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presents
the Annotated Popular Edition of

Gammer Gurton's Needle
by Mr. S
c. 1562-4?

Featuring complete and easy-to-read annotations.

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GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

by Mr. S.

c. 1562-4?

A Ryght Pithy, Pleasaunt, anp Merie Comedie, Intytuled
Gammer Gurtons Nedle: Played on Stage, not longe ago
in Christes Colledge in Cambridge.

Made by Mr. S. Mr. of Art.

God Save the Queene.

The Names of the Speakers in this Comedy:

Gammer Gurton.

Hodge, Gammer Gurton's Servant.

Tib, Gammer Gurton's Maid.

Cock, Gammer Gurton's Boy.

Diccon, the Bedlam.

Doctor Rat, the Curate

Master Baily, the Bailiff.

Scapethrift, Master Baily's Servant.

Dame Chat.

Doll, Dame Chat's Maid.

Mutes

INTRODUCTION to the PLAY

Gammer Gurton's Needle is considered to be the second-earliest proper English comedy extant. *Gammer* is also one of the most entertainingly - or grossly - vulgar plays in the canon, but this is because of its earthy humour based on bodily-functions rather than on sex. The characters are low-brow, and the dialogue full of colourful dialect, all of which is explained in the annotations. The action is driven by the vagabond Diccon, a conniving trickster, who orchestrates all of the play's confusion and violence.

NOTE on the PLAY'S SOURCE

The text of the play is taken from John Farmer's 1906 edition of *Gammer*, cited below at #3, with some original spelling from the earliest known edition of 1575 reinstated.

NOTES on the ANNOTATIONS

Mention of Farmer, Bradley, Hazlitt, Dodsley, Gassner, Whitworth and Brett-Smith in the annotations refers to the notes provided by each of these editors in their respective editions of this play, each cited fully below.

Mention of Clements refers to the stage directions suggested in his abbreviated edition of the play.

The most commonly cited sources are listed in the footnotes immediately below. The complete list of footnotes appears at the end of this play.

1. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online.

2. Crystal, David and Ben. *Shakespeare's Words*. London; New York: Penguin, 2002.

3. Farmer, John S. *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. London: Gibbings and Co., 1906.

4. Bradley, Henry, ed. *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, pp. 195-262. From *Representative English Comedies*, Charles Mills Gayley, general editor. London: Mac-Millan & Co., 1916.

5. Hazlitt, W. Carew. *A Selected Collection of Old English Plays*, Vol. III (originally published by Robert

Dodsley). London: Reeves and Turner, 1874.

6. Dodsley, Robert. *The Ancient British Drama*. Edinburgh: James Ballentyne & Co., 1810.

7. Gassner, John. *Medieval and Tudor Drama*. New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1968.

8. Whitworth, Charles W. *Three Sixteenth Century Comedies*. London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1984.

11. Brett-Smith, H.F.B. *Gammer Gvrtons Needle*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1920.

12. Clements, Colin Campbell. *Gammer Gurton's Needle, a Modern Adaptation*. Samuel French, 1922.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

A. Who Wrote *Gammer Gurton's Needle*?

Much ink has been spent by detective-scholars trying to determine the identity of the author of *Gammer*. A starting point has been the notation in the play's title page, which tells us that the playwright was "Mr. S., Mr. (ie. Master) of Art.", and that *Gammer* was performed "not longe ago" - that is, some unspecified time before the play's publication date of 1575 - at Christ's College at Cambridge; the reasoning, reasonably enough, is that the shadowy Mr. S must have been a member of Christ's College, and that his surname must begin with the letter S.

We see no reason to draw any conclusions on this score, but will simply identify who the candidates for authorship have been over the centuries:

(1) the earliest nominee was **John Still**, a cleric who began his career at Christ's College, and was later promoted to the bishopric of Bath and Wales; however, the evidence against him is strong: as *Gammer* editor John Farmer, who had sifted the contemporary descriptions of Bishop Still, wrote in 1906, there is "(no) evidence that he ever made a joke."³

(2) **William Stevenson**, a member of the faculty at Christ's College in the 1550's; the OED's numerous citations from *Gammer* attach Stevenson's name as *Gammer's* author; and

(3) **John Bridges**, of Pembroke College at Cambridge. The supposition that Bridges is our author is based on a 16th century letter written to him critically accusing him of having written *Gammer Gurton's Needle*.

A good summary of the history of this minor historical mystery can be found in the *Introduction* of Charles Whitworth's *Three Sixteenth Century Comedies* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1984).

B. The Setting and Scenery of *Gammer*.

A reading of the play makes it very clear that *Gammer* takes place entirely on the street and yards in front of two adjacent houses, the first the home of our play's heroine, *Gammer Gurton*, and the other that of *Dame Chat*; *Chat's* house also doubles as a tavern, or alehouse, run by the same lady. Characters will enter and exit the stage either through one of the doors of the two houses, or off-stage if they are entering or exiting the scene by means of the fronting road.

Many of the scenes do not end clearly with all of the actors - no women were to play on the stage for another century - vacating the stage; our author often begins a new scene whenever a character or two enters the stage to join those already present.

The original edition of *Gammer* included practically no stage directions; thus, except where noted, the stage directions in this edition of the play are all provided by the present editor or other early editors; a substantial number of our stage directions are borrowed from the practical and abbreviated edition of *Gammer* published by Colin Clements in 1922.¹²

C. *Gammer's* Gleeeful Scatological Obsession.

If anyone remembers *Gammer* today, it is likely for its incessant use of excrement and buttocks as a source of humour. Thus, we have one character unexpectedly picking a piece of *cat's turd* off his clothing, numerous references to *arses*, and most famously, perhaps the only character in all the canon who soils himself in the very worst way right on stage.

Because the play was performed at an all-male college, - women did not attend university, nor receive any formal education at all in this century - it is not surprising, and perhaps even relieving, to know that young men of almost five centuries ago were as willing to laugh at poo-poo and pee-pee jokes as they are today.

D. Oaths and Swears.

Gammer Gurton's Needle contains a dizzying range of oaths and swears, and almost all of them are of a religious nature, including many which will be familiar to any reader of Elizabethan drama, invoking the Lord's *soul*, *heart* and *mother*; but the observant reader will also note the presence of many unique and colourfully odd oaths, such as those invoking God's *sacrament*, *malt* and *blest* (ie. bliss).

As you read the play, you may observe that the characters have no aversion to explicitly mentioning God and Jesus in their oaths, although *God* is often replaced euphemistically with *Gog* and *Cock*. Additionally, we find a *by Gis* and a *by Gigs*, rather silly euphemisms for *by Jesus*. It was only later, in the first decade of the 17th century, that the explicit use of God's name on stage was banned by a statute of Parliament, so that plays printed after 1606 generally contained no such explicit expressions.

E. Gammer's Use of Dialect.

Probably the most difficult task a modern reader of *Gammer* may face is dealing with the heavy use of dialectical and regional words and phrases which appear densely throughout the play.

The most obvious instances of dialect are those in which the pronoun 'I' is replaced by *ich*, and in which common two-word combinations, such as *ich have* and *ich am* (ie. "I have" and "I am") are abbreviated (to *chave* and *cham* in our examples respectively). This aspect of dialect is identified with the good people of south-western England, but it also became the go-to means by which an Elizabethan author would give his characters a rural flavour.

We also find the occasional first-letter 'f' and 'v' of words interchanged, so that *father* becomes *vather*, but *vixen* becomes *fixen*; additionally, the author appears to take liberties in creating his own faux-dialectical words, such as *glay* for *clay* and *feygh* for *fight*, there being no authority for such modifications.

A unique approach to this edition of *Gammer* is to restore the original spelling of a word whenever the original spelling suggests a variation in actual pronunciation; for example, we will keep *ere* written as *or*, and *heard* as *hard*, wherever these words were printed this way in the original 1575 edition of the play, even though all subsequent editions of *Gammer* which modernize the play's spelling publish *or* and usually *heard*.

F. 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. *throw* = to believe, suppose; examples: *I throw*, *throwest now*.
2. *ween* = to expect, think; example: *ich ween*.
3. *wot* = to know; examples: *ich wot*, *I wot not*.

Some other unusual words upon which our author depends heavily 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. *dress* = used to mean "to treat", "to beat", and once even "to dress a wound", in addition to its modern meaning of "to attire".
6. *hold* = to wager.

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

G. Gammer's Rhyme Scheme.

The overwhelming majority of the play is written in rhyming couplets. Happily for the reader, 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 contain anywhere from 10 to 13 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.

An interesting feature of the playwright'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 *streite* instead of *street* in order to rhyme with *sprite*, and *britch* for *breech* to rhyme with *stitch*.

Having said all that, we recommend you not get hung up on the rhyming as you read our play; The author used rhyming couplets only as a frame, or skeleton, on which to build *Gammer*, so we suggest that you will enjoy *Gammer* a great deal more if you do not think about the rhyming at all.

THE PROLOGUE.

- 1 As Gammer Gurton, with many a wide stitch,
2 Sat piecing and patching of Hodge her man's britch,

By chance or misfortune, as she her gear tossed,
4 In Hodge' leather breeches her needle she lost.
When Diccon the Bedlam had hard by report,
6 That good Gammer Gurton was robbed in this sort,
He quietly persuaded with her in that stound

8 Dame Chat, her dear gossip, this needle had found;
Yet knew she no more of this matter (alas),
10 Than knoweth Tom, our clerk, what the priest saith at mass.

Hereof there ensued so fearful a fray,
12 Mas Doctor was sent for, these gossips to stay,
Because he was curate, and esteemed full wise,
14 Who found that he sought not, by Diccon's device.
When all things were tumbled and clean out of fashion,

The Prologue: WARNING: the Prologue summarizes the complete plot of our play, so save your reading of it for last, unless you want to ruin the suspense for yourself!

The **Prologue**, sometimes called a **Chorus**, is a device used to introduce the play to an audience, and is recited by a single actor.

2: **piecing** = mending.²

man's = servant's.

britch = ie. breech, or breeches, probably referring to a loose garment worn like trousers, but only reaching below the knee.¹ The playwright used this alternate spelling to rhyme the word with **stitch**.

= the sense is "worked on her mending".

gear = could mean business, stuff, or clothing.¹

= Hodge's; Hodge is another of Gammer's servants.

= **Diccon** is a beggar; see the note at the beginning of Act I.i below.

hard = heard.

= manner.

7: **persuaded with her** = ie. "persuaded Gammer"; the combination **persuaded with**, meaning "used persuasion on", was common in the 16th and 17th centuries.

in that stound = in that moment;¹ though Farmer and Gassner suggest **stound** here takes its alternate meaning of "crisis" or "difficult time".

= read as "that Dame Chat". = female friend.

9-10: "but Gammer is as ignorant of what happened to the needle as Tom the clerk is of what the priest is saying at Mass."

Because the priest recites the mass in Latin, Tom the lay officer of the local church (**clerk**),¹ who presumably was without formal education, would not comprehend it at all.

This is the first of several lines in the play that suggest the characters might be Catholic; the English Reformation had taken place during the 1530's, but Mary I's reign (1553-8) brought about a violent pro-Catholic backlash, before official-English policy returned to the Protestant fold with Elizabeth's ascension in 1558.

= from this.¹

= Master. = ie. a cleric. = comfort or support.¹

14: "who found that which he was not looking for, thanks to Diccon's scheme (**device**).

15: ie. "when the entire matter reached its climax, having dissolved into a big mess".

out of fashion = out of shape.¹

16	Whether it were by fortune, or some other <u>constellation</u> ,	= ie. fate, referring to the position of the stars with respect to the influence they were believed to maintain over the affairs of man. ¹
	Suddenly the needle Hodge found by <u>the pricking</u> ,	= ie. being stuck by it.
18	And drew it out of his buttock, where he felt it sticking.	
	Their hearts then at rest <u>with perfect security</u> ,	= ie. without any further anxiety.
20	With a pot of good <u>nale</u> they <u>stroke up their plaudite</u> .	20: <i>nale</i> = alternate Middle English spelling for ale. ¹ <i>stroke up their plaudite</i> = appealed to the audience for applause.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter Diccon the Bedlam from off-stage.

1 **Dic.** Many a mile have I walked divers and sundry ways,
2 And many a good man's house have I been at in my days;
Many a gossip's cup in my time have I tasted,
4 And many a broach and spit have I both turned and basted,

Settings of the Play: there are no settings provided in the original edition of *Gammer*: we will assume the stage is furnished with the facades of two adjacent houses, the first belonging to the elderly Gammer Gurton, and the other to Dame Chat, who also runs a tavern out of her home.

The entire play takes place either directly in front of either of the two houses, or on the street fronting them.

Entering Character: Diccon is an itinerant beggar; he is identified in the character-list as a **Bedlam**, which could mean one of two things:

(1) he had been a patient at Bethlehem Hospital, London's famous insane asylum, but, having partially recovered, had been released, and as such, is licensed to beg;⁷ or

(2) when the religious houses were dissolved during the Reformation, all of the poor who had been provided for by these houses were forced to now roam the country begging for provisions. Many of these vagabonds notoriously pretended to be mad in order to elicit greater sympathy from the populace, and as such were known as "Abraham-men" or "Bedlam-beggars".⁶ We may note that Diccon is fully functional, even if he ignores normal social conventions.

Diccon is a nickname for **Richard**. In Shakespeare's *Richard III*, an anonymous note insultingly referring to the King as *Dickon* was submitted to the Duke of Norfolk, warning him not to trust Richard.

The original edition of *Gammer* does not list character entrances, but rather simply lists the names of the characters who take part in a given scene at the top of each scene. Characters will enter and exit the stage either through one of the doors of the two houses, or off-stage if they are entering or exiting the scene by means of the fronting road.

All character entrances and departures are the suggestions of either the present editor or earlier editors.

Act I, Scene i: the first scene comprises a brief monologue, as Diccon addresses the audience.

= a common formula meaning simply "various".¹

3-4: Diccon remembers the food and drink he has received thanks to the generosity of others

gossip's cup = a sweet drink flavored with nutmeg and mixed with ale and roasted crab-apples, originally served at baptisms, but later also at special occasions generally.²⁹

broach and spit = synonyms for the pointed instrument used to pierce and rotate meat above a fire.¹

	Many a piece of bacon have I had out of their <u>balks</u> ,	5: Diccon refers to the bacon he has received or more likely stolen from many a household. balks = beams or rafters, or horizontally-laid poles, used to hang things from. ^{1,6}
6	In <u>ronning</u> over the country with long and weary walks; Yet came my foot never within those <u>door cheeks</u> ,	= unusual 16th century alternate spelling for running . = door-posts, the vertical side posts on either side of a door. ¹
8	To seek <u>flesh</u> or fish, garlick, onions, or leeks, <u>That</u> ever I saw a <u>sort</u> in such a plight,	= ie. meat. 9-20: Diccon describes the uproar that he witnessed moments ago in the household of Gammer Gurton. That = "where" or "in which". sort = company or group of people.
10	As here within this house appeareth to my sight. There is howling and scowling, all <u>cast in a dump</u> ,	10: Diccon casts a glance to, or perhaps gestures towards, Gammer's house behind him. = thrown into a state of perplexity. ¹
12	With <u>whewling</u> and <u>puling</u> , as though they had <u>lost a trump</u> . Sighing and sobbing, they weep and they wail; 14 I <u>marvel</u> in my mind what the devil <u>they ail</u> . The old <u>trot</u> sits groaning, <u>with alas and alas</u> !	12: whewling = moaning or howling. ¹ puling = whining or complaining. lost a trump = lost a play at the obsolete card game known as trump . ¹ = wonder. = ie. "ails them." 15: trot = hag, decrepit old woman, meaning Gammer. with alas and alas = ie. she sits there crying out "alas!" repeatedly.
16	And <u>Tib</u> wrings her hands, and <u>takes on in worse case</u> . With poor Cock, their <u>boy</u> , they be driven in such fits,	= Tib is Gammer's maid. = exhibits great distress. ¹ = ie. servant boy.
18	I fear me the folks be not <u>well in their wits</u> . <u>Ask</u> them what they ail, or who brought them <u>in this stay</u> ?	= of sound mind, the opposite of "out of their wits". ¹ = ie. "I asked them". = "to this condition or situation."
20	They <u>answer not at all</u> , but "alack!" and " <u>wellaway</u> !" When I saw it <u>booted not</u> , out at doors I hied me,	= "do not answer me". = an ancient cry of lament. ¹ 21: "when I saw how useless it was (booted not) to expect an answer, I hurried out the door". = ie. stole. = thin strip. ¹
22	And <u>caught</u> a <u>slip</u> of bacon, when I saw none spied me, Which I intend not far hence, unless my purpose fail,	24: shoeing horn = older name for a shoe horn, which along with its still modern meaning was also used to refer to an appetizer, ¹ but more likely referring here to something that can "facilitate a transaction" (OED, def. 2b), meaning that Diccon expects to trade the bacon for alcohol. pots = pot was common term for a drinking vessel.
24	Shall serve me for a <u>shoeing horn</u> to draw on two <u>pots</u> of ale.	
<u>ACT I, SCENE II.</u>		Scene Endings in Gammer Gurton's Needle: the scenes of our play do not always end sharply with all the characters exiting the stage; when one or more characters newly join those already on stage, our author usually begins a new scene. Hence Diccon remains on stage as Hodge enters the stage to begin Scene ii.

[Still on Stage: Diccon, standing on the street.]

Enter Hodge from off-stage.

*Sometime before line 32, Gammer and Tib
enter from Gammer's house
and sit down on dejectedly in their front yard.*

- 1 **Hodge.** See, so cham arrayed with dabbling in the dirt!
- 2 She that set me to ditching, ich would she had the squirt!
- 4 Was never poor soul that such a life had?
Gog's bones! this vilthy glay hase dressed me too bad!
- Gog's soul! see how this stuff tears!
- 6 Ich were better to be a bearward, and set to keep bears!
- By the mass, here is a gash, a shameful hole indeed!
- 8 And one stitch tear further, a man may thrust in his head.

Still on Stage: whenever characters remain on stage from the end of the previous scene, such will be noted in a stage direction in brackets, all added by the editor.

Entering Character: Hodge is a servant of Gammer Gurton's, and specifically a farm or field labourer.⁴ Hodge is returning home after having spent the day toiling on Gammer's lands, but he first runs into Diccon on the street.

We may note that **Hodge** is an ancient nick-name for **Roger**, and that **Hodge** in fact came to be used as the typical or conventional name of a farm-worker.^{1,4}

Most of the play's characters, and Hodge particularly, speak with a distinct rural dialect. This dialect is marked primarily by the following three characteristics:

(1) use of the pronoun **ich** for '**I**';

(2) the use of numerous contracted words beginning with '**ch**', which stands in for the pronoun '**I**'; examples include **cham** for "I am" and **chad** for "I had" (these types of words were employed in the south-western counties);³ and

(3) the occasional interchanging of '**v**' and '**f**' at the beginning of a word; Farmer suggests this particular dialecticism was a characteristic of the southern counties, though Shakespeare used the same transformation for his Welsh characters.

= "see how soiled (**arrayed**)⁵ I am (**cham**) from splashing about (**dabbling**) in the dirt!"

= "I (**ich**) hope that she who set me to smearing myself in the mud (**ditching**) gets the runs!" Hodge is referring to his mistress, Gammer Gurton.

the squirt = diarrhea.

4: **Gog's bones** = ie. "God's bones", an oath; Hodge generally, but not completely, avoids using God's name explicitly in his oaths, typically employing the euphemism **Gog**.

vilthy glay = filthy clay; Farmer posits that **glay** for **clay** is a piece of faux-dialect, invented by the author. Gassner, we may note, thinks **glay** means **day**.

hase = "has", an alternate spelling used frequently throughout the play.

dressed me too bad = Diccon complains how he is unpleasantly besmeared with clay and other filth; **dressed** means "treated".¹

= referring to his clothing.

= ie. a bear-keeper, one who is in charge of caring for a bear, which would be used in such public spectacles as bear-baiting; presumably a profession in which one's clothes run on the ragged side.

7: Hodge points out the large tear in the buttocks of his breeches.

By the mass = a common oath.

= 16th century alternate spelling for **further**, perhaps

10	Dic. By my father's soul, Hodge, if I should now be sworn, I cannot choose but say thy <u>breech</u> is foul betorn.	meant to sound dialectical. ¹ = ie. breeches, probably referring to a loose garment worn like trousers, but only reaching below the knee. ¹
12	But the <u>next</u> remedy in such a <u>case and hap</u> Is to <u>planch</u> on a <u>piece</u> as broad as thy cap.	12: next = most obvious or direct. ¹ case and hap = synonyms for "occurrence". 13: planch = "attach". ¹ piece = scrap of cloth used for mending, ie. patch. ¹
14	Hodge. Gog's soul, man, 'tis not yet two days fully ended,	
16	Since my dame Gurton (<u>cham sure</u>) these breeches <u>amended</u> ; But cham made such a <u>drudge</u> to <u>trudge</u> at every need,	= "I am sure". = ie. mended, repaired. = "but I am forced to do the most menial of tasks whenever a need arises". drudge = low-level servant. trudge = walk or go about without spirit.
18	<u>Chwold</u> rend it though it were stitched with sturdy <u>packthread</u> .	18: "I would (chwold) tear these breeches even if they were sewn together with pack-thread ." packthread = heavy twine used for wrapping packages.
20	Dic. Hodge, <u>let thy breeches go</u> , and speak and tell me <u>soon</u> , What devil aileth Gammer Gurton and Tib her maid <u>to frown</u> ?	20: let thy breeches go = "forget about your breeches for a moment", but the clause also humorously suggests Hodge let his breeches drop to the floor. soon = ie. now. = ie. "thus causing them to frown."
22	Hodge. Tush, man, <u>th'art</u> deceived: ' <u>tis their daily look</u> :	= "thou art", ie. "you are". = "that is how they look every day!"
24	They <u>cow'r</u> so over <u>the coals</u> , their eyes be bleared with smoke.	= crouch. = ie. of the fire.
26	Dic. Nay, by the mass, I <u>perfectly perceived</u> as I came <u>hether</u> , That either Tib and <u>her dame</u> hath been <u>by the ears</u> together,	= clearly saw. = alternate spelling for hither (meaning "to here"), used to rhyme with together . = ie. her mistress, Gammer. = ie. fighting. ¹
28	Or else <u>as great a matter</u> , as thou shalt shortly see.	= ie. something of the same magnitude has occurred.
30	Hodge. Now, <u>ich</u> beseech our Lord they never better <u>agree</u> !	= "I". = get along.
32	Dic. By Gog's soul, there they sit as still as stones in the <u>streite</u> , As though they had been <u>taken with</u> fairies, or else with some <u>ill-sprite</u> .	32: as Hodge and Diccon "walk" down the street, they "arrive" at Gammer's house, where Gammer and Tib are seen sitting dejectedly outside. streite = alternate spelling for street , used to rhyme with sprite . 33: taken with = ie. charmed by. ill sprite = evil spirit.
34	Hodge. Gog's heart! I <u>durst</u> have <u>laid</u> my cap to a <u>crown</u> ,	35: durst = dared. laid = wagered. crown = gold coin worth five shillings.
36	Ch'would learn of some <u>prancome</u> as soon as ich came to town.	36: "that I would learn about some strange occurrence (prancome) ³ as soon as I arrived in town."
38	Dic. Why, Hodge, art thou <u>inspired</u> ? or didst thou thereof hear?	38: "why, Hodge, did you get knowledge of what happened by divine inspiration (inspired)? Or did someone in town already tell you about it?"
40	Hodge. Nay, but ich saw such a wonder, as ich saw <u>nat this</u> seven year.	40-44: Hodge explains that he saw a cow acting in a bizarre manner; observance of such unnatural

	Tom Tankard's cow (by Gog's bones) she <u>set me up her sail</u> ,	phenomena was generally taken to be an omen of some other undesirable event. <i>nat this</i> = "not this", ie. "not for the past"; <i>nat</i> was an alternate spelling for <i>not</i> . = humorous metaphor of the cow raising its tail as if it were the sail of a ship anticipating some movement. <i>set me up</i> = "set up"; this is an example of the grammatical construction known as the <i>ethical dative</i> , in which the superfluous <i>me</i> of <i>set me up</i> adds emphasis to the clause.
42	And <u>flinging</u> about <u>his</u> half acre, <u>fisking</u> with her tail, As though there had been in her <u>arse</u> a swarm of bees;	42: <i>flinging</i> = violently flying about, kicking, etc. ¹ <i>his</i> = ie. Tom's. <i>fisking</i> = scampering about, whisking. ¹ = this most English of vulgarisms is at least 1000 years old. ¹
44	And chad not cried "tphrowh, whore," she'ad leapt out of his <u>lees</u> .	44: "and had I not cried out, 'tphrowh, you whore', she (the cow) would have leaped out of Tom's pasture". <i>lees</i> = alternate spelling for <i>lease</i> , meaning "pasture". ¹⁰ You may note as you read this play how our characters have a penchant for referring to each other as <i>whore</i> and <i>whoreson</i> .
46	Dic. Why, Hodge, lies the <u>cunning</u> in Tom Tankard's cow's tail?	46: Diccon humorously wonders if the cow's tail was the key to its prophetic behaviour. <i>cunning</i> = usually meaning "skill" or "intelligence", but here probably taking its alternate meaning of "magic". ¹
48	Hodge. Well, <u>ich chawe hard</u> some say such <u>tokens</u> do not fail. But ca[n]st thou not <u>tell</u> , in faith, Diccon, why <u>she</u> frowns, or <u>whereat</u> ?	48: <i>ich chawe</i> = "I have"; a grammatical "blunder" by the author, as Brett-Smith calls it, for its redundancy, since <i>chawe</i> alone means "I have". <i>hard</i> = alternate spelling for <i>heard</i> , and used in place of <i>heard</i> almost everywhere in the play. <i>tokens</i> = signs, ie. predictors of future events. ¹
50	Hath <u>no man</u> stolen her ducks or hens, or <u>gelded</u> <u>Gib</u> , her cat?	49: <i>tell</i> = the original edition prints <i>till</i> here; perhaps intended as dialect, perhaps just an error. <i>she</i> = ie. Gammer. <i>whereat</i> = ie. at what. 50: <i>no man</i> = ie. some man. <i>gelded</i> = spayed: Gammer's cat is referred to throughout the play as <i>she</i> and <i>her</i> , indicating it is female. <i>Gib</i> = a common name given to cats of both sexes, though as Dodsley specifically observes, all male cats of the era were called <i>Gib</i> .
52	Dic. What devil can I tell, man, I could not <u>have one word</u> ! They gave no more heed to my talk than thou wouldst to a <u>lord</u> .	= ie. "get one word (of explanation) out of them!" 53: the point of the line is not completely clear: Diccon possibly is being simply ironic; Whitworth changes <i>lord</i> to <i>turd</i> .
54	Hodge. Ich cannot <u>still</u> but <u>muse</u> , what marvelous thing it is:	55: <i>still</i> = refrain, ie. help. ¹ <i>muse</i> = ponder, think about. ¹
56	<u>Chill in</u> and <u>know</u> myself what matters are amiss.	= "I will go in". = find out.

