the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops, and I will make it felony to drink small beer. All the realm shall be in common, and in Cheapside 70 shall my palfrey go to grass. And when I am king, as king I will be±±

ALL CADE'S FOLLOWERS God save your majesty!

CADE I thank you good people! $\pm\pm$ there shall be no money.
All shall eat and drink on my score, and I will apparel
them all in one livery that they may agree like brothers,
and worship me their lord.

75

BUTCHER The first thing we do let's kill all the lawyers.

CADE Nay, that I mean to do. Is not this a lamentable
thing that of the skin of an innocent lamb should be 80
made parchment? That parchment, being scribbled
o'er, should undo a man? Some say the bee stings, but
I say 'tis the bee's wax. For I did but seal once to a
thing, and I was never mine own man since. How
now? Who's there? 85

Enter some bringing forth the Clerk of Chatham

WEAVER The Clerk of Chatham $\pm\pm$ he can write and read
and cast account.

CADE O, monstrous!

WEAVER We took him setting of boys' copies.

CADE Here's a villain. 90

WEAVER He's a book in his pocket with red letters in't.

CADE Nay, then he is a conjuror!

BUTCHER Nay, he can make obligations and write court
hand.

CADE I am sorry for't. The man is a proper man, of mine 95
honour. Unless I find him guilty, he shall not die. Come
hither, sirrah, I must examine thee. What is thy name?

CLERK Emmanuel.

BUTCHER They use to write that on the top of letters $\pm\pm$
'twill go hard with you. 100

CADE Let me alone. (*To the Clerk*) Dost thou use to write
thy name? Or hast thou a mark to thyself like an
honest plain-dealing man?

CLERK Sir, I thank God I have been so well brought up
that I can write my name. 105

ALL CADE'S FOLLOWERS He hath confessed $\pm\pm$ away with
him! He's a villain and a traitor.

CADE Away with him, I say, hang him with his pen and
inkhorn about his neck.

Exit one with the Clerk

Enter a Messenger

MESSENGER Where's our general? 110
CADE Here I am, thou particular fellow.
MESSENGER Fly, fly, fly! Sir Humphrey Stafford and his
brother are hard by with the King's forces.
CADE Stand, villain, stand±±or I'll fell thee down. He shall
be encountered with a man as good as himself. He is 115
but a knight, is a?
MESSENGER No.
CADE To equal him I will make myself a knight presently.
He kneels and knights himself
Rise up, Sir John Mortimer.
He rises
Now have at him! 120
*Enter Sir Humphrey Stafford and his brother, with
a drummer and soldiers*
STAFFORD *(to Cade's followers)*
Rebellious hinds, the filth and scum of Kent,
Marked for the gallows, lay your weapons down;
Home to your cottages, forsake this groom.
The King is merciful, if you revolt.
STAFFORD'S BROTHER *(to Cade's followers)*
But angry, wrathful, and inclined to blood, 125
If you go forward. Therefore, yield or die.
CADE *(to his followers)*
As for these silken-coated slaves, I pass not.
It is to you, good people, that I speak,
Over whom, in time to come, I hope to reign±±
For I am rightful heir unto the crown. 130
STAFFORD
Villain, thy father was a plasterer
And thou thyself a shearman, art thou not?
CADE
And Adam was a gardener.
STAFFORD'S BROTHER And what of that?
CADE
Marry, this: Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March,
Married the Duke of Clarence' daughter, did he not? 135
STAFFORD Ay, sir.
CADE
By her he had two children at one birth.

STAFFORD'S BROTHER That's false.

CADE

Ay, there's the question±±but I say 'tis true.
The elder of them, being put to nurse, 140
Was by a beggar-woman stol'n away,
And, ignorant of his birth and parentage,
Became a bricklayer when he came to age.
His son am I±±deny it an you can.

BUTCHER

Nay, 'tis too true±±therefore he shall be king. 145

WEAVER Sir, he made a chimney in my father's house,
and the bricks are alive at this day to testify. Therefore
deny it not.

STAFFORD *(to Cade's followers)*

And will you credit this base drudge's words
That speaks he knows not what? 150

ALL CADE'S FOLLOWERS

Ay, marry, will we±±therefore get ye gone.

STAFFORD'S BROTHER

Jack Cade, the Duke of York hath taught you this.

CADE *(aside)*

He lies, for I invented it myself.
(Aloud) Go to, sirrah±±tell the King from me that for
his father's sake, Henry the Fifth, in whose time boys 155
went to span-counter for French crowns, I am content
he shall reign; but I'll be Protector over him.

BUTCHER And, furthermore, we'll have the Lord Saye's
head for selling the dukedom of Maine.

CADE And good reason, for thereby is England maimed, 160
and fain to go with a staff, but that my puissance holds
it up. Fellow-kings, I tell you that that Lord Saye hath
gelded the commonwealth, and made it an eunuch,
and, more than that, he can speak French, and
therefore he is a traitor! 165

STAFFORD

O gross and miserable ignorance!

CADE Nay, answer if you can: the Frenchmen are our
enemies; go to, then, I ask but this±±can he that speaks
with the tongue of an enemy be a good counsellor or
no? 170

