

I hope I shall have leisure to make good,
If this be not a dream I see and hear.

Ang. That is the chain, sir, which you had
of me. 380

Ant. S. I think it be, sir; I deny it not.

Ant. E. And you, sir, for this chain arrested
me.

Ang. I think I did, sir; I deny it not.

Adr. I sent you money, sir, to be your bail,
By Dromio; but I think he brought it not. 385

Dro. E. No, none by me.

Ant. S. This purse of ducats I receiv'd from
you,

And Dromio, my man, did bring them me. 388

I see we still did meet each other's man,
And I was ta'en for him, and he for me,

And thereupon these errors are arose.

Ant. E. These ducats pawn I for my father
here. 392

Duke. It shall not need: thy father hath his
life.

Cour. Sir, I must have that diamond from
you.

Ant. E. There, take it; and much thanks for
my good cheer.

Abb. Renowned duke, vouchsafe to take the
pains 396

To go with us into the abbey here,
And hear at large discoursed all our fortunes;

And all that are assembled in this place,
That by this sympathized one day's error 400

Have suffer'd wrong, go keep us company,
And we shall make full satisfaction.

Thirty-three years have I but gone in travail
Of you, my sons; and, till this present hour 404

My heavy burdens ne'er delivered.

The duke, my husband, and my children both,

And you the calendars of their nativity,
Go to a gossip's feast, and joy with me: 408

After so long grief such festivity!

Duke. With all my heart I'll gossip at this
feast.

[*Exeunt DUKE, ABBESS, JEGON, Courtezan,*
Merchant, ANGELO, and Attendants.

Dro. S. Master, shall I fetch your stuff from
shipboard?

Ant. E. Dromio, what stuff of mine hast thou
embark'd? 412

Dro. S. Your goods that lay at host, sir, in
the Centaur.

Ant. S. He speaks to me. I am your master,
Dromio:

Come, go with us; we'll look to that anon:
Embrace thy brother there; rejoice with him.

[*Exeunt ANTIPHOLUS of Syracuse and*
ANTIPHOLUS of Ephesus, ADRIANA

and LUCIANA.

Dro. S. There is a fat friend at your master's
house, 417

That kitchen'd me for you to-day at dinner:
She now shall be my sister, not my wife.

Dro. E. Methinks you are my glass, and not
my brother: 420

I see by you I am a sweet-fac'd youth.
Will you walk in to see their gossiping?

Dro. S. Not I, sir; you are my elder.

Dro. E. That's a question: how shall we try
it? 424

Dro. S. We'll draw cuts for the senior: till
then lead thou first.

Dro. E. Nay, then, thus:
Wecame into the world like brother and brother;

And now let's go hand in hand, not one before
another. [*Exeunt.*

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

DON PEDRO, Prince of Arragon.
DON JOHN, his bastard Brother.
CLAUDIO, a young Lord of Florence.
BENEDICK, a young Lord of Padua.
LEONATO, Governor of Messina.
ANTONIO, his Brother.
BALTHAZAR, Servant to Don Pedro.
BORACHIO, } followers of Don John.
CONRADE, }
DOGBERRY, a Constable.

VERGES, a Headborough.
FRIAR FRANCIS.
A Sexton.
A Boy.

HERO, Daughter to Leonato.
BEATRICE, Niece to Leonato.
MARGARET, } Waiting-gentlewomen attending on Hero.
URSULA, }
Messengers, Watch, Attendants, &c.

SCENE.—Messina.

ACT I

SCENE I.—Before LEONATO'S House.

Enter LEONATO, HERO, BEATRICE and others,
with a Messenger.

Leon. I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of
Arragon comes this night to Messina.

Mess. He is very near by this: he was not
three leagues off when I left him. 4

Leon. How many gentlemen have you lost in
this action?

Mess. But few of any sort, and none of name.

Leon. A victory is twice itself when the
achiever brings home full numbers. I find here
that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honour on
a young Florentine called Claudio. 11

Mess. Much deserved on his part and equally
remembered by Don Pedro. He hath borne
himself beyond the promise of his age, doing
in the figure of a lamb the feats of a lion: he
hath indeed better bettered expectation than
you must expect of me to tell you how. 17

Leon. He hath an uncle here in Messina will
be very much glad of it.

Mess. I have already delivered him letters,
and there appears much joy in him; even so
much that joy could not show itself modest
enough without a badge of bitterness. 24

Leon. Did he break out into tears?

Mess. In great measure.

Leon. A kind overflow of kindness. There are
no faces truer than those that are so washed:
how much better is it to weep at joy than to joy
at weeping! 29

Beat. I pray you is Signior Mountanto re-
turned from the wars or no?

Mess. I know none of that name, lady: there
was none such in the army of any sort. 33

Leon. What is he that you ask for, niece?

Hero. My cousin means Signior Benedick of
Padua. 36

Mess. O! he is returned, and as pleasant as
ever he was.

Beat. He set up his bills here in Messina and
challenged Cupid at the flight; and my uncle's

fool, reading the challenge, subscribed for Cupid,
and challenged him at the bird-bolt. I pray
you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these
wars? But how many hath he killed? for, indeed,
I promised to eat all of his killing. 45

Leon. Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick
too much; but he'll be meet with you, I doubt
it not. 48

Mess. He hath done good service, lady, in
these wars.

Beat. You had musty victual, and he hath
help to eat it: he is a very valiant trencher-
man; he hath an excellent stomach. 53

Mess. And a good soldier too, lady.

Beat. And a good soldier to a lady; but
what is he to a lord? 56

Mess. A lord to a lord, a man to a man;
stuffed with all honourable virtues.