58	Dic. Then farewell, Hodge, a while, since thou dost <u>inward</u> <u>haste</u> , For <u>I will into</u> the <u>good wife</u> Chat's, to feel how the ale doth taste.	58: inward haste = hurry inside.
60	<p style="text-align: center;">[Diccon exits into Chat's tavern. At some point after line 32, Gammer and Tib have exited into their house.]</p>	59: I will into = ie. "I will go into"; note the common grammatical construction of this clause: in the presence of a verb of intent (will), the verb of action (go) is often omitted. good wife = ie. goodwife, a common title for a woman who runs an establishment, as Dame Chat does a tavern.
	<p style="text-align: center;">ACT I, SCENE III.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Still on Stage: Hodge, standing on the street in front of Gammer's house.]</p>	61: Diccon, taking his stolen bacon with him, exits through the door into Chat's tavern.
1	Hodge. <u>Cham</u> aghast, by the mass, <u>ich wot</u> not what to do.	= "I am terrified". ¹ = "I know".
2	<u>Chad</u> need bless me well before <u>ich</u> go <u>them to</u> .	2: Hodge needs a blessing to protect him from whatever evil lurks inside Gammer's house. Chad = "I had", ie. "I have". ich = "I". them to = ie. "to them."
4	Perchance some <u>felon</u> sprit may haunt our house indeed; And then <u>chwere</u> but a <u>noddy</u> to venture where <u>cha'</u> no need.	= cruel or terrible. ¹ 4: "in which case I would be a fool (noddy) ² to take a such a risk (by entering the house) when I have no need to." chwere = "I were", ie. "I would be". cha' = "I had"
6	<p style="text-align: center;">Enter Tib from Gammer's house.</p>	Entering Character: Tib is Gammer Gurton's maid. Tib initially talks to herself (or to the audience), before she sees Hodge at line 13.
8	Tib. <u>Cham</u> worse than mad, by the mass, to be <u>at this stay</u> !	8: Cham = "I am". at this stay = the sense seems to be "in this (bad) situation", though the expression has a more literal meaning of "at this standstill".
10	Cham <u>chid</u> , cham blamed, and beaten, all th' hours on the day; Lamed and hunger-storved, <u>pricked up</u> all in <u>jags</u> ,	= rebuked. 10: storved = obsolete spelling for "starved". pricked up = dressed elaborately. ²⁸ jags = rags. ¹ = ie. article of clothing. ¹ = except for.
12	Having no <u>patch</u> to hide my back, <u>save</u> a few rotten rags!	= surely believe.
14	Hodge. I say, Tib, if thou be Tib, as I <u>trow sure</u> thou be, What devil <u>make-ado</u> is this, between our <u>dame</u> and thee?	= uproar. ¹ = mistress, ie. Gammer.
16	Tib. Gog's bread, Hodge, thou had a good turn, thou wert not here this while! It had been better for some of us to have been <u>hence a mile</u> ;	= "goodness, Hodge, you were fortunate not to have been here all this while!" = "a mile away from here".
18	My gammer is so <u>out of course</u> , and frantic all at once, That Cock, our boy, and I, poor wench, have felt it on our bones.	18-19: Gammer has been so put out by some yet undisclosed development, that she has taken to beating her two servants who had remained at home this day,

20	Hodge. What is the matter, say on, Tib, <u>whereat</u> she taketh so on?	Tib and Cock. out of course = out of sorts, ie. confused. ¹ = "for which". ¹
22	Tib. She is <u>undone</u> , she saith, (alas!) her joy and life is gone!	= ruined.
24	If she hear not of some <u>comfort</u> , she is, <u>faith</u> , but dead;	24: comfort = comforting word or news. faith = truly; but it is not clear that faith is not saith - the "f" and "s" look almost identical in the font of the ancient text; Hazlitt, going with the latter, has amended the last clause of the line to read "she saith she is but dead".
	<u>Shall never</u> come within her lips one inch of <u>meat</u> <u>ne</u> bread.	25: Shall never = ie. "never again shall". meat = food. ne = nor.
26	Hodge. <u>By'r lady</u> , cham not very glad to see her in this <u>dump</u> ;	27: By'r lady = "by our Lady", an oath, referring to the Virgin Mary. dump = common term for "state of depression".
28	<u>Chold a noble her stool hath fallen</u> , and she hath broke her rump.	28: Chold a noble = "I bet (hold) a noble"; a noble was a gold coin worth half a mark, or 6s 8d. ^{1,3} her stool hath fallen = that the stool Gammer was sitting on broke underneath her; in this era stools were the normal piece of furniture on which people sat; chairs were reserved for the very wealthy, and even then were used only in limited circumstances.
30	Tib. Nay, <u>and</u> that were the worst, we would not greatly care, For <u>bursting</u> of her <u>huckle-bone</u> , or breaking of her <u>chair</u> ;	= if. 31: bursting = breaking. ⁵ huckle-bone = hip bone. ¹ chair = ie. stool, generic term for furniture on which to sit.
32	But greater, greater, is her grief, as, Hodge, <u>we shall all feel</u> !	= ie. by receiving further corporal punishment.
34	Hodge. Gog's wounds, Tib, my gammer has never lost her nee'le?	34: one wonders if a line was lost here; how did Hodge guess that Gammer lost her sewing needle?
36	Tib. Her nee'le!	
38	Hodge. Her nee'le?	
40	Tib. Her nee'le! <u>by Him that made me</u> , it is true, Hodge, I tell thee.	= an oath, referring to God.
42	Hodge. Gog's sacrament! I <u>would</u> she had lost <u>th' arte</u> out of her belly!	= wish. = "the heart"; arte is an alternate, Middle English spelling for heart .
	<u>The devil, or else his dame, they ought her, sure a shame!</u>	43: The devil, or else his dame = variation of the common expression, the devil and his dam , in which dam refers to the devil's mother. they ought her = "they owed her (an ill turn)". ¹ sure a shame = "which is certainly a shame."
44	<u>How a murrion</u> came this <u>chance</u> , say Tib, unto our dame?	44: "tell me Tib, how the hell did this happen to our mistress?" murrion = plague; expressions such as how a murrion and what the murrion were used in the same

46	Tib. My gammer sat her down on her <u>pes</u> , and <u>bad me reach thy breeches</u> ,	way as we say "how in hell", "what the hell", etc. ¹ chance = unfortunate occurrence. ¹
	And <u>by and by</u> , <u>a vengeance in it</u> , <u>or</u> she had take two stitches	46: pes = likely a variation of press , meaning "hassock", a cushion stuffed with straw. ³ bad me = "asked me"; bad is the past tense of bid . reach thy breeches = "to reach for your breeches", ie. "grab your breeches to give to her".
48	To <u>clap</u> a <u>clout</u> upon thine arse, by chance aside she leers,	47: "and right away (by and by), a pox on it, before she had made two stitches". a vengeance on it = common imprecation. or = ere, ie. before.
	And Gib, our cat, in the milk-pan she spied <u>over head and ears</u> .	= "to patch or mend the backside of your breeches with a patch, she happened to glance to the side, ie. away from her work". clap = place or set, ie. "slap". clout = patch or piece of cloth. ¹
50	"Ah, <u>whore</u> ! out, thief!" she cried aloud, and <u>swapt the breeches down</u> ;	49: "and she saw Gib the cat immersed (over head and ears) in the milk pan (where it should not have been)." milk pan = a large pan in which milk is kept and the cream is allowed to separate. ¹
	<u>Up went her staff</u> , and out leapt Gib at doors into the <u>town</u> .	50: Gammer screamed at the cat. whore = Gassner suggests whore is used to generally mean "rascal" in our play, but the OED does not support this usage. swapt the breeches down = ie. threw down Hodge's breeches. ¹
52	And since that time, <u>was never wight could</u> set their eyes upon it.	51: Up went her staff = ie. she raised her walking stick to swat the cat with. town = the grounds or yard surrounding the house. ^{1,4}
54	Gog's <u>malison</u> , chavè Cock and I bid twenty times light on it.	= ie. "no one has" wight = Old English word meaning "person", the latter not entering the language until the 13th century.
56	Hodge. And is not then my breeches sewed up, to-morrow that I should wear?	= "twenty times have Cock and I called down God's curse (malison) on it."
58	Tib. No, <u>in faith</u> , Hodge, thy breeches lie for all this <u>never the near</u> .	57: in faith = truly. never the near = ie. "never nearer to being done."
60	Hodge. Now a vengeance light on all the <u>sort</u> that better should have kept it: The cat, the house, and Tib our maid, that better should have swept it!	59-60: possibly an aside: "a plague on everything and everyone who should have attended to the needle more carefully, including the cat, the house, and Tib, who should have swatted at the cat instead!" sort = group or company of people, animals or things. ¹
	<u>See where she cometh crawling!</u> – come on, <u>in twenty devils' way!</u>	61: Hodge sees the door to Gammer's house open, and Gammer crawls onto the stage, searching for the needle.

62 Ye have made a fair day's work, have you not? pray you, say!

ACT I, SCENE IV.

[*Still on Stage: Hodge and Tib in front of Gammer's house.*]

*Gammer Gurton has just crawled out of the front door
of her house, searching for her needle.*

1 **Gamm.** Alas, Hodge, alas! I may well curse and ban
2 This day, that ever I saw it, with Gib and the milk-pan;
For these and ill-luck together, as knoweth Cock, my boy,

4 Have stack away my dear nee'le, and robbed me of my joy,

My fair long straight nee'le, that was mine only treasure;
6 The first day of my sorrow is, and last end of my pleasure!

8 **Hodge.** [*Aside*]
Might ha' kept it, when ye had it; but fools will be fools still:
10 Lose that is vast in your hands, ye need not, but ye will.

12 **Gamm.** Go hie thee, Tib, and run thou, whore, to th' end
here of the town.

Didst carry out dust in thy lap? seek where thou pourest it down;
14 And as thou sawest me roking in the ashes where I mourned,

So see in all the heap of dust thou leave no straw unturned.

See...crawling = possibly an aside; after the dash, Hodge addresses Gammer directly.

in twenty devils' way = "in the name of twenty devils",¹⁴ an expression signaling impatience.⁸ The combination *twenty devils* appears with some regularity in other expressions in the era's literature.

= good, successful. = "I ask you, tell me!"

Entering Characters: we finally meet our elderly mistress, **Gammer Gurton**. Gammer should generally be imagined as carrying her walking stick with her, though the present scene may be an exception, since she is crawling around on all fours.

The word **gammer**, used here as a form of address, is thought to be an abbreviated form of "godmother" or "grandmother".¹

= damn or curse.^{1,2}

= ie. along with.

= ie. servant-boy.

= hidden; the OED identifies **stack** as the past tense of the word **steek**, which normally means "to pierce".

6: "today is the first day of my sorrow, and the end of my joy!"

8: Hazlitt suggests lines 9-10 are spoken as an aside.
= always.

10: "it was unnecessary to lose that which you had securely in your hands, but you did it."
vast = dialect for **fast**, ie. securely, held tightly.

12: **hie thee** = "hurry yourself".

whore = rogue, per Gassner.

th' end = ie. the far end.

town = yard or grounds.

14: **as** = just as.

roking in the ashes = ie. **raking in the ashes**: a reference to the custom of keeping a fire alive at night by covering the glowing coals with ashes (the scene takes place in the late afternoon or evening); **roking** is a likely regionalism for **raking**.

More recent editors have yet another take, suggesting that **roking** is a variation for **rucking**, meaning "crouching".^{7,8}

15: unusual variation of **leave no stone unturned**, which appeared also in the 16th century.

	Tib. That <u>chall</u> , Gammer, <u>swith and tite</u> , and soon <u>be here again</u> !	17: chall = "I shall". swith and tite = synonyms for "right away". be here again = ie. "return again".
18		
	Gamm. Tib, stoop and look down to the ground – to it, and <u>take some pain</u> .	19: to it = "get to it". take some pain = "make an effort", "try hard." The dash after ground is a logical addition by Whitworth, as the second instruction is directed at Hodge.
20		
	[Exit Tib into the house.]	
22	Hodge. Here is a <u>pretty</u> matter, to <u>see</u> this <u>gear</u> how it goes:	23: pretty = awkward, deplorable. ¹ see = perceive. ¹ gear = business.
24	By Gog's soul, I <u>thenk</u> you would lose your arse, <u>and</u> it were <u>loose</u> !	24: thenk = a Middle English spelling of think . and = if. loose = unattached (to her body). = anxiety; the sentence is sarcastic and ironic.
	Your nee'le lost? it is pity you should lack <u>care</u> and endless sorrow.	
26	Gog's death, how shall my breeches be sewed? Shall I <u>go thus</u> to-morrow?	= ie. "go about like this". Hodge presumably gestures towards his buttocks as he says this.
28	Gamm. Ah, Hodge, Hodge! if that <u>ich</u> could find my nee'le, <u>by the reed</u> ,	29: ich = I. by the reed = ie. "by the rood", an oath; reed is likely a regionalism for rood , which means "cross".
30	<u>Chould</u> sew thy breeches, ich promise thee, with full good double <u>threed</u> ,	30: Chould = "I would". threed = alternate spelling for thread , used to rhyme with reed .
	And set a patch on either knee <u>should last this moneths twain</u> .	= "which would last for the next two (twain) months." moneths = moneth was a common alternate spelling for month .
32	Now God and good <u>Saint Sithe</u> , I pray to send it <u>home again</u> !	32: Saint Sithe = two, or possibly three, candidates exist for the identity of this saint: (1) St. Osyth , or St. Osith, a 7th century Anglo- Saxon princess; serving as an abbess at a convent, she was murdered for her Christian faith by invading pirates, possibly Danes; ^{4,8,15} (2) St. Swithin or Swithun, a 9th century monk and Bishop of Winchester; Swithin dedicated himself to serving the poor, performing his pastoral duties barefoot. He was also the chief counsellor to King Aethelwulf. A century after Swithin's death (15 July 964), during a ceremony in which his relics were moved to a new shrine, such rain fell that a superstition arose, that if it rained on St. Swithin's Day (15 July), 40 days of rain would follow. ^{6,15} (3) St. Zita , a 13th century Italian maid-servant of the Fatinelli family; hated by her fellow-servants and treated illy by her employers, she remained imperturbable, and eventually won over those who had for so long mistreated her. ¹³ Zita lived a devotional life, and was known to be "generous to the poor and kind to the sick and to prisoners" (McBrien, p. 178). ³⁰ Richard McBrien, in his <i>Lives of the Saints</i> , writes that Zita was also known as Sitha , among other

34 **Hodge.** Whereto served your hands and eyes, but this your
nee'le to keep?
What devil had you else to do? ye keep, ich wot, no sheep!

36 Cham fain abroad to dig and delve, in water, mire, and clay,

Sossing and possing in the dirt still from day to day.

38 A hundred things that be abroad, cham set to see them weel,

And four of you sit idle at home, and cannot keep a nee'le!

40 **Gamm.** My nee'le, alas, ich lost it, Hodge, what time ich me
up hasted,

42 To save the milk set up for thee, which Gib, our cat, hath wasted.

44 **Hodge.** The devil he burst both Gib and Tib, with all the rest!
Cham always sure of the worst end, whoever have the best!

46 Where ha' you been fidging abroad, since you your nee'le lost?

48 **Gamm.** Within the house, and at the door, sitting by this
same post,
Where I was looking a long hour, before these folks came here;

50 But, wellaway, all was in vain, my nee'le is never the near!

52 **Hodge.** [*Getting down on his hands and knees*]
Set me a candle, let me seek, and grope wherever it be.

54 Gog's heart, ye be foolish (ich think), you know it not when
you it see!

56 **Gamm.** Come hether, Cock: what, Cock, I say!

variations, and that she was popular with those on the lower rung of the social ladder, particularly in medieval England. In the 20th century Pope Pius declared Zita to be the "principal patron saint of domestic servants" (Ibid).³⁰

home again = ie. back again.⁶

= ie. "for what purpose do you have".

= "I know".

36-39: Hodge expresses a slight variation of a modern stereotypical spouse's or parent's complaint: "I slave all day at work in the muck and mire, while all of you sit at home all day doing nothing, and you can't even do something as simple as not lose a needle."

Cham fain = "I am compelled", "I am obliged".²

abroad = away from home.

= synonyms for "splashing".¹

38: ie. "I am sent to take care of a hundred different things away from the house (**abroad**)".

set = Gassner suggests "ordered".

weel = alternate spelling of **well**, employed to rhyme with **nee'le**.

= ie. Gammer, Tib, Cock and the cat.

41: **what time ich me** = "at the time I".

up hasted = quickly jumped up.

Note Gammer's use of the ethical dative with **ich me up hasted**.

42: Gammer explains she lost the needle while trying to save the milk, which she had set aside for Hodge, from the cat.

= "may he break or smash".²

45: Hodge always suffers the worst of any situation, regardless of who gets the best.

= moving about restlessly.¹ = away from home.

= Whitworth suggests Gammer is referring to the audience; such breaking of the "fourth wall" was common in interludes of the early 16th century, writes Whitworth (p. 15).⁸

= common term expressing regret.

52: Hodge begins his own search for the needle.

= "light a candle for me"; it is evening, the sky darkening.

= "you don't even recognize it".

56, 60: a couple of unrhymed lines; any rhyme between lines 62-63 was also lost or neglected.

58	<i>Enter Cock from Gammer's house.</i>	Entering Character: <i>Cock</i> is Gammer's young boy-servant.
60	Cock. <u>How</u> , Gammer?	= "what is it".
62	Gamm. Go, <u>hie</u> thee soon, and <u>grope</u> behind the old brass pan,	= ie. "move quickly". = reach.
64	Which thing when thou hast done,	
64	There shalt thou find an old shoe, wherein, if thou look well,	
66	Thou shalt find lying an inch of a white <u>tallow candle</u> ;	= candle made from animal fat. ¹
66	Light it, and bring it <u>tite away</u> .	= ie. right away.
68	Cock. That shall be done <u>anon</u> .	= straightaway.
70	<i>Cock exits into the house.</i>	
72	Gamm. Nay, <u>tarry</u> , Hodge, till thou hast light, and then we'll seek <u>each one</u> .	72: <i>tarry</i> = wait. <i>each one</i> = ie. "every one of us".
74	Hodge. [<i>Calling into the house</i>] <u>Come away</u> , ye whoreson boy, are ye asleep? <u>ye must have a crier</u> !	75: <i>Come away</i> = "hurry up!" ¹ <i>ye must have a crier</i> = a <i>crier</i> , more commonly known today as a <i>town crier</i> , was one employed to make public announcements; the sense of this sarcastic line is likely the same as the modern "do I need to send you an invitation?", an expression used to mock one's slowness to get something done.
76		
76	Cock. [<i>From within</i>]	
78	Ich cannot get the candle light: here is almost no fire.	78: Cock has been trying and failing to get the candle lit in the ashes of the smouldering fire.
80	Hodge. [<i>Rising</i>] <u>Chill hold</u> thee a penny, chill make thee come, if that ich may catch thine ears! –	81: "I will (<i>chill</i>) bet (<i>hold</i>) you a penny, I will get you to come, if I can grab you by the ears!"
82	Art deaf, thou whoreson boy? Cock, I say; why, canst not hear?	
84	Gamm. Beat him not, Hodge, but help the boy, and come you two together.	84: responding to Gammer's entreaty, Hodge enters the house, where he will take the candle from the boy and work to try to light it from the ashes.
86	<i>[Exit Hodge into the house.]</i>	
	ACT I, SCENE V.	
	<i>[Still on Stage: Gammer in front of her house.]</i>	
	<i>Enter Tib from the house.</i>	Entering Character: Tib returns from her search for the needle in the dust in the backyard.
1	Gamm. How now, Tib? quick, let's hear what news thou hast brought <u>hether</u> !	= alternate spelling for <i>hither</i> , used to rhyme with <i>together</i> , the last word of the previous scene; a clear indication of how many of the scenes seamlessly meld together on the stage.
2		
2	Tib. <u>Chave</u> tossed and <u>tumbled</u> yonder heap over and over again,	3: Tib has finished pouring through the dust pile, searching unsuccessfully for the needle. <i>Chave</i> = "I have". <i>tumbled</i> = searched by turning over. ¹
4	And winnowed it through my fingers, as men would winnow grain;	

	Not so much as a hen's <u>turd</u> , but in pieces I <u>tare</u> it;	5: turd = an ancient word, first appearing in English letters around 1000 A.D. ¹ tare = dialect for tore . ¹
6	Or whatsoever clod or clay I found, I did not spare it, Looking within and <u>eke</u> without, to find your nee'le, alas!	= also.
8	But all in vain and without help, your nee'le <u>is where it was</u> .	= remains wherever it has been.
10	Gamm. Alas, my nee'le, we shall never meet! adieu, adieu, <u>for aye!</u>	10: for aye = forever.
12	Tib. Not so, Gammer, we might it find, if we knew where it lay.	12: possibly the least helpful comment ever.
14	<i>Cock enters from the house.</i>	
16	Cock. Gog's cross, Gammer, if ye <u>will</u> laugh, look in but at the door, And see how Hodge lieth tumbling and tossing <u>amids the flour</u> , Raking there some fire to find among the ashes dead, Where there is not one spark so big as a pin's head: At last in a dark corner two sparks he thought he sees, Which were indeed <u>nought</u> else but Gib our cat's two eyes. "Puff!" <u>quod</u> Hodge, thinking thereby to have fire without doubt; With that Gib shut her two eyes, and so the fire was out; And by and by them opened, even as they were before; With that the sparks appeared even as they had done <u>of yore</u> ;	16: ie. "want to" = "in the middle of the floor"; flour was a dialectical form of floor . ¹ = nothing. = quoth, said. = ie. "and then immediately or again". = an expression normally meaning "in ancient times" or "long ago", but here apparently meaning simply "earlier".
26	And even as Hodge blew the fire (as he did think), Gib, as she felt the blast, straightway began to <u>wink</u> ;	26: Hodge was blowing on the cat, when he thought he was blowing on a spark of fire. = blink.
28	Till Hodge <u>fell of</u> swearing, as <u>came best to his turn</u> , The fire was sure bewitched, and therefore would not burn: At last Gib <u>up</u> the stairs, among the old posts and pins, And Hodge he <u>hied</u> him after, till <u>broke were both his shins</u> : Cursing and swearing oaths <u>were never of his making</u> , That Gib would <u>fire the house</u> , if that she were not <u>taken</u> .	= ie. fell to. = as best suited him, his purpose, or his condition. ¹ 29: Cock is paraphrasing Hodge's cries in this line. = ie. raced up. = chased. = he had hurt his shins, ie. his legs. ¹ 32: the sense is, "which he could not possibly have invented himself". = ie. set the house on fire. = caught.
34	Gamm. See, here is all the thought that <u>the foolish urchin</u> taketh!	= ie. Cock.
36	And Tib, me-think, at his elbow almost as merry maketh. This is all the <u>wit</u> ye have, when others <u>make their moan</u> : – Come down, Hodge, where art thou? and let the cat alone.	= intelligence. = ie. are lamenting.
40	Hodge. [Appears above.] Gog's heart, help and come up! Gib in her tail hath fire, And is <u>like</u> to burn all, if she get a little higher! "Come down," <u>quoth you?</u> nay, then you might <u>count me a</u> <u>patch</u> , The house cometh down on your heads, if <u>it take</u> once the thatch.	40: I have adopted Clements' suggestion that Hodge sticks his head out of an upstairs window. ¹² = likely. 43: quoth you? = "you say?" count me a patch = "reckon me to be a fool". = ie. the fire catches.
46	Gamm. It is the cat's eyes, fool, that shineth in the dark.	
48	Hodge. Hath the cat, do you think, in every eye a spark?	

50	Gamm. No, but they shine as like fire as ever man see.	
52	Hodge. By the mass, <u>and she burn all</u> , you <u>sh'</u> bear the blame <u>for</u> me!	52: <i>and she burn all</i> = "if she burns everything down". <i>sh'</i> = shall. <i>for</i> = ie. instead of.
54	Gamm. Come down and help to seek here our nee'le, <u>that it were</u> found. – Down, Tib, on thy knees, I say! Down, Cock, to the ground!	54: <i>that it were</i> = so that it can be.
56		
58	<i>Hodge enters from the house.</i> To God I make a vow, and so to good <u>Saint Anne</u> ,	= <i>Anne</i> was the mother of the Virgin Mary.
60	A candle shall they have <u>a-piece</u> , get it where I can, If I may my nee'le find in one place or in other.	60-61: Gammer promises to light dedicatory candles if only God and Saint Anne will help her find her needle; the early editors note that this is a Roman Catholic, and not a Protestant, practice. <i>a-piece</i> = each.
62		
64	Hodge. Now a vengeance on Gib light, on Gib and Gib's mother, And all the <u>generation</u> of cats both far and near! – Look on the ground, whoreson, thinks thou the nee'le is here?	= Whitworth suggests "race". ⁸
66		
68	Cock. <u>By my troth</u> , Gammer, me-thought your nee'le here I saw, But when my fingers touched it, I felt it was a straw.	65: Hodge addresses Cock; Whitworth believes the dialogue from here to line 70 suggests that Cock and Tib are picking pieces of filth, including the mystery clod referred to by Tib in line 70, off of Hodge's dirty clothes = truly.
70	Tib. See, Hodge, what's this? may it not be within it?	70: Tib points to something suspicious she sees stuck to Hodge's clothing.
72	Hodge. Break it, fool, with thy hand, and see and thou canst find it.	
74	Tib. Nay, break it you, Hodge, <u>according to your word</u> .	= the sense seems to be, "since you are the one who suggested it;" Tib doesn't want to touch the unknown material, so Hodge picks it off instead, to his immediate regret.
76	Hodge. Gog's sides, fie! it stinks! it is a cat's turd! <u>It were well done</u> to make thee eat it, by the mass!	= it would be a good deed.
78		= ie. "this situation has not fixed or resolved itself."
80	Gamm. <u>This matter amendeth not</u> ; my nee'le is still where it was. Our candle is at an end, let us all <u>in quite</u> And come another time, when we have more light.	= ie. go in. 81: Clements notes that it has been getting darker in the last few minutes.
82		End of Act I: the only time the stage is completely vacated is at the end of each act; we may assume a bit of music was performed between acts: such a musical interlude between acts became the norm of the era's plays.
	<i>[Exeunt all into Gammer's house.]</i>	
	END OF ACT I.	

ACT II.

First a Song.

