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the Annotated Popular Edition of

# GEORGE-A-GREENE,
# THE PINNER OF WAKEFIELD

ANONYMOUS

Earliest Extant Edition: 1599

Featuring complete and easy-to-read annotations.

# GEORGE-A-GREENE, THE PINNER OF WAKEFIELD

## Anonymous.

## Earliest Extant Edition: 1599

*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ:*

***Edward,*** King of England.
***James,*** King of Scotland.

**The English Rebels:**

***Earl of Kendal.***
***Lord Bonfield.***
***Sir Gilbert Armstrong.***
***Sir Nicholas Mannering.***

**Other English Characters:**

***Earl of Warwick.***
***George-a-Greene.***
***Jenkin,*** George-a-Greene's man.
***Wily,*** George-a-Greene's boy.
***William Musgrove.***
***Cuddy,*** son to Musgrove.
***Grime.***
***Bettris,*** daughter to Grime.
***Jane-a-Barley.***
***Ned-a-Barley,*** son to Jane.
***Justice.***

**Other Scottish Characters:**

***Lord Humes.***
***John Taylor,*** messenger to King James.

**Robin Hood's Gang:**

***Robin Hood.***
***Much, the Miller's Son.***
***Scarlet.***
***Maid Marian.***

Townsmen, Shoemakers, Soldiers, Messengers, etc.

## INTRODUCTION to the PLAY

Very little is known about the provenance of *George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield*, other than it was performed in 1593. Historically attributed, although with reservations, to Robert Greene, the play is now generally filed under the category of *Anonymous*.

George-a-Greene himself was a legendary figure of English folklore, a hero of low rank who single-handedly snuffed a rebellion which supposedly took place in the time of Richard I. The play dramatizes these events (which were recorded in an early history), before appending a further story of George-a-Greene's dealings with that more well-known legend, Robin Hood.

## OUR PLAY'S SOURCE

The text of this play was originally adapted from the 1876 edition of Greene's plays edited by Alexander Dyce, and was then carefully compared to the original 1599 quarto. Consequently, much of the original wording and spelling from this earliest printing of the play has been reinstated.

## NOTES ON THE ANNOTATIONS

Mention in the annotations of various editors refers to the notes supplied by these scholars for their editions of this play. Their works are cited fully below.

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

Footnotes in the text correspond as follows:

1. *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) online.
2. Crystal, David and Ben. *Shakespeare's Words.* London; New York: Penguin, 2002.
3. Collins, J. Churton. *The Plays and Poems of Robert Greene*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1905.
4. Dyce, Rev. Alexander. *The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Robert Greene and George Peele*. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1876.
15. Dickinson, Thomas H., ed. *Robert Greene.* London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909?

## NOTES.

### A. Who is George-a-Greene, and What is a Pinner?

**George-a-Greene** is a legendary figure of English history, whose various exploits might have once been as well-known as those of **Robin Hood**; in fact, the two characters were contemporaries, both living in the north of England in the time of Richard I. The legends of George and Robin Hood in fact cross paths, as stories and poems recount their meeting on at least one occasion.

While Robin Hood was a noble who had been dispossessed of his title and belongings by **Prince John** (who ruled England while his brother **Richard I** was on Crusade in the Holy Land), George-a-Greene was of more prosaic origin: His father was a yeoman farmer, and George naturally was of the same class. The stories told of George take place while he served as **Pinner**, or Pinder, of the town of **Wakefield**, which meant that he was responsible for capturing and impounding the town's stray animals.

### B. A History and a Ballad.

Our play, the anonymously authored *George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield*, was known to have been performed in 1593, even though the earliest extant printing of the play is from 1599. Attempting to determine its date of composition would be an act of absolute conjecture.

Other issues of chronology are just as frustrating to work out: the play is clearly a dramatization of *The History of George-a-Greene*, a work which recounts a number of legends told about the famous Wakefield pinner; our play follows the events of the *History* quite closely, but the earliest known edition of the *History* dates from 1632.

The play also incorporates some language and ideas from a brief ballad describing the first meeting between George-a-Greene and Robin Hood, but nothing more can be said with regards to the date of the ballad's origins, other than that it must have existed prior to the composition of the play.

One benefit of having the *History* to refer to is that it clarifies the meaning of some of the mysterious lines and stage directions of the play.

### C. Our Author Mildly Modifies the Events of the *History*.

As noted above, our unknown dramatist, in translating the events of the *History* to the stage, stuck quite closely to the story as recounted in the prose work.

But the author did make two major changes which are worth noting: firstly, the King in the play is identified as "Edward", rather than Richard I; which Edward is supposed to be represented is unclear, and frankly unimportant. Furthermore, whereas in the prose telling the king is away on Crusade (England famously was ruled by Richard's greedy and malicious brother Prince John in his absence), in the play, Edward has never left England. This makes for a bit of awkwardness in the plot, as we are left to wonder why Edward takes so long to respond to the rebellion brewing up north.

A second variation is that in the play, the rebellious English nobles are joined in their mischief-making by the generically named "James", the King of Scotland. James invades England at the same time the insurrection is to break out, as a way to support the discomfiting of the English monarch. The details about James in the play are thus of the author's own invention.

## D. So Who Wrote *George-a-Greene*, the Play?

A brief handwritten note appended to one of the original editions of the play suggests rather vaguely that Robert Greene was the play's author. This piece of very weak evidence may be supported by the fact that the play includes quite a large number of words, expressions and ideas that appear in the other plays known definitively to have been written by Robert Greene.

Based on this slight evidence, early literary editors such as Alexander Dyce and Churton Collins included *George-a-Greene* in their collections of plays written by Robert Greene, albeit with some admitted hesitation. However, the modern line of thought leans strongly against identifying Robert Greene with the play, and so our author's name will likely remain obscure forever.

## E. Not So Iambic, Not So Much Pentameter.

The text of *George-a-Greene*, as it has come down to us, does have some pretensions to following iambic pentameter, but does not do so with any consistency. Early editors, Dyce in particular, have tried to force the lines into a regime of traditional Elizabethan regularity, but the exercise is ultimately fruitless. Our recommendation? Do not overly-concern yourself with the rhythm of the lines of this play!

## F. Scene Breaks, Settings, and Stage Directions.

*George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield* was originally published in a 1599 quarto. As usual, we lean towards adhering to the wording of this earliest volume as much as possible.

Words or syllables which have been added to the original text to clarify the sense or repair the meter are surrounded by hard brackets [ ]; these additions are often adopted from the suggestions of later editors. A director who wishes to remain truer to the original text may of course choose to omit any of the supplementary wording.

The 1599 quarto does not divide *George-a-Greene* into Acts and Scenes, or provide settings or asides. Act and scene breaks and settings have been adopted from Dickinson, and asides from Dyce.

Finally, as is our normal practice, a good number of the quarto's stage directions have been modified, and others added, usually without comment, to give clarity to the action. Most of these changes are adopted from Dyce.

# ACT I.

## SCENE I.

*At Bradford.*

**Setting:** ***Bradford*** is a historic city in the county of West Yorkshire, located about 300 miles north of London.

*Enter the Earl of Kendal; with him Lord Bonfield, Sir Gilbert Armstrong, Sir Nicholas Mannering, and John.*

**Entering Characters:** the first characters we meet are a group of nobles and knights who are fomenting a rebellion against the English King Edward. The ***Earl of Kendal*** is the leader of the enterprise.

***John*** is a messenger of the Scottish King James, who is in league with the English rebels.

Our play is a dramatization of a prose collection of several of the legends extolling the exploits of George-a-Greene. The earliest extant version of the work (published in the early 17th century) was known as *The History of George-a-Greene*: we shall refer to it simply as the *History*.

In the *History*, the leaders of the rebellion are Kendal, Bonfield and Armstrong, while Mannering is identified simply as "a servant of the earl's". Our dramatist bestows knighthood on Mannering.

***Kendal.*** Welcome to Bradford, martial gentlemen,
Lord Bonfield, and Sir Gilbert Armstrong both;
And all my troops, even to my basest groom,

= warlike, brave.[1]

3: Kendal extends his welcome to every last man who has appeared to support him, down to the lowest servant (***basest groom***).

***all*** = ie. "to all".

***even*** = typically, as here, a monosyllable: *e'en*. Modern two-syllable words with a medial ***v*** are normally pronounced in a single syllable, with the ***v*** elided.

Courage and welcome! for the day is ours.
Our cause is good, it is for the land's avail:
Then let us fight, and die for England's good.

= ie. "victory is ours"; a common expression.
= benefit.

***All.*** We will, my lord.

***Kendal.*** As I am Henry Momford, Kendal's earl,
You honour me with this assent of yours;
And here upon my sword I make protest
For to relieve the poor or die myself.

= ie. the Earl of Kendal.

12-13: Kendal takes an oath upon his ***sword***; such a vow was viewed seriously because the sword's hilt, or handle, formed the shape of a cross with the blade.

***make protest*** = promise, swear.

**Line 13:** Kendal reveals the ostensible reason the nobles are attempting to overthrow their king.

***For to*** = ie. to.

And know, my lords, that James, the King of Scots,
Wars hard upon the borders of this land:

14-15: the Scottish King James is working in cooperation with Kendal and the rebels, timing an invasion of England with the eruption of the insurrection.

**Line 15:** in fact, James has already taken his army into England, causing havoc in the English counties south of the two nations' border.

Here is his post. –
Say, John Taylor, what news with King James?

= messenger.

***John.*** War, my lord, [I] tell, and good news, I trow;

= believe.

for King Jamy vows to meet you the twenty-sixth of this month, God willing; marry, doth he, sir.

= commonly used familiar name for King James; as we will see, even James himself is not above referring to himself this way.

= common oath derived from the name of the Virgin Mary.

***Kendal.*** My friends, you see what we have to win. −

= ie. what assistance or advantages.

Well, John, commend me to King James, and tell him, I will meet him the twenty-sixth of this month, And all the rest; and so, farewell.

= basically, "give my regards".

[*Exit John*.]

Bonfield, why stand'st thou as a man in dumps? Courage! for, if I win, I'll make thee duke: I Henry Momford will be king myself; And I will make thee Duke of Lancaster, And Gilbert Armstrong Lord of Doncaster.

= ie. "do you appear so downcast?"

***Bonf.*** Nothing, my lord, makes me amazed at all, But that our soldiers find our victuals scant.

= dismayed.[1,2]

37: provisions, especially food, are low in the rebel army.

We must make havoc of those country-swains; For so will the rest tremble and be afraid, And humbly send provision to your camp.

38-40: the rebels have no choice but to take what they need by force: Bonfield recommends they threaten violence against the local peasants (***those country-swains***) if they do not turn over the requested supplies; such a show of force will induce other towns to donate provisions more willingly!

***Armstr.*** My Lord Bonfield gives good advice: They make a scorn, and stand upon the king;

43: the local population treat the rebels with contempt, and remain loyal to their king.

So what is brought is sent from them perforce;

44: the only way the rebels have been able to restock their supplies is to take them by force (***perforce***).

Ask Mannering else.

= for confirmation.[1]

***Kendal.*** What sayest thou, Mannering?

***Mann.*** Whenas I shewed your high commissiön, They made this answer, Only to send provision for your horses.

49-51: Mannering has apparently already attempted, and failed, to collect provisions from the residents of Bradford. Kendal had tried to impress the people by having Mannering show them an "official" requisition (a ***high commission***) for supplies.

***shewed*** = common alternate form of ***showed***.

***Kendal.*** Well, hie thee to Wakefield, bid the town

53: ***hie thee*** = hurry.

***Wakefield*** = cathedral city located about 20 miles south-east of Bradford.

***bid*** = ask.

To send me all provision that I want, Lest I, like martial Tamburlaine, lay waste Their bordering countries, and leaving none alive That contradicts my commission.

55-57: a nod to the ferocious and uncompromising late-14th century conqueror of Asia (properly Tamur or Tamerlane), made famous in England by Christopher Marlowe in the pair of plays he wrote about the warrior in the 1580's.

***That*** = who.

***Mann.*** Let me alone, my lord,

= ie. "I'll take care of it".

I'll make them vail their plumes;

= ie. submit; a common expression literally meaning "lower their plumes (the feathers on their hats or helmets)", ie. "remove their hats".

For whatsoe'er he be, the proudest knight,
Justice, or other, that gainsayeth your word,
I'll clap him fast, to make the rest to fear.

= whosoever. = ie. even the.
= ie. "who speaks against or refuses your order".[1]
= ie. (arrest and) incarcerate him promptly.[1] = ie. in order to.

***Kendal.*** Do so, Nick: hie thee thither presently,
And let us hear of thee again to-morrow.

= "hurry over there right away".
= from.

***Mann.*** Will you not remove, my lord?

= leave, ie. move the army to a new location.

***Kendal.*** No, I will lie at Bradford all this night
And all the next. − Come, Bonfield, let us go,
And listen out some bonny lasses here.

= find news of or inquire about;[1,3] the expression, perhaps a variation of the more common "listen after", appears to be unique to this play.

[*Exeunt*.]

## ACT I, SCENE II.

*At Wakefield.*

**Setting:** as noted above, ***Wakefield*** sits about 20 miles south-east of Bradford.

*Enter the Justice, Townsmen, George-a-Greene, and Sir Nicholas Mannering with his commission.*

**Entering Characters:** we join the town meeting of the city of Wakefield in progress. ***Mannering***, representing the rebels, has just presented Kendal's ultimatum to the residents: they must either hand over all the provisions that have been requested, or suffer the pillaging of their homes.

Mannering's threat is in the form, in part, of a ***commission***, a written authorization stamped with the wax seals of Kendal, Armstrong and Bonfield, the leaders of the rebellion.

Present in the crowd is ***George-a-Greene*** (who we will refer to in the notes simply as *George*), a legendary English figure, known for his fierce fighting ability and his loyalty to his sovereign.

The name of the town's ***Justice*** is Woodroffe.

***Just.*** Master Mannering, stand aside, whilst we confer
What is best to do. − Townsmen of Wakefield,
The Earl of Kendal here hath sent for victuals;

= food and other supplies;[1] in the *History*, we are told that the commission specifically required the townsmen to turn over to Mannering corn, cattle, and cash, the latter to be used to pay the soldiers.

And in aiding him we shew ourselves no less
Than traitors to the king; therefore
Let me hear, townsmen, what is your consents.

= ie. "show", here and everywhere.
= opinion; note the clause's lack of agreement between the subject and verb, a common feature of Elizabethan writing.

***1st Towns.*** Even as you please, we are all content.

8: the townsmen are of the same mind as the Justice.

***Just.*** Then, Master Mannering, we are resolved −

***Mann.*** As how?

***Just.*** Marry, sir, thus.
We will send the Earl of Kendal no victuals,
Because he is a traitor to the king;
And in aiding him we shew ourselves no less.

= a common oath. = as follows.

17: the Justice repeats his statement of line 4 above.
***no less*** = ie. to be traitors also.

***Mann.*** Why, men of Wakefield, are you waxen mad,

= grown.
**Lines 19-21:** note the extended alliteration of ***w-*** words.

That present danger cannot whet your wits,
Wisely to make provision of yourselves?

20-21: ie. "does not the immediate (***present***) threat of harm focus your intellect, leading you to do what is necessary to ensure your town's safety?"
***whet*** = sharpen.

The earl is thirty thousand men strong in power,
And what town soever him resist,
He lays it flat and level with the ground.
Ye silly men, you seek your own decay:
Therefore
Send my lord such provision as he wants,
So he will spare your town,
And come no nearer Wakefield than he is.

22: the *History* tells us that the rebel-army was comprised of 20,000 men.