Beat. It is so, indeed; he is no less than a
stuffed man; but for the stuffing,—well, we are
all mortal. 61

Leon. You must not, sir, mistake my niece.
There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior
Benedick and her: they never meet but there's
a skirmish of wit between them. 63

Beat. Alas! he gets nothing by that. In our
last conflict four of his five wits went halting off,
and now is the whole man governed with one!
so that if he have wit enough to keep himself
warm, let him bear it for a difference between
himself and his horse; for it is all the wealth
that he hath left to be known a reasonable
creature. Who is his companion now? He hath
every month a new sworn brother. 74

Mess. Is't possible?

Beat. Very easily possible: he wears his faith
but as the fashion of his hat; it ever changes
with the next block.

Mess. I see, lady, the gentleman is not in
your books. 80

Beat. No; an he were, I would burn my
study. But, I pray you, who is his companion?

Is there no young squarer now that will make a
voyage with him to the devil? 84

Mess. He is most in the company of the right
noble Claudio.

Beat. O Lord! he will hang upon him like a disease: he is sooner caught than the pestilence, and the taker runs presently mad. God help the noble Claudio! if he have caught the Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound ere a' be cured.

Mess. I will hold friends with you, lady.

Beat. Do, good friend.

Leon. You will never run mad, niece.

Beat. No, not till a hot January.

Mess. Don Pedro is approached.

Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHAZAR, and Others.

D. Pedro. Good Signior Leonato, you are come to meet your trouble: the fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

Leon. Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your Grace, for trouble being gone, comfort should remain; but when you depart from me, sorrow abides and happiness takes his leave.

D. Pedro. You embrace your charge too willingly. I think this is your daughter.

Leon. Her mother hath many times told me so.

Bene. Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?

Leon. Signior Benedick, no; for then you were a child.

D. Pedro. You have it full, Benedick: we may guess by this what you are, being a man. Truly, the lady fathers herself. Be happy, lady, for you are like an honourable father.

Bene. If Signior Leonato be her father, she would not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is.

Beat. I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you.

Bene. What! my dear Lady Disdain, are you yet living?

Beat. Is it possible Disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

Bene. Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted; and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.

Beat. A dear happiness to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that: I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

Bene. God keep your ladyship still in that mind; so some gentleman or other shall scape a predestinate scratched face.

Beat. Scratching could not make it worse, an 'twere such a face as yours were.

Bene. Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

Beat. A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

Bene. I would my horse had the speed of

your tongue, and so good a continuer. But keep your way, I' God's name; I have done.

Beat. You always end with a jade's trick: I know you of old.

D. Pedro. This is the sum of all, Leonato: Signior Claudio, and Signior Benedick, my dear friend Leonato hath invited you all. I tell him we shall stay here at the least a month, and he heartily prays some occasion may detain us longer: I dare swear he is no hypocrite, but prays from his heart.

Leon. If you swear, my lord, you shall not be forsworn. [To DON JOHN.] Let me bid you welcome, my lord: being reconciled to the prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

D. John. I thank you: I am not of many words, but I thank you.

Leon. Please it your Grace lead on?

D. Pedro. Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

[*Exeunt all but* BENEDICK and CLAUDIO.
Claud. Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

Bene. I noted her not; but I looked on her.

Claud. Is she not a modest young lady?

Bene. Do you question me, as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgment; or would you have me speak after my custom, as being a professed tyrant to their sex?

Claud. No; I pray thee speak in sober judgment.

Bene. Why, I' faith, methinks she's too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise: only this commendation I can afford her, that were she other than she is, she were unhandsome, and being no other but as she is, I do not like her.

Claud. Thou thinkest I am in sport: I pray thee tell me truly how thou likest her.

Bene. Would you buy her, that you inquire after her?

Claud. Can the world buy such a jewel?

Bene. Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you this with a sad brow, or do you play the flouting Jack, to tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder, and Vulcan a rare carpenter? Come, in what key shall a man take you, to go in the song?

Claud. In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.

Bene. I can see yet without spectacles and I see no such matter; there's her cousin, an she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

Claud. I would scarce trust myself, though I had sworn to the contrary, if Hero would be my wife.

Bene. Is't come to this, I' faith? Hath not the world one man but he will wear his cap with suspicion? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again? Go to, I' faith; an thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it, and sigh away Sundays. Look! Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

Re-enter DON PEDRO.

D. Pedro. What secret hath held you here, that you followed not to Leonato's?

Bene. I would your Grace would constrain me to tell.

D. Pedro. I charge thee on thy allegiance.

Bene. You hear, Count Claudio: I can be secret as a dumb man; I would have you think so; but on my allegiance, mark you this, on my allegiance: he is in love. With who? now that is your Grace's part. Mark how short his answer is: with Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

Claud. If this were so, so were it uttered.

Bene. Like the old tale, my lord: 'it is not so, nor 'twas not so; but, indeed, God forbid it should be so.'

Claud. If my passion change not shortly, God forbid it should be otherwise.

D. Pedro. Amen, if you love her; for the lady is very well worthy.

Claud. You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

D. Pedro. By my troth, I speak my thought.

Claud. And in faith, my lord, I spoke mine.

Bene. And by my two faiths and troths, my lord, I spoke mine.

Claud. That I love her, I feel.

D. Pedro. That she is worthy, I know.

Bene. That I neither feel how she should be loved nor know how she should be worthy, is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me: I will die in it at the stake.

D. Pedro. Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic in the despite of beauty.

Claud. And never could maintain his part but in the force of his will.

Bene. That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks; but that I will have a recheat winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle in an invisible baldrick, all women shall pardon me. Because I will not do them the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust none; and the fine is,—for the which I may go the finer,—I will live a bachelor.