1 *Back and side go bare, go bare,*
2 *Both foot and hand go cold:*
3 *But, belly, God send thee good ale enough,*
4 *Whether it be new or old.*

6 *I cannot eat but little meat,*
7 *My stomach is not good;*
8 *But sure I think that I can drink*
9 *With him that wears a hood.*

10 *Though I go bare, take ye no care,*
11 *I am nothing a-cold;*
12 *I stuff my skin so full within*
13 *Of jolly good ale and old.*

14
15 *Back and side go bare, go bare,*
16 *Both foot and hand go cold:*
17 *But, belly, God send thee good ale enough,*
18 *Whether it be new or old.*

20 *I love no roast but a nut-brown toast,*
21 *And a crab laid in the fire.*

22 *A little bread shall do me stead:*
23 *Much bread I not desire.*
24 *No frost nor snow, no wind, I trow,*
25 *Can hurt me if I would;*
26 *I am so wrapt, and thoroughly lapt*
27 *Of jolly good ale and old.*

28
29
30 *Back and side go bare, go bare,*
31 *Both foot and hand go cold:*
32 *But, belly, God send thee good ale enough,*
33 *Whether it be new or old.*

34 *And Tib my wife, that as her life*
35 *Loveth well good ale to seek,*
36 *Full oft drinks she, till ye may see*
37 *The tears run down her cheek:*
38 *Then doth she trowl to me the bowl,*

The Song: the original edition of Gammer introduces the second Act by printing the following words, on the same line, in the same large font:

The ii Acte.

Fyrste a Songe.

The play's director may decide who the singer or singers shall be, as no instructions are provided in the 1575 edition.

1-2: the singer begins by describing how threadbare his clothing is.

= food.

9: ie. "as much as any friar";¹¹ a satirical description of a monk: Farmer suggests there is a reference here to the Friars, who (says he) were stereotyped as drunks.

= "don't you worry about it".

20-21: the lines describe a traditional drink of spiced ale or wine containing roasted crab-apples (**crab**) and topped with toast to act as a sop.¹⁶

nut-brown = a common colour description.
= "satisfy or be enough for me."¹

= believe or know.

26: **wrapt** = the OED suggests "dressed" or "wrapped in a cloth"; but "rapt", ie. enraptured, is also a possible interpretation.¹

thoroughly = thoroughly.

lapt = lapped, meaning "enfolded", with the sense of being soothed or stupefied, ie. pleasantly buzzed.¹

34-35: "my wife Tib, who loves good ale as much as she loves her life". This is not the Tib of our play.
= quite often.

38: the phrase **troll** (here written **trowl**) **the bowl** means "to pass the bowl", the vessel containing the ale.

40	Even as a <u>malt-worm</u> should; And saith, sweet heart, I took my part Of this jolly good ale and old.	= heavy drinker. ²
42		
44	Back and side go bare, go bare, Both foot and hand go cold: But, belly, God send thee good ale enough, Whether it be new or old.	
46		
48	Now let them drink, till they <u>nod and wink</u> , Even as good fellows should do; They shall not miss to have the bliss Good ale doth bring men to; And all poor souls that have <u>scoured bowls</u> ,	= ie. "fall asleep" or "doze off"; to wink was to close one's eyes. = cleaned out their drinking vessels, ie. finished their drinks; one is tempted to wonder if there is also a pun here, as scoured bowls would sound awfully like scoured bowels , a reference to one's digestive tract being purged with an emetic.
50		
52		
54	Or have them <u>lustly trolled</u> , God save the lives of them and their wives, Whether they be young or old.	= cheerfully passed around. ¹
56		
58	Back and side go bare, go bare, Both foot and hand go cold: But, belly, God send thee good ale enough, Whether it be new or old.	
60		
ACT II, SCENE I.		
<i>Diccon enters from Chat's tavern.</i>		
1	Dic. Well done, <u>by Gog's malt</u> ! well sung and <u>well said</u> ! –	1: Diccon compliments the musicians and the singers. by Gog's malt = a unique oath. well said = common expression for "well done."
2	Come on, mother Chat, as thou art [a] true maid, One fresh pot of ale let's see, to make an end	2-4: standing outside of the tavern run by Dame Chat, Diccon calls for a pot of ale. 3-4: to make...defend = Diccon wants alcohol to dull his sensitivity to the cold weather.
4	Against this cold weather my naked arms to defend: This <u>gear</u> it warms the soul: now, wind, blow on thy worst, And let us drink and swill till that our bellies burst! Now were he a wise man by cunning could define Which way my journey lieth, or where Diccon will dine: But one good <u>turn</u> I have: be it by night or day, South, east, north or west, I am never <u>out of my way</u> .	4: Brett-Smith observes that a bedlam such as Diccon would deliberately dress most scantily to elicit pity. 5: Diccon's ale arrives as he speaks this line. gear = stuff, ie. the booze. 7-8: "now he would be a wise man who could, through his skill or intelligence, tell me where I am going and where I will eat next." = circumstance. ¹ = ie. heading in the wrong direction.
6		
8		
10		
12	<i>Enter Hodge from Gammer's house, carrying a piece of bread.</i>	
14	Hodge. <u>Chym</u> goodly rewarded, <u>cham</u> I not, do you think?	15-18: Hodge bemoans his failure to get any dinner this evening; he is bitterly sarcastic.

16 Chad a goodly dinner for all my sweat and swink.
Neither butter, cheese, milk, onions, flesh, nor fish,

18 Save this poor piece of barley-bread: 'tis a pleasant costly dish!

20 **Dic.** Hail, fellow Hodge, and well to fare with thy meat,
if you have any:
But by thy words, as I them smelled, thy daintrels be not many.

22 **Hodge.** Daintrels, Diccon? Gog's soul, man, save this piece
of dry horsebread,

24 Cha bit no bit this livelong day, no crumb come in my head:

My guts they yawl, crawl, and all my belly rumbleth,
26 The puddings cannot lie still, each one over other tumbleth.

By Gog's heart, cham so vexed, and in my belly penned,

28 Chould one piece were at the spital-house, another at the
castle end!

30 **Dic.** Why, Hodge, was there none at home thy dinner for to set?

32 **Hodge.** Gog's bread, Diccon, ich came too late, was nothing
there to get:

Gib (a foul fiend might on her light!) licked the milk-pan so
clean:
34 See, Diccon, 'twas not so well washed this seven year, as
ich ween!

A pestilence light on all ill-luck! chad thought, yet for all this,
36 Of a morsel of bacon behind the door at worst should not miss:

But when ich sought a slip to cut, as ich was wont to do,
38 Gog's soul, Diccon, Gib, our cat, had eat the bacon too!

12: *chym* was an already obsolete variation of
cham, both meaning "I am".¹

cham I = redundant, as *cham* alone means "I
am".¹¹

= "I had". = labour, drudgery.³

= meat.

= except for. = typical coarse fare of the lower classes.

20: "greetings, friend Hodge, I wish you a pleasant
meal, if you have any food."

21: "but based on what you said, as I understand
(*smelled*) your words, you have not had many
delicacies (*daintrels*) to eat."

23: *save* = except for.

horsebread = bread made of two-parts beans and
one-part wheat, and fed to horses in the old days,
under the belief it would add strength to the beast.⁹

Hodge exaggerates - but not by much - the poor
quality of his fare.

24: *Cha bit no bit* = "I have bitten not a bite".

this livelong day = this still-familiar expression
first appeared in the very early 15th century.¹

= cry out.¹ = rumble.¹

= ie. "my bowels (ie. entrails or intestines)".¹

27: *cham so vexed* = "I am so troubled or afflicted".

penned = "pained (with hunger)"; the playwright
employs an obsolete spelling to rhyme with *end*.

28: no author has tried to interpret this obscure line;
perhaps Hodge means he wishes parts of his digestive
tract were located elsewhere, where they would stand a
better chance of being fed.

Chould = "I would", ie. "I wish".

spital-house = hospital, which could refer, as here,
to a place in which the indigent are cared for.¹

30: "to fix you dinner?"

32: Hodge arrived home too late, there was no food
remaining for him to eat.

ich = "I".

33-34: humorous: Gib had so thoroughly licked the
milk from the pan, that it could be said the pan had
not been cleaned so well for seven years.

as ich ween = "I think" or "I expect".

35-36: "damn all bad luck! Yet despite this, I had
remembered the slab of bacon that was hanging
behind the door: now that would not fail (*miss*)
to hit the spot!"

= strip or slice. = "I was accustomed".

40	[Which bacon Diccon stole, as is declared before.]	40: this reminder for the reader actually appeared in the original edition of <i>Gammer</i> ; Hodge is unknowingly blaming the cat for Diccon's crime.
42	Dic. "Ill-luck," quod he! – marry, swear it, Hodge this day, the truth tell, <u>Thou rose not on thy right side</u> , or else blessed thee not well.	42: " <i>Ill-luck</i> ," <i>quod he!</i> = "bad luck", he says!"; as Diccon speaks this likely aside, he no doubt chuckles as he recalls that he himself was the bacon-thief! <i>marry</i> = an oath, derived from the Virgin Mary. = early version of the expression, "to get up on the right (or wrong) wide of the bed": Diccon acknowledges that this is not Hodge's day!
44	Thy milk <u>slopped</u> up! thy bacon filched! that was too <u>bad luck</u> , Hodge.	44: <i>slopped up</i> = lapped. ¹ <i>bad luck</i> = this is the earliest known written appearance in English letters of this ubiquitous phrase. ¹
46	Hodge. Nay, nay, there was a fouler <u>fault</u> , my Gammer ga' me the <u>dodge</u> ; Seest not how cham rent and torn, my heels, my knees, and my breech? 48 Chad thought, as ich sat by the fire, help here and there a stitch; But there ich was <u>pooPED</u> indeed.	46: <i>fault</i> = deficiency or error, ie. problem. ¹ <i>ga' me the dodge</i> = ie. "gave me the slip", ie. "eluded me," or "let me down" (Whitworth). 47: Hodge gestures towards his shredded clothing, especially his breeches. 48: Hodge had expected that, if nothing else, at least his clothes might be stitched up a bit this evening. = cheated or deceived. ^{1,3}
50	Dic. Why, Hodge?	
52	Hodge. <u>Boots not</u> , man, to tell.	53: "it is useless to talk about it." <i>boots not</i> = there is no point.
54	Cham so dressed amongst a sort of fools, chad better be in hell. My Gammer (cham ashamed to say) by God, served me not <u>weele</u> .	54: "I am (so poorly) treated (<i>dressed</i>) amongst this company of fools, that I would be better off if I was in hell." 55: <i>weele</i> = well.
56	Dic. How so, Hodge?	
58	Hodge. <u>Hase</u> she not gone, <u>trowest now</u> , and lost her nee'le?	= has. = ie. "can you believe it". ¹
60	Dic. Her eel, Hodge? <u>who fished of late</u> ? that <u>was</u> a dainty dish!	61: we may presume that Diccon has deliberately "misheard" Hodge. <i>who fished of late?</i> = "who was fishing recently?" <i>was</i> = ie. was certainly.
62	Hodge. Tush, tush, her nee'le, her nee'le, her nee'le, man! 'tis neither <u>flesh</u> nor fish;	63: <i>flesh</i> = meat.
64	A little thing with an hole in the end, as bright as any <u>siller</u> , Small, long, sharp at the point, and straight as any pillar.	= silver, an obsolete spelling.
66	Dic. I know not what a devil thou meanest, thou bring'st me more in <u>doubt</u> .	67: <i>doubt</i> = uncertainty (as to what Hodge is talking about).
68	Hodge. Knowest not with what Tom-tailor's <u>man</u> sits <u>broaching through a clout</u> ?	69: <i>man</i> = employee or journeyman, one who has completed his service as an apprentice but still

70	A nee'le, a nee'le, a nee'le! my Gammer's nee'le is gone!	works for another. broaching through a clout = piercing through a cloth.
72	Dic. Her nee'le, Hodge! now <u>I smell thee</u> ; that was a <u>chance alone</u> : By the mass, thou hast a shameful loss, <u>and it were but</u> for thy breeches.	72: I smell thee = "I get you", "I understand you". chance alone = "just bad luck or misfortune," or "a unique bit of bad luck." ¹ = "even if it were only".
74	Hodge. Gog's soul, man, chould give a <u>crown</u> chad it but three stitches.	75: "God's soul, man, I would give a crown if I could have had put into it even three stitches." crown = gold coin worth five shillings.
76	Dic. How sayest thou, Hodge? <u>what should he have, again thy needle got</u> ?	77: what should...got? = "what would you give to that person who could recover your needle?"
78	Hodge. <u>Bem vather's</u> soul, <u>and chad it</u> , <u>chould</u> give him a new <u>groat</u> .	79: Bem vather's = "by my father's"; Hodge momentarily slips into the dialectic feature of replacing 'f' with 'v'. and chad it = "if I had it". chould = "I would". groat = a coin worth four pence. ¹
80	Dic. Canst thou <u>keep counsel</u> in this case?	= ie. "keep a secret".
82	Hodge. Else <u>chwold</u> my <u>thonge</u> were out.	83: ie. "may my tongue be cut out if I can't." chwold = "I would", ie. "I wish". thonge = perhaps a faux-dialectical form of tongue ; elsewhere, the author writes tonge for tongue throughout the play.
84	Dic. <u>Do thou but then by</u> my advice, and I will fetch it without doubt.	= ie. "follow"; the editors all print the clause as shown, though the original edition has "do <i>than</i> but then".
86	Hodge. <u>Chill</u> run, chill ride, chill dig, chill delve,	87-94: note the alternating 8- and 6-syllable lines; the effect is a catchy rhythm. Chill = I will".
88	Chill toil, chill trudge, <u>shalt</u> see;	= "you shall".
90	Chill hold, chill draw, chill pull, chill pinch, Chill kneel on my bare knee;	
92	Chill scrape, chill scratch, chill sift, chill seek, Chill bow, chill bend, chill sweat,	
94	Chill stoop, chill stir, chill <u>cap</u> , chill kneel,	93: "remove my cap", performed as a sign of respect or humble submission.
96	Chill creep on hands and feet; Chill be thy <u>bondman</u> , Diccon, ich swear by sun and moon,	= slave.
98	<div style="text-align: right;">[Pointing behind to his torn breeches.]</div> <u>And channot somewhat</u> to stop this gap, cham utterly <u>undone</u> !	97: stage direction in original edition. 99: "if (And) something (somewhat) is not done to close up this hole, I will be completely ruined (undone)!" channot = faux-dialect for cannot ; channot appears nowhere else in either the OED or in the data-base of <i>Early English Books Online</i> .
100		

102	Dic. Why, is there any special <u>cause</u> thou <u>takest</u> hereat such sorrow?	= reason. = feels or expresses.
104	Hodge. <u>Kirstian</u> <u>Clack</u> , Tom Simson's maid, by the mass, <u>comes hether</u> to-morrow.	103: Kirstian = unique spelling in the old literature, presumably a variation of Christian . Clack = to clack is to chatter. comes hether = ie. "is coming here".
106	Cham not able to say between us what may <u>hap</u> ; She smiled on me the last Sunday, when <u>ich put off</u> my cap.	= "happen"; Hodge has been hoping to impress the visiting maiden. = "I removed".
108	Dic. Well, Hodge, this is a matter of weight, and must be kept <u>close</u> . It might else turn to both our costs, as the world now goes.	107: "well, Hodge, what I have to tell you is of a weighty nature, and must be kept secret (close)". = "it might cost us both (if you spill what I am about to tell you), given the way things are in the world today." Dodsley intriguingly suggests that Diccon is referring to a statute passed by Parliament in 1572 subjecting those who claimed to have knowledge or ability in supernatural doings to heavy penalties; keep this in mind as the scene continues.
110	Shalt swear to be no <u>blab</u> , Hodge?	109: blab was a noun for two centuries before it was first used a verb. ¹
112	Hodge. <u>Chill</u> , Diccon.	= "I will (swear)".
114	Dic. [<i>pointing to his own backside</i>] Then <u>go to</u> , Lay thine hand here; say after me, as thou shalt hear me do. Hast no book?	= "do so", "get to it". ¹
116	Hodge. <u>Cha</u> no book, I.	115: "don't you have a Bible on you?" = I have".
118	Dic. Then needs must force us both,	119: "then necessity forces our hands", ie. "requires us to take the following measure".
120	Upon my breech to lay thine hand, and there to take thine oath.	120: Diccon points to his own backside. 122ff: at this point, the rhyme scheme of the play dramatically switches from rhyming couplets to a 6- line rhyme scheme known as a sextilla , a pattern of Spanish origin: aabccb . ¹⁷ Note that the sextilla scheme employs significantly shorter lines than are otherwise used throughout the play. Our rhyming couplets do no not return until line 19 of the next scene!
122	Hodge. I, Hodge, breechless, Swear to Diccon, <u>rechless</u> , By the cross that I shall kiss, To keep his counsel <u>close</u> , And always me to dispose To work that his pleasure is.	122-7: Clements suggests that each line of the oath is recited first by Diccon, then repeated by Hodge. = reckless, ie. without reservation. ³ = secret, private.
124		126-7: "and always to be inclined to do what he wants me to do."
126		129: this stage direction appears in the original.
128	[<i>Here he kisseth Diccon's breech.</i>]	
130	Dic. Now, Hodge, see thou take heed,	

132	And do as I <u>thee bid</u> ;	= "ask you" or "tell you."
	For so I judge it <u>meet</u> ;	= fitting.
134	This needle again to win,	134: "in order to find this needle"
	There is no <u>shift therein</u> ,	135: ie. "there is no (other) measure or expedient (<i>shift</i>) available in this matter (<i>therein</i>)".
136	But conjure up a <u>spreet</u> .	= spirit; Diccon proposes to use magic to summon a demon to help them find the needle.
138	Hodge. What the great devil, Diccon, I say?	
140	Dic. Yea, in good faith, that is the way;	
	<u>Fet</u> with some pretty charm.	= "fetch it", ie. "summon it".
142		
	Hodge. <u>Soft</u> , Diccon, be not too hasty yet,	= "hold on".
144	By the mass, for ich begin to sweat!	
	Cham afraid of <u>syne</u> harm.	= probably faux-dialect for <i>some</i> .
146		
	Dic. Come hether, then, and stir thee <u>nat</u>	147-9: Diccon points to a circle which he has drawn on the ground (or traced into the dirt) into which Hodge should step (per Clements); when summoning spirits, a sorcerer normally stood inside such a circle, which would offer the magician protection against evil. <i>nat</i> = not.
148	One inch out of this <u>circle plat</u> ,	= circular place, area or diagram. ¹
	But stand, as I thee teach.	149: "but remain standing inside of it, as I instruct you."
150		
	Hodge. And shall ich be here safe from their claws?	
152		
	Dic. The master-devil with his long paws	153: head-devil, ie. Satan.
154	<u>Here to thee cannot reach</u> –	154: ie. "cannot touch you inside the circle."
	Now will I settle me to this gear.	155: "now I will commence with this business (of summoning)."
156		
	Hodge. I say, Diccon, hear me, hear:	= carefully. ¹
158	Go <u>softly</u> to this matter!	
160	Dic. What devil, man, art afraid of nought?	160: "what the devil, man, are you afraid of nothing?"
162	Hodge. Canst not tarry a little thought	162-3: Hodge asks Diccon to wait until he has had a chance to urinate!
	Till ich make a <u>courtesy</u> of water?	= a moderate amount. ¹
164		
	Dic. <u>Stand still to it</u> , why shouldest thou fear him?	165: "stay where you are".
166		
	Hodge. Gog's sides, Diccon, me-think ich hear him!	
168	And tarry, chall mar all!	168: "if I wait any longer (to relieve myself), I will ruin everything!"
170	Dic. The matter is no worse than I told it.	
172	Hodge. By the mass, cham able no longer to hold it!	
	Too bad, ich must <u>beray the hall</u> !	= befoul, defile. ¹ = ie. the auditorium in which the play is being presented (per Whitworth).
174		
	Dic. Stand to it, Hodge, stir not, you whoreson!	
176	What devil, be thine <u>arse-strings</u> <u>brusten</u> ?	176: Hodge has apparently completely soiled himself. <i>arse-strings</i> = muscles of Hodge's buttocks, ie. rectum. <i>brusten</i> = broken.

178 Thyself a while but stay,
The devil – I smell him – will be here anon.
180 **Hodge.** Hold him fast, Diccon, cham gone!

Chill not be at that fray!

182
[Exit quickly Hodge into Gammer's house.]

ACT II, SCENE II.

[Still on Stage: Diccon in front of Chat's tavern.]

1 **Dic.** Fie, shitten knave, and out upon thee!

2 Above all other louts, fie on thee!
Is not here a cleanly prank?

4 But thy matter was no better,
Nor thy presence here no sweeter,

6 To fly I can thee thank.
Here is a matter worthy glosing,

177: "stay there", ie. "don't go anywhere".
= it is not the devil Diccon smells! = any moment.
= "I am out of here!"

= "I will not remain for this to-do!" Gassner suggests the meaning "affair" for *fray*.

Whitworth notes that this unpleasant episode gives Hodge a reason to go change into his other breeches, the ones Gammer had been working on when she lost her needle.

Hodge's Accident: it is worth noting that in Colin Clements' 1922 modernized and abbreviated - as well as sanitized - adaptation of our play, Hodge asserts not that he is fouling himself, but rather that his leg has fallen asleep! Furthermore, earlier in the scene the prudish Clements has Hodge ask for a drink of water, instead of asking for a moment to make water!

Scene ii: Note that the scene continues in the *sextilla rhyme-scheme* format introduced in line 121 of the previous scene.

1-8: Diccon begins the scene by cursing out the absent Hodge for soiling himself.

Fie = an interjection expressing disgust.

shitten = in the gloriously high-toned language of the OED, "defiled with excrement".

The adjective **shitten** entered the written language in 1405; the root vulgarism first appeared in verb form in 1325, but as a noun goes back to Old English, where it originally was used to describe diarrhea, especially in cattle; however, it was not used to refer to dung in general until 1585; to complete the picture, the word first appears as a mere expletive in an 1865 report of a Court Martial in the U.S. army, in which Private James Sullivan is quoted as saying "'Oh, shi*e, I can't' or words to that effect."

knave = villain, a term of abuse.

out upon thee = "damn you."

= cleverly wicked trick or deed,^{1,2} referring to Diccon's practical joke of summoning of the demon.

4-5: Diccon alludes to Hodge's fouling himself.

matter = meaning both (1) business in general, and (2) bodily discharge.¹

sweeter = meaning both (1) agreeable, and (2) pleasant in odor.

Note the double-negative in line 5.

6: "I thank you for fleeing".

7-18: Diccon turns his thoughts to the missing needle, and recognizes an opportunity to cause further

8 Of Gammer Gurton's needle losing,
And a foul piece of wark:

10 A man, I think, might make a play,
And need no word to this they say,
12 Being but half a clark.

Soft, let me alone, I will take the charge
14 This matter further to enlarge
Within a time short;

16 If ye will mark my toys, and note,
I will give ye leave to cut my throat
18 If I make not good sport. –
Dame Chat, I say, where be ye, within?

20 *Enter Dame Chat from her tavern.*

22 **Chat.** Who have we there maketh such a din?

24 **Dic.** Here is a good fellow, maketh no great danger.

26 **Chat.** What, Diccon? – Come near, ye be no stranger:
28 We be fast set at trump, man, hard by the fire;

Thou shalt set on the king, if thou come a little nigher.

30 **Dic.** Nay, nay, there is no tarrying: I must be gone again;
32 But first for you in counsel I have a word or twain.

34 **Chat.** Come hether, Doll; Doll, sit down and play this game,
And as thou sawest me do, see thou do even the same:
36 There is five trumps besides the queen, the hindmost thou
shalt find her.

Take heed of Sym Glover's wife, she hath an eye behind her. –

mischief.

worthy glosing = worthy of being commented on or discussed; **glosing** was an already-archaic spelling of **glozing**.¹

= business; **wark** was an already-obsolete spelling for **work**.

10-12: Whitworth's interpretation is definitive: "even a man of only partial education (**half a clark**, ie. scholar) could write a play about all the excitement, because he need not add any words to those the characters already are saying" (p. 27).

13f: Diccon now directly addresses the audience.

13-15: roughly, "but hold on, leave me alone, for I need a moment to think through this business".

take the charge = early variation of **take charge**, ie. take responsibility.¹

enlarge = widen the scope of.¹

16-18: "pay attention to my antics (**toys**), and if I fail to turn this situation into a source of great entertainment, you may cut my throat."

= so much noise.

25: Diccon refers to himself.

maketh no great danger = one who is not dangerous; Brett-Smith suggests "who makes himself at home."

= who.

28: Chat explains that she is in the middle of a now-obsolete card game known as **trump**, or ruff.¹

hard = close.

29: Chat invites Diccon to join the card game.

nigher = nearer.

= delaying, ie. time to waste.

32: "but first I have a bit of information to impart to you in secret (**in counsel**)."⁵

twain = two; the still-common expression **a word or two** first appeared in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* of about 1390.¹

34: Chat calls her maid or servant Doll to take her place in the card game. We may note that Doll does not speak any lines in the play.

36: **trumps** = a **trump** is a card that outranks three others of the same suit.¹

the hindmost = in the back.

