

The Jests of George Peele:

A Retelling

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DEDICATED TO MOM AND DAD

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In this retelling, as in all my retellings, I have tried to make the work of literature accessible to modern readers who may lack the knowledge about mythology, religion, and history that the literary work's contemporary audience had.

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NOTES

- A jest is a notable deed.
- I reordered a chapter. I moved Ch. 8 to after Ch. 5 because Ch. 8 tells the conclusion of the story in Ch. 5.

This is the original order:

Chapter 5: How George Peele was Shaven, and of the Revenge He Took.

Chapter 6: The Jest of George Peele at Bristow.

Chapter 7: How George Gulled a Punk, Otherwise Called a Croshabell [Prostitute].

Chapter 8: How the Gentleman was Gulled for Shaving of George.

- An edition of the play (with the original spelling, punctuation, and grammar) is here:

<http://fourluminarium.org/renascence-editions/peele1.html>

- The original title of the books is this:

**MERRIE
CONCEITED
IESTS,
OF GEORGE PEELE GENTLEMAN,
SOMETIMES STUDENT IN OXFORD.**

**Wherein is shewed the course of his life,
how he liued: a man very well knowne in
the City of LONDON, and elsewhere.**

- For more information about George Peele, see this book:

The Life and Minor Works of George Peele

Horne, David Hamilton

New Haven, Yale University Press, 1952

Chapter 1: The Jests of George Peele with Four of his Companions at Brainford.

George and some of his friends were merry together at the tavern, having a greater store of money than usual, although they were as regardless of their silver coins as a garden whore is of her honesty [chastity], yet they intended for a season to become good managers of their wealth, if they knew how to be sparing of the money that their pockets were then furnished with.

Five pounds they had among them, and they knew that a plot must be cast so that they might be merry with extraordinary cheer for three or four days, and yet keep their five pounds whole in stock.

George Peele was the man who must do it, or none, and all together they conjured him by their loves, his own credit, and his reputation that he would use his wit and intelligence in coming up with a plot, and they promised that they would help him carry out the plot as much as in them lay.

George, who was as easy as they were earnest for him to be won to such an exploit, consented, and they gathered their money together and gave it all to George, who would be their purse-bearer, and the other four would seem to be servants to George Peele. The better to carry out this plot, they would go and exchange their cloaks and make the one as like the other as they could possibly could, which they might quickly do at the shops of Beelzebub's brothers, the brokers.

This was soon accomplished, and George was furnished with his black satin suit, and a pair of boots that were as familiar to his legs as the pillory is to a baker's or collier's neck, and he sufficiently possessed his friends with the whole scope of his intent, as, gentle reader, the sequel will show.

Instantly they took a pair of oars, also known as rowers or watermen or ferrymen, whose arms were to make a false

gallop [a cantor] no further than Brainford, where their fare was paid them so liberally that each of them, the next tide to London, purchased two new waistcoats.

Yet, should these good benefactors come to their usual places of trade, and if they spy a better fare than their own, and they think that perhaps the gentleman (the better fare) has more mind to go (and thus is willing to pay more money than their own fare), they will not only fall out with him (the rower, or ferryman) who is of their own sweet transporters, as they are, but they will also verbally abuse the fare with foul speeches, such as “a Pox go with you” or “the Devil go with you,” as their Godfather Charon the Ferryman of Hell has taught them.

I speak not this of all ferrymen, but of some who are brought up in the East, some in the West, some in the North, but the most part are brought up in the South. As for the rest, they are honest complete men.

Let’s leave the ferrymen and come back to honest George, who is now merry with sack [white wine] and sugar at the Three Pigeons in Brainford.

No wine was lacking, the musicians were playing, the host was drinking, and the hostess was dancing with the worshipful justice, for so then George was termed, and he had left his mansion house in Kent and come there with the purpose to be merry with his men because he could not be merry so conveniently near home, by reason of a shrewish wife he had.

[At least, that is the story George told the host and hostess.]

The gentle hostess gave him all the entertainment her house could afford, for Master Peele had paid royally, and his five pounds were reduced to ten groats.