D. Pedro. I shall see thee, ere I die, look pale with love.

Bene. With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord; not with love: prove that ever I lose more blood with love than I will get again with drinking, pick out mine eyes with a ballad-maker's pen, and hang me up at the door of a brothel-house for the sign of blind Cupid.

D. Pedro. Well, if ever thou dost fall from this faith, thou wilt prove a notable argument.

Bene. If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat and shoot at me; and he that hits me, let him be clapped on the shoulder, and called Adam.

D. Pedro. Well, as time shall try:

Bene. In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke.

Bene. The savage bull may; but if ever the sensible Benedick bear it, pluck off the bull's horns and set them in my forehead; and let me be vilely painted, and in such great letters as they write, 'Here is good horse to hire,' let them signify under my sign 'Here you may see Benedick the married man.'

Claud. If this should ever happen, thou wouldst be horn-mad.

D. Pedro. Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in Venice, thou wilt quake for this shortly.

Bene. I look for an earthquake too then.

D. Pedro. Well, you will temporize with the hours. In the meantime, good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's: commend me to him and tell him I will not fail him at supper; for indeed he hath made great preparation.

Bene. I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassy; and so I commit you—

Claud. To the tuition of God: from my house, if I had it,—

D. Pedro. The sixth of July: your loving friend, Benedick.

Bene. Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your discourse is sometime guarded with fragments, and the guards are but slightly basted on neither: ere you flout old ends any further, examine your conscience: and so I leave you.

[*Exit.*
Claud. My liege, your highness now may do me good.

D. Pedro. My love is thine to teach: teach it but how,

And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

Claud. Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

D. Pedro. No child but Hero; she's his only heir.

Dost thou affect her, Claudio?

Claud. O! my lord, When you went onward on this ended action, I looked upon her with a soldier's eye,

That lik'd, but had a rougher task in hand Than to drive liking to the name of love;

But now I am return'd, and that war-thoughts Have left their places vacant, in their rooms

Come thronging soft and delicate desires, All prompting me how fair young Hero is,

Saying, I lik'd her ere I went to wars.

D. Pedro. Thou wilt be like a lover presently, And tire the hearer with a book of words.

If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it, And I will break with her, and with her father,

And thou shalt have her. Was't not to this end That thou began'st to twist so fine a story?

Claud. How sweetly do you minister to love, That know love's grief by his complexion!

But lest my liking might too sudden seem, I would have salv'd it with a longer treatise.

D. Pedro. What need the bridge much broader than the flood?

The fairest grant is the necessity. Look, what will serve is fit: 'tis once, thou lov'st,

And I will fit thee with the remedy.

I know we shall have revelling to-night: I will assume thy part in some disguise,

And tell fair Hero I am Claudio; And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart,

And take her hearing prisoner with the force And strong encounter of my amorous tale:

Then, after to her father will I break; And the conclusion is, she shall be thine. In practice let us put it presently.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—A Room in LEONATO'S House.

Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, meeting.

Leon. How now, brother! Where is my cousin, your son? Hath he provided this music?

Ant. He is very busy about it. But, brother, I can tell you strange news that you yet dreamt not of.

Leon. Are they good?

Ant. As the event stamps them: but they have a good cover; they show well outward. The prince and Count Claudio, walking in a thick-pleached alley in my orchard, were thus much overheard by a man of mine: the prince discovered to Claudio that he loved my niece your daughter, and meant to acknowledge it this night in a dance; and, if he found her accordant, he meant to take the present time by the top and instantly break with you of it.

Leon. Hath the fellow any wit that told you this?

Ant. A good sharp fellow: I will send for him; and question him yourself.

Leon. No, no; we will hold it as a dream till it appear itself: but I will acquaint my daughter withal, that she may be the better prepared for an answer, if peradventure this be true. Go you, and tell her of it. [Several persons cross the stage.] Cousins, you know what you have to do. O! I cry you mercy, friend; go you with me, and I will use your skill. Good cousin, have a care this busy time.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.—Another Room in LEONATO'S House.

Enter DON JOHN and CONRADE.

Con. What the good-year, my lord! why are you thus out of measure sad?

D. John. There is no measure in the occasion that breeds; therefore the sadness is without limit.

Con. You should hear reason.

D. John. And when I have heard it, what blessing brings it?

Con. If not a present remedy, at least a patient sufferance.

D. John. I wonder that thou, being,—as thou say'st thou art,—born under Saturn, goest about to apply a moral medicine to a mortifying mischief. I cannot hide what I am: I must be sad when I have cause, and smile at no man's jests; eat when I have stomach, and wait for no man's leisure; sleep when I am drowsy, and tend on no man's business; laugh when I am merry, and claw no man in his humour.

Con. Yea; but you must not make the full show of this till you may do it without controlment. You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace; where it is impossible you should take true root but by the fair weather that you make yourself: it is needful that you frame the season for your own harvest.

D. John. I had rather be a canker in a hedge

than a rose in his grace; and it better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any: in this, though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a muzzle and enfranchised with a clog; therefore I have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking: in the meantime, let me be that I am, and seek not to alter me.

Con. Can you make no use of your discontent?

D. John. I make all use of it, for I use it only. Who comes here?

Enter BORACHIO.

What news, Borachio?

Bora. I came yonder from a great supper: the prince, your brother, is royally entertained by Leonato; and I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

D. John. Will it serve for any model to build mischief on? What is he for a fool that betrays himself to unquietness?

Bora. Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

D. John. Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

Bora. Even he.

D. John. A proper squire! And who, and who? which way looks he?

Bora. Marry, on Hero, the daughter and heir of Leonato.

