

Well, lords, to-day we shall have our despatch,
On saturday we will return to *France*.

Then, forester, my friend, where is the bush
That we must stand and play the murtherer in?

For. Hard by, upon the edge of yonder coppice;
A stand, where you may make the fairest shoot.^a

Enter Costard.

Boyet. Here comes a member of the commonwealth.^b

^a ----- the fairest shoot.

Prin. I thank my beauty, I am fair that shoot,
And thereupon thou speak'st the fairest shoot.

For. Pardon me, madam, for I meant not so.

Prin. What, what? first praise me, then again say, no?
O short-liv'd pride! not fair? alack for wo!

For. Yes, madam, fair.

Prin. Nay, never paint me now;

Where fair is not, praise cannot mend the brow.

Here, good my glass, take this for telling true;

Fair payment for foul words is more than due.

For. Nothing but fair is that which you inherit.

Prin. See, see, my beauty will be sav'd by merit.

O heresy in fair, fit for these days!

A giving hand, though foul, shall have fair praise.

But come, the bow: now mercy goes to kill,

And shooting well is then accounted ill.

Thus will I save my credit in the shoot,

Not wounding, pity would not let me do't:

If wounding, then it was to show my skill,

That more for praise than purpose meant to kill.

And, out of question, so it is sometimes;

Glory grows guilty of detested crimes;

When, for fame's sake, for praise, an outward part,

We bend to that the working of the heart.

As I, for praise alone, now seek to spill

The poor deer's blood, that my heart means no ill.

Boyet. Do not curst wives hold that self-sovereignty

Only for praise' sake, when they strive to be

Lords o'er their lords?

Prin. Only for praise; and praise we may afford

To any lady that subdues her lord.

Enter Costard.

^b ----- commonwealth.

Cost. God dig-you-den all! pray you, which is the head lady?

Prin. Thou shalt know her, fellow, by the rest that have no heads.

Cost. Which is the greatest lady, the highest?

Prin. The thickest, and the tallest.

Cost. The thickest, and the tallest! it is so, truth is truth.

An your waist, mistress, were as slender as my wit,

One o' these girdles for your waist should be fit.

Are not you the chief woman? you are the thickest here.

Prin. What's your will, sir? what's your will?

Cost. I have, &c.

Cost.