Now George Peele's wit and intelligence labored to bring in that five pounds that he had spent there, and soon he hatched a plot.

Sitting down at dinner, George said, "My host, how falls the tide out for London?"

"Not until the evening," said the host. "Have you any business in London, sir?"

"Yes, by the Virgin Mary," said George. "But I intend not to go home for two days. Therefore, my host, saddle a horse for my man-servant to ride to London, if you are so well furnished with horses, for I must send him for another bag of money. Ten pounds has seen no sun these six months."

"I am badly furnished if I cannot furnish you with that," said the host, and he immediately saddled for him a good horse, and away rode one of George's "men-servants" to London, where he waited for the good hour of Master Peele's return to London.

In the meantime George ordered great cheer — very good food and drink — for supper, saying that he expected some of his friends from London.

Now you must imagine there was not a penny owing in the house to the host and hostess, for he had paid in cash as liberally as Caesar, as far as Caesar's wealth went. Indeed, most of the money he had spent was one Caesar's, an honest man yet living in London.

But to the catastrophe. [A catastrophe is the final part of a play.]

All the day before, one of the other "serving-men" of George Peele had been a great solicitor to the hostess, asking that she would beg his master [George] to give him permission to go and see a maiden, a sweetheart of his so far away as

Kingstone, and he said that before his master went to bed, he would return again. He also said that he was sure that she might command it at his master's hands and so persuade George to give him permission to do that.

The kind hostess was willing to please the young fellow, knowing in her time what belonged to such love matters, and she went to Master Peele, and tried to persuade him to let his manservant leave for a time, but he angrily refused. But she was so earnest in it that she swore that George would not deny her when she protested that the man-servant was going only to see an uncle of his some five miles away.

“Marie, I thank you,” said George. “But, my good hostess, would you so discredit me, or has the knave no more wit and intelligence than at this time to go, knowing I have no horse here — would the base cullion [rascal] go on foot?”

“No, good sir,” said the Hostess. “Don't be angry. It is not his intention to go on foot, for he shall have my mare, and I will assure you, sir, upon my word he shall be here again on time to help you go to bed.”

“Well,” said George, “Hostess, I'll take you at your word. Let him go: His negligence shall alight upon you.”

“So be it,” said the hostess. So she went down, and sent away civil Thomas, for so she called him, on the back of her mare to visit his sweetheart.

Thomas, however, instead of riding to Kingstone, took London in his way, where meeting with the other horseman whom George had sent to London, awaited the arrival of George Peele, which was not long after.

The two “man-servants” were at London, and George was in his chamber at Brainford, accompanied by no one except one Anthony Nit, a barber, who dined with him continually, from whom George had borrowed a lute to pass away the

melancholy afternoon, although George could play as well as Banks' horse.

The barber very modestly took his leave, and George obsequiously bid him to supper, requesting that the barber (God willing) would not fail to eat with him.

George, being left alone with his two remaining supposed serving-men, told them how to escape the inn.

Walking in the court, George found fault with the weather, saying it was rawish and cold. The kind hostess, hearing him complain, fetched her husband's holiday gown, which George thankfully put on him and then called for a cup of sack, saying that after drinking the wine he would walk into the meadows and practice upon his lute.

"Good for your worship to do so," said the hostess.

George walked directly to Sion, where having the advantage of a pair of rowers at hand, he made his journey for London.

His two friends left behind had the plot in their heads by George's instructions for their escape, for they knew he was gone.

The hostess was in the market buying provisions for supper, the host was working at tables, and the two masterless (because their master was not present) men (friends of George) requested the maids to excuse them if their master came, for, said they, "We will go drink two pots with Smug Smith's wife at old Brainford."

"We will do so," said the maids. So away went the two men to the Smiths at old Brainford, and from thence they went to London, where they all met, and sold the horse and the mare, the gown and the lute, and the money they received was as badly spent as it was lewdly got.

How the host and the hostess looked when they saw the event of this, go to the Three Pigeons at Brainford, and you shall know.

NOTES:

A purse is a moneybag.