D. John. A very forward March-chick! How came you to this?

Bora. Being entertained for a perfumer, as I was smoking a musty room, comes me the prince and Claudio, hand in hand, in sad conference: I whipt me behind the arras, and there heard it agreed upon that the prince should woo Hero for himself, and having obtained her, give her to Count Claudio.

D. John. Come, come; let us thither: this may prove food to my displeasure. That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow: if I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way. You are both sure, and will assist me?

Con. To the death, my lord.

D. John. Let us to the great supper: their cheer is the greater that I am subdued. Would the cook were of my mind! Shall we go prove what's to be done?

Bora. We'll wait upon your lordship.

[Exeunt.]

ACT II

SCENE I.—A Hall in LEONATO'S House.

Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, and Others.

Leon. Was not Count John here at supper?

Ant. I saw him not.

Beat. How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see him but I am heart-burned an hour after.

Hero. He is of a very melancholy disposition.

Beat. He were an excellent man that were

made just in the mid-way between him and Benedick: the one is too like an image, and says nothing; and the other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling.

Leon. Then half Signior Benedick's tongue in Count John's mouth, and half Count John's melancholy in Signior Benedick's face,—

Beat. With a good leg and a good foot, uncle, and money enough in his purse, such a man would win any woman in the world, if a' could get her good will.

Leon. By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue.

Ant. In faith, she's too curst.

Beat. Too curst is more than curst: I shall lessen God's sending that way; for it is said, 'God sends a curst cow short horns;' but to a cow too curst he sends none.

Leon. So, by being too curst, God will send you no horns?

Beat. Just, if he send me no husband; for the which blessing I am at him upon my knees every morning and evening. Lord! I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face: I had rather lie in the woollen.

Leon. You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

Beat. What should I do with him? dress him in my apparel and make him my waiting-gentlewoman? He that hath a beard is more than a youth, and he that hath no beard is less than a man; and he that is more than a youth is not for me; and he that is less than a man, I am not for him: therefore I will even take sixpence in earnest of the bear-ward, and lead his apes into hell.

Leon. Well then, go you into hell?

Beat. No; but to the gate; and there will the devil meet me, like an old cuckold, with horns on his head, and say, 'Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven; here's no place for you maids;' so deliver I up my apes, and away to Saint Peter for the heavens; he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

Ant. [To HERO.] Well, niece, I trust you will be ruled by your father.

Beat. Yes, faith; it is my cousin's duty to make curtsy, and say, 'Father, as it please you:'—but yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another curtsy, and say, 'Father, as it please me.'

Leon. Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

Beat. Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be over-mastered with a piece of valiant dust? to make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I'll none: Adam's sons are my brethern; and truly, I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

Leon. Daughter, remember what I told you: if the prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.

Beat. The fault will be in the music, cousin,

if you be not wooed in good time: if the prince be too important, tell him there is measure in everything, and so dance out the answer. For, hear me, Hero: wooing, wedding, and repenting, is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque-pace: the first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly-modest, as a measure, full of state and ancients; and then comes Repentance, and, with his bad legs, falls into the cinque-pace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave.

Leon. Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

Beat. I have a good eye, uncle: I can see a church by daylight.

Leon. The revellers are entering, brother: make good room.

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHAZAR, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, MARGARET, URSULA, and Others, masked.

D. Pedro. Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

Hero. So you walk softly and look sweetly and say nothing, I am yours for the walk; and especially when I walk away.

D. Pedro. With me in your company?

Hero. I may say so, when I please.

D. Pedro. And when please you to say so?

Hero. When I like your favour; for God defend the lute should be like the case!

D. Pedro. My visor is Philemon's roof; within the house is Jove.

Hero. Why, then, your visor should be thatch'd.

D. Pedro. Speak low, if you speak love.

[Takes her aside.]

Balth. Well, I would you did like me.

Marg. So would not I, for your own sake; for I have many ill qualities.

Balth. Which is one?

Marg. I say my prayers aloud.

Balth. I love you the better; the hearers may cry Amen.

Marg. God match me with a good dancer!

Balth. Amen.

Marg. And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done! Answer, clerk.

Balth. No more words: the clerk is answered.

Urs. I know you well enough: you are Signior Antonio.

Ant. At a word, I am not.

Urs. I know you by the wagging of your head.

Ant. To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

Urs. You could never do him so ill-well, unless you were the very man. Here's his dry hand up and down: you are he, you are he.

Ant. At a word, I am not.

Urs. Come, come; do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? Can virtue hide itself? Go to, mum, you are he: graces will appear, and there's an end.

Beat. Will you not tell me who told you so?

Bene. No, you shall pardon me.

Beat. Nor will you not tell me who you are?

Bene. Not now. 135
Beat. That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of the 'Hundred Merry Tales.' Well, this was Signior Benedick that said so.

Bene. What's he?
Beat. I am sure you know him well enough.
Bene. Not I, believe me. 141
Beat. Did he never make you laugh?
Bene. I pray you, what is he?

Beat. Why, he is the prince's jester: a very dull fool; only his gift is in devising impossible slanders: none but libertines delight in him; and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villany; for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet: I would he had boarded me! 151

Bene. When I know the gentleman, I'll tell him what you say.

Beat. Do, do: he'll but break a comparison or two on me; which, peradventure not marked or not laughed at, strikes him into melancholy; and then there's a partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper that night. [Music within.] We must follow the leaders.

Bene. In every good thing. 160
Beat. Nay, if they lead to any ill, I will leave them at the next turning.

[Dance. Then exeunt all but DON JOHN, BORACHIO, and CLAUDIO.]