= early version of having "eyes in the back of one's

38	Now, Diccon, say your will.	head", meaning Sym's wife, one of the other players, seems to always know exactly what is going on.
40	<i>Dic.</i> Nay, <u>soft</u> a <u>little</u> yet; I would not tell it <u>my</u> sister, the matter is so great.	= hold on. = the original edition has <i>title</i> , ie. <i>tittle</i> , here. = ie. "to my".
42	There, I will have you swear by <u>Our Dear Lady of Boulogne</u> , <u>Saint Dunstan</u> and <u>Saint Dominic</u> , with the <u>three Kings of Kullaine</u> , 44 That ye shall keep it secret.	42-44: Diccon requires Chat to make a fantastic vow to keep his secret. <i>Our Dear Lady of Boulogne</i> = in the year 636 A.D., a small passengerless boat landed at France's Boulogne harbour; when a citizen of the town removed the ship's statue of the Virgin Mary, a voice was heard which spoke the words, "I choose your city as a place of grace." The statue was placed in a shrine, becoming one of Europe's great pilgrimage sights. ¹⁸ 43: <i>Saint Dunstan</i> = 10th century Archbishop of Canterbury. <i>Saint Dominic</i> = 11th-12th century founder of the Black Friars, known more commonly as the Dominicans. The order had been established in London at the Convent of the Blackfriars in 1276. ³ <i>three Kings of Kullaine</i> = ie. three kings of Cologne: a gold sarcophagus, located in the cathedral at Cologne, is believed to house the relics of the three magi of the New Testament.
46	<i>Chat.</i> Gog's bread, that will I do, As secret as mine own thought, by God and the devil <u>two</u> !	= both; though some editions print <i>too</i> here.
48	<i>Dic.</i> Here is Gammer Gurton, your neighbour, a sad and <u>heavy wight</u> : 50 Her goodly fair red <u>cock</u> at home was stole this last night.	49: <i>heavy wight</i> = gloomy person. = rooster.
52	<i>Chat.</i> Gog's soul! her cock with the yellow legs, that <u>nightly</u> crowed <u>so just</u> ?	52: <i>nightly</i> = every night. <i>so just</i> = so punctually. ¹
54	<i>Dic.</i> That cock is stolen.	
56	<i>Chat.</i> What, was he <u>fet</u> out of the hen's <u>rust</u> ?	56: <i>fet</i> = fetched, ie. taken or stolen. ¹ <i>rust</i> = alternate spelling of <i>roost</i> , used to rhyme with <i>just</i> .
58	<i>Dic.</i> I cannot tell where the devil he was kept, <u>under key or lock</u> , But Tib hath <u>tickled</u> in Gammer's ear, that you <u>should steal</u> the cock.	= the linguistic pairing of <i>lock and key</i> appeared in English letters as early as the 13th century. ¹ 59: note that Diccon is telling Chat that she is being accused of having taken Gammer's prize rooster, but says nothing about the needle. <i>tickled</i> = whispered; the OED suggests <i>tickle</i> , as used here, is a dialectical form of <i>tittle</i> , meaning to whisper. <i>should steal</i> = ie. have stolen.
60	<i>Chat.</i> Have I, <u>strong</u> whore? <u>by bread and salt</u> !	= gross or flagrant. ¹ = an oath; Dodsley suggests that it may have been a custom to eat <i>bread and salt</i> before taking an oath; Farmer proposes that <i>bread and salt</i> represent the necessities of life.
62		
64	<i>Dic.</i> What, soft, I say, be still! Say not one word <u>for all this gear</u> .	= "about this matter", or "in spite of this accusation"

66	Chat. By the mass, that I will! I will have the <u>young whore</u> by the head, and the <u>old trot</u> by the throat.	(the latter from Whitworth). = ie. Tib. = old hag, ie. Gammer Gurton.
68		
70	Dic. Not one word, dame Chat, I say, not one word <u>for my coat</u> !	= similar sense to, "for the life of me!"
72	Chat. Shall such a beggar's <u>brawl</u> as that, thinkest thou, make me a thief? The <u>pox</u> light on her whore's sides, a pestilence and <u>mischief</u> ! –	= broll, ie. offspring, brat. ¹ 72: Chat rains various curses on Gammer's head, including the classic wishing her venereal disease (pox) and harm or bad luck (mischief).
	Come out, thou hungry <u>needy bitch</u> ! O, <u>that</u> my nails be short!	73: Chat yells towards Gammer's house. needy = poor. ¹ bitch = This is one of the earliest examples of the word bitch being applied to a woman. that = ie. "too bad that", "what a shame that".
74	Dic. Gog's bread, woman, hold your peace; <u>this gear will</u> <u>else pass sport</u> !	75: Diccon doesn't want Chat to say anything to Gammer: "for God's sake keep quiet, woman; otherwise this matter (gear) will go too far, ie. beyond a jest or mere amusement!" ¹ this gear will else pass sport = Whitworth may indeed be correct that this clause must be an aside; he suggests the meaning of these words to be "otherwise the jest will fail to take", or "otherwise you will spoil the entertainment value of my scheme." After all, why would Diccon want to let Chat know the whole thing is a practical joke?
76	I would not for an hundred pound this matter should be known That I am <u>author</u> of this tale, or <u>have abroad it blown</u> .	76-77: Diccon reveals his true concern, which is that he wants his name kept out of the discussion; Whitworth, however, suggests lines 76-77 are also an aside, but it seems reasonable that Diccon would want to instruct Chat to leave his name out of it. 77: author = the original edition prints the alternate spelling auctor here. have abroad it blown = ie. "have it spread around town (that I am the source of this intelli- gence)."
78	Did ye not swear <u>ye would be ruled</u> , before the tale I told? I said ye must all secret keep, and ye said sure ye <u>wold</u> .	= common phrase for "you would do as I asked". = would.
80	Chat. Would you <u>suffer</u> , yourself, Diccon, such a <u>sort</u> to revile you,	= tolerate. = company of people.
82	With slanderous words to <u>blot</u> your name, and so to <u>defile you</u> ?	= stain, ie. defame. = "sully your name".
84	Dic. No, <u>Goodwife</u> Chat, I would be <u>loth</u> such <u>drabs</u> should blot my name;	84: Goodwife = common title for a woman who runs an establishment, as Chat does a tavern. loth = "unwilling (to permit)". drabs = harlots. ²
86	But yet ye must <u>so order all</u> , that Diccon bear no blame. Chat. Go to, then, what is your <u>rede</u> ? say on your mind, ye shall me rule herein.	= "arrange things", ie. "make sure". 87: Chat backs down: "go ahead, then, what is your advice (rede)? Tell me what you want me to do, you shall govern my actions forthwith."

88	Dic. <u>Godamercy</u> to dame Chat; in faith thou must the gear begin:	89: "thanks (Godamercy) to you; truly now, here is what you should do first regarding this business (gear)", or "you will have to be the one to begin the business." Godamercy = contraction of God have mercy . ¹
90	It is twenty pound to a goose-turd, my Gammer will not <u>tarry</u> . – But hetherward she <u>comes as fast as her legs can her carry</u> ,	90: Diccon expresses his confidence that Gammer will arrive at any moment in terms of heavily favourable (if a bit crude) odds. tarry = delay. 91: comes = ie. will come. as fast...carry = possibly the earliest use of this still-common expression, though an earlier variation, "as fast as his legges might beare hym", was published in a book of ancient wisdom edited by Nicholas Udall in 1542.
92	To <u>brawl</u> with you about her cock, for well I <u>hard</u> Tib say,	= confront or quarrel with. ² = heard.
94	The cock was roasted in your house to <u>breakfast</u> yesterday;	= the original edition prints breafast here.
96	And when ye had the carcase eaten, the feathers ye outflung,	
98	And Doll, your maid, the legs she hid a foot-deep in the dung.	95: ie. in order to hide the evidence, no doubt!
	Chat. O gracious God, my heart <u>it</u> bursts!	= the original edition has is here.
100	Dic. Well, rule yourself a space; And Gammer Gurton, when she cometh <u>anon</u> into this place,	99: "well, control yourself for a short while still." = soon.
	Then to the <u>quean</u> let's see: <u>tell her your mind, and spare not</u> .	= whore. = "Tell her what is on your mind, and don't hold back!"
102	So shall Diccon blameless be; and then, <u>go to</u> , I care not.	= "give it to her"; line 102 is arguably an aside.
104	Chat. Then, whore, beware her throat! I can <u>abide</u> no longer: –	= wait.
106	In faith, old witch, it shall be seen which of us two be stronger! – And, Diccon, but at your request, I would not stay one hour.	106: "and Diccon, except for the fact that you asked me to wait, I would not delay confronting her for even one hour."
108	Dic. Well, <u>keep it in</u> till she be here, and then out let it pour!	= ie. "keep your temper in check".
110	In the meanwhile get you in, and make no words of this;	
112	More of this matter within this hour to hear you shall not miss.	= ie. "to keep this information from you".
114	Because I knew you are my friend, <u>hide it</u> I could not, doubtless.	
116	Ye know your harm, see ye be wise about your own business.	113: Diccon starts to leave.
118	So fare ye well.	
	Chat. <u>Nay, soft, Diccon, and drink</u> : – What, Doll, I say, Bring here a cup of the best ale; let's see, come quickly away!	= ie. "don't go yet, Diccon, have a drink."
	[Doll brings out a cup of ale for Diccon; Doll and Chat exit into Chat's tavern.]	
	ACT II, SCENE III.	
	[Still on Stage: Diccon in front of Chat's tavern.]	

1	Dic. Ye see, masters, that one end <u>tapped</u> of this my short device,	1-4: Diccon addresses the audience, which as the use of the male-specific term of address - masters - suggests, was made up of all men, presumably scholars and students at Christ's College at Cambridge University, where the play was originally performed. 1-2: there are two parts to Diccon's scheme (device): the first - convincing Dame Chat that she has been accused of stealing Gammer's cock - has been implemented; now, the other shoe must drop. tapped = pierced or opened up, like a cask, suggesting "put into effect". ¹
2	Now must we <u>broach tother</u> too, <u>before the smoke arise</u> ;	2: broach = pierce, like a vessel of liquid (or more specifically, a vein or artery, according to the OED, though this interpretation is questionable), essentially synonymous with tap . ¹ tother = common word for "the other". before the smoke arise = before anyone notices or catches on (Whitworth); smoke is used here in the same sense as it is used in the ancient adage, "where there is smoke there is fire".
	And by the time they have a while run, I trust ye need not crave it,	
4	But look what lieth in both their hearts, ye are like sure to have it.	3-4: "once the proceedings I have set in motion have had a chance to run their course, you won't have to ask long to know what will happen - if you study the nature of the people involved (Gammer and Chat), you will be sure to figure it out."
6	<i>Enter Hodge from Gammer's house.</i>	
8	Hodge. Yea, Gog's soul, <u>art alive yet</u> ? What, Diccon, <u>dare ich come</u> ?	8: art alive yet = "are you still alive?" dare ich come = "do I dare come out?"
10	Dic. A man is <u>well hied</u> to trust to thee, I will say nothing but mum;	10: Diccon is sarcastic: "a man does well to put his trust in you; but I won't say a word." well hied = well-urged. ¹
	But, and ye come any nearer, I pray you see all be sweet!	11: "but if you come any nearer to me, I ask you to make sure you smell good!"
12	Hodge. Tush, man, is Gammer's nee'le found? that <u>chould</u> gladly <u>weet</u> .	13: chould = "I would". weet = know. ¹
14	Dic. She may thank thee it is not found, for if you had kept thy standing,	
16	The devil he would have fet it out – ev'n, Hodge, at thy commanding.	15-16: "Gammer can thank you for the fact that the needle has not been found, because if you had kept still (in the conjuring circle), the demon would have fetched it for you - even at your very own command."
18	Hodge. Gog's heart! and could he tell nothing where the nee'le might be found?	
20	Dic. Ye foolish dolt, ye were to <u>seek</u> , ere we had <u>got our ground</u> ;	20: "you idiot, you were supposed to ask (seek) for help (from the demon), before we could make any progress (got our ground) ¹ ."
	Therefore his tale so <u>doubtful</u> was, that I could not perceive it.	21: as a result of Hodge's failure, the demon spoke something so ambiguous or unintelligible (doubtful) that Diccon could not understand any of it.
22	Hodge. Then <u>ich</u> see well something was said, <u>chope</u> one day yet to have it.	23: "well then at least I (ich) see the demon said something, so that I can hope (chope) to one day have the needle yet."

24	But Diccon, Diccon, did not the devil cry, " <u>ho, ho, ho</u> "?	= traditional derisive laugh expressed by the devil on entering the stage in the old morality plays. ⁶
26	Dic. If thou hadst <u>tarried</u> where thou stood'st, thou wouldst have said so!	= remained.
28	Hodge. Durst swear of a book, <u>chard</u> him roar, straight after ich was gone; But tell me, Diccon, what said the knave? <u>let me hear it anon.</u>	28: "I dare swear on a Bible, I heard (chard) him roar, right after I left." = "tell me right away."
30	Dic. The whoreson talked to me, I know not well of what;	
32	One <u>while</u> his tongue it ran, and <u>paltered of</u> a cat,	= time or moment. = mumbled about ¹ or spoke ambiguously about. ⁶
34	Another while he stammered still upon a rat;	
36	Last of all, there was nothing but every word, Chat, Chat; But <u>this I well perceived</u> before I would him rid,	= "I understood at least this much".
38	Between Chat, and the rat, and the cat, the needle is hid. Now whether Gib, our cat, hath eat it in her <u>maw</u> ,	= stomach.
40	Or <u>Doctor Rat</u> , our <u>curate</u> , have found it in the straw, Or this dame Chat, your neighbour, hath stolen it, God he knoweth,	= Diccon refers to a soon-to-appear new character, the parson known as Doctor Rat.
42	But by <u>the morrow</u> at this time, we shall learn how the matter goeth.	= tomorrow.
42	Hodge. [<i>Pointing behind to his torn breeches</i>]	42: the stage direction appears in the original edition. We remember that at the end of Act II.i, Hodge was forced, due to his "accident", to change into the breeches which Gammer had originally been mending, and which apparently also have a hole in the backside.
44	Canst not learn to-night, man, <u>seest not</u> what is here?	= "don't you see".
46	Dic. 'Tis not possible to make it sooner appear.	
48	Hodge. Alas, Diccon, then chave no <u>shift</u> ; but lest ich tarry too long, [Chill] <u>hie me</u> to Sym Glover's shop, there to seek for a <u>thong</u> , Therewith this breech to <u>tatch</u> and <u>tie</u> as ich may.	47-49: then too bad, Diccon, I have no alternative (shift) left; but so that I don't wait too long (before I end up in an even worse condition), I will hurry (hie me) over to the shop of Sym the glove-maker to ask him for a strip of leather (thong) to try to attach to (tatch and tie) the hole in my breeches any way I can." tatch (line 49) = some editors replace tatch with thatch , meaning "to cover", but tatch appears to be a Middle English word for "fasten". ¹
50	Dic. To-morrow, Hodge, if we chance to meet, <u>shall see</u> what I <u>will say</u> .	51: shall see = "you shall learn". will say = "will have to say."
52	[<i>Exit Hodge off-stage.</i>]	
	ACT II, SCENE IV.	
	[<i>Still on Stage: Diccon.</i>]	
	<i>Enter Gammer from her house.</i>	
1	Dic. Now this <u>gear</u> must forward go, for here my Gammer cometh:	1-2: Diccon addresses the audience. this gear = this business, ie. Diccon's scheme.

2 Be still a while, and say nothing; make here a little romth.

4 **Gamm.** Good lord, shall never be my luck my nee'le again
to spy?
Alas, the while, 'tis past my help; where 'tis still it must lie!

6 **Dic.** Now, Jesus, Gammer Gurton, what driveth you to this
sadness?
8 I fear me, by my conscience, you will sure fall to madness.

10 **Gamm.** Who is that? What, Diccon? cham lost, man! fie, fie!

12 **Dic.** Marry, fie on them that be worthy; but what should be
your trouble?

14 **Gamm.** Alas, the more ich think on it, my sorrow it waxeth
double.
My goodly tossing spurrier's nee'le chavè lost, ich wot not
where.

16

18 **Dic.** Your nee'le? when?

20 **Gamm.** My nee'le, alas! ich might full ill it spare,
As God himself he knoweth, ne'er one beside chavè.

22 **Dic.** If this be all, good Gammer, I warrant you all is save.

24 **Gamm.** Why, know you any tidings which way my nee'le is
gone?

26 **Dic.** Yea, that I do, doubtless, as ye shall hear anon,
'A see a thing this matter toucheth within these twenty hours,

28 Even at this gate before my face, by a neighbour of yours;
She stooped me down, and up she took up a needle or a pin,

30 I durst be sworn it was even yours, by all my mother's kin.

32 **Gamm.** It was my nee'le, Diccon, ich wot; for here, even
by this post,
Ich sat, what time as ich up start, and so my nee'le it lost:

= make way; **romth** is **roomth**, ie. room.¹ Hazlitt suggests Diccon steps back to give space to Gammer to speak her mind.

Diccon is likely addressing the audience here, some of whom might even be on the stage: we may note that it became common in indoor theatres for some members of the audience to be seated on stools right on the stage - the most expensive seats in the house!²⁶

= "I am". = "for shame!"; **fie** is usually used to express reproach: Diccon responds as if Gammer is showing disapproval of himself.

= "shame on those who deserve it."

= "I". = about. = grows.

15: "I have lost my fine spur-maker's (**spurrier's**)¹ needle, and I know (**ich wot**) not where it is."¹

tossing = Bradley suggests "first-rate", Hazlitt "sharp", Brett-Smith "the natural action of sewing with a long thread", Gassner "fast", and Whitworth (paraphrased) "moving quickly back and forth while one sews"; the OED most unhelpfully suggests "that tosses: see the verb."

spurrier's nee'le = Hazlitt notes a **spurrier** needs a strong needle because he would also create the leather straps to which he would attach the spurs.

Bradley and Farmer, we may note, suggest "harness-maker" for **spurrier**.

= "I can hardly (**ill**)¹ spare it".

= ie. "I do not have another."

= assure. = safe, ie. well.

= news.

= soon.

27: "I have seen something that concerns (**toucheth**) this matter, not twenty hours ago".

29: **stooped me down** = "stooped down", using the ethical dative.

took up = picked up.

= dare. = an oath, "I swear".

= "I know it."

= "at which time as I jumped up".

34	Who was it, <u>leve</u> son? speak, ich pray thee, and quickly tell me that!	= lief, ie. dear. ¹
36	Dic. A subtle <u>quean</u> as any in this town, your neighbour here, dame Chat.	= hussy.
38	Gamm. Dame Chat! Diccon, let me be gone: <u>chill thither</u> in post haste.	38: <i>chill...haste</i> = "I will hurry there (<i>thither</i>) at once".
40	Dic. Take my counsel yet <u>or</u> ye go, for fear ye walk in waste: It is a <u>murrian</u> crafty <u>drab</u> , and <u>froward</u> to be pleased,	= <i>or</i> is used for <i>ere</i> here and two other times in the play, meaning "before". 41: "she is an exceedingly (<i>murrian</i> , ie. murrain) cunning whore (<i>drab</i>), and one who takes delight in being hard to please." ¹ <i>froward</i> = stubborn, perverse, hard to please. ¹
42	<u>And ye take not the better way</u> , [y]our needle yet ye <u>lose</u> it: For when she took it up, even here <u>before</u> your doors,	= "if you do not approach her the right way". <i>lose it</i> = Bradley suggests substituting <i>lese it</i> for the sake of the rhyme with the two-syllable <i>pleased</i> , ie. <i>pleas-ed</i> .
44	"What, <u>soft</u> , dame Chat" (<u>quoth</u> I), "that same is none of yours." " <u>Avaunt</u> " (<u>quoth</u> she), " <u>sir knave</u> ! <u>what pratest thou of</u> that I find?"	= in front of. = "hold on there". = said. 45: <i>Avaunt</i> = "get out of here". <i>sir knave</i> = a mock title. <i>what pratest thou of</i> = "what are you babbling about regarding".
46	I <u>would</u> thou hadst kissed me I <u>wot</u> where": she meant, I know, behind; And home she went as <u>brag</u> as <u>it</u> had been a body-louse,	= wish. = know. The still-common sentiment to <i>kiss my behind</i> (and its cruder variants) has a long history; the OED's earliest citation for this rejoinder dates only back to 1705 ("kiss my a*se"), but clearly the phrase's pedigree goes at least as far back as 1575, the date of our play's publication (indeed, <i>kiss my tail</i> appears later in Act III.iii). A more humorous and euphemistic variation, "kiss my blind-cheeks", also appeared later in the 17th century.
48	And I after, as <u>bold</u> as it had been the <u>goodman</u> of the house. But there, <u>and</u> ye had <u>hard</u> her, how she began to scold,	47: "and she went home as haughtily (<i>brag</i>) ¹ as if she had been a body-louse. <i>as brag as a body-louse</i> became proverbial, with <i>busy</i> or <i>brisk</i> sometimes replacing <i>brag</i> .
50	<u>The tongue it went on patins</u> , <u>by him that Judas sold</u> !	48: "then I went after her, as surely (<i>bold</i>) as if I had been the master (<i>goodman</i>) of the house." = if only. = heard.
52	<u>Each other word</u> I was a knave, and you a whore of whores, Because I <u>spake in</u> your behalf, and said the nee'le was yours.	50: <i>The tongue...patins</i> = "her tongue ran on pattens", meaning "she clattered on"; the expression is borrowed from John Heywood's 1546 book of <i>Proverbs</i> : "The cow is wood. Her tongue runth on pattens." A <i>patten</i> was basically a clog, or wooden shoe, which made a great deal of noise as its wearer moved about. ¹ <i>by him...sold</i> = ie. by Jesus. = "with every other word she called me a knave". = spoke on.

54 **Gamm.** Gog's bread! and thinks the callet thus to keep my
nee'le me fro'?

56 **Dic.** Let her alone, and she minds none other, but even to
dress you so.

58 **Gamm.** By the mass, chill rather spend the coat that is on
my back!
Thinks the false quean by such a slygh, that chill my nee'le
lack?

60 **Dic.** Sleep not you[r] gear, I counsel you, but of this take
good heed:

62 Let not be known I told you of it, how well soever ye speed.

64 **Gamm.** Chill in, Diccon, and clean apern to take, and set
before me;
And ich may my nee'le once see, chill sure remember thee!

66

[Exit Gamm into her house.]

ACT II, SCENE V.

[Still on Stage: Diccon.]

1 **Dic.** Here will the sport begin; if these two once may meet,
2 Their cheer, durst lay money, will prove scarcely sweet.
My Gamm sure intends to be upon her bones
4 With staves or with clubs, or else with cobble stones.
Dame Chat on the other side, if she be far behind,
6 I am right far deceived; she is given to it of kind.

8 He that may tarry by it awhile, and that but short,
I warrant him, trust to it, he shall see all the sport.

10 Into the town will I, my friends to visit there,
And hether straight again to see th'end of this gear. –

In the meantime, fellows, pipe up your fiddles: I say, take them,

54: callet = strumpet.¹
me fro' = "from me".

56: a difficult line: perhaps (though I suggest this with little confidence), "don't bother with her, so long as she concerns herself with no one else, and only calls you names"; Whitworth suggests "leave her alone if she does not intend to do exactly that to you."

= "I will". = ie. give away, go without.¹

= "does that deceitful harlot (*false quean*) think that she can use such a cunning strategy (*slygh*) to deprive me of my needle?"

slygh = likely faux-dialect for *sleight*, which is the word all the editors print here.

61: *Sleep...gear* = "do not neglect (*sleep*)¹ this matter of yours" (OED II.7), or "do not let your property slip (from your grasp)" (Brett-Smith, p. 77).

Sleep = the original edition prints *Slepe* here, which most editors incorrectly amend to *Slip*.

of this...heed = "be careful about this."

62: "just don't tell her I told you this, no matter what happens." As ever, Diccon makes sure his involvement in the matter remains unmentioned.

speed = fare.¹

64: "I will go in (*Chill in*), Diccon, and put on a clean apron (*apern*), and sit down.

65: "if I see my needle once more, I will assuredly reward (*remember*) you!"

= entertainment. = ie. Chat and Gamm.

= mood or amity.¹ = "I dare bet".

= ie. physically attack her.

= staffs.

= "if she proves slow to respond in kind".

= "she has a penchant for violence (*it*)."

of kind = by nature.⁴

7-8: "anyone who hangs around here for a while - and only a short time will be necessary - I guarantee it, trust me, he will be greatly entertained."

= "I will go".

= "and then return quickly to see the outcome of this business".

Gassner suggests "fight" for *gear*.

11-12: Diccon instructs the house orchestra - or the

12	And let your friends hear such mirth as ye can make them.	tavern's musicians - to play some music between
14	<i>[Exit Diccon off-stage.]</i>	the acts.
	END OF ACT II.	

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter Hodge from off-stage.

1 **Hodge.** Sym Glover, yet gramercy! cham meetly well-spel now,

2 Th'art even as good a fellow as ever kissed a cow! –
Here is a thong indeed, by the mass, though ich speak it;

4 Tom Tankard's great bald curtal, I think, could not break it!

And when he spied my need to be so straight and hard,

6 Hays lent me here his nawl, to set the gib forward;

8 As for my gammer's nee'le, the flying fiend go wi' it!
Chill not now go to the door again with it to meet.

Should make shift good enough and chad a candle's end;

10 The chief hole in my breech with these two chill amend.

Scene i: Hodge exults because his friend Sym Glover has lent him a tool with which he can repair his breeches.

1: ie. "thanks, Sym Glover, I have nicely achieved my goal"; Hodge may speak lines 1-2 to the off-stage glove-maker.

cham = "I am".

meetly = very or fairly.¹

well-spel = successful, ie. in a better position.

= "thou art", ie. "you are".

3: "here is a great patch (**thong**), if I say so myself."

thong = a strip of leather; we note that the original edition has **thyng** (thing) printed here, which all the editors amend to **thong**.

4: **bald** = marked with white streaks; a precursor to the word **piebald**, which describes something with patches of colours.¹

curtal = horse with a docked tail. Partial amputation of a horse's tail has been justified with various reasons over the centuries, such as by claims that a shortened tail is necessary to keep the driver of a draught horse from losing control of the animal should its tail rise over the rein; in an interesting discussion in a 1903 book on the care of horses, author M.H. Hayes criticizes this painful and unnecessary procedure, suggesting such arguments are no more than mere pretexts, when the true goal of the mutilation is merely cosmetic, a statement of fashion.¹⁹

5: "and when Sym saw how severe my need was".

6: **Hays** = "he has".

nawl = ie. awl, a small tool used for piercing leather; Hodge's friend, a glove-maker, would naturally own such an implement.

set the gib forward = seemingly proverbial for "expedite matters".³ Brett-Smith suggests the expression derives from the act of raising all of a ship's sails (including the **jib** or jibs); however, the OED indicates that the word **jib**, referring to a sail, did not appear in English letters for another full century.

= a curse or imprecation: "the devil take it!"

8: "I wouldn't even get up to meet it at the door", ie. Hodge doesn't need Gammer's needle anymore.

9: "I would make-do (**shift**) well enough (ie. be able to mend his breeches) if I had (**and chad**) a candle (for light)."

= "I will mend with these two articles," ie. the patch and the awl (**thong** and **nawl**).

ACT III, SCENE II.

[Still on Stage: Hodge in front of Gammer's house.]

Enter Gammer from her house.

1 **Gamm.** Now Hodge, may'st now be glad, cha news to tell thee;
2 Ich know who hais my nee'le; ich trust soon shall it see.

4 **Hodge.** The devil thou does! hast hard, gammer, indeed,
or dost but jest?

6 **Gamm.** 'Tis as true as steel, Hodge.

8 **Hodge.** Why, knowest well where didst lese it?

10 **Gamm.** Ich know who found it, and took it up! shalt see or
it be long.

12 **Hodge.** God's mother dear! if that be true, farewell both
nawl and thong!
But who hais it, gammer, say on: chould fain hear it disclosed.

14 **Gamm.** That false fixen, that same dame Chat, that counts
herself so honest.

18 **Hodge.** Who told you so?

20 **Gamm.** That same did Diccon the bedlam, which saw it done.

22 **Hodge.** Diccon? it is a vengeable knave, gammer, 'tis a
bonable whoreson,
Can do mo things than that, els cham deceived evil:

24 By the mass, ich saw him of late call up a great black devil!
O, the knave cried "ho, ho!" he roared and he thundered,
And ye 'ad been here, cham sure you'd murrainly ha' wondered.

28 **Gamm.** Was not thou afraid, Hodge, to see him in this place?

30 **Hodge.** No, and chad come to me, chould have laid him
on the face,
Chould have promised him!

32 **Gamm.** But, Hodge, had he no horns to push?

34 **Hodge.** As long as your two arms. Saw ye never Friar Rush

= "you may", ie. "you can". = "I have".

= "I". = has. = ie. "I shall".

= "have you heard". = in fact, for real.

= proverbial sentiment going back at least to 1300,
meaning "completely trustworthy".¹

= "lose", though *lese* is technically a variant of the
word *leese*, which is a different word than, though
a synonym for, *lose*.¹

= ie. picked. = "you shall". = ere, ie. before.

12: Clements suggests Hodge tosses aside his awl and
thong here.