= plural form of ***you***. = stupid. = destruction.[2]

***Just.*** Master Mannering, you have your answer;
You may be gone.

***Mann.*** Well, Woodroffe, for so I guess is thy name,
I'll make thee curse thy overthwart denial;

35: the sense is, "you will curse the day you made this perverse or hostile (***overthwart***)[1] refusal."

And all that sit upon the bench this day shall rue
The hour they have withstood my lord's commission.

***Just.*** Do thy worst, we fear thee not.

***Mann.*** See you these seals? before you pass the town,
I will have all things my lord doth want,
In spite of you.

= Mannering tries to impress upon the townspeople the authority and power of the commission, which has impressed on it the ***seals*** of the rebellion's three primary leaders (Kendal, Armstrong and Bonfield).

**45*f*:** George-a-Greene steps forward now to take on the burden of dealing with the traitor Mannering.

***George.*** Proud dapper Jack, vail bonnet to the bench

45: "you arrogant (***Proud***) and petty fellow, remove your hat before the Justice."
***dapper*** = trim and neat, but with a deprecative sense, suggesting smallness.
***Jack*** = generic name for a male.
***vail*** = lower.

That represents the person of the king;
Or, sirrah, I'll lay thy head before thy feet.

47: "or I will slice your head off."
***sirrah*** = term of address used to signal an assumption of authority and contempt.[1]

***Mann.*** Why, who art thou?

***George.*** Why, I am George-a-Greene,
True liege-man to my king,

= loyal subject.

Who scorns that men of such esteem as these

= ie. the residents of Wakefield generally, and perhaps the Justice specifically.

Should brook the braves of any traitorous squire. −

54: ***brook the braves*** = (be forced to) endure the blustering threats.[1]
***squire*** = lad (contemptuous).

You of the bench, and you, my fellow-friends,
Neighbours, we subjects all unto the king;
We are English born, and therefore Edward's friends.

= this is the first mention of the English king's name.

Vowed unto him even in our mothers' womb,

58: hyperbolically, "sworn to be loyal to him even before we were born".

Our minds to God, our hearts unto our king:

59: this line sounds proverbial, but is actually unique to this play.

Our wealth, our homage, and our carcasses,

= always stressed on its first syllable. = bodies.

Be all King Edward's. − Then, sirrah, we
Have nothing left for traitors, but our swords,
Whetted to bathe them in your bloods, and die

= sharpened.

Against you, before we send you any victuals.

= ie. fighting against.

***Just.*** Well spoken, George-a-Greene!

***1st Towns.*** Pray let George-a-Greene speak for us.

= please.

***George.*** Sirrah, you get no victuals here,
Not if a hoof of beef would save your lives.

71: in the *History*, George also snatches Mannering's hat from off his head, stomps on it, and kicks it away.

***Mann.*** Fellow, I stand amazed at thy presumption.
Why, what art thou that darest gainsay my lord,

= who. = deny or contradict. = ie. Kendal.

Knowing his mighty puissance and his stroke?

75: ***puissance*** = power or army.[1]
***his stroke*** = perhaps, "the strength of Kendal's arm", or "the might with which he wields a sword."

Why, my friend, I come not barely of myself;

= "solely on my own behalf or authority"

For, see, I have a large commissiön.

***George.*** Let me see it, sirrah .

[*Takes the commission*].

Whose seals be these?

***Mann.*** This is the Earl of Kendal's seal-at-arms;
This Lord Charnel Bonfield's;
And this Sir Gilbert Armstrong's.

***George.*** I tell thee, sirrah, did good King Edward's son

= ie. "even if Edward's son did".

Seal a commission 'gainst the king his father,
Thus would I tear it in despite of him,

= ie. tear it up.

[*Tears the commission*.]

Being traitor to my sovereign.

***Mann.*** What, hast thou torn my lord's commission?
Thou shalt rue it, and so shall all Wakefield.

***George.*** What, are you in choler? I will give you pills

= irritable, in a rage, impatient.[1,2]

To cool your stomach. Seest thou these seals? = considered the seat of emotions.[1]

Now, by my father's soul, = an oath.

Which was a yeoman when he was alive, = who. = land-holding farmer, hence of a respectable position.[1,2]

Eat them, or eat my dagger's point, proud squire. = a threat to stab the knight.

***Mann.*** But thou dost but jest, I hope.

***George.*** Sure that shall you see before we two part. = ie. "you will see if I am joking".

***Mann.*** Well, and there be no remedy, so, George: = if. = ie. no other path, no way to repair the situation.

[*Swallows one of the seals*.]

One is gone; I pray thee, no more now. = please.

***George.*** O, sir,
If one be good, the others cannot hurt.
So sir;

[*Mannering swallows the other two seals*.]

Now you may go tell the Earl of Kendal,
Although I have rent his large commission, = torn.
Yet of courtesy I have sent all his seals = ie. out of.
Back again by you. = in return.

***Mann.*** Well, sir, I will do your errand.

[*Exit Mannering*.]

***George.*** Now let him tell his lord that he hath spoke
With George-a-Greene,
Right Pinner of merry Wakefield town, 133: ***Right*** = Dyce likely correctly emends ***Right*** to ***Hight***, meaning "called", "named".
***Pinner*** = official charged with "impounding stray animals" (OED); also called a ***pinder***.

That hath physic for a fool, = medicine.
Pills for a traitor that doth wrong his sovereign. − = do injury or insult to.
Are you content with this that I have done? 136: Greene addresses the Justice or his fellow townsmen.

***Just.*** Ay, content, George;
For highly hast thou honoured Wakefield town
In cutting off proud Mannering so short.
Come, thou shalt be my welcome guest to-day;
For well thou hast deserved reward and favour.

[*Exeunt*.]

## ACT I, SCENE III.

*In Westmoreland*. **Setting:** ***Westmoreland*** is a county in north-west England, its northern border located about 60 miles south of Scotland. It is also about 100 miles north-west of Wakefield and the other towns in which much of our play takes place.

*Enter Musgrove and Cuddy.*

**Entering Characters:** ***Musgrove*** is an Englishman, ***Cuddy*** his son; though not a knight or any higher rank, Musgrove is a landowner, and, more importantly, a fierce warrior.

***Cuddy.*** Now, gentle father, list unto thy son,
= listen to.

And for my mother's love,
= ie. in memory of, or something similar.

That erst was blithe and bonny in thine eye,
3: "who previously (when she was alive) you found to be merry and attractive".

Grant one petition that I shall demand.
= request. = ask.

***Musgr.*** What is that, my Cuddy?

***Cuddy.*** Father, you know
The ancient enmity of late
Between the Musgroves and the wily Scots,
9-10: Cuddy describes the hatred between his family and the Scots as both longstanding (***ancient***) and recent (***of late***).
Dyce, recognizing line 9 to be both awkwardly phrased and short, asks if the line should end with, ***of late revived***, meaning, "recently revived".

Whereof they have oath
Not to leave one alive that strides a lance.
12-13: the Scots have sworn to kill even the children of the Musgrove clan.
***strides a lance*** = allusion to a child running with a lance between his or her legs as if it were a hobby horse.[3]
***strides*** = ie. bestrides.[1]

O father,
You are old, and waning age unto the grave:
= ie. nearing death; ***waning*** = declining.

Old William Musgrove, which whilom was thought
= once upon a time.[1] = accounted.

The bravest horseman in all Westmoreland,
Is weak,
And forced to stay his arm upon a staff,
= rest. = walking stick.

That erst could wield a lance.
= who once.

Then, gentle father, resign the hold to me;
20: Cuddy asks his father to turn over to him ownership of the family property (***the hold***)!

Give arms to youth, and honour unto age.
= let the young fight, and the old, in retirement, be held in reverence.

***Musgr.*** Avaunt, false-hearted boy! my joints do quake
= be gone! = disloyal, faithless.

Even with anguish of thy very words.
Hath William Musgrove seen an hundred years?
25: Musgrove claims to be 100 years old! It is no wonder Cuddy is impatient to receive his inheritance.

Have I been feared and dreaded by the Scots,
That, when they heard my name in any road,
= ie. anytime they raided England; ***road*** = inroad.[3]

They fled away, and posted thence amain,
= rode quickly away, ie. back to Scotland.

And shall I die with shame now in mine age?
No, Cuddy, no: thus resolve I,
Here have I lived, and here will Musgrove die.

[*Exeunt.*]

## ACT I, SCENE IV.

*At Bradford.*

**Setting:** while Mannering has gone to squeeze supplies out of the residents of Wakefield, the rebel army remains at Bradford.

*Enter Lord Bonfield, Sir Gilbert Armstrong,*

**Entering Characters:** unlike the citizens of Wakefield,

*Grime, and Bettris (his daughter).*

who refuse to do business or succour the rebels, ***Grime***, a man of otherwise no particular account, has provided a nice meal for the leaders of the insurrection.

***Bettris*** is Grime's attractive daughter.

***Bonf.*** Now, gentle Grime, God-a-mercy for our good cheer;
Our fare was royal, and our welcome great:
And sith so kindly thou hast entertained us,

1: ***God-a-mercy*** = thank you.
***cheer*** = food, meal.
= since. = welcomed and fed.[1]

If we return with happy victory,
We will deal as friendly with thee in recompense.

4-5: if the rebellion is successful, the nobles will return to Bradford to reward their host.
***happy*** = fortunate.

***Grime.*** Your welcome was but duty, gentle lord;
For wherefore have we given us our wealth,
But to make our betters welcome when they come?

= ie. done in duty.
8-9: ie. "why else have men been given possessions, except to share them with their superiors when the opportunity to do so arises?"

[*Aside*]. O, this goes hard when traitors must be flattered!
But life is sweet, and I cannot withstand it:
God, I hope, will revenge the quarrel of my king.

10-12: Grime lets the audience know that he is actually loyal to the crown; however, by welcoming the rebel leaders into his home and feeding them (in order to avoid any retribution should he have refused), Grime has shown himself to be a weak and unsympathetic character.
***this goes hard*** = "things have come to a bad state", a common expression.
***withstand it*** = ie. avoid engaging in such flattery.
Grime is described with a bit more sympathy in the *History*, which tells us that he was "*forced*" to provide entertainment to the rebel leaders "*much against his will*".

***Armstr.*** What said you, Grime?

14: we find here an interesting variation on the conventional asides found in abundance in Elizabethan plays: normally, when a character speaks an "aside", the stage-action's time, as it were, stops: the speech is made to let the audience know what is really going on the character's mind. When the speaker completes the aside, he or she returns to the time and place of the scene, and the dialogue and action resume.
In this play, however, many of the asides operate in an interesting hybrid manner: while the audience would hear the speech clearly, the other characters on stage also hear the aside, but the words come across to them as an indistinct mumble, as if the lines were filtered through a hazy aural medium. Look for this effect to be repeated several times in *George-a-Greene*.

***Grime.*** I say, Sir Gilbert, looking on my daughter,
I curse the hour that e'er I got the girl;
For, sir, she may have many wealthy suitors,
And yet she disdains them all,
To have poor George-a-Greene unto her husband.

= begot, ie. sired, brought into the world.[1]
= ie. could.
= ie. in preference for.
**Lines 16-20:** in the *History*, Grime (called Grymes) is a wealthy Justice of the Peace, and it is because George is of lesser rank, as well as of little means, that Bettris' father refuses to consent to her marrying the Pinner.

***Bonf.*** On that, good Grime, I am talking with thy daughter;
But she, in quirks and quiddities of love,
Sets me to school, she is so over-wise. −

= ie. on that subject.
23-24: Bonfield is frustrated in his wooing of Bettris, who is playing hard-to-get; Bettris is no dumb peasant girl: she will prove herself to be willful and strong of character, and able

to handle herself quite well with men.

***quirks and quiddities*** = idiosyncrasies, a common expression.

***Sets me to school*** = presumes to instruct Bonfield about love. The expression, to ***set one to school***, metaphorically meaning "to provide an education for", was a common one.

***she is so over-wise*** = Bettris is affectedly clever, ie. she acts smarter than she is.[1]

But, gentle girl, if thou wilt forsake the Pinner
And be my love, I will advance thee high; = "raise you in rank", "promote you to a higher status".
To dignify those hairs of amber hue, = Bettris' golden hair.[1]
I'll grace them with a chaplet made of pearl, = coronet.[1]
Set with choice rubies, sparks, and diamonds, = small diamonds or other gems.[1,3]
Planted upon a velvet hood, to hide that head 30: note the wordplay with ***hood***, ***hide*** and ***head***.
Wherein two sapphires burn like sparkling fire: = ie. her eyes.
This will I do, fair Bettris, and far more,
If thou wilt love the Lord of Doncaster. = ie. Bonfield himself; Kendal had promised this title to Bonfield should the insurrection succeed.

***Bettris.*** Heigh-ho! my heart is in a higher place, 35-36: Bettris toys with Bonfield: she suggests she may
Perhaps on the earl, if that be he. − prefer a man of higher rank.

***Heigh-ho*** = an expression used to express yawning or jadedness.[1]

***if that be he*** = Bettris hears Kendal arriving.

See where he comes, or angry, or in love, = here, there. = ie. "either he is".

For why his colour looketh discontent. 38: Kendal appears emotional or flushed, without his normal calm demeanor; it turns out he has been enjoying a hearty laugh.

*Enter the Earl of Kendal and Sir Nicholas Mannering.*

***Kendal.*** Come, Nick, follow me.

***Bonf.*** How now, my lord! what news?

***Kendal.*** Such news, Bonfield, as will make thee laugh, 46-58: to his credit, Kendal sees the humour in Mannering's failed attempt to intimidate the townsmen of Wakefield.

And fret thy fill, to hear how Nick was used. 47: ***And fret thy fill*** = perhaps, "as well as enrage you".

***used*** = treated.

Why, the Justices stand on their terms: = remained inflexible in their refusal.[1]
Nick, as you know, is haughty in his words; = speaks in a high-handed manner.
He laid the law unto the Justices
With threatening braves, that one looked on another, = with such blustering threats.

Ready to stoop; but that a churl came in, 52: Mannering has told Kendal that the townsmen were prepared to cave (***Ready to stoop***) to their demands, at least until George stepped in, when in reality, the Justice and the town's residents had refused to accede to his demands from the first. Mannering is likely trying to save at least a portion of face in front of his boss, given his failure to overawe his victims.

