



GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

THE PROLOGUE.

As Gammer Gurton with many a wide stitch
Sat piecing and patching of Hodge her man's breech,
By chance or misfortune, as she her gear toss'd,
In Hodge's leather breeches her needle she lost.
When Diccon the Bedlam had heard by report
That good Gammer Gurton was robbed in this sort,
He quietly persuaded with her in that stound
Dame Chat, her dear gossip, this needle had found;
Yet knew she no more of this matter, alas!
Than knoweth Tom, our clerk, what the priest saith at mass.
Hereof there ensued so fearful a fray,
Mas. Doctor was sent for, these gossips to stay,
Because he was curate, and esteemed full wise;
Who found that he sought not, by Diccon's device.
When all things were tumbled and clean out of fashion,
Whether it were by fortune, or some other constellation,
Suddenly the needle Hodge found by the pricking.
And drew it out of his buttock, where he felt it sticking.
Their hearts then at rest with perfect security,
With a pot of good ale they struck up their plaudity.
[4]

THE FIRST ACT. THE FIRST SCENE.

Diccon. Many a mile have I walked, divers and sundry ways,
And many a good man's house have I been at in my days;
Many a gossip's cup in my time have I tasted,

And many a broach and spit have I both turned and basted,
Many a piece of bacon have I had out of their balks,
In running over the country, with long and weary walks;
Yet came my foot never within those door cheeks,
To seek flesh or fish, garlick, onions, or leeks,
That ever I saw a sort in such a plight
As here within this house appeareth to my sight.
There is howling and scowling, all cast in a dump,
With whewling and puling, as though they had lost a trump.
Sighing and sobbing, they weep and they wail;
I marvel in my mind what the devil they ail.
The old trot sits groaning, with alas and alas!
And Tib wrings her hands, and takes on in worse case.
With poor Cock, their boy, they be driven in such fits,
I fear me the folks be not well in their wits.
Ask them what they ail, or who brought them in this stay,
They answer not at all, but "alack!" and "wellaway!"
When I saw it booted not, out at doors I hied me,
And caught a slip of bacon, when I saw none spied me,
Which I intend not far hence, unless my purpose fail,
Shall serve me for a shoeing horn to draw on two pots of ale.
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THE FIRST ACT. THE SECOND SCENE.

HODGE, DICCON.

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

Diccon. By my father's soul, Hodge, if I should now be sworn,
I cannot choose but say thy breech is foul betorn,
But the next remedy in such a case and hap
Is to planch on a piece as broad as thy cap.

Hodge. Gog's soul, man, 'tis not yet two days fully ended,

Since my dame Gurton (cham sure) these breeches amended;
But cham made such a drudge to trudge at every need,
Chwold rend it though it were stitched with sturdy packthread.

Diccon. Hodge, let thy breeches go, and speak and tell me soon
What devil aileth Gammer Gurton and Tib her maid to frown.

Hodge. Tush, man, th'art deceived: 'tis their daily look;
They cow'r so over the coals, their eyes be blear'd with smoke.

Diccon. Nay, by the mass, I perfectly perceived, as I came hither,
[6]That either Tib and her dame hath been by the ears together,
Or else as great a matter, as thou shalt shortly see.

Hodge. Now, ich beseech our Lord they never better agree!

Diccon. By Gog's soul, there they sit as still as stones in the street,
As though they had been taken with fairies, or else with some ill-spreet.

Hodge. Gog's heart! I durst have laid my cap to a crown
Ch'would learn of some prancome as soon as ich came to town.

Diccon. Why, Hodge, art thou inspired? or didst thou thereof hear?

Hodge. Nay, but ich saw such a wonder as ich saw nat this seven year.
Tom Tankard's cow, by Gog's bones! she set me up her sail,
And flinging about his half acre, fisking with her tail,
As though there had been in her arse a swarm of bees,
And chad not cried "tphrowh, whore," shea'd leapt out of his lees.

Diccon. Why, Hodge, lies the cunning in Tom Tankard's cow's tail?

Hodge. Well, ich chave heard some say such tokens do not fail.
But ca[n]st thou not tell, in faith, Diccon, why she frowns, or whereat?
Hath no man stolen her ducks or hens, or gelded Gib, her cat?

Diccon. What devil can I tell, man? I could not have one word!
They gave no more heed to my talk than thou wouldst to a lord.

Hodge. Ich cannot skill but muse, what marvellous thing it is.
Chill in and know myself what matters are amiss.

Diccon. Then farewell, Hodge, a while, since thou dost inward haste,
For I will into the good wife Chat's, to feel how the ale doth taste.
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THE FIRST ACT. THE THIRD SCENE.

HODGE, TIB.

Hodge. Cham aghast; by the mass, ich wot not what to do.
Chad need bless me well before ich go them to.
Perchance some felon sprit may haunt our house indeed;
And then chwere but a noddy to venture where cha' no need.

Tib. Cham worse than mad, by the mass, to be at this stay!
Cham chid, cham blam'd, and beaten, all th'hours on the day;
Lamed and hunger-starved, pricked up all in jags,
Having no patch to hide my back, save a few rotten rags!

Hodge. I say, Tib, if thou be Tib, as I trow sure thou be,
What devil make-ado is this, between our dame and thee?

Tib. Gog's bread, Hodge, thou had a good turn thou wert not here this while!
It had been better for some of us to have been hence a mile;
My gammer is so out of course and frantic all at once,
That Cock, our boy, and I, poor wench, have felt it on our bones.

Hodge. What is the matter—say on, Tib—whereat she taketh so on?

Tib. She is undone, she saith; alas! her joy and life is gone!
If she hear not of some comfort, she is, faith! but dead;
Shall never come within her lips one inch of meat ne bread.

Hodge. By'r lady, cham not very glad to see her in this dump.
Chold a noble her stool hath fallen, and she hath broke her rump.
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Tib. Nay, and that were the worst, we would not greatly care
For bursting of her huckle-bone, or breaking of her chair;
But greater, greater, is her grief, as, Hodge, we shall all feel!

Hodge. Gog's wounds, Tib, my gammer has never lost her nee'le?

Tib. Her nee'le!

Hodge. Her nee'le?

Tib. Her nee'le! by him that made me, it is true, Hodge, I tell thee.

Hodge. Gog's sacrament! I would she had lost th'heart out of her belly!
The devil, or else his dame, they ought her, sure a shame!
How a murrion came this chance, say, Tib! unto our dame?

Tib. My gammer sat her down on her pes, and bad me reach thy breeches,
And by and by—a vengeance in it! ere she had take two stitches
To clout a clout upon thine arse, by chance aside she leers,
And Gib, our cat, in the milk-pan she spied over head and ears.
"Ah, whore! out, thief!" she crief aloud, and swept the breeches down.
Up went her staff, and out leapt Gib at doors into the town,
And since that time was never wight could set their eyes upon it.
Gog's malison chavè Cock and I bid twenty times light on it.

Hodge. And is not then my breeches sewed up, to-morrow that I should wear?

Tib. No, in faith, Hodge, thy breeches lie for all this never the near.

Hodge. Now a vengeance light on all the sort, that better should have kept it,
[9]The cat, the house, and Tib, our maid, that better should have swept it!
See where she cometh crawling! come on, in twenty devils' way!
Ye have made a fair day's work, have you not? pray you, say!

THE FIRST ACT. THE FOURTH SCENE.

GAMMER, HODGE, TIB, COCK.

Gammer. Alas, Hodge, alas! I may well curse and ban
This day, that ever I saw it, with Gib and the milk-pan;
For these and ill-luck together, as knoweth Cock, my boy,
Have stack away my dear nee'le, and robbed me of my joy,
My fair long straight nee'le, that was mine only treasure;
The first day of my sorrow is, and last end of my pleasure!

Hodge (aside). Might ha' kept it, when ye had it! but fools will be fools still,
Lose that is vast in your hands ye need not but ye will.

Gammer. Go hie thee, Tib, and run thou, whore, to th'end here of the town!
Didst carry out dust in thy lap? seek where thou pourest it down;
And as thou sawest me roking, in the ashes where I mourned,
So see in all the heap of dust thou leave no straw unturned.

Tib. That chall, Gammer, swyth and tite, and soon be here again!

Gammer. Tib, stoop and look down to the ground to it, and take some pain.

Hodge. Here is a pretty matter, to see this gear how it goes:
By Gog's soul, I think you would lose your arse, and it were loose!
Your nee'le lost? it is pity you should lack care and endless sorrow.
[10]Gog's death! how shall my breeches be sewed?
Shall I go thus to-morrow?

Gammer. Ah, Hodge, Hodge! if that ich could find my nee'le, by the reed,
Ch'ould sew thy breeches, ich promise thee, with full good double thread,
And set a patch on either knee should last this moneths twain.
Now God and good Saint Sithe, I pray to send it home again!

Hodge. Wereto served your hands and eyes, but this your nee'le to keep?
What devil had you else to do? ye keep, ich wot, no sheep!
Cham fain abroad to dig and delve, in water, mire, and clay,
Sossing and possing in the dirt still from day to day.
A hundred things that be abroad, cham set to see them well,
And four of you sit idle at home, and cannot keep a nee'le!

Gammer. My nee'le! alas! ich lost it, Hodge, what time ich me up hasted
To save the milk set up for thee, which Gib, our cat, hath wasted.

Hodge. The devil he burst both Gib and Tib, with all the rest!
Cham always sure of the worst end, whoever have the best!
Where ha' you been fidging abroad, since you your nee'le lost?

Gammer. Within the house, and at the door, sitting by this same post,
Where I was looking a long hour, before these folks came here;
But, wellaway, all was in vain, my nee'le is never the near!

Hodge. Set me a candle, let me seek, and grope wherever it be.
Gog's heart, ye be foolish ich think, you know it not when you it see!

Gammer. Come hither, Cock: what, Cock, I say!

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Cock. How, Gammer?

Gammer. Go, hie thee soon,

And grope behind the old brass pan, which thing when thou hast done,

There shalt thou find an old shoe, wherein, if thou look well,

Thou shalt find lying an inch of a white tallow candle;

Light it, and bring it tite away.

Cock. That shall be done anon.

Gammer. Nay, tarry, Hodge, till thou hast light, and then we'll seek each one.

Hodge. Come away, ye whoreson boy, are ye asleep? ye must have a crier!

Cock. Ich cannot get the candle light: here is almost no fire.

Hodge. Chill hold thee a penny, chill make thee come, if that ich may catch thine ears!

Art deaf, thou whoreson boy? Cock, I say; why, canst not hear?

Gammer. Beat him not, Hodge, but help the boy, and come you two together.

THE FIRST ACT. THE FIFTH SCENE.

GAMMER, TIB, COCK, HODGE.

Gammer. How now, Tib? quick, let's hear what news thou hast brought hither!

Tib. Chave tost and tumbled yonder heap over and over again,

And winnowed it through my fingers, as men would winnow grain;

Not so much as a hen's turd, but in pieces I tare it;

Or whatsoever clod or clay I found, I did not spare it,

[12]Looking within and eke without, to find your nee'le, alas!

But all in vain and without help! your nee'le is where it was.

Gammer. Alas, my nee'le! we shall never meet! adieu, adieu, for aye!

Tib. Not so, Gammer, we might it find, if we knew where it lay.

