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presents

a Theatre Script of

RALPH ROISTER DOISTER

By Nicholas Udall

Written c. 1552-3

Earliest Extant Edition: 1566

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DRAMATIS PERSONS.

RALPH ROISTER DOISTER.

DOBINET DOUGHTIE, servant to Roister Doister.

HARPAX and other *Musicians* in the service of Roister Doister.

MATHEW MERYGREEKE, friend to Roister Doister.

DAME CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE, a wealthy widow.

TOM TRUPENIE, servant to Dame Custance.

MARGERIE MUMBLECRUST, an old nurse to Dame Custance.

TIBET TALKAPACE, maid to Dame Custance.

ANNOT ALYFACE, maid to Dame Custance

GAWYN GOODLUCK, a London Merchant, affianced to Dame
Custance.

SYM SURESBY, servant to Gawyn Goodluck.

TRISTRAM TRUSTIE, a friend to Gawyn Goodluck.

SCRIVENER.

Scene: London

NOTES.

A. The Setting of *Roister*.

Unless otherwise noted, the entire play (with perhaps the partial exception of Act I, Scenes iii and v) takes place on the street either directly in front of or within sight of the entrance to Dame Christian Custance's house. A door at the back of the stage would represent the entrance to the house, and characters would enter and exit the house through this door.

Roister editor Charles Whitworth suggests that a second house, that of Roister Doister himself, may have also been represented on the stage; Whitworth further theorizes that between the homes of Custance and Roister there may have appeared something like a painting of a street (on a backdrop) disappearing into the distance, indicating to the audience that the two houses were actually located in different parts of town.¹²

Many of the scenes do not end clearly with all of the actors and actresses exiting the stage; Udall often begins a new scene whenever a character or two enters the stage to join those already present.

In these cases, you will note that the players on stage will suddenly observe another character or two coming towards them from off-stage; as the new characters enter, the separate parties will proceed to talk to themselves or to the audience as they pause in their movements or slowly approach each other.

In general, because it is very clear when the characters finally meet and converse, we have decided it was not necessary to insert relevant stage directions.

B. Some Frequently Appearing Vocabulary.

Speakers of English frequently take recourse to a number of pause-phrases which parenthetically indicate an individual's frame of mind - *I believe, you think, don't you know*: "The governor, I think, is not so tall" (such expressions are part of a larger category of sentence organizers called *discourse markers*).

16th century English used some older words in these types of phrases, and these words appear repeatedly in this play:

1. **trou** = to believe, suppose; examples: *I trou, trou ye*.
2. **ween** = to expect, think; example: *I ween*.
3. **wot** = to know; examples: *I wot, I wot not*.

Some other unusual words that Udall depends heavily on include the following:

4. **warrant** = guarantee, assure; used especially in phrases such as *I warrant you*, ie. "I guarantee it", or "I assure you".
5. **wist** = to know.

6. *pastance* = pastime, recreation.

7. *use* = to treat.

8. *fet* = to fetch.

Finally, we point out that the word *and* could be used to mean either "and" or "if". Udall uses *and* in both senses regularly.

C. Roister's Rhyme Scheme.

Except for the Prologue, the entire play is written in rhyming couplets. Fortunately, the meter is completely irregular, or non-existent, and the number of syllables per line varies: this is a blessing, because otherwise the play would quickly begin to sound like a Dr. Seuss book, and the regular rhythm and rhyme would grow rapidly tiresome, indeed exhausting.

As it is, the lines generally have 10, 11 or 12 syllables; and as mentioned, thanks to there being no meter to speak of, - that is, no regular rhythm - the dialogue comes across as a little more natural, and you probably won't even be conscious of the rhyming.

Another interesting circumstance was that our author, Nicholas Udall, did not seem to obsess about having the rhymes be perfect every time; in fact, many of them seem quite strained, even taking into account the different sound of many - or most - vowels of the time compared to how we sound them today.

So, just looking at the first Scene, we have some rhymes that would work well even today, such as *say-day*, *pip-ing-grip-ing*, and *advise-wise*; we have rhymes that would have worked more obviously in the 16th century, such as *feast-guest*, and *coming-gloming*; and we also find some rhymes that require a bit of a stretch of the imagination to appreciate, or that perhaps even seem amateurish: *sop-Blinkensoppe*, *gone-compassion*, *express-worthiness*, *is-amiss*.

Another interesting feature of Udall's versifying is that he sometimes chose to use an obscure or rarely used alternative spelling or form of a word in order to make a rhyme work; for example, he uses *together* instead of *togeth* in order to rhyme with *hither*; and *wast* instead of *waste* in order to rhyme with *last*.

Having said all that, we recommend you not get hung up on the rhyming as you read our play; Udall used rhyming couplets as a frame, or skeleton, on which to build *Roister*, but since he did not obsess over perfect rhymes, neither should you: in fact, you will enjoy the play a great deal more if you do not think about the rhyming at all.

D. Optional Textual Changes.

A list of optional emendations to the text can be found at the end of this play

THE PROLOGUE.

1 What creature is in health, either young or old,
 2 But some mirth with modesty will be glad to use? —
 As we in this interlude shall now unfold,
 4 Wherein all scurrility we utterly refuse,
 Avoiding such mirth wherein is abuse,
 6 Knowing nothing more commendable for a man's recreation
 Than mirth which is used in an honest fashion.

 8 For mirth prolongeth life, and causeth health,
 Mirth recreates our spirits and voideth pensiveness,
 10 Mirth increaseth amity, not hindering our wealth,
 Mirth is to be used both of more and less,
 12 Being mixed with virtue in decent comeliness,
 As we trust no good nature can gainsay the same;
 14 Which mirth we intend to use, avoiding all blame.

 15 The wise poets long time heretofore
 16 Under merry comedies secrets did declare,
 Wherein was contained very virtuous lore,
 18 With mysteries and forewarnings very rare.
 Such to write neither Plautus nor Terence did spare,
 20 Which among the learned at this day bears the bell;
 These, with such other, therein did excel.

 22 Our comedy, or interlude, which we intend to play
 Is named *Roister Doister* indeed,
 24 Which against the vainglorious doth inveigh,
 Whose humour the roisting sort continually doth feed.
 26 Thus by your patience we intend to proceed
 In this our interlude by God's leave and grace;
 28 And here I take my leave for a certain space.

FINIS.

ACT I.SCENE I.

The Street in Front of, or a Short Distance from, Christian Custance's House.

Enter Mathew Merygreeke, singing.

1 **Mery.** As long liveth the merry man, they say,
 2 As doth the sorry man, and longer, by a day.
 Yet the grasshopper, for all his summer piping,
 4 Starveth in winter with hungry griping.
 Therefore another said saw doth men advise,
 6 That they be together both merry and wise.
 This lesson must I practise, or else ere long,
 8 With me, Mathew Merygreeke, it will be wrong.
 Indeed men so call me, for by Him that us bought,
 10 Whatever chance betide, I can take no thought,
 Yet wisdom would that I did myself bethink
 12 Where to be provided this day of meat and drink –
 For know ye that, for all this merry note of mine,
 14 He might appose me now that should ask where I dine.
 My living lieth here and there, of God's grace,
 16 Sometime with this good man, sometime in that place;
 Sometime Lewis Loytrer biddeth me come near;
 18 Somewhiles Watkin Waster maketh us good cheer,
 Sometime Davy Diceplayer, when he hath well cast,
 20 Keepeth revel-rout as long as it will last;
 Sometime Tom Titivile maketh us a feast;
 22 Sometime with Sir Hugh Pye I am a bidden guest;
 Sometime at Nicol Neverthrive's I get a sop;
 24 Sometime I am feasted with Bryan Blinkinsoppe;
 Sometime I hang on Hankyn Hoddydodie's sleeve;
 26 But this day on Ralph Roister Doister's, by his leave.
 For, truly, of all men he is my chief banker
 28 Both for meat and money, and my chief shoot-anchor.
 For, sooth Roister Doister in that he doth say,
 30 And, require what ye will, ye shall have no nay.
 But now of Roister Doister somewhat to express,
 32 That ye may esteem him after his worthiness,
 In these twenty towns, and seek them throughout,
 34 Is not the like stock whereon to graff a lout.
 All the day long is he facing and craking
 36 Of his great acts in fighting and fray-making,
 But when Roister Doister is put to his proof,

38 To keep the Queen's peace is more for his behoof.
If any woman smile, or cast on him an eye,
40 Up is he to the hard ears in love by and by;
And in all the hot haste must she be his wife,
42 Else farewell his good days, and farewell his life;
Master Ralph Roister Doister is but dead and gone
44 Except she on him take some compassion.
Then chief of counsel must be Mathew Merygreeke,
46 "What if I for marriage to such an one seek?"
Then must I sooth it, whatever it is –
48 For what he sayeth or doeth cannot be amiss;
Hold up his yea and nay, be his nown white son,
50 Praise and roose him well, and ye have his heart won,
For so well liketh he his own fond fashions
52 That he taketh pride of false commendations.
But such sport have I with him as I would not lese,
54 Though I should be bound to live with bread and cheese.
For exalt him, and have him as ye lust indeed –
56 Yea, to hold his finger in a hole for a need.
I can with a word make him fain or loth,
58 I can with as much make him pleased or wroth,
I can, when I will, make him merry and glad,
60 I can, when me lust, make him sorry and sad,
I can set him in hope and eke in despair,
62 I can make him speak rough, and make him speak fair.
But I marvel I see him not all this same day;
64 I will seek him out. – But, lo! he cometh this way.
I have yond espied him sadly coming,
66 And in love, for twenty pound, by his gloming!

ACT I, SCENE II.*[Still on Stage: Merygreeke.]**Enter Roister Doister.*

1 **Roist.** Come death when thou wilt, I am weary of my life.

2
3 **Mery.** I told you, I, we should woo another wife.

4
5 **Roist.** Why did God make me such a goodly person?

6
7 **Mery.** He is in by the week, we shall have sport anon.

8
9 **Roist.** And where is my trusty friend, Mathew Merygreeke?

10
11 **Mery.** I will make as I saw him not, he doth me seek.

12
13 **Roist.** I have him espied me thinketh, yond is he. —
14 Ho! Mathew Merygreeke, my friend, a word with thee.

15
16 **Mery.** I will not hear him, but make as I had haste. —
17 Farewell all my good friends, the time away doth waste,
18 And the tide, they say, tarrieth for no man.

19
20 **Roist.** Thou must with thy good counsel help me if thou can.

21
22 **Mery.** God keep thee, worshipful Master Roister Doister,
23 And fare well thee, lusty Master Roister Doister.

24
25 **Roist.** I must needs speak with thee a word or twain.

26
27 **Mery.** Within a month or two I will be here again.
28 Negligence in great affairs, ye know, may mar all.

29
30 **Roist.** Attend upon me now, and well reward thee I shall.

31
32 **Mery.** I have take my leave, and the tide is well spent.

33
34 **Roist.** I die except thou help, I pray thee be content.
35 Do thy part well now, and ask what thou wilt,
36 For without thy aid my matter is all spilt.

37
38 **Mery.** Then to serve your turn I will some pains take,
39 And let all mine own affairs alone for your sake.

40
41 **Roist.** My whole hope and trust resteth only in thee.

42
43 **Mery.** Then can ye not do amiss, whatever it be.

44

46 **Roist.** Gramercies, Merygreeke, most bound to thee I am.

48 **Mery.** But up with that heart, and speak out like a ram!
Ye speak like a capon that had the cough now.
Be of good cheer, anon ye shall do well enow.

50 **Roist.** Upon thy comfort, I will all things well handle.

52 **Mery.** So, lo, that is a breast to blow out a candle!
54 But what is this great matter, I would fain know?
We shall find remedy therefore I trow.
56 Do ye lack money? Ye know mine old offers;
Ye have always a key to my purse and coffers.

58 **Roist.** I thank thee! had ever man such a friend!

60 **Mery.** Ye give unto me, I must needs to you lend.

62 **Roist.** Nay, I have money plenty all things to discharge.

64 **Mery.** [Aside]
66 That knew I right well when I made offer so large.

68 **Roist.** But it is no such matter.

70 **Mery.** What is it than?
Are ye in danger of debt to any man?
72 If ye be, take no thought nor be not afraid.
Let them hardly take thought how they shall be paid.

74 **Roist.** Tut, I owe nought.

76 **Mery.** What then? fear ye imprisonment?

78 **Roist.** No.

80 **Mery.** No, I wist ye offend not, so to be shent.
82 But if ye had, the Tower could not you so hold,
But to break out at all times ye would be bold.
84 What is it – hath any man threatened you to beat?

86 **Roist.** What is he that durst have put me in that heat?
He that beateth me, by His arms, shall well find,
88 That I will not be far from him nor run behind.

90 **Mery.** That thing know all men ever since ye overthrew
The fellow of the lion which Hercules slew.
92 But what is it then?

94 **Roist.** Of love I make my moan.

96 **Mery.** "Ah, this foolish-a love, wil't ne'er let us alone?"
But because ye were refused the last day,

98 Ye said ye would ne'er more be entangled that way –
"I would meddle no more, since I find all so unkind."

100 **Roist.** Yea, but I cannot so put love out of my mind.

102 **Mery.** But is your love, tell me first in any wise,
104 In the way of marriage, or of merchandise?
If it may otherwise than lawful be found,

106 Ye get none of my help for a hundred pound.

108 **Roist.** No, by my troth, I would have her to my wife.

110 **Mery.** Then are ye a good man, and God save your life!
And what or who is she, with whom ye are in love?

112 **Roist.** A woman whom I know not by what means to move.

114 **Mery.** Who is it?

116 **Roist.** A woman yond.

118 **Mery.** What is her name?

120 **Roist.** Her yonder.

122 **Mery.** Whom?

124 **Roist.** Mistress – ah –

126 **Mery.** Fie, fie, for shame!
128 Love ye, and know not whom – but "her yond," "a woman?"
We shall then get you a wife, I cannot tell whan.

130 **Roist.** The fair woman, that supped with us yesternight,
132 And I heard her name twice or thrice, and had it right.

134 **Mery.** Yea, ye may see ye ne'er take me to good cheer with you, –
If ye had, I could have told you her name now.

136 **Roist.** I was to blame indeed, but the next time perchance –
138 And she dwelleth in this house.

140 **Mery.** What, Christian Custance?

142 **Roist.** Except I have her to my wife, I shall run mad.

144 **Mery.** Nay, "unwise" perhaps, but I warrant you for "mad."

146 **Roist.** I am utterly dead unless I have my desire.

148 **Mery.** Where be the bellows that blew this sudden fire?

150 **Roist.** I hear she is worth a thousand pound and more.

152 **Mery.** Yea, but learn this one lesson of me afore –
 An hundred pound of marriage-money, doubtless,
 154 Is ever thirty pound sterling, or somewhat less;
 So that her thousand pound, if she be thrifty,
 156 Is much near about two hundred and fifty.
 Howbeit, wooers and widows are never poor.

158 **Roist.** Is she a widow? I love her better therefore.

160 **Mery.** But I hear she hath made promise to another.

162 **Roist.** He shall go without her, and he were my brother!

164 **Mery.** I have heard say, I am right well advised,
 166 That she hath to Gawyn Goodluck promised.

168 **Roist.** What is that Gawyn Goodluck?

170 **Mery.** A merchant-man.

172 **Roist.** Shall he speed afore me? Nay, sir, by sweet Saint Anne!
 Ah, sir, "'Backare,' quod Mortimer to his sow,"
 174 I will have her mine own self, I make God a vow.
 For I tell thee, she is worth a thousand pound.

176 **Mery.** Yet a fitter wife for your maship might be found.
 178 Such a goodly man as you might get one with land,
 Besides pounds of gold a thousand and a thousand,
 180 And a thousand, and a thousand, and a thousand,
 And so to the sum of twenty hundred thousand.
 182 Your most goodly personage is worthy of no less.

184 **Roist.** I am sorry God made me so comely, doubtless,
 For that maketh me eachwhere so highly favoured,
 186 And all women on me so enamoured.

188 **Mery.** "Enamoured," quod you? – have ye spied out that?
 Ah, sir, marry, now I see you know what is what.
 190 "Enamoured," ka? marry, sir, say that again,
 But I thought not ye had marked it so plain.

192 **Roist.** Yes, eachwhere they gaze all upon me and stare.