***Ready to stoop*** = literally, prepared to bow down, ie. submit.

***churl*** = villain.

One George-a-Greene, the Pinner of the town,

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 54 | And with his dagger drawn laid hands on Nick, | = another exaggeration: while George certainly threatened to slay Mannering, there was no indication in Scene II that George had physically assaulted him. |
| | And by no beggars swore that we were traitors, | = literally, "swore by no mean people" (Collins, p. 369); a common expression used to emphasize the trustworthiness of one's oath. |
| 56 | Rent our commission, and upon a brave | = tore up. = with a threat. |
| | Made Nick to eat the seals or brook the stab: | 57: forced Mannering to choose between eating the seals or being killed; ***brook*** = endure. |
| 58 | Poor Mannering, afraid, came posting hither straight. | = riding back here quickly. |
| 60 | ***Bettris.*** O lovely George, fortune be still thy friend! | |
| | And as thy thoughts be high, so be thy mind | 61-62: roughly, just as George's thoughts are high-minded |
| 62 | In all accords, even to thy heart's desire! | and noble (***high***)[1], so may he attain whatever he desires; but the lines, as Dyce suggests, are potentially corrupted, as ***thoughts*** and ***mind*** are synonymous. |
| 64 | ***Bonf.*** What says fair Bettris? | 64: "what did you say?" |
| 66 | ***Grime.*** My lord, she is praying for George-a-Greene: | |
| | He is the man, and she will none but him. | = ie. will have none. |
| 68 | | |
| | ***Bonf.*** But him! why, look on me, my girl: | |
| 70 | Thou know'st that yesternight I courted thee, | = last night. |
| | And swore at my return to wed with thee. | |
| 72 | Then tell me, love, shall I have all thy fair? | = "possess all thy beauty?" |
| 74 | ***Bettris.*** I care not for earl, nor yet for knight, | |
| | Nor baron that is so bold; | |
| 76 | For George-a-Greene, the merry Pinner, | |
| | He hath my heart in hold. | = imprisoned or in his custody.[1] |
| 78 | | |
| | ***Bonf.*** Bootless, my lord, are many vain replies: | 79: Bonfield's attempts to persuade Bettris are fruitless (***Bootless***); ***vain*** = unprofitable.[1] |
| 80 | Let us hie us to Wakefield, and send her the Pinner's head. | = hurry. |
| 82 | ***Kendal.*** It shall be so. − Grime, gramercy, | = thanks; but note that Kendal's words of gratitude are followed by a not-so-vague threat. |
| | Shut up thy daughter, bridle her affects; | 83: "confine your daughter, and curb her desires."[1] ***affects*** = affections.[4] |
| 84 | Let me not miss her when I make return; | = get back. |
| | Therefore look to her, as to thy life, good Grime. | 85: "watch her, as you would guard your life, Grimes." |
| 86 | | |
| | ***Grime.*** I warrant you, my lord. | = assure. |
| 88 | | |
| | ***Kendal.*** And, Bettris, | |
| 90 | Leave a base Pinner, for to love an earl. | = in order to. |
| 92 | [*Exeunt Grime and Bettris*.] | |
| 94 | Fain would I see this Pinner George-a-Greene. | = gladly. |
| | It shall be thus: | |
| 96 | Nick Mannering shall lead on the battle, | = the army (in Kendal's absence). |
| | And we three will go to Wakefield in some disguise: | = ie. Kendal, Armstrong and Bonfield. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 98 | But howsoever, I'll have his head to-day. | = nonetheless, ie. one way or another. |
| 100 | [*Exeunt*.] | |
| | END OF ACT I. | |

# ACT II.

## SCENE I.

*Before Sir John-a-Barley's Castle*.

**Setting:** the scene takes place on the lands fronting the home of the English knight, Sir John-a-Barley, who himself does not appear in the play. Based on some lines spoken in the play's final scene, the Barley castle may be identified with Middleham Castle in North Yorkshire, which is about 10 miles south of Richmond; another line suggests the castle is in Aske, a parish sitting a mile north of Richmond.

*Enter James (King of Scots), Lord Humes, with Soldiers, and John.*

**Entering Characters:** the Scottish king ***James***, we remember, is working in concert with the English rebels to vex the English crown with an invasion of the northern counties. James enters the stage with one of his nobles, ***Lord Humes*** (who speaks no lines in the play), and his servant ***John***, who has just returned from his errand to assure Kendal and the rebels that he is on their side.

***John*** is not to be confused with ***John-a-Barley***, the owner of the castle before the Scottish forces.

***K. James.*** Why, Johnny, then the Earl of Kendal is blithe,
And hath brave men that troop along with him?

= pleased or merry.[1]

2: James is inquiring as to whether Kendal appears to have enough support to succeed in his objective.

***troop*** = march, ie. travel.[1]

***John.*** Ay, marry, my liege,
And hath good men that come along with him,
And vows to meet you at Scrasblesea, God willing.

= this location has never been identified.[5]

***K. James.*** If good Saint Andrew lend King Jamy leave,
I will be with him at the 'pointed day.

= patron saint of Scotland. = "grants me permission".
= ie. appointed.

*Enter Ned.*

**Entering Character:** ***Ned*** is the young son of the Barley household; ***Ned***, of course, is a nickname for ***Edward***.

But, soft! − Whose pretty boy art thou?

= wait a moment.

***Ned.*** Sir, I am son unto Sir John-a-Barley,
Eldest, and all that e'er my mother had;
Edward my name.

16: the eldest son, and the only child of the family.

***K. James.*** And whither art thou going, pretty Ned?

= to where.

***Ned.*** To seek some birds, and kill them, if I can:
And now my schoolmaster is also gone,
So have I liberty to ply my bow;
For when he comes, I stir not from my book.

22-24: when Ned's stern private tutor is away from the castle, Ned feels free to attend to his preferred activities, such as hunting; when the tutor is home, Ned dares not lift his head from his studies.

***ply*** = bend.[1]

***K. James.*** Lord Humes, but mark the visage of this child:
By him I guess the beauty of his mother;

= note, observe. = face.

27: James judges that because the lad is so attractive, his mother must be too.

None but Leda could breed Helena. −

28: an analogy: only a woman as beautiful as ***Leda*** could have given birth to a girl who was as similarly lovely as was ***Helen*** of Troy.

***Leda*** was a queen of Sparta; she was famously raped by the king of the gods **Jupiter** (who had taken the form of a swan for the purpose), and gave birth to, among others, ***Helen***, who would become the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen of Troy.

Tell me, Ned, who is within with thy mother?

= ie. inside.

Though it is not clear from this speech or the ensuing dialogue, James has specifically led his army to this castle in order to pay a visit to the lady of the house, Ned's mother Jane. While James may not have initially recognized who Ned was, the king has deduced, based on the lad's attractive looks and response to his query, that he is Jane's son.

***Ned.*** Nought but herself and household servants, sir:
If you would speak with her, knock at this gate.

= the quarto prints ***Not***, emended as shown by Dickinson.
= wish to.

***K. James.*** Johnny, knock at that gate.

[*John knocks at the gate*.]

*Enter Jane-a-Barley upon the walls*.

38: Ned's mother Jane appears on the rear balcony of the stage, which often doubled for the walls of a palace or castle.

***Jane.*** O, I'm betrayed! What multitudes be these?

40: Jane is dismayed to find an entire army in front of her home, but why she feels ***betrayed*** is as yet unclear.

***K. James.*** Fear not, fair Jane, for all these men are mine,
And all thy friends, if thou be friend to me:

43: James hints, a bit cryptically, that if Jane gives herself to him, then she will suffer no harm at the hands of the army.

I am thy lover, James the King of Scots,
That oft have sued and wooed with many letters,
Painting my outward passions with my pen,
Whenas my inward soul did bleed for woe.
Little regard was given to my suit;

= the one who loves Jane, or has been courting her.
= often.
= depicting.
= while.
48: Jane has ignored James' pleas.

But haply thy husband's presence wrought it:

49: perhaps (***haply***) it is Jane's husband who has prevented her from responding to James; the king gives the lady the benefit of the doubt.

Therefore, sweet Jane, I fitted me to time,
And, hearing that thy husband was from home,
Am come to crave what long I have desired.

50-52: James asserts that he has arranged specifically to visit Jane at the castle once he learned that John-a-Barley was away.

***I fitted me to time*** = "I adapted to, or took advantage of, the situation".

***Ned.*** Nay, soft you, sir! you get no entrance here,
That seek to wrong Sir John-a-Barley so,
And offer such dishonour to my mother.

= hold on one moment!
55: ie. by cheating with his wife.

***K. James.*** Why, what dishonour, Ned?

***Ned.*** Though young,
Yet often have I heard my father say,
No greater wrong than to be made [a] cuckold.
Were I of age, or were my body strong,

= ie. there is no. = insult, injury.
63: ie. "if I were older and bigger".

Were he ten kings, I would shoot him to the heart

= ie. "any man, even if he were the equal of ten kings".

That should attempt to give Sir John the horn. −

= commit adultery with Sir John's wife; the expression refers to the common conceit that ***horns*** grow out of the forehead of a cuckolded man.

Mother, let him not come in:
I will go lie at Jocky Miller's house.

67: Ned is clever: if the castle entrance − a portcullis, most likely, not a simple and flimsy front door − were opened up, it would give James an opportunity to enter the castle as well.

***K. James.*** Stay him.

69: "stop or grab the boy."

***Jane.*** Ay, well said; Ned, thou hast given the king his answer;
For were the ghost of Caesar on the earth,
Wrapped in the wonted glory of his honour,
He should not make me wrong my husband so. −

72-74: ie. Jane would not permit even the greatest ruler in all of history to seduce her.
***wonted*** = accustomed.

But good King James is pleasant, as I guess,
And means to try what humour I am in;
Else would he never have brought an host of men,
To have them witness of his Scottish lust.

75: perhaps James is simply being droll or merry.
= test. = mood.
= army.

***K. James.*** Jane, in faith, Jane, −

= truly, really.

***Jane.*** Never reply,
For I protest by the highest holy God,
That doometh just revenge for things amiss,
King James, of all men, shall not have my love.

= profess.
84: who, acting as a judge, punishes those who commit wicked deeds and such.
***doometh*** = sentences.[1]

***K. James.*** Then list to me: Saint Andrew be my boot,
But I'll raze thy castle to the very ground,
Unless thou open the gate, and let me in.

= listen. = ie. the sense is, "St. Andrew help me".

***Jane.*** I fear thee not, King Jamy: do thy worst.
This castle is too strong for thee to scale;
Besides, to-morrow will Sir John come home.

= note how Jane signals her scorn for James by addressing him with the informal and insulting term ***thee*** instead of ***you***.

***K. James.*** Well, Jane, since thou disdain'st King James's love,
I'll draw thee on with sharp and deep extremes;
For, by my father's soul, this brat of thine
Shall perish here before thine eyes,
Unless thou open the gate, and let me in.

96: "I will have to adopt extraordinary measures to lure you out."

***Jane.*** O deep extremes! my heart begins to break:
My little Ned looks pale for fear. −
Cheer thee, my boy, I will do much for thee.

= Jane repeats James' words from line 96 above.
= ie. take heart. = ie. "I would do anything".

***Ned.*** But not so much as to dishonour me.

***Jane.*** And if thou diest, I cannot live, sweet Ned.

= if.

***Ned.*** Then die with honour, mother, dying chaste.

***Jane.*** I am armed:
My husband's love, his honour, and his fame,
Joins victory by virtue. − Now, King James,
If mother's tears cannot allay thine ire,
Then butcher him, for I will never yield:
The son shall die before I wrong the father.

***K. James.*** Why, then, he dies.

*Alarum within.*
*Enter a Messenger.*

***Mess.*** My lord, Musgrove is at hand.

***K. James.*** Who, Musgrove? The devil he is! Come, my horse!

[*Exeunt.*]

= reputation.

113: "(together act to) combine victory with virtue."[1]

= "mitigate your fury".

120: a call-to-arms sounds off-stage.

123: nearby.

125: immediately dropping his attempts to seduce Jane, King James prepares to meet the Scots' ancient enemy, the centenarian Musgrove.

## ACT II, SCENE II.

*The Same, before Sir John-a-Barley's Castle.*

*Enter Musgrove with King James prisoner; Jane-a-Barley on the walls.*

**Scene II:** a battle between the forces of the English warrior Musgrove and the Scottish army of King James took place between Scenes I and II; the English victorious, Musgrove has taken James prisoner.

We may wonder at the efficacy of the Scottish army, which allowed itself to be defeated by what could not have been a very large force.

**Entering Characters:** we met ***Musgrove***, an Englishman ready to do battle with any aggressive Scotsman he meets, in Act I.iii; his son Cuddy, we remember, had wanted his father to retire and turn the family property over to him, and Musgrove told him basically to go to the devil; they seem to have made up.

***Musgr.*** Now, King James, thou art my prisoner.

***K. James.*** Not thine, but Fortune's prisoner.

*Enter Cuddy.*

3: James ascribes his capture not to the martial abilities of his opponent, but to bad luck.

***Cuddy.*** Father, the field is ours:
Their colours we have seized, and Humes is slain;
I slew him hand to hand.

***Musgr.*** God and Saint George!

***Cuddy.*** O father, I am sore athirst!

***Jane.*** Come in, young Cuddy, come and drink thy fill:

= ie. victory.

8: ***Their colours…seized*** = the worst humiliation a defeated army could endure was to have its battle flags and national banners captured.

***Humes*** = the nobleman who appeared on-stage with James in the last scene, but spoke no lines.

= ie. in a one-on-one, or single, combat.

11: traditional English battle-cry.

= oppressively thirsty.

Bring in King Jamy with you as a guest;
For all this broil was 'cause he could not enter.

[*Jane exits above; exeunt below, the others*.]

16-17: Jane is deliciously ironic.
17: this whole turmoil (***broil***) was caused by Jane refusing entry to James.

## ACT II, SCENE III.

*At Wakefield*.

*Enter George-a-Greene*.

***Entering Character:*** George-a-Green begins the scene with a short soliloquy: loves brings happiness to those who may enjoy its fruits, but frustration to those who are unable to attain the objects of their desire.

***George.*** The sweet content of men that live in love
Breeds fretting humours in a restless mind;

1-2: love disrupts a man's peace of mind, because it causes him to suffer from a consuming vexation.
***humours*** = any of the four fluids (blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile) which, in medieval thinking, were believed, based on the relative proportion with which they existed in the body, to determine a person's temperament.

And fancy, being checked by fortune's spite,
Grows too impatient in her sweet desires;

3-4: when personified Fortune prevents one from attaining his or her love, one must endure intolerable longing.

Sweet to those men whom love leads on to bliss,
But sour to me whose hap is still amiss.

5-6: love brings happiness to those who are successful in love, but not to George, whose luck (***hap***) is against him. Note the author's employment of the still-familiar contrast between ***sweet*** and ***sour***.

*Enter Jenkin*.

**Entering Character: *Jenkin*** is a servant of George's.
You may wish to note how Jenkin's speeches are typical of those of the Elizabethan low-ranking comic figure, full of absurdities and self-contradictions.

***Jenkin.*** Marry, amen, sir.

10: "Goodness, amen to that, sir!" Jenkin has overheard George's lament.

***George.*** Sir, what do you cry "amen" at?

***Jenkin.*** Why, did not you talk of love?

***George.*** How do you know that?

***Jenkin.*** Well, though I say it that should not say it,

= ie. "I who"; Jenkin excuses his seemingly boastful comments here.[1]

there are few fellows in our parish so nettled with love as I have been of late.

= stirred.[1]

***George.*** Sirrah, I thought no less, when the other morning you rose so early to go to your wenches. Sir, I had thought you had gone about my honest business.

22-24: George correctly discerned that Jenkin had been visiting his girlfriends when he should have been working.
***Sirrah*** = correct form of address for one's servant.

***Jenkin.*** Trow, you have hit it; for, master, be it known to you, there is some good-will betwixt Madge the souce-wife and I; marry, she hath another lover.

= "believe me". = "you are correct in your assessment."
= "there is a mutual understanding between", or "there are shared feelings between".
= woman who pickles, preserves, and then sells various parts of an animal,[1] or who sells such pickling brine.[15]

***George.*** Can'st thou brook any rivals in thy love?

= tolerate.

***Jenkin.*** A rider! no, he is a sow-gelder and goes

32: ***A rider!*** = Jenkin seems to have misheard George, perhaps thinking George had said ***riders*** (one who rides about on a horse) instead of ***rivals***. The joke is mysteriously lame, but perhaps is a set-up for Jenkin's speech of lines 64*f* below, in which he humorously contradicts his assertion here.

***sow-gelder*** = one who spays sows.

afoot. But Madge 'pointed to meet me in your wheat-close.

33: ***'pointed*** = appointed, ie. had an appointment.

33-34: ***wheat-close*** = an enclosed wheat-field.[1]

***George.*** Well, did she meet you there?

***Jenkin.*** Never make question of that. And first I

= "do not doubt it."

saluted her with a green gown, and after fell as hard a-wooing as if the priest had been at our backs to have married us.