Cock. Gog's cross, Gammer, if ye will laugh, look in but at the door,

And see how Hodge lieth tumbling and tossing amids the flour,

Raking there some fire to find among the ashes dead,
Where there is not one spark so big as a pin's head:
At last in a dark corner two sparks he thought he sees,
Which were indeed nought else but Gib our cat's two eyes.
"Puff!" quod Hodge, thinking thereby to have fire without doubt;
With that Gib shut her two eyes, and so the fire was out;
And by and by them opened, even as they were before;
With that the sparks appeared, even as they had done of yore;
And even as Hodge blew the fire (as he did think),
Gib, as she felt the blast, straightway began to wink;
Till Hodge fell of swearing, as came best to his turn,
The fire was sure bewitch'd, and therefore would not burn;
At last Gib up the stairs, among the old posts and pins,
And Hodge he hied him after, till broke were both his shins:
Cursing and swearing oaths were never of his making,
That Gib would fire the house if that she were not taken.

[13]*Gammer*. See, here is all the thought that the foolish urchin taketh!
And Tib, me-think, at his elbow almost as merry maketh.
This is all the wit ye have, when others make their moan.
Come down, Hodge, where art thou? and let the cat alone!

Hodge. Gog's heart, help and come up! Gib in her tail hath fire,
And is like to burn all, if she get a little higher!
Come down, quoth you? nay, then you might count me a patch,
The house cometh down on your heads, if it take once the thatch.

Gammer. It is the cat's eyes, fool, that shineth in the dark.

Hodge. Hath the cat, do you think, in every eye a spark?

Gammer. No, but they shine as like fire as ever man see.

Hodge. By the mass, and she burn all, you sh' bear the blame for me!

Gammer. Come down and help to seek here our nee'le, that it were found.
Down, Tib, on the knees, I say! Down, Cock, to the ground!
To God I make a vow, and so to good Saint Anne,
A candle shall they have a-piece, get it where I can,
If I may my nee'le find in one place or in other.

Hodge. Now a vengeance on Gib light, on Gib and Gib's mother,
And all the generation of cats both far and near!
Look on the ground, whoreson, thinks thou the nee'le is here?

Cock. By my troth, Gammer, me-thought your nee'le here I saw,
But when my fingers touch'd it, I felt it was a straw.

Tib. See, Hodge, what's this? may it not be within it?

Hodge. Break it, fool, with thy hand, and see and thou canst find it.
[14]

Tib. Nay, break it you, Hodge, according to your word.

Hodge. Gog's sides! fie! it stinks! it is a cat's turd!
It were well done to make thee eat it, by the mass!

Gammer. This matter amendeth not; my nee'le is still where it was.
Our candle is at an end, let us all in quite,
And come another time, when we have more light.

THE SECOND ACT.

First a SONG.

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

*I cannot eat but little meat,
My stomach is not good;
But sure I think that I can drink
With him that wears a hood.
Though I go bare, take ye no care,
I am nothing a-cold;
I stuff my skin so full within
Of jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, go bare, &c.*

*I love no roast but a nut-brown toast
And a crab laid in the fire.
A little bread shall do me stead:
Much bread I not desire.
No frost nor snow, no wind, I trow,
Can hurt me if I would;
I am so wrapt, and thoroughly lapt
Of jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, &c.*

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*And Tib my wife, that as her life
Loveth well good ale to seek,
Full oft drinks she till ye may see
The tears run down her cheek:
Then doth she trowl to me the bowl
Even as a malt-worm should:
And saith, sweet heart, I took my part
Of this jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, &c.*

*Now let them drink till they nod and wink,
Even as good fellows should do;
They shall not miss to have the bliss
Good ale doth bring men to;
And all poor souls that have scoured bowls,
Or have them lustly troll'd.
God save the lives of them and their wives,
Whether they be young or old.
Back and side go bare, &c.*

THE SECOND ACT. THE FIRST SCENE.

DICCON, HODGE.

Diccon. Well done, by Gog's malt! well sung and well said!
Come on, mother Chat, as thou art true maid,
One fresh pot of ale let's see, to make an end
Against this cold weather my naked arms to defend!
This gear it warms the soul! now, wind, blow on thy worst!
And let us drink and swill till that our bellies burst!
Now were he a wise man by cunning could define

Which way my journey lieth, or where Diccon will dine!

[16]But one good turn I have: be it by night or day,
South, east, north or west, I am never out of my way!

Hodge. Chim goodly rewarded, cham I not, do you think?
Chad a goodly dinner for all my sweat and swink!
Neither butter, cheese, milk, onions, flesh, nor fish,
Save this poor piece of barley-bread: 'tis a pleasant costly dish!

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

Hodge. Daintrels, Diccon? Gog's soul, man, save this piece of dry horsebread,
Cha bit no bit this livelong day, no crumb come in my head:
My guts they yawl-crawl, and all my belly rumbleth,
The puddings cannot lie still, each one over other tumbleth.
By Gog's heart, cham so vexed, and in my belly penn'd,
Chould one piece were at the spital-house, another at the castle end!

Diccon. Why, Hodge, was there none at home thy dinner for to set?

Hodge. Gog's bread, Diccon, ich came too late, was nothing there to get!
Gib (a foul fiend might on her light!) licked the milk-pan so clean,
See, Diccon, 'twas not so well washed this seven year, as ich ween!
A pestilence light on all ill-luck! chad thought, yet for all this
Of a morsel of bacon behind the door at worst should not miss:
But when ich sought a slip to cut, as ich was wont to do,
Gog's souls, Diccon! Gib, our cat, had eat the bacon too!
[17]

[Which bacon Diccon stole, as is declared before.]

Diccon. Ill-luck, quod he! marry, swear it, Hodge! this day, the truth tell,
Thou rose not on thy right side, or else blessed thee not well.
Thy milk slopped up! thy bacon filched! that was too bad luck, Hodge!

Hodge. Nay, nay, there was a fouler fault, my Gammer ga' me the dodge;
Seest not how cham rent and torn, my heels, my knees, and my breech?
Chad thought, as ich sat by the fire, help here and there a stitch:
But there ich was pouped indeed.

Diccon. Why, Hodge?

Hodge. Boots not, man, to tell.
Cham so drest amongst a sort of fools, chad better be in hell.
My Gammer (cham ashamed to say) by God, served me no well.

Diccon. How so, Hodge?

Hodge. Has she not gone, trowest now,
and lost her nee'le?

Diccon. Her eel, Hodge? who fished of late? that was a dainty dish!

Hodge. Tush, tush, her nee'le, her nee'le, her nee'le, man! 'tis neither flesh nor fish;
A little thing with an hole in the end, as bright as any sil'er,
Small, long, sharp at the point, and straight as any pillar.

Diccon. I know not what a devil thou meanest, thou bring'st me more in doubt.

Hodge. Knowest not with what Tom-tailor's man sits broaching through a clout?
A nee'le, a nee'le, a nee'le! my Gammer's nee'le is gone.

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Diccon. Her nee'le, Hodge! now I smell thee! that was a chance alone!
By the mass, thou hast a shameful loss, and it were but for thy breeches.

Hodge. Gog's soul, man, should give a crown chad it but three stitches.

Diccon. How sayest thou, Hodge? what should he have, again thy needle got?

Hodge. By m'father's soul, and chad it, should give him a new groat.

Diccon. Canst thou keep counsel in this case?

Hodge. Else chould my tongue were out.

Diccon. Do than but then by my advice, and I will fetch it without doubt.

Hodge. Chill run, chill ride, chill dig, chill delve,
Chill toil, chill trudge, shalt see;
Chill hold, chill draw, chill pull, chill pinch,
Chill kneel on my bare knee;
Chill scrape, chill scratch, chill sift, chill seek,

Chill bow, chill bend, chill sweat,
Chill stoop, chill stour, chill cap, chill kneel,
Chill creep on hands and feet;
Chill be thy bondman, Diccon, ich swear by sun and moon,
And channot somewhat to stop this gap, cham utterly undone!

[Pointing behind to his torn breeches.

Diccon. Why, is there any special cause thou takest hereat such sorrow?

Hodge. Kirstian Clack, Tom Simpson's maid, by the mass, comes hither to-morrow,
Cham not able to say, between us what may hap;
She smiled on me the last Sunday, when ich put off my cap.

[19]*Diccon.* Well, Hodge, this is a matter of weight, and must be kept close,
It might else turn to both our costs, as the world now goes.
Shalt swear to be no blab, Hodge?

Hodge. Chill, Diccon.

Diccon. Then go to,
Lay thine hand here; say after me, as thou shalt hear me do.
Hast no book?

Hodge. Cha no book, I.

Diccon. Then needs must force us both,
Upon my breech to lay thine hand, and there to take thine oath.

Hodge. I, Hodge, breechless
Swear to Diccon, rechless,
By the cross that I shall kiss,
To keep his counsel close,
And always me to dispose
To work that his pleasure is.

[Here he kisseth Diccon's breech.

Diccon. Now, Hodge, see thou take heed,
And do as I thee bid;
For so I judge it meet;
This needle again to win,
There is no shift therein,

But conjure up a sprete.

Hodge. What, the great devil, Diccon, I say?

Diccon. Yea, in good faith, that is the way.
Fet with some pretty charm.

Hodge. Soft, Diccon, be not too hasty yet,
By the mass, for ich begin to sweat!
Cham afraid of some harm.

Diccon. Come hither, then, and stir thee not
One inch out of this circle plat,
But stand as I thee teach.

Hodge. And shall ich be here safe from their claws?

Diccon. The master-devil with his long paws
[20]Here to thee cannot reach—
Now will I settle me to this gear.

Hodge. I say, Diccon, hear me, hear!
Go softly to this matter!

Diccon. What devil, man? art afraid of nought?

Hodge. Canst not tarry a little thought
Till ich make a courtesy of water?

Diccon. Stand still to it; why shouldest thou fear him?

Hodge. Gog's sides, Diccon, me-think ich hear him!
And tarry, chall mar all!

Diccon. The matter is no worse than I told it.

Hodge. By the mass, cham able no longer to hold it!
Too bad! ich must beray the hall!

Diccon. Stand to it, Hodge! stir not, you whoreson!
What devil, be thine arse-strings brusten?

Thyself a while but stay,
The devil (I smell him) will be here anon.

Hodge. Hold him fast, Diccon, cham gone!
Chill not be at that fray!

THE SECOND ACT. THE SECOND SCENE.

DICCON, CHAT.

Diccon. Fie, shitten knave, and out upon thee!
Above all other louts, fie on thee!
Is not here a cleanly prank,
But thy matter was no better,
Nor thy presence here no sweeter,
To fly I can thee thank.
Here is a matter worthy glosing,
Of Gammer Gurton's needle losing,
[21]And a foul piece of wark!
A man I think might make a play,
And need no word to this they say
Being but half a clerk.

Soft, let me alone, I will take the charge
This matter further to enlarge
Within a time short.
If ye will mark my toys, and note,
I will give ye leave to cut my throat
If I make not good sport.

Dame Chat, I say, where be ye? within?

Chat. Who have we there maketh such a din?

Diccon. Here is a good fellow, maketh no great danger.

Chat. What, Diccon? Come near, ye be no stranger.
We be fast set at trump, man, hard by the fire;
Thou shalt set on the king, if thou come a little nigher.

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

Chat. Come hither, Doll! Doll, sit down and play this game,
And as thou sawest me do, see thou do even the same.
There is five trumps besides the queen, the hindmost thou shalt find her.
Take heed of Sim Glover's wife, she hath an eye behind her!
Now, Diccon, say your will.