D. John. Sure my brother is amorous on Hero, and hath withdrawn her father to break with him about it. The ladies follow her and but one visor remains.

Bora. And that is Claudio: I know him by his bearing. 168

D. John. Are you not Signior Benedick?
Claud. You know me well; I am he.

D. John. Signior, you are very near my brother in his love: he is enamoured on Hero; I pray you, dissuade him from her; she is no equal for his birth: you may do the part of an honest man in it.

Claud. How know you he loves her? 176
D. John. I heard him swear his affection.

Bora. So did I too; and he swore he would marry her to-night.

D. John. Come, let us to the banquet. 180
 [Exeunt DON JOHN and BORACHIO.]

Claud. Thus answer I in name of Benedick, But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio. 'Tis certain so; the prince woos for himself. Friendship is constant in all other things 184 Save in the office and affairs of love: Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues;

Let every eye negotiate for itself And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch 188 Against whose charms faith melteth into blood. This is an accident of hourly proof, Which I mistrusted not. Farewell, therefore, Hero!

Re-enter BENEDICK.

Bene. Count Claudio? 192
Claud. Yea, the same.

Bene. Come, will you go with me?

Claud. Whither? 195

Bene. Even to the next willow, about your own business, count. What fashion will you wear the garland of? About your neck, like a usurer's chain? or under your arm, like a lieutenant's scarf? You must wear it one way, for the prince hath got your Hero. 201

Claud. I wish him joy of her.

Bene. Why, that's spoken like an honest drovier: so they sell bullocks. But did you think the prince would have served you thus? 205

Claud. I pray you, leave me.

Bene. Ho! now you strike like the blind man: 'twas the boy that stole your meat, and you'll beat the post. 209

Claud. If it will not be, I'll leave you. [Exit.]

Bene. Alas! poor hurt fowl. Now will he creep into sedges. But, that my lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me! The prince's fool! Ha! it may be I go under that title because I am merry. Yea, but so I am apt to do myself wrong; I am not so reputed: it is the base though bitter disposition of Beatrice that puts the world into her person, and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may. 219

Re-enter DON PEDRO.

D. Pedro. Now, signior, where's the count? Did you see him?

Bene. Troth, my lord, I have played the part of Lady Fame. I found him here as melancholy as a lodge in a warren. I told him, and I think I told him true, that your Grace had got the good will of this young lady; and I offered him my company to a willow tree, either to make him a garland, as being forsaken, or to bind him up a rod, as being worthy to be whipped. 229

D. Pedro. To be whipped! What's his fault?

Bene. The flat transgression of a school-boy, who, being overjoy'd with finding a bird's nest, shows it his companion, and he steals it. 233

D. Pedro. Wilt thou make a trust a transgression? The transgression is in the stealer.

Bene. Yet it had not been amiss the rod had been made, and the garland too; for the garland he might have worn himself, and the rod he might have bestowed on you, who, as I take it, have stolen his bird's nest. 240

D. Pedro. I will but teach them to sing, and restore them to the owner.

Bene. If their singing answer your saying, by my faith, you say honestly. 244

D. Pedro. The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel to you; the gentleman that danced with her told her she is much wronged by you.

Bene. O! she misused me past the endurance of a block: an oak but with one green leaf on it, would have answered her: my very visor began to assume life and scold with her. She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the prince's jester; that I was duller than a great thaw; huddling jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance upon me, that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs:

if her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her; she would infect to the north star. I would not marry her, though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed: she would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire too. Come, talk not of her; you shall find her the infernal Ate in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure her, for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary; and people sin upon purpose because they would go thither; so, indeed, all disquiet, horror and perturbation follow her. 271

Re-enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, and LEONATO.

D. Pedro. Look! here she comes.

Bene. Will your Grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on; I will fetch you a toothpicker now from the furthest inch of Asia; bring you the length of Prester John's foot; fetch you a hair off the Great Cham's beard; do you any embassy to the Pigmies, rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me? 282
D. Pedro. None, but to desire your good company.

Bene. O God, sir, here's a dish I love not: I cannot endure my Lady Tongue. [Exit.]

D. Pedro. Come, lady, come; you have lost the heart of Signior Benedick. 288

Beat. Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile; and I gave him use for it, a double heart for a single one: marry, once before he won it of me with false dice, therefore your Grace may well say I have lost it. 293

D. Pedro. You have put him down, lady, you have put him down.

Beat. So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest I should prove the mother of fools. I have brought Count Claudio, whom you sent me to seek. 299

D. Pedro. Why, how now, count! wherefore are you sad?

Claud. Not sad, my lord.

D. Pedro. How then? Sick?

Claud. Neither, my lord. 304

Beat. The count is neither sad, nor sick, nor merry, nor well; but civil count, civil as an orange, and something of that jealous complexion. 308

D. Pedro. I' faith, lady, I think your blazon to be true; though, I'll be sworn, if he be so, his conceit is false. Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won; I have broke with her father, and, his good will obtained; name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy!

Leon. Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes: his Grace hath made the match, and all grace say Amen to it! 317

Beat. Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

Claud. Silence is the perfectest herald of joy: I were but little happy, if I could say how much.

Lady, as you are mine, I am yours: I give away myself for you and dote upon the exchange. 322

Beat. Speak, cousin; or, if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss, and let not him speak neither. 325

D. Pedro. In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

Beat. Yea, my lord; I thank it, poor fool, it keeps on the windy side of care. My cousin tells him in his ear that he is in her heart. 330

Claud. And so she doth, cousin.