194 **Mery.** Yea, Malkyn, I warrant you, as much as they dare. –
 196 And ye will not believe what they say in the street,
 When your maship passeth by, all such as I meet,
 198 That sometimes I can scarce find what answer to make.
 "Who is this," saith one, "Sir Launcelot du Lake?"
 200 "Who is this – great Guy of Warwick?" saith another.
 "No," say I, "it is the thirteenth Hercules' brother."
 202 "Who is this – noble Hector of Troy," saith the third.
 "No, but of the same nest," say I, "it is a bird."
 204 "Who is this – great Goliah, Sampson, or Colbrand?"
 "No," say I, "but it is a brute of the Alie Land."
 206 "Who is this – great Alexander, or Charle le Maigne?"
 "No, it is the tenth Worthy," say I to them again. –
 208 I know not if I said well.

210 **Roist.** Yes, for so I am.

212 **Mery.** Yea, for there were but nine Worthies before ye came.
 To some others, the third Cato I do you call.
 214 And so, as well as I can, I answer them all.
 "Sir, I pray you, what lord or great gentleman is this?"
 216 "Master Ralph Roister Doister, dame," say I, "iwis."
 "O Lord," saith she then, "what a goodly man it is.
 218 Would Christ I had such a husband as he is!"
 "O Lord," say some, "that the sight of his face we lack!"
 220 "It is enough for you," say I, "to see his back.
 His face is for ladies of high and noble parages,
 222 With whom he hardly 'scapeth great marriages " –
 With much more than this, and much otherwise.

224 **Roist.** I can thee thank that thou canst such answers devise;
 226 But I perceive thou dost me throughly know.

228 **Mery.** I mark your manners for mine own learning, I trow,
 But such is your beauty, and such are your acts,
 230 Such is your personage, and such are your facts,
 That all women, fair and foul, more and less,
 232 They eye you, they lub you, they talk of you doubtless.
 Your pleasant look maketh them all merry;
 234 Ye pass not by, but they laugh till they be weary;
 Yea and money could I have, the truth to tell,
 236 Of many, to bring you that way where they dwell.

238 **Roist.** Merygreeke, for this thy reporting well of me –

240 **Mery.** What should I else, sir? It is my duty, pardee.

242 **Roist.** I promise thou shalt not lack, while I have a groat.

244 **Mery.** Faith, sir, and I ne'er had more need of a new coat.
 246 **Roist.** Thou shalt have one to-morrow, and gold for to spend.
 248 **Mery.** Then I trust to bring the day to a good end;
 For, as for mine own part, having money enow,
 250 I could live only with the remembrance of you.
 But now to your widow whom you love so hot.
 252
Roist. By Cock, thou sayest truth! I had almost forgot.
 254
Mery. What if Christian Custance will not have you, what?
 256
Roist. Have me? Yes, I warrant you, never doubt of that;
 258 I know she loveth me, but she dare not speak.
 260
Mery. Indeed, meet it were somebody should it break.
 262
Roist. She looked on me twenty times yesternight,
 And laughed so –
 264
Mery. That she could not sit upright.
 266
Roist. No, faith, could she not.
 268
Mery. No, even such a thing I cast.
 270
Roist. But for wooing, thou knowest, women are shamefast.
 272 But, and she knew my mind, I know she would be glad,
 And think it the best chance that ever she had.
 274
Mery. To her then like a man, and be bold forth to start!
 276 Wooers never speed well that have a false heart.
 278
Roist. What may I best do?
 280
Mery. Sir, remain ye awhile [here].
 Ere long one or other of her house will appear.
 282 Ye know my mind.
 284
Roist. Yea, now, hardly, let me alone!
 286
Mery. In the meantime, sir, if you please, I will home, –
 And call your musicians, for, in this your case,
 288 It would set you forth, and all your wooing grace;
 Ye may not lack your instruments to play and sing.
 290
Roist. Thou knowest I can do that.
 292

294 **Mery.** As well as anything .
Shall I go call your folks, that ye may show a cast?

296 **Roist.** Yea, run, I beseech thee, in all possible haste.

298 **Mery.** I go.

300 [Exit.]

302 **Ralph.** Yea, for I love singing out of measure,
It comforteth my spirits and doth me great pleasure.
304 But who cometh forth yond from my sweetheart Custance?
My matter frameth well, this is a lucky chance.

ACT I, SCENE III.

The Yard before Custance's House.

[*Still on Stage: Roister Doister.*]

*Enter Madge Mumblecrust, spinning on the distaff,
and Tibet Talkapace, sewing.*

1 **Madge.** If this distaff were spun, Margerie Mumblecrust –

2
3 **Tibet.** Where good stale ale is, will drink no water, I trust.

4
5 **Madge.** Dame Custance hath promised us good ale and white
6 bread.

7
8 **Tibet.** If she keep not promise, I will beshrew her head:
9 But it will be stark night before I shall have done.

10 **Roist.** I will stand here awhile, and talk with them anon.
11 I hear them speak of Custance, which doth my heart good;
12 To hear her name spoken doth even comfort my blood.

13
14 **Madge.** Sit down to your work, Tibet, like a good girl,

15
16 **Tibet.** Nurse, meddle you with your spindle and your whirl!
17 No haste but good, Madge Mumblecrust, for "whip and whur,"
18 The old proverb doth say, "never made good fur."

19
20 **Madge.** Well, ye will sit down to your work anon, I trust.

21
22 **Tibet.** "Soft fire maketh sweet malt," good Madge Mumblecrust.

23
24 **Madge.** And sweet malt maketh jolly good ale for the nones.

25
26 **Tibet.** Which will slide down the lane without any bones.

27
28 [*Cantet.*]

29
30 "Old brown bread crusts must have much good mumbling,
31 But good ale down your throat hath good easy tumbling."

32
33 **Roist.** The jolliest wench that ere I heard, little mouse!
34 May I not rejoice that she shall dwell in my house!

35
36 **Tibet.** So, sirrah, now this gear beginneth for to frame.

37
38 **Madge.** Thanks to God, though your work stand still, your tongue
39 is not lame.

40
41 **Tibet.** And though your teeth be gone, both so sharp and so fine,
42 Yet your tongue can renne on pattens as well as mine.

42 **Madge.** Ye were not for nought named Tib Talkapace.
 44 **Tibet.** Doth my talk grieve you? Alack, God save your grace!
 46 **Madge.** I hold a groat ye will drink anon for this gear.
 48 *Enter Annot Alyface, [with her knitting].*
 50 **Tibet.** And I will pray you the stripes for me to bear.
 52 **Madge.** I hold a penny ye will drink without a cup.
 54 **Tibet.** Whereinsoe'er ye drink, I wot ye drink all up.
 56 **Annot.** By Cock, and well sewed, my good Tibet Talkapace!
 58 **Tibet.** And e'en as well knit, my nown Annot Alyface.
 60 **Roist.** See what a sort she keepeth that must be my wife!
 62 Shall not I, when I have her, lead a merry life?
 64 **Tibet.** Welcome, my good wench, and sit here by me just.
 66 **Annot.** And how doth our old beldame here, Madge Mumblecrust?
 68 **Tibet.** Chide, and find faults, and threaten to complain.
 70 **Annot.** To make us poor girls shent to her is small gain.
 72 **Madge.** I did neither chide, nor complain, nor threaten.
 74 **Roist.** It would grieve my heart to see one of them beaten.
 76 **Madge.** I did nothing but bid her work and hold her peace.
 78 **Tibet.** So would I, if you could your clattering cease –
 But the devil cannot make old trot hold her tongue.
 80 **Annot.** Let all these matters pass, and we three sing a song,
 82 So shall we pleasantly both the time beguile now,
 And eke dispatch all our works ere we can tell how.
 84 **Tibet.** I shrew them that say nay, and that shall not be I.
 86 **Madge.** And I am well content.
 88 **Tibet.** *Sing on then, by and by.*
 90 **Roist.** And I will not away, but listen to their song,

92 Yet Merygreeke and my folks tarry very long.

94 [*Tibet, Annot, and Madge do sing here.*]

96 *Pipe, merry Annot! etc.*
Trilla, trilla, trillarie.

98 *Work, Tibet! work, Annot! work, Margerie!*
Sew, Tibet! knit, Annot! spin, Margerie!

100 *Let us see who shall win the victory.*

102 **Tibet.** This sleeve is not willing to be sewed, I trow.
 A small thing might make me all in the ground to throw.

104 [*Then they sing again.*]

106 *Pipe, merry Annot! etc.*
Trilla, trilla, trillarie.

108 *What, Tibet! what, Annot! what, Margerie!*
Ye sleep, but we do not, that shall we try.
Your fingers be numbed, our work will not lie.

112 **Tibet.** If ye do so again, well I would advise you nay.
 114 In good sooth one stop more, and I make holiday.

116 [*They sing the third time.*]

118 *Pipe, merry Annot! etc.*
Trilla, trilla, trillarie.

120 *Now, Tibet! now, Annot! now, Margerie!*
Now whippet apace for the maistry,
 122 *But it will not be, our mouth is so dry.*

124 **Tibet.** Ah, each finger is a thumb to-day, methink;
 I care not to let all alone, choose it swim or sink.

126 [*They sing the fourth time.*]

128 *Pipe, merry Annot, etc.*
Trilla, trilla, trillarie.

130 *When, Tibet? when, Annot? when, Margerie?*
 132 *I will not, I cannot, no more can I.*
Then give we all over, and there let it lie.

134 [*Let her cast down her work.*]

136 **Tibet.** There it lieth; the worst is but a curried coat –
 138 Tut, I am used thereto, I care not a groat!

140 **Annot.** Have we done singing since? Then will I in again.

142 Here I found you, and here I leave both twain.
[Exit.]

144 **Madge.** And I will not be long after – Tib Talkapace!

146 **Tibet.** What is the matter?

148 **Madge.** Yond stood a man all this space
150 And hath heard all that ever we spake together.

152 **Tibet.** Marry, the more lout he for his coming hither,
And the less good he can to listen maidens talk.
154 I care not, and I go bid him hence for to walk;
It were well done to know what he maketh hereaway.

156 **Roist.** Now might I speak to them, if I wist what to say.

158 **Madge.** Nay, we will go both off, and see what he is.

160 **Roist.** One that hath heard all your talk and singing, i-wis.

162 **Tibet.** The more to blame you! A good thrifty husband
164 Would elsewhere have had some better matters in hand.

166 **Roist.** I did it for no harm, but for good love I bear
To your dame mistress Custance, I did your talk hear.
168 And, mistress nurse, I will kiss you for acquaintance.

170 **Madge.** I come anon, sir.

172 **Tibet.** Faith, I would our dame Custance
Saw this gear.

174 **Madge.** I must first wipe all clean, yea, I must.

176 **Tibet.** Ill chieve it, doting fool, but it must be cust.

178 **Madge.** God yelde you, sir; chad not so much, ichotte not whan –
180 Ne'er since chwas bore, – chwine – of such a gay gentleman.

182 **Roist.** I will kiss you too, maiden, for the good will I bear you.

184 **Tibet.** No, forsooth, by your leave, ye shall not kiss me.

186 **Roist.** Yes, be not afeard, I do not disdain you a whit.

188 **Tibet.** Why should I fear you? I have not so little wit –
Ye are but a man I know very well.

190

192 **Roist.** Why, then?

194 **Tibet.** Forsooth for I will not! I use not to kiss men.

196 **Roist.** I would fain kiss you too, good maiden, if I might.

198 **Tibet.** What should that need?

200 **Roist.** But to honour you by this light.
I use to kiss all them that I love, to God I vow.

202 **Tibet.** Yea, sir? – I pray you, when did ye last kiss your cow?

204 **Roist.** Ye might be proud to kiss me, if ye were wise.

206 **Tibet.** What promotion were therein?

208 **Roist.** Nurse is not so nice.

210 **Tibet.** Well, I have not been taught to kissing and licking.

212 **Roist.** Yet I thank you, mistress nurse, ye made no sticking.

214 **Madge.** I will not stick for a koss with such a man as you.

216 **Tibet.** They that lust –! I will again to my sewing now.

218 *Enter Annot.*

220 **Annot.** Tidings, ho! tidings! dame Custance greeteth you well.

222 **Roist.** Whom? me?

224 **Annot.** You, sir? No, sir! I do no such tale tell.

226 **Roist.** But and she knew me here.

228 **Annot.** Tibet Talkapace,
Your mistress Custance and mine, must speak with your grace.

230 **Tibet.** With me?

232 **Annot.** Ye must come in to her, out of all doubts.

234 **Tibet.** And my work not half done? A mischief on all louts.

236 *[Exeunt Annot and Tibet.]*

238 **Roist.** Ah, good sweet nurse!

240 **Madge.** Ah, good sweet gentleman!

242

244 **Roist.** What?

246 **Madge.** Nay, I cannot tell, sir, but what thing would you?

248 **Roist.** How doth sweet Custance, my heart of gold, tell me how?

250 **Madge.** She doth very well, sir, and command me to you.

252 **Roist.** To me?

254 **Madge.** Yea, to you, sir.

256 **Roist.** To me? Nurse, tell me plain,
To me?

258 **Madge.** Ye.

260 **Roist.** That word maketh me alive again.

262 **Madge.** She command me to one, last day, whoe'er it was.

264 **Roist.** That was e'en to me and none other, by the Mass.

266 **Madge.** I cannot tell you surely, but one it was.

268 **Roist.** It was I and none other; this cometh to good pass.
I promise thee, nurse, I favour her.

270 **Madge.** E'en so, sir.

272 **Roist.** Bid her sue to me for marriage.

274 **Madge.** E'en so, sir.

276 **Roist.** And surely for thy sake she shall speed.

278 **Madge.** E'en so, sir.

280 **Roist.** I shall be contented to take her.

282 **Madge.** E'en so, sir.

284 **Roist.** But at thy request and for thy sake.

286 **Madge.** E'en so, sir.

288 **Roist.** And come – hark in thine ear what to say.

290 **Madge.** E'en so, sir.

292

| *[Here let him tell her a great long tale in her ear.]*

ACT I, SCENE IV.

[*Still on Stage: Roister Doister and Madge, Roister whispering to her.*]

*Enter Merygreeke, Dobinet Doughtie, Harpax,
[and at least one other Musician.]*

1 **Mery.** Come on, sirs, apace, and quit yourselves like men,
2 Your pains shall be rewarded.

4 **Dob.** But I wot not when.

6 **Mery.** Do your master worship as ye have done in time past.

8 **Dob.** Speak to them; of mine office he shall have a cast.

10 **Mery.** Harpax, look that thou do well too, and thy fellow.

12 **Harp.** I warrant, if he will mine example follow.

14 **Mery.** Curtsy, whoresons, duck you, and crouch at every word.

16 **Dob.** Yes, whether our master speak earnest or bord.

18 **Mery.** For this lieth upon his preferment indeed.

20 **Dob.** Oft is he a wooer, but never doth he speed.

22 **Mery.** But with whom is he now so sadly rounding yond?

24 **Dob.** With "*Nobs, nicebecetur, miserere*" fond.

26 **Mery.** God be at your wedding, be ye sped already?
I did not suppose that your love was so greedy.

28 I perceive now ye have chose of devotion, –
30 And joy have ye, lady, of your promotion.

32 **Ralph.** Tush, fool, thou art deceived, this is not she.

34 **Mery.** Well, mock much of her, and keep her well, I 'vise ye.
I will take no charge of such a fair piece' keeping.

36 **Mumb.** What aileth this fellow? he driveth me to weeping.

38 **Mery.** What, weep on the wedding day? Be merry, woman,
Though I say it, ye have chose a good gentleman.

40 **Roist.** Cocks nouns, what meanest thou, man? tut-a-whistle!

42 **Mery.** Ah, sir, be good to her; she is but a gristle.
44 Ah, sweet lamb and coney!

46 **Roist.** Tut, thou art deceived.

48 **Mery.** Weep no more, lady, ye shall be well received. –
Up with some merry noise, sirs, to bring home the bride.

50 **Roist.** Gog's arms, knave, art thou mad? I tell thee thou art wide.

52 **Mery.** Then ye intend by night to have her home brought.

54 **Roist.** I tell thee no.

56 **Mery.** How then?

58 **Roist.** 'Tis neither meant ne thought.

60 **Mery.** What shall we then do with her?

62 **Roist.** Ah, foolish harebrain,

64 This is not she.

66 **Mery.** No is? Why then, unsaid again!
And what young girl is this with your maship so bold?

68 **Roist.** A girl?

70 **Mery.** Yea – I dare say, scarce yet three score year old.

72 **Roist.** This same is the fair widow's nurse, of whom ye wot.

74 **Mery.** Is she but a nurse of a house? Hence home, old trot,
76 Hence at once!

78 **Roist.** No, no.