Diccon. Nay, soft a little yet;
I would not tell it my sister, the matter is so great.
There I will have you swear by Our Dear Lady of Boulogne,
Saint Dunstan, and Saint Dominic, with the three Kings of Cologne,
That ye shall keep it secret.

Chat. Gog's bread! that will I do!
As secret as mine own thought, by God and the devil too!

[22]

Diccon. Here is Gammer Gurton, your neighbour, a sad and heavy wight:
Her goodly fair red cock at home was stole this last night.

Chat. Gog's soul! her cock with the yellow legs, that nightly crowed so just?

Diccon. That cock is stolen.

Chat. What, was he fet out of the hen's roost?

Diccon. I cannot tell where the devil he was kept, under key or lock;
But Tib hath tickled in Gammer's ear, that you should steal the cock.

Chat. Have I, strong whore? by bread and salt!—

Diccon. What, soft, I say, be still!
Say not one word for all this gear.

Chat. By the mass, that I will!
I will have the young whore by the head, and the old trot by the throat.

Diccon. Not one word, dame Chat, I say; not one word for my coat!

Chat. Shall such a beggar's brawl as that, thinkest thou, make me a thief?
The pox light on her whore's sides, a pestilence and mischief!
Come out, thou hungry needy bitch! O, that my nails be short!

Diccon. Gog's bread, woman, hold your
peace! this gear will else pass sport!
I would not for an hundred pound this matter should be known,
That I am author of this tale, or have abroad it blown.
Did ye not swear ye would be ruled, before the tale I told?
I said ye must all secret keep, and ye said sure ye would.

Chat. Would you suffer, yourself, Diccon, such a sort to revile you,
With slanderous words to blot your name, and so to defile you?
[23]

Diccon. No, Goodwife Chat, I would be loth such drabs should blot my name;
But yet ye must so order all that Diccon bear no blame.

Chat. Go to, then, what is your reed? say on your mind, ye shall me rule herein.

Diccon. Godamercy to dame Chat! In faith thou must the gear begin.
It is twenty pound to a goose-turd, my gammer will not tarry,
But hitherward she comes as fast as her legs can her carry,
To brawl with you about her cock; for well I heard Tib say
The cock was roasted in your house to breakfast yesterday;
And when ye had the carcase eaten, the feathers ye outflung,
And Doll, your maid, the legs she hid a foot-deep in the dung.

Chat. O gracious God! my heart it bursts!

Diccon. Well, rule yourself a space;
And Gammer Gurton when she cometh anon into this place,
Then to the quean, let's see, tell her your mind, and spare not.
So shall Diccon blameless be; and then, go to, I care not!

Chat. Then, whore, beware her throat! I can abide no longer.
In faith, old witch, it shall be seen which of us two be stronger!
And, Diccon, but at your request, I would not stay one hour.

Diccon. Well, keep it till she be here, and then out let it pour!
In the meanwhile get you in, and make no words of this.
More of this matter within this hour to hear you shall not miss,
Because I knew you are my friend, hide it I could not, doubtless.
[24]Ye know your harm, see ye be wise about your own business!
So fare ye well.

Chat. Nay, soft, Diccon, and drink! What, Doll, I say!
Bring here a cup of the best ale; let's see, come quickly away!

THE SECOND ACT. THE THIRD SCENE.

HODGE, DICCON.

Diccon. Ye see, masters, that one end tapp'd of this my short device!
Now must we broach th'other too, before the smoke arise;
And by the time they have a while run,
I trust ye need not crave it.
But look, what lieth in both their hearts, ye are like, sure, to have it.

Hodge. Yea, Gog's soul, art alive yet? What, Diccon, dare ich come?

Diccon. A man is well hied to trust to thee; I will say nothing but mum;
But and ye come any nearer, I pray you see all be sweet!

Hodge. Tush, man, is Gammer's nee'le found? that chould gladly weet.

Diccon. She may thank thee it is not found, for if you had kept thy standing,
The devil he would have fet it out, ev'n, Hodge, at thy commanding.

Hodge. Gog's heart! and could he tell nothing where the nee'le might be found?

Diccon. Ye foolish dolt, ye were to seek, ere we had got our ground;
[25]Therefore his tale so doubtful was that I could not perceive it.

Hodge. Then ich see well something was said, chope one day yet to have it.
But Diccon, Diccon, did not the devil cry "ho, ho, ho"?

Diccon. If thou hadst tarried where thou stood'st, thou wouldst have said so!

Hodge. Durst swear of a book, cheard him roar, straight after ich was gone.
But tell me, Diccon, what said the knave? let me hear it anon.

Diccon. The whoreson talked to me, I know not well of what.
One while his tongue it ran and paltered of a cat,
Another while he stammered still upon a rat;
Last of all, there was nothing but every word, Chat, Chat;
But this I well perceived before I would him rid,

Between Chat, and the rat, and the cat, the needle is hid.
Now whether Gib, our cat, hath eat it in her maw,
Or Doctor Rat, our curate, have found it in the straw,
Or this dame Chat, your neighbour, hath stolen it, God he knoweth!
But by the morrow at this time, we shall learn how the matter goeth.

Hodge. Canst not learn to-night, man? seest not what is here?

[Pointing behind to his torn breeches.]

Diccon. 'Tis not possible to make it sooner appear.

Hodge. Alas, Diccon, then chavé no shift; but—lest ich tarry too long—
Hie me to Sim Glover's shop, there to seek for a thong,
Therewith this breech to thatch and tie as ich may.

Diccon. To-morrow, Hodge, if we chance to meet, shall see what I will say.
[26]

THE SECOND ACT. THE FOURTH SCENE.

DICCON, GAMMER.

Diccon. Now this gear must forward go, for here my Gammer cometh.
Be still a while, and say nothing; make here a little romth.

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

Diccon. Now, Jesus! Gammer Gurton, what driveth you to this sadness?
I fear me, by my conscience, you will sure fall to madness.

Gammer. Who is that? What, Diccon? cham lost, man! fie, fie!

Diccon. Marry, fie on them that be worthy! but what should be your trouble?

Gammer. Alas! the more ich think on it, my sorrow it waxeth double.
My goodly tossing spurrier's nee'le chavé lost ich wot not where.

Diccon. Your nee'le? when?

Gammer. My nee'le, alas! ich might full ill it spare,
As God himself he knoweth, ne'er one beside chavé.

Diccon. If this be all, good Gammer, I warrant you all is safe.

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

Diccon. Yea, that I do, doubtless, as ye shall hear anon,
'A see a thing this matter toucheth within these twenty hours,
[27]Even at this gate, before my face, by a neighbour of yours.
She stooped me down, and up she took up a needle or a pin.
I durst be sworn it was even yours, by all my mother's kin.

Gammer. It was my nee'le, Diccon, ich wot; for here, even by this post,
Ich sat, what time as ich up start, and so my nee'le it lost:
Who was it, leve son? speak, ich pray thee, and quickly tell me that!

Diccon. A subtle quean as any in this town, your neighbour here, dame Chat.

Gammer. Dame Chat, Diccon! Let me be gone, chill thither in post haste.

Diccon. Take my counsel yet or ye go, for fear ye walk in waste,
It is a murrain crafty drab, and froward to be pleased;
And ye take not the better way, our needle yet ye lose [it]:
For when she took it up, even here before your doors,
"What, soft, dame Chat" (quoth I), "that same is none of yours."
"Avaunt" (quoth she), "sir knave! what pratest thou of that I find?
I would thou hast kiss'd me I wot where"; she meant, I know, behind;
And home she went as brag as it had been a body-louse,
And I after, as bold as it had been the goodman of the house.
But there and ye had heard her, how she began to scold!
The tongue it went on patins, by him that Judas sold!
Each other word I was a knave, and you a whore of whores.
Because I spake in your behalf, and said the nee'le was yours.

Gammer. Gog's bread! and thinks that
that callet thus to keep my nee'le me fro?
[28]

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

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

Diccon. Slip not your gear, I counsel you, but of this take good heed:
Let not be known I told you of it, how well soever ye speed.

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

THE SECOND ACT. THE FIFTH SCENE.

DICCON.

Diccon. Here will the sport begin; if these two once may meet,
Their cheer, durst lay money, will prove scarcely sweet.
My gammer, sure, intends to be upon her bones
With staves, or with clubs, or else with cobble stones.
Dame Chat, on the other side, if she be far behind
I am right far deceived; she is given to it of kind.
He that may tarry by it awhile, and that but short,
I warrant him, trust to it, he shall see all the sport.
Into the town will I, my friends to visit there,
And hither straight again to see th'end of this gear.
In the meantime, fellows, pipe up; your fiddles, I say, take them,
And let your friends hear such mirth as ye can make them.
[29]

THE THIRD ACT. THE FIRST SCENE.

HODGE.

Hodge. Sim Glover, yet gramercy! cham meetly well-spiced now,
Th'art even as good a fellow as ever kiss'd a cow!
Here is a thong indeed, by the mass, though ich speak it;
Tom Tankard's great bald curtal, I think, could not break it!
And when he spied my need to be so straight and hard,
Hase lent me here his nawl, to set the gib forward;
As for my gammer's nee'le, the flying fiend go wi' it!
Chill not now go to the door again with it to meet.
Should make shift good enough and chad a candle's end;
The chief hole in my breech with these two chill amend.

THE THIRD ACT. THE SECOND SCENE.

GAMMER, HODGE.

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

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

Gammer. 'Tis as true as steel, Hodge.

Hodge. Why, knowest well where didst lese it?

Gammer. Ich know who found it, and took it up! shalt see ere it be long.

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

[30]

Gammer. That false vixen, that same dame Chat, that counts herself so honest.

Hodge. Who told you so?

Gammer. That same did Diccon the bedlam, which saw it done.

Hodge. Diccon? it is a vengeable knave, gammer, 'tis a bonable whoreson,
Can do mo things than that, els cham deceived evil:
By the mass, ich saw him of late call up a great black devil!
O, the knave cried "*ho, ho!*" he roared and he thundered,
And ye 'ad been here, cham sure you'd murrainly ha' wondered.

Gammer. Was not thou afraid, Hodge, to see him in this place?

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

Gammer. But, Hodge, had he no horns to push?

Hodge. As long as your two arms. Saw ye never Friar Rush
Painted on a cloth, with a side-long cow's tail,
And crooked cloven feet, and many a hooked nail?
For all the world, if I should judge, chould reckon him his brother.
Look, even what face Friar Rush had, the devil had such another.

Gammer. Now, Jesus mercy, Hodge! did Diccon in him bring?

Hodge. Nay, gammer, hear me speak, chill tell you a greater thing.
The devil (when Diccon had him, ich heard him wondrous well)
Said plainly here before us, that dame Chat had your nee'le.

[31]*Gammer.* Then let us go, and ask her wherefore she minds to keep it;
Seeing we know so much, 'twere a madness now to slip it.

Hodge. Go to her, gammer; see ye not where she stands in her doors?
Bid her give you the nee'le, 'tis none of hers but yours.

THE THIRD ACT. THE THIRD SCENE.

GAMMER, CHAT, HODGE.

Gammer. Dame Chat, ch'ould pray thee fair, let me have that is mine!
Chill not these twenty years take one fart that is thine;
Therefore give me mine own, and let me live beside thee.

Chat. Why art thou crept from home hither, to mine own doors to chide me?
Hence, doating drab, avaunt, or I shall set thee further!
Intends thou and that knave me in my house to murther?