Apparently, George's friends obtained cloaks that were very similar and so would appear to be George's livery — distinctive clothing that showed which master the servants served.

Apparently, the brokers were buyers and sellers of clothing. Since the anonymous author of *The Jestes of George Peele* calls them Beelzebub's 'brother'[s], he may not have held a high opinion of them.

Charon is a mythological ferryman who transports souls into the Land of the Dead. He appears as a character in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Inferno*, among other works.

A groat is a coin of small value.

A cullion is a rascal.

Banks' horse was a trained horse that could perform tricks, although playing a lute was not one of them.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a gown is "A loose flowing upper garment worn as an article of ordinary attire."

This sentence puzzles me: "Ten pounds has seen no sun these six months." I guess it means that the money was out of sight in a cupboard or other place.

Chapter 2: The Jests of George and the Barber.

George was not as merry at London with his capons and claret, as poor Anthony the barber was sorrowful at Brainford for the loss of his lute, and the barber therefore determined to come to London to seek out George Peele.

Anthony Nit the Barber had in London a kinsman whose name was Cuts or Feats. He was a fellow who had good skill in tricks on the cards, and he was well acquainted with the place where George's usual abode was. For kindred's sake he directed the barber where he should find George, which was at a blind alehouse in Sea-coal lane.

There he found George in a green jacket and a Spanish-fashioned hat, all alone eating a serving of oysters. The barber's heart danced within him for joy he had so happily found him, and he gave him the time of the day. George was not a little abashed at the sight of the barber, yet he did not reveal it openly. George, who at all times had a quick invention, was not now behindhand to entertain the barber, and George knew why the barber had come to him.

George thus saluted him, "My honest barber, welcome to London. I partly know your business: You have come for your lute, haven't you?"

"Indeed, sir," said the barber, "that is the reason for my coming."

"And believe me," said George, "you shall not lose your labor; please stand to and eat an oyster, and I'll go with you presently. For a gentleman of great worship in the city of London borrowed it from me for the use of his daughter, who plays exceedingly well and had a great desire to have the use of the lute. But, sir, if you will go along with me to the gentleman's house, you shall have your lute with great satisfaction, for had you not come to London, I assure you that I would have sent it to you, for you must understand that

all that was done at Brainford among us mad gentlemen, was only a jest, and no otherwise.”

“Sir, I don’t think otherwise,” said the barber, “but I would request your worship that as you had it of me in love, so you would help me to it again in kindness.”

“Oh, God, what else?” said George. “I’ll go with thee presently, even as I am, for I came from hunting this morning, and if I were to go up to certain gentlemen above, I should hardly get away.”

[In other words, he would not go upstairs to dress in better clothing because people upstairs would detain him, perhaps in conversation. So said George.]

“I thank you, sir,” said the barber.

Wearing his green jacket and holding a very pretty walking stick in his hand, George went with the barber, until he came almost at the alderman’s house.

He suddenly stopped and said, “Before God, I must beg your pardon at this instant, for I have just thought that if I should go to the alderman dressed as I am, it would be imagined that I had had some of my lord’s hounds out this morning; therefore, I’ll take my leave of you, and meet you wherever you want about one o’clock.”

“Nay, good sir,” said the barber. “Go with me now, for I intend, God willing, to be at Brainford tonight.”

“Do you say so?” said George. “Why, then I’ll tell you what you shall do. You are here a stranger, and altogether unknown, so lend me your cloak and your hat, and you put on my green jacket, and I’ll go along with you directly.”

The barber was wearing better clothing (a new cloak and a fair hat) than George (who was wearing an old hat and a green jacket), and George was saying that he (George)

needed to be better dressed to meet the alderman. Since the barber was unknown in London and would be returning quickly to Brainford, his wearing less good clothing at a gentleman's house for a while would not affect him much. But George's wearing old clothing might be regarded as an affront to the alderman.

The barber, who was loath to leave George until he had his lute, yielded to the exchange of clothing. So when they came to the gentleman's porch, the barber put on George's green jacket and his Spanish hat, and George put on the barber's new cloak and his fair hat. Both of them being thus fitted, George knocked at the door, and the porter heartily bid him welcome, for George was well known because at that time he had all the oversight of the pageants.