80 **Mery.** What, an please your maship,
A nurse talk so homely with one of your worship?

82 **Roist.** I will have it so: it is my pleasure and will.

84 **Mery.** Then I am content. – Nurse, come again, tarry still.

86 **Roist.** What, she will help forward this my suit for her part.

88 **Mery.** Then is't mine own pigsney, and blessing on my heart.

90 **Roist.** This is our best friend, man.

92 **Mery.** Then teach her what to say.

94

96 **Madge.** I am taught already.
 98 **Mery.** Then go, make no delay.
 100 **Roist.** Yet hark, one word in thine ear.
 102 **Mery.** Back, sirs, from his tail.
 104 **Roist.** Back, villains, will ye be privy of my counsail?
 106 **Mery.** Back, sirs, so: I told you afore ye would be shent.
 108 **Roist.** She shall have the first day a whole peck of argent.
 110 **Madge.** A peck! *Nomine Patris*, have ye so much spare?
 112 **Roist.** Yea, and a cart-load thereto, or else were it bare,
 114 **Madge.** Have ye lands too?
 116 **Roist.** An hundred marks.
 118 **Mery.** Yea, a thousand.
 120 **Madge.** And have ye cattle too? and sheep too?
 122 **Roist.** Yea, a few.
 124 **Mery.** He is ashamed the number of them to shew.
 126 E'en round about him, as many thousand sheep goes,
 128 **Madge.** And how many years old be you?
 130 **Roist.** Forty at least.
 132 **Mery.** Yea, and thrice forty to them.
 134 **Roist.** Nay, now thou dost jest.
 136 I am not so old; thou misreckonest my years.
 138 **Mery.** I know that; but my mind was on bullocks and steers.
 140 **Madge.** And what shall I show her your mastership's name is?
 142 **Roist.** Nay, she shall make suit ere she know that, i-wis.
 144 **Madge.** Yet let me somewhat know.
Mery. This is he, understand,

146 That killed the Blue Spider in Blanchepowder land.

148 **Madge.** Yea, Jesus, William zee law, did he zo, law!

150 **Mery.** Yea, and the last elephant that ever he saw,
As the beast passed by, he start out of a busk,
152 And e'en with pure strength of arms plucked out his great tusk.

154 **Madge.** Jesus, *nomine Patris*, what a thing was that!

156 **Roist.** Yea, but, Merygreeke, one thing thou hast forgot.

158 **Mery.** What?

160 **Roist.** Of th' other elephant.

162 **Mery.** Oh, him that fled away.

164 **Roist.** Yea.

166 **Mery.** Yea, he knew that his match was in place that day.
Tut, he bet the King of Crickets on Christmas day,
168 That he crept in a hole, and not a word to say.

170 **Madge.** A sore man, by zembletee.

172 **Mery.** Why, he wrong a club
Once in a fray out of the hand of Belzebub.

174

176 **Roist.** And how when Mumfision –?

178 **Mery.** Oh, your custreling
Bore the lantern a-field so before the gosling –
Nay, that is too long a matter now to be told.

180 Never ask his name, nurse, I warrant thee, be bold.
He conquered in one day from Rome to Naples,
182 And won towns, nurse, as fast as thou canst make apples.

184 **Madge.** O Lord, my heart quaketh for fear: he is too sore.

186 **Roist.** Thou makest her too much afeard, Merygreeke, no more.
This tale would fear my sweetheart Custance right evil.

188

190 **Mery.** Nay, let her take him, nurse, and fear not the devil.
But thus is our song dashed. – Sirs, ye may home again.

192 **Roist.** No, shall they not. I charge you all here to remain –
The villain slaves, a whole day ere they can be found.

194

196 **Mery.** Couch on your marybones, whoresons, down to the ground.
Was it meet he should tarry so long in one place

Without harmony of music, or some solace?
 198 Whoso hath such bees as your master in his head
 Had need to have his spirits with music to be fed. –
 200 By your mastership's licence –

202 **Roist.** What is that? a mote?

204 **Mery.** No, it was a fool's feather had light on your coat.

206 **Roist.** I was nigh no feathers since I came from my bed.

208 **Mery.** No, sir, it was a hair that was fall from your head.

210 **Roist.** My men come when it please them.

212 **Mery.** By your leave –

214 **Roist.** What is that?

216 **Mery.** Your gown was foul spotted with the foot of a gnat.

218 **Roist.** Their master to offend they are nothing afeard –
 What now?

220 **Mery.** A lousy hair from your mastership's beard.

222 **Omnes famuli.** And sir, for nurse's sake, pardon this one offence.
 224 We shall not after this show the like negligence.

226 **Roist.** I pardon you this once, and come, sing ne'er the worse.

228 **Mery.** How like you the goodness of this gentleman, nurse?

230 **Madge.** God save his mastership that so can his men forgive!
 And I will hear them sing ere I go, by his leave.

232 **Roist.** Many, and thou shalt, wench. Come, we two will dance!

234 **Madge.** Nay, I will by mine own self foot the song, perchance.

236 **Roist.** Go to it, sirs, lustily.

238 **Madge.** Pipe up a merry note,
 240 Let me hear it played, I will foot it for a groat.

242 [*Cantent.*]

244 *Whoso to marry a minion wife,
 Hath had good chance and hap,
 246 Must love her and cherish her all his life,
 And dandle her in his lap.*

248

250 *If she will fare well, if she will go gay,
 A good husband ever still,
 Whatever she lust to do, or to say,
 252 Must let her have her own will.*
 254 *About what affairs soever he go,
 He must show her all his mind.*
 256 *None of his counsel she may be kept fro.
 Else is he a man unkind.*
 258 **Roist.** Now, nurse, take this same letter here to thy mistress,
 260 And as my trust is in thee, ply my business.
 262 **Madge.** It shall be done.
 264 **Mery.** Who made it?
 266 **Roist.** I wrote it each whit.
 268 **Mery.** Then needs it no mending.
 270 **Roist.** No, no.
 272 **Mery.** No, I know your wit.
 274 **Roist.** I warrant it well.
 276 **Madge.** It shall be delivered.
 But, if ye speed, shall I be considered?
 278 **Mery.** Whough! dost thou doubt of that?
 280 **Madge.** What shall I have?
 282 **Mery.** An hundred times more than thou canst devise to crave.
 284 **Madge.** Shall I have some new gear? – for my old is all spent.
 286 **Mery.** The worst kitchen wench shall go in ladies' raiment.
 288 **Madge.** Yea?
 290 **Mery.** And the worst drudge in the house shall go better
 292 Than your mistress doth now.
 294 **Madge.** Then I trudge with your letter.
 296 **Roist.** Now, may I repose me – Custance is mine own.
 Let us sing and play homeward that it may be known.
 298 **Mery.** But are you sure that your letter is well enough?

300

Roist. I wrote it myself.

302

Mery. Then sing we to dinner.

304

[Here they sing, and go out singing.]

ACT I, SCENE V.

A Room in Custance's House.

Enter Christian Custance and Madge.

1 **Cust.** Who took thee this letter, Margerie Mumblecrust?

2
3 **Madge.** A lusty gay bachelor took it me of trust,
4 And if ye seek to him he will 'low your doing.

6 **Cust.** Yea, but where learned he that manner of wooing?

8 **Madge.** If to sue to him, you will any pains take,
He will have you to his wife, he saith, for my sake.

10
11 **Cust.** Some wise gentleman, belike. I am bespoken;
12 And I thought verily this had been some token
From my dear spouse, Gawyn Goodluck, whom when him please,
14 God luckily send home to both our hearts' ease.

16 **Madge.** A joyly man it is, I wot well by report,
And would have you to him for marriage resort.
18 Best open the writing, and see what it doth speak.

20 **Cust.** At this time, nurse, I will neither read ne break.

22 **Madge.** He promised to give you a whole peck of gold.

24 **Cust.** Perchance, lack of a pint when it shall be all told.

26 **Madge.** I would take a gay rich husband, and I were you.

28 **Cust.** In good sooth, Madge, e'en so would I, if I were thou.
But no more of this fond talk now – let us go in,
30 And see thou no more move me folly to begin.
Nor bring me no more letters for no man's pleasure,
32 But thou know from whom.

34 **Madge.** I warrant ye shall be sure.

36 [Exeunt.]

ACT II.SCENE I.*Enter Dobinet.*

1 **Dob.** Where is the house I go to, before or behind?
 2 I know not where nor when nor how I shall it find.
 If I had ten men's bodies and legs and strength,
 4 This trotting that I have must needs lame me at length.
 And now that my master is new set on wooing,
 6 I trust there shall none of us find lack of doing.
 Two pair of shoes a day will now be too little
 8 To serve me, I must trot to and fro so mickle.
 "Go bear me this token," "carry me this letter,"
 10 Now this is the best way, now that way is better.
 "Up before day, sirs, I charge you, an hour or twain,
 12 Trudge, do me this message, and bring word quick again."
 If one miss but a minute, then, "His arms and wounds,
 14 I would not have slacked for ten thousand pounds!
 Nay, see, I beseech you, if my most trusty page
 16 Go not now about to hinder my marriage!"
 So fervent hot wooing, and so far from wiving,
 18 I trow, never was any creature living.
 With every woman is he in some love's pang,
 20 Then up to our lute at midnight, *twangledom twang*,
 Then *twang* with our sonnets, and *twang* with our dumps,
 22 And heigho from our heart, as heavy as lead lumps;
 Then to our recorder with *toodleloodle poop*,
 24 As the howlet out of an ivy bush should hoop.
 Anon to our gittern, *thrumpledum, thrumpledum thrum*,
 26 *Thrumpledum, thrumpledum, thrumpledum, thrumpledum, thrum*.
 Of songs and ballads also he is a maker,
 28 And that can he as finely do as Jack Raker;
 Yea, and *extempore* will he ditties compose,
 30 Foolish Marsyas ne'er made the like, I suppose,
 Yet must we sing them, as good stuff I undertake,
 32 As for such a pen-man is well fitting to make.
 "Ah, for these long nights! heigho! when will it be day?
 34 I fear ere I come she will be wooed away."
 Then when answer is made that it may not be,
 36 "O death, why comest thou not by and by?" saith he.
 But then, from his heart to put away sorrow,
 38 He is as far in with some new love next morrow.
 But in the mean season we trudge and we trot.
 40 From dayspring to midnight I sit not, nor rest not.

42 And now am I sent to dame Christian Custance,
But I fear it will end with a mock for pastance.
I bring her a ring, with a token in a clout,
44 And by all guess this same is her house out of doubt.
I know it now perfect, I am in my right way.
46 And, lo! yond the old nurse that was with us last day.

ACT II, SCENE II.

[*Still on Stage: Dobinet.*]

Enter Madge.

1 **Madge.** I was ne'er so shoke up afore, since I was born.
2 That our mistress could not have chid, I would have sworn –
And I pray God I die, if I meant any harm,
4 But for my life-time this shall be to me a charm.

6 **Dob.** God you save and see, nurse, and how is it with you?

8 **Madge.** Marry, a great deal the worse it is for such as thou.

10 **Dob.** For me? Why so?

12 **Madge.** Why, were not thou one of them, say,
That sang and played here with the gentleman last day?

14 **Dob.** Yes, and he would know if you have for him spoken,
16 And prays you to deliver this ring and token.

18 **Madge.** Now by the token that God tokened, brother,
I will deliver no token, one nor other.
20 I have once been so shent for your master's pleasure,
As I will not be again for all his treasure.

22 **Dob.** He will thank you, woman.

24 **Madge.** I will none of his thank.

[*Exit Madge.*]

28 **Dob.** I ween I am a prophet, this gear will prove blank:
30 But what, should I home again without answer go?
It were better go to Rome on my head than so.
32 I will tarry here this month, but some of the house
Shall take it of me, and then I care not a louse.
34 But yonder cometh forth a wench or a lad,
If he have not one Lombard's touch, my luck is bad.

ACT II, SCENE III.*[Still on Stage: Dobinet.]**Enter Tom Trupenie.*

1 **Tom.** I am clean lost for lack of merry company,
 2 We 'gree not half well within, our wenches and I:
 They will command like mistresses, they will forbid,
 4 If they be not served, Trupenie must be chid.
 Let them be as merry now as ye can desire,
 6 With turning of a hand, our mirth lieth in the mire.
 I cannot skill of such changeable mettle,
 8 There is nothing with them but "in dock out nettle."

10 **Dob.** Whether is it better that I speak to him first,
 Or he first to me? – It is good to cast the worst.
 12 If I begin first, he will smell all my purpose,
 Otherwise I shall not need anything to disclose.

14 **Tom.** What boy have we yonder? I will see what he is.

16 **Dob.** He cometh to me. It is hereabout, i-wis.

18 **Tom.** Wouldest thou ought, friend, that thou lookest so about?

20 **Dob.** Yea, but whether ye can help me or no, I doubt.
 22 I seek to one mistress Custance house here dwelling.

24 **Tom.** It is my mistress ye seek to, by your telling.

26 **Dob.** Is there any of that name here but she?

28 **Tom.** Not one in all the whole town that I know, pardee.

30 **Dob.** A widow she is, I trow.

32 **Tom.** And what and she be?

34 **Dob.** But ensured to an husband.

36 **Tom.** Yea, so think we.

38 **Dob.** And I dwell with her husband that trusteth to be.

40 **Tom.** In faith, then must thou needs be welcome to me –
 Let us for acquaintance shake hands together,
 42 And whate'er thou be, heartily welcome hither.

44 *Enter Tibet and Annot.*

46 **Tibet.** Well, Trupenie, never but flinging?
 48 **Annot.** And frisking?
 50 **Tom.** Well, Tibet and Annot, still swinging and whisking?
 52 **Tibet.** But ye roil abroad –
 54 **Annot.** In the street everywhere.
 56 **Tom.** Where are ye twain – in chambers – when ye meet me there?
 But come hither, fools, I have one now by the hand,
 58 Servant to him that must be our mistress' husband,
 Bid him welcome.
 60 **Annot.** To me truly is he welcome.
 62 **Tibet.** Forsooth, and as I may say, heartily welcome.
 64 **Dob.** I thank you, mistress maids.
 66 **Annot.** I hope we shall better know.
 68 **Tibet.** And when will our new master come?
 70 **Dob.** Shortly, I trow.
 72 **Tibet.** I would it were to-morrow: for till he resort,
 74 Our mistress, being a widow, hath small comfort;
 And I heard our nurse speak of an husband to-day
 76 Ready for our mistress, a rich man and a gay.
 And we shall go in our French hoods every day,
 78 In our silk cassocks (I warrant you) fresh and gay,
 In our trick ferdegews and biliments of gold;
 80 Brave in our suits of change, seven double fold,
 Then shall ye see Tibet, sirs, tread the moss so trim –
 82 Nay, why said I "tread"? – ye shall see her glide and swim,
 Not *lumperdee*, *clumperdee*, like our spaniel Rig.
 84 **Tom.** Marry, then, prick-me-dainty, come toast me a fig!
 86 Who shall then know our Tib Talkapace, trow ye?
 88 **Annot.** And why not Annot Alyface as fine as she?
 90 **Tom.** And what had Tom Trupenie, a father or none?
 92 **Annot.** Then our pretty new-come man will look to be one.
 94 **Tom.** We four, I trust, shall be a joyly merry knot.
 Shall we sing a fit to welcome our friend, Annot?

96 **Annot.** Perchance he cannot sing.
 98
 100 **Dob.** I am at all assays.
 102 **Tibet.** By Cock, and the better welcome to us always.
 104 [Here they sing.]
 106 *A thing very fit*
 108 *For them that have wit,*
 110 *And are fellows knit*
 112 *Servants in one house to be,*
 114 *Is fast for to sit,*
 116 *And not oft to flit,*
 118 *Nor vary a whit,*
 120 *But lovingly to agree.*
 122
 124 *No man complaining,*
 126 *No other disdaining,*
 128 *For loss or for gaining,*
 130 *But fellows or friends to be.*
 132 *No grudge remaining,*
 134 *No work refraining,*
 136 *Nor help restraining,*
 138 *But lovingly to agree.*
 140
 142 *No man for despite,*
 144 *By word or by write*
 146 *His fellow to twite,*
 148 *But further in honesty,*
 150 *No good turns entwite,*
 152 *Nor old sores recite,*
 154 *But let all go quite,*
 156 *And lovingly to agree.*
 158
 160 *After drudgery,*
 162 *When they be weary,*
 164 *Then to be merry,*
 166 *To laugh and sing, they be free –*
 168 *With chip and cherry,*
 170 *Heigh derry derry,*
 172 *Trill on the berry –*
 174 *And lovingly to agree.*
 176
 178 **Finis.**
 180 **Tibet.** Will you now in with us unto our mistress go?