Gammer. Tush, gape not so on me, woman! shalt not yet eat me,
Nor all the friends thou hast in this shall not entreat me!
Mine own goods I will have, and ask thee no by leave:
What, woman! poor folks must have right, though the thing you aggrieve.

Chat. Give thee thy right, and hang thee up, with all thy beggar's brood!
What, wilt thou make me a thief, and say I stole thy good?

Gammer. Chill say nothing, ich warrant thee, but that ich can prove it well.
Thou set my good even from my door, cham able this to tell!

Chat. Did I, old witch, steal aught was thine? how should that thing be known?
[32]

Gammer. Ich cannot tell; but up thou tookest it as though it had been thine own.

Chat. Marry, fie on thee, thou old gib, with all my very heart!

Gammer. Nay, fie on thee, thou ramp, thou rig, with all that take thy part!

Chat. A vengeance on those lips that layeth such things to my charge!

Gammer. A vengeance on those callet's hips, whose conscience is so large!

Chat. Come out, hog!

Gammer. Come out, hog, and let have me right!

Chat. Thou arrant witch!

Gammer. Thou bawdy bitch, chill make thee curse this night!

Chat. A bag and a wallet!

Gammer. A cart for a callet!

Chat. Why, weenest thou thus to prevail?
I hold thee a groat, I shall patch thy coat!

Gammer. Thou wert as good kiss my tail!
Thou slut, thou cut, thou rakes, thou jakes! will not shame make thee hide [thee]?

Chat. Thou skald, thou bald, thou rotten, thou glutton! I will no longer chide thee;
But I will teach thee to keep home.

Gammer. Wilt thou, drunken beast?

[*They fight.*]

Hodge. Stick to her, gammer, take her by the head, chill warrant you this feast!
Smite, I say, gammer! Bite, I say, gammer! I trow ye will be keen!
Where be your nails? claw her by the jaws, pull me out both her eyen.
Gog's bones, gammer, hold up your head!

[33]*Chat.* I trow, drab, I shall dress thee.
Tarry, thou knave, I hold thee a groat! I shall make these hands bless thee!
Take thou this, old whore, for amends, and learn thy tongue well to tame,
And say thou met at this bickering, not thy fellow but thy dame!

Hodge. Where is the strong stewed whore? chill gi'r a whore's mark!

Stand out one's way, that ich kill none in the dark!
Up, gammer, and ye be alive! chill fight now for us both.
Come no near me, thou scald callet! to kill thee ich were loth.

Chat. Art here again, thou hoddypeke? what, Doll! bring me out my spit.

Hodge. Chill broach thee with this, by m'father's soul, chill conjure that foul spreet.
Let door stand. Cock! why com'st indeed? keep door, thou whoreson boy!

Chat [to Doll]. Stand to it, thou dastard, for thine ears, ise teach thee, a sluttish toy!

Hodge. Gog's wounds, whore, chill make thee avaunt!
Take heed, Cock, pull in the latch!

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

Gammer. Now 'ware thy throat, losel, thou'se pay for all!

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

Chat. Com'st behind me, thou withered witch? and I get once on foot!
Thou'se pay for all, thou old tar-leather! I'll teach thee what longs to 't!
Take thee this to make up thy mouth, till time thou come by more!
[34]

Hodge. Up, gammer, stand on your feet; where is the old whore?
Faith, would chad her by the face, chould crack her callet crown!

Gammer. Ah, Hodge, Hodge, where was thy help, when vixen had me down?

Hodge. By the mass, gammer, but for my staff Chat had gone nigh to spill you!
Ich think the harlot had not cared, and chad not come, to kill you.
But shall we lose our nee'le thus?

Gammer. No, Hodge, chwere loth to do so.
Thinkest thou chill take that at her hand? no, Hodge, ich tell thee no.

Hodge. Chould yet this fray were well take up, and our nee'le at home,
'Twill be my chance else some to kill, wherever it be or whom!

Gammer. We have a parson, Hodge, thou knows, a man esteemed wise,

Mast Doctor Rat; chill for him send, and let me hear his advice.
He will her shrive for all this gear, and give her penance straight;
Wese have our nee'le, else dame Chat comes ne'er within heaven-gate.

Hodge. Yea, marry, gammer, that ich think best: will you now for him send?
The sooner Doctor Rat be here, the sooner wese ha' an end.
And here, gammer! Diccon's devil, as ich remember well,
Of cat, and Chat, and Doctor Rat, a felonious tale did tell.
Chold you forty pound, that is the way your nee'le to get again.

Gammer. Chill ha' him straight! Call out the boy, wese make him take the pain.

Hodge. What, Cock, I say! come out! What devil! can'st not hear?
[35]

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

Gammer. Come hither, Cock, anon!
Hence swith to Doctor Rat, hie thee that thou were gone,
And pray him come speak with me, cham not well at ease.
Shalt have him at his chamber, or else at Mother Bee's;
Else seek him at Hob Filcher's shop, for as cheard it reported,
There is the best ale in all the town, and now is most resorted.

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

Gammer. Yea, by and by, good Cock.

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

Hodge. Now, gammer, shall we two go in, and tarry for his coming?
What devil, woman! pluck up your heart, and leave off all this glooming.
Though she were stronger at the first, as ich think ye did find her,
Yet there ye dress'd the drunken sow, what time ye came behind her.

Gammer. Nay, nay, cham sure she lost not all, for, set th'end to the beginning,
And ich doubt not but she will make small boast of her winning.

THE THIRD ACT. THE FOURTH SCENE.

TIB, HODGE, GAMMER, COCK.

Tib. See, gammer, gammer, Gib, our cat, cham afraid what she aileth;
[36]She stands me gasping behind the door, as though her wind her faileth:
Now let ich doubt what Gib should mean, that now she doth so doat.

Hodge. Hold hither! I chould twenty pound, your nee'le is in her throat.
Grope her, ich say, methinks ich feel it; does not prick your hand?

Gammer. Ich can feel nothing.

Hodge. No! ich know there's not within this land
A murrainer cat than Gib is, betwixt the Thames and Tyne;
Sh'ase as much wit in her head almost as ch'ave in mine.

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

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

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

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

Hodge. By the mass, dame Chat hase me so moved, ich care not what I kill, ma' God a
vow!
Go to, then, Tib, to this gear! hold up her tail and take her!
Chill see what devil is in her guts! chill take the pains to rake her!

Gammer. Rake a cat, Hodge! what wouldest thou do?

Hodge. What, think'st that cham not able?
Did not Tom Tankard rake his curtal t'o'er day standing in the stable?

Gammer. Soft! be content, let's hear what news Cock bringeth from Mast Rat.
[37]

Cock. Gammer, chave been there as you bad, you wot well about what.
'Twill not be long before he come, ich durst swear off a book,
He bids you see ye be at home, and there for him to look.

Gammer. Where didst thou find him, boy? was he not where I told thee?

Cock. Yes, yes, even at Hob Filcher's house, by him that bought and sold me!
A cup of ale had in his hand, and a crab lay in the fire;
Chad much ado to go and come, all was so full of mire.
And, gammer, one thing I can tell: Hob Filcher's nawl was lost,
And Doctor Rat found it again, hard beside the door-post.
I chold a penny can say something, your nee'le again to set.

Gammer. Cham glad to hear so much, Cock, then trust he will not let
To help us herein best he can; therefore, till time he come
Let us go in; if there be ought to get thou shalt have some.

THE FOURTH ACT. THE FIRST SCENE.

DOCTOR RAT, GAMMER GURTON.

Doctor Rat. A man were better twenty times be a bandog and bark,
Than here among such a sort be parish priest or clerk,
Where he shall never be at rest one pissing while a day,
But he must trudge about the town, this way and that way;
Here to a drab, there to a thief, his shoes to tear and rent,
And that which is worst of all, at every knave's commandment!
[38]I had not sit the space to drink two pots of ale,
But Gammer Gurton's sorry boy was straightway at my tail,
And she was sick, and I must come, to do I wot not what!
If once her finger's-end but ache—trudge, call for Doctor Rat!
And when I come not at their call, I only thereby lose;
For I am sure to lack therefore a tithe-pig or a goose.
I warrant you, when truth is known, and told they have their tale,
The matter whereabout I come is not worth a halfpennyworth of ale;
Yet must I talk so sage and smooth, as though I were a gloser
Else ere the year come at an end, I shall be sure the loser.
What work ye, Gammer Gurton? How? here is your friend M[ast] Rat.

Gammer. Ah! good M[ast] Doctor! 'cha troubled, 'cha troubled you, 'chwot well that.

Doctor Rat. How do ye, woman? be ye lusty, or be ye not well at ease?

Gammer. By Gis, Master, cham not sick, but yet chave a disease.
Chad a foul turn now of late, chill tell it you, by gigs!

Doctor Rat. Hath your brown cow cast her calf, or your sandy sow her pigs?

Gammer. No, but chad been as good they had as this, ich wot well.

Doctor Rat. What is the matter?

Gammer. Alas, alas! 'cha lost my good nee'le!
My nee'le, I say, and wot ye what, a drab came by and spied it,
And when I asked her for the same, the filth flatly denied it.

Doctor Rat. What was she that?

Gammer. A dame, ich warrant you! She began to scold and brawl—
Alas, alas! come hither, Hodge! this wretch can tell you all.
[39]

THE FOURTH ACT. THE SECOND SCENE.

HODGE, DOCTOR RAT, GAMMER, DICCON.

Hodge. Good morrow, Gaffer Vicar.

Doctor Rat. Come on, fellow, let us hear!
Thy dame hath said to me, thou knowest of all this gear;
Let's see what thou canst say.

Hodge. By m' fay, sir, that ye shall,
What matter soever there was done, ich can tell your maship [all]:
My Gammer Gurton here, see now,
Sat her down at this door, see now;
And, as she began to stir her, see now,
Her nee'le fell in the floor, see now;
And while her staff she took, see now,
At Gib her cat to fling, see now,
Her nee'le was lost in the floor, see now—
Is not this a wondrous thing, see now?
Then came the quean dame Chat, see now,
To ask for her black cup, see now:
And even here at this gate, see now,

She took that nee'le up, see now:
My gammer then she yede, see now,
Her nee'le again to bring, see now,
And was caught by the head, see now—
Is not this a wondrous thing, see now?
She tare my gammer's coat, see now,
And scratched her by the face, see now;
Chad thought sh'ad stopp'd her throat, see now—
Is not this a wondrous case, see now?
When ich saw this, ich was wroth, see now,
[40]And stert between them twain, see now;
Else ich durst take a book-oath, see now,
My gammer had been slain, see now.

Gammer. This is even the whole matter, as Hodge has plainly told;
And should fain be quiet for my part, that chould.
But help us, good Master, beseech ye that ye do:
Else shall we both be beaten and lose our nee'le too.

Doctor Rat. What would ye have me to do? tell me, that I were gone;
I will do the best that I can, to set you both at one.
But be ye sure dame Chat hath this your nee'le found?

Gammer. Here comes the man, that see her take it up off the ground.
Ask him yourself, Master Rat, if ye believe not me:
And help me to my nee'le, for God's sake and Saint Charity!

Doctor Rat. Come near, Diccon, and let us hear what thou can express.
Wilt thou be sworn thou seest dame Chat this woman's nee'le have?

Diccon. Nay, by Saint Benet, will I not, then might ye think me rave!

Gammer. Why, did'st not thou tell me so even here? canst thou for shame deny it?