= has. = "I would like to".

15: *fixen* = perhaps faux-dialect for *vixen*, meaning
"shrew"; the editors generally print *vixen* here.

counts = accounts, considers.

The rhyme between line 13 and line 15 is unclear, if
indeed it is supposed to rhyme; perhaps something was
lost or inadvertently changed.

21: *it* = he.

vengeable = great, tremendous (an intensifier).¹

21-22: '*tis a...evil* = "a man would be a great
villain if he could do anything more (*mo*) terrible
than what he has done, or else I am wickedly (*evil*)
deceived."

bonable = unique corruption of *abominable*.¹

= "I saw him recently summon".

= villain or scoundrel, referring to the demon.

25: "and had you been there, I am (*cham*) sure you
would have been exceedingly (*murrainly*)¹
amazed."

29: "not at all, and if he had come at me, I would have
struck (*laid*) him on his face

= "I would".

= thrust or butt with.¹

= the devil; the name originates from a German folk-
tale of a mischievous demon who disguises himself as a

36 Painted on a cloth, with a side-long cow's tail,
And crooked cloven feet, and many a hooked nail?

For all the world (if I should judge), chould reckon him his brother:

38 Look, even what face Friar Rush had, the devil had such another.

40 **Gamm.** Now, Jesus mercy, Hodge, did Diccon in him bring?

42 **Hodge.** Nay, gammer, hear me speak, chill tell you a greater thing.
The devil (when Diccon had him – ich hard him wondrous weel)

44 Said plainly here before us, that dame Chat had your nee'le.

46 **Gamm.** Then let us go, and ask her wherefore she minds to keep it;
Seeing we know so much, 'twere a madness now to sleep it.

48

Hodge. Go to her, gammer; see ye not where she stands in her doors?

50 Bid her give you the nee'le, 'tis none of hers, but yours.

ACT III, SCENE III.

[*Still on Stage: Gamm, Hodge and Chat in front of Chat's tavern.*]

1 **Gamm.** Dame Chat, chould pray thee fair, let me have that is mine!

2 Chill not these twenty years take one fart that is thine;
Therefore give me mine own, and let me live beside thee.

friar and goes on to corrupt the monks in a monastery. The story was published in English in 1568, and a now-lost play about Friar Rush was published in London in 1601.^{3,20}

35-36: Hodge describes the still-prevailing cartoon image of a devil.

cloth = a cheap substitute for tapestries, cloths with painted scenes, such as of the Nine Worthies, were commonly used as wall coverings.³

side-long = ie. low-hanging.¹

nail = finger nail.

37-38: **chould...brother** = "I would judge him (ie. the demon I saw) to be the brother of the one on the painted cloth, because their countenances (**faces**) are so similar."

= "summon him".

= "I will".

43: **ich hard...weel** = ie. "I heard him very clearly".
weel = well.

44: Hodge is not exactly honest about what transpired.

= why.

= "it would be madness for us to now neglect (**sleep**) the matter," ie. not go forward in attempting to retrieve it.

= ask.

49-50: at some point as the last few lines are spoken, Chat presumably steps outside the door of her tavern and onto the stage. Whitworth observes she no doubt appears upon hearing Gamm's voice next door.

Scene iii: Hodge and Gamm go over to the tavern where Chat awaits them.

Stage directions in Scene iii: the scene contains a great deal of running around, entering and exiting, and fighting; thus, in order to make the action easier for the reader to follow, I have incorporated into the text a significant number of stage directions, most of which are suggested by Clements.

Hence, all stage directions may be understood to be additions to the original text, unless otherwise noted.

1: **chould pray thee fair** = "I ask you courteously".
that = ie. "that which".

2: ie. "I would not in twenty years take anything from you that is of even the least possible value".

= ie. live in peace.

4	Chat. Why <u>art thou</u> crept from home <u>hether</u> , to mine own doors to chide me?	= "have you". = to here.
6	Hence, <u>doating</u> drab, <u>avaunt</u> , or I shall set thee further!	6: "begone, you senile or raving (<i>doating</i>) ^{1,3} hussy, away with you (<i>avaunt</i>), or I will chase you away!" = ie. Gammer and Hodge. = common spelling for <i>murder</i> .
8	Intends <u>thou and that knave</u> me in my house to <u>murther</u> ?	9: as the incensed Chat stands glaring with her mouth wide open, Gammer sarcastically suggests Chat is preparing to gobble her up. <i>on</i> = the original edition prints <i>no</i> here. <i>shalt</i> = "you shall".
10	Gamm. Tush, gape not so <u>on</u> me, woman! <u>shalt</u> not yet eat me,	10: ie. "not even if every friend you had asked me to leave would I do so."
	Nor all the friends thou hast in this shall not entreat me!	11: Gammer pauses after speaking this line, waiting for Chat to respond - which Chat does not do. <i>no by-leave</i> = "without having your permission to do so"; the original edition prints <i>on beleve</i> , which most of the editors amend.
	Mine own goods I will have, and ask thee <u>no by leave</u> : –	12: <i>have right</i> = ie. be given what is due them. <i>though...aggrieves</i> = "even if the matter causes you grief."
12	What, woman? poor folks must <u>have right</u> , <u>though the thing you aggrieves</u> .	= ie. "call me" or "make me out to be".
14	Chat. Give thee thy right, and hang thee up, with all thy beggar's brood!	17: "I will say nothing, I assure you, except for that which I can prove."
16	What, wilt thou <u>make me</u> a thief, and say I stole thy good?	18: <i>set</i> = took. <i>good</i> = property. <i>cham able this to tell</i> = "I am able to say this much!"
18	Gamm. Chill say nothing, ich warrant thee, but that ich can prove it well.	20: <i>oft was</i> = "aught was", ie. "anything that was". <i>how should...known</i> = Chat asks Gammer to describe what it is she allegedly stole.
	Thou <u>set</u> my <u>good</u> even from my door, <u>cham able this to tell</u> !	22: by not describing the needle, Gammer leaves Chat to continue to believe they are talking about Gammer's cock.
20	Chat. Did I, old witch, steal <u>oft was</u> thine? <u>how should that thing be known</u> ?	= term of abuse for an old woman. ¹
22	Gamm. Ich cannot tell; but up thou tookest it as though it had been thine own.	26: <i>ramp</i> = rude or wanton woman. ^{1,21} <i>rig</i> = harlot. ¹ <i>that take thy part</i> = "who are allied with you."
24	Chat. Marry, fie on thee, thou old <u>gib</u> , with all my very heart!	28: "a curse on those lips that accuse me of such an act!"
26	Gamm. Nay, fie on thee, thou <u>ramp</u> , thou <u>rig</u> , with all <u>that take thy part</u> !	30: <i>callet's</i> = whore's. <i>large</i> = lax, loose. ¹
28	Chat. A vengeance on those lips that layeth such things to my charge!	32, 34: as the two ladies are directly facing each other, it does not make sense for them to be calling for the other to <i>come out</i> , as we understand the phrase; one solution may be that the two women have to this point
30	Gamm. A vengeance on those <u>callet's</u> hips, whose conscience is so <u>large</u> !	
32	Chat. Come out, hog!	

34 **Gamm.** Come out, hog, and let have me right!

36 **Chat.** Thou arrant witch!

38 **Gamm.** Thou bawdy bitch, chill make thee curse this night!

40 **Chat.** A bag and a wallet!

42 **Gamm.** A cart for a callet!

44 **Chat.** Why, weenest thou thus to prevail?

I hold thee a groat,

46 I shall patch thy coat!

48 **Gamm.** Thou wert as good kiss my tail!

Thou slut, thou cut, thou rakes, thou jakes! will not shame
make thee hide [thee]?

50 **Chat.** Thou scald, thou bald, thou rotten, thou glutton!
I will no longer chide thee;

52 But I will teach thee to keep home.

54 **Gamm.** Wilt thou, drunken beast?

56 [They fight.]

58 **Hodge.** Stick to her, gammer, take her by the head, chill
warrant you this feast!
Smite, I say, gammer!

actually have been yelling at each other from their respective properties, and each is daring the other to come out from her own yard and into the other's. Either way, by line 56, the two women are in each other's faces.

= downright, notorious.¹

= "I will".

40-48: the rhyme scheme switches briefly to **abbcb**.

40: **A bag and a wallet** = the accessories of a street-walker.⁵

42: Gammer refers to the tradition of parading fallen-women about the streets in a cart for the purpose of humiliating them in front of jeering onlookers.

44: "do you believe you can prevail over me?"

weenest = from **ween**, meaning "to think" or "expect".

= bet. = small-valued coin.

46: Chat threatens Gammer with violence, but in doing so inadvertently and indirectly also alludes to the missing needle.

patch = cause to be covered with patches of something, here discoloured skin.

coat = hide.

48: "you can kiss my a***!"; see the note at Act II.iv.46.

49: **cut** = term of abuse, especially for a woman;¹ but the *Canting Dictionary* of 1696 suggests a **cut** is a "drunk"; note that Gammer accuses Chat of drunkenness in line 54 below.

rakes = our author has invented this word to use as a term of abuse, likely for no other reason than to simply rhyme with **jakes**.^{1,3}

jakes = originally meaning "privy", here a term of abuse, ie: human filth.¹

51: **scald** = scurvy person.¹

bald = **bald** as a term of abuse does not appear in the OED, but no doubt the reference is to the lack of a full of head of hair on Gammer's head, ie. "baldy".

rotten = rat³ or putrid person.¹

glutton = wretch.¹

I will no longer chide thee = ie. "I'm done with talking!"

= stay at.

58: **chill...feast** = Hodge assures Gammer of victory.

60	Bite, I say, gammer! I trow ye will be keen!	61: "I trust you will be valiant or cruel!"
62	Where be your nails? claw her by the jaws, pull me out both her <u>eyen</u> !	62: eyen = common alternate form of eyes .
64	Gog's bones, gammer, hold up your head! Chat. I <u>trow</u> , drab, I shall <u>dress</u> thee. –	= expect. = thrash. ¹
66	<u>Tarry</u> , thou knave, I hold thee a groat I shall make these hands <u>bless</u> thee! –	66: Chat momentarily turns to Hodge, threatening him with equal violence. Tarry = "you just wait", or "don't you go any- where". bless = beat. = teach.
	Take thou this, old whore, for amends, and <u>learn</u> thy tongue well to tame,	= match or equal. ³ = mistress, ie. (female) superior; ⁴
68	And say thou met at this bickering, not thy <u>fellow</u> , but thy <u>dame</u> !	Chat cleverly puns on the connection between fellow and dame , which also mean simply "male" and "female" respectively.
70	[<i>Chat knocks Gammer to the ground.</i>]	
72	Hodge. Where is the <u>strong-stewed whore</u> ? <u>chill gear a</u> <u>whore's mark</u> ! –	72: with Chat apparently gaining the upper hand, Hodge decides to join the fray. strong-stewed whore = general insult imputing unchastity; derived from the word stews , the name given to a red-light district. ¹ chill...mark = "I will give her a whore's mark." gear = either an alternate form of gi'r , or faux- dialect, either way meaning "give her". whore's mark = Hodge may be referring to the punishment of branding; while in the 16th century, according to a 1547 statute, branding could be inflicted on "vagabonds, gipsies and brawlers", it is not clear whether prostitutes too were actually subject to this punishment. ²²
	<u>Stand out one's way</u> , that ich kill none <u>in the dark</u> ! –	73: Stand out one's way = "get out of my way". Probably addressed to the audience; see the note at Act II.iv.2. in the dark = once again the action seems to be taking place in the twilight.
74	Up, gammer, <u>and</u> ye be alive! chill <u>feygh</u> now for us both. –	= if. = faux-dialect for fight , which is the word all the editors insert here.
76	[<i>Chat threateningly approaches Hodge.</i>]	
78	Come no near me, thou <u>scald callet</u> ! to kill thee ich <u>were loth</u> .	= scurvy whore. = "would be reluctant (loth) to do."
80	[<i>Hodge runs away to his own house, then returns cautiously again.</i>]	
82	Chat. Art here again, thou <u>hoddypeke</u> ? – what, Doll, bring me out my spit!	= fool. ³
84	[<i>Doll enters from the tavern with a spit, which she hands to Chat; Hodge picks up Gammer's staff.</i>]	
86		

88 **Hodge.** Chill broach thee with this, by m'father's soul, chill
conjure that foul spreet. –

Let door stand, Cock! – why, comes indeed? – keep door,
thou whoreson boy!

92 *Cock enters from Gammer's house,
and stands in front of the open door.*

94 **Chat.** Stand to it, thou dastard, for thine ears; ise teach thee a
sluttish toy!

96 **Hodge.** Gog's wounds, whore, chill make thee avaunt! –

98 *[Chat strikes Hodge hard;
Hodge runs away and into his house.]*

100 Take heed, Cock, pull in the latch!

102 *[Exit Cock into the house,
closing the door after him.]*

104 **Chat.** I'faith, Sir Loose-breech, had ye tarried, ye should
have found your match!

108 *[As Chat stands facing Gammer's house,
Gammer gets up and attacks Chat from behind.]*

110 **Gamm.** Now 'ware thy throat, losel, thouse pay for all!

112 *[Hodge sticks his head out the door, as Gammer
succeeds in knocking Chat down to the ground.]*

114 **Hodge.** Well said, gammer, by my soul.
Hoise her, souse her, bounce her, trounce her, pull her
throat-bole!

118 **Chat.** Com'st behind me, thou withered witch? and I get
once on foot,

120 Thou'se pay for all, thou old tar-leather! I'll teach thee what
'longs to 't!

122 *[Chat gets up and strikes Gammer in the face,
knocking her down once again.]*

124 Take thee this to make up thy mouth, till time thou come by
more!

126 *[Exit Chat into her house.]*

88: **broach** = stab or spit.
with this = ie. Gammer's walking stick.
spreet = spirit, ie. Diccon's demon.

89: Hodge calls for Cock to come out of their house
and keep watch at the open door.
why, comes indeed? = to Chat: "do you dare
come at me?"⁸

94: **Stand to it** = "come on and fight".¹
dastard = coward.
ise = "I shall", presumably a regionalism.
ise...toy = "I'll teach you a low and dirty
(sluttish) trick!" or "to be a despicable person!"

= **avaunt** has two senses, so that the clause may mean
either "I will teach you to brag", or "I will force you
to depart!"

101: Hodge tells Cock to lock the door after him!

= "slovenly lout".³ = waited any longer.

111: Gammer may wrap her hands around Chat's neck.
'ware = beware, ie. watch out for.
losel = worthless person, ne'er-do-well.^{1,5}
thou'se = thou shall.

= done.

117: **Hoise** = lift.¹
souse = strike, beat.¹
throat-bole = Adam's apple.¹

119: **and I...on foot** = "if I get back on my feet".

120: **tar-leather** = literally a dried and salted strip of
sheep-skin, applied uniquely here as a term of abuse,
specifically to Gammer as an old woman.
I'll teach...to 't = a generic threat: "I'll show you
what is fitting for you!"³

125: **make up thy mouth** = shut up.¹

till time = until.

128	<i>Hodge hurries over to help Gammer up.]</i>	
130	Hodge. Up, gammer, stand on your feet; where is the old whore? Faith, <u>would chad</u> her by the face, <u>chould</u> crack her <u>callet crown</u> !	131: Hodge's words show more courage than did his actions. would chad = "I wish I had". chould = "I would". callet crown = whore's head.
132	Gamm. Ah, Hodge, Hodge, where was thy help, when [th'] <u>fixen</u> had me down?	133: fixen = faux-dialect for vixen .
134	Hodge. By the mass, gammer, but for my staff Chat had gone <u>nigh</u> to spill you!	135: but for...spill you = "if I had not threatened Chat with the staff, she would have come close (nigh) to slaying you!"
136	Ich think the harlot had not cared, and chad not come, to kill you. But shall we lose our nee'le thus?	136: "I think the harlot would have had no compunction, if I had not arrived, about killing you."
138	Gamm. No, Hodge, <u>chwarde loth do so</u> .	= "I would be loth to do so." Bradley suggests chwarde is a misprint for chware , meaning "I would be".
140	Thinkest thou chill take that at her hand? no, Hodge, ich tell thee no.	
142	Hodge. Chould yet this fray were well <u>take up</u> , and our nee'le at home.	142: "yet I wish this quarrel were settled, and our needle was at home." take up = taken up, ie. settled, at an end. ¹
144	'Twill be my <u>chance</u> else some to kill, wherever it be or whom!	143: "otherwise, it would be my bad luck (chance) to kill some people, whoever and wherever they may be!"
146	Gamm. We have a parson, Hodge, thou knows, a man esteemed wise, <u>Mast Doctor Rat</u> ; chill for him send, and let me hear his advice. He will <u>her shrive</u> for all this <u>gear</u> , and give her penance <u>strait</u> ;	= Master Doctor Rat, a cleric; Doctor was a common title used for men of the cloth. 147: Gammer expects the parson will get the truth from Chat. her shrive = ie. "obtain her confession". gear = matter. strait = severe or rigorous. ¹
148	<u>Wese</u> have our nee'le, else dame Chat comes ne'er within heaven-gate.	148: "we will have our needle, or else Chat will never be admitted to Heaven", ie. because she will have failed to confess her sin - the theft of the needle - to the priest. wese = "we shall"; this word does not appear in the OED.
150	Hodge. Yea, marry, gammer, that ich think best: will you now for him send?	= "we will bring this matter to a close."
152	The sooner Doctor Rat be here, the sooner <u>wese ha' an end</u> . And <u>hear</u> , gammer, Diccon's devil, (as ich remember well) <u>Of</u> cat and Chat, and Doctor Rat, a <u>felonious</u> tale did tell.	= the original edition has here here. = about. = wicked. ¹
154	<u>Chold you forty pound</u> , that is the way your nee'le to get again.	= "I'll bet you 40 pounds". Forty <i>pence</i> (not <i>pounds</i>) was actually a customary amount in a wager.
156	Gamm. Chill ha' him straight; call out the boy, wese make him <u>take the pain</u> .	156: ie. "I will get him here right away; call Cock, we shall have him do the errand." take the pain = the sense is "take the trouble to do this."
158	Hodge. What, Cock, I say, come out! What devil, can'st not hear?	
160	<i>Enter Cock tentatively.</i>	

162 **Cock.** How now, Hodge? how does gammer, is yet the
weather clear?
What would chave me to do?

164

166 **Gamm.** Come hether, Cock, anon.
Hence swith to Doctor Rat hie thee, that thou were gone,
And pray him come speak with me, cham not well at ease.

168 Shalt have him at his chamber, or else at Mother Bee's;
Else seek him at Hob Filcher's shop, for as chard it reported,

170 There is the best ale in all the town, and now is most resorted.

172 **Cock.** And shall ich bring him with me, gammer?

174 **Gamm.** Yea, by and by, good Cock.

176 **Cock.** Shalt see that shall be here anon, else let me have
on the dock.

178 [Exit Cock off-stage.]

180 **Hodge.** Now, gammer, shall we two go in, and tarry for his
coming? –
What devil, woman, pluck up your heart, and leave off all
this glooming.

182 Though she were stronger at the first, as ich think ye did find her,
Yet there ye dressed the dronken sow, what time ye came
behind her.

184 **Gamm.** Nay, nay, cham sure she lost not all, for, set th'end
to the beginning,

186 And ich doubt not, but she will make small boast of her winning.

ACT III, SCENE IV.

[Still on Stage: Hodge and Gamm in front of
Gammer's house.]

162: *is yet...clear?* = ie. "have matters settled down
out here?", ie. "is the fight over?"
= literally "I have me", another obvious blunder; the
intended meaning is "you have me".
Bradley contends that *chave* is either a mistaken
bit of dialect, or a printer's mistake for *thave*, ie.
"thou have".

165: "come here, Cock, right away."
= "from here quickly". = "hurry".

167: *pray* = ask.
cham not well at ease = Cock will take this
clause
to mean that Gamm feels ill, and that is why she
wants the parson to come over.
= "you shall find him". = rooms, ie. home.

169: *Hob Filcher's shop* = like *Mother Bee's*, presum-
ably a tavern; *filcher* means "petty thief".¹
chard = "I have heard".
= frequented.

= right away.

176: "you will see, I will bring him back right away,
otherwise you can thrash me on my backside
(*dock*)."¹

180: *tarry for* = await.
coming = arrival.

181-3: Hodge tries to buck up the distressed and
morose Gamm.
glooming = sulking, appearing sullen.⁴

183: "yet you managed to beat (*dressed*) her too, that
time when you came up behind her."
dronken = drunken.

185-6: "if she describes the fight by reversing the order
of the main action (ie. by describing my strong finish as
if it had occurred first, and then her strong start as if
that was how the fight had concluded), as I am sure she
will do, she will be able to brag that she was
victorious."

186: before Gamm and Hodge leave the stage, Tib
comes running out in a tizzy, and the next scene
begins.

Enter Tib from Gammer's house, frantic.

Tib. See, gammer, gammer, Gib, our cat, cham afraid what she aileth;
She stands me gasping behind the door, as though her wind her faileth:

Now let ich doubt what Gib should mean, that now she doth so doat.

[Hodge steps into the house, then returns holding Gib the cat.]

Hodge. Hold hether! Ich hold twenty pound, your nee'le is in her throat.

Grope her, ich say, methinks ich feel it; does not prick your hand?

Gamm. Ich can feel nothing.

Hodge. No! ich know thar's not within this land

A murrainer cat than Gib is, betwixt the Thames and Tyne;

Sh'ase as much wit in her head almost as chave in mine.

Tib. Faith, sh'ase eaten something, that will not easily down;
Whether she gat it at home, or abroad in the town,
Ich cannot tell.

Gamm. Alas! ich fear it be some crooked pin,
And then farewell Gib, she is undone, and lost, all save the skin!

Hodge. 'Tis your nee'le, woman, I say! Gog's soul, give me a knife,
And chill have it out of her maw, or else chall lose my life.

Gamm. What! nay, Hodge, fie! Kill not our cat, 'tis all the cats we ha' now!

Hodge. By the mass, dame Chat hays me so moved, ich care not what I kill, ma' God a vow!

Go to then, Tib, to this gear; hold up her tail and take her!

[Hodge hands Tib the cat.]

1: **cham...aileth** = "I am afraid that Gib appears ill."

= "she is standing": another example of the ethical dative.

3: "now I am apprehensive (**doubt**) about the meaning of this, that she is behaving so oddly or madly (**she doth so doat**)^{1,4}."

let = replaced by Hazlitt with **mot**, meaning "might".

8: **Hold hether!** = "feel him here!"

Ich hold twenty pound = "I would bet twenty pounds". Hodge is feeling Gib around her neck, and invites Gammer to do the same.

= feel, probe.¹ = ie. "does it".

= there's.

14: **murrainer** = more plaguey or contemptible.¹

betwixt the Thames and Tyne = between the Rivers **Thames** (which flows through London) and **Tyne** (which flows through Newcastle, about 250 miles north of London).

= "she has". = "I have".

= "she has". = ie. go down.

= common alternative for **got**. = out of the house and in the yard.

= ruined. = except for.

According to the OED, **cat skin** might be used to make purses.¹

= the original edition had **Tyb** here, amended by all to **'Tis**.

25: "and I will cut it out of her stomach, or else I shall (**chall**) give up my life."

27: **'tis all...now** = "it's the only cat we have!" A good cat was needed to kill off mice and similar vermin.

29: **hays me so moved** = "has upset me so much". The original edition has **moned**, amended universally to **moved**.

ma' God a vow = ie. "I swear to God".

ma' = "I make".⁴

30: "go on, Tib, let's get to this business."

34	<u>Chill</u> see what devil is in her guts, chill take the pains to <u>rake her</u> !	34: Chill = "I will". rake her = Hodge intends to reach into Gib's intestines through her fundament; a constipated horse was treated in this manner so as to remove the clogging matter. ¹
36	Gamm. Rake a cat, Hodge! what wouldst thou do?	
38	Hodge. What, think'st that <u>cham</u> not able? Did not Tom <u>Tankard</u> rake his <u>curtal</u> t'o'er day standing in the stable?	= "I am". 39: Tankard = a drinking vessel. curtal = a horse with a shortened tail. t'o'er = "the other".
40		
42	<i>Enter Cock from off-stage.</i>	
44	Gamm. <u>Soft!</u> be <u>content</u> , let's hear what news Cock bringeth from Mast Rat.	43: "wait a minute - calm down".
46	Cock. Gammer, chave been there as you <u>bad</u> , you <u>wot</u> well about what. 'Twill not be long before he come, <u>ich durst swear off a book</u> , He bids you see ye be at home, and there for him to look.	= asked. = know. = "I dare swear on a Bible".
48	Gamm. Where didst thou find him, boy? was he not where I told thee?	47: Rat wants Gammer to wait at home for him.
50	Cock. Yes, yes, even at Hob Filcher's house, <u>by him that</u> <u>bought and sold me</u> :	51: by him...sold me = "by Him who redeemed me", ie. Christ; as Brett-Smith notes, and sold me is an extraneous and ignorant addition of Cock's.
52	A cup of ale <u>had</u> in his hand, and a <u>crab</u> lay in the fire; Chad much ado to go and come, all was so full of mire:	= "he had". = crab-apple; see the note at lines 20-21 of the song which begins Act II.
54	And, gammer, one thing I can tell: Hob Filcher's <u>nawl</u> was lost,	53: "I had much trouble getting there and back, the way was so muddy;" muddy roads were no doubt a never- ending problem in rainy, unpaved England.
56	And Doctor Rat found it again, <u>hard</u> beside the door-post. <u>Ichold</u> a penny can say something, your nee'le again to <u>fet</u> .	54-55: Cock notes that Doctor Rat recently had success in a similar case, finding Hob Filcher's missing awl (nawl), a tool for punching holes in leather. = close.
58	Gamm. Cham glad to hear so much, Cock, then trust he will not <u>let</u> To help us herein best he can; therefore, till time he come, Let us go in; if there be ought to get, thou shalt have some.	56: "I bet you a penny, Doctor Rat will be helpful, and will find (fet) your needle." Ichold = "I hold", ie. "I wager". 58: let = refrain.
60		60: if any food can be found inside, Gammer will bestow it on Cock as a reward for successfully completing his mission.
62	<i>[Exeunt all into Gammer's house.]</i>	
	END OF ACT III.	

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter Gammer from her house into her yard.

Enter Doctor Rat from off-stage.

Entering Characters: Gammer enters her yard, where she sits and sadly ruminates.

We also finally meet our play's resident cleric, the parson **Doctor Rat**, who enters from off-stage, coming down the "street", heading towards Gammer's house.

Doctor Rat, as his name suggests, is no ordinary kindly cleric, but rather an ornery man who would rather drink than deal with his miserable flock.

Doctor was a title often given to a man of the cloth.