George asked the porter to bid the barber welcome because, George said, "My friend is a good fellow and a keeper, M. Porter, and he is one who at his pleasure can bestow a haunch of venison on you."

"By the Virgin Mary, that can I," said the barber.

"I thank you, sir," answered the porter. "M. Peele, my master is in the hall. Will it please you to walk in?"

"With all my heart," said George, "and in the meantime let my friend keep you company."

"That he shall, M. Peele," said the porter, "and if it would please him, he shall eat a simple dinner with me."

The barber gave the porter hearty thanks. He did not have any misgivings about M. Peele after seeing him so well-known at the gentleman's house, and seeing himself so welcome, and so he began to chat with the porter.

George Peele went directly to the alderman, who now had come into the court in the eye of the barber. In the court,

George, after making many complaints, drew a black [blank?] paper out of his bosom, pointed to the barber, and then read [said?] this to the alderman:

“I humbly desire your worship to be my friend in a slight matter. Yonder hard-favored knave, who sits by your worship’s porter, has dogged me to arrest me, and I had no other means but to take to your worship’s house for shelter. The occasion is but trivial; it is only for stealing a piece of flesh. In doing this, I myself consorted with three or four gentlemen of good fashion, who would not willingly have our names come in question. Therefore, this is the boon I ask: that your worship would have one of your servants let me out at the garden door. If you do this, I shall think myself much indebted to your worship.”

The kind gentleman, little dreaming of George Peele’s deceit, took him into the parlor, gave him a pair of angels [gold coins], and caused one of his servants to let George out at the garden door. The door was no sooner opened, but George went on his way so the barber would not see him anymore, and all the way he went he could not choose but laugh at his knavish trick, how he had gulled the simple barber, who sat all this while with the porter and blew on his nails.

The fellow who had opened the garden door and let out George went to the barber and said, “You whoreson keeperly rascal,” said the fellow, “do you come to arrest any honest gentleman in my master’s house?”

“Not I, so God help me,” said the barber. “Please, sir, where is the gentleman — M. Peele — who came along with me?”

“He is far enough away,” said the fellow, “to avoid your coming near him, for he has gone out at the garden door.”

“Garden door?” said the barber. “Why, do you have any more doors than one?”

“We have, sir, and get you hence or I’ll set you going, goodman keeper.”

“Alas,” said the barber. “Sir, I am no keeper [jailor]. I am quite ruined. I am a barber dwelling at Brainford.”

With weeping tears, the barber up and told him how George had treated him. The servant went in and told his master. When the alderman heard the barber’s story, he could not help laughing at him. Yet in pity of the poor barber, he gave him twenty shillings towards his loss. Sighing, the barber took it, and he went towards his home in Brainford, and whereas he had come from thence in a new cloak and a fair hat, he went home weeping in an old hat and a green jacket.

NOTES:

A blind inn may be an inn that is not lighted, or is hidden away, or has blinds.

A keeper is a jailor or a warden. A keeper can be a gamekeeper, which may be what the porter thinks when George says that the barber is a keeper. (The barber may thought that George called him a keeper because he kept (possessed) a lute.

Barbers often had lutes that their customers could use to entertain themselves.

Pageants are medieval mystery plays or plays with religious themes. The anonymous author of *The Jestes of George Peele* may be punning, however, because a pageant, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is also “A performance intended to deceive; a trick.”

George hardly seems to have had time to write anything on a piece of paper, so perhaps “black” [blacker] is a misprint of “blank.”

Or perhaps the paper had a black border, indicating bad news, such as being accused of stealing venison.

“To blow (on) one’s nails” means “to wait; to mark time,” according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

“Nails” are fingernails.

An angel is a gold coin that is worth 10 shillings, aka half-a-pound.

Chapter 3: How George Peele Became a Physician.

George was once happily furnished both with a horse and with money, although the horse he hired, and the money he borrowed, but no matter how he was possessed of them, towards Oxford he rode to make merry with his friends and fellow students.