Diccon. Ay, marry, gammer; but I said I would not abide by it.

Doctor Rat. Will you say a thing, and not stick to it to try it?

Diccon. "Stick to it," quoth you, Master Rat? marry, sir, I defy it!
Nay, there is many an honest man, when he such blasts hath blown
In his friend's ears, he would be loth the same by him were known.

[41]If such a toy be used oft among the honesty,
It may [not] beseem a simple man of your and my degree.

Doctor Rat. Then we be never the nearer, for all that you can tell!

Diccon. Yea, marry, sir, if ye will do by mine advice and counsel.
If mother Chat see all us here, she knoweth how the matter goes;
Therefore I reed you three go hence, and within keep close,
And I will into dame Chat's house, and so the matter use,
That ere ye could go twice to church I warrant you hear news.
She shall look well about her, but, I durst lay a pledge,
Ye shall of gammer's nee'le have shortly better knowledge.

Gammer. Now, gentle Diccon, do so; and, good sir, let us trudge.

Doctor Rat. By the mass, I may not tarry so long to be your judge.

Diccon. 'Tis but a little while, man; what! take so much pain!
If I hear no news of it, I will come sooner again.

Hodge. Tarry so much, good Master Doctor, of your gentleness!

Doctor Rat. Then let us hie us inward, and, Diccon, speed thy business.

Diccon. Now, sirs, do you no more, but keep my counsel just,
And Doctor Rat shall thus catch some good, I trust;
But mother Chat, my gossip, talk first withal I must,
For she must be chief captain to lay the Rat in the dust.
[42]

THE FOURTH ACT. THE THIRD SCENE.

DICCON, CHAT.

Diccon. Good even, dame Chat, in faith, and well-met in this place!

Chat. Good even, my friend Diccon; whither walk ye this pace?

Diccon. By my truth, even to you, to learn how the world goeth.
Heard ye no more of the other matter? say me now, by your troth!

Chat. O yes, Diccon, hear the old whore and Hodge, that great knave—

But, in faith, I would thou hadst seen—O Lord, I drest them brave!
She bare me two or three souses behind in the nape of the neck,
Till I made her old weasand to answer again, "keck!"
And Hodge, that dirty dastard, that at her elbow stands—
If one pair of legs had not been worth two pair of hands,
He had had his beard shaven if my nails would have served,
And not without a cause, for the knave is well deserved.

Diccon. By the mass, I can thee thank, wench, thou didst so well acquit thee!

Chat. And th' adst seen him, Diccon, it would have made thee beshit thee
For laughter. The whoreson dolt at last caught up a club,
As though he would have slain the master-devil, Belsabub.
But I set him soon inward.

Diccon. O Lord, there is the thing!
That Hodge is so offended! that makes him start and fling!
[43]

Chat. Why? makes the knave any moiling, as ye have seen or heard?

Diccon. Even now I saw him last, like a mad man he far'd,
And sware by heaven and hell he would a-wreak his sorrow,
And leave you never a hen alive by eight of the clock to-morrow;
Therefore mark what I say, and my words see that ye trust.
Your hens be as good as dead, if ye leave them on the roost.

Chat. The knave dare as well go hang himself, as go upon my ground.

Diccon. Well, yet take heed, I say, I must tell you my tale round.
Have you not about your house, behind your furnace or lead
A hole where a crafty knave may creep in for need?

Chat. Yes, by the mass, a hole broke down, even within these two days.

Diccon. Hodge, he intends this same night to slip in thereaways.

Chat. O Christ! that I were sure of it! in faith, he should have his meed!

Diccon. Watch well, for the knave will be there as sure as is your creed.
I would spend myself a shilling to have him swung well.

Chat. I am as glad as a woman can be of this thing to hear tell.
By Gog's bones, when he cometh, now that I know the matter,
He shall sure at the first skip to leap in scalding water,
With a worse turn besides; when he will, let him come.

Diccon. I tell you as my sister; you know what meaneth "mum"!
[44]

THE FOURTH ACT. THE FOURTH SCENE.

DICCON, DOCTOR RAT.

Diccon. Now lack I but my doctor to play his part again.
And lo, where he cometh towards, peradventure to his pain!

Doctor Rat. What good news, Diccon, fellow? is mother Chat at home?

Diccon. She is, sir, and she is not, but it please her to whom;
Yet did I take her tardy, as subtle as she was.

Doctor Rat. The thing that thou went'st for, hast thou brought it to pass?

Diccon. I have done that I have done, be it worse, be it better,
And dame Chat at her wits-end I have almost set her.

Doctor Rat. Why, hast thou spied the nee'le? quickly, I pray thee, tell!

Diccon. I have spied it, in faith, sir, I handled myself so well;
And yet the crafty quean had almost take my trump.
But, ere all came to an end, I set her in a dump.

Doctor Rat. How so, I pray thee, Diccon?

Diccon. Marry, sir, will ye hear?
She was clapp'd down on the backside, by Cock's mother dear,
And there she sat sewing a halter or a band,
With no other thing save gammer's needle in her hand.
As soon as any knock, if the filth be in doubt,
She needs but once puff, and her candle is out:
[45]Now I, sir, knowing of every door the pin,
Came nicely, and said no word, till time I was within;
And there I saw the nee'le, even with these two eyes;

Whoever say the contrary, I will swear he lies.

Doctor Rat. O Diccon, that I was not there then in thy stead!

Diccon. Well, if ye will be ordered, and do by my reed,
I will bring you to a place, as the house stands,
Where ye shall take the drab with the nee'le in her hands.

Doctor Rat. For God's sake do so, Diccon, and I will gage my gown
To give thee a full pot of the best ale in the town.

Diccon. Follow me but a little, and mark what I will say;
Lay down your gown beside you, go to, come on your way!
See ye not what is here? a hole wherein ye may creep
Into the house, and suddenly unawares among them leap;
There shall ye find the bitch-fox and the nee'le together.
Do as I bid you, man, come on your ways hither!

Doctor Rat. Art thou sure, Diccon, the swill-tub stands not hereabout?

Diccon. I was within myself, man, even now, there is no doubt.
Go softly, make no noise; give me your foot, sir John,
Here will I wait upon you, till you come out anon.

[*D. Rat creeps in.*]

Doctor Rat [*calling from within*]. Help, Diccon! out alas! I shall be slain among them!

Diccon. If they give you not the needle, tell them that ye will hang them.
Ware that! How, my wenches! have ye caught the fox,
[46]That used to make revel among your hens and cocks?
Save his life yet for his order, though he sustain some pain.
Gog's bread! I am afraid they will beat out his brain.

Doctor Rat. Woe worth the hour that I came here!
And woe worth him that wrought this gear!
A sort of drabs and queans have me blest—
Was ever creature half so evil drest?
Whoever it wrought, and first did invent it
He shall, I warrant him, ere long repent it!
I will spend all I have without my skin

But he shall be brought to the plight I am in!
Master Baily, I trow, and he be worth his ears,
Will snaffle these murderers, and all that them bears:
I will surely neither bite nor sup
Till I fetch him hither, this matter to take up.

THE FIFTH ACT. THE FIRST SCENE.

MASTER BAILY, DOCTOR RAT.

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

Doctor Rat. If it be counted his fault, besides all his griefs,
When a poor man is spoiled, and beaten among thieves,
Then I confess my fault herein, at this season;
But I hope you will not judge so much against reason.

Baily. And, methinks, by your own tale, of all that ye name,
If any played the thief, you were the very same.
The women they did nothing, as your words made probation,
[47]But stoutly withstood your forcible invasion.
If that a thief at your window to enter should begin,
Would you hold forth your hand and help to pull him in?
Or you would keep him out? I pray you answer me.

Doctor Rat. Marry, keep him out! and a good cause why!
But I am no thief, sir, but an honest learned clerk.

Baily. Yea, but who knoweth that, when he meets you in the dark?
I am sure your learning shines not out at your nose!
Was it any marvel, though the poor woman arose
And start up, being afraid of that was in her purse?
Me-think you may be glad that you[r] luck was no worse.

Doctor Rat. Is not this evil enough, I pray you, as you think?

[*Showing his broken head.*]

Baily. Yea, but a man in the dark, if chances do wink,
As soon he smites his father as any other man,
Because for lack of light discern him he ne can.
Might it not have been your luck with a spit to have been slain?

Doctor Rat. I think I am little better, my scalp is cloven to the brain.
If there be all the remedy, I know who bears the knocks.

Baily. By my troth, and well worthy besides to kiss the stocks!
To come in on the back side, when ye might go about!
I know none such, unless they long to have their brains knock'd out.

Doctor Rat. Well, will you be so good, sir, as talk with dame Chat.
And know what she intended? I ask no more but that.
[48]

Baily. Let her be called, fellow, because of
Master Doctor [*to Scapethrift*],
I warrant in this case she will be her own proctor;
She will tell her own tale in metre or in prose,
And bid you seek your remedy, and so go wipe your nose.

THE FIFTH ACT. THE SECOND SCENE.

M. BAILY, CHAT, D. RAT, GAMMER, HODGE, DICCON.

Baily. Dame Chat, Master Doctor upon you here complained
That you and your maids should him much disorder,
And taketh many an oath, that no word be feigned,
Laying to your charge, how you thought him to murder;
And on his part again, that same man saith further,
He never offended you in word nor intent.
To hear you answer hereto, we have now for you sent.

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

Baily. Belike, then Master Doctor, yon stripe there ye got not!
[49]

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

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

Doctor Rat. How canst thou prove the contrary?

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

Doctor Rat. Too plainly, by St Mary,
This proof, I trow, may serve, though I no word spoke!

[Showing his broken head.]

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

Doctor Rat. No, marry, thou sawest me not; for why thou hadst no light;
But I felt thee for all the dark, beshrew thy smooth cheeks!
And thou groped me, this will declare any day this six weeks.

[Showing his head.]

Baily. Answer me to this, M[ast] Rat: when caught you this harm of yours?

Doctor Rat. A while ago, sir, God he knoweth, within less than these two hours.

Baily. Dame Chat, was there none with you (confess, i' faith) about that season?
What, woman? let it be what it will, 'tis neither felony nor treason.

Chat. Yes, by my faith, Master Baily, there was a knave not far
Who caught one good filip on the brow with a door-bar,
And well was he worthy, as it seemed to me;
But what is that to this man, since this was not he?

Baily. Who was it then? let's hear!

[50]*Doctor Rat.* Alas, sir, ask you that?

Is it not made plain enough by the own mouth of dame Chat?
The time agreeth, my head is broken, her tongue cannot lie,
Only upon a bare nay she saith it was not I.

Chat. No, marry, was it not indeed! ye shall hear by this one thing:
This afternoon a friend of mine for good-will gave me warning,
And bad me well look to my roost, and all my capons' pens,
For if I took not better heed, a knave would have my hens.
Then I, to save my goods, took so much pains as him to watch;
And as good fortune served me, it was my chance him for to catch.
What strokes he bare away, or other what was his gains,
I wot not, but sure I am he had something for his pains!

Baily. Yet tell'st thou not who it was.

Chat. Who it was? A false thief,
That came like a false fox, my pullen to kill and mischief!

Baily. But knowest thou not his name?

Chat. I know it, but what than?
It was that crafty cullion Hodge, my Gammer Gurton's man.

Baily. Call me the knave hither, he shall sure kiss the stocks.
I shall teach him a lesson for filching hens or cocks!