Beat. Good Lord, for alliance! Thus goes every one to the world but I, and I am sunburnt. I may sit in a corner and cry heigh-ho for a husband! 335

D. Pedro. Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

Beat. I would rather have one of your father's getting. Hath your Grace ne'er a brother like you? Your father got excellent husbands, if a maid could come by them. 340

D. Pedro. Will you have me, lady?

Beat. No, my lord, unless I might have another for working days: your Grace is too costly to wear every day. But, I beseech your Grace, pardon me; I was born to speak all mirth and no matter. 346

D. Pedro. Your silence most offends me, and to be merry best becomes you; for, out of question, you were born in a merry hour.

Beat. No, sure, my lord, my mother cried; but then there was a star danced, and under that was I born. Cousins, God give you joy! 352

Leon. Niece, will you look to those things I told you of?

Beat. I cry you mercy, uncle. By your Grace's pardon. [Exit.]

D. Pedro. By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady. 358

Leon. There's little of the melancholy element in her, my lord: she is never sad but when she sleeps; and not ever sad then, for I have heard my daughter say, she hath often dreamed of unhappiness and waked herself with laughing.

D. Pedro. She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband. 365

Leon. O! by no means: she mocks all her wooers out of suit.

D. Pedro. She were an excellent wife for Benedick. 369

Leon. O Lord! my lord, if they were but a week married, they would talk themselves mad.

D. Pedro. Count Claudio, when mean you to go to church? 373

Claud. To-morrow, my lord. Time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

Leon. Not till Monday, my dear son, which is hence a just seven-night; and a time too brief too, to have all things answer my mind. 378

D. Pedro. Come, you shake the head at so long a breathing; but, I warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully by us. I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules' labours, which is, to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection the one with the other. I would fain have it a match; and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you

three will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction. 388

Leon. My lord, I am for you, though it cost me ten nights' watchings.

Claud. And I, my lord.

D. Pedro. And you too, gentle Hero? 392

Hero. I will do any modest office, my lord, to help my cousin to a good husband.

D. Pedro. And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him; he is of a noble strain, of approved valour, and confirmed honesty. I will teach you how to humour your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your two helps, will so practise on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer: his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift. 406

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—Another Room in LEONATO'S House.

Enter DON JOHN and BORACHIO.

D. John. It is so; the Count Claudio shall marry the daughter of Leonato.

Bora. Yea, my lord; but I can cross it. 3

D. John. Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be medicinal to me: I am sick in displeasure to him, and whatsoever comes athwart his affection ranges evenly with mine. How canst thou cross this marriage? 8

Bora. Not honestly, my lord; but so covertly that no dishonesty shall appear in me.

D. John. Show me briefly how. 11

Bora. I think I told your lordship, a year since, how much I am in the favour of Margaret, the waiting-gentlewoman to Hero.

D. John. I remember. 15

Bora. I can, at any unseasonable instant of the night, appoint her to look out at her lady's chamber-window.

D. John. What life is in that, to be the death of this marriage? 20

Bora. The poison of that lies in you to temper. Go you to the prince your brother; spare not to tell him, that he hath wronged his honour in marrying the renowned Claudio,—whose estimation do you mightily hold up,—to a contaminated stale, such a one as Hero. 26

D. John. What proof shall I make of that?

Bora. Proof enough to misuse the prince, to vex Claudio, to undo Hero, and kill Leonato. Look you for any other issue?

D. John. Only to despite them, I will endeavour any thing. 32

Bora. Go, then; find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone: tell them that you know that Hero loves me; intend a kind of zeal both to the prince and Claudio, as—in love of your brother's honour, who hath made this match, and his friend's reputation, who is thus like to be cozened with the sem-

blance of a maid,—that you have discovered thus. They will scarcely believe this without trial: offer them instances, which shall bear no less likelihood than to see me at her chamber-window, hear me call Margaret Hero; hear Margaret term me Claudio; and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding: for in the meantime I will so fashion the matter that Hero shall be absent; and there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty, that jealousy shall be called assurance, and all the preparation overthrown. 51

D. John. Grow this to what adverse issue it can, I will put it in practice. Be cunning in the working this, and thy fee is a thousand ducats.

Bora. Be you constant in the accusation, and my cunning shall not shame me. 57

D. John. I will presently go learn their day of marriage. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—LEONATO'S Garden.

Enter BENEDICK.

Bene. Boy!

Enter a Boy.

Boy. Signior?

Bene. In my chamber-window lies a book; bring it hither to me in the orchard. 4

Boy. I am here already, sir.

Bene. I know that; but I would have thee hence, and here again. [*Exit Boy.*] I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known, when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife; and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe: I have known, when he would have walked ten mile afoot to see a good armour; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is he turned orthographer; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted, and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not: I will not be sworn but love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God. Ha! the prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour. [*Withdraws.*]

Enter DON PEDRO, LEONATO, and CLAUDIO, followed by BALTHAZAR and Musicians.

D. Pedro. Come, shall we hear this music? 40

Claud. Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is,

As hush'd on purpose to grace harmony!

D. Pedro. See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

Claud. O! very well, my lord: the music ended, 44

We'll fit the kid-fox with a penny-worth.

D. Pedro. Come, Balthazar, we'll hear that song again.

Balth. O! good my lord, tax not so bad a voice To slander music any more than once. 48

D. Pedro. It is the witness still of excellency, To put a strange face on his own perfection. 51

Balth. Because you talk of wooing, I will sing; Since many a wooer doth commence his suit To her he thinks not worthy; yet he woos; Yet will he swear he loves.

D. Pedro. Nay, pray thee, come; Or if thou wilt hold longer argument, 56 Do it in notes.

Balth. Note this before my notes; There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting.