39: ***saluted...gown*** = expression meaning that Jenkin threw Madge to the ground in an aggressive bit of love-making, so as to stain her gown on the grass.[1,7]

***saluted*** = honoured or welcomed.[1]

39-40: ***after fell...wooing*** = began to beg Madge, with great intensity, to marry him.

***George.*** What, did she grant?

= accept or agree to marry Jenkin.

***Jenkin.*** Did she grant! never make question of that. And she gave me a shirt-collar wrought over with no counterfeit stuff.

= made or comprised of.

***George.*** What, was it gold?

***Jenkin.*** Nay, 'twas better than gold.

***George.*** What was it?

***Jenkin.*** Right Coventry blue. We had no sooner come there but wot you who came by?

55: ***Coventry blue*** = the city of Coventry was a center for the dying of blue thread.[8]

= to this point, ie. Madge had accepted. = know.

***George.*** No: who?

***Jenkin.*** Clim the sow-gelder.

***George.*** Came he by?

***Jenkin.*** He spied Madge and I sit together: he leapt from his horse, laid his hand on his dagger, and began to swear. Now I seeing he had a dagger, and I nothing but this twig in my hand, I gave him fair words and said nothing. He comes to me, and takes me by the bosom. "You whoreson slave," said he, "hold my horse, and look he take no cold in his feet." "No, marry, shall he, sir," quoth I; "I'll lay my cloak

64: ***sit*** = sitting.

64-65: ***he leapt…horse*** = Jenkin contradicts his own assertion of lines 32-33 above that the sow-gelder travels ***afoot***.

= spoke pleasantly to him.

= son of a b*tch.

= "make sure his feet do not get cold."

71-73: ***I'll lay…midst of it*** = Jenkin is clever: he will prevent

underneath him." I took my cloak, spread it all along, and [set] his horse on the midst of it.

the feet of the horse from getting cold (due to their resting on the dirt) by having it stand on his cloak.

***George.*** Thou clown, didst thou set his horse upon thy cloak?

= ignoramus.[1]

***Jenkin.*** Ay, but mark how I served him. Madge and he was no sooner gone down into the ditch, but I plucked out my knife, cut four holes in my cloak, and made his horse stand on the bare ground.

= "note how I dealt with him."

78-81: the joke is on Clim after all.

***George.*** 'Twas well done. Now, sir, go and survey my fields: if you find any cattle in the corn, to pound with them.

= examine, take a look around.[1]

84-85: ***to pound with them*** = "impound them"; it is George's job, we remember, to detain trespassing animals in the pound, an enclosed area used specifically for holding beasts.

***Jenkin.*** And if I find any in the pound, I shall turn them out.

87-88: ***turn them out*** = drive them out, ie. release them; a typical absurdity from Jenkin.

[*Exit Jenkin*.]

*Enter the Earl of Kendal, Lord Bonfield, Sir Gilbert Armstrong, all disguised, with a train of men.*

**Entering Characters:** ***Kendal*** and company have arrived in Wakefield to complete their announced mission of cutting off George's head.

***train*** = retinue, party; the *History* tells us the rebel leaders were accompanied on this errand by forty of their men.

***Kendal.*** Now we have put the horses in the corn,
Let us stand in some corner for to hear
What braving terms the Pinner will breathe
When he spies our horses in the corn.

96: the nobles have set their three horses into the cornfield for the purpose of grabbing George's attention.
= in order to.
98: what kind of threats George will offer.
***braving terms*** = blustering words.

[*Retires with the others*.]

101: the rebels withdraw, so that they cannot be seen by either George or Jenkin.

*Re-enter Jenkin blowing his horn.*

103: Jenkin, having seen the trespassing horses, raises an alarm.

***Jenkin.*** O master, where are you? we have a prize.

***George.*** A prize! what is it?

***Jenkin.*** Three goodly horses in our wheat-close.

***George.*** Three horses in our wheat-close! whose be they?

***Jenkin.*** Marry, that's a riddle to me; but they are there; velvet horses, and I never saw such horses before. As my duty was, I put off my cap, and said as followeth: "My masters, what do you make in our close?" One of them, hearing me ask what he made there, held up his head and neighed, and after his manner laughed as heartily as if a mare had been tied to his girdle. "My masters," said I, "it is no laughing

= horses caparisoned in velvet cloth, which suggests their owners are men of wealth and high standing.[3]
= ie. "as it was my job to do". = removed.
= respectful form of address. = "what are you doing".

119-120: ***laughed…girdle*** = the horse's laughter suggested he was as happy as if a she-horse had been attached to his belt (***girdle***)!

matter; for, if my master take you here, you go as

121: ***take*** = catches.
121-2: ***as round as a top*** = perhaps meaning "most assuredly"; the expression was usually used to describe how round something was, or how something was spinning, but the use here is unique, most likely employed by the not-so-bright Jenkin so as to create a rhyme for ***pound***.

round as a top to the pound." Another untoward jade, hearing me threaten him to the pound and to tell you of them, cast up both his heels, and let such a monstrous great fart, that was as much as in his language to say, "A fart for the pound, and a fart for George-a-Greene!" Now I, hearing this, put on my cap, blew my horn, called them all jades, and came to tell you.

= difficult, stubborn. = opprobrious name for a horse; hack.

***George.*** Now, sir, go and drive me those three horses to the pound.

= ie. "drive"; here is an example of a linguistic conceit known as the *ethical dative*, common in the era's writing: the superfluous ***me*** suggests an extra interest in the speaker to see the action completed.

***Jenkin.*** Do you hear? I were best to take a constable with me.

= ie. "weren't you listening?" = "it would be better".

***George.*** Why so?

***Jenkin.*** Why, they, being gentlemen's horses, may stand on their reputation, and will not obey me.

138-9: Jenkin asserts the horses may adopt for themselves the high ranks of their owners, and consequently refuse to follow any orders issued by him, a lowly servant.

***George.*** Go, do as I bid you, sir.

= ask.

***Jenkin.*** Well, I may go.

*The Earl of Kendal, Lord Bonfield, and Sir Gilbert Armstrong come forward.*

***Kendal.*** [*To Jenkin*] Whither away, sir?

= to where.

***Jenkin.*** Whither away! I am going to put the horses in the pound.

***Kendal.*** Sirrah, those three horses belong to us,
And we put them in,
And they must tarry there and eat their fill.

= remain. = ie. of wheat.

***Jenkin.*** Stay, I will go tell my master. − Hear you, master? we have another prize: those three horses be in your wheat-close still, and here be three geldings more.

= castrated horses.

***George.*** What be these?

= who.

***Jenkin.*** These are the masters of the horses.

***George.*** Now, gentlemen (I know not your degrees, But more you cannot be, unless you be kings,)

166-7: George chooses not to insult the nobles, assuming them to be of some higher rank, and addresses them accordingly.
***degrees*** = ranks.

Why wrong you us of Wakefield with your horses?
I am the Pinner, and, before you pass,
You shall make good the trespass they have done. = pay for or atone for.

***Kendal.*** Peace, saucy mate, prate not to us: 172: "be quiet, impertinent fellow, and stop prattling at us."
I tell thee, Pinner, we are gentlemen.

***George.*** Why, sir,
So may I, sir, although I give no arms. 176: "I can also call myself a gentleman, though I do not wear a coat of arms." Any man who had achieved the rank of gentleman could apply for a coat of arms.

***Kendal.*** Thou! how art thou a gentleman? = "how do you figure yourself to be".

***Jenkin.*** And such is my master, and he may give as good arms as ever your great-grandfather could give. 180-1: Jenkin plays along with George's claim.

***Kendal.*** Pray thee, let me hear how. = please.

***Jenkin.*** Marry, my master may give for his arms the = wear for his coat of arms.
picture of April in a green jerkin, with a rook on one = image. = a short jacket. = crow.
fist and an horn on the other: but my master gives his = wears, displays.
arms the wrong way, for he gives the horn on his fist; = ie. which is ***wrong*** because it should be on his forehead.
and your grandfather, because he would not lose his
arms, wears the horn on his own head. = ie. the grandfather is a cuckold; Jenkin's description is utter nonsense, but the last clause returns to the familiar gag about the man who has been cuckolded growing horns on his forehead.

***Kendal.*** Well, Pinner, sith our horses be in, = since. = ie. in the field.
In spite of thee they now shall feed their fill,
And eat until our leisures serve to go. = "it is our pleasure", ie. "it is convenient for us".[1]

***George.*** Now, by my father's soul,
Were good King Edward's horses in the corn, = ie. "even if"
They shall amend the scath, or kiss the pound; 198: ***shall amend the scath*** = would pay for the damage. ***kiss*** = "be placed in", a common metaphoric use of ***kiss***.

Much more yours, sir, whatsoe'er you be. 199: "this applies even more so to you, whoever you are (ie. and you are not the king)."

***Kendal.*** Why, man, thou knowest not us:
We do belong to Henry Momford, Earl of Kendal; = serve.
Men that, before a month be full expired,
Will be King Edward's betters in the land. 204: euphemism for deposing the king.

***George.*** King Edward's better[s]! Rebel, thou liest!

[*George strikes him*.] 208: the *History* tells us that George specifically struck Kendal "*with his staff a sound blow betwixt his neck and shoulders*."

***Bonf.*** Villain, what hast thou done? thou hast stroke an earl. = ie. struck, a common alternate form.

***George.*** Why, what care I? a poor man that is true, = loyal (to the king).
Is better than an earl, if he be false. = disloyal.
Traitors reap no better favours at my hands.

***Kendal.*** Ay, so methinks; but thou shalt dear aby this blow. −
Now or never lay hold on the Pinner!

= pay a high price for.

[*All the train comes forward*.]

219: the entire raiding party comes forward to seize or attack George.

***George.*** Stay, my lords, let us parley on these broils:

221: George asks Kendal to wait a moment, and to talk this over.
***parley*** = negotiate, a term typically used to describe a meeting between the leaders of warring factions, especially before or during a battle.
***on these broils*** = about this quarrel.

Not Hercules against two, the proverb is,
Nor I against so great a multitude. −

222: it was proverbial to observe that even Hercules would not take on two adversaries at one time.

[*Aside*]. Had not your troops come marching as they did,
I would have stopped your passage unto London:

224-5: had the balance of the forces not descended on George, he would have thrashed the three men before him.

But now I'll fly to secret policy.

226: George has a new expedient to which to turn.

***Kendal.*** What dost thou murmur, George?

228: George's aside was heard, albeit indistinctly, by Kendal.

***George.*** Marry, this, my lord; I muse,
If thou be Henry Momford, Kendal's earl,
That thou wilt do poor George-a-Greene this wrong,
Ever to match me with a troop of men.

= wonder, ponder.

232-3: "it would be unfair of you to force me to fight against such a large group of men at once."

***Kendal.*** Why dost thou strike me, then?

***George.*** Why, my lord, measure me but by yourself:

237: ie. "judge my action by what you would have done if you were in my position."

**Lines 238-245 (below):** an analogy: if a servant of Kendal's had failed to defend the earl's honour by challenging any man who insulted the earl outside of the earl's hearing, Kendal would be correct to fire him. Similarly, as the king's servant, George is bound to defend Edward's honour when it is impugned.

Had you a man had served you long,
And heard your foe misuse you behind your back,
And would not draw his sword in your defence,
You would cashier him.

= mistreat.

= dismiss.

Much more, King Edward is my king:
And before I'll hear him so wronged,
I'll die within this place,
And maintain good whatsoever I have said.

244-5: "I will die defending Edward, and back up fully (***maintain good***) what I say."

And, if I speak not reason in this case,
What I have said I'll maintain in this place.

= unreasonably.

***Bonf.*** A pardon, my lord, for this Pinner;
For, trust me, he speaketh like a man of worth.

249: Bonfield, impressed, asks Kendal to forgive George.

***Kendal.*** Well, George,
Wilt thou leave Wakefield and wend with me,
I'll freely put up all and pardon thee.

= "if you will". = go.
= Kendal will have everyone return their swords to their scabbards.

***George.*** Ay, my lord, considering me one thing,
You will leave these arms, and follow your good king.

= ie. "(I will do this) if you will do this one thing".
= ie. cease this rebellion.

***Kendal.*** Why, George, I rise not against King Edward,
But for the poor that is oppressed by wrong;
And, if King Edward will redress the same,
I will not offer him disparagement,
But otherwise; and so let this suffice.
Thou hear'st the reason why I rise in arms:
Now, wilt thou leave Wakefield and wend with me,
I'll make thee captain of a hardy band,
And, when I have my will, dub thee a knight.

= disgrace the king.[2]
= ie. when the rebellion has succeeded, and Kendal, now crowned king, can do as he wishes.

***George.*** Why, my lord, have you any hope to win?

= expectation.

***Kendal.*** Why, there is a prophecy doth say,
That King James and I shall meet at London,
And make the king vail bonnet to us both.

= remove his hat as a sign of submission,[1] a common expression; ***vail*** = lower. Kendal interprets the prediction to mean that he will become the king.

**Lines 271-3:** it was a popular tradition to include in a play a prophecy which was then only ironically fulfilled in the play's climax, ie. a prediction which came true, but in a manner contrary to the expectations of the subject of the prediction.

***George.*** If this were true, my lord,
This were a mighty reason.

***Kendal.*** Why, it is
A miraculous prophecy, and cannot fail.

***George.*** Well, my lord, you have almost turned me. − Jenkin, come hither.

= convinced.

***Jenkin.*** Sir?

***George.*** Go your ways home, sir,
And drive me those three horses home unto my house,
And pour them down a bushel of good oats.

= ie. "feed them".

***Jenkin.*** Well, I will. − [*Aside*]. Must I give these scurvy horses oats?

290-1: Jenkin is confused by George's seeming willingness to appease the rebels.

[*Exit Jenkin*.]

***George.*** Will it please you to command your train aside?

295: George asks Kendal to ask his men to retire.

***Kendal.*** Stand aside.

[*The train retires*.]

***George.*** Now list to me: = listen.

Here in a wood, not far from hence, = here.
There dwells an old man in a cave alone,
That can foretell what fortunes shall befall you,
For he is greatly skilful in magic art.
Go you three to him early in the morning,
And question him: if he says good, = ie. "if his prediction is in your favour".
Why, then, my lord, I am the foremost man = first.
Who will march up with your camp to London. = (campaigning) army.[1]

***Kendal.*** George, thou honourest me in this.
But where shall we find him out? = ie. "find him".

***George.*** My man shall conduct you to the place; = ie. Jenkin.
But, good my lord, tell me true what the wise man saith. = ie. "report back to me truthfully regarding".

***Kendal.*** That will I, as I am Earl of Kendal.

***George.*** Why, then, to honour George-a-Greene the more,
Vouchsafe a piece of beef at my poor house; = deign (to take).
You shall have wafer-cakes your fill, = thin cakes or wafers.[1]

A piece of beef hung up since Martlemas: 322: ***Martlemas*** (November 11, the date of the Feast of St. Martin, hence properly called *Martinmas*) was the customary time to hang up for the winter those provisions that had been salted for preservation.[8]

If that like you not, take what you bring, for me. 323: ie. "if what I have does not please you, you can eat whatever you bring with you." The expression is repeated more fully later at Act IV.iv.87.

***Kendal.*** Gramercies, George. = thank you.

[*Exeunt*.]

END OF ACT II.

# ACT III.

## SCENE I.

*Before Grime's house in Bradford.*

**Setting:** we have met ***Grime***, who lacked the courage to resist the rebelling nobles when they came to ask him for food. George is in love with Grime's daughter Bettris.

*Enter George-a-Greene's boy Wily, disguised as a woman.*

**Entering Character:** ***Wily*** is a younger lad, also a servant of George-a-Greene's. Wily would be young enough to be without facial hair, so as to be able to impersonate a girl more convincingly.

Wily begins the scene with a brief soliloquy, in which he explains his reason for donning the disguise.