Doctor Rat. I marvel, Master Baily, so bleared be your eyes;
An egg is not so full of meat, as she is full of lies:
When she hath played this prank, to excuse all this gear,
She layeth the fault in such a one as I know was not there.

Chat. Was he not there? look on his pate, that shall be his witness!

Doctor Rat. I would my head were half so whole; I would seek no redress!
[51]

Baily. God bless you, Gammer Gurton!

Gammer. God 'eild ye, master mine!

Baily. Thou hast a knave within thy house—Hodge, a servant of thine;
They tell me that busy knave is such a filching one,

That hen, pig, goose or capon, thy neighbour can have none.

Gammer. By God, cham much a-meved to hear any such report!
Hodge was not wont, ich trow, to have him in that sort.

Chat. A thievisher knave is not on-live, more filching, nor more false;
Many a truer man than he has hanged up by the halse;
And thou, his dame—of all his theft thou art the sole receiver;
For Hodge to catch, and thou to keep, I never knew none better!

Gammer. Sir reverence of your masterdom, and you were out a-door,
Should be so bold, for all her brags, to call her arrant whore;
And ich knew Hodge as bad as t'ou, ich wish me endless sorrow
And should not take the pains to hang him up before to-morrow!

Chat. What have I stolen from thee or thine, thou ill-favor'd old trot?

Gammer. A great deal more, by God's blest, than chever by thee got!
That thou knowest well, I need not say it.

Baily. Stop there, I say,
And tell me here, I pray you, this matter by the way,
How chance Hodge is not here? him would I fain have had.

Gammer. Alas, sir, he'll be here anon; a' be handled too bad.

Chat. Master Baily, sir, ye be not such a fool, well I know.
But ye perceive by this lingering there is a pad in the straw.

[Thinking that Hodge his head was broke, and that Gammer would not let him come before them.]

[52]

Gammer. Chill show you his face, ich warrant thee; lo, now where he is!

Baily. Come on, fellow, it is told me thou art a shrew, i-wis:
Thy neighbour's hens thou takest, and plays the two-legged fox;
Their chickens and their capons too, and now and then their cocks.

Hodge. Ich defy them all that dare it say, cham as true as the best!

Baily. Wert not thou take within this hour in dame Chat's hens'-nest?

Hodge. Take there? no, master; should not do't for a house full of gold!

Chat. Thou, or the devil in thy coat—swear this I dare be bold.

Doctor Rat. Swear me no swearing, quean, the devil he give thee sorrow!
All is not worth a gnat, thou canst swear till to-morrow!
Where is the harm he hath? show it, by God's bread!
Ye beat him with a witness, but the stripes light on my head!

Hodge. Beat me! Gog's blessed body, should first, ich trow, have burst thee!
Ich think, and chad my hands loose, callet, should have crust thee!

Chat. Thou shitten knave, I trow thou knowest the full weight of my fist;
I am foully deceived unless thy head and my door-bar kissed.

Hodge. Hold thy chat, whore; thou criest so loud, can no man else be heard?

Chat. Well, knave, and I had thee alone, I would surely rap thy costard!

[53]

Baily. Sir, answer me to this: Is thy head whole or broken?

Hodge. Yea, Master Baily, blest be every good token,
Is my head whole! Ich warrant you, 'tis neither scurvy nor scald!
What, you foul beast, does think 'tis either pild or bald?
Nay, ich thank God, chill not for all that thou may'st spend
That chad one scab on my narse as broad as thy finger's end.

Baily. Come nearer here!

Hodge. Yes, that ich dare.

Baily. By our Lady, here is no harm,
Hodge's head is whole enough, for all dame Chat's charm.

Chat. By Gog's blest, however the thing he cloaks or smolders,
I know the blows he bare away, either with head or shoulders.
Camest thou not, knave, within this hour, creeping into my pens,
And there was caught within my house, groping among my hens?

Hodge. A plague both on the hens and thee! a cart, whore, a cart!

Chould I were hanged as high as a tree, and chwere as false as thou art!
Give my gammer again her washical thou stole away in thy lap!

Gammer. Yea, Master Baily, there is a thing you know not on, mayhap;
This drab she keeps away my good, the devil he might her snare.
Ich pray you that ich might have a right action on her [fare].

Chat. Have I thy good, old filth, or any such old sow's?
I am as true, I would thou knew, as skin between thy brows.

Gammer. Many a truer hath been hanged, though you escape the danger!
[54]

Chat. Thou shalt answer, by God's pity, for this thy foul slander!

Baily. Why, what can you charge her withal? to say so ye do not well.

Gammer. Marry, a vengeance to her heart! the whore has stol'n my nee'le!

Chat. Thy needle, old witch! how so? it were alms thy soul to knock!
So didst thou say the other day, that I had stol'n thy cock.
And roasted him to my breakfast, which shall not be forgotten,
The devil pull out thy lying tongue and teeth that be so rotten!

Gammer. Give me my nee'le! as for my cock, chould be very loth
That chould here tell he should hang on thy false faith and troth.

Baily. Your talk is such, I can scarce learn who should be most in fault.

Gammer. Yet shall ye find no other wight, save she, by bread and salt!

Baily. Keep ye content a while, see that your tongues ye hold.
Methinks you should remember this is no place to scold.
How knowest thou, Gammer Gurton, dame Chat thy needle had?

Gammer. To name you, sir, the party, chould not be very glad.

Baily. Yea, but we must needs hear it, and therefore say it boldly.

Gammer. Such one as told the tale full soberly and coldly,
Even he that looked on—will swear on a book—
[55]What time this drunken gossip my fair long nee'le up took,

Diccon, Master, the Bedlam, cham very sure ye know him.

Baily. A false knave, by God's pity! ye were but a fool to trow him.
I durst aventure well the price of my best cap,
That when the end is known, all will turn to a jape,
Told he not you that besides she stole your cock that tide?

Gammer. No, master, no indeed; for then he should have lied.
My cock is, I thank Christ, safe and well a-fine.

Chat. Yea, but that rugged colt, that whore, that Tib of thine,
Said plainly thy cock was stol'n, and in my house was eaten.
That lying cut is lost that she is not swunged and beaten,
And yet for all my good name it were a small amends!
I pick not this gear, hear'st thou, out of my fingers' ends;
But he that heard it told me, who thou of late didst name,
Diccon, whom all men knows, it was the very same.

Baily. This is the case: you lost your nee'le about the doors,
And she answers again, she hase no cock of yours;
Thus in you[r] talk and action, from that you do intend,
She is whole five mile wide, from that she doth defend.
Will you say she hath your cock?

Gammer. No, marry, sir, that chill not.

Baily. Will you confess her nee'le?

Chat. Will I? no, sir, will I not.

Baily. Then there lieth all the matter.

Gammer. Soft, master, by the way!
Ye know she could do little, and she could not say nay.
[56]

Baily. Yea, but he that made one lie about your cock-stealing,
Will not stick to make another, what time lies be in dealing.
I ween the end will prove this brawl did first arise
Upon no other ground but only Diccon's lies.

Chat. Though some be lies, as you belike have espied them,

Yet other some be true, by proof I have well tried them.

Baily. What other thing beside this, dame Chat?

Chat. Marry, sir, even this.

The tale I told before, the self-same tale it was his;
He gave me, like a friend, warning against my loss,
Else had my hens be stol'n each one, by God's cross!
He told me Hodge would come, and in he came indeed,
But as the matter chanced, with greater haste than speed.
This truth was said, and true was found, as truly I report.

Baily. If Doctor Rat be not deceived, it was of another sort.

Doctor Rat. By God's mother, thou and he be a couple of subtle foxes!
Between you and Hodge I bear away the boxes.
Did not Diccon appoint the place, where thou should'st stand to meet him?

Chat. Yes, by the mass, and if he came, bad me not stick to spit him.

Doctor Rat. God's sacrament! the villain knave hath dress'd us round about!
He is the cause of all this brawl, that dirty shitten lout!
[57]When Gammer Gurton here complained, and made a rueful moan,
I heard him swear that you had gotten her needle that was gone;
And this to try, he further said, he was full loth; howbeit
He was content with small ado to bring me where to see it.
And where ye sat, he said full certain, if I would follow his reed,
Into your house a privy way he would me guide and lead,
And where ye had it in your hands, sewing about a clout,
And set me in the back-hole, thereby to find you out:
And whiles I sought a quietness, creeping upon my knees,
I found the weight of your door-bar for my reward and fees.
Such is the luck that some men gets, while they begin to mell.
In setting at one such as were out, minding to make all well.

Hodge. Was not well blest, gammer, to 'scape that stour? And chad been there,
Then chad been dress'd, belike, as ill, by the mass, as Gaffer Vicar.

Baily. Marry, sir, here is a sport alone; I looked for such an end.
If Diccon had not play'd the knave, this had been soon amend.
My gammer here he made a fool, and dress'd her as she was;

And goodwife Chat he set to scold, till both parts cried, alas!
And D[octo]r Rat was not behind, whiles Chat his crown did pare.
I would the knave had been stark blind, if Hodge had not his share.

Hodge. Cham meetly well-spiced already among's, cham dress'd like a colt!
And chad not had the better wit, chad been made a dolt.
[58]

Baily. Sir knave, make haste Diccon were here; fetch him, wherever he be!

Chat. Fie on the villain, fie, fie! that makes us thus agree!

Gammer. Fie on him, knave, with all my heart! now fie, and fie again!

Doctor Rat. Now "fie on him!" may I best say, whom he hath almost slain.

Baily. Lo, where he cometh at hand, belike he was not far!
Diccon, here be two or three thy company cannot spare.

Diccon. God bless you, and you may be bless'd, so many all at once!

Chat. Come, knave, it were a good deed to geld thee, by Cock's bones!
Seest not thy handiwork? Sir Rat, can ye forbear him?

Diccon. A vengeance on those hands light, for my hands came not near him.
The whoreson priest hath lift the pot in some of these alewives' chairs,
That his head would not serve him, belike, to come down the stairs.

Baily. Nay, soft! thou may'st not play the knave, and have this language too!
If thou thy tongue bridle a while, the better may'st thou do.
Confess the truth, as I shall ask, and cease a while to fable;
And for thy fault I promise thee thy handling shall be reasonable.
Hast thou not made a lie or two, to set these two by the ears?

Diccon. What if I have? five hundred such have I seen within these seven years:
I am sorry for nothing else but that I see not the sport
Which was between them when they met, as they themselves report.
[59]

Baily. The greatest thing—Master Rat, ye see how he is dress'd!

Diccon. What devil need he be groping so deep, in goodwife Chat's hens' nest?

Baily. Yea, but it was thy drift to bring him into the briars.

Diccon. God's bread! hath not such an old fool wit to save his ears?
He showeth himself herein, ye see, so very a cox,
The cat was not so madly allured by the fox
To run into the snares was set for him, doubtless;
For he leapt in for mice, and this Sir John for madness.

Doctor Rat. Well, and ye shift no better, ye losel, lither, and lazy,
I will go near for this to make ye leap at a daisy.
In the king's name, Master Baily, I charge you set him fast.

Diccon. What! fast at cards or fast on sleep? it is the thing I did last.

Doctor Rat. Nay, fast in fetters, false varlet, according to thy deeds.

Baily. Master Doctor, there is no remedy,
I must entreat you needs Some other kind of punishment.

Doctor Rat. Nay, by All-Hallows!
His punishment, if I may judge, shall be nought else but the gallows.