Rat is referred to as a **parson**, a **clerk**, a **vicar** and a **priest** in the play; a **clerk** is a priest, and **parson** and **vicar** are basically synonymous, both referring to a salaried parish priest.^{1,24}

1 **Dr. Rat.** A man were better twenty times be a bandog and bark,

1-7: Rat bemoans the fact that as a priest, he must continuously handle his parishioners' problems, which are of a generally trivial but time-consuming nature, when he would much rather be left in peace drinking.

were better = "would be better off".

bandog = chained and vicious dog.²

2 Than here among such a sort be parish priest or clerk,

2: **sort** = collection of people.

clerk = a lay officer of the church who assists the priest in various matters, such as by loudly leading the responses during church services.¹

= the time it takes to urinate.

4 Where he shall never be at rest one pissing while a day,
But he must trudge about the town, this way and that way,
Here to a drab, there to a thief, his shoes to tear and rent,

5: **drab** = whore.

his shoes = referring to the hypothetical priest's shoes.

rent = synonym for "tear".

= command, ie. Rat has no choice but to be at every wretch's beck and call.

= been sitting. = time.

6 And that which is worst of all, at every knave's commandment!

= know.

10: ie. "even something as trivial as".

8 I had not sit the space to drink two pots of ale,
But Gammer Gurton's sorry boy was straightway at my tail;
And she was sick, and I must come, to do I wot not what;
10 If once her finger's-end but ache – trudge, call for Doctor Rat!

11-12: as a parish priest, Rat is entitled to receive a portion of the **tithes** - the annual taxes rated at 10% of one's produce or income - paid by the parishioners to the church, part of which supplemented the priest's small salary; often times tithes were paid in kind directly to the priest, as with animals, hence the terms **tithe-pig** or **tithe-goose**.

lack = lose.⁷

12 And when I come not at their call, I only thereby lose,
For I am sure to lack therefore a tithe-pig or a goose.

= assure.

= for which.

14 I warrant you, when truth is known, and told they have their tale,
The matter whereabout I come is not worth a half-penny-
worth of ale;

= wisely and agreeably. = glozer, ie. flatterer.

= before.

16 Yet must I talk so sage and smooth, as though I were a gloser;
Else ere the year come at an end, I shall be sure the loser. –
What work ye, Gammer Gurton? How? here is your friend
M[ast] Rat.

17: **M[ast] Rat** = ie. Master Rat; the 1575 edition prints only **M. Rat**.

18	Gamm. Ah! good M[ast] Doctor, <u>cha</u> troubled, cha troubled you, <u>chwot</u> well that.	19: cha = "I have". chwot = "ich wot", ie. "I know".
20	Dr. Rat. How do ye, woman? be ye <u>lusty</u> , or be ye not well at ease?	= vigorously healthy; Rat assumes, based on Cock's message, that Gammer is ill.
22	Gamm. <u>By Gis</u> , Master, <u>cham</u> not sick, but yet <u>chave a disease</u> .	23: By Gis = ie. "by Jesus", an odd but surprisingly common euphemistic oath. cham = "I am". chave = "I have". a disease = trouble or anxiety. ^{1,4}
24	Chad a foul <u>turn</u> now of late, chill tell it you, <u>by Gigs</u> !	24: "I have had a wretched change of circumstances (<u>turn</u>) lately, I will tell you, by Jesus!" by Gigs = yet another euphemistic version of "by Jesus".
26	Dr. Rat. Hath your brown cow <u>cast</u> her calf, or your <u>sandy</u> sow her pigs?	26: cast = given premature birth too. ¹ sandy = yellow-red coloured. ¹
28	Gamm. No, but chad been as good they had as this, ich wot well.	28: "no, but I would have been better off if they had done that than to find myself in the situation I am in now, I know that much."
30	Dr. Rat. What is the matter?	30: this still common expression first appeared in the early 16th century. ¹
32	Gamm. Alas, alas! <u>cha</u> lost my good nee'le! My nee'le, I say, and <u>wot</u> ye what? a <u>drab</u> came by and <u>spied</u> it,	= "I have". 33: wot = know. drab = whore, meaning Chat. spied = saw.
34	And when I asked her for the same, the <u>filth</u> flatly denied it.	= old term of abuse.
36	Dr. Rat. <u>What</u> was she that –	= who.
38	Gamm. <u>A dame</u> , ich <u>warrant</u> you! She began to scold and brawl –	= the sarcastic sense is, "a real lady". = assure.
40	Alas, alas! – come hether, Hodge! – <u>this wretch</u> can tell you all.	= ie. Hodge.
ACT IV, SCENE II.		
[Still on Stage: Gammer and Doctor Rat in front of Gammer's house.]		
<i>Enter Hodge from Gammer's house.</i>		
1	Hodge. Good morrow, <u>Gaffer Vicar</u> .	= Gaffer was a term of respect attached to a man's profession, used by country people; it may be a contraction of godfather , just as Gammer may be an abbreviated form of godmother . ¹
2		
4	Dr. Rat. Come on, fellow, let us hear! Thy <u>dame</u> hath said to me, thou knowest of all this <u>gear</u> ; Let's see what thou canst say.	= mistress, ie. Gammer. = business.
6		
8	Hodge. <u>By m' fay</u> , sir, that ye shall, What matter soever there was done, <u>ich</u> can tell <u>your maship</u> [all]:	= "by my faith", ie. truly. = "I". = ie. "Your Mastership".

10	My Gammer Gurton here, see now, Sat her down at this door, see now; And as she began to <u>stir her</u> , see now,	= bestir herself.
12	Her nee'le fell in the floor, see now; And while her <u>staff</u> she took, see now,	= walking stick.
14	At Gib her cat to fling, see now, Her nee'le was lost in the floor, see now –	
16	Is not this a wondrous thing, see now? Then came the <u>quean</u> dame Chat, see now,	= prostitute.
18	To ask for her black cup, see now: And even here at this gate, see now,	18: Hodge invents the idea that Chat had come over looking for Gammer to return a piece of kitchen-ware she had borrowed.
20	She took that nee'le up, see now: My gammer then she <u>yede</u> , see now,	= proceeded or went; ⁴ the OED calls <i>yede</i> a "pseudo-archaism" of the 16th century.
22	Her nee'le again to bring, see now, And was caught by the head, see now –	
24	Is not this a wondrous thing, see now? She <u>tare</u> my gammer's coat, see now,	= dialectical form of <i>tore</i> . ¹
26	And scratched her by the face, see now; <u>Chad</u> thought <u>sh'ad</u> stopped her throat, see now –	= "I had". = "she had".
28	Is not this a wondrous case, see now? When ich saw this, ich was <u>worth</u> , see now,	= archaism for <i>wroth</i> , ie. irate.
30	And <u>start</u> between them <u>twain</u> , see now;	30: Hodge then joined the fray. <i>start</i> = hurried. <i>twain</i> = two.
32	Else ich durst take a book-oath, see now, My gammer had been slain, see now.	31-32: "otherwise (ie. if I had not jumped in), I swear on a Bible that Chat would have killed Gammer." Hodge conveniently leaves out the part where he ran away from Chat.
34	Gamm. This is even the whole matter, as Hodge has plainly told; And <u>chould fain</u> be quiet for my part, that chould.	35: "and I would prefer or be glad (<i>chould fain</i>) to be at peace or untroubled, that I would." Gammer wishes the whole episode were behind her.
36	But help us, good Master, beseech ye that ye do: <u>Else</u> shall we both be <u>beaten</u> , and lose our nee'le too.	= ie. "or else". = ie. beat up.
38	Dr. Rat. What would ye have me to do? tell me, that I were gone;	39: <i>that I were gone</i> = an ambiguous clause: while Rat no doubt wants Gammer to understand him to mean "and I'll go do it", there is probably an undercurrent of a wish by Rat to return to his drinking as quickly as he can, ie. "so that I can get out of here!"
40	I will do the best that I can, to <u>set you both at one</u> . But <u>be ye</u> sure dame Chat hath this your nee'le found?	= "reconcile the two of you." = "are you".
42		
44	<i>Enter Diccon from off-stage.</i> Gamm. Here comes the man that <u>see her take it up</u> off the ground:	= "saw her pick it up".
46	Ask him yourself, Master Rat, if ye believe not me: And help me to my nee'le, for God's sake and <u>Saint Charity</u> !	47: <i>Charity</i> was one of three sisters (the other two being <i>Faith</i> and <i>Hope</i>) who, along with their mother <i>Sophia</i> (Wisdom) were martyred in the 3rd century A.D. ²³

48	Dr. Rat. Come near, Diccon, and let us hear what thou can express.	49: has a line dropped out in error? There is no line to rhyme with line 49.
50	Wilt thou be sworn thou seest dame Chat this woman's nee'le have?	
52	Dic. Nay, by <u>Saint Benet</u> , will I not, then might ye think me <u>rave</u> .	52: <i>Saint Benet</i> = Bennet or Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-c. 543), founder of the Benedictine rule, a set of instructions for how monks should live communally. <i>rave</i> = mad, or talk wildly and irrationally, like a madman; ^{1,6} as a recently released inmate of a lunatic asylum, Diccon may be wary - or at least may be pretending to be so - of doing anything that might reflect badly on his sanity.
54	Gamm. Why, did'st not thou tell me so even here? canst thou for shame deny it?	
56	Dic. Ay, marry, gammer; but I said I would not <u>abide by it</u> .	= "bide by it", ie. maintain his story. See Act II.iv.62.
58	Dr. Rat. Will you say a thing, and not stick to it to <u>try it</u> ?	58: ie. "will you allege something, but then not stick by your words?" <i>try it</i> = "prove what you said to be true".
60	Dic. "Stick to it," <u>quoth</u> you, Master Rat? marry, sir, I <u>defy it</u> . Nay, there is many an honest man, when he such <u>blasts hath blown</u>	= say. = "refuse to do so", or "deny the charge." ⁵
62	In his friend's ears, he would be loth the same <u>by him were known</u> . If such a <u>toy</u> be used oft among the honesty,	61-62: "no, there are many honest men who, having imparted secret information to a friend, would be hesitant to let it be known they were the source of that information." <i>blasts hath blown</i> = breath or wind has blown. <i>by him were known</i> = ie. could be traced back to him. ¹¹
64	It may beseem a simple man of your and my degree.	63-64: "if such an idle practice or antic (<i>toy</i> , referring to the practice of not maintaining what one has said) is frequently employed as it is by respectable people (<i>the honesty</i>), ¹ then it is surely suitable for simple people of yours and my station to do likewise."
66	Dr. Rat. Then we be <u>never the nearer</u> , for all that you can tell.	= ie. to locating the needle; we see a long-standing legal notion at work: if Diccon will not testify that he saw Chat pick up the needle, then Gamm's reporting that Diccon told her this very fact - hearsay - cannot be considered evidence.
68	Dic. Yea, marry, sir, if ye will do by mine advice and counsel: If mother Chat see all us here, she knoweth how the matter goes;	68: to Rat: "follow my advice." 69-71: Diccon suggests that if Chat sees them all congregating outside Gamm's house, she will know they are all talking about her; and, therefore, the others should go inside while he will go to Chat's home to investigate the matter.
70	Therefore I <u>rede</u> you three go hence, and within keep close, And I <u>will</u> into dame Chat's house, and so the matter use,	70 "therefore I advise (<i>rede</i>) you to get away from here, and stay out of sight inside the house". = will go.
72	That <u>or</u> ye could go twice to church, I warrant you hear news.	72: "that before the equivalent amount of time necessary for you to go to church twice passes, I guarantee you will have news from me." <i>or</i> = ere, ie. before.
	She shall look well about her, but I <u>durst lay a pledge</u> ,	= dare swear.

74	Ye shall of gammer's nee'le have shortly better knowledge.	
76	Gamm. Now, gentle Diccon, do so; – and, <u>good sir</u> , let us trudge.	= to Rat.
78	Dr. Rat. By the mass, I may not <u>tarry</u> so long to be your judge.	78: Rat is hesitant to remain any longer than he has to. tarry = wait around passively.
80	Dic. 'Tis but a little while, man; what, <u>take so much pain</u> ! If I hear no news of it, I will come <u>sooner</u> again.	= "take the trouble to do this!" = soon. ⁵
82	Hodge. <u>Tarry so much</u> , good Master Doctor, of your gentleness!	= "please do wait".
84	Dr. Rat. Then let us hie us inward, and, Diccon, speed thy business.	85: "then let us hurry inside, and, Diccon, expedite your work."
86	Dic. Now, sirs, do you no more, but <u>keep my counsel just</u> ,	= "do exactly as I say".
88	And Doctor Rat shall thus catch some good, I trust; [<i>Aside</i>] But mother Chat, my <u>gossip</u> , talk first <u>withal</u> I must,	= friend. = "with (her)".
90	For she must be chief captain to lay the Rat in the dust.	90: Diccon is planning to set a trap for Rat.
92	[<i>Exit Rat, Hodge and Gammer into Gammer's house; Diccon walks over to Chat's tavern.</i>]	
 <u>ACT IV, SCENE III.</u>		
[<i>Still on Stage: Diccon, who is heading over to Chat's tavern.</i>]		
 <i>Enter Chat from her tavern.</i>		
1	Dic. <u>God deven</u> , dame Chat, in faith, and well-met in this place.	Scene iii: in the original 1575 edition of the play, Scene ii runs straight through to the end of Act IV; I follow Farmer's lead in breaking the scene up. = good even, ie. good evening, but used to mean "good afternoon"; good even appeared first in English writing in 1481, but good evening did not show up until 1593. ¹
2		
4	Chat. God deven, my friend Diccon; <u>whither walk ye this pace</u> ?	= "to where are you walking so quickly?" This line suggests Chat speaks to Diccon before he has turned into Chat's yard.
6	Dic. By my truth, even to you, to learn how the world goeth. <u>Hard</u> ye no more of <u>the other matter</u> ? <u>say me now, by your troth</u> .	6: Hard = heard. the other matter = ie. Gammer's stolen cock. say me...troth = "tell me the truth."
8	Chat. O yes, Diccon: here the old whore and Hodge, that great knave – But, in faith, I would thou hadst seen – O Lord, I <u>dressed</u> them <u>brave</u> !	9: "but, truly, I wish you had seen it - oh Lord, I treated (dressed) them most excellently (brave , ie. bravely)."
10	She <u>bare</u> me two or three <u>souses</u> behind in the <u>nape</u> of the neck, Till I made her old <u>weasand</u> to answer again, "keck!"	10: "she struck me two or three times on the back (nape) of my neck". bare = alternate spelling for bore . souses = blows. 11: weasand = throat or windpipe. keck = make a retching sound. ¹
12	And Hodge, that dirty <u>dastard</u> , that at her elbow stands –	= coward.

14	If one pair of legs had not been worth two pair of hands, He had had his beard shaven, if my nails would have served, And not without a cause, for the knave it well deserved.	13: ie. if Hodge had not run away (Whitworth, p. 57). 14: humorous: Chat would have so effectively clawed at Hodge's face that she would have likely stripped him of his beard.
16		
18	Dic. By the mass, I can thee thank, wench, thou didst so well acquit <u>thee</u> .	17: thee = "yourself" (in the fight).
20	Chat. And <u>th' adst</u> seen him, Diccon, it would have made thee beshit <u>thee</u> For laughter: the whoreson <u>dolt</u> at last <u>caught</u> up a club, As though he would have slain the master-devil, <u>Belsabub</u> ; But I set him soon inward.	19: And th' adst = "if thou hadst", ie. "had you". thee = thyself. = ie. Hodge. = picked. = ie. Beelzebub , who is identified as "the prince of the devils" in old Bibles such as the <i>Geneva</i> and <i>King James</i> . 22: "but I quickly drove him inside" (Gassner, p. 383).
22		
24	Dic. O Lord! there is the thing, That Hodge is so offended, that makes him start and <u>fling</u> !	24-25: Diccon reacts as if Chat's revelation now suddenly explains to him why he has seen Hodge so distraught. fling = burst out in complaint. ¹
26		
28	Chat. Why? makes the knave any <u>moiling</u> , as ye have seen or <u>hard</u> ?	27: moiling = ado or to-do. ³ hard = heard.
30	Dic. Even now I saw him last, like a mad man he <u>farde</u> , And <u>sware</u> by heaven and hell he would <u>a-wreak</u> his sorrow, And leave you never a hen alive by eight of the clock to- morrow; Therefore <u>mark</u> what I say, and my words <u>see that ye trust</u> : Your hens be as good as dead, if ye leave them on the <u>rust</u> .	= fared, an archaic spelling. = swore. = avenge. = "listen closely to". = ie. "you must believe". = roost.
32		
34	Chat. The knave dare as well go hang himself, as <u>go upon</u> <u>my ground</u> .	35: go upon my ground = ie. "enter my property."
36		
38	Dic. Well, yet take heed, I say, I must tell you my tale <u>round</u> : Have you not about your house, behind your <u>furnace</u> or <u>lead</u> , A hole where a crafty knave may creep in for need?	= bluntly, plainly. ² 38: furnace = oven or fireplace. ^{1,8,22} lead = large open pot for brewing; we remember that Chat keeps a tavern. ^{1,3,4}
40		
42	Chat. Yes, by the mass, a hole broke down even within these two days.	39: Whitworth considers the argument that there is actually a smoke-conduit, or a vent of sorts, leading outside the house, through which, as Diccon warns Chat, an intruder might crawl; but see Chat's next line below, which would argue against this interpretation.
44	Dic. Hodge, he intends this same night to slip in thereaways.	41: Chat seems to describe a partial collapse of one of her walls within the past two days.
46	Chat. O Christ, that I were sure of it! in faith, <u>he should</u> <u>have his meed</u> !	43: the conversation suggests Chat keeps her hen- roost inside her house. 45: he should...meed = "he will get his due reward!"
	Dic. Watch well, for the knave will be there as sure as is your <u>creed</u> ;	47: creed = religious faith or belief. ¹

48	I would <u>spend myself</u> a shilling to have him <u>swinged</u> well.	= ie. pay. = beaten.
50	Chat. I am as glad as a woman can be of this thing to hear tell;	
52	By Gog's bones, when he cometh, now that I know the matter, He shall sure at the first skip to leap <u>in scalding water</u> ,	52: metaphorically, "Hodge will with his first step find himself in deep trouble." But as Whitworth notes, if there is a cauldron of boiling water at the end of the vent through which Hodge could crawl, Chat's assertion might be intended to be literal. in scalding water = variation on the still-current use of the phrase in hot water to describe being in trouble.
	<u>With a worse turn besides</u> ; when he will, let him come.	= ie. "and he will then receive something even worse besides", ie. a sound beating. worse turn = a change in circumstances for the worse.
54	Dic. I tell you as my sister; you know what meaneth "mum"!	55: Diccon warns Chat yet again not to let anyone know that he is the source of this information.
56	[Exit Chat into her tavern.]	
	ACT IV, SCENE IV.	
	[Still on Stage: Diccon.]	Scene iv: once again, I follow Farmer in beginning a new scene here.
1	Dic. Now lack I but my doctor to play his part again.	
2	<i>Enter Doctor Rat from Gammer's house.</i>	
4	And lo, where he cometh towards, peradventure to his pain!	5: "and look, here he comes, and likely to his own grief!"
6	Dr. Rat. What good news, Diccon? fellow, is mother Chat at home?	
8	Dic. She is, sir, and she is not, but it please her to whom: Yet <u>did I take her tardy</u> , as subtle as she was.	9: the sense is, "she is home for those she wants to see." = "I did catch her unexpectedly or by surprise".
12	Dr. Rat. The thing that thou went'st for, hast thou brought it to pass?	12: did Diccon find the evidence of Chat's alleged crime, as he said he would do?
14	Dic. I have done <u>that</u> I have done, be it worse, be it better; And dame Chat <u>at her wits-end</u> I have almost set her.	= that which. 15: Diccon suggests that he has in some way almost upset Chat. at her wits-end = the still-current phrase to be at one's wit's ends first appeared in the 14th century. ¹
16	Dr. Rat. Why, hast thou <u>spied</u> the nee'le? quickly, <u>I pray thee</u> , tell!	= seen. = please.
18	Dic. I have spied it, in faith, sir, I handled myself so well;	
20	And yet the crafty <u>quean</u> had almost <u>take my trump</u> ;	= whore. = a card-game metaphor for having almost foiled Diccon's plan.
22	But, <u>or</u> all came to an end, I <u>set her in a dump</u> .	= ere, ie. before. = vexed her or put her in a dark mood. ¹
24	Dr. Rat. How so, I pray thee, Diccon?	
	Dic. Marry, sir, will ye hear?	

26	She was clapped down on the <u>backside</u> , <u>by Cock's mother dear</u> ,	26: Diccon means that Chat was sitting in the rear part of her house (<i>backside</i>). ^{1,5} <i>By Cock's mother dear</i> = an oath; <i>Cock</i> is a common euphemism for <i>God</i> , and does not refer to Gammer's servant-boy.
28	And there she sat sewing a <u>halter</u> or a <u>band</u> , With no other thing <u>save</u> gammer's needle in her hand;	= noose (humorous). ¹ = collar. ¹ = except for.
30	As soon as any knock, if <u>the filth</u> be in doubt, She needs but once puff, and her candle is out:	29-30: ie. "if someone were to knock on Chat's door, and she (<i>the filth</i>) did not want whoever it was to see her with the needle, she could simply blow out the candle.
32	Now I, sir, knowing of every door the <u>pin</u> , <u>Came nicely</u> , and said no word, till time I was within; And there I saw the nee'le, even with these two eyes; Whoever say the contrary, I will swear he lies.	31-33: because Diccon is so familiar with Chat's house, he was able to sneak in unnoticed and see Chat working with the needle. What likely happened is that that once he confirmed Chat had the needle, Diccon began speaking to her, at which point she presumably quickly hid the needle, but was understandably concerned that Diccon might have found her out. <i>pin</i> = latch or bolt. ³ <i>Came nicely</i> = entered carefully, cautiously. ¹
36	<i>Dr. Rat.</i> O Diccon, <u>that</u> I was not there then in thy stead!	= ie. "how unfortunate it was that".
38	<i>Dic.</i> Well, if ye will <u>be ordered</u> , and do by my <u>reed</u> , I will bring you to a place, as the house stands, Where ye shall <u>take</u> the <u>drab</u> with the nee'le in her hands.	= "allow yourself to be instructed. = advice.
40		= catch. = hussy.
42	<i>Dr. Rat.</i> For God's sake do so, Diccon, and I will <u>gage</u> my <u>gown</u> To give thee a full pot of the best ale in the town.	= forfeit or pledge. ¹ = ie. his cleric's robe or loose outer garment.
44	<i>Dic.</i> Follow me but a little, and <u>mark</u> what I will say;	43: ie. as a reward for his service to Rat.
46	Lay down your gown beside you, go to, come on your way! See ye not what is here? a hole wherein ye may creep Into the house, and suddenly unawares among them leap; There shall ye find the bitch-fox and the nee'le together. Do as I bid you, man, come on your ways hether!	45: Diccon will lead Rat to the hole in Chat's house. <i>mark</i> = listen closely.
48		46: Rat should remove his gown in order to more easily crawl into Chat's house.
50		
52	<i>Dr. Rat.</i> Art thou sure, Diccon, the <u>swill-tub</u> stands not hereabout?	52: a tub for the leftovers which are fed to the pigs; Rat doesn't want to pop out of the hole and into the swill-tub.
54	<i>Dic.</i> I was within myself, man, even now, there is no doubt. Go softly, make no noise; give me your foot, Sir John, Here will I wait upon you, till you come out <u>anon</u> .	54: ie. "I was just inside there myself, and most assuredly, the swill-tub is not near the hole's entrance."
56		55: Diccon helps Rat to climb into the hole. <i>Sir John</i> = familiar (and sometimes contemptuous) name for a priest, a term dating back to Chaucer. ¹ = shortly.
58	[<i>Doctor Rat creeps in.</i>]	58: at this point, there would be a pause in the action, as Diccon listens expectantly to the outcome of Rat's expedition into the tunnel; we hear Chat react furiously as we imagine Rat's head suddenly protruding from the

60	Dr. Rat [<i>calling from within</i>]. Help, Diccon! out alas! I shall be slain among them!	inner-end of the hole, to be followed by the ladies inside mercilessly pummeling Rat!
62		
64	Dic. If they give you not the needle, tell them that ye will hang them. – <u>Ware that!</u> How, my wenches, have ye caught the fox, That used to <u>make revel</u> among your hens and cocks?	= "watch out!" = carouse, party.
66	<u>Save his life yet for his order</u> , though he sustain some pain. – Gog's bread, I am afraid they will beat out his brain.	= "out of respect for his position as a priest, do not kill him."
68		
70	[<i>Exit Diccon off-stage.</i>]	69: Diccon, obviously not wishing to be present when Rat reappears, leaves the stage.
72	[<i>Rat re-enters the stage, crawling back out of the hole.</i>]	
74	Dr. Rat. <u>Woe worth</u> the hour that I came here! And woe worth him that wrought this gear!	= "curse", ie. damn. ¹ 74: "and misfortune fall on him that contrived this business!" Rat does not suspect that it was Diccon who set him up.
76	A <u>sort</u> of drabs and queans have me <u>blessed</u> – Was ever creature half so <u>evil dressed</u> ?	75: "a company (sort) of harlots and whores have hurt (blessed) me." = ie. "wickedly beaten (as I have been)?" dressed = meaning "treated" generally and "beaten" specifically and ironically. ¹
78	Whoever <u>it wrought</u> , and first did invent it, He shall, I <u>warrant</u> him, <u>ere</u> long repent it!	= ie. "devised this prank". = promise. = before.
80	I will spend all I have <u>without</u> my skin, But he shall be brought to the <u>plight</u> I am in!	79-80: the sense is, "if I have to, I will sell everything I own to ensure that the contriver of this scheme will suffer as I have suffered!" without = outside of. plight = (bad or unfortunate) condition. ¹
82	<u>Master Baily, I trow, and he be worth his ears,</u> Will <u>snaffle</u> these murderers, and all <u>that them bears</u> :	81: Master Baily = the local magistrate. I trow = "I am sure". and he be worth his ears = old expression for "if he is of any value".
84	I will surely neither <u>bite nor sup</u> , Till I fetch <u>him</u> hether, this matter to take up.	= seize or arrest. ¹ = "who support him" or "who are his confederates in this plot." = "eat nor drink". ¹ = ie. Baily.
86	[<i>Exit Doctor Rat off-stage.</i>]	
	END OF ACT IV.	

ACT V.

SCENE I.

[Enter Doctor Rat, Master Bailly, and Scapethrift from off-stage.]

Entering Characters: Doctor Rat has returned with the sheriff's deputy, or bailiff, **Bailly**, who is accompanied by his servant **Scapethrift**. Scapethrift is never named in the play, nor does he speak any lines.

Bailly = the word **bailly** is synonymous with **bailiff**; the **bailiff** has authority to execute writs, make arrests, etc. We may note that London's Central Criminal Court, the **Old Bailey**, appears to have received its name sometime in the mid-16th century.¹

Scapethrift = the word **scapethrift** means "spendthrift", or one who spends money foolishly.

= "see no other way to view the matter".

1-2: Bailly recognizes that Rat himself is primarily responsible for his misadventure in Chat's home.