During his journey he stopped at Wickham, where he sojourned that night. While he was at supper, accompanied by his hostess, among other table-talk, they fell to talking about doctoring, of which the hostess was a simple professor.

George Peele, observing the humor [character] of the she-doctor, upheld her in and approved of all the strange cures she talked of, and he praised her womanly endeavor, telling her that he loved her so much the better for it because it was a thing that he professed, both medicine and doctoring. George had a dictionary of physical [medical] words that he used so that it might set a better gloss upon that which he seemingly professed: a knowledge of medicine.

He also told his good hostess that at his return he would teach her something that should do her no hurt, for he said, “At this instant I am going about a great cure as far as Warwickshire, to a gentleman of great wealth, one who has been in a consumption this half-year, and I hope to do him good.”

“Oh, God,” said the hostess, “there is a gentleman not a quarter of a mile off who has been a long time sick of the same disease. Believe me, sir, if it would please your worship before your departure in the morning, just to visit the gentleman and give your medical opinion of him and his health, I don’t doubt that the gentlewoman — his wife — will be very thankful to you.”

“Indeed,” said George, “perhaps at my return I may visit him, but at this time my haste is such that I cannot, and so good night, hostess.”

So away went George to bed, and the giddy hostess, who had the nature of most women, thought that night as long as ten, until she decided what to do with that burden of news that she had received from the new doctor (for so George called himself).

Morning having come, at the break of the day the hostess trudged to this gentleman’s house and told his wife what an excellent man the hostess had at her house. She protested that he was the best seen in medicine, and that he had done the strangest cures that she ever heard of, and she said that if the gentlewoman would just send for him, there was no question he would do her husband good.

Glad to hear of anything that might procure the health of her husband, the gentlewoman immediately sent one of her serving-men to request that the doctor come and visit her husband. When George heard this message, he wondered at it, for he had no more skill in medicine than in music, and they were both as distant from him as heaven is distant from hell.

But George put on a bold face, and away he went to the sick gentleman. After he arrived there, after giving some compliments to the gentlewoman, he was brought to the chamber where the ancient gentleman lay wonderfully sick, for all the doctors had given up on him.

George felt his pulse and his temples, and said that the old gentleman was very far spent, yet, said he, “Under God, I will do him some good, if Nature is not quite extinct.”

He then asked whether they had a garden.

“That I have,” said the gentlewoman.

“I ask you to direct me there,” said George.

When he came to the garden, he cut a handful of every flower, herb and blossom, and whatever else was in the garden, and collected them and carried them in the lap of his cloak. He boiled them in ale, strained them, boiled them again, and when he had all the juice out of them, he used it to make some bottles of drink, and he caused the sick gentleman to drink off a maudlin cupful, and told his wife to give him that same drink at morning, noon, and night, protesting that if anything in this world did her husband good, it must be that drink.

He also directed the gentlewoman to keep her husband wonderfully warm, “and at my return,” said George, “some ten days hence, I will return and see how he fares, for by that time something will be done, and so I will take my leave.”

“Not so,” said the gentlewoman, “your worship must stay and eat a simple dinner with me today.”

“Indeed,” said George, “I cannot now stay; my haste is such that I must immediately get on my horse and leave.”

You may suppose that George was in haste until he was out of the gentlewoman’s house, for he didn’t know whether or not he had poisoned the gentleman, which made him so eager to be gone out of the gentleman’s house.

The gentlewoman, seeing she could by no means get him to stay, gave him two pairs of angels [gold coins], which never shined long in his purse because he spent them so quickly, and she desired him at his return to come back to her house.

George promised to return, and with seeming niceness [reluctance] took the gold, and towards Oxford he went, forty shillings heavier than he had been, and he splendidly partied while his money lasted.

But see the strange result of this: Whether it was the virtue of some herb that he had gathered, or the high opinion the gentleman had of George Peele and his doctoring [the placebo effect], but it so pleased God that the gentleman recovered, and in eight days he walked around, and that fortunate potion that George had made at random, did him more good than many pounds that he had spent in half a year before in real doctors' medicine.