Baily. That were too sore; a spiritual man to be so extreme!

Doctor Rat. Is he worthy any better, sir? how do you judge and deem?

Baily. I grant him worthy punishment, but in no wise so great.
[60]

Gammer. It is a shame, ich tell you plain, for such false knaves entreat.
He has almost undone us all—that is as true as steel—
And yet for all this great ado cham never the near my nee'le!

Baily. Canst thou not say anything to that, Diccon, with least or most?

Diccon. Yea, marry, sir, thus much I can say well, the nee'le is lost.

Baily. Nay, canst not thou tell which way that needle may be found?

Diccon. No, by my fay, sir, though I might have an hundred pound.

Hodge. Thou liar, lickdish, didst not say the nee'le would be gotten?

Diccon. No, Hodge; by the same token you were that time beshitten
For fear of hobgoblin—you wot well what I mean;
As long as it is since, I fear me yet ye be scarce clean.

Baily. Well, Master Rat, you must both learn and teach us to forgive.
Since Diccon hath confession made, and is so clean shreve,
If ye to me consent, to amend this heavy chance,
I will enjoin him here some open kind of penance,
Of this condition—where ye know my fee is twenty pence:
For the bloodshed, I am agreed with you here to dispense;
Ye shall go quit, so that ye grant the matter now to run
To end with mirth among us all, even as it was begun.

[61]*Chat.* Say yea, Master Vicar, and he shall sure confess to be your debtor,
And all we that be here present will love you much the better.

Doctor Rat. My part is the worst; but since you all hereon agree,
Go even to, Master Baily! let it be so for me!

Baily. How say'st thou, Diccon? art content this shall on me depend?

Diccon. Go to, M[ast] Baily, say on your mind, I know ye are my friend.

Baily. Then mark ye well: To recompense this thy former action—
Because thou hast offended all, to make them satisfaction—
Before their faces here kneel down, and as I shall thee teach—
For thou shalt take an oath of Hodge's leather breech:
First, for Master Doctor, upon pain of his curse,
Where he will pay for all, thou never draw thy purse;
And when ye meet at one pot he shall have the first pull,
And thou shalt never offer him the cup but it be full.
To goodwife that thou shalt be sworn, even on the same wise,
If she refuse thy money once, never to offer it twice.
Thou shalt be bound by the same, here as thou dost take it,
When thou may'st drink of free cost, thou never forsake it.
For Gammer Gurton's sake, again sworn shalt thou be,
To help her to her needle again if it do lie in thee;
And likewise be bound, by the virtue of that,
To be of good a-bearing to Gib her great cat.
Last of all, for Hodge the oath to scan,

Thou shalt never take him for fine gentleman.

Hodge. Come on, fellow Diccon, chall be even with thee now!
[62]

Baily. Thou wilt not stick to do this, Diccon, I trow?

Diccon. No, by my father's skin, my hand down I lay it!
Look, as I have promised, I will not denay it.
But, Hodge, take good heed now, thou do not beshit me!

[And give him a good blow on the buttock.

Hodge. Gog's heart! thou false villain, dost thou bite me?

Baily. What, Hodge, doth he hurt thee ere ever he begin?

Hodge. He thrust me into the buttock with a bodkin or a pin.

[He discovers the needle.

I say, gammer! gammer!

Gammer. How now, Hodge, how now?

Hodge. God's malt, gammer Gurton!

Gammer. Thou art mad, ich trow!

Hodge. Will you see the devil, gammer?

Gammer. The devil, son! God bless us!

Hodge. Chould, [if] ich were hanged, gammer—

Gammer. Marry, see, ye might dress us—

Hodge. Chave it, by the mass, gammer!

Gammer. What, not my nee'le, Hodge?

Hodge. Your nee'le, gammer! your nee'le!

Gammer. No, fie, dost but dodge!

Hodge. Ch' a found your nee'le, gammer, here in my hand be it!

Gammer. For all the loves on earth, Hodge, let me see it!

Hodge. Soft, gammer!

Gammer. Good Hodge!

Hodge. Soft, ich say; tarry a while!

Gammer. Nay, sweet Hodge, say truth, and not me beguile!

Hodge. Cham sure on it, ich warrant you; it goes no more astray.

[63]

Gammer. Hodge, when I speak so fair, wilt still say me nay?

Hodge. Go near the light, gammer, this—well, in faith, good luck!—
Ch'was almost undone, 'twas so far in my buttock!

Gammer. 'Tis mine own dear nee'le, Hodge, sikerly I wot!

Hodge. Cham I not a good son, gammer, cham I not?

Gammer. Christ's blessing light on thee, hast made me for ever!

Hodge. Ich knew that ich must find it, else chould a' had it never!

Chat. By my troth, gossip Gurton, I am even as glad
As though I mine own self as good a turn had!

Baily. And I, by my conscience, to see it so come forth,
Rejoice so much at it, as three needles be worth.

Doctor Rat. I am no whit sorry to see you so rejoice.

Diccon. Nor I much the gladder for all this noise;
Yet say, "Gramercy, Diccon!" for springing of the game.

Gammer. Gramercy, Diccon, twenty times! O, how glad cham!
If that chould do so much, your masterdom to come hither,

Master Rat, Goodwife Chat, and Diccon together,
Cha but one halfpenny, as far as ich know it,
And chill not rest this night, till ich bestow it.
If ever ye love me, let us go in and drink.

Baily. I am content, if the rest think as I think.
Master Rat, it shall be best for you if we so do,
Then shall you warm you and dress yourself too.

[64]*Diccon.* Soft, sirs, take us with you, the company shall be the more!
As proud comes behind, they say, as any goes before!
But now, my good masters, since we must be gone,
And leave you behind us here all alone;
Since at our last ending thus merry we be,
For Gammer Gurton's needle sake, let us have a plaudite.

FINIS.

Gurton. Perused and Allowed, &c. Imprinted at London, in Fleetstreate, beneath the
Conduite, at the signe of S. John Euangelist, by Thomas Colwell, 1575.



[The device of
Thomas Colwell, the printer of "Gammer Gurton's Needle."]

[65]

A NOTE-BOOK AND WORD-LIST

INCLUDING

CONTEMPORARY REFERENCES, NOTES, &C.,
TOGETHER WITH A GLOSSARY OF WORDS
AND PHRASES NOW ARCHAIC OR
OBSOLETE; THE WHOLE ARRANGED

IN ONE ALPHABET IN
DICTIONARY
FORM.

[66]

A FORE-WORD TO NOTE-BOOK AND WORD-LIST

Reference from text to Note-Book is copious, and as complete as may be. The following pages may, with almost absolute certainty, be consulted on any point that may occur in the course of reading.[67]



NOTE-BOOK AND WORD-LIST TO GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

- 'A, the infinitive *have*.
- A-FINE, now, at the moment: *i.e.* at the finish.
- ALEWIVES, women keeping ale-houses.
- ALL-HALLOWS, the old name for All Saints' Day (1st Nov.): formerly ushered in by the ceremonies and merrymakings of All-Hallowe'en.
- ALMS, ALMS-DEED, charity, godsend.
- A-MEVED, moved, disturbed.
- AND, if.
- APERN, apron: the usual early form of the word.
- ARRAYED, (*a*) disconcerted, afflicted, put out. (*b*) bespattered.
- AVENTURE, venture, risk, wager.
- A-WREAK, avenge.

- BACK SIDE, at the back of the house, backyard.
- BALD, short for bald-head, bald-pate: a generic term of abuse.
- BALKS, beams, rafters, an overhead rack used for storing bacon.
- BEDLAM, a crazy beggar, real or assumed: properly a convalescent from Bethlehem Hospital, an asylum for lunatics since 1547. Many of these unfortunates, being either unable or unwilling to work, adopted vagrancy as a

profession, the Simon Pures being avouched by an official arm-badge. These were considerably augmented by the often deserving (but more frequently spurious) poor who had, until the dissolution of the monasteries, been the special care of the religious.

- BET, the old past tense of *beat*: still dialectical.
- BLEST, bliss.
- BODY-LOUSE, proud, conceited, fine. Later we get "*brisk as a body-louse*" (Ray).
- BONABLE, abominable.
- BOOTS, avails, profits, is of advantage, matters.
- BORROW, pledge, security.
- BOULOGNE, *Our dear Lady of Boulogne*, the image of the Virgin Mary at Boulogne, formerly in so much reverence that pilgrimages were made to it.
- BRAWL, brat, offspring.
- BREAD AND SALT, a common sixteenth-century oath, probably as symbolising the necessities of life.
- BURSTING, breaking.
- BY AND BY, immediately.

- CALLET, a lewd woman, drab, scold.
- CANDLE, "a *candle* shall they have a piece." In all cases of distress it was usual with Roman Catholics to promise their tutelary saints to light up candles at their altars.
- CHAD, see Cham.
- CHAM, I am. The rustic dialect in the piece is conventional, but its general peculiarities are those of the south-western counties: *iche* = I, reduced to *ch* in *cham*, *chould*, or *chwold* (I would), *chwere*, &c. The south-western *v* for *f* is not generally used, but occurs in *vylthy*, *vast*, and in *vathers*; *glaye* (p. 5) for clay is probably not genuine dialect.
- CHANNOT, see Cham.
- CHAVE, see Cham.
- CHILL, see Cham.
- CHOLD, I hold. *To hold a noble* = to wager or bet.
- CHOPE, see Cham.
- CHWOLD, see Cham.
- CLOTH, "painted on a *cloth*," the cloth hangings of taverns on which were depicted such popular themes as the Nine Worthies, the Prodigal Son, and, as in this case, Friar Rush (*q.v.*).
- COAT, see Walk.
- COCK'S BODY, COCK'S PASSION, COCK'S PRECIOUS, &c., a corruption of God: euphemistic.

- COCK'S MOTHER (p. 44), see previous entry: the reader must not fall into the error of thinking that Gammer Gurton is here meant.
 - COLOGNE, "the three kings of *Cologne*." These are supposed to have been the wise men who travelled to Bethlehem by the direction of the star. To these kings have been given the names of Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar.
 - COMMODITY, a word which formerly had plenty to do: anything that afforded advantage, interest, or convenience was *commodity*—profit, interest, accommodation, opportunity, wares, goods, movables, and even harlots.
 - COSTARD, (a) the head, pate.
(b) a large kind of apple.
 - COUNSEL, in secrecy, confidence.
 - COX, a coxcomb, fool: jesters formerly wore a cap surmounted by a comb or crest resembling that of a cock: cf. cokes = fool.
 - CRAB, *i.e.* a roasted crabapple put in a bowl of ale: it served a double purpose, to flavour and also to "chill" the beverage.
 - CRUST, crushed.
 - CULLION, poltroon, base contemptible fellow: a generic term of abuse.
 - CURTAL, a short-tailed horse, one docked in the tail.
 - CUT, a gelding: hence of both sexes, but specifically of women.
-
- DAINTRELS, dainties, delicacies, luxuries.
 - DAISY, "leap at a *daisy*," be hanged. The allusion is to a story of a man who, when the noose was adjusted round his neck, leapt off with the words, "Have at yon daisy that grows yonder."
 - DEFY, refuse, deny, renounce.
 - DICCON, a nickname for Richard: see Bedlam.
 - DISEASE, anxiety, trouble: originally general in meaning = absence of ease.
 - DOAT, rave, act the fool.
 - DOCK, tail, backside: *i.e.* get his backside kicked.
 - DODGE, "ga' me the *dodge*," *i.e.* cheated, tricked me.
 - DRAB, a generic reproach—strumpet, slattern, slut.
 - DRESS'D, served out, done for.
 - DUMP, ill of ease, melancholy: now obsolete in the singular.
-
- EVERYCHONE, everyone.
 - EKE, also, besides, likewise, moreover: still occasional in poetry.
-
- FELLOW, (a) "originally a courteous mode of addressing a servant, like the French *mon ami*: here *fellow* = comrade" (Bradley).
(b) "Not thy *fellow*, but thy dame," *i.e.* not thy equal, but thy mistress.
 - FILTH, vile person: a strong reproach.
 - FLYING FIEND, the devil.