144

Dob. I have first for my master an errand or two.

146

But I have here from him a token and a ring,
They shall have most thank of her that first doth it bring.

148

Tibet. Marry, that will I!

150

Tom. See and Tibet snatch not now.

152

Tibet. And why may not I, sir, get thanks as well as you?

154

[Tibet grabs the gifts from Dobinet, then exits.]

156

Annot. Yet get ye not all, we will go with you both,
And have part of your thanks, be ye never so loth.

160

[Exeunt omnes.]

162

Dob. So my hands are rid of it, I care for no more.
I may now return home, so durst I not afore.

164

[Exit.]

ACT II, SCENE IV.

Enter Custance, Tom, Tibet and Annot.

1 **Cust.** Nay, come forth all three; and come hither, pretty maid.
2 Will not so many forewarnings make you afraid?

4 **Tibet.** Yes, forsooth.

6 **Cust.** But still be a runner up and down,
Still be a bringer of tidings and tokens to town.

8 **Tibet.** No, forsooth, mistress.

10 **Cust.** Is all your delight and joy
12 In whisking and ramping abroad like a tom-boy?

14 **Tibet.** Forsooth, these were there too, Annot and Trupenie.

16 **Trup.** Yea, but ye alone took it, ye cannot deny.

18 **Annot.** Yea, that ye did.

20 **Tibet.** But if I had not, ye twain would.

22 **Cust.** You great calf, ye should have more wit, so ye should; –
But why should any of you take such things in hand?

24 **Tibet.** Because it came from him that must be your husband.

26 **Cust.** How do ye know that?

28 **Tibet.** Forsooth, the boy did say so.

30 **Cust.** What was his name?

32 **Annot.** We asked not.

34 **Cust.** No?

36 **Annot.** He is not far gone, of likelihood.

38 **Tom.** I will see.

40 **Cust.** If thou canst find him in the street, bring him to me.

42 **Tom.** Yes.

44 [Exit.]

46

48 **Cust.** Well, ye naughty girls, if ever I perceive
That henceforth you do letters or tokens receive,
50 To bring unto me from any person or place,
Except ye first show me the party face to face,
52 Either thou or thou, full truly abye thou shalt.

Tibet. Pardon this, and the next time powder me in salt.

54 **Cust.** I shall make all girls by you twain to beware.

Tibet. If ever I offend again, do not me spare!
58 But if ever I see that false boy any more
By your mistressship's licence, I tell you afore,
60 I will rather have my coat twenty times swinged,
Than on the naughty wag not to be avenged.

62 **Cust.** Good wenches would not so ramp abroad idly,
64 But keep within doors, and ply their work earnestly.
If one would speak with me that is a man likely,
66 Ye shall have right good thank to bring me word quickly.
But otherwise with messages to come in post
68 From henceforth, I promise you, shall be to your cost.
Get you in to your work.

70 **Tibet.** Yes, forsooth.

72 **Cust.** Hence, both twain.
74 And let me see you play me such a part again.

76 [Exit Tibet and Annot.]

78 Re-enter Tom.

80 **Tom.** Mistress, I have run past the far end of the street,
Yet can I not yonder crafty boy see nor meet.

82 **Cust.** No?

84 **Tom.** Yet I looked as far beyond the people,
86 As one may see out of the top of Paul's steeple.

88 **Cust.** Hence, in at doors, and let me no more be vexed.

90 **Tom.** Forgive me this one fault, and lay on for the next.

92 [Exit.]

94 **Cust.** Now will I in too, for I think, so God me mend,
This will prove some foolish matter in the end.

96

[*Exit.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter Merygreeke.

1 **Mery.** Now say this again – he hath somewhat to doing
 2 Which followeth the trace of one that is wooing,
 Specially that hath no more wit in his head,
 4 Than my cousin Roister Doister withal is led.
 I am sent in all haste to espy and to mark
 6 How our letters and tokens are likely to wark.
 Master Roister Doister must have answer in haste,
 8 For he loveth not to spend much labour in waste.
 Now as for Christian Custance, by this light,
 10 Though she had not her troth to Gawyn Goodluck plight,
 Yet rather than with such a loutish dolt to marry,
 12 I daresay would live a poor life solitary.
 But fain would I speak with Custance, if I wist how,
 14 To laugh at the matter – yond cometh one forth now.

ACT III, SCENE II.

[*Still on Stage: Merygreeke.*]

Enter Tibet.

- 1 **Tibet.** Ah, that I might but once in my life have a sight
 2 Of him that made us all so ill shent – by this light,
 He should never escape if I had him by the ear,
 4 But even from his head I would it bite or tear!
 Yea, and if one of them were not enow,
 6 I would bite them both off, I make God avow!
- 8 **Mery.** What is he, whom this little mouse doth so threaten?
- 10 **Tibet.** I would teach him, I trow, to make girls shent or beaten!
- 12 **Mery.** I will call her. – Maid, with whom are ye so hasty?
- 14 **Tibet.** Not with you, sir, but with a little wag-pasty,
 A deceiver of folks by subtle craft and guile.
- 16 **Mery.** I know where she is – Dobinet hath wrought some wile.
- 18 **Tibet.** He brought a ring and token which he said was sent
 20 From our dame's husband, but I wot well I was shent –
 For it liked her as well, to tell you no lies,
 22 As water in her ship, or salt cast in her eyes;
 And yet whence it came neither we nor she can tell.
- 24 **Mery.** We shall have sport anon – I like this very well! –
 26 And dwell ye here with mistress Custance, fair maid?
- 28 **Tibet.** Yea, marry do I, sir – what would ye have said?
- 30 **Mery.** A little message unto her by word of mouth.
- 32 **Tibet.** No messages, by your leave, nor tokens forsooth.
- 34 **Mery.** Then help me to speak with her.
- 36 **Tibet.** With a good will that.
 Here she cometh forth. Now speak ye know best what.
- 38 *Enter Custance.*
- 40 **Cust.** None other life with you, maid, but abroad to skip?
- 42 **Tibet.** Forsooth, here is one would speak with your mistress-ship.
- 44 **Cust.** Ah, have ye been learning of mo messages now?

46 **Tibet.** I would not hear his mind, but bade him show it to you.

48 **Cust.** In at doors.

50 **Tibet.** I am gone.

52 [Exit.]

54 **Mery.** Dame Custance, God ye save.

56 **Cust.** Welcome, friend Merygreeke – and what thing would ye have?

58 **Mery.** I am come to you a little matter to break.

60 **Cust.** But see it be honest, else better not to speak.

62 **Mery.** How feel ye yourself affected here of late?

64 **Cust.** I feel no manner change but after the old rate.
66 But whereby do ye mean?

68 **Mery.** Concerning marriage.
Doth not love lade you?

70 **Cust.** I feel no such carriage.

72 **Mery.** Do ye feel no pangs of dotage? answer me right.

74 **Cust.** I dote so, that I make but one sleep all the night.
76 But what need all these words?

78 **Mery.** Oh, Jesus, will ye see
What dissembling creatures these same women be? –
80 The gentleman ye wot of, whom ye do so love
That ye would fain marry him, if ye durst it move,
82 Among other rich widows, which are of him glad,
Lest ye, for lesing of him, perchance might run mad,
84 Is now contented that, upon your suit-making,
Ye be as one in election of taking.

86 **Cust.** What a tale is this? "that I wote of?" "whom I love?"

88 **Mery.** Yea, and he is as loving a worm, again, as a dove.
90 E'en of very pity he is willing you to take,
Because ye shall not destroy yourself for his sake.

92

94 **Cust.** Marry, God yield his maship whatever he be.
It is gentmanly spoken.

96 **Mery.** Is it not, trow ye?
If ye have the grace now to offer yourself, ye speed.

98 **Cust.** As much as though I did – this time it shall not need.
100 But what gentman is it, I pray you tell me plain,
That wooeth so finely?

102 **Mery.** Lo, where ye be again,
104 As though ye knew him not.

106 **Cust.** Tush, ye speak in jest.

108 **Mery.** Nay sure, the party is in good knacking earnest,
And have you he will, he saith, and have you he must.

110 **Cust.** I am promised during my life; that is just.

112 **Mery.** Marry so thinketh he, unto him alone.

114 **Cust.** No creature hath my faith and troth but one,
116 That is Gawyn Goodluck, and, if it be not he,
He hath no title this way whatever he be,
118 Nor I know none to whom I have such word spoken.

120 **Mery.** Ye know him not, you, by his letter and token?

122 **Cust.** Indeed true it is, that a letter I have,
But I never read it yet, as God me save.

124 **Mery.** Ye a woman, and your letter so long unread?

126 **Cust.** Ye may thereby know what haste I have to wed.
128 But now who it is, for my hand I know by guess.

130 **Mery.** Ah, well I say!

132 **Cust.** It is Roister Doister, doubtless.

134 **Mery.** Will ye never leave this dissimulation?
Ye know him not?

136 **Cust.** But by imagination,
138 For no man there is but a very dolt and lout
That to woo a widow would so go about.
140 He shall never have me his wife while he do live.

142 **Mery.** Then will he have you if he may, so mote I thrive,

And he biddeth you send him word by me,
 144 That ye humbly beseech him, ye may his wife be,
 And that there shall be no let in you nor mistrust,
 146 But to be wedded on Sunday next if he lust,
 And biddeth you to look for him.
 148
Cust. Doth he bid so?
 150
Mery. When he cometh, ask him whether he did or no.
 152
Cust. Go say that I bid him keep him warm at home,
 154 For if he come abroad, he shall cough me a mome;
 My mind was vexed, I shrew his head, sottish dolt!
 156
Mery. He hath in his head –
 158
Cust. As much brain as a burbolt.
 160
Mery. Well, dame Custance, if he hear you thus play choploge –
 162
Cust. What will he?
 164
Mery. Play the devil in the horologe.
 166
Cust. I defy him, lout.
 168
Mery. Shall I tell him what ye say?
 170
Cust. Yea, and add whatsoever thou canst, I thee pray.
 172 And I will avouch it, whatsoever it be.
 174
Mery. Then let me alone –; we will laugh well, ye shall see,
 It will not be long ere he will hither resort.
 176
Cust. Let him come when him lust, I wish no better sport.
 178 Fare ye well, I will in, and read my great letter.
 I shall to my wooer make answer the better.

[Exit.]

ACT III, SCENE III.

[*Still on Stage: Merygreeke.*]

Enter Roister Doister.

1 **Mery.** Now that the whole answer in my device doth rest,
2 I shall paint out our wooer in colours of the best,
And all that I say shall be on Custance's mouth;
4 She is author of all that I shall speak forsooth.
But yond cometh Roister Doister now in a trance.

6
7 **Roist.** Juno send me this day good luck and good chance!
8 I cannot but come see how Merygreeke doth speed.

10 **Mery.** I will not see him, but give him a jut indeed. –
I cry your mastership mercy.

12
13 **Roist.** And whither now?

14 **Mery.** As fast as I could run, sir, in post against you.
16 But why speak ye so faintly, or why are ye so sad?

18 **Roist.** Thou knowest the proverb – because I cannot be had.
Hast thou spoken with this woman?

20
21 **Mery.** Yea, that I have.

22
23 **Roist.** And what will this gear be?

24
25 **Mery.** No, so God me save.

26
27 **Roist.** Hast thou a flat answer?

28
29 **Mery.** Nay, a sharp answer.

30
31 **Roist.** What?

32
33 **Mery.** Ye shall not, she saith, by her will marry her cat.
34 Ye are such a calf, such an ass, such a block,
Such a lilburn, such a hoball, such a lobcock,
36 And because ye should come to her at no season,
She despised your maship out of all reason.
38 "Bawawe what ye say," ko I, "of such a gentman."
"Nay, I fear him not," ko she, "do the best he can.
40 He vaunteth himself for a man of prowess great,
Whereas a good gander, I daresay, may him beat.
42 And where he is louted and laughed to scorn,
For the veriest dolt that ever was born,

44 And veriest lover, sloven and beast,
 Living in this world from the west to the east:
 46 Yet of himself hath he such opinion,
 That in all the world is not the like minion.
 48 He thinketh each woman to be brought in dotage
 With the only sight of his goodly personage.
 50 Yet none that will have him – we do him lout and flock,
 And make him among us our common sporting stock,
 52 And so would I now," ko she, "save only because."
 "Better nay," ko I, "I lust not meddle with daws.
 54 Ye are happy," ko I, "that ye are a woman.
 This would cost you your life in case ye were a man."
 56
Roist. Yea, an hundred thousand pound should not save her life!
 58
Mery. No, but that ye woo her to have her to your wife –
 60 But I could not stop her mouth.
 62 **Roist.** Heigh ho, alas!
 64 **Mery.** Be of good cheer, man, and let the world pass.
 66 **Roist.** What shall I do or say now that it will not be?
 68 **Mery.** Ye shall have choice of a thousand as good as she,
 And ye must pardon her; it is for lack of wit.
 70
Roist. Yea, for were not I an husband for her fit?
 72 Well, what should I now do?
 74 **Mery.** In faith I cannot tell.
 76 **Roist.** I will go home and die.
 78 **Mery.** Then shall I bid toll the bell?
 80 **Roist.** No.
 82 **Mery.** God have mercy on your soul, ah, good gentleman,
 That e'er ye should thus die for an unkind woman.
 84 Will ye drink once ere ye go?
 86 **Roist.** No, no, I will none.
 88 **Mery.** How feel your soul to God?
 90 **Roist.** I am nigh gone.
 92 **Mery.** And shall we hence straight?
 94 **Roist.** Yea.

96 **Mery.** *Placebo dilexi.*

98 Master Roister Doister will straight go home and die,
 Our Lord Jesus Christ his soul have mercy upon!

100 Thus you see to-day a man, to-morrow John.
 Yet saving for a woman's extreme cruelty,

102 He might have lived yet a month or two or three.

104 **Roist.** Heigh-ho! Alas, the pangs of death my heart do break!

106 **Mery.** Hold your peace for shame, sir, a dead man may not speak!
Nequando. – What mourners and what torches shall we have?

108 **Roist.** None.

110 **Mery.** *Dirige.*

112 He will go darkling to his grave,
Neque lux, neque crux, neque mourners, *neque* clink,

114 He will steal to Heaven, unknowing to God, I think,
A porta inferi. Who shall your goods possess?

116 **Roist.** Thou shalt be my sectour, and have all more and less.

118 **Mery.** *Requiem aeternam.* – Now, God reward your mastership.
 And I will cry halfpenny-dole for your worship.
 Come forth, sirs, hear the doleful news I shall you tell.

122 [Evocat servos militis.]

124 Our good master here will no longer with us dwell.
 But in spite of Custance, which hath him wearied,
 Let us see his maship solemnly buried.

128 And while some piece of his soul is yet him within,
 Some part of his funerals let us here begin.

130 Yet, sirs, as ye will the bliss of Heaven win,
 When he cometh to the grave lay him softly in.

132 *Audivi vocem.*
 All men take heede by this one gentleman,
 How you set your love upon an unkind woman.
 For these women be all such mad peevish elves,
 They will not be won except it please themselves.
 But in faith, Custance, if ever ye come in hell,
 Master Roister Doister shall serve you as well!
 And will ye needs go from us thus in very deed?

140 **Roist.** Yea, in good sadness.

142 **Mery.** Now, Jesus Christ be your speed.
 144 Good-night, Roger, old knave! farewell, Roger, old knave!
 Good-night, Roger, old knave! knave, knap!
 146 *Nequando. Audivi vocem. Requiem aeternam.*
 148 Pray for the late master Roister Doister's soul,
 And come forth, parish clerk, let the passing bell toll. —
 150
 152 *Enter the Parish Clerk.*
 152 Pray for your master, sirs, and for him ring a peal.
 154 He was your right good master while he was in heal.
 156 *[The Peal Of Bells Rung By The Parish Clerk And Roister Doister's Four Men.]*
 158
 160 *The first Bell a Triple.*
 When died he? When died he?
 162 *The second.*
 We have him, we have him.
 164
 166 *The third.*
 Roister Doister, Roister Doister.
 168 *The fourth Bell.*
 He cometh, he cometh.
 170
 172 *The great Bell.*
 Our own, our own.
 174 **Mery.** *Qui Lazarum.*
 176 **Roist.** Heigh-ho!
 178 **Mery.** Dead men go not so fast
In Paradisum.
 180
 182 **Roist.** Heigh-ho!
 182 **Mery.** Soft, hear what I have cast.
 184
 186 **Roist.** I will hear nothing, I am past.
 186
 188 **Mery.** Whough, wellaway!
 Ye may tarry one hour, and hear what I shall say,
 Ye were best, sir, for a while to revive again,
 190 And quite them ere ye go.