4-6: Rat is sarcastic: "if a man is judged to be at fault when, on top of his other hardships (**grieves**), he is the one who has been robbed (**spoiled**)¹ and then beaten up by thieves, then I confess I am guilty."

grieves = alternate spelling for **griefs**.

at this season = at this time.

= ie. logic suggests Bailly should see the situation in an opposite light.

9-10: Bailly is having none of Rat's backtalk: as Rat was the one sneaking into Chat's house, then if anybody must be deemed a thief, it must be him.

= ie. "as your own testimony proves".

= courageously.

= please; astonishingly, it is illegal today to defend yourself against home invaders in England with a "self-defense product".²⁵ Richard the Lionheart might weep in his grave if he knew this.

= educated cleric or priest.

21: because it was dark, Rat should not be surprised at the reception he got, since the fact of his education and profession was not visible in the dark to those inside Chat's house.

= "for what was".

26: stage direction in the original.

1 **Bailly.** I can perceive none other, I speak it from my heart,
2 But either ye are in all the fault, or else in the greatest part.

4 **Dr. Rat.** If it be counted his fault, besides all his grieves,
When a poor man is spoiled, and beaten among thieves,
6 Then I confess my fault herein, at this season;

But I hope you will not judge so much against reason.

8 **Bailly.** And methinks by your own tale, of all that ye name,
10 If any played the thief, you were the very same.

The women they did nothing, as your words made probation,
12 But stoutly withstood your forcible invasion.
If that a thief at your window to enter should begin,
14 Would you hold forth your hand and help to pull him in?
Or you would keep him out? I pray you answer me.

16 **Dr. Rat.** Marry, keep him out; and a good cause why.
18 But I am no thief, sir, but an honest learned clerk.

20 **Bailly.** Yea, but who knoweth that, when he meets you in
the dark?
I am sure your learning shines not out at your nose!

22 Was it any marvel, though the poor woman arose
And start up, being afraid of that was in her purse?
24 Me-think you may be glad that you[r] luck was no worse.

26 **Dr. Rat.** [Showing his broken head]
Is not this evil enough, I pray you, as you think?
28

	Baily. Yea, but a man in the dark, <u>of chances do wink</u> ,	= the sense is, "closing his eyes to the possibility of misfortune"; Gassner suggests "if luck is blind", and Whitworth, "if he is unlucky"; finally, Hazlitt replaces <i>of</i> with <i>oft</i> - " <i>oft chances do wink</i> ", ie. fortune is often blind", which might be the best idea of all.
30	As soon he smites his father as any other man, Because for lack of light, <u>discern him he ne can</u> .	30-31: because one cannot see whom one is striking in the dark, the probability that a swinging man might hit his own father is as great as that of his striking any other person in the room. <i>discern nim he ne can</i> = "he cannot see him."
32	Might it not have been your luck with a spit to have been slain?	32: Baily reminds Rat that he might have been unlucky enough to have been killed.
34	Dr. Rat. I think I am <u>little better</u> , my scalp is <u>cloven</u> to the brain: If there be all the remedy, I know who bears the knocks.	= ie. little better off. = split. 35: "if this is the redress I can expect, then I know who will end up with the short end of the stick" - ie. he will!
36	Baily. By my troth, and well worthy besides to kiss the stocks!	37: Baily reminds the priest that he technically deserves punishment for breaking and entering.
38	To come in on the back side, when ye might go about, I know none such, unless they long to have their brains knocked out.	38-39: "I don't know anyone who would want to sneak into another's home through the back way, when they can go in the front door, unless they want to have their heads bashed."
40	Dr. Rat. Well, will you be so good, sir, as talk with dame Chat, 42 And know what she intended? I ask no more but that.	
44	Baily. [to Scapethrift] Let her be called, <u>fellow</u> , because of Master Doctor,	= common and courteous form of address used to a servant. ⁴
46	[Scapethrift walks to Chat's house to retrieve Chat.]	
48	I <u>warrant</u> in this case, she will be her own <u>proctor</u> ;	= "am certain". = attorney, ie. Baily expects Chat will be able to speak for herself.
50	She will tell her own tale, <u>in metre or in prose</u> , And <u>bid you seek your remedy</u> , and so go wipe your nose.	= ie. in verse or not. = "you can ask her for your own remedy"; remedy is a legal term for redress.
	ACT V, SCENE II. [Still on Stage: Baily and Doctor Rat.]	
	<i>Chat enters from her tavern and returns with Scapethrift to Baily.</i>	Scene ii: the following scene, the climax of <i>Gammer Gurton's Needle</i> , contains what is likely to have been the first appearance in English arts of what was to become a standard feature of "who-done-it" type crime stories, in which the detective gathers into a single room all of the suspects, and through intense multidirectional questioning figures out who the perpetrator was - excepting only the fact that in the present scenario, we know who did it!
1	Baily. Dame Chat, Master Doctor upon you here complained	1-7: in this speech, Baily employs a rhyme scheme known as rhyme royal , or rhythm royal: ababbcc . Rhyme royal was first used in English poetry in the

2 That you and your maids should him much misorder,
 And taketh many an oath, that no word be feigned,
 4 Laying to your charge, how you thought him to murder:
 And on his part again, that same man saith further,
 6 He never offended you in word nor intent;
 To hear you answer hereto, we have now for you sent.
 8

Chat. That I would have murdered him? fie on him, wretch!
 10 And evil mought he thee for it, our Lord I beseech.
 I will swear on all the books that opens and shuts,
 12 He feigneth this tale out of his own guts;
 For this seven weeks with me, I am sure, he sat not down; –
 14 [*To Doctor Rat*]
 Nay, ye have other minions in the other end of the town,
 16 Where ye were liker to catch such a blow
 Than anywhere else, as far as I know!
 18

Baily. Belike then, Master Doctor, yon stripe there ye got not!

20

Dr. Rat. Think you I am so mad, that where I was bet I
wot not?
 22 Will ye believe this quean, before she hath tried it?
 It is not the first deed she hath done, and afterward denied it.
 24

Chat. What, man, will you say I broke you[r] head?
 26

Dr. Rat. How canst thou prove the contrary?
 28

Chat. Nay, how provest thou that I did the dead?
 30

Dr. Rat. [*Showing his broken head*]
 32 Too plainly, by St Mary,
 This proof, I trow, may serve, though I no word spoke!
 34

Chat. Because thy head is broken, was it I that it broke?
 36 I saw thee, Rat, I tell thee, not once within this fortnight.

38 **Dr. Rat.** No, marry, thou sawest me not, for why thou
hadst no light;

But I felt thee for all the dark, beshrew thy smooth cheeks!
 40 [*Showing his head*]

14th century by Geoffrey Chaucer, who may have borrowed it from Guillaume de Machaut, the famous 14th century French composer and poet.²⁷

= ie. have. = treated badly,¹ perhaps a euphemism.

3: ie. "and he has sworn that he is not lying".

= ie. "accusing you".

5: alternate spelling for *further*.¹

= shame.

= ie. "may he suffer illy for accusing me so".

= Bibles; note the lack of subject-verb agreement in this line.

= a loaded word: *minions* could mean "favourites" or "darlings", but could also refer to "male lovers" or "underlings".¹

19: "it is probable then, Doctor Rat, that you did not in fact receive your beating in Chat's house."

yon = originally printed erroneously as *you*, though *your* could have also been intended.

stripe = literally referring to the marks made by a whipping, but here referring to the discolouration on Rat's face and head that resulted from his beating.

21: *bet* = beaten.

wot = know.

= whore. = proved.

25-32: the rhyme scheme changes briefly to **abab**.

= deed, an archaic spelling employed to rhyme with *head*.¹

31: stage direction in original edition.

= expect.

38: *for why* = because.

thou hadst no light = Clements suggests that Chat had deliberately blown out her candle to darken her room as she waited for the chicken-thief to appear.

= ie. "felt your blows". = "curse"; part of a strange oath which also appears in the contemporary comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister*.

40: stage direction in original edition.

42	And thou <u>groped</u> me, this will <u>declare</u> any day this six weeks.	= grasped or handled. ¹ = prove, make clear. ¹
44	Baily. Answer me to this, M[ast] Rat: when caught you this harm of yours?	
46	Dr. Rat. A while ago, sir, God he knoweth; within less than these two hours.	
48	Baily. Dame Chat, was there none with you (confess, i' <u>faith</u>) about that <u>season</u> ? – <u>What</u> , woman? let it be what it will, 'tis neither felony nor treason.	47: <i>i' faith</i> = in truth, truly. <i>season</i> = time. 48: there is likely a pause before Baily speaks this line. <i>What, woman?</i> = "well, woman?"
50	Chat. Yes, by my faith, Master Baily, there was a knave not far, Who caught one good <u>filip</u> on the brow with a <u>door-bar</u> ; And well was he worthy, as it seemed to me: But what is that to this man, since this was not he?	50-51: Chat reluctantly acknowledges that there was indeed someone whom she recently pummeled. = blow. = a bar used to secure the door. ¹
54	Baily. Who was it then? let's hear!	
56	Dr. Rat. Alas, sir, ask you that?	
58	Is it not made plain enough by the own mouth of dame Chat?	
60	The time agreeth, my head is broken, her tongue cannot lie; Only <u>upon a bare nay</u> she saith it was not I.	59-60: Rat lays out a reasonably convincing argument regarding the circumstantial evidence: Chat admits to administering a beating to someone in the last couple of hours, and since his own injuries are so fresh, it stands to reason she was the one who dealt them to him; the only thing missing is Chat's acknowledgement that it was Rat she had pummeled. <i>upon a bare nay</i> = a simple and unsubstantiated denial. ¹¹
62	Chat. No, marry, was it not indeed! ye shall hear by this one thing: This afternoon a friend of mine for good-will gave me warning, And <u>bad</u> me well look to my <u>rust</u> , and all my capons' pens; For if I took not better heed, a knave would have my hens.	64-65: Chat refers to Diccon's warning that someone was planning to sneak into her house and steal her chickens. <i>bad</i> = bid, ie. entreated or begged. ¹ <i>rust</i> = roost.
66	Then I, to save my goods, took so much pains as him to watch; And as good fortune served me, it was my <u>chance</u> him for to catch.	= good luck.
68	What strokes he bare away, or other what was his gains, I <u>wot</u> not, but sure I am he had something for his pains!	= know.
70	Baily. Yet tell'st thou not who it was.	
72	Chat. Who it was? A <u>false</u> thief,	= treacherous. ¹
74	That came like a false fox, my <u>pullen</u> to kill and <u>mischief</u> !	= poultry. = harm; an interesting but not uncommon use at <i>mischief</i> as a verb.
76	Baily. But knowest thou not his name?	
78	Chat. I know it, but <u>what than</u> ?	= "so what?" <i>than</i> is an alternate spelling for <i>then</i> .
	It was that crafty <u>cullion</u> Hodge, my Gammer Gurton's man.	= rascal; our author has taken a word which heretofore

80		had been used only to mean "testicle", and turned it into a term of abuse. ¹
82	Baily. [To Scapethrift] Call me the knave hether, he shall sure kiss the stocks. I shall teach him a lesson for <u>filching</u> hens or cocks!	= stealing.
84		
86	[Scapethrift heads over to Gammer's house to retrieve Hodge.]	
88	Dr. Rat. I marvel, Master Baily, so <u>bleared</u> be your eyes! An egg is not so full of <u>meat</u> , as she is full of lies:	= bleary, clouded, ie. blind to the obvious. 89: Dr. Rat coins an expression - describing something as full as an egg is full of meat - which became proverbial for describing a large amount of something. Shakespeare employs this phrase in Act III.i of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> . The egg's meat refers to its yolk or its edible matter.
90	When she hath <u>played this prank</u> , to excuse all this <u>gear</u> , She layeth the fault <u>in</u> such a one <u>as</u> I know was not there.	90: played this prank = this still-common expression dates back to at least 1513. ¹ gear = business. = on. = ie. who.
92	Chat. Was he not there? look on <u>his pate</u> ; that shall be his witness!	= ie. Hodge's head.
94	Dr. Rat. I would my head were half so <u>whole</u> , I would seek no redress!	95: "I wish my own head was half as free from injury (whole) ¹ as is Hodge's; in that case I wouldn't bother to seek reparations for my injury!"
96		
98	[Scapethrift returns with Gammer Gurton.]	
100	Baily. God bless you, Gammer Gurton!	
102	Gamm. God <u>dild</u> ye, master mine!	= yield, ie. reward; Hazlitt considers this a misprint, though later authors of the era copied this usage.
104	Baily. Thou hast a knave within thy house – Hodge, a servant of thine; They tell me that busy knave is such a <u>filching</u> one, That hen, pig, goose or capon, thy neighbour <u>can have none</u> .	= robbing. = ie. "cannot safely keep."
106	Gamm. By God, <u>cham much a-meved</u> to hear any such report!	= "I am much distressed". a-meved = a-moved, ie. moved.
108	Hodge was not wont, ich trow, to <u>bave</u> him in <u>that sort</u> .	108: "Hodge is not in the habit, I believe, of behaving in that manner (that sort) ¹ ." bave = Gammer abbreviates behave . ¹¹
110	Chat. A <u>thievisher</u> knave is not <u>on-live</u> , more filching, nor more <u>false</u> ;	110: thievisher = the original edition seems to print the non-word theenisher here, but all the editors amend it to thievisher , a word which does not appear in the OED, but whose meaning, "more thievish", is obvious. on-live = alive; on-life and on-live were ancient phrases dating back to Old English, and precursors to alive . ¹ false = treacherous.
	Many a <u>truer</u> man than he has hanged up by the <u>halse</u> ;	= more honest. = neck. ¹ Note the alliteration in this line.

112	And thou, his <u>dame</u> – of all his theft thou art the sole <u>receiver</u> ;	112: dame = mistress. receiver = recipient: receiver was already a legal term for one who deals in stolen goods; Bradley suggests replacing receiver with resetter - which also means "one who receives stolen goods" - for the sake of the rhyme.
	For Hodge to catch, and thou to keep, I never knew none better!	113: Chat sees a conspiracy at work: Hodge commits the robberies, and Gammer receives and holds the stolen goods.
114	Gamm. <u>Sir reverence</u> of your masterdom, and you were <u>out a-door</u> ,	115-6: to Baily: "begging your pardon, sir, if you were not present, I would be so bold, for all her haughtiness (brags), to call her a downright whore."
116	Should be so bold, for all her <u>brags</u> , to call her arrant whore; –	Sir reverence = abbreviated form of saving your reverence , ⁴ a common formula used to apologize ahead of time for something offensive one is about to say to or in the presence of one's superior. out a-door = outside. ¹
	And ich knew Hodge as bad as t'ou, ich wish me endless sorrow,	117-8: Gammer addresses Chat: "if I had reason to
118	And chould not take the pains to hang him up before to-morrow!	believe Hodge was as evil as you actually are, then I would wish to suffer endless sorrow if I did not make the effort to have him hanged before the morning." t'ou = thou.
120	Chat. What have I stolen from thee or <u>thine</u> , thou <u>ill-favored</u> old <u>trot</u> ?	120: thine = ie. "your dependents", or "those who live with you". ill-favoured = ugly. trot = hag.
122	Gamm. A great deal more, by God's <u>blest</u> , <u>than chever by</u> <u>thee got</u> !	122: blest = bliss. ⁵ than chever by thee got = "than I ever got or took from you!"
	That thou knowest well, I need not say it.	
124	Baily. Stop there, I say,	
126	And tell me here, I pray you, this matter by the way: How chance Hodge is not here? him would I fain have had.	127: "how does it happen that Hodge is not present? I would like to have him here."
128	Gamm. Alas, sir, he'll be here <u>anon</u> ; <u>ha' be handled too bad</u> .	129: anon = shortly. ha' be handled too bad = the sense is, "he has had a difficult time", but Gammer's choice of words suggests to the others that Hodge has indeed been roughed up.
130	Chat. [<i>Thinking that Hodge his head was broke,</i>	131-2: stage commentary in the original edition.
132	<i>and that Gammer would not let him come before them</i>] Master Baily, sir, ye be not such a fool, well I know,	
134	But <u>ye perceive by this lingering</u> <u>there is a pad in the straw</u> .	134: ye perceive by this lingering = "as you can see by this delay". there is a pad in the straw = common expression for "there is something wrong", or "there lurks a hidden danger"; the original meaning of pad , a word first introduced at least as far back as the 12th century, was "toad". ¹
136	Gamm. <u>Chill shew</u> you his face, <u>ich warrant thee</u> – lo, now where he is!	= "I will show". = "I assure you".

138	<i>Enter Hodge from Gammer's house.</i>	
140	Baily. Come on, fellow, it is told me thou art a <u>shrew</u> , <u>i-wis</u> ;	140: shrew = troublesome person. ² In earlier days
142	Thy neighbour's hens thou takest, and plays the two-legged fox;	shrew could be used to describe a member of
	Their chickens and their capons too, and now and then their	either sex. ⁶
	cocks.	i-wis (line 140)= assuredly. ²
144	Hodge. Ich defy them all that dare it say; <u>cham as true</u> as	= "I am as honest".
	the best!	
146	Baily. <u>Wart not thou take</u> within this hour in dame Chat's	= "were you not taken", ie. caught.
	hens'-nest?	
148	Hodge. Take there? no, master, <u>chould</u> not do't for a house	= "I would".
	full of gold!	
150	Chat. Thou, or the devil in thy coat – swear this I dare be <u>bold</u> .	150: ie. "it was either you or the devil in your coat - this
		much I can with confidence swear to."
		bold = confident, sure.
152	Dr. Rat. Swear me no swearing, quean, <u>the devil he</u> give	152: Rat responds to Chat's invocation of the devil
	thee sorrow!	with his own curse.
	<u>All is not worth a gnat</u> , thou canst swear till to-morrow!	the devil he = ie. "may the devil".
		= ie. "your oaths are of no value".
154	Where is the harm he hath? <u>shew</u> it, by God's bread!	154: Rat naturally points out that Hodge's head bears
		no evidence of having been beaten.
	Ye beat him <u>with a witness</u> , but the stripes light on my head!	shew = show.
		= "you claim it was Hodge that you beat, without any
		doubt (with a witness), ¹ but the blows landed on
		my head!"
156	Hodge. <u>Bet</u> me! Gog's blessed body, chould first, ich trow,	= "beat (Bet) me? by God, I would first, I am confident,
	have burst thee!	have broken you!"
158	Ich think, and chad my hands loose, callet, chould have <u>crust</u>	158: "I think, if I had my hands loose, hussy, I would
	thee!	have crushed (crust) thee!"
		= believe.
160	Chat. Thou shitten knave, I <u>trow</u> thou knowest the full	
	weight of my fist;	
	I am foully deceived unless thy head and my door-bar kissed.	
162	Hodge. Hold thy chat, whore; thou criest so loud, can no	163: hard = heard.
	man else be <u>hard</u> ?	
164	Chat. Well, knave, <u>and</u> I had thee alone, I would surely rap	165: and = if.
	thy <u>costard</u> !	costard = properly a type of apple, but used
		frequently to refer to one's head.
166	Baily. Sir, answer me to this: is thy head <u>whole or broken</u> ?	= spoken to Hodge: "not injured or injured?"
168	Chat. Yea, Master Baily, blessed be every good <u>token</u> ,	= bit of evidence, ie. the expected marks on Hodge's
		head. ² Some editors assign this line to Hodge.
170	Hodge. Is my head whole! Ich warrant you, 'tis neither	171: scurvy nor scald = synonyms meaning "covered
	<u>scurvy nor scald</u> : –	with scabs". ¹
172	What, you foul beast, does think 'tis either <u>pilled</u> or bald?	= ie. with all the hair removed, either from disease or
		by shaving. ^{1,3}
	Nay, ich thank God, chill not for all that thou may'st spend,	173-4: "no, I thank God, not even for all the money
174	That chad one scab on <u>my narse</u> as broad as thy finger's end.	you would give me, that I have not one scab on my

		buttocks even as small as the width of the end of your finger."
		<i>my narse</i> = "my arse", a transformation of <i>mine arse</i> .
176	Baily. Come nearer here!	
178	Hodge. Yes, that <u>ich dare</u> .	= "I dare do".
180	[<i>Baily inspects Hodge's head.</i>]	
182	Baily. By our Lady, here is no harm: Hodge's head is <u>whole</u> enough, for all dame Chat's <u>charm</u> .	= uninjured. = singing, ie. chatter. ¹
184	Chat. By Gog's <u>blest</u> , however the thing he <u>cloaks</u> or <u>smoulders</u> ,	185: <i>blest</i> = bliss. ⁵ <i>cloaks</i> = conceals. <i>smoulders</i> = smothers. ^{1,4}
186	I know the blows he <u>bare</u> away, either with head or shoulders. –	= bore.
188	Camest thou not, knave, within this hour, creeping into my pens, And there was caught within my house, groping among my hens?	
190	Hodge. A plague both on the hens and thee! <u>a cart, whore</u> , a cart!	= as Gammer did earlier in the play, Hodge calls for a cart for Chat, which would have been used to parade known prostitutes on the streets to the jeers of a curious public.
	<u>Should I were</u> hanged as high as a tree, <u>and chwere</u> as false as thou art!	= "I would wish to be". = "if I were as dishonest".
192	Give my gammer again her <u>washical</u> thou stole away in thy lap!	= the OED suggests this is simply a corruption of "what-shall-I-call it", similar to the modern notion of saying "what-do-you-call-it" as a substitute for a word referring to a thing whose name one cannot recall.
194	Gamm. Yea, Master Baily, there is a thing you know not <u>on</u> , <u>mayhap</u> : This drab she keeps away my <u>good</u> , the devil he might her snare:	194: <i>on</i> = about. <i>mayhap</i> = perhaps. = possession.
196	Ich pray you that ich might have <u>a right action</u> on her.	= ie. a right of action, a legal term for a cause of action, or the right to bring legal proceedings, but as Whitworth notes, probably simply meaning "due process" here.
198	Chat. Have I thy good, old filth, or any such old sow's? I am as <u>true</u> , I would thou knew, <u>as [the] skin between thy brows</u> .	= honest. = phrase invented by the author, which became proverbial, as a simple intensifier; ¹ this expression was used by Shakespeare in <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> .
200	Gamm. Many a truer hath been hanged, though you escape the <u>daunger</u> !	201: danger; our author uses an archaic spelling to reasonably rhyme with <i>slaunder</i> .
202	Chat. Thou shalt answer, by God's pity, for this thy foul <u>slaunder</u> !	202: <i>slaunder</i> = slander.
204	Baily. Why, what can you charge her <u>withal</u> ? to say so ye do not well.	= with.
206	Gamm. Marry, a vengeance to her heart! that whore hase stol'n my nee'le!	
208		

	Chat. Thy needle, old witch! how so? it <u>were alms</u> thy <u>skull</u> to <u>knock</u> !	209: this is the first time in the play that Chat has heard anything about Gammer's missing needle. <i>were alms</i> = "would be an act of charity". <i>skull</i> = the original edition has a very fuzzy <i>scul</i> appearing here, which some editors take to be "soul". <i>knock</i> = strike, hit.
210	So didst thou say the other day, that I had stol'n thy cock.	
	And roasted him to my breakfast, which shall not be forgotten:	
212	The devil pull out thy lying tongue, and teeth that be so rotten!	
214	Gamm. Give me my nee'le! as for my cock, should be very loth	214-5: <i>should...troth</i> = "I would be reluctant to hear that Hodge's fate depends on your false testimony;"
	That should hear tell he should hang on thy false <u>faith and troth</u> .	<i>hang</i> humorously could mean both "depend on" and "hang from the gallows".
216		<i>faith and troth</i> = common formula for honesty or a pledge of faith.
	Baily. Your talk is such, I can scarce learn who should be most in fault.	
218		
	Gamm. Yet shall ye find no other <u>wight</u> , <u>save</u> she, by bread and salt.	= person. = except for.
220		
	Baily. <u>Keep ye content</u> a while, see that your tongues ye hold.	= ie. "keep quiet".
222	Methinks you should remember, this is no place to scold.	
	How knowest thou, Gammer Gurton, dame Chat thy needle had?	
224		
	Gamm. To name you, sir, the party, should not be very glad.	225: ie. "I would prefer not to mention the name of the person who told that to me".
226		
	Baily. Yea, but we must needs hear it, and therefore say it boldly.	
228		
	Gamm. Such one as told the tale full soberly and coldly,	
230	Even he that looked on – will swear on a book –	230: "he that saw it - he will swear to it on a Bible".
	What time this drunken <u>gossip</u> my fair long nee'le up took:	= the sense is "neighbour".
232	Diccon, Master, the <u>bedlam</u> , cham very sure ye know him.	= lunatic.
234	Baily. A false knave, by God's pity! ye were but a fool to <u>throw</u> him.	234-7: Baily reproaches Gammer for listening to anything Diccon might say. <i>throw</i> = believe.
	I durst <u>aventure</u> well the price of my best cap,	235-6: "I would wager (<i>aventure</i> , ie. <i>adventure</i>) ¹ an amount of money equal to the value of my best hat that this entire episode will turn out to have been a practical joke."
236	That when the end is known, all will turn to a jape.	= time.
	Told he not you that besides she stole your cock that <u>tide</u> ?	
238		
	Gamm. No, master, no indeed; for then he should have lied;	= well indeed. ¹
240	My cock is, I thank Christ, safe and <u>well afine</u> .	
242	Chat. Yea, but that <u>ragged colt</u> , that whore, that Tib of thine,	242: unkempt, or dressed in rags. ¹ = wanton person. ¹
	Said plainly thy cock was stol'n, and in my house was eaten;	
244	That lying <u>cut</u> is <u>lost</u> , <u>that</u> she is not <u>swinged</u> and beaten,	244: <i>cut</i> = term of abuse for a woman. <i>lost</i> = ie. damned. ⁸ <i>that</i> = if. ⁸ <i>swinged</i> = synonym for "beaten".
	And yet for all my good name it were a small amends!	245: "yet doing so would do little to make up for the loss of my good name."