***Wily.*** O, what is love! it is some mighty power,
Else could it never conquer George-a-Greene. −
Here dwells a churl that keeps away his love:

= otherwise.
= base fellow, ie. Grime. = keeps Bettris away from George.

I know the worst, and if I be espied,
'Tis but a beating; and if I by this means

4-5: ***I know…beating*** = if Grimes figures out that the figure before him is a young man, then the worst that can happen is the old man will thrash Wily.
***and if*** = ie. if.

Can get fair Bettris forth her father's door,

= out and away from Grime's house.

It is enough. −

7: we may note that Wily is generously acting out this scheme on behalf of his master without the latter's knowledge. His devotion to George must be great, as he would even risk a beating to help George out.

Venus, for me, of all the gods alone,
Be aiding to my wily enterprise!

8-9: Wily (punning on his name) asks for assistance from ***Venus***, the goddess of love, before implementing his plan.
***of all the gods alone*** = the quarto prints ***and all goes alone*** here, emended by Dyce as shown; Collins suggests ***and all the gods above***.

[*Wily knocks at the door.*]

*Enter Grime.*

***Grime.*** How now! who knocks there? what would you have?

15: ***what would you have*** = "what do you want?"

From whence came you? where do you dwell?

= from where.

***Wily.*** I am, forsooth, a sempster's maid hard by,
That hath brought work home to your daughter.

= truly. = seamstress'. = from (ie. who lives) nearby.
19: the *History* tells us that Wily (called William or Willy) brought samples of work to show Bettris, presumably to sell to her if she were interested.

***Grime.*** Nay, are you not
Some crafty quean that comes from George-a-Greene,
That rascal, with some letters to my daughter?
I will have you searched.

= sneaky whore.

21-24: interestingly, Grime is highly suspicious of his visitor, expecting "she" is a spy sent by George, but never imagining that "she" is really a boy.

***Wily.*** Alas, sir, it is Hebrew unto me

= ie. "I do not know what you are talking about", a common variation on the still-familiar expression, "it is Greek to me."

To tell me of George-a-Greene or any other!
Search me, good sir, and if you find a letter
About me, let me have the punishment that's due.

***Grime.*** Why are you muffled? I like you the worse for that.

***Wily.*** I am not, sir, ashamed to shew my face;
Yet loth I am my cheeks should take the air:
Not that I'm chary of my beauty's hue,
But that I'm troubled with the toothache sore.

[*Unmuffles*.]

***Grime.*** [*Aside*] A pretty wench, of smiling countenance!
Old men can like, although they cannot love;
Ay,
And love, though not so brief as young men can. −

Well,
Go in, my wench, and speak with my daughter.

[*Exit Wily into the house*.]

I wonder much at the Earl of Kendal,
Being a mighty man, as still he is,
Yet for to be a traitor to his king,
Is more than God or man will well allow.
But what a fool am I to talk of him!
My mind is more here of the pretty lass.
Had she brought some forty pounds to town,
I could be content to make her my wife:
Yet I have heard it in a proverb said,
He that is old and marries with a lass,
Lies but at home, and proves himself an ass.

*Enter, from the house, Bettris in Wily's apparel*.

How now, my wench! how is't? − what, not a word? −
Alas, poor soul, the toothache plagues her sore. −
Well, my wench,
Here is an angel for to buy thee pins,

[*Gives money*.]

And I pray thee use mine house;
The oftener, the more welcome: farewell.

[*Exit Grime*.]

***Bettris.*** O blessèd love, and blessèd fortune both! −
But, Bettris, stand not here to talk of love,

= speak to me.

= "on my person".

= Wily's face is concealed. = less.

= ie. show, as always.

= (particularly) careful regarding.

43: Grime may mean that old men need more time to seduce young ladies.

= lass, not a derogatory term.

49-52: a rather awkward and pointless digression.

= ie. thinking about, occupied with.

= ie. if his visitor had had a decent dowry.

57-59: the previous editors have not identified any such proverb.[3]

58-59: a young wife is bound to roam about and cheat on her older husband.

61: a convention of Elizabethan drama allowed characters in disguise to remain unrecognized, even by their own close kin!

63: Bettris does not respond to Grime's query.

= troubles. = greatly.

66: ***angel*** = English gold coin bearing the image of St. Michael slaying the dragon.
***pins*** = a common gift for a 16th century girl.

70: "please feel free to take advantage of my hospitality any time."

75-76: it was a common feature of Elizabethan plays for characters to pause to speak their thoughts aloud for the benefit of the audience, then immediately reproach

themselves for wasting time speaking instead of acting.

But hie thee straight unto thy George-a-Greene:
Never went roe-buck swifter on the downs
Than I will trip it till I see my George.

= rush right away.
= the male of the species of deer known as the roe. = hills.
= go.[1]

[*Exit*.]

## ACT III, SCENE II.

*A Wood near Wakefield*.

*Enter the Earl of Kendal, Lord Bonfield, Sir Gilbert Armstrong, and Jenkin.*

**Entering Characters:** at the direction of George, Jenkin is leading the three leaders of the insurrection to the seer in order to ask him to predict if the rebellion will meet with success or not.

***Kendal.*** Come away, Jenkin.

***Jenkin.*** Come, here is his house.

3: at Act II.iii.303, George had stated that the seer lives in a cave.

[*Knocks at the door*.]

– Where be you, ho?

***George.*** [*Within*] Who knocks there?

9: George answers the knock from off-stage.

***Kendal.*** Here are two or three poor men, father,
would speak with you.

11-12: the rebels pretend to be non-entities who are trying to decide if they should tie their fortunes to the insurrectionist army.

***George.*** [*Within*]
Pray, give your man leave to lead me forth.

15: George, who is pretending to be blind, asks that Jenkin be allowed to come inside to guide him out of house.

***Kendal.*** Go, Jenkin, fetch him forth.

[*Jenkin leads forth George-a-Greene disguised*.]

***Jenkin.*** Come, old man.

***Kendal.*** Father,
Here is three poor men come to question thee
A word in secret that concerns their lives.

***George.*** Say on, my son.

***Kendal.*** Father, I am sure you hear the news,
How that the Earl of Kendal wars against the king.
Now, father, we three are gentlemen by birth,
But younger brethren that want revenues,

31-32: it was normal in older times for the eldest son to inherit the family fortune, leaving younger siblings to find their own ways in the world. Kendal claims he and his associates are such impoverished younger brothers (***brethren***).
***want revenues*** = lack income.

And for the hope we have to be preferred,
If that we knew that we shall win,

= promoted in status or raised in condition.

We will march with him: if not,
We will not march a foot to London more.
Therefore, good father, tell us what shall happen,
Whether the king or the Earl of Kendal shall win.

***George.*** The king, my son.

***Kendal.*** Art thou sure of that?

***George.*** Ay, as sure as thou art Henry Momford,
The one Lord Bonfield, the other Sir Gilbert [Armstrong].

***Kendal.*** Why, this is wondrous, being blind of sight,
His deep perceiverance should be such to know us.

= ie. Kendal.

= perception. = recognize.

***Armstr.*** Magic is mighty and foretelleth great matters. −
Indeed, father, here is the earl come to see thee,
And therefore, good father, fable not with him.

= "do not tell him any lies."

***George.*** Welcome is the earl to my poor cell,
And so are you, my lords; but let me counsel you
To leave these wars against your king,
And live in quiet.

= humble dwelling.

= abandon.

***Kendal.*** Father, we come not for advice in war,
But to know whether we shall win or leese.

= lose.[1]

***George.*** Lose, gentle lords, but not by good King Edward;
A baser man shall give you all the foil.

= "defeat you."

***Kendal.*** Ay, marry, father, what man is that?

***George.*** Poor George-a-Greene, the Pinner.

***Kendal.*** What shall he?

= ie. "what will he do?"

***George.*** Pull all your plumes, and sore dishonour you.

71: ***Pull…plumes*** = common metaphor for "bring you low"; a reference to the plucking of a peacock's feathers: in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part I*, Joan of Arc says, "*We'll pull his plumes, and take away his train* (ie. tail)."
***sore*** = greatly; ***sore*** was commonly used an adverb.

***Kendal.*** He! as how?

***George.*** Nay, the end tries all; but so it will fall out.

= this expression (which this play appears to have introduced into English literature) seems to have been used to suggest that it is a venture's conclusion, rather than its beginning, that should be used to measure its level of success; or, it may simply mean, "we will see what happens."

***Kendal.*** But so it shall not, by my honour Christ.
I'll raise my camp, and fire Wakefield town,
And take that servile Pinner George-a-Greene,
And butcher him before King Edward's face.

= a unique oath.
= "rouse my army to action". = burn.
= menial, slave-like.[1]

***George.*** Good my lord, be not offended,
For I speak no more than art reveals to me:

82-83: Kendal should not direct his ire at the old man, who, after all, is only the messenger.
***Good my lord*** = alternate wording for "my good lord", used frequently in verse because it better fits a line of iambic

meter.
***art*** = astrology, magic.

84 And for greater proof,

84: ie. "and to provide further evidence that I speak the truth."

Give your man leave to fetch me my staff.

= permission. = walking-stick.

86

***Kendal.*** Jenkin, fetch him his walking-staff.

88

***Jenkin.*** [*Giving it*] Here is your walking-staff.

90

***George.*** I'll prove it good upon your carcasses;
92 A wiser wizard never met you yet,
Nor one that better could foredoom your fall.

= predict, presage,[1] a great word.

94 Now I have singled you here alone,
I care not though you be three to one.

94-95: George's scheme now becomes clear: he has staged this entire charade for the purpose of getting the three leaders of the rebellion alone, so as to meet them in a fair fight, without their being backed up by any of their fellow-insurrectionists.

96

***Kendal.*** Villain, hast thou betrayed us?

= misled.[1]

98

***George.*** Momford, thou liest, ne'er was I traitor yet;
100 Only devised this guile to draw you on
For to be combatants.

= trick, act of deceit.[1] = lead.
101: ie. "in order to fight you."

102 Now conquer me, and then march on to London:
But shall go hard but I will hold you task.

103: "it may go badly, but I will hold you to this."
104 ***But*** = Collins emends ***But*** to ***It***.

***Armstr.*** Come, my lord, cheerly, I'll kill him hand to hand.

106

***Kendal.*** A thousand pound to him that strikes that stroke!

108

***George.*** Then give it me, for I will have the first.

110

[*Here they fight;*
112 *George kills Sir Gilbert Armstrong,*
*and takes the other two prisoners*.]

114

***Bonf.*** Stay, George, we do appeal.

115: Bonfield and Kendal submit.

116

***George.*** To whom?

118

***Bonf.*** Why, to the king:
120 For rather had we bide what he appoints,
Then here be murthered by a servile groom.

120-1: the nobles would rather be sentenced to death by the king − as befits their rank − then be ignobly slain by a commoner!
122 ***bide*** = endure.[1]
***murthered*** = ie. murdered, a common alternate form.

***Kendal.*** What wilt thou do with us?

124

***George.*** Even as Lord Bonfield wist,

= desires.

126 You shall unto the king: and, for that purpose,

= ie. "shall go to"; note the common early grammatical construction here: in the presence of a word of intent (***shall***), the word of movement (*go*) may be omitted.

See where the Justice is placed.

*Enter Justice.*

***Just.*** Now, my Lord of Kendal, where be all your threats?
Even as the cause, so is the combat fallen,
Else one could never have conquered three.

***Kendal.*** I pray thee, Woodroffe, do not twit me;
If I have faulted, I must make amends.

***George.*** Master Woodroffe, here is not a place for many words:
I beseech ye, sir, discharge all his soldiers,
That every man may go home unto his own house.

***Just.*** It shall be so. What wilt thou do, George?

***George.*** Master Woodroffe, look to your charge;
Leave me to myself.

***Just.*** Come, my lords.

[*Exeunt all except George.*]

127: "here comes the judge!"

129: the setting may change seamlessly to Wakefield proper, or, the Justice might simply be opportunely strolling by.

131: the Justice taunts Kendal.

132: the rebellion has failed with the conclusion of this fight.

= mock.

= sinned, transgressed.

139-140: typically, only the leaders of an Elizabethan stage-rebellion could expect to be punished; the followers, no matter how numerous, would generally be pardoned if they returned home peacefully.

= ie. "concern yourself with your own affairs."

## ACT III, SCENE III.

*A Wood near Wakefield.*

*George-a-Greene still on-stage.*

**Setting:** the action returns to the woods outside of town.

***George.*** Here sit thou, George, wearing a willow wreath,
As one despairing of thy beauteous love: −
Fie, George! no more;
Pine not away for that which cannot be.
I cannot joy in any earthly bliss,
So long as I do want my Bettris.

= it was customary to wear a garland of willow as the traditional symbol of lost love.

3-6: George reproves himself for submitting to such maudlin thoughts.

= "do not waste away" (from grief).

= take pleasure.

= lack, go without.

*Enter Jenkin.*

***Jenkin.*** Who see a master of mine?

= "has anyone seen".

***George.*** How now, sirrah! whither away?

= correct form of address to a servant. = "where are you going?"[1]

***Jenkin.*** Whither away! why, who do you take me to be?

***George.*** Why, Jenkin, my man.

***Jenkin.*** I was so once indeed, but now the case is altered.

19-20: ***the case is altered*** = the situation has changed, ie. Jenkin is no longer George's servant!

***George.*** I pray thee, as how?

= ie. "please tell me".

***Jenkin.*** Were not you a fortune-teller to-day?

***George.*** Well, what of that?

***Jenkin.*** So sure am I become a juggler. What will you say if I juggle your sweetheart?

= magician.
= conjure up.[1]

***George.*** Peace, prating losel! her jealous father
Doth wait over her with such suspicious eyes,
That, if a man but dally by her feet,
He thinks it straight a witch to charm his daughter.

= "be quiet, you chattering scoundrel!"[2]
= watches.[1]
= hangs about, flirts.[2]
34: the first thing that comes to Grime's mind is that the man is a sorcerer trying to seduce Bettris.

***Jenkin.*** Well, what will you give me, if I bring her hither?

= here.

***George.*** A suit of green, and twenty crowns besides.

***Jenkin.*** Well, by your leave, give me room. You must give me something that you have lately worn.

= "with your permission". = space.

***George.*** Here is a gown, will that serve you?

= ie. "serve your purpose".

[*George gives gown*.]

***Jenkin.*** Ay, this will serve me. Keep out of my circle,
Lest you be torn in pieces with she-devils. –
Mistress Bettris, once, twice, thrice!

= Jenkin draws a conjuring circle; a sorcerer typically performed his feats while standing in a circle to protect him from evil spirits.
= by.

[*Jenkin throws the gown in, and Bettris comes out*.]

52: Jenkin may throw the gown into the circle, which may surround the stage's trap door, allowing Bettris to rise up and "magically" appear before her lover; or, Jenkin, from within the circle, may toss the gown off-stage, from which Bettris can simply walk in.

Oh, is this no cunning?

= ie. is this not.

***George.*** Is this my love, or is it but her shadow?

= shade, apparition.

***Jenkin.*** Ay, this is the shadow, but here is the substance.

58-59: Jenkin likely points first to the literal shadow Bettris casts on the ground, then to Bettris herself.

***George.*** Tell me, sweet love,
What good fortune brought thee hither?
For one it was that favoured George-a-Greene.

***Bettris.*** Both love and fortune brought me to my George,
In whose sweet sight is all my heart's content.

66: Bettris needs only to see George to be content.

***George.*** Tell me, sweet love, how cam'st thou from thy father's?

***Bettris.*** A willing mind hath many slips in love:
It was not I, but Wily, thy sweet boy.

70: when one is in love, one can come up with any number of expedients to reach one's lover.
***slips*** = perhaps "acts of stealing off".[1]

***George.*** And where is Wily now?

***Bettris.*** In my apparel, in my chamber still.

= clothes. = bedroom.