192 **Roist.** Trowest thou so?

194 **Mery.** Yea, plain!

196 **Roist.** How may I revive, being now so far past?

198 **Mery.** I will rub your temples, and fet you again at last.

200 **Roist.** It will not be possible.

202 **Mery.** Yes, for twenty pound.

204 **Roist.** Arms, what dost thou?

206 **Mery.** Fet you again out of your sound.
By this cross ye were nigh gone indeed, I might feel
208 Your soul departing within an inch of your heel.
Now follow my counsel.

210 **Roist.** What is it?

212 **Mery.** If I were you,
214 Custance should eft seek to me, ere I would bow.

216 **Roist.** Well, as thou wilt have me, even so will I do.

218 **Mery.** Then shall ye revive again for an hour or two.

220 **Roist.** As thou wilt, I am content for a little space.

222 **Mery.** "Good hap is not hasty, yet in space cometh grace."
To speak with Custance yourself should be very well,
224 What good thereof may come, nor I nor you can tell.
But now the matter standeth upon your marriage,
226 Ye must now take unto you a lusty courage.
Ye may not speak with a faint heart to Custance,
228 But with a lusty breast and countenance,
That she may know she hath to answer to a man.

230 **Roist.** Yes, I can do that as well as any can.

232 **Mery.** Then because ye must Custance face to face woo,
234 Let us see how to behave yourself ye can do.
Ye must have a portly brag after your estate.

236 **Roist.** Tush, I can handle that after the best rate.

238 **Mery.** Well done! so lo, up man with your head and chin,
240 Up with that snout, man! So, lo, now ye begin! –
So, that is something like – but, pranky cote, nay whan!
242 That is a lusty brute – hands under your side, man!

So, lo, now is it even as it should be –
 244 That is somewhat like, for a man of your degree.
 Then must ye stately go, jetting up and down.
 246 Tut, can ye no better shake the tail of your gown?
 There, lo, such a lusty brag it is ye must make.
 248 **Roist.** To come behind, and make curtsy, thou must some pains
 take.
 250 **Mery.** Else were I much to blame, I thank your mastership.
 252 The Lord one day all-to-begrime you with worship! –
 Back, Sir Sauce, let gentlefolks have elbow room,
 254 Void, sirs, see ye not master Roister Doister come?
 Make place, my masters.
 256 **Roist.** Thou jostlest now too nigh.
 258 **Mery.** Back, all rude louts!
 260 **Roist.** Tush!
 262 **Mery.** I cry your maship mercy.
 264 Heyday – if fair fine mistress Custance saw you now,
 Ralph Roister Doister were her own, I warrant you.
 266 **Roist.** Ne'er an M. by your girdle?
 268 **Mery.** Your Good Mastership's
 270 Mastership were her own Mistress-ship's Mistress-ship!
 Ye were take up for hawks, ye were gone, ye were gone!
 272 But now one other thing more yet I think upon.
 274 **Roist.** Show what it is.
 276 **Mery.** A wooer, be he never so poor,
 Must play and sing before his best-beloved's door,
 278 How much more, then, you?
 280 **Roist.** Thou speakest well, out of doubt.
 282 **Mery.** And perchance that would make her the sooner come out.
 284 **Roist.** Go call my musicians, bid them hie apace.
 286 **Mery.** I will be here with them ere ye can say "Treyace."
 288 [Exit.]
 290 **Roist.** This was well said of Merygreeke. I 'low his wit.
 Before my sweetheart's door we will have a fit,

292 That if my love come forth, that I may with her talk,
 I doubt not but this gear shall on my side walk.
 294 But, lo, how well Merygreeke is returned sence.

296 [Re-enter Merygreeke with the musicians.]

298 **Mery.** There hath grown no grass on my heel since I went hence,
 Lo, here have I brought that shall make you pastance.

300 **Roist.** Come, sirs, let us sing to win my dear love Custance.

302 [Content.]

304 *I mun be married a Sunday,*
 306 *I mun be married a Sunday,*
Whosoever shall come that way,
 308 *I mun be married a Sunday.*

310 *Roister Doister is my name,*
Roister Doister is my name,
 312 *A lusty brute I am the same,*
I mun be married a Sunday.

314 *Christian Custance have I found,*
 316 *Christian Custance have I found,*
A widow worth a thousand pound,
 318 *I mun be married a Sunday.*

320 *Custance is as sweet as honey,*
Custance is as sweet as honey,
 322 *I her lamb and she my coney,*
I mun be married a Sunday.

324 *When we shall make our wedding feast,*
 326 *When we shall make our wedding feast,*
There shall be cheer for man and beast,
 328 *I mun be married a Sunday.*

330 *I mun be married a Sunday, etc.*

332 **Mery.** Lo, where she cometh, some countenance to her make,
 And ye shall hear me be plain with her for your sake.
 334

ACT III, SCENE IV.

[*Still on Stage: Merygreeke and Roister Doister.*]

Enter Custance.

1 **Cust.** What gauding and fooling is this afore my door?

2
3 **Mery.** May not folks be honest, pray you, though they be poor?

4
5 **Cust.** As that thing may be true, so rich folks may be fools.

6
7 **Roist.** Her talk is as fine as she had learned in schools.

8
9 **Mery.** Look partly toward her, and draw a little near.

10
11 **Cust.** Get ye home, idle folks!

12
13 **Mery.** Why, may not we be here?
14 Nay, and ye will ha'ze, ha'ze – otherwise, I tell you plain,
15 And ye will not ha'ze, then give us our gear again.

16
17 **Cust.** Indeed I have of yours much gay things, God save all.

18
19 **Roist.** Speak gently unto her, and let her take all.

20
21 **Mery.** Ye are too tender-hearted: shall she make us daws? –
22 Nay, dame, I will be plain with you in my friend's cause.

23
24 **Roist.** Let all this pass, sweetheart, and accept my service.

25
26 **Cust.** I will not be served with a fool in no wise.
27 When I choose an husband I hope to take a man.

28
29 **Mery.** And where will ye find one which can do that he can?
30 Now this man toward you being so kind,
31 You not to make him an answer somewhat to his mind!

32
33 **Cust.** I sent him a full answer by you, did I not?

34
35 **Mery.** And I reported it.

36
37 **Cust.** Nay, I must speak it again.

38
39 **Roist.** No, no, he told it all.

40
41 **Mery.** Was I not meetly plain?

42
43 **Roist.** Yes.

44 **Mery.** But I would not tell all; for faith, if I had,
 46 With you, dame Custance, ere this hour it had been bad,
 48 And not without cause – for this goodly personage
 Meant no less than to join with you in marriage.

50 **Cust.** Let him waste no more labour nor suit about me.

52 **Mery.** Ye know not where your preferment lieth, I see,
 He sending you such a token, ring and letter.

54 **Cust.** Marry, here it is – ye never saw a better.

56 **Mery.** Let us see your letter.

58 **Cust.** Hold, read it if ye can,
 60 And see what letter it is to win a woman.

62 **Mery.** "To mine own dear coney-bird, sweet-heart, and pigsney,
 Good Mistress Custance, present these by and by."
 64 Of this superscription do ye blame the style?

66 **Cust.** With the rest as good stuff as ye read a great while.

68 **Mery.** "Sweet mistress, where as I love you nothing at all –
 Regarding your substance and riches chief of all;
 70 For your personage, beauty, demeanour and wit,
 I commend me unto you never a whit.
 72 Sorry to hear report of your good welfare,
 For (as I hear say) such your conditions are,
 74 That ye be worthy favour of no living man;
 To be abhorred of every honest man;
 76 To be taken for a woman inclined to vice,
 Nothing at all to virtue giving her due price.
 78 Wherefore, concerning marriage, ye are thought
 Such a fine paragon, as ne'er honest man bought.
 80 And now by these presents I do you advertise,
 That I am minded to marry you in no wise.
 82 For your goods and substance, I could be content
 To take you as ye are. If ye mind to be my wife,
 84 Ye shall be assured, for the time of my life,
 I will keep you right well from good raiment and fare;
 86 Ye shall not be kept but in sorrow and care.
 Ye shall in no wise live at your own liberty;
 88 Do and say what ye lust, ye shall never please me.
 But when ye are merry, I will be all sad;
 90 When ye are sorry, I will be very glad;
 When ye seek your heart's ease, I will be unkind.

92 At no time in me shall ye much gentleness find,
 But all things contrary to your will and mind
 94 Shall be done – otherwise I will not be behind
 To speak. And as for all them that would do you wrong,
 96 I will so help and maintain, ye shall not live long;
 Nor any foolish dolt shall cumber you but I.
 98 I, whoe'er say nay, will stick by you till I die.
 Thus, good mistress Custance, the Lord you save and keep
 100 From me, Roister Doister, whether I wake or sleep,
 Who favoureth you no less (ye may be bold)
 102 Than this letter purporteth, which ye have unfold."

104 **Cust.** How by this letter of love? is it not fine?

106 **Roist.** By the arms of Caleys, it is none of mine.

108 **Mery.** Fie, you are foul to blame, this is your own hand!

110 **Cust.** Might not a woman be proud of such an husband?

112 **Mery.** Ah, that ye would in a letter show such despite!

114 **Roist.** Oh, I would I had him here, the which did it endite!

116 **Mery.** Why, ye made it yourself, ye told me, by this light.

118 **Roist.** Yea, I meant I wrote it mine own self yesternight.

120 **Cust.** I-wis, sir, I would not have sent you such a mock.

122 **Roist.** Ye may so take it, but I meant it not so, by Cock.

124 **Mery.** Who can blame this woman to fume and fret and rage?
 Tut, tut! yourself now have marred your own marriage. –
 126 Well, yet mistress Custance, if ye can this remit,
 This gentleman otherwise may your love requit.

128 **Cust.** No, God be with you both, and seek no more to me.
 130

[Exit.]

132 **Roist.** Wough! she is gone for ever, I shall her no more see.

134 **Mery.** What, weep? Fie, for shame! And blubber? For manhood's
 sake,

136 Never let your foe so much pleasure of you take.
 Rather play the man's part, and do love refrain.

138 If she despise you, e'en despise ye her again.

140 **Roist.** By Goss, and for thy sake I defy her indeed.

142 **Mery.** Yea, and perchance that way ye shall much sooner speed,
 For one mad property these women have in fey,
 144 When ye will, they will not, will not ye, then will they. –
 Ah, foolish woman! ah, most unlucky Custance!
 146 Ah, unfortunate woman! ah, peevish Custance!
 Art thou to thine harms so obstinately bent,
 148 That thou canst not see where lieth thine high preferment?
 Canst thou not lub dis man, which could lub dee so well?
 150 Art thou so much thine own foe?

152 **Roist.** Thou dost the truth tell.

154 **Mery.** Well I lament.

156 **Roist.** So do I.

158 **Mery.** Wherefore?

160 **Roist.** For this thing.
 Because she is gone.

162 **Mery.** I mourn for another thing.

164 **Roist.** What is it, Merygreeke, wherefore thou dost grief take?

166 **Mery.** That I am not a woman myself for your sake,
 168 I would have you myself, and a straw for yond gill,
 And mock much of you, though it were against my will.
 170 I would not, I warrant you, fall in such a rage,
 As so to refuse such a goodly personage.

172 **Roist.** In faith, I heartily thank thee, Merygreeke.

174 **Mery.** And I were a woman –

176 **Roist.** Thou wouldest to me seek.

178 **Mery.** For, though I say it, a goodly person ye be.

180 **Roist.** No, no.

182 **Mery.** Yes, a goodly man as e'er I did see.

184 **Roist.** No, I am a poor homely man, as God made me.

186 **Mery.** By the faith that I owe to God, sir, but ye be!
 188 Would I might for your sake spend a thousand pound land.

190 **Roist.** I dare say thou wouldest have me to thy husband.

192 **Mery.** Yea, and I were the fairest lady in the shire,
 And knew you as I know you, and see you now here —
 194 Well, I say no more.

196 **Roist.** Gramercies, with all my heart!

198 **Mery.** But since that cannot be, will ye play a wise part?

200 **Roist.** How should I?

202 **Mery.** Refrain from Custance a while now,
 And I warrant her soon right glad to seek to you.
 204 Ye shall see her anon come on her knees creeping,
 And pray you to be good to her, salt tears weeping.
 206

Roist. But what and she come not?

208

Mery. In faith, then, farewell she.
 210 Or else if ye be wroth, ye may avenged be.

212 **Roist.** By Cock's precious potstick, and e'en so I shall.
 I will utterly destroy her, and house and all.
 214 But I would be avenged in the mean space,
 On that vile scribbler, that did my wooing disgrace.
 216

Mery. "Scribbler," ko you, indeed he is worthy no less.
 218 I will call him to you, and ye bid me doubtless.

220 **Roist.** Yes, for although he had as many lives,
 As a thousand widows, and a thousand wives,
 222 As a thousand lions, and a thousand rats,
 A thousand wolves, and a thousand cats,
 224 A thousand bulls, and a thousand calves,
 And a thousand legions divided in halves,
 226 He shall never 'scape death on my sword's point,
 Though I should be torn therefore joint by joint.
 228

Mery. Nay, if ye will kill him, I will not fet him,
 230 I will not in so much extremity set him;
 He may yet amend, sir, and be an honest man,
 232 Therefore pardon him, good soul, as much as ye can.

234 **Roist.** Well, for thy sake, this once with his life he shall pass,
 But I will hew him all to pieces, by the Mass.
 236

Mery. Nay, faith, ye shall promise that he shall no harm have,
 238 Else I will not fet him.

240 **Roist.** I shall, so God me save —

242 | But I may chide him a-good.

244 | **Mery.** Yea, that do, hardily.

246 | **Roist.** Go, then.

248 | **Mery.** I return, and bring him to you by and by.

[*Exit.*]

ACT III, SCENE V.

[*Still on Stage: Roister Doister.*]

Enter Merygreeke and Scrivener.

- 1 **Roist.** What is a gentleman but his word and his promise?
 2 I must now save this villain's life in any wise,
 And yet at him already my hands do tickle,
 4 I shall uneth hold them, they will be so fickle.
 But, lo, and Merygreeke have not brought him sens.
- 6 **Mery.** Nay, I would I had of my purse paid forty pence.
- 8 **Scriv.** So would I too; but it needed not, that stound.
- 10 **Mery.** But the gentman had rather spent five thousand pound,
 12 For it disgraced him at least five times so much.
- 14 **Scriv.** He disgraced himself, his loutishness is such.
- 16 **Roist.** How long they stand prating! – Why comest thou not away?
- 18 **Mery.** Come now to himself, and hark what he will say.
- 20 **Scriv.** I am not afraid in his presence to appear.
- 22 **Roist.** Art thou come, fellow?
- 24 **Scriv.** How think you? Am I not here?
- 26 **Roist.** What hindrance hast thou done me, and what villainy?
- 28 **Scriv.** It hath come of thyself, if thou hast had any.
- 30 **Roist.** All the stock thou comest of later or rather,
 From thy first father's grandfather's father's father,
 32 Nor all that shall come of thee to the world's end,
 Though to threescore generations they descend,
 34 Can be able to make me a just recompense,
 For this trespass of thine and this one offence.
- 36 **Scriv.** Wherein?
- 38 **Roist.** Did not you make me a letter, brother?
- 40 **Scriv.** Pay the like hire, I will make you such another.
- 42 **Roist.** Nay, see and these whoreson Pharisees and Scribes
 44 Do not get their living by polling and bribes.