246	I pick not this gear, hear'st thou, out of my fingers' ends; But he that <u>hard</u> it told me, who thou of late didst name,	246: ie. "I did not invent this idea out of thin air." = heard.
248	Diccon, whom all men knows, it was the very same.	
250	Baily. This is the case: you lost your nee'le about the doors; And she answers again, she <u>hase</u> no cock of yours;	= has.
252	Thus in you[r] talk and action, from <u>that you do intend</u> ,	252: "what you are talking about".
254	She is whole five mile wide from that she doth defend. Will you say she hath your cock?	253: Chat is completely wide of the mark in thinking that the cock is the issue.
256	Gamm. No, <u>merry</u> , sir, that chill not.	= marry, a common oath.
258	Baily. Will you confess her nee'le?	
260	Chat. Will I? no, sir, will I not.	
262	Baily. Then there lieth all the matter.	
264	Gamm. <u>Soft</u> , master, by the way, Ye know she could do little, and she could not say nay.	= "but wait".
266		265: a tricky line: perhaps, "you know she would do the least amount possible, if she were not able to refuse to do so."
268	Baily. Yea, but he that <u>made</u> one lie about your cock-stealing, Will not <u>stick</u> to make another, <u>what time lies be in dealing</u> .	= told. 268: <i>stick</i> = hesitate. <i>what time...dealing</i> = perhaps, "when the telling of lies is common." = expect. = quarrel.
270	I <u>ween</u> the end will prove this <u>brawl</u> did first arise Upon no other ground but only Diccon's lies.	
272	Chat. Though some be lies, as you <u>belike</u> have <u>espied</u> them, Yet other some be true, <u>by proof I have well tried them</u> .	= likely. = discovered, recognized. = ie. "as I have proved."
274		
276	Baily. What other thing beside this, dame Chat?	
278	Chat. Marry, sir, even this: The tale I told before, the self-same tale it was his; He gave me, like a friend, warning against my loss, Else had my hens be stol'n each one, by God's cross! He told me Hodge would come, and in he came indeed; But as the matter <u>chaunced</u> , <u>with greater haste than speed</u> .	282: <i>chaunced</i> = chanced, ie. happened. <i>with greater haste than speed</i> = "with greater speed than success"; this proverbial-sounding expression plays on the double-meaning of <i>speed</i> , which can be used to mean both "quickness" and "success".
284	This truth was said, and true was found, as truly I report.	283: "at least in this case, what Diccon said would happen did in fact happen, just as I am reporting it."
286	Baily. If Doctor Rat be not deceived, it was of another sort.	287-9: Rat addresses Chat.
288	Dr. Rat. By God's mother, thou and he be a couple of subtle foxes! Between you and Hodge I <u>bear away the boxes</u> . Did not Diccon appoint the place, where thou should'st stand to meet <u>him</u> ?	= "I am the one who carried away the blows." 289: <i>him</i> = Hodge, whom Chat was told would sneak into her house to steal her chickens.
290	Chat. Yes, by the mass, and if he came, bad me not stick to <u>speet</u> him.	291: "indeed, by God, and if he were to enter my house, Diccon asked me not to hesitate to drive a spit through

292	Dr. Rat. God's sacrament! the villain knave hath <u>dressed us round about!</u>	him!" <i>speet</i> = common alternate spelling for <i>spit</i> .
294	He is the cause of all this brawl, that dirty shitten lout! When Gammer Gurton here complained, and made a rueful moan,	293: dressed us round about = "manipulated both of us in every direction," ie. "tricked both of us!"
296	I heard him swear that you had gotten her needle that was gone; And this to <u>try</u> , he further said, he was full <u>loth</u> : howbeit	297-8: "and to prove (<i>try</i>) this, he further said, he was unwilling (<i>loth</i>) to do; however, he was willing to take the trouble to bring me over to Chat's house so I could see the needle for myself."
298	He was content with small ado to bring me where to see it.	
	And where ye sat, he said full certain, if I would follow his <u>reed</u> ,	299: reed = advice.
300	Into your house a <u>privy</u> way he would me guide and lead, And where ye had <u>it</u> in your hands, sewing about a <u>clout</u> ,	= secret. = ie. the needle. = piece of clothing.
302	And set me in the <u>back-hole</u> , thereby to find you out: And whiles I sought a <u>quietness</u> , creeping upon my knees,	= hole in the back of the house. = ie. to move quietly.
304	I found the weight of your door-bar for my reward and fees. Such is the luck that some men gets, while they <u>begin to mell</u> ,	304: dryly humorous for getting smashed on the head. = ie. get involved, meddle. ^{1,5}
306	In setting at one such as were out, minding to make all well.	306: "in trying to bring together those who have fallen out, intending to make all well."
308	Hodge. Was not well blessed, gammer, to 'scape that <u>scour</u> ? And chad been there, Then chad been <u>dressed</u> , belike, as ill, by the mass, as Gaffer Vicar.	308: "was I not blessed, Gammer, to have escaped that attack (<i>scour</i>) ¹ ? If I had been there, I would have been treated or beaten (<i>dressed</i>) as badly, by God, as the vicar had been." Bradley suggests <i>scour</i> should be <i>stour</i> , a much more commonly used word in this context, meaning "fight". Bradley also suggests "done for" for <i>dressed</i> .
310	Baily. Marry, sir, here is a <u>sport alone</u> ; I looked for such an end;	= one-of-a-kind entertainment; Baily begins here to subtly indicate how amusing he finds the whole situation.
312	If Diccon had not played the knave, this had been soon amend. My gammer here he made a fool, and <u>dressed her as she was</u> ;	312: if Diccon had not played the role of a scoundrel, this matter would have been settled much sooner. = "treated her accordingly." ¹
314	And goodwife Chat he <u>set to scole</u> , till both <u>parts</u> cried, "alas!" And D[octo]r Rat was not behind, whiles Chat his <u>crown</u> did <u>pare</u> :	314: set to scole = "instigated (her) to quarrel; <i>scole</i> is dialectical for <i>scold</i> ." ¹ <i>parts</i> = parties. 315: crown = head. <i>pare</i> = trim or prune, like a hair-cut (humorous). ¹
316	I would the knave had been stark blind, if Hodge had not his share.	316: having itemized the manner in which Diccon has manipulated Gammer, Chat and Rat, Baily (showing his good humour) expresses a sly expectation that Hodge has also received a share of Diccon's treatment, further wishing the vagrant blindness if he has failed to involve Hodge somehow in his schemes. We may note that the one episode that never comes to light is the shameful way Hodge reacted to Diccon's summoning of a spirit.

318	Hodge. <u>Cham meetly well-spiced already amongs</u> , cham dressed like a colt!	318: Hodge sarcastically assures Baily he has received his share of humiliation. Cham...amongs = "I am myself reasonably getting on in the meantime (<i>amongs</i>)". ¹ dressed like a colt = "treated like a fool"; colt refers to an inexperienced person, hence a fool. ¹⁰
	And chad not had the better wit, chad been made a dolt.	319: "if I had not been as clever as I am, I would have been made a real fool of!"
320	Baily. Sir knave, make haste Diccon were here; fetch him, wherever he be!	321: Baily, with increasing good humour (e.g. Sir knave) instructs Scapethrift to quickly go find Diccon.
322		
324	[Exit Scapethrift off-stage.]	
326	Chat. <u>Fie</u> on the villain, fie, fie! <u>that makes us thus agree!</u>	= shame. = "at least on this we can agree!" Whitworth, however, suggests agree means disagree , as in "he who brought us into conflict!"
	Gamm. Fie on him, knave, with all my heart! now fie, and fie again!	
328	Dr. Rat. Now "fie on him!" may I best say, <u>whom</u> he hath almost <u>slain</u> .	329: Rat has more reason than anyone else to curse out Diccon. whom = ie. "I whom". slain = ie. caused to be slain.
330	Baily. Lo, where he cometh at hand, belike he was not <u>fare</u> .	= ie. far.
332		
334	<i>Enter Scapethrift with Diccon from off-stage.</i>	333: Clements suggests Diccon is a bit inebriated.
	Diccon, here be two or three thy company cannot spare.	
336	Dic. God bless you, and you may be blessed, so many all at once!	
338	Chat. Come, knave, it <u>were</u> a good deed to <u>geld</u> thee, by Cock's bones!	= would be. = castrate.
340	<u>Seest not thy handiwork?</u> – Sir Rat, can ye <u>forbear him?</u>	340: Seest not thy handiwork? = Chat points to Rat's injured head. forbear him? = "endure him?" or "keep yourself from killing him?" Whitworth suggests that Rat actually does strike Diccon here; otherwise Diccon's next line makes little sense.
342	Dic. A vengeance on those hands light, for my hands came not near him.	342: "may a pox land on his hands, because my hands never touched him." Diccon pretends to be affronted, reacting as if he is being accused of beating Rat and thus bearing responsibility for his injuries (Whitworth, p. 79).
	The whoreson priest hath lift the pot in some of these alewives' chairs,	343-4: Diccon accuses Rat of extreme drunkenness: to paraphrase slightly, "that SOB cleric has lifted so many tankards of ale while sitting on stools in taverns kept by women, that he probably cracked his head when he fell down a set of stairs." (Gassner, p. 397).
344	That his head would not serve him, belike, to come down the stairs.	
346	Baily. Nay, soft, thou may'st not play the knave, and have this language too!	346: "hold on there, you cannot both behave like a scoundrel and speak in this manner too!"

	If thou thy tongue bridle a while, the better may'st thou do.	347: "it would be better for you to hold your tongue for a while."
348	Confess the truth, as I shall ask, and cease a while to <u>fable</u> , And for thy fault I promise thee thy handling shall be reasonable.	= lie. 349: "and I promise your punishment will be reasonable considering the offenses you have committed."
350	Hast thou not made a lie or two, <u>to set these two by the ears</u> ?	= to cause Chat and Gammer to come into conflict.
352	Dic. What, if I have? five hundred <u>such</u> have I seen within <u>these seven years</u> :	352: such = it is unclear if Diccon is referring to lies or fights. these seven years = seven was proverbial for an indefinite length of time.
354	I am sorry for nothing else but that <u>I see not the sport</u> Which was between them when they met, as they themselves report.	= "I did not get to be a witness to the entertainment", ie. Rat's beating.
356	Baily. The greatest thing – Master Rat, ye see how he is <u>dressed</u> !	356: though not exactly clear, Baily seems to be asking Diccon to check out Rat's busted head.
358	Dic. What devil need he be groping so deep in goodwife Chat's hens' nest?	358: Diccon brazenly dissimulates: "what the devil was Rat doing in Chat's hen-house anyway?"
360	Baily. Yea, but it was thy <u>drift</u> to bring him into the <u>briars</u> .	360: "your point is valid, but it was your intention (drift) to lead him into that predicament." briars = thorny brush as a metaphor for trouble.
362	Dic. God's bread! hath not such an old fool <u>wit</u> to <u>save his ears</u> ?	362: wit = ie. enough intelligence. save his ears = ie. avoid getting beat up.
	He showeth himself herein, ye see, so very a <u>cox</u> ,	= fool or simpleton; the OED suggests this is an alternate spelling for cokes , which means "fool"; ¹ Dodsley wonders if the word is derived from the coxcomb , or fool's cap, worn by jesters.
364	The cat was not so madly allured by the fox To run into the snares was set for him, doubtless;	364-6: reference to one of the stories that was part of an epic series of fables about the trickster character Reynard the Fox and his community of animals, originally written in the 13th century by a Fleming named Willem. ^{5,20}
366	For he leapt in for mice, and this Sir John for madness.	In the tale in question, Reynard was interested to capture the chickens kept by the Priest, but he knew there was a snare, or slip-knot, waiting for him in the hole through which he would go to get his dinner. One night, Reynard's companion, the cat, was hungry, and Reynard was able to tempt the cat to go into the hole by telling him there were mice down there. The cat entered the hole and was caught round the neck by the snare, allowing the fox to then safely pass to get his chickens. Meanwhile, the Priest and his son had heard the commotion, and had come out to investigate, but in the dark could not tell that the trapped animal was the cat instead of the fox, and beat the cat mercilessly. Diccon unfavourably compares the deceived cat with the equally deceived Rat, who did not even have the excuse of hunger to explain his entering the hole of the house. The parallels between the fable and the present situation are obvious.

		366: "for the cat leapt into the hole for the mice, but the priest went in because he was crazy."
368	Dr. Rat. Well, <u>and ye shift no better, ye losel, lither and lazy,</u>	364: and ye shift no better = "if you take no better care". ye losel, lither and lazy = "you villain, (who is) wicked or lazy (<i>lither</i>) and idle". ^{1,3}
	I will go near for this to make ye <u>leap at a daisy</u> . –	369: "be hanged": perhaps newly proverbial. Bradley observes the phrase is derived from the humorous story of a man who, leaping while being hanged, cried out, "have at yon daisy yonder!"
370	In the king's name, Master Bailly, <u>I charge you set him fast.</u>	= ie. "do your duty and arrest him."
372	Dic. <u>What!</u> <u>fast at cards</u> or <u>fast on sleep</u> ? it is the thing I did last.	372: Diccon puns and dissimulates. What? = "which do you mean?" fast at cards = slippery at cards. ¹ fast on sleep = less common variation of fast asleep .
374	Dr. Rat. Nay, fast in fetters, false varlet, according to thy deeds.	374: Rat grimly plays along with Diccon's punning game: "no, but rather secure you in chains, lying scoundrel, as befits your actions."
376	Bailly. Master Doctor, there is no remedy, I must entreat you needs Some other kind of punishment.	376-7: ie. "Master Doctor, hanging is no (appropriate) remedy: I must ask you to suggest some other form of punishment."
378	Dr. Rat. Nay, <u>by All-Hallows!</u>	= "by all the saints," an oath; All Hallows , more commonly called All Saints Day , is November 1, hence Hallowe'en (Hallows'-evening) is October 31.
380	His punishment, if I may judge, shall be <u>nought</u> else but the gallows.	= nothing.
382	Bailly. That were too <u>sore</u> ; a <u>spiritual man</u> to be so extreme!	= severe. = ie. man of the cloth.
384	Dr. Rat. Is he worthy any better, sir? how do you judge and <u>deem</u> ?	384: deem = synonym for "judge".
386	Bailly. I grant him worthy punishment, but in <u>no wise</u> so great.	= no way.
388	Gamm. It is a shame, ich tell you plain, for such false knaves entreat. He has almost <u>undone</u> us all – that is <u>as true as steel</u> –	= ruined. = see Act III.ii.vi.
390	And yet for all this great ado, <u>cham</u> never the <u>near</u> my nee'le!	= "I am". = nearer.
392	Bailly. Canst thou not say anything to that, Diccon, <u>with least or most</u> ?	392: with least or most? = ie. "at all?" ¹
394	Dic. Yea, marry, sir, thus much I can say well, the nee'le is lost.	
396	Bailly. Nay, canst not thou tell which way that needle may be found?	
398	Dic. No, <u>by my fay</u> , sir, though I might have an hundred pound.	398: for once, Diccon is telling the truth. by my fay = by my faith, ie. truly.
400	Hodge. Thou liar <u>lickdish</u> , didst not say the nee'le would be <u>gitten</u> ?	400: lickdish = parasite; ¹ as an itinerant lunatic, Diccon depends on the generosity of others for his provisions; such individuals were traditionally known as "parasites".

		<i>gitten</i> = rare alternate spelling for <i>gotten</i> , used obviously to rhyme with line 402.
402	Dic. No, Hodge; by the same token you were that time beshitten For fear of <u>hobgoblin</u> – you <u>wot</u> well what I mean;	402-3: Diccon reminds Hodge of the unfortunate incident during which he soiled himself.
404	As long as it is <u>sence</u> , I fear me yet ye be scarce clean.	403: <i>hobgoblin</i> = humorous allusion to the demon Diccon was supposedly summoning. <i>wot</i> = know.
406	Baily. Well, Master Rat, you must both <u>learn</u> and teach us to forgive. Since Diccon hath confession made, and is <u>so clean shreve</u> :	404: "even though that episode took place a while ago, I fear you have not cleaned yourself up since." <i>sence</i> = since.
408	If ye to me consent, to amend this heavy chance, I will <u>enjoin</u> him here some open kind of penance:	= ie. learn to forgive.
410	<u>Of</u> this condition – <u>where ye know my fee is twenty pence</u> :	= "thus absolved of all sin". ⁸
	For the bloodshed, I am agreed with you here to <u>dispense</u> ;	
412	Ye shall <u>go quite</u> , so that ye grant the matter now to run, To end with <u>mirth</u> among us all, even as it was begun.	408: "if you will agree ahead of time to go along with whatever I decide regarding how Diccon must make amends for this serious case (<i>heavy chance</i>)". Gassner prefers "bad luck" for <i>heavy chance</i> .
414	Chat. Say yea, Master Vicar, and he shall sure confess to be your debtor, And all we that be here present will love you much the better.	= ie. "impose on".
418	Dr. Rat. My part is the worst; but since you all hereon agree, <u>Go even to</u> , Master Baily, let it be so for me.	= on. = Whitworth observes that in the interest of peace, Baily will forgo his fee that he would otherwise collect by bringing charges against Rat for breaking and entering.
420	Baily. How say'st thou, Diccon? art content this shall on me depend?	= the sense is, "remit any penalty to which you are subject."
422	Dic. Go to, M[ast] Baily, say on your mind, I know ye are my friend.	412-3: Baily alludes to the fact that Rat himself is technically liable to be punished for his apparent attempted burglary: "you shall go free (<i>go quite</i> , ie. <i>go quit</i>), if you go along with however the matter proceeds, which I will expect to end in general merriment, just as things used to be."
424	Baily. Then mark ye well: to <u>recompense</u> this thy former action,	415: "say you agree, parson, and Diccon will surely admit that he is in your debt."
426	Because thou hast offended all, to make them satisfaction,	418-9: Rat points out yet again that he was the one who had the worst experience of everyone; but he, no doubt with a sigh, accedes to the wishes of the majority. = "go ahead then". ¹¹
		421: Baily wants Diccon also to agree to go along with whatever he, Baily, decides.
		425f: Baily addresses Diccon; the magistrate's appreciation for Diccon's skill in creating this complex scheme is demonstrated by the absurdly lenient terms he assigns to the vagrant. <i>recompense</i> = atone for.

428	Before their faces here kneel down, and as I shall thee teach, For thou shalt take an oath <u>of Hodge's leather breech</u> :	428: Baily wants Diccon to swear an oath by placing his hand on Hodge's backside.
430	First, for Master Doctor, upon pain of his curse, Where he will pay for all, thou never draw thy purse;	429-430: Diccon must swear that he will never offer to pay for a drink when Rat has himself offered to do so.
432	And when ye meet at one pot, he shall have the first <u>pull</u> ; And thou shalt never offer him the cup, but it be full.	= draught, drink. 432: Baily reiterates: Diccon should always allow Rat the first drink from any cup of ale they share.
434	To goodwife Chat thou shalt be sworn, even <u>on the same wise</u> , If she refuse thy money once, never to offer it twice.	= in the same manner. 434: if Diccon offers to pay for a drink, and Chat refuses his money, he should not insist.
436	Thou shalt be bound by the same, here as thou dost take it: When thou may'st drink of free cost, thou never <u>forsake</u> it. For Gammer Gurton's sake, again sworn shalt thou be,	435: "then you shall take another oath with respect to the following." = refuse. ¹
438	To help her to her needle again, <u>if it do lie in thee</u> ; And likewise be bound, by the virtue of <u>that</u> ,	= "if it is in your power to do so." = ie. that same oath.
440	To be of <u>good a-bearing</u> to Gib her great cat.	440: Diccon must also act kindly towards Gammer's cat. good a-bearing = ie. good abearance, a legal term for good behaviour.
442	Last of all for Hodge, the oath to <u>scan</u> , Thou shalt never take him for fine gentleman.	= Whitworth suggests "recite" or "sum up". 442: "you shall never mistake him for a fashionable gentleman." ¹
444	Hodge. Come on, fellow Diccon, <u>chall be even with thee now</u> .	= "we are all even now."
446	Baily. Thou wilt not <u>stick to do this</u> , Diccon, I <u>trow</u> ?	446: stick to do this = hesitate or refuse to take this series of oaths. trow = trust.
448	Dic. No, by my father's skin, my hand down I lay it! Look, as I have promised, I will not <u>denay it</u> . –	448: Diccon agrees to take the oath. 449: denay it = "refuse to do so."
450	But, Hodge, take good heed now, thou do not beshit me.	denay = alternate spelling for deny .
452	[<i>And give him a good blow on the buttock.</i>]	452: stage direction in the original edition.
454	Hodge. Gog's heart, thou false villain, dost thou bite me?	
456	Baily. What, Hodge, doth he hurt thee, <u>or ever he begin</u> ?	= "before (or = ere) he has even begun to take the oath?"
458	Hodge. He thrust me into the buttock with a <u>bodkin</u> or a pin.	= dagger or any sharp instrument.
460	[<i>He discovers the needle.</i>]	460: Hodge reaches back to rub his bum, and finds the needle. Stage direction in original edition.
462	I say, gammer! gammer!	
464	Gamm. How now, Hodge, how now?	
466	Hodge. God's malt, gammer Gurton –	
468	Gamm. Thou art mad, <u>ich trow</u> !	= "I believe!"
470	Hodge. Will you see the devil, gammer?	
472	Gamm. The devil, son! God bless us!	

474	Hodge. Chould ich were hanged, gammer –	474: "I wish I were hanged, Gammer," similar to the modern expression, "well, I'll be hanged!"
476	Gamm. Marry, see, ye might dress us –	476: Gammer does not yet see what Hodge is yelling about.
478	Hodge. <u>Chave</u> it, by the mass, gammer!	= "I have".
480	Gamm. What, not my nee'le, Hodge?	
482	Hodge. Your nee'le, gammer, your nee'le!	
484	Gamm. No, fie, <u>dost but dodge</u> !	= basically, "you are kidding me!"
486	Hodge. <u>Cha</u> found your nee'le, gammer, here in my hand be it!	= "I have".
488	Gamm. For all the loves on earth, Hodge, let me see it!	
490	Hodge. <u>Soft</u> , gammer.	= "wait", ie. "not so fast": Hodge wants to examine the needle more closely before he turns it over.
492	Gamm. Good Hodge!	
494	Hodge. Soft, ich say; <u>tarry</u> a while.	= wait, delay.
496	Gamm. Nay, sweet Hodge, say truth, and not me <u>beguile</u> !	= deceive.
498	Hodge. <u>Cham sure on it</u> ; ich <u>warrant</u> you, it goes no more astray.	= "I am sure of it". = assure.
500	Gamm. Hodge, when I speak so fair, wilt still say me nay?	500: ie. "Hodge, when I am asking so nicely, will you still refuse to show it to me?"
502	Hodge. Go near the light, gammer, this – well, in faith, good luck! – <u>Chwas almost undone</u> , 'twas so far in my buttock!	= "I was almost ruined".
504	Gamm. 'Tis mine own dear nee'le, Hodge, <u>sickerly I wot</u> !	= "for sure (<i>sickerly</i>), I know it!" ¹
506	Hodge. <u>Cham I</u> not a good son, gammer, cham I not?	= "am I"; technically redundant, since <i>cham</i> alone means "I am".
508	Gamm. Christ's blessing light on thee, <u>hast made me</u> for ever!	= "you have assured me of happiness". The phrase <i>to make (someone)</i> was a common one, meaning one is assured of success or some other positive abstract attribute, e.g. "I am made".
510	Hodge. Ich knew that ich must find it, else chould a' had it never!	511: "I knew it was up to me to find it, otherwise I never would have it again." For the second clause, Gassner suggests "else I wish I never had it."
512	Chat. By my troth, <u>gossip</u> Gurton, I am even as glad,	= friend.
514	As though I mine own self as good a turn had!	514: "as if something so fortunate had happened to me!"
516	Baily. And I, by my conscience, to see it so <u>come forth</u> ,	= ie. turn out (well).
518	Rejoice so much at it, as three needles be worth.	
520	Dr. Rat. I am <u>no whit</u> sorry to see you so rejoice.	= not a bit.
	Dic. Nor I much the gladder for all this noise;	521: Diccon doesn't seem to share in the otherwise widespread joy.

522	<u>Yet say, "Gramercy, Diccon!" for springing of the game.</u>	522: <i>Yet say, "Garmercy, Diccon!"</i> = ie. "yet you could thank me". <i>springing of the game</i> = Diccon uses a hunting metaphor for his being responsible for discovering the needle: one might <i>spring</i> a partridge, ie. flush it out from its hiding place, for example, in order to shoot it.
524	Gamm. Gramercy, Diccon, twenty times! O, how glad cham!	
526	If that chould do so much, your masterdom to come hether, Master Rat, Goodwife Chat, and Diccon together; <u>Cha</u> but one halfpenny, as far as ich know it,	= "I have". = "I will".
528	And <u>chill</u> not rest this night, till ich bestow it. If ever ye love me, let us go in and drink.	
530		
532	Baily. I am content, if the rest think as I think. Master Rat, it shall be best for you if we so do, Then shall you warm <u>you</u> and <u>dress yourself</u> too.	532-3: Baily recommends Rat join them all for a drink. = "yourself". = "dress your wounds".
534		
	Dic. Soft, sirs, take us with you, the company shall be the more;	535: Diccon asks that he and Hodge be permitted to join the celebration.
536	As proud comes behind, they say, as any goes before. –	536: proverbial: those who come last are as proud as those who come first. Whitworth suggests that Diccon is rather bitterly acknowledging the superior social rank of Baily and Rat.
538	[Exit all to Chat's tavern, except Diccon.]	
540	But now, my good masters, since we must be gone, And leave you behind us here all alone:	540-3: Diccon addresses the audience, in what would become a traditional appeal for applause.
542	Since at our last ending thus merry we be, For Gammer Gurton's needle sake, let us have a <u>plauditè</u> .	= applause; our author imitates the Roman comic playwright Plautus, who often ended his plays with the word <i>plaudite</i> .
	<i>FINIS</i>	

MR. S.'s INVENTED WORDS

Like all of the writers of the era, our anonymous author may have made up words when he felt like it, usually by adding prefixes and suffixes to known words, combining words, or using a word in a way not yet used before. The following is a list of words from *Gammer Gurton's Needle* that are indicated by the OED as being either the first or only use of a given word, or, as noted, the first use with a given meaning:

bad luck
bonable
bread and salt (an oath)
cullion (as a term of abuse)
daintrel
dodge (as a noun, meaning the act of eluding)
felonious
fidge
fine gentleman (meaning fashionable gentleman)
gaffer
gammer
gash (referring to a cut in anything other than flesh)
glaye (as faux-dialect for clay)
God dild (for God yield)
keck
kiss the stocks
with least or most
loose-breech
make-a-do
Mas (as a title of respect)
masterdom (as a title of respect)
you wot what I mean (predecessor of "you know what I mean")
the exclamation *God's mother* (precursor to "mother of God!")
need (in an interrogative clause, e.g. "need I do this?", or "what need you do this?")
nicely (meaning cautiously)
nut-brown (colour used to describe a thing, as opposed to a person)
peess
planch (meaning to attach something)
poop (meaning to deceive)
poss (meaning to splash in mud or water)
prancome
queen (describing the face card)
rakes (as a term of abuse)
rig (meaning a whore or wanton woman)
scald (as a noun and as a term of abuse)
scowling (as a noun)
sidelong (meaning hanging low)
sir-reverence
as the skin between one's brows
slop (as a verb, meaning to lap or gobble up)
sooss (meaning to splash in mud or dirt)
steek away
swill-tub
tarleather (as a term of abuse)
teach (used as a threat, e.g. "I'll teach you to insult me!")
thereaways (a later version of thereaway)
tickel (dialectical for tittle)
Tom Tailor
tossing (as an adjective)
tphrowh

troll (meaning to pass around)
vixen (applied to a woman)
washical
way (meaning the best way)

**Additional phrases which research suggests
originated in *Gammer Gurton's Needle***

kiss my behind (also *arse*, etc., as a rejoinder)
as brag (with variants) **as a body-louse**
as full as an egg is full of meat

FOOTNOTES

Footnotes in the text correspond as follows:

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