***George.*** Jenkin, come hither: go to Bradford,
And listen out your fellow Wily. –

= inquire about, find out what is happening to.[1]

Come, Bettris, let us in,

= ie. go in.

And in my cottage we will sit and talk.

[*Exeunt*.]

END OF ACT III.

# ACT IV.

## SCENE I.

*London, the Court of King Edward.*

**Setting:** King Edward's exact location is somewhat unclear: Dickinson places the scene at "The Camp of King Edward", which makes sense, suggesting as it does that the king has left London to head north to deal with the insurrection and the Scottish invasion. However, there is no indication in the play itself that suggests specifically that Edward is removed from London.

On the other hand, we find, later in this scene, James welcoming Kendal "to the court" (line 120), and in the play's final scene, Edward states that he travelled north specifically to meet George-a-Greene, a plan he does not devise until the end of the present scene.

The puzzle arises because in the *History*, the English king was Richard I, who had just returned from several years of Crusading, and is only just learning about the rebellion in the north. Thus, naturally, he is in his court in London, and we are told that he is considering ways to raise money to pay for an army to suppress the insurrection when he learns it has already been quashed.

In our play, on the other hand, Edward does not really have any excuse for still being in London. Needless to say, our authors did not really worry about such minor details, and so, while inconsistencies of continuity are always worth noting (see, for example, lines 102*f* below), they are never worth worrying about for us as readers either.

*Enter King Edward, James (King of Scots), Lord Warwick, Cuddy, and Train.*

**Entering Characters:** we finally meet ***King Edward***, who is attended by Lord Warwick.

At this point, the king is not aware that the rebellion has been put down, thanks to the ministrations of George-a-Greene.

Musgrove, meanwhile, having captured ***King James of Scotland***, has sent his son ***Cuddy*** to deliver his royal prisoner to King Edward's hands.

***K. Edw.*** Brother of Scotland, I do hold it hard,

1: ***Brother*** = the usual term of address between kings.

***I do hold it hard*** = "I consider this to be ill-advised or bad form"; the expression ***hold it hard*** is a unique one.

Seeing a league of truce was late confirmed
'Twixt you and me, without displeasure offered
You should make such invasion in my land.

2-4: given the recent peace treaty signed between the two nations, Edward is (naturally) displeased that James has invaded England without Edward's having done anything to provoke it.

The vows of kings should be as oracles,
Not blemished with the stain of any breach;
Chiefly where fealty and homage willeth it.

5-7: a monarch should consider any promise he or she makes as sacred, not to be stained by any failure to follow through on it, especially when made by a sovereign who is, feudally speaking, a vassal of another (as James is to Edward, or at least as the latter believes).

***oracles*** = utterances of infallible truth or wisdom.[1]

***fealty and homage*** = ***fealty*** was a vow not to do harm to one's lord; ***homage*** was a ceremony in which a vassal, or subject, acknowledged that his position was held at the sufferance of his lord.[10] Throughout the pre-unification

history of England and Scotland, English monarchs continuously attempted to force their Scottish counterparts to accept the English kings as their overlords.

***K. James.*** Brother of England, rub not the sore afresh;
My conscience grieves me for my deep misdeed.

9-10: James asks his fellow-king not to remind him of his transgression, of which he is already deeply ashamed.

I have the worst; of thirty thousand men,
There 'scaped not full five thousand from the field.

11-12: James, we remember, was captured when a band of English warriors, led by the English patriot Musgrove, surprised James and his army while the Scottish were camped near Sir John-a-Barley's castle; the nature of the battle has been transmuted into a major slaughter of Scottish soldiers, as James claims to have lost 25,000 men; as a means of comparison, the Scottish lost perhaps 17,000 warriors to the English in 1513 at Flodden, the bloodiest battle ever actually fought on British soil.[11]
***have the worst*** = ie. came off the worst.

***K. Edw.*** Gramercy, Musgrove, else it had gone hard:

14: without Musgrove's role in the battle, things would have gone worse for the English.
***Gramercy*** = thanks.

Cuddy, I'll quite thee well ere we two part.

= reward. = before.

***K. James.*** But had not his old father, William Musgrove,
Played twice the man, I had not now been here.

18: ***Played…man*** = fought as hard as two men.
***I had…here*** = "I would not be in this situation (ie. a royal prisoner)."

A stronger man I seldom felt before;
But one of more resolute valiance,
Treads not, I think, upon the English ground.

= the quality of being valiant; an uncommon word today, but one appearing not infrequently in the 16th and early 17th centuries.

***K. Edw.*** I wot well, Musgrove shall not lose his hire.

= know. = ie. miss out on his reward; the king is droll.

***Cuddy.*** And it please your grace, my father was
Five-score and three at midsummer last past:

25-26: Cuddy claims his father is 103 years old!
***And it*** = if it.

Yet had King Jamy been as good as George-a-Greene,

27: ***had*** = even if.
***as good as George-a-Greene*** = ie. as fierce a fighter as is George-a-Green; this common proverb appeared in print for the first time in 1590.

Yet Billy Musgrove would have fought with him.

= ie. William Musgrove, Cuddy's father.

***K. Edw.*** As George-a-Greene!
I pray thee, Cuddy, let me question thee.
Much have I heard, since I came to my crown,
Many in manner of a proverb say,

= almost as if it were proverbial.

"Were he as good as George-a-Greene, I would strike him sure:"

34: ***sure*** = assuredly, for sure.[1]

I pray thee, tell me, Cuddy, canst thou inform me,
What is that George-a-Greene?

= who.

***Cuddy.*** Know, my lord, I never saw the man,
But mickle talk is of him in the country:

= much.

They say he is the Pinner of Wakefield town:
But for his other qualities, I let alone.

= ie. "I will not speak of them."[1]

***Warwick.*** May it please your grace, I know the man too well.

***K. Edw.*** Too well! why so, Warwick?

***Warwick.*** For once he swinged me till my bones did ache.

= thrashed; this is the only time in the play any mention has been made of George beating Warwick. The backstory is never provided.

***K. Edw.*** Why, dares he strike an earl?

***Warwick.*** An earl, my lord! nay, he will strike a king,
Be it not King Edward. For stature he is framed
Like to the picture of stout Hercules,

52: ***Be it not*** = "so long as he is not".
52-53: ***For stature…Hercules*** = in build he resembles the great mythological hero.
***framed*** = formed, shaped.
***Like to*** = ie. like.
***picture*** = image.
***stout*** = brave.

And for his carriage passeth Robin Hood.

= bearing or demeanor. = "(he) surpasses".

The boldest earl or baron of your land,
That offereth scath unto the town of Wakefield,
George will arrest his pledge unto the pound;

55-57: "should the greatest peer of England attempt to do injury (***offereth scath***) to Wakefield (by letting his animal commit trespass), George will seize the animal and impound it."
***arrest his pledge*** = seize the animal as a security or surety.[1]

And whoso resisteth bears away the blows,
For he himself is good enough for three.

59: George is a great enough fighter to take on, and defeat, three men at one time.

***K. Edw.*** Why, this is wondrous: my Lord of Warwick,
Sore do I long to see this George-a-Greene. −
But leaving him, what shall we do, my lord,
For to subdue the rebels in the north?
They are now marching up to Doncaster. –

= greatly.
= but putting that topic aside.
= in order to.
= town about 20 miles south-east of Wakefield.

*Enter one with the Earl of Kendal prisoner.*

= a man.

Soft! who have we there?

= wait a moment!

***Cuddy.*** Here is a traitor, the Earl of Kendal.

***K. Edw.*** Aspiring traitor! how dar'st thou
Once cast thine eyes upon thy sovereign
That honoured thee with kindness, and with favour?
But I will make thee buy this treason dear.

= who (previously).
76: Kendal will pay dearly for his treason.

***Kendal.*** Good my lord, −

***K. Edw.*** Reply not, traitor. −
Tell me, Cuddy, whose deed of honour
Won the victory against this rebel?

***Cuddy.*** George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield.

84*ff*: a minor miscue, perhaps: if Cuddy knew that George had put down the insurrection, wouldn't he have mentioned it to the king earlier than this?

***K. Edw.*** George-a-Greene! now shall I hear news

Certain, what this Pinner is.
= who.

88 Discourse it briefly, Cuddy, how it befell.
= recount.[2]

90 ***Cuddy.*** Kendal and Bonfield, with Sir Gilbert Armstrong,
Came to Wakefield town disguised,
91: the leaders had dressed as commoners.

92 And there spoke ill of your grace;
Which George but hearing, felled them at his feet,
= knocked them down.

94 And, had not rescue come unto the place,
George had slain them in his close of wheat.
94-95: Cuddy misrepresents George's role in the story, making him appear even fiercer than he already really is.

96 ***unto*** = frequently used, as here, to mean "into".
***had*** = would have.

***K. Edw.*** But, Cuddy,

98 Canst thou not tell where I might give and grant
Something that might please
99-100: briefly, "a reward to this George?"

100 And highly gratify the Pinner's thoughts?

102 ***Cuddy.*** This at their parting George did say to me:
102*f*: a continuity error: Cuddy told Edward at line 38 above that he has never seen George-a-Greene.

"If the king vouchsafe of this my service,
= "graciously accepts what I have done".

104 Then, gentle Cuddy, kneel upon thy knee,
And humbly crave a boon of him for me."
= ask a favour.

106

***K. Edw.*** Cuddy, what is it?

108

***Cuddy.*** It is his will your grace would pardon them,
= ie. the rebel leaders.

110 And let them live, although they have offended.
= transgressed.

112 ***K. Edw.*** I think the man striveth to be glorious. −
= "conspicuously honourable" (OED, def. 3b).

Well, George hath craved it, and it shall be granted,

114 Which none but he in England should have gotten. −
= no one.

Live, Kendal, but as prisoner,

116 So shalt thou end thy days within the Tower.

118 ***Kendal.*** Gracious is Edward to offending subjects.

120 ***K. James.*** My Lord of Kendal, you're welcome to the court.
120: the line can interpreted in multiple ways:
(1) now that Kendal is to be spared execution, James formally welcomes him;
(2) even if Edward is not pleased to see Kendal, James − to whom Kendal was allied − is; or
(3) James dryly welcomes Kendal as a fellow-prisoner of Edward's.
We note that in the *History*, these welcoming words are spoken jeeringly by the English king: see the note at line 126 below.

122 ***K. Edw.*** Nay, but ill-come as it falls out now;
122: "actually, his arrival is unfortunate or unwelcome, as events turned out."
***ill-come*** = *ill* being the opposite of *well*, ***ill-come*** would logically be the opposite of *welcome*.

Ay,

124 Ill-come indeed, were't not for George-a-Greene. −
124: Kendal's arrival would have been unwelcome indeed, were it not for George − because the earl would have entered the court intending to overthrow Edward.

But, gentle king, for so you would aver,

125-6: Edward mildly mocks his prisoners here.
***would aver*** = claim to be.

And Edward's betters, I salute you both,

126: ***Edward's betters*** = ie. referring to the rebels; Kendal had vowed that he and his fellows would become ***Edward's betters*** at Act II.iii.204 above.
***I salute you both*** = Edward mockingly welcomes his prisoners. In the *History*, we are told that the English king (Richard I, and not Edward) "*in mere derision vailed his bonnet*" to Kendal, and "*said withal, 'My lord, you are welcome to London*," thus fulfilling the prophesy (see Act II.iii.271-3) upon which the entire rebellion was based!

And here I vow by good Saint George,

= England's patron saint.

You will gain but little when your sums are counted.

128: a commercial metaphor: "for all your work, you see that, when you add up your money, you have made little profit," ie. the rebels have little to show for all their efforts.

I sore do long to see this George-a-Greene:
And for because I never saw the north,

129: Edward practically repeats his wish of line 62 above.
= ie. northern England.

I will forthwith go see it;

= immediately, without delay.

And for that to none I will be known,

= "and so that no one will recognize me".

We will disguise ourselves and steal down secretly,
Thou and I, King James, Cuddy, and two or three,
And make a merry journey for a month. −
Away, then, conduct him to the Tower. −

= ie. Kendal.

Come on, King James, my heart must needs be merry,
If Fortune makes such havoc of our foes.

[*Exeunt*.]

## ACT IV, SCENE II.

*Robin Hood's Retreat.*

**Setting:** with King James, the Scottish invasion, and the rebellion of the northern lords dispensed with, the play transitions to a new story-line.

*Enter Robin Hood, Maid Marian, Scarlet, and Much the Miller's son.*

**Entering Characters:** we meet ***Robin Hood*** and the famous band of outlaws known as his "merry men". Among Robin Hood's well-known companions are ***Will Scarlet*** and ***Much the Miller's Son***, as well as Robin's romantic interest, ***Maid Marion***.

The earliest known literary references to Robin Hood date from the late 14th century; the home of the band varied depending on the story, but several legends described Robin Hood as a native of Yorkshire,[12] which would make the next part of our play, which portrays the interactions between George-a-Greene and Robin Hood, not infeasible.

The *History* informs us that Robin Hood was actually Earl of Huntington, but that he had been stripped of his title and possessions by his great enemy, the Bishop of Ely, who ran England as vice-regent while King Richard I was on Crusade; Marian was actually Matilda, daughter to one Lord Fitz-Walters, and that she had escaped into Sherwood Forest to be with her sweetheart Robin Hood after Prince John (Richard's brother) made unwelcome advances unto her.

***Robin.*** Why is not lovely Marian blithe of cheer?
What ails my leman, that she gins to lour?

= in a merry mood.
2: ***leman*** = sweetheart; ***leman*** is stressed on its first syllable.
***lour*** = begins to frown or scowl.

Say, good Marian, why art thou so sad?

1-3: the *History* makes Marian's depression a little more sinister-seeming, portraying Robin Hood as worried that Marian has fallen out of love with him, and "*inclining to Prince John*", who had never stopped pestering her with "*letters*" and "*sundry gifts and presents*."

***Marian.*** Nothing, my Robin, grieves me to the heart
But, whensoever I do walk abroad,
I hear no songs but all of George-a-Greene;
Bettris, his fair leman, passeth me:
And this, my Robin, galls my very soul.

= except. = about, around.
= except.
= beautiful. = surpasses me (in popularity).
= chafes, irritates.[2]

***Robin.*** Content [thee]:

= the sense is, "take it easy".

What recks it us, though George-a-Greene be stout,

12: "what does it matter to us, even if George-a-Greene is valiant or formidable (***stout***)".[1]
***recks*** = concerns, troubles.[1]

So long as he doth proffer us no scath?
Envy doth seldom hurt but to itself;
And therefore, Marian, smile upon thy Robin.

= "does us no harm".
14: envy only harms the envier.

***Marian.*** Never will Marian smile upon her Robin,
Nor lie with him under the greenwood shade,
Till that thou go to Wakefield on a green,
And beat the Pinner for the love of me.

= have sexual relations with.[1] = shady forest.
= village green, ie. public place.
= ie. beat up.

***Robin.*** Content thee, Marian, I will ease thy grief,
My merry men and I will thither stray;
And here I vow that, for the love of thee,
I will beat George-a-Greene, or he shall beat me.

= wander over there (to Wakefield).

***Scarl.*** As I am Scarlet, next to Little John,
One of the boldest yeomen of the crew,

27-28: Will Scarlet considers himself the bravest member, second only to Little John, of Robin Hood's crew. The ironically-named, oversized Little John was Robin Hood's second in command.
***yeoman*** = foot-soldier.[1]

So will I wend with Robin all along,
And try this Pinner what he dares do.

= go.
= try out, test.