46 If it were not for shame –
 48 *Scriv.* Nay, hold thy hands still.
 50 *Mery.* Why, did ye not promise that ye would not him spill?
 52 *Scriv.* Let him not spare me.
 54 *Roist.* Why, wilt thou strike me again?
 56 *Scriv.* Ye shall have as good as ye bring of me, that is plain.
 58 *Mery.* I cannot blame him, sir, though your blows would him
 60 grieve.
 62 For he knoweth present death to ensue of all ye give.
 64 *Roist.* Well, this man for once hath purchased thy pardon.
 66 *Scriv.* And what say ye to me? or else I will be gone.
 68 *Roist.* I say the letter thou madest me was not good.
 70 *Scriv.* Then did ye wrong copy it, of likelihood.
 72 *Roist.* Yes, out of thy copy word for word I wrote.
 74 *Scriv.* Then was it as ye prayed to have it, I wot,
 76 But in reading and pointing there was made some fault.
 78 *Roist.* I wot not, but it made all my matter to halt.
 80 *Scriv.* How say you, is this mine original or no?
 82 *Roist.* The self same that I wrote out of, so mote I go!
 84 *Scriv.* Look you on your own fist, and I will look on this,
 86 And let this man be judge whether I read amiss.
 88 “To mine own dear coney-bird, sweetheart, and pigsney,
 90 Good Mistress Custance, present these by and by.”
 92 How now? doth not this superscription agree?
 94 *Roist.* Read that is within, and there ye shall the fault see.
 96 *Scriv.* “Sweet mistress, whereas I love you; nothing at all
 98 Regarding your riches and substance – chief of all
 100 For your personage, beauty, demeanour, and wit
 102 I commend me unto you; never a whit
 104 Sorry to hear report of your good welfare,
 106 For (as I hear say) such your conditions are,

94 That ye be worthy favour; of no living man
 To be abhorred; of every honest man
 To be taken for a woman inclined to vice
 96 Nothing at all; to virtue giving her due price.
 Wherefore, concerning marriage, ye are thought
 98 Such a fine paragon, as ne'er honest man bought.
 And now, by these presents, I do you advertise
 100 That I am minded to marry you; in no wise
 For your goods and substance; I can be content
 102 To take you as you are. If ye will be my wife,
 Ye shall be assured for the time of my life,
 104 I will keep you right well; from good raiment and fare
 Ye shall not be kept; but in sorrow and care
 106 Ye shall in no wise live; at your own liberty,
 Do and say what ye lust; ye shall never please me
 108 But when ye are merry; I will be all sad
 When ye are sorry; I will be very glad
 110 When ye seek your heart's ease; I will be unkind
 At no time; in me shall ye much gentleness find.
 112 But all things contrary to your will and mind
 Shall be done otherwise; I will not be behind
 114 To speak. And as for all them that would do you wrong
 (I will so help and maintain ye) shall not live long.
 116 Nor any foolish dolt shall cumber you; but I,
 I, whoe'er say nay, will stick by you till I die.
 118 Thus, good mistress Custance, the Lord you save and keep.
 From me, Roister Doister, whether I wake or sleep,
 120 Who favoureth you no less (ye may be bold)
 Than this letter purporteth, which ye have unfold."
 122 Now, sir, what default can ye find in this letter?

124 **Roist.** Of truth, in my mind there cannot be a better.

126 **Scriv.** Then was the fault in reading, and not in writing,
 No, nor I dare say in the form of enditing.
 128 But who read this letter, that it sounded so naught?

130 **Mery.** I read it, indeed.

132 **Scriv.** Ye read it not as ye ought.

134 **Roist.** Why, thou wretched villain, was all this same fault in thee?

136 **Mery.** I knock your costard if ye offer to strike me!

138 **Roist.** Strikest thou, indeed? and I offer but in jest?

140 **Mery.** Yea, and rap you again except ye can sit in rest –
 And I will no longer tarry here, me believe!

142 **Roist.** What, wilt thou be angry, and I do thee forgive? –
 144 Fare thou well, scribbler, I cry thee mercy indeed.
 146 **Scriv.** Fare ye well, bibbler, and worthily may ye speed!
 148 **Roist.** If it were another but thou, it were a knave.
 150 **Mery.** Ye are another yourself, sir, the Lord us both save.
 Albeit in this matter I must your pardon crave.
 152 Alas, would ye wish in me the wit that ye have?
 But as for my fault I can quickly amend,
 154 I will show Custance it was I that did offend.
 156 **Roist.** By so doing her anger maybe reformed.
 158 **Mery.** But if by no entreaty she will be turned,
 Then set light by her and be as testy as she,
 160 And do your force upon her with extremity.
 162 **Roist.** Come on, therefore, let us go home in sadness.
 164 **Mery.** That if force shall need all may be in a readiness –
 And as for this letter, hardily, let all go.
 166 We will know where she refuse you for that or no.

168

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.SCENE I.*Enter Sym Suresby.*

1 **Sym.** Is there any man but I, Sym Suresby, alone,
2 That would have taken such an enterprise him upon,
In such an outrageous tempest as this was,
4 Such a dangerous gulf of the sea to pass?
I think, verily, Neptune's mighty godship
6 Was angry with some that was in our ship,
And but for the honesty which in me he found,
8 I think for the others' sake we had been drowned.
But fie on that servant which for his master's wealth
10 Will stick for to hazard both his life and his health.
My master, Gawyn Goodluck, after me a day,
12 Because of the weather, thought best his ship to stay,
And now that I have the rough surges so well past,
14 God grant I may find all things safe here at last.
Then will I think all my travail well spent.
16 Now the first point wherefore my master hath me sent,
Is to salute dame Christian Custance, his wife
18 Espoused, whom he tendreth no less than his life.
I must see how it is with her, well or wrong,
20 And whether for him she doth not now think long.
Then to other friends I have a message or tway,
22 And then so to return and meet him on the way.
Now will I go knock that I may despatch with speed,
24 But lo, forth cometh herself happily indeed.

ACT IV, SCENE II.

[*Still on Stage: Sym.*]

Enter Custance.

- 1 **Cust.** I come to see if any more stirring be here,
- 2 But what stranger is this which doth to me appear?
- 4 **Sym.** I will speak to her. – Dame, the Lord you save and see.
- 6 **Cust.** What, friend Sym Suresby? Forsooth, right welcome ye be!
How doth mine own Gawyn Goodluck, I pray thee tell?
- 8
- 10 **Sym.** When he knoweth of your health he will be perfect well.
- 12 **Cust.** If he have perfect health, I am as I would be.
- 14 **Sym.** Such news will please him well, this is as it should be.
- 16 **Cust.** I think now long for him.
- 18 **Sym.** And he as long for you.
- 20 **Cust.** When will he be at home?
- 22 **Sym.** His heart is here e'en now,
His body cometh after.
- 24 **Cust.** I would see that fain.
- 26 **Sym.** As fast as wind and sail can carry it amain. –
But what two men are yond coming hitherward?
- 28 **Cust.** Now I shrew their best Christmas cheeks both togetherward.

ACT IV, SCENE III.

[*Still on Stage: Custance, Sym.*]

Enter Roister Doister and Merygreeke.

- 1 **Cust.** What mean these lewd fellows thus to trouble me still?
- 2 Sym Suresby here perchance shall thereof deem some ill,
- 3 And shall suspect in me some point of naughtiness –
- 4 And they come hitherward!
- 6 **Sym.** What is their business?
- 8 **Cust.** I have nought to them; nor they to me in sadness.
- 10 **Sym.** Let us hearken them; somewhat there is, I fear it.
- 12 **Roist.** I will speak out aloud best, that she may hear it.
- 14 **Mery.** Nay, alas, ye may so fear her out of her wit.
- 16 **Ralph.** By the cross of my sword, I will hurt her no whit.
- 18 **Mery.** Will ye do no harm indeed? shall I trust your word?
- 20 **Roist.** By Roister Doister's faith, I will speak but in bord. –
- 21 Sirs, see that my harness, my target, and my shield,
- 22 Be made as bright now, as when I was last in field,
- 23 As white as I should to war again to-morrow:
- 24 For sick shall I be, but I work some folk sorrow.
- 25 Therefore see that all shine as bright as Saint George,
- 26 Or as doth a key newly come from the smith's forge,
- 27 I would have my sword and harness to shine so bright,
- 28 That I might therewith dim mine enemies' sight,
- 29 I would have it cast beams as fast, I tell you plain,
- 30 As doth the glittering grass after a shower of rain.
- 31 And see that in case I should need to come to arming,
- 32 All things may be ready at a minute's warning,
- 33 For such chance may chance in an hour, do ye hear?
- 34 **Mery.** As perchance shall not chance again in seven year.
- 36 **Roist.** Now draw we near to her, and hear what shall be said.
- 38 **Mery.** But I would not have you make her too much afraid.
- 40 **Roist.** Well found, sweet wife, I trust, for all this your sour look.
- 42 **Cust.** "Wife" – why call ye me wife?
- 44

46 **Sym.** [*Aside.*] "Wife?" This gear goeth a-crook.

48 **Mery.** Nay, mistress Custance, I warrant you, our letter
Is not as we read e'en now, but much better,
And where ye half stomached this gentleman afore.
50 For this same letter, ye will love him now therefore,
Nor it is not this letter, though ye were a queen,
52 That should break marriage between you twain, I ween,

54 **Cust.** I did not refuse him for the letter's sake.

56 **Roist.** Then ye are content me for your husband to take?

58 **Cust.** You for my husband to take? nothing less truly.

60 **Roist.** Yea, say so, sweet spouse, afore strangers hardily.

62 **Mery.** And though I have here his letter of love with me,
Yet his ring and tokens he sent, keep safe with ye.

64 **Cust.** A mischief take his tokens, and him and thee too!
66 But what prate I with fools? have I naught else to do? –
Come in with me, Sym Suresby, to take some repast.

68 **Sym.** I must ere I drink, by your leave, go in all haste,
70 To a place or two, with earnest letters of his.

72 **Cust.** Then come drink here with me.

74 **Sym.** I thank you!

76 **Cust.** Do not miss.
You shall have a token to your master with you.

78 **Sym.** No tokens this time, gramercies, God be with you.

80 [Exit.]

82 **Cust.** Surely this fellow misdeemeth some ill in me,
84 Which thing but God help, will go near to spill me.

86 **Roist.** Yea, farewell, fellow, and tell thy master Goodluck
That he cometh too late of this blossom to pluck.
88 Let him keep him there still, or at leastwise make no haste,
As for his labour hither he shall spend in waste.
90 His betters be in place now.

92 **Mery.** As long as it will hold.

94 **Cust.** I will be even with thee, thou beast, thou mayst be bold!

96 **Roist.** Will ye have us then?

98 **Cust.** I will never have thee!

100 **Roist.** Then will I have you?

102 **Cust.** No, the devil shall have thee!
I have gotten this hour more shame and harm by thee,
104 Than all thy life days thou canst do me honesty.

106 **Mery.** Why now may ye see what it cometh to, in the end,
To make a deadly foe of your most loving friend; –
108 And, i-wis, this letter, if ye would hear it now –

110 **Cust.** I will hear none of it.

112 **Mery.** In faith, would ravish you.

114 **Cust.** He hath stained my name for ever, this is clear.

116 **Roist.** I can make all as well in an hour.

118 **Mery.** As ten year. –
How say ye, will ye have him?

120 **Cust.** No.

122 **Mery.** Will ye take him?

124 **Cust.** I defy him.

126 **Mery.** At my word?

128 **Cust.** A shame take him.
130 Waste no more wind, for it will never be.

132 **Mery.** This one fault with twain shall be mended, ye shall see.
Gentle mistress Custance, now, good mistress Custance!
134 Honey mistress Custance, now, sweet mistress Custance!
Golden mistress Custance, now, white mistress Custance!
136 Silken mistress Custance, now, fair mistress Custance!

138 **Cust.** Faith, rather than to marry with such a doltish lout,
I would match myself with a beggar, out of doubt.

140 **Mery.** Then I can say no more; to speed we are not like,
142 Except ye rap out a rag of your rhetoric.

144 **Cust.** Speak not of winning me, for it shall never be so!

146 **Roist.** Yes, dame, I will have you, whether ye will or no!

148 I command you to love me, wherefore should ye not?
Is not my love to you chafing and burning hot?

150 **Mery.** To her! That is well said.

152 **Roist.** Shall I so break my brain
To dote upon you, and ye not love us again?

154 **Mery.** Well said yet!

156 **Cust.** Go to, you goose!

158 **Roist.** I say, Kit Custance,
160 In case ye will not ha'ze, – well, better "yes," perchance!

162 **Cust.** Avaunt, losel! pick thee hence.

164 **Mery.** Well, sir, ye perceive,
For all your kind offer, she will not you receive.

166 **Roist.** Then a straw for her, and a straw for her again,
168 She shall not be my wife, would she never so fain –
No, and though she would be at ten thousand pound cost!

170 **Mery.** Lo, dame, ye may see what an husband ye have lost.

172 **Cust.** Yea, no force, a jewel much better lost than found.

174 **Mery.** Ah, ye will not believe how this doth my heart wound.
176 How should a marriage between you be toward,
If both parties draw back, and become so froward?

178 **Roist.** Nay, dame, I will fire thee out of thy house,
180 And destroy thee and all thine, and that by and by!

182 **Mery.** Nay, for the passion of God, sir, do not so.

184 **Roist.** Yes, except she will say yea to that she said no.

186 **Cust.** And what – be there no officers, trow we, in town
To check idle loiterers, bragging up and down?
188 Where be they, by whom vagabonds should be repressed,
That poor silly widows might live in peace and rest?
190 Shall I never rid thee out of my company?
I will call for help. – What ho, come forth, Trupenie!

192

194 *Enter Tom.*

196 **Trup.** Anon. What is your will, mistress? did ye call me?

198 **Cust.** Yea. Go run apace, and as fast as may be,
 Pray Tristram Trustie, my most assured friend,
 To be here by and by, that he may me defend.

200

202 **Trup.** That message so quickly shall be done, by God's grace,
 That at my return ye shall say, I went apace.

204 [Exit.]

206 **Cust.** Then shall we see, I trow, whether ye shall do me harm.

208 **Roist.** Yes, in faith, Kit, I shall thee and thine so charm,
 That all women incarnate by thee may beware.

210

212 **Cust.** Nay, as for charming me, come hither if thou dare,
 I shall clout thee till thou stink, both thee and thy train,
 And coil thee mine own hands, and send thee home again.

214

216 **Roist.** Yea, sayest thou me that, dame? Dost thou me threaten? –
 Go we, I will see whether I shall be beaten!

218 **Mery.** Nay, for the pashe of God, let me now treat peace,
 For bloodshed will there be in case this strife increase. –

220 Ah, good dame Custance, take better way with you.

222 **Cust.** Let him do his worst.

224 **Mery.** [To Custance.] Yield in time.

226 **Roist.** Come hence, thou.

228 [Exeunt Roister Doister and Merygreeke.]

ACT IV, SCENE IV.

[*Still on Stage: Custance.*]

1 **Cust.** So, sirrah, if I should not with him take this way,
 2 I should not be rid of him, I think, till doom's day.
 I will call forth my folks, that, without any mocks,
 4 If he come again we may give him raps and knocks. –
 Madge Mumblecrust, come forth, and Tibet Talkapace.
 6 Yea, and come forth too, mistress Annot Alyface.

8 *Enter Annot, Tibet and Madge.*

10 **Annot.** I come.

12 **Tibet.** And I am here.

14 **Mumb.** And I am here too, at length.

16 **Cust.** Like warriors, if need be, ye must show your strength.
 The man that this day hath thus beguiled you,
 18 Is Ralph Roister Doister, whom ye know well inowe,
 The most lout and dastard that ever on ground trod.

20 **Tibet.** I see all folk mock him when he goeth abroad.

22 **Cust.** What, pretty maid, will ye talk when I speak?

24 **Tibet.** No, forsooth, good mistress!

26 **Cust.** Will ye my tale break? –
 28 He threateneth to come hither with all his force to fight,
 I charge you, if he come, on him with all your might.

30 **Mumb.** I with my distaff will reach him one rap.

32 **Tibet.** And I with my new broom will sweep him one swap,
 34 And then with our great club I will reach him one rap.

36 **Annot.** And I with our skimmer will fling him one flap.

38 **Tibet.** Then Trupenie's firefork will him shrewdly fray,
 And you with the spit may drive him quite away.

40 **Cust.** Go, make all ready, that it may be even so.

42 **Tibet.** For my part I shrew them that last about it go.

44

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV, SCENE V.

[*Still on Stage: Custance.*]

Enter Tom and Tristram Trustie.

1 **Cust.** Trupenie did promise me to run a great pace,
2 My friend Tristram Trustie to fet into this place.
Indeed he dwelleth hence a good start, I confess:
4 But yet a quick messenger might twice since, as I guess,
Have gone and come again. Ah, yond I spy him now!

6 **Tom.** Ye are a slow goer, sir, I make God avow.
8 My mistress Custance will in me put all the blame,
Your legs be longer than mine – come apace for shame!

10 **Cust.** I can thee thank, Trupenie, thou hast done right well.

12 **Tom.** Mistress, since I went no grass hath grown on my heel,
14 But master Tristram Trustie here maketh no speed.