D. Pedro. Why these are very crotchets that he speaks; 59

Notes, notes, forsooth, and nothing! [*Music.*]

Bene. Now, divine air! now is his soul ravished! Is it not strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out of men's bodies? Well, a horn for my money, when all's done. 64

BALTHAZAR sings.

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,

Men were deceivers ever;

One foot in sea, and one on shore,

To one thing constant never. 68

Then sigh not so,

But let them go,

And be you blithe and bonny,

Converting all your sounds of woe 72 Into Hey nonny, nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no mo

Of dumps so dull and heavy;

The fraud of men was ever so,

Since summer first was leavy. 76

Then sigh not so,

But let them go,

And be you blithe and bonny,

Converting all your sounds of woe 80 Into Hey nonny, nonny.

D. Pedro. By my troth, a good song.

Balth. And an ill singer, my lord. 84

D. Pedro. Ha, no, no, faith; thou singest well enough for a shift.

Bene. [*Aside.*] An he had been a dog that should have howled thus, they would have hanged him; and I pray God his bad voice bode no mischief. I had as lief have heard the night-raven, come what plague could have come after it. 91

D. Pedro. Yea, marry; dost thou hear,

Balthazar? I pray thee, get us some excellent music, for to-morrow night we would have it at the Lady Hero's chamber-window.

Balth. The best I can, my lord. 96

D. Pedro. Do so: farewell. [*Exeunt BALTHAZAR and Musicians.*] Come hither, Leonato: what was it you told me of to-day, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick? 100

Claud. O! ay:—[*Aside to D. PEDRO.*] Stalk on, stalk on; the fowl sits. I did never think that lady would have loved any man. 103

Leon. No, nor I neither; but most wonderful that she should so dote on Signior Benedick, whom she hath in all outward behaviours seemed ever to abhor. 107

Bene. [*Aside.*] Is't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

Leon. By my troth, my lord, I cannot tell what to think of it but that she loves him with an enraged affection: it is past the infinite of thought. 113

D. Pedro. May be she doth but counterfeit.

Claud. Faith, like enough.

Leon. O God! counterfeit! There was never counterfeit of passion came so near the life of passion as she discovers it. 117

D. Pedro. Why, what effects of passion shows she? 120

Claud. [*Aside.*] Bait the hook well: this fish will bite.

Leon. What effects, my lord? She will sit you; [*To CLAUDIO.*] You heard my daughter tell you how. 125

Claud. She did, indeed.

D. Pedro. How, how, I pray you? You amaze me: I would have thought her spirit had been invincible against all assaults of affection. 129

Leon. I would have sworn it had, my lord; especially against Benedick.

Bene. [*Aside.*] I should think this a gull, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it: knavery cannot, sure, hide itself in such reverence.

Claud. [*Aside.*] He hath ta'en the infection: hold it up. 136

D. Pedro. Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

Leon. No; and swears she never will: that's her torment. 140

Claud. 'Tis true, indeed; so your daughter says: 'Shall I,' says she, 'that have so oft encountered him with scorn, write to him that I love him?' 144

Leon. This says she now when she is beginning to write to him; for she'll be up twenty times a night, and there will she sit in her smock till she have writ a sheet of paper: my daughter tells us all. 149

Claud. Now you talk of a sheet of paper, I remember a pretty jest your daughter told us of.

Leon. O! when she had writ it, and was reading it over, she found Benedick and Beatrice between the sheet? 155

Claud. That.

Leon. O! she tore the letter into a thousand halfpence; railed at herself, that she should be so immodest to write to one that she knew would

flout her: 'I measure him,' says she, 'by my own spirit; for I should flout him, if he writ to me; yea, though I love him, I should.'

Claud. Then down upon her knees she falls, weeps, sobs, beats her heart, tears her hair, prays, curses; 'O sweet Benedick! God give me patience!'

Leon. She doth indeed; my daughter says so; and the ecstasy hath so much overborne her, that my daughter is sometimes afraid she will do a desperate outrage to herself. It is very true.

D. Pedro. It were good that Benedick knew of it by some other, if she will not discover it.

Claud. To what end? he would but make a sport of it and torment the poor lady worse.

D. Pedro. An he should, it were an alms to hang him. She's an excellent sweet lady, and, out of all suspicion, she is virtuous.

Claud. And she is exceeding wise.

D. Pedro. In everything but in loving Benedick.

Leon. O! my lord, wisdom and blood combating in so tender a body, we have ten proofs to one that blood hath the victory. I am sorry for her, as I have just cause, being her uncle and her guardian.

D. Pedro. I would she had bestowed this dotage on me; I would have daffed all other respects and made her half myself. I pray you, tell Benedick of it, and hear what a' will say.

Leon. Were it good, think you?

Claud. Hero thinks surely she will die; for she says she will die if he love her not, and she will die ere she make her love known, and she will die if he woo her, rather than she will bate one breath of her accustomed crossness.

D. Pedro. She doth well: if she should make tender of her love, 'tis very possible he'll scorn it; for the man,—as you know all,—hath a contemptible spirit.

Claud. He is a very proper man.

D. Pedro. He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

Claud. 'Fore God, and in my mind, very wise.

D. Pedro. He doth indeed show some sparks that are like wit.

Leon. And I take him to be valiant.

D. Pedro. As Hector, I assure you: and in the managing of quarrels you may say he is wise; for either he avoids them with great discretion, or undertakes them with a most Christian-like fear.

Leon. If he do fear God, a' must necessarily keep peace: if he break the peace, he ought to enter into a quarrel with fear and trembling.

D. Pedro. And so will he do; for the man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him by some large jests he will make. Well, I am sorry for your niece. Shall we go seek Benedick, and tell him of her love?