**Lines 32-37 (below):** note the rhyme scheme of Much's brief speech: *ababcc*. Much's speech is also written in sing-songy iambic tetrameter, rather than in the more dignified pentameter.

***Much.*** As I am Much, the miller's son,
That left my mill to go with thee,
And nill repent that I have done,
This pleasant life contenteth me;
In aught I may, to do thee good,
I'll live and die with Robin Hood.

= ie. join Robin Hood's band.
34: and will not (***nill***) regret his decision to do so.
36-37: Much would do anything for his leader.

***Marian.*** And, Robin, Marian she will go with thee,
To see fair Bettris how bright she is of blee.

= hue or colour, especially of the face.[1]

***Robin.*** Marian, thou shalt go with thy Robin. − Bend up your bows, and see your strings be tight, The arrows keen, and everything be ready,

43-46: Robin admonishes his men to make sure their weapons are in proper shape.
***Bend up your bows*** = use string to bend their bows to an appropriate level of tension.[1]
***keen*** = with sharp points.[1]

And each of you a good bat on his neck,
Able to lay a good man on the ground.

= the men should all carry a ***bat***, or quarterstaff, across the backs of their necks; a quarterstaff was a long pole, normally possessing an iron tip, commonly used as a weapon in rural England.[1,12]
We may note that in the *History*, we are told that Robin Hood and his gang will leave their bows and arrows at home, carrying only their quarterstaffs with them when they go to visit George.

***Scarl.*** I will have Friar Tuck's.

= carry, borrow. = ***Friar Tuck***, another famous companion of Robin Hood's, was both jolly and fond of food and drink, but a formidable fighter in his own right.

***Much.*** I will have Little John's.

***Robin.*** I will have one made of an ashen plank,
Able to bear a bout or two. −

52: contemporary literature refers sometimes to staffs made of the wood of an ash tree.
53: suitable to be used for a fight or two: a brief bit of ironic understatement.

Then come on, Marian, let us go;
For before the sun doth show the morning day,
I will be at Wakefield to see this Pinner, George-a-Greene.

55: ie. "for before morning".

[*Exeunt*.]

## ACT IV, SCENE III.

*At Bradford.*

*A Shoemaker discovered at work: enter Jenkin, carrying a staff.*

**Entering Characters:** the curtain is pulled back to reveal a ***Shoemaker*** at work. George-a-Greene's servant ***Jenkin*** enters the stage carrying a staff across the back of his neck.

***Jenkin.*** My masters, he that hath neither meat nor money, and hath lost his credit with the alewife, for anything I know, may go supperless to bed. − But, soft! who is here? here is a shoemaker; he knows where is the best ale. − Shoemaker, I pray thee tell me, where is the best ale in the town?

1-5: ***My masters…best ale*** = Jenkin addresses the audience.
***meat*** = ie. food.
= cannot get a meal on credit anywhere; ***credit*** means both (1) good standing, and (2) services based on an expectation to be paid in the future.[1]
***alewife*** = alehouse or tavern keeper.[1,2]
= wait!

***Shoe.*** Afore, afore, follow thy nose; at the sign of the

8-9: the Shoemaker answers Jenkin without looking up at him.

Egg-shell.

***Afore*** = "right in front of you".
8-9: ***at the sign…Egg-shell*** = English taverns were identified by an image painted on the sign in front.

***Jenkin.*** Come, shoemaker, if thou wilt, and take thy part of a pot.

11-12: Jenkin invites the Shoemaker to join him for a drink.

***Shoe.*** [*Coming forward*] Sirrah, down with your staff, down with your staff.

14-15: the Shoemaker finally looks up, and notices that Jenkin is bearing his weapon across his neck.

***Jenkin.*** Why, how now! is the fellow mad? I pray thee tell me, why should I hold down my staff?

= take down, lower.

***Shoe.*** You will down with him, will you not, sir?

= take it down.

***Jenkin.*** Why, tell me wherefore?

= why, for what reason.

***Shoe.*** My friend, this is the town of merry Bradford, and here is a custom held, that none shall pass with his staff on his shoulders but he must have a bout with me; and so shall you, sir.

= the quarto prints ***Wakefield*** here, an obvious error.

= round, fight.

***Jenkin.*** And so will not I, sir.

29: Jenkin means he will not lower his staff.[4]

***Shoe.*** That will I try. Barking dogs bite not the sorest.

31: ***That will I try*** = the sense is, "we will see about that."
***Barking…sorest*** = he who is the most boastful will usually prove not to be the best fighter; a common proverbial conceit of the era.

***Jenkin.*** [*Aside*] I would to God I were once well rid of him.

33-34: Jenkin has no desire to fight the Shoemaker.
***would*** = wish.

***Shoe.*** Now, what, will you down with your staff?

***Jenkin.*** Why, you are not in earnest, are you?

***Shoe.*** If I am not, take that.

[*Strikes him*.]

***Jenkin.*** You whoreson cowardly scab, it is but the part of a clapperdudgeon to strike a man in the street.

= villain.
45: ***part*** = ie. act.
***clapperdudgeon*** = slang name for a beggar born.[1,3]

But darest thou walk to the town's end with me?

46: Jenkin seemingly invites the Shoemaker to do battle − but not where they are presently standing.

***Shoe.*** Ay, that I dare do; but stay till I lay in my tools, and I will go with thee to the town's end presently.

= wait. = ie. put away.
= right away.

***Jenkin.*** [*Aside*] I would I knew how to be rid of this fellow.

51-52: Jenkin did not expect his foe to leave his work just to fight with him.

***Shoe.*** Come, sir, will you go to the town's end now, sir?

***Jenkin.*** Ay, sir, come. −

[*Scene changes to the town's end*].

59: we have seen before how the setting can change right in

Now we are at the town's end, what say you now?

***Shoe.*** Marry, come, let us even have a bout.

63: the Shoemaker raises his staff in anticipation.

***Jenkin.*** Ha, stay a little; hold thy hands, I pray thee.

***Shoe.*** Why, what's the matter?

***Jenkin.*** Faith, I am Under-pinner of a town, and there is an order, which if I do not keep, I shall be turned out of mine office.

= truly. = Jenkin serves under George. = ie. Wakefield.
= rule. = follow.
= fired from.

***Shoe.*** What is that, sir?

***Jenkin.*** Whensoever I go to fight with anybody, I use to flourish my staff thrice about my head before I strike, and then show no favour.

= ie. must. = wave.
= ie. "I may fight as hard as I can."

***Shoe.*** Well, sir, and till then I will not strike thee.

79: the Shoemaker unwisely agrees to allow Jenkin to perform his customary routine before he will strike him.

***Jenkin.*** Well, sir, here is once, twice: − here is my hand, I will never do it the third time.

81-82: ***here is my hand*** = Jenkin offers to shake the Shoemaker's hand.

***Shoe.*** Why, then, I see we shall not fight.

***Jenkin.*** Faith, no: come, I will give thee two pots of the best ale, and be friends.

***Shoe.*** [*Aside*] Faith, I see it is as hard to get water out of a flint as to get him to have a bout with me: therefore I will enter into him for some good cheer. – My friend, I see thou art a faint-hearted fellow, thou hast no stomach to fight, therefore let us go to the ale-house and drink.

= ie. take up Jenkin's offer to drink together.

***Jenkin.*** Well, content: go thy ways, and say thy prayers, thou 'scap'st my hands to-day.

96-97: Jenkin, with a bit of a wisecrack, suggests the Shoemaker should thank God that he avoided getting a good thrashing at Jenkin's hands.

[*Exeunt*.]

## ACT IV, SCENE IV.

*At Wakefield*.

*Enter George-a-Greene and Bettris.*

***George.*** Tell me, sweet love, how is thy mind content?
What, canst thou brook to live with George-a-Greene?

= endure, bear.

***Bettris.*** O, George, how little pleasing are these words!
Came I from Bradford for the love of thee,
And left my father for so sweet a friend?

4-7: Bettris is unhappy that, after all she went through to escape the clutches of her father just to reach George, he would still question her attraction and loyalty to him − even

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Here will I live until my life do end. | if, as we understand, he spoke with humorous and ironic understatement. |
| 8 | | |
| | ***George.*** Happy am I to have so sweet a love. − | |
| 10 | But what are these come tracing here along? | = who. = heading, passing. |
| 12 | ***Bettris.*** Three men come striking through the corn, my love. | = making their way.[1] |
| 14 | *Enter Robin Hood, Maid Marian, Scarlet and Much.* | **Entering Characters: t**hough Bettris only mentions that ***three men*** are approaching, George does address Marion later in the scene (line 82), so she is included in the party of trespassers. |
| 16 | ***George.*** Back again, you foolish travellers, | 16-17: despite all that has transpired, George still has a job to do, and he warns the approaching party not to trespass on the fields of the town. |
| | For you are wrong, and may not wend this way. | ***wend*** = go. |
| 18 | | |
| | ***Robin.*** That were great shame. Now, by my soul, proud sir, | |
| 20 | We be three tall yeomen, and thou art but one. − | = valiant, strong in combat. |
| | Come, we will forward in despite of him. | = proceed. = spite. |
| 22 | | |
| | ***George.*** Leap the ditch, or I will make you skip. | 23: ***Leap the ditch*** = George employs a common expression of no particular metaphoric meaning in advising the intruders to follow his instructions. |
| | | ***skip*** = leap, jump.[1] |
| 24 | What, cannot the highway serve your turn, | = purpose. |
| | But you must make a path over the corn? | |
| 26 | | |
| | ***Robin.*** Why, art thou mad? dar'st thou encounter three? | = face in battle.[1] |
| 28 | We are no babes, man, look upon our limbs. | |
| 30 | ***George.*** Sirrah, | = form of address used to signal a reprimand and assumption of authority over another.[1] |
| | The biggest limbs have not the stoutest hearts. | 31: a bigger or physically stronger man is not necessarily the bravest (***stoutest***).[1] |
| 32 | Were ye as good as Robin Hood and his three merry men, | = "even if you were as fine fighters". |
| | | ***ye*** = plural form of ***you***. |
| | I'll drive you back the same way that ye came. | = ie. "I would". |
| 34 | Be ye men, ye scorn to encounter me all at once; | 34: ie. if his opponents were real men, they would fight him one at a time, and not all at once. |
| | But be ye cowards, set upon me all three, | = "but if you are cowards"; in the *History*, George actually calls his opponents "*base and effeminate cowards*" for thinking to attack him all three at once. |
| 36 | And try the Pinner what he dares perform. | = test. |
| 38 | ***Scarl.*** Were thou as high in deeds | 38-39: "if your actions prove to be as impressive as your words are arrogant". |
| | As thou art haughty in words, | |
| 40 | Thou well mightest be a champion for the king: | 40: Robin Hood alludes to the traditional nobleman, known as ***Champion of the King***, who plays a formal role in an English monarch's coronation ceremony: at the post-ceremony banquet, the Champion rides into Westminster Hall, throws down his gauntlet, and challenges anyone who |

disputes the king's right to the crown to single-combat. The king salutes the champion by drinking to him, and sends him a gilt cup filled with wine; the champion drinks the wine and keeps the cup.[13] The Dymoke family has held this office since at least the 14th century, though the formal ceremony as described above was last employed at the coronation of George IV.[14]

But empty vessels have the loudest sounds,
And cowards prattle more than men of worth. = talk, chatter.

***George.*** Sirrah, darest thou try me?

***Scarl.*** Ay, sirrah, that I dare.

[*They fight, and George-a-Greene beats him*.]

***Much.*** How now! what, art thou down? −
Come, sir, I am next.

[*They fight, and George-a-Greene beats him*.]

***Robin.*** Come, sirrah, now to me: spare me not, 55-56: Robin Hood suggests that neither one of them should hold back.
For I'll not spare thee.

***George.*** Make no doubt I will be as liberal to thee. = generous.

[*They fight; Robin Hood stays*.] = pauses.

***Robin.*** Stay, George, for here I do protest, = avow, profess.
Thou art the stoutest champion = fiercest or most valiant warrior or combatant.[1]
that ever I laid hands upon.

***George.*** Soft, you sir! by your leave, you lie; = "hold on there". = "with your permission".
You never yet laid hands on me.

***Robin.*** George, wilt thou forsake Wakefield, = leave.
And go with me?
Two liveries will I give thee every year, = (new) suits of clothes; in the short ballad, *The Jolly Pinder of Wakefield, with Robin Hood, Scarlet, and John*, Robin Hood promised to give George "*livery twice in the year, The one green, the other brown*," if George would join his merry band. Our dramatist clearly borrowed some language from this ballad for our play.
And forty crowns shall be thy fee.

***George.*** Why, who art thou?

***Robin.*** Why, Robin Hood:
I am come hither with my Marian
And these my yeomen for to visit thee. = in order.

***George.*** Robin Hood!
Next to King Edward art thou lief to me. = (only) after. = dearest.
Welcome, sweet Robin; welcome, Maid Marian;
And welcome, you my friends. Will you to my poor house? = ie. "will you come to".
You shall have wafer-cakes your fill, 84-85: George's repeats his offer of fare with the exact words he used to address the noble rebels at Act II.iii. 321-2.
A piece of beef hung up since Martlemas,

Mutton and veal: if this like you not,
Take that you find, or that you bring, for me.

***Robin.*** Godamercies, good George,
I'll be thy guest to-day.

***George.*** Robin, therein thou honourest me.
I'll lead the way.

[*Exeunt*.]

END OF ACT IV.

86-87: ***if this…for me*** = ie. "if what I have to offer is not satisfactory, then take whatever else you can find in my kitchen, or bring your own food." George expands the formulaic conclusion to his offer that he used at Act II.iii.323.

***like*** = pleases.

= thank you.

# ACT V.

## SCENE I.

*At Bradford.*

*Several Shoemakers discovered at work.*
*Enter King Edward and James (King of Scots) disguised, each carrying a staff.*

**Entering Characters:** we will see here a scene parallel to that which began Act IV.iii, but in this case it is the disguised ***kings of England and Scotland*** who will encounter the defenders of the strange custom portrayed in that earlier scene; the kings are carrying their weapons across the backs of their necks.

***K. Edw.*** Come on, King James; now we are thus disguised,
There's none, I know, will take us to be kings:
I think we are now in Bradford,
Where all the merry shoemakers dwell.

= recognize.

***1st Shoe.*** Down with your staves, my friends,
Down with them.

= plural for ***staff***.

***K. Edw.*** Down with our staves! I pray thee, why so?

***1st Shoe.*** My friend, I see thou art a stranger here,
Else wouldst thou not have questioned of the thing.
This is the town of merry Bradford,
And here hath been a custom kept of old,
That none may bear his staff upon his neck,
But trail it all along throughout the town,
Unless they mean to have a bout with me.

= ie. (must) drag his staff on the ground behind him.
= intend. = fight, match.

***K. Edw.*** But hear you, sir, hath the king granted you
This custom?

19-20: a logical question: such a tradition, which allows a town's citizens to threaten violence on otherwise peaceable visitors, should not be permitted to exist without the sanction of the king! In the *History*, the shoemakers tell the king that the tradition was one which "*they have observed time out of mind*."

***1st Shoe.*** King or kaiser, none shall pass this way,
Except King Edward;
No, not the stoutest groom that haunts his court;
Therefore down with your staves.

= a common expression; ***kaiser*** = emperor.

= ie. not even. = bravest servant.

***K. Edw.*** [*To James*] What were we best to do?

***K. James.*** Faith, my lord, they are stout fellows;

29-31: James suggests they accede to the Shoemaker's demand.

And, because we will see some sport,
We will trail our staves.

= ie. "we would experience some diversion or entertainment", a euphemism for, "we would be on the receiving end of a thrashing".