16 **Cust.** That he came at all, I thank him in very deed,
For now have I need of the help of some wise man.

18 **Trust.** Then may I be gone again, for none such I am.

20 **Tom.** Ye may be by your going – for no Alderman
22 Can go, I dare say, a sadder pace than ye can.

24 **Cust.** Trupenie, get thee in. Thou shalt among them know,
How to use thyself like a proper man, I trow.

26 **Tom.** I go.

[*Exit.*]

30 **Cust.** Now, Tristram Trustie, I thank you right much.
32 For, at my first sending, to come ye never grutch.

34 **Trust.** Dame Custance, God ye save, and while my life shall last,
For my friend Goodluck's sake ye shall not send in wast.

36 **Cust.** He shall give you thanks.

38 **Trust.** I will do much for his sake.

40 **Cust.** But alack, I fear, great displeasure shall be take.

42 **Trust.** Wherefore?

44 *Cust.* For a foolish matter.

46 *Trust.* What is your cause?

48 *Cust.* I am ill accumbred with a couple of daws.

50 *Trust.* Nay, weep not, woman, but tell me what your cause is.

52 As concerning my friend is anything amiss?

54 *Cust.* No, not on my part; but here was Sym Suresby –

56 *Trust.* He was with me and told me so.

58 *Cust.* And he stood by
While Ralph Roister Doister with help of Merygreeke,
60 For promise of marriage did unto me seek.

62 *Trust.* And had ye made any promise before them twain?

64 *Cust.* No, I had rather be torn in pieces and slain,
No man hath my faith and troth, but Gawyn Goodluck,
66 And that before Suresby did I say, and there stuck,
But of certain letters there were such words spoken –

68 *Trust.* He told me that too.

70 *Cust.* And of a ring and token, –

72 That Suresby I spied did more than half suspect,
That I my faith to Gawyn Good luck did reject.

74 *Trust.* But there was no such matter, dame Custance, indeed?

76 *Cust.* If ever my head thought it, God send me ill speed!
Wherefore, I beseech you, with me to be a witness,
78 That in all my life I never intended thing less,
And what a brainsick fool Ralph Roister Doister is,
80 Yourself know well enough.

82 *Trust.* Ye say full true, i-wis.

84 *Cust.* Because to be his wife I ne grant nor apply,
86 Hither will he come, he sweareth, by and by,
To kill both me and mine, and beat down my house flat.
88 Therefore I pray your aid.

90 *Trust.* I warrant you that.

92 *Cust.* Have I so many years lived a sober life,
And showed myself honest, maid, widow, and wife,

94 And now to be abused in such a vile sort?
Ye see how poor widows live all void of comfort.

96
98 **Trust.** I warrant him do you no harm nor wrong at all.

100 **Cust.** No, but Mathew Merygreeke doth me most appall,
That he would join himself with such a wretched lout.

102 **Trust.** He doth it for a jest, I know him out of doubt,
And here cometh Merygreeke.

104 **Cust.** Then shall we hear his mind.

106

ACT IV, SCENE VI.

[*Still on Stage: Custance and Trustie.*]

Enter Merygreeke.

1 **Mery.** Custance and Trustie both, I do you here well find.

2
3 **Cust.** Ah, Mathew Merygreeke, ye have used me well.

4
5 **Mery.** Now for altogether ye must your answer tell.
6 Will ye have this man, woman, or else will ye not?
7 Else will he come, never boar so brim nor toast so hot.

8
9 **Trust. And Cust.** But why join ye with him?

10
11 **Trust.** For mirth?

12
13 **Cust.** Or else in sadness?

14
15 **Mery.** The more fond of you both hardly yat matter guess.

16
17 **Trust.** Lo, how say ye, dame?

18
19 **Mery.** Why do ye think, dame Custance,
20 That in this wooing I have meant ought but pastance?

22 **Cust.** Much things ye spake, I wot, to maintain his dotage.

24 **Mery.** But well might ye judge I spake it all in mockage.
25 For why? Is Roister Doister a fit husband for you?

26
27 **Trust.** I daresay ye never thought it.

28
29 **Mery.** No, to God I vow.

30 And did not I know afore of the insurance
31 Between Gawyn Goodluck and Christian Custance?
32 And did not I for the nonce, by my conveyance,
33 Read his letter in a wrong sense for dalliance?
34 That if you could have take it up at the first bound,
35 We should thereat such a sport and pastime have found,
36 That all the whole town should have been the merrier.

38 **Cust.** Ill ache your heads both! I was never wearier,
39 Nor never more vexed since the first day I was born!

40
41 **Trust.** But very well I wist he here did all in scorn.

42
43 **Cust.** But I feared thereof to take dishonesty.

44 **Mery.** This should both have made sport and showed your honesty,
 46 And Goodluck, I dare swear, your wit therein would 'low.

48 **Trust.** Yea, being no worse than we know it to be now.

50 **Mery.** And nothing yet too late; for when I come to him,
 52 Hither will he repair with a sheep's look full grim,
 By plain force and violence to drive you to yield.

54 **Cust.** If ye two bid me, we will with him pitch a field,
 I and my maids together.

56 **Mery.** Let us see! be bold.

58 **Cust.** Ye shall see women's war!

60 **Trust.** That fight will I behold!

62 **Mery.** If occasion serve, taking his part full brim,
 64 I will strike at you, but the rap shall light on him,
 When we first appear.

66 **Cust.** Then will I run away
 68 As though I were afeard.

70 **Trust.** Do you that part well play
 And I will sue for peace.

72 **Mery.** And I will set him on.
 74 Then will he look as fierce as a Cotsold lion.

76 **Trust.** But when goest thou for him?

78 **Mery.** That do I very now.

80 **Cust.** Ye shall find us here.

82 **Mery.** Well, God have mercy on you!

84 **Trust.** There is no cause of fear; the least boy in the street –

86 **Cust.** Nay, the least girl I have, will make him take his feet.
 But hark! methink they make preparation.

88 **Trust.** No force, it will be a good recreation!

90 **Cust.** I will stand within, and step forth speedily,
 92 And so make as though I ran away dreadfully.

94 [Exit.]

ACT IV, SCENE VII.

[*Still on Stage: Trustie.*]

Enter Roister Doister [with his army of servants, including]
Merygreeke, Dobinet, and Harpax

1 **Roist.** Now, sirs, keep your ray, and see your hearts be stout.
2 But where be these caitiffs? Methink they dare not rout!
How sayest thou, Merygreeke? – what doth Kit Custance say?

4
Mery. I am loth to tell you.

6
Roist. Tush, speak, man – yea or nay?

8
Mery. Forsooth, sir, I have spoken for you all that I can,
10 But if ye win her, ye must e'en play the man,
E'en to fight it out, ye must a man's heart take.

12
Roist. Yes, they shall know, and thou knowest, I have a stomach.

14
Mery. “A stomach,” quod you, yea, as good as e'er man had!

16
Roist. I trow they shall find and feel that I am a lad.

18
Mery. By this cross, I have seen you eat your meat as well
20 As any that e'er I have seen of or heard tell.
“A stomach,” quod you? He that will that deny,
22 I know, was never at dinner in your company.

24
Roist. Nay, the stomach of a man it is that I mean.

26
Mery. Nay, the stomach of a horse or a dog, I ween.

28
Roist. Nay, a man's stomach with a weapon, mean I.

30
Mery. Ten men can scarce match you with a spoon in a pie.

32
Roist. Nay, the stomach of a man to try in strife.

34
Mery. I never saw your stomach cloyed yet in my life.

36
Roist. Tush, I mean in strife or fighting to try.

38
Mery. We shall see how ye will strike now, being angry.

40
Roist. Have at thy pate then, and save thy head if thou may.

42
Mery. Nay, then have at your pate again by this day.

44
Roist. Nay, thou mayst not strike at me again in no wise.

46 **Mery.** I cannot in fight make to you such warrantise:
But as for your foes, here let them the bargain bie.

48 **Roist.** Nay, as for they, shall every mother's child die.
50 And in this my fume a little thing might make me
To beat down house and all, and else the devil take me!

52 **Mery.** If I were as ye be, by Gog's dear mother,
54 I would not leave one stone upon another,
Though she would redeem it with twenty thousand pounds.

56 **Roist.** It shall be even so, by His lily wounds.

58 **Mery.** Be not at one with her upon any amends.

60 **Roist.** No, though she make to me never so many friends,
62 Nor if all the world for her would undertake,
No, not God himself neither, shall not her peace make,
64 On, therefore, march forward! – Soft, stay a while yet.

66 **Mery.** On.

68 **Roist.** Tarry.

70 **Mery.** Forth.

72 **Roist.** Back.

74 **Mery.** On.

76 **Roist.** Soft! Now forward set!

78 *Enter Custance.*

80 **Cust.** What business have we here? Out! alas, alas!

82 *[Custance, feigning fright, runs back inside.]*

84 **Roist.** Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!
Didst thou see that, Merygreeke, how afraid she was?
86 Didst thou see how she fled apace out of my sight?
Ah, good sweet Custance, I pity her by this light.

88 **Mery.** That tender heart of yours will mar altogether, –
90 Thus will ye be turned with wagging of a feather.

92 **Roist.** On, sirs, keep your ray.

94 **Mery.** On, forth, while this gear is hot.

96 **Roist.** Soft, the arms of Caleys, I have one thing forgot!

98 **Mery.** What lack we now?

100 **Roist.** Retire, or else we be all slain!

102 **Mery.** Back, for the pash of God! back, sirs, back again!
What is the great matter?

104 **Roist.** This hasty forthgoing
106 Had almost brought us all to utter undoing,
It made me forget a thing most necessary.

108 **Mery.** Well remembered of a captain, by Saint Mary.

110 **Roist.** It is a thing must be had.

112 **Mery.** Let us have it then.

114 **Roist.** But I wot not where nor how.

116 **Mery.** Then wot not I when.
118 But what is it?

120 **Roist.** Of a chief thing I am to seek.

122 **Mery.** Tut, so will ye be, when ye have studied a week. —
But tell me what it is?

124 **Roist.** I lack yet an headpiece.

126 **Mery.** The kitchen collocavit, the best hens to grease,
128 Run, fet it, Dobinet, and come at once withal,
And bring with thee my potgun, hanging by the wall.

130 [Exit Dobinet.]

132 I have seen your head with it, full many a time,
134 Covered as safe as it had been with a skrine;
And I warrant it save your head from any stroke,
136 Except perchance to be amazed with the smoke.
I warrant your head therewith, except for the mist,
138 As safe as if it were fast locked up in a chist.
And lo, here our Dobinet cometh with it now.

140 Re-enter Dobinet.

142 **Dob.** It will cover me to the shoulders well enow.

144 **Mery.** Let me see it on.

146 **Roist.** In faith, it doth metely well.
 148
 148 **Mery.** There can be no fitter thing. Now ye must us tell
 150 What to do.
 152 **Roist.** Now forth in ray, sirs, and stop no more!
 154 **Mery.** Now, Saint George to borrow, drum dub-a-dub afore!
 156 **Trust.** What mean you to do, sir, commit manslaughter?
 158 **Roist.** To kill forty such is a matter of laughter.
 160 **Trust.** And who is it, sir, whom ye intend thus to spill?
 162 **Roist.** Foolish Custance here forceth me against my will.
 164 **Trust.** And is there no mean your extreme wrath to slake?
 She shall some amends unto your good maship make.
 166
 166 **Roist.** I will none amends.
 168
 168 **Trust.** Is her offence so sore?
 170
 170 **Mery.** And he were a lout she could have done no more.
 172 She hath called him fool, and dressed him like a fool,
 Mocked him like a fool, used him like a fool.
 174
 174 **Trust.** Well, yet the sheriff, the justice, or constable,
 176 Her misdemeanour to punish might be able.
 178
 178 **Roist.** No, sir, I mine own self will, in this present cause,
 Be sheriff, and justice, and whole judge of the laws;
 180 This matter to amend, all officers be I shall,
 Constable, bailiff, sergeant.
 182
 182 **Mery.** And hangman and all.
 184
 184 **Trust.** Yet a noble courage, and the heart of a man,
 186 Should more honour win by bearing with a woman.
 Therefore take the law, and let her answer thereto.
 188
 188 **Roist.** Merygreeke, the best way were even so to do.
 190 What honour should it be with a woman to fight?
 192
 192 **Mery.** And what then, will ye thus forgo and lese your right?
 194
 194 **Roist.** Nay, I will take the law on her withouten grace.
 196
 196 **Trust.** Or, if your maship could pardon this one trespass,

198 I pray you forgive her!

200 **Roist.** Hoh!

202 **Mery.** Tush, tush, sir, do not!
Be good, master, to her.

204 **Roist.** Hoh!

206 **Mery.** Tush, I say, do not.
And what! shall your people here return straight home?

208 **Roist.** Yea, levy the camp, sirs, and hence again each one.
210 But be still in readiness, if I hap to call.
I cannot tell what sudden chance may befall.

212 **Mery.** Do not off your harness, sirs, I you advise,
214 At the least for this fortnight in no manner wise.
Perchance in an hour, when all ye think least,
216 Our master's appetite to fight will be best.
But soft, ere ye go, have one at Custance' house.

218 **Roist.** Soft, what wilt thou do?

220 **Mery.** Once discharge my harquebouse,
222 And, for my heart's ease, have once more with my potgun.

224 **Roist.** Hold thy hands, else is all our purpose clean fordone.

226 **Mery.** And it cost me my life.

228 **Roist.** I say, thou shalt not.

230 **Mery.** By the matte, but I will. Have once more with hail shot.
I will have some pennyworth, I will not lese all.

ACT IV, SCENE VIII.

[*Still on Stage: Trustie, Roister Doister and his army, with Merygreeke, Dobinet and Harpax, and at least one drummer.*]

Enter Custance.

1 **Cust.** What caitiffs are those that so shake my house wall?

2
3 **Mery.** Ah, sirrah! now, Custance, if ye had so much wit,
4 I would see you ask pardon, and yourselves submit.

6 **Cust.** Have I still this ado with a couple of fools?

8 **Mery.** Hear ye what she saith?

10 **Cust.** Maidens, come forth with your tools!

12 *Enter Custance's army of servants, all armed for battle.*

14 **Roist.** In array!

16 **Mery.** Dubbadub, sirrah!

18 **Roist.** In array!
They come suddenly on us.

20
22 **Mery.** Dubbadub!

24 **Roist.** In array!
That ever I was born, we are taken tardy.

26 **Mery.** Now, sirs, quit ourselves like tall men and hardy!

28 **Cust.** On afore, Trupenie! Hold thine own, Annot!
On toward them, Tibet! for 'scape us they cannot!
30 Come forth, Madge Mumblecrust, to stand fast together!

32 **Mery.** God send us a fair day!

34 **Roist.** See, they march on hither!

36 **Tibet.** But, mistress

38 **Cust.** What sayest thou?

40 **Tibet.** Shall I go fet our goose?

42 **Cust.** What to do?

44 **Tibet.** To yonder captain I will turn her loose,
And she gape and hiss at him, as she doth at me,

46 I durst jeopard my hand she will make him flee.
 48 **Cust.** On forward!
 50 **Roist.** They come!
 52 **Mery.** Stand!
 54 **Roist.** Hold!
 56 **Mery.** Keep!
 58 **Roist.** There!
 60 **Mery.** Strike!
 62 **Roist.** Take heed!
 64 **Cust.** Well said, Trupenie!
 66 **Trup.** Ah, whoresons!
 68 **Cust.** Well done, indeed.
 70 **Mery.** Hold thine own, Harpax! down with them, Dobinet!
 72 **Cust.** Now Madge, there Annot! now stick them, Tibet!
 74 **Tibet.** All my chief quarrel is to this same little knave,
 That beguiled me last day – nothing shall him save.
 76 **Dob.** Down with this little quean, that hath at me such spite!
 78 Save you from her, master – it is a very sprite!
 80 **Cust.** I myself will Mounsire Graund Captaine undertake.
 82 **Roist.** They win ground!
 84 **Mery.** Save yourself, sir, for God's sake!
 86 **Roist.** Out, alas! I am slain! Help!
 88 **Mery.** Save yourself!
 90 **Roist.** Alas!
 92 **Mery.** Nay, then, have at you, mistress!
 94 **Roist.** Thou hittest me, alas!
 96 **Mery.** I will strike at Custance here.
 98 **Roist.** Thou hittest me!
 100 **Mery.** So I will! –

102 Nay, mistress Custance!

104 **Roist.** Alas! thou hittest me still.
Hold.

106 **Mery.** Save yourself, sir.

108 **Roist.** Help! Out, alas! I am slain!