- FORTY, generic for an indefinite number: forty pence (or ten groats) = the sum commonly offered for a small wager. Several law fees were fixed at that sum, viz., 3s. 4d.; and when money was reckoned by pounds, marks, and nobles, forty pence was just the half-noble, or the sixth of a pound.
- FOX, "allured by the *fox*," see *History of Reynard the Fox* (1701), vii. (Steevens).
- FRIAR RUSH, the principal character in a popular folk-lore story translated from the German. The devil, in friar's garb, seeking to corrupt a convent of monks by delicious fare, assumes human shape, knocks at the door, and is admitted as cook's boy. A favourable opportunity enabling him to dispose of his chief in a boiling cauldron, he is appointed to his place. The virtue of the convent is now at his mercy: the monks forget prayer and fasting over Ruus' exquisite cookery. Strife and wantonness creep in, and the monks are all but lost, when a peasant who has involuntarily overheard a conclave of devils discussing Ruus, discloses his true nature. The abbot, summoning all the monks into the church, seizes Ruus, transforms him into a red horse, and commits him to the power of hell (Herford). There are several versions, the earliest known English one bearing date 1620, but the Stationers' Company registers show it as entered in 1568-9. That the story was extremely popular is obvious from numerous contemporary allusions.
- GAFFER, formerly a respectful address, but now in contempt: a corruption of *granfer*, itself a corruption of *grandfather*. The co-relative is *gammer* (q.v.).
- GAMMER, an old wife, old lady: formerly, like *gaffer* (which see), a respectful address. *Gammer* = *grammer* = grandmother.
- GEAR, a word, if not of-all-work, with plenty to do—goods, property in general, outfit, tools, necessities, materials, stuffs, matters, business, affairs, manners, habits, customs, rubbish, trash—all are included: sometimes = affair, contention.
- GIB, (a) a generic name for male cats: hence a common reproach. (b) "To set the gib forward" = to expedite matters: proverbial.
- GIS, GYS, JIS, &c., Jesus: supposed by some to be a corruption of the letters I.H.S. anciently set on altars, covers of books, &c., to denote the name of Jesus: rather, however, from the name itself.
- GITTEN, got.
- GLAY, see Cham.
- GLOOMING, sulking: cf. "glum."
- GOD, "God 'ield you" (p. 143a), i.e. God yield you = God reward you: the compositor has duplicated the *d* of *God* in the next word: cf. *Good den*, *God deven* = good e'en.

- GOG'S (*passim*), God's. Thus, Gog's blest, Gog's bones, Gog's bread, Gog's cross, Gog's malison, Gog's sacrament, Gog's sides, Gog's soul, Gog's wounds.
 - GOOD, property.
 - GOSSIP, a sponsor in baptism: hence an intimate acquaintance, neighbour.
 - GRAMMERCY, an exclamation of surprise and thanks: Fr. *grand merci*.
-
- HALSE, neck, throat.
 - HAVE, behave.
 - HODDEPEAK, fool, cuckold.
 - HOLD, wager, bet.
 - HONESTY, the honest sort of people.
 - HOOD, "I can drink With him that wears a *hood*," *i.e.* a friar; an allusion to their notoriously drunken habits.
-
- INOWE, enough.
 - I-WIS, I-WYS, certainly, indeed, truly.
-
- JAKES, privy, cesspool: Gammer racks her vocabulary for terms of reproach.
 - JAPE, jest, joke.
 - JET, JETTETH, in modern phrase to put on "side" (in word or act), brag, strut, vaunt, swagger: also in a weaker sense = to go.
-
- KIND, nature.
-
- LEAD, copper.
 - LESE, lose.
 - LET, hindrance, hinder: archaic except in the phrase "without let or hindrance."
 - LEVE, dear, beloved: *i.e. lief*.
 - LICKDISH, parasite.
 - LITHER, sluggish, spiritless, or as Hazlitt says "wicked," but the true reading is an open question.
 - LONGS, is appropriate to, fitting for, beseeching.
 - LOOSE-BREECH, a slovenly lout.
 - LOSE (p. 27), read *lese* for the rhyme.
 - LOSEL, a generic reproach—profligate, rake, scoundrel; and (in weakened form) ne'er-do-well, good-for-nothing.
-
- MALT-WORM, tippler, toper.
 - MAS, a vulgar or jocular shortening of *master*, usually followed by a proper name or official title: also Mast.
 - MASTERDOM, mastership.
 - MELL, meddle, fight, interfere.

- MEVE, move.
 - MINDS, intends, purposes.
 - MINIONS, wantons, strumpets: also in a weaker sense, favourite, darling.
 - MO, more.
 - MOILING, ado, toiling.
 - MOT, may.
-
- NARSE, one of many instances in which *n* is found prefixed to a word properly commencing with a vowel: cf. *newt*, *nickname*, *nuncle*; also the converse flexion omitting *n*, *adder*, *apron*, *umpire*, *orange*, for *nadder*, *napron*, *numpire*, *norange*.
 - NAWL, awl: see previous entry.
 - NE, nor.
 - NEAR, nearer.
 - NICELY, carefully, quietly, gently.
 - NOBLE, coin value 6s. 8d.: see Chold and Hold.
 - NOTHER, neither, nor.
-
- ON-LIVE, alive, of which on-live is an earlier form.
 - OR, ere.
 - OUGHT, owed.
-
- PAD, see Straw.
 - PALTER, to speak indistinctly, mumble.
 - PARTS, parties.
 - PARTY, person: once literary but now vulgar.
 - PATCH, (*a*) fool, buffoon, jester: the nickname of Cardinal Wolsey's domestic fool, whose real name was Sexton. Murray suggests the influence of It. *pazzo* (= fool), combined with the motley wear of professional buffoons.
 - PATINS, "it went on *patins*" (p. 27), *i.e.* a great clatter was made: often used figuratively of the tongue.
 - PERFIT, perfect.
 - PES, hassock: an East Anglian word.
 - PIGSNIE, an endearment.
 - PILD, stripped, shorn: whether by shaving or disease.
 - PILL, plunder, strip.
 - PIN, latch, bolt.
 - PISSING WHILE, a short time.
 - PLANCH, to plank on: *i.e.* to plaster by patching all round.
 - POUPED, deceived.
 - PRANCOME, anything odd or strange, a trick, device.

- PUDDINGS, entrails, guts.
- PULLEN, poultry.
- QUEAN, a wanton.
- RAKES (p. 32), a term of abuse: not found elsewhere, and seemingly chosen because of the jingle: cf. the whole passage. Possibly an abbreviated form of Rakehell or Rakeshame.
- RAMP, wanton, strumpet.
- RAVE, talk wildly, without thought.
- RECEIVER (p. 51), "perhaps we should read *recetter* for the sake of the rhyme" (Bradley).
- RECHLESS, "swear to Diccon, *rechless*" (p. 19), reckless: *i.e.* without reservation, not minding the sense of the humorous oath which the Baily administers. Another example of similar fooling is the Highgate oath which travellers toward London were required to take at a certain tavern at Highgate—that they would not prefer small beer before strong, unless indeed they liked the small better; never to kiss the maid if they could kiss the mistress, unless the maid was prettier; and other statements of a similar kind.
- REED, (a) rood.
(b) counsel, advice.
- RIG, strumpet.
- RIGHT SIDE, "thou rose not on thy *right side*" p. 17), *i.e.* "you did not commence the day well," "you are not lucky."
- ROMTH, room, space.
- ROTTEN, rat.
- RUSH, see Friar Rush.
- ST. CHARITY, a known saint among Roman Catholics.
- ST. DOMINIC, the founder of the order of Dominicans or Black Friars: the order was approved by Pope Innocent III. in 1215, and was established in London, building the Convent of the Blackfriars in 1276: the name is perpetuated in the bridge.
- SCABB'D HORSE, sorry "screw" of a horse: *scabb'd* and *scald* (q.v.) are synonymous, and both are used in contempt.
- SCALD, scabby, mean, sorry: hence *scald squire* = a term of contempt; *scald* (or *skald*), subs. = a mean wretch.
- SEVEN, proverbial, according to the context, for an indefinite length of time.
- SHAVE, extort, strip, cheat.
- SHOEING-HORN, a pretext, an incitement.
- SHREVE, shrive, confess, absolve: *shreve* by poetic licence.

- SHREW, (a) curse, call over the coals.
(b) the word was formerly applied in contempt to both sexes.
 - SHRIVE, confess: see Shreve.
 - SIKERLY, securely, certainly.
 - SIR JOHN, a priest.
 - SIR REVERENCE, an apology on mentioning anything for which an excuse was thought necessary. Lat. *salvâ reverentiâ*, whence sa' reverence, sur-reverence, and sir-reverence.
 - SITH, SITHENS, since, because.
 - SLIP, neglect.
 - SMELL, detect, understand, "twig."
 - SMOLDERS, smothers.
 - SORT, company, assembly.
 - SOSSING, dashing, sousing.
 - SPURRIER, harness-maker.
 - SQUIRT, diarrhœa, squitters.
 - STEWED WHORE, a foundered jade of the stews.
 - STICK, be scrupulous, hesitate.
 - STOUND, trouble, disaster, blow: also interval, time, station, place—hence, generally, circumstances, exigence, situation.
 - STOUR, uproar, tumult.
 - STRAW, "a pad in the *straw*," toad: *i.e.* something lurking or hidden.
 - SWINK, labour, drudgery.
 - SWYTH, with vigour and speed, promptly, quickly.
 - TAR-LEATHER, a term of abuse.
-
- THE, "so mote I *the*," so may I thrive.
 - THROAT-BOLE, gullet, windpipe.
 - TOSSING, first-rate, sharp.
 - T'OU, thou.
 - TOWN, "the ground attached to the house: cf. Scots *toun*" (Bradley).
 - TOYS, generic for trifles, persons, and things of little importance, tricks, fancies, &c.
 - TROT, old woman; usually in contempt, and = drab, slut, strumpet.
 - TROWL, "*trowl* to me the bowl" (p. 15), a common phrase in drinking for passing the vessel about.
 - TRUMP, the card game of triumph.
 - TWENTY DEVIL WAY, a favourite malediction: *i.e.* in the name of twenty devils.
 - TWO-LEGGED FOX, a thief, *two-legged cat* is a colloquialism which is still of service in everyday speech as a retort to blame put on a cat for stealing—"a *two-legged cat*, then!"

- WASHICAL, *i.e.* What shall I call [it]; in modern guise, Whatch-em-may-call-it, &c.
- WEET, learn, know.
- WESE, we shall.
- WHEWLING, crying, blubbering, fretful.
- WIDE, wide of the mark: cf. modern slang usage = well-informed, clever, &c.
- WOLL, will.
- YEDE, went.