***K. Edw.*** Hear'st thou, my friend?
Because we are men of peace and travellers,
We are content to trail our staves.

***1st Shoe.*** The way lies before you, go along.

*Enter Robin Hood and George-a-Greene, disguised.*

***Robin.*** See, George, two men are passing through the town,

41*ff*: both Robin Hood and George sneeringly consider the disguised kings, who are obviously healthy-enough-looking to do battle with the Shoemakers, as cowards.

Two lusty men, and yet they trail their staves.

= hardy, vigorous.[1]

***George.*** Robin,
They are some peasants tricked in yeoman's weeds. −
Hollo, you two travellers!

45: they are mere peasants dressed up (***tricked***) in the clothes of men who are of a higher rank than they occupy.

***K. Edw.*** Call you us, sir?

***George.*** Ay, you. Are ye not big enough to bear
Your bats upon your necks, but you must trail them
Along the streets?

= ie. strong.
= staves.

***K. Edw.*** Yes, sir, we are big enough;
But here is a custom kept,
That none may pass, his staff upon his neck,
Unless he trail it at the weapon's point.
Sir, we are men of peace, and love to sleep
In our whole skins, and therefore quietness is best.

58-59: ***love to sleep…skins*** = euphemism for, "we prefer not to be beaten up,"

***George.*** Base-minded peasants, worthless to be men!
What, have you bones and limbs to strike a blow,
And be your hearts so faint you cannot fight?

= cowardly.[1]

Were't not for shame, I would shrub your shoulders well,
And teach you manhood against another time.

64-65: it would be beneath George to thrash (***shrub***)[1] such obvious low-lives.
***shrub*** = Dyce emends ***shrub*** to ***drub***.
**Line 65:** and teach them how to act like real men in the future; ***against*** = in anticipation of.

***1st Shoe.*** [*To George*] Well preached, Sir Jack! down with your staff!

67: ***Sir*** = ***Sir*** was commonly used (before a person's given name, as here) as a courteous form of address for a priest or simple cleric, hence its use here with ***preached***.[1]
***Jack*** = a commonly employed generic name for a male.

***K. Edw.*** Do you hear, my friends? an you be wise,
Keep down your staves, for all the town will rise upon you.

= "if you are smart".
= set upon, assail.

***George.*** [*To Edward*]
Thou speakest like an honest, quiet fellow:
But hear you me; in spite of all the swains

= ie. "even in the face of being attacked by every peasant (***swain***)".

Of Bradford town, bear me your staves upon your necks,
Or, to begin withal, I'll baste you both so well,
You were never better basted in your lives.

= ie. "bear": another example of the ethical dative.
= with. = ie. beat.

***K. Edw.*** We will hold up our staves.

[*George-a-Greene fights with the Shoemakers, and beats them all down*.]

***George.*** What, have you any more?

Call all your town forth, cut and longtail.

86: George is prepared to face off against the entire town.
***cut and longtail*** = a common expression which divides all dogs into two classes, those with their tails cut short, and those not; hence, used metaphorically here to mean "everyone".[9]
In the *History*, the entire town enters the fray!

[*The Shoemakers spy George-a-Greene*.]

88: the *History* tells us that George's disguise fell off during the battle, at which point the Shoemakers recognized him.
***spy*** = see, ie. recognize.

***1st Shoe.*** What, George a-Greene, is it you? A plague found you!
I think you longed to swinge me well.
Come, George, we will crush a pot before we part.

90-92: the Shoemakers are actually delighted to see George.
***found*** = ie. confound.[1]
= beat.
= ie. drink liberally.

***George.*** A pot, you slave! we will have an hundred. − Here, Will Perkins, take my purse; fetch me A stand of ale, and set [it] in the market-place, That all may drink that are athirst this day; For this is for a fee to welcome Robin Hood To Bradford town.

= perhaps one of the Shoemakers.
= an open barrel of ale.[1]
= thirsty.
= ie. a gift for services with which.[1]

[*The stand of ale is brought out, and they fall a-drinking*.]

Here, Robin, sit thou here;
For thou art the best man at the board this day.
You that are strangers, place yourselves where you will. Robin,
Here's a carouse to good King Edward's self;
And they that love him not, I would we had
The basting of them a little.

= table.
= toast, large quaff.[1]
109-110: ***I would…little*** = "I hope we get an opportunity to beat them up."

*Enter the Earl of Warwick with other Noblemen, bringing out the King's garments; then George-a-Greene and the rest kneel down to the King.*

**Entering Characters:** in this dumb show (action without speech), King Edward's identity is silently revealed; George and the other characters respond appropriately to this surprising development, humbling themselves before their sovereign.

***K. Edw.*** Come, masters, all fellows. − Nay, Robin, You are the best man at the board to-day. − Rise up, George.

117-9: Edwards asks his subjects to stand up.
***all fellows*** = ie. "we are all equal this day."

**Lines 121-6 (below):** a conventional moment: George acknowledges that he and the others have treated their king disrespectfully, and humbly apologizes for doing so; thus, even though (1) they had no idea who they were speaking to, and (2) Edward clearly does not hold their actions against them, George still formally asks for his sovereign's forgiveness.

***George.*** Nay, good my liege, ill-nurtured we were, then: Though we Yorkshire men be blunt of speech, And little skilled in court or such quaint fashions,

123: and have no training in courtly manners.
***quaint*** = gracious, refined.[1]

Yet nature teacheth us duty to our king; Therefore I

124: "yet we instinctively know how to address and behave towards our king."

Humbly beseech you pardon George-a-Greene.

***Robin.*** And, good my lord, a pardon for poor Robin;
And for us all a pardon, good King Edward.

***1st Shoe.*** I pray you, a pardon for the shoemakers.

***K. Edw.*** I frankly grant a pardon to you all:

= without reservation, freely.

The *History* informs us that the English king (Richard) restored to Robin his title and possessions, and further granted him permission to marry Marian.

In the *History*, we are further told that the king was actually "*incensed*" at the Shoemakers, and was appeased and pardoned them only after they performed a "*country morris dance*" for him.

[*They rise*.]

And, George-a-Greene, give me thy hand;
There's none in England that shall do thee wrong.
Even from my court I came to see thyself;
And now I see that fame speaks naught but truth.

= ie. George's reputation is not exaggerated.

***George.*** I humbly thank your royal majesty.
That which I did against the Earl of Kendal,
It was but a subject's duty to his sovereign,
And therefore little merit[s] such good words.

142-5: George is attractively modest.

= kind, complimentary.

***K. Edw.*** But ere I go, I'll grace thee with good deeds.

147: Edward still plans to reward George before (***ere***) they all part.

Say what King Edward may perform,
And thou shalt have it, being in England's bounds.

148: Edward asks George to name his own reward.
= ie. within reason.

***George.*** I have a lovely leman,
As bright of blee as is the silver moon,
And old Grime her father will not let her match
With me, because I am a Pinner,
Although I love her, and she me, dearly.

= sweetheart.
= hue.
= marry.

***K. Edw.*** Where is she?

***George.*** At home at my poor house,
And vows never to marry unless her father
Give consent; which is my great grief, my lord.

***K. Edw.*** If this be all, I will dispatch it straight;
I'll send for Grime and force him give his grant:
He will not deny King Edward such a suit.

= dispense with this matter immediately.
= request.

*Enter Jenkin.*

***Jenkin.*** Ho, who saw a master of mine? − Oh, he is gotten into company, and a body should rake hell for company.

170-1: ***and a body…company*** = ie. it appears to Jenkin that George has had to search hell itself to find company; a humorous implication that George's companions are villains.

***and*** = if.

***George.*** Peace, ye slave! see where King Edward is.

= shut up.

***K. Edw.*** George, what is he?

= who.

***George.*** I beseech your grace pardon him; he is my man.

= servant.

***1st Shoe.*** Sirrah, the king hath been drinking with us, and did pledge us too.

= appropriate form of address for a servant.

***Jenkin.*** Hath he so? kneel; I dub you gentlemen.

***1st Shoe.*** Beg it of the king, Jenkin.

185: ie. "Jenkin, ask the king for permission to do so."

***Jenkin.*** I will. − I beseech your worship grant me one thing.

187-8: Jenkin is a little presumptuous: luckily for him, Edward is in a generous mood.

***K. Edw.*** What is that?

***Jenkin.*** Hark in your ear.

= listen.

[*Whispers King Edward in the ear*.]

***K. Edw.*** Go your ways, and do it.

***Jenkin.*** [*To Shoemakers*] Come, down on your knees, I have got it.

***1st Shoe.*** Let us hear what it is first.

***Jenkin.*** Marry, because you have drunk with the king, and the king hath so graciously pledged you, you shall be no more called Shoemakers; but you and yours, to the world's end, shall be called the trade of the Gentle Craft.

203-7: in the 1590's, shoemaking began to be referred to as the ***gentle craft***, or less frequently, the ***gentle trade***, the suggestion being that shoemaking was an art appropriate for gentlemen. The term became famous for its repeated use in Thomas Dekker's popular 1600 play, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*.

***1st Shoe.*** I beseech your majesty reform this which he hath spoken.

= see the next note at line 212.

***Jenkin.*** I beseech your worship consume this which he hath spoken.

**Lines 209 and 212:** with ***consume***, and possibly also ***reform*** (line 209), Jenkin and the 1st Shoemaker have respectively misspoken, as recognized by Edward.

***K. Edw.*** "Confirm" it, you would say. −
Well, he hath done it for you, it is sufficient. −
Come, George, we will go to Grime, and have thy love.

***Jenkin.*** I am sure your worship will abide; for yonder is coming old Musgrove and mad Cuddy his son. – Master, my fellow Wily comes dressed like a woman, and Master Grime will marry Wily. Here they come.

= pause, wait a moment.[1]

*Enter Musgrove and Cuddy; Grime, Wily disguised as a woman,*

*Maid Marian, and Bettris.*

***K. Edw.*** Which is thy old father, Cuddy?

***Cuddy.*** This, if it please your majesty.

[*Musgrove kneels.*]

***K. Edw.*** Ah, old Musgrove, kneel up;
It fits not such grey hairs to kneel.

= arise; the OED defines ***to kneel up*** to mean "to rise on the knees;" some editors unnecessarily emend this to ***stand up***.

***Musgr.*** [*Rising*] Long live my sovereign!
Long and happy be his days!
Vouchsafe, my gracious lord, a simple gift
At Billy Musgrove's hand.

= deign (to receive).
= from his own hands.

King James at Middleham Castle gave me this;
This won the honour, and this give I thee.

= it appears from Musgrove's comment that the Barley's castle, by which the battle with the Scottish took place, was in fact Middleham Castle; but see line 252 below.
The castle of Middleham is found in north Yorkshire, about ten miles south of Richmond; now a spectacular ruin, it was the childhood home of the future Richard III.[6]

[*Gives sword to King Edward.*]

***K. Edw.*** Godamercy, Musgrove, for this friendly gift;
And, for thou felledst a king with this same weapon,
This blade shall here dub valiant Musgrove knight.

= thank you.
= because. = defeated.[1]

***Musgr.*** Alas, what hath your highness done? I am poor.

250: ironically, Musgrove does not want to be a knight, because he is not wealthy enough to pay for the accoutrements a knight was expected to possess.

***K. Edw.*** To mend thy living take thou Middleham Castle,

252: "to augment your income, take possession of Middleham Castle". But of course, the Barley's presumably still in this stronghold. See lines 337-8 below for the final piece of this muddle.

The hold of both, and if thou want living, complain;

253: ***The hold of both*** = possession of both properties; clearly some language has been lost here.[4] Dickinson prefers ***And hold of me***, meaning that Musgrove will take ownership of the castle directly from the king.
***want living*** = ie. (still) lack sufficient funds or income.
***complain*** = technically, make a formal statement of a grievance.[1]

Thou shalt have more to maintain thine estate. –
George, which is thy love?

= "support your rank or financial condition."

***George.*** This, if please your majesty.

***K. Edw.*** Art thou her aged father?

***Grime.*** I am, and it like your majesty.

= ie. "if it please".

***K. Edw.*** And wilt not give thy daughter unto George?

***Grime.*** Yes, my lord, if he will let me marry
With this lovely lass.

***K. Edw.*** What say'st thou, George?

***George.*** With all my heart, my lord, I give consent.

***Grime.*** Then do I give my daughter unto George.

***Wily.*** Then shall the marriage soon be at an end.
Witness, my lord, if that I be a woman;

[*Wily throws off his disguise*.]

For I am Wily, boy to George-a-Greene,
Who for my master wrought this subtle shift. = arranged, worked out. = cunning subterfuge.[2]

***K. Edw.*** What, is it a boy? − what say'st thou to this, Grime?

***Grime.*** Marry, my lord, I think this boy hath
More knavery than all the world besides. = villainy.
Yet am I content that George shall both have
My daughter and my lands. = as a dowry or ultimate inheritance.

***K. Edw.*** Now, George, it rests I gratify thy worth: = it only remains for the king to reward George as he deserves.

And therefore here I do bequeath to thee,
In full possession, half that Kendal hath; = ie. half of all Kendal's wealth and possessions.

And what as Bradford holds of me in chief,
I give it frankly unto thee for ever.
Kneel down, George.

292-3: Edward further grants any and all of the monarchy's property in Bradford to George.
***frankly*** = completely, without restriction.

***George.*** What will your majesty do?

***K. Edw.*** Dub thee a knight, George.

***George.*** I beseech your grace, grant me one thing.

***K. Edw.*** What is that?

***George.*** Then let me live and die a yeoman still:

304: like Musgrove before him, George too prefers not to be made a knight, though it is not for pecuniary reasons that he declines the honour.
***yeoman*** = a small-holder, the rank just below that of gentleman.

So was my father, so must live his son.
For 'tis more credit to men of base degree,
To do great deeds, than men of dignity.

306-7: George claims there is greater honour to be won by a man of lesser rank performing heroic deeds than could be gained by those of higher status, perhaps because it is more surprising when a lower-ranked man accomplishes something so impressive.

***K. Edw.*** Well, be it so, George.

***K. James.*** I beseech your grace dispatch with me, = "settle my situation".

And set down my ransom.

312: it was traditional for men of high rank to be able to buy their freedom − usually for quite a bit of money − when they have been captured in battle.

***K. Edw.*** George-a-Greene,
Set down the King of Scots his ransom.

***George.*** I beseech your grace pardon me;
It passeth my skill.

318: George modestly claims that this responsibility is beyond his abilities.
***passeth*** = surpasses.

***K. Edw.*** Do it, the honour's thine.

***George.*** Then let King James make good
Those towns which he hath burnt upon the borders;
Give a small pension to the fatherless,
Whose fathers he caused murthered in those wars;−
[*To James*]
Put in pledge for these things to your grace,
And so return.

= ie. make reparations for.

= ie. those whose fathers were recently slain by the Scottish.

327: "swear that you will do these things".

***K. Edw.*** King James, are you content?

***K. James.*** I am content, and like your majesty,
And will leave good castles in security.

= if it pleases.

***K. Edw.*** I crave no more. − Now, George-a-Greene,
I'll to thy house; and when I have supped,
I'll go to Ask,
And see if Jane-a-Barley be so fair
As good King James reports her for to be.
And for the ancient custom of *Vail staff*,
Keep it still, claim privilege from me:
If any ask a reason why, or how,
Say, English Edward vailed his staff to you.

= ask.
= ie. go to.
= village abutting the north side of Richmond.
338: so the Barleys, perhaps, do not live at Middleham after all!
***fair*** = beautiful.

340-1: Edward formally sanctions the practice of the Shoemakers to challenge all newcomers who carry their staves across the back of their necks.
***Vail staff*** = "lower staff".

[*Exeunt*.]

FINIS

## FOOTNOTES

Footnotes in the text correspond as follows:

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