110 **Mery.** Truce, hold your hands, truce for a pissing while or twain! –
Nay, how say you, Custance, for saving of your life,
112 Will ye yield and grant to be this gentman's wife?

114 **Cust.** Ye told me he loved me – call ye this love?

116 **Mery.** He loved a while even like a turtle-dove.

118 **Cust.** Gay love, God save it! – so soon hot, so soon cold.

120 **Mery.** I am sorry for you – he could love you yet, so he could.

122 **Roist.** Nay, by Cock's precious, she shall be none of mine!

124 **Mery.** Why so?

126 **Roist.** Come away! by the matte, she is mankine.
I durst adventure the loss of my right hand,
128 If she did not slee her other husband, –
And see if she prepare not again to fight!

130 **Mery.** What then? Saint George to borrow, our ladies' knight!

132 **Roist.** Slee else whom she will, by Gog, she shall not slee me!

134 **Mery.** How then?

136 **Roist.** Rather than to be slain, I will flee.

138 **Cust.** To it again, my knightesses! Down with them all!

140 **Roist.** Away, away, away! she will else kill us all.

142 **Mery.** Nay, stick to it, like an hardy man and a tall.

144 **Roist.** Oh bones, thou hittest me! Away, or else die we shall.

146 **Mery.** Away, for the pashe of our sweet Lord Jesus Christ.

148 **Cust.** Away, lout and lubber, or I shall be thy priest.

150

[*Exeunt om.*]

152

So this field is ours, we have driven them all away.

154

Tibet. Thanks to God, mistress, ye have had a fair day.

156

Cust. Well, now go ye in, and make yourself some good cheer.

158

Omnes pariter. We go.

160

[Exit Custance's Amazons.]

162

Trust. Ah, sir, what a field we have had here!

164

Cust. Friend Tristram, I pray you be a witness with me.

166

Trust. Dame Custance, I shall depose for your honesty,
And now fare ye well, except something else ye would.

168

Cust. Not now, but when I need to send I will be bold.
I thank you for these pains. And now I will get me in.

170

172

[Exit Trustie.]

174

Now Roister Doister will no more wooing begin.

[Exit.]

ACT V.SCENE I.

Enter Gawyn Goodluck and Sym.

1 **Gawyn.** Sym Suresby, my trusty man, now advise thee well,
2 And see that no false surmises thou me tell.
Was there such ado about Custance of a truth?

4
Sym. To report that I heard and saw, to me is ruth,
6 But both my duty and name and property
Warneth me to you to show fidelity.
8 It may be well enough, and I wish it so to be;
She may herself discharge, and try her honesty –
10 Yet their claim to her methought was very large,
For with letters, rings and tokens, they did her charge,
12 Which when I heard and saw I would none to you bring.

14 **Gawyn.** No, by Saint Marie, I allow thee in that thing.
Ah, sirrah, now I see truth in the proverb old,
16 All things that shineth is not by and by pure gold!
If any do live a woman of honesty,
18 I would have sworn Christian Custance had been she.

20 **Sym.** Sir, though I to you be a servant true and just,
Yet do not ye therefore your faithful spouse mistrust.
22 But examine the matter, and if ye shall it find
To be all well, be not ye for my words unkind.

24
Gawyn. I shall do that is right, and as I see cause why –
26 But here cometh Custance forth, we shall know by and by.

ACT V, SCENE II.

[*Still on Stage: Gawyn and Sym.*]

Enter Custance.

- 1 **Cust.** I come forth to see and hearken for news good,
- 2 For about this hour is the time of likelihood,
- 3 That Gawyn Goodluck by the sayings of Suresby
- 4 Would be at home, and lo, yond I see him, I! –
- 5 What! Gawyn Goodluck, the only hope of my life!
- 6 Welcome home, and kiss me, your true espoused wife.
- 8 **Gawyn.** Nay, soft, dame Custance; I must first, by your licence,
- 9 See whether all things be clear in your conscience.
- 10 I hear of your doings to me very strange.
- 12 **Cust.** What! fear ye that my faith towards you should change?
- 14 **Gawyn.** I must needs mistrust ye be elsewhere entangled,
- 15 For I hear that certain men with you have wrangled
- 16 About the promise of marriage by you to them made.
- 18 **Cust.** Could any man's report your mind therein persuade?
- 20 **Gawyn.** Well, ye must therein declare yourself to stand clear,
- 21 Else I and you, dame Custance, may not join this year.
- 22 **Cust.** Then would I were dead, and fair laid in my grave! –
- 23 Ah, Suresby, is this the honesty that ye have,
- 24 To hurt me with your report, not knowing the thing?
- 26 **Sym.** If ye be honest, my words can hurt you nothing,
- 27 But what I heard and saw, I might not but report.
- 30 **Cust.** Ah, Lord, help poor widows, destitute of comfort! –
- 31 Truly, most dear spouse, nought was done but for pastance.
- 32 **Gawyn.** But such kind of sporting is homely dalliance.
- 34 **Cust.** If ye knew the truth, ye would take all in good part.
- 36 **Gawyn.** By your leave, I am not half well skilled in that art.
- 38 **Cust.** It was none but Roister Doister, that foolish mome.
- 40 **Gawyn.** Yea, Custance, better, they say, a bad 'scuse than none.
- 42 **Cust.** Why, Tristram Trustie, sir, your true and faithful friend,
- 44 Was privy both to the beginning and the end.

46 | Let him be the judge, and for me testify.

48 | **Gawyn.** I will the more credit that he shall verify.

48 | And because I will the truth know e'en as it is,

50 | I will to him myself, and know all without miss. —

50 | Come on, Sym Suresby, that before my friend thou may

52 | Avouch the same words, which thou didst to me say.

[*Gawyn and Sym Exit.*]

ACT V, SCENE III.

[*Still on Stage: Custance.*]

1 **Cust.** O Lord! how necessary it is now of days
 2 That each body live uprightly all manner ways,
 For let never so little a gap be open,
 4 And be sure of this, the worst shall be spoken.
 How innocent stand I in this for deed or thought,
 6 And yet see what mistrust towards me it hath wrought!
 But thou, Lord, knowest all folks' thoughts and eke intents,
 8 And thou art the deliverer of all innocents.
 Thou didst help the advoutress, that she might be amended,
 10 Much more then help, Lord, that never ill intended.
 Thou didst help Susanna, wrongfully accused,
 12 And no less dost thou see, Lord, how I am now abused.
 Thou didst help Hester, when she should have died,
 14 Help also, good Lord, that my truth may be tried.
 Yet if Gawyn Goodluck with Tristram Trustie speak,
 16 I trust of ill report the force shall be but weak.
 And lo, yond they come, sadly talking together,
 18 I will abide, and not shrink for their coming hither.

ACT V, SCENE IV.

[*Still on Stage: Custance.*]

Enter Gawyn Goodluck, Tristram Trusti and Sym Suresby.

- 1 **Gawyn.** And was it none other than ye to me report?
- 2
- 3 **Trust.** No, and here were ye wished to have seen the sport.
- 4
- 5 **Gawyn.** Would I had, rather than half of that in my purse!
- 6
- 7 **Sym.** And I do much rejoice the matter was no worse,
- 8 And like as to open it I was to you faithful,
- 9 So of dame Custance' honest truth I am joyful,
- 10 For God forbend that I should hurt her by false report.
- 11
- 12 **Gawyn.** Well, I will no longer hold her in discomfort.
- 13
- 14 **Cust.** Now come they hitherward, I trust all shall be well.
- 15
- 16 **Gawyn.** Sweet Custance, neither heart can think nor tongue tell,
- 17 How much I joy in your constant fidelity!
- 18 Come now, kiss me, the pearl of perfect honesty.
- 19
- 20 **Cust.** God let me no longer to continue in life,
- 21 Than I shall towards you continue a true wife.
- 22
- 23 **Gawyn.** Well, now to make you for this some part of amends,
- 24 I shall desire first you, and then such of our friends
- 25 As shall to you seem best, to sup at home with me,
- 26 Where at your fought field we shall laugh and merry be.
- 27
- 28 **Sym.** And mistress, I beseech you, take with me no grief;
- 29 I did a true man's part, not wishing you reprieve.
- 30
- 31 **Cust.** Though hasty reports, through surmises growing,
- 32 May of poor innocents be utter overthrowing,
- 33 Yet because to thy master thou hast a true heart,
- 34 And I know mine own truth, I forgive thee for my part.
- 35
- 36 **Gawyn.** Go we all to my house, and of this gear no more. –
- 37 Go, prepare all things, Sym Suresby; hence, run afore.
- 38
- 39 **Sym.** I go.
- 40

[*Exit.*]

- 41
- 42
- 43 **Gawyn.** But who cometh yond, – Mathew Merygreeke?
- 44

46 | ***Cust.*** Roister Doister's champion, I shrew his best cheek!

48 | ***Trust.*** Roister Doister self, your wooer, is with him too.
Surely some thing there is with us they have to do.

ACT V, SCENE V.

[*Still on Stage: Gawyn, Custance and Trustie.*]

Enter Merygreeke and Roister Doister.

1 **Mery.** Yond I see Gawyn Goodluck, to whom lieth my message;
2 I will first salute him after his long voyage,
And then make all thing well concerning your behalf.

4
6 **Roist.** Yea, for the pash of God.

6 **Mery.** Hence out of sight, ye calf,
8 Till I have spoke with them, and then I will you fet.

10 **Roist.** In God's name!

12 [Exit Roister Doister.]

14 **Mery.** What, master Gawyn Goodluck, well met!
And from your long voyage I bid you right welcome home.

16 **Good.** I thank you.

18 **Mery.** I come to you from an honest mome.

20 **Good.** Who is that?

22 **Mery.** Roister Doister, that doughty kite.

24 **Cust.** Fie! I can scarce abide ye should his name recite.

26 **Mery.** Ye must take him to favour, and pardon all past;
28 He heareth of your return, and is full ill aghast.

30 **Gawyn.** I am right well content he have with us some cheer.

32 **Cust.** Fie upon him, beast! then will not I be there.

34 **Gawyn.** Why, Custance, do ye hate him more than ye love me?

36 **Cust.** But for your mind, sir, where he were would I not be.

38 **Trust.** He would make us all laugh.

40 **Mery.** Ye ne'er had better sport.

42 **Gawyn.** I pray you, sweet Custance, let him to us resort.

44 **Cust.** To your will I assent.

46 **Mery.** Why, such a fool it is,

48 | As no man for good pastime would forgo or miss.

50 | **Gawyn.** Fet him to go with us.

52 | **Mery.** He will be a glad man.

[*Exit.*]

54 | **Trust.** We must to make us mirth, maintain him all we can.
56 | And lo, yond he cometh, and Merygreeke with him.

58 | **Cust.** At his first entrance ye shall see I will him trim.
60 | But first let us hearken the gentleman's wise talk.

Trust. I pray you, mark, if ever ye saw crane so stalk.

ACT V, SCENE VI.

[*Still on Stage: Custance, Gawyn and Trustie.*]

Enter Merygreeke and Roister Doister.

- 1 **Roist.** May I then be bold?
 2
 3 **Mery.** I warrant you, on my word,
 4 They say they shall be sick, but ye be at their board.
 5
 6 **Roist.** They were not angry, then?
 7
 8 **Mery.** Yes, at first, and made strange,
 9 But when I said your anger to favour should change,
 10 And therewith had commended you accordingly,
 11 They were all in love with your maship by and by,
 12 And cried you mercy that they had done you wrong.
 13
 14 **Roist.** For why no man, woman, nor child can hate me long.
 15
 16 **Mery.** "We fear," quod they, "he will be avenged one day,
 17 Then for a penny give all our lives we may."
 18
 19 **Roist.** Said they so indeed?
 20
 21 **Mery.** Did they? yea, even with one voice –
 22 "He will forgive all," quod I. Oh, how they did rejoice!
 23
 24 **Roist.** Ha, ha, ha!
 25
 26 **Mery.** "Go fet him," say they, "while he is in good mood,
 27 For have his anger who lust, we will not, by the Rood."
 28
 29 **Roist.** I pray God that it be all true, that thou hast me told,
 30 And that she fight no more.
 31
 32 **Mery.** I warrant you, be bold.
 33 To them, and salute them!
 34
 35 **Roist.** Sirs, I greet you all well!
 36
 37 **Omnes.** Your mastership is welcome.
 38
 39 **Cust.** Saving my quarrel –
 40 For sure I will put you up into the Exchequer.
 41
 42 **Mery.** Why so? better nay – wherefore?
 43
 44 **Cust.** For an usurer.

46 **Ralph.** I am no usurer, good mistress, by His arms!

48 **Mery.** When took he gain of money to any man's harms?

50 **Cust.** Yes, a foul usurer he is, ye shall see else.

52 **Roist.** Didst not thou promise she would pick no mo quarrels?

54 **Cust.** He will lend no blows, but he have in recompense
Fifteen for one, which is too much of conscience.

56

58 **Roist.** Ah, dame, by the ancient law of arms, a man
Hath no honour to foil his hands on a woman.

60 **Cust.** And where other usurers take their gains yearly,
This man is angry but he have his by and by.

62

64 **Gawyn.** Sir, do not for her sake bear me your displeasure.

66 **Mery.** Well, he shall with you talk thereof more at leisure.
Upon your good usage, he will now shake your hand.

68 **Roist.** And much heartily welcome from a strange land.

70 **Mery.** Be not afeard, Gawyn, to let him shake your fist.

72 **Gawyn.** Oh, the most honest gentleman that e'er I wist.
I beseech your maship to take pain to sup with us.

74

76 **Mery.** He shall not say you nay, and I too, by Jesus,
Because ye shall be friends, and let all quarrels pass.

78 **Roist.** I will be as good friends with them as ere I was.

80 **Mery.** Then let me fet your quire that we may have a song.

82 **Roist.** Go.

84 [Exit Merygreeke.]

86 **Gawyn.** I have heard no melody all this year long.

88 Re-enter Merygreeke
[with Dobinet, Harpax and the musicians.]

90 **Mery.** Come on, sirs, quickly.

92 **Roist.** Sing on, sirs, for my friends' sake.

94 **Dob.** Call ye these your friends?

96 **Roist.** Sing on, and no mo words make.

98

[*Here they sing.*]

100

Gawyn. The Lord preserve our most noble Queen of renown,
And her virtues reward with the heavenly crown.

102

104

Cust. The Lord strengthen her most excellent Majesty,
Long to reign over us in all prosperity.

106

108

Trust. That her godly proceedings the faith to defend,
He may 'stablish and maintain through to the end.

110

112

Mery. God grant her, as she doth, the Gospel to protect,
Learning and virtue to advance, and vice to correct.

114

116

Roist. God grant her loving subjects both the mind and grace,
Her most godly proceedings worthily to embrace.

118

120

Harp. Her highness' most worthy counsellors, God prosper
With honour and love of all men to minister.

122

Omnes. God grant the nobility her to serve and love,
With all the whole commony as doth them behove.

AMEN

Optional Textual Changes.

The texts of the Scripts prepared for our website, ElizabethanDrama.org, generally lean towards keeping the language of the plays' earliest editions. Where obvious errors in typography have occurred, the emendations suggested by early and modern editors are usually accepted without comment.

Words and syllables have in some cases been added to the original text; such additions appear within hard brackets [], and may be omitted at a director's discretion. Additions may be made for one of two reasons: (1) where words or syllables have clearly been omitted from the original text by accident, and are needed for a line to make sense; and (2) where words or syllables are added to repair a line's meter.

The text of this Script may be confidently adopted by a theatre group without further revision; however, we present below a list of changes a director may wish to consider, if he or she feels any of them would make the language more sensible, etc. Most of these emendations represent suggestions of later editors of the play, and a few represent restoring original language from the quartos.

Explanations for all these possible emendations can be found in the annotated edition of this play found on our website.

Prologue.

Omit the Prologue.

Act I, Scene iv.

1. line 299: emend *is well enough* to *will win her*.

Act I, Scene v.

1. line 4: emend *'low* to *love*.

Act II, Scene iv.

1. line 35: in place on *No?*, reinstate the quarto's *No did?*

Act III, Scene ii.

1. line 17: emend *some wife* to *somewhile*.

Act III, Scene iii.

1. line 38: emend *Bewawe* to *Beware*.

2. line 100: emend *John* to *none*.

3. line 226: emend *courage* to *carriage*.

Act IV, Scene vi.

1. line 7: emend *brim* to *breme*.

Act IV, Scene viii.

1. line 131: emend *our ladies'* to *our Lady's*.