Claud. Never tell him, my lord: let her wear it out with good counsel.

Leon. Nay, that's impossible: she may wear her heart out first.

D. Pedro. Well, we will hear further of it by

your daughter: let it cool the while. I love Benedick well, and I could wish he would modestly examine himself, to see how much he is unworthy to have so good a lady.

Leon. My lord, will you walk? dinner is ready.

Claud. [Aside.] If he do not dote on her upon this, I will never trust my expectation.

D. Pedro. [Aside.] Let there be the same net spread for her; and that must your daughter and her gentlewoman carry. The sport will be, when they hold one an opinion of another's dotage, and no such matter: that's the scene that I would see, which will be merely a dumb-show. Let us send her to call him in to dinner.

[Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO.]

Bene. [Advancing from the arbour.] This can benotrick: the conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady: it seems, her affections have their full bent. Love me! why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured: they say I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from her; they say too that she will rather die than give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry: I must not seem proud: happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair: 'tis a truth, I can bear them witness; and virtuous: 'tis so, I cannot reprove it; and wise, but for loving me: by my troth, it is no addition to her wit, nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her. I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have railled so long against marriage; but doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour? No; the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married. Here comes Beatrice. By this day! she's a fair lady: I do spy some marks of love in her.

[Enter BEATRICE.]

Beat. Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.

Bene. Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

Beat. I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me: if it had been painful, I would not have come.

Bene. You take pleasure then in the message?

Beat. Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point, and choke a daw withal. You have no stomach, signior: fare you well.

Bene. Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner,' there's a double meaning in that. 'I took no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me,' that's as much as to say, Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks. If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain; if I do not love her, I am a Jew. I will go get her picture.

[Exit.]

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[Exit.]

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[Exit.]

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[Exit.]

ACT III

SCENE I.—LEONATO'S Garden.

Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA.

Hero. Good Margaret, run thee to the parlour;

There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice Proposing with the prince and Claudio:

Whisper her ear, and tell her, I and Ursula

Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse

Is all of her; say that thou overheard'st us,

And bid her steal into the pleached bower,

Where honey-suckles, ripen'd by the sun,

Forbid the sun to enter; like favourites,

Made proud by princes, that advance their pride

Against that power that bred it. There will she

hide her,

To listen our propose. This is thy office;

Bear thee well in it and leave us alone.

Marg. I'll make her come, I warrant you,

presently. [Exit.]

Hero. Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth

come,

As we do trace this alley up and down,

Our talk must only be of Benedick:

When I do name him, let it be thy part

To praise him more than ever man did merit.

My talk to thee must be how Benedick

Is sick in love with Beatrice: of this matter

Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,

That only wounds by hearsay.

Enter BEATRICE, behind.

Now begin;

For look where Beatrice, like a lapwing, runs

Close by the ground, to hear our conference.

Urs. The pleasant'st angling is to see the

fish

Cut with her golden oars the silver stream,

And greedily devour the treacherous bait:

So angle we for Beatrice; who even now

Is couched in the woodbine coverture.

Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

Hero. Then go we near her, that her ear lose

nothing

Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.

[They advance to the bower.]

No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful;

I know her spirits are as coy and wild

As haggards of the rock.

Urs. But are you sure

That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

Hero. So says the prince, and my new-trothed

lord.

Urs. And did they bid you tell her of it,

madam?

Hero. They did entreat me to acquaint her

of it;

But I persuaded them, if they lov'd Benedick,

To wish him wrestle with affection,

And never to let Beatrice know of it.

Urs. Why did you so? Doth not the gentle-

man

Deserve as full as fortunate a bed

As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?

Hero. O god of love! I know he doth deserve

As much as may be yielded to a man;

But nature never fram'd a woman's heart

Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice;

Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,

Misprising what they look on, and her wit

Values itself so highly, that to her

All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,

Nor take no shape nor project of affection,

She is so self-endear'd.

Urs. Sure, I think so;

And therefore certainly it were not good

She knew his love, lest she make sport at it.

Hero. Why, you speak truth. I never yet

saw man,

How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featur'd,

But she would spell him backward: if fair-fac'd,

She would swear the gentleman should be her

sister;

If black, why, Nature, drawing of an antick,

Made a foul blot; if tall, a lance ill-headed;

If low, an agate very vilely cut;

If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;

If silent, why, a block moved with none.

So turns she every man the wrong side out,

And never gives to truth and virtue that

Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.

Urs. Sure, sure, such carping is not com-

mendable.

Hero. No, not to be so odd and from

fashions

As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable.

But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,

She would mock me into air: O! she would

laugh me

Out of myself, press me to death with wit.

Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire,

Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly:

It were a better death than die with mocks,

Which is as bad as die with tickling.

Urs. Yet tell her of it: hear what she will say.

Hero. No; rather I will go to Benedick,

And counsel him to fight against his passion.

And, truly, I'll devise some honest slanders

To stain my cousin with. One doth not know

How much an ill word may empoison liking.

Urs. O! do not do your cousin such a wrong.

She cannot be so much without true judgment,—

Having so swift and excellent a wit

As she is priz'd to have,—as to refuse

So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick.

Hero. He is the only man of Italy,

Always excepted my dear Claudio.

Urs. I pray you, be not angry with me, madam,

Speaking my fancy: Signior Benedick,

For shape, for bearing, argument and valour,

Goes foremost in report through Italy.

Hero. Indeed, he hath an excellent good

name.

Urs. His excellence did earn it, ere he had it.

When are you married, madam?

Hero. Why, every day, to-morrow. Come,

go in:

I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel

Which is the best to furnish me to-morrow.

Urs. She's lim'd, I warrant you: we have

caught her, madam.