George's money being spent, he made his return towards London, and when he came within a mile of the gentleman's house, he inquired of a country fellow how the gentleman was doing.

The fellow told him, "God be praised, my good landlord is well recovered by the efforts of a virtuous gentleman who had come this way by chance."

"Are you sure of it?" asked George.

"Yes, believe me," said the fellow. "I saw the old gentleman in the fields just this morning."

This was no simple news to George. He immediately set spurs to his horse, and whereas he had thought to shun the town, he went directly to his inn.

At his arrival, the hostess clapped her hands, the hostler laughed, the tapster leapt, and the chamberlain ran to the gentleman's house, and told him the doctor had returned.

How joyful the old gentleman was, let them imagine who have any after-healths. George Peele was sent for, and after a million of thanks from the old gentleman, and his friends, George Peele had twenty pounds delivered to him.

How long it took him to spend the money, let the taverns in London witness.

NOTES:

A chirurgian is a surgeon, or doctor.

In this culture, consumption is a wasting disease.

A hostler takes care of horses.

A tapster is a bartender.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a chamberlain is the “ person in charge of the bedrooms at an inn.”

A health is a toast in which one wishes for the welfare of a person.

Just guessing through context, but an after-health may be the return of health after an illness.

Chapter 4: How George Helped His Friend to a Supper.

George was invited one night by certain of his friends to supper at the White Horse in Friday Street. That evening as he was going there, he met an old friend of his, who was so ill at the stomach, hearing George tell him of the good cheer — food and drink — that George went to, while the friend lacked both food and money, that the friend swore he had rather have gone a mile out of his way than to have met George at that instant.

“Believe me,” said George, “I am heartily sorry that I cannot take you along with me, since I myself am just an invited guest; besides, you lack the proper clothes, and so you are unfit for such a company. By the Virgin Mary, however, I’ll do this: If you will follow my advice, I’ll help you get your supper.”

“I’ll do anything,” the friend said to George. “Just come up with a plan, and I’ll execute it.”

George immediately told him what he should do, and they parted.

George was well entertained, with an extraordinary welcome, and he was seated at the upper end of the table when the supper was being brought up. His friend had been watching, and when he saw that the food was carried up, he went to the table.

When George saw him, George said, “You whoreson rascal! What are you doing here?”

“Sir,” said the friend, “I have come from a party whom you know of.”

“You rogue,” George said, “didn’t I warn you about this?”

“Please, sir,” said the friend. “Let me tell you why I have come.”

“Do you prate, you slave?” said George, and he took a rabbit out of the serving dish, and threw it at him.

His friend said, “You treat me very badly.”

“You dunghill,” said George, “do you defy me?”

He took another rabbit out of the serving dish and threw it at his friend’s head and after that he threw a loaf of bread at him.

George then drew his dagger and acted as if he were going to throw it at his friend, but the other gentlemen at the table stopped him.

Meanwhile his friend took the loaf of bread and the two rabbits, and away he went. When George saw that he was gone, after a little fretting, he sat quietly.

So by that honest trick he helped his friend to his supper, and he was never suspected for it by the company.

NOTES:

The upper end of the table was the best seating. Spices such as salt were placed at the upper end of the table.

George’s friend had the initials H. M.

Being called “whoreson” (the son of a whore) is, of course, an insult.

Chapter 5: How George Peele was Shaven, and the Revenge He Took.

A gentleman dwelled in the West Country, but he had stayed in London a term longer than he intended, by reason of a book he owned that he wanted George to translate out of Greek into English.

When he wanted money, George got it from the gentleman, but the more the gentleman supplied George with money, the further off George was from finishing his translation of the book, and the gentleman could not get George to finish the translation, whether by fair means, or entreaty, or double payment, for George was of the poetical disposition, and he never wrote as long as his money lasted. Only about a quarter of the book was done.

Therefore, the gentleman plotted a means to take such an order with George the next time he came to him for money, so that George would finish translating the book and give it to the gentleman.

It was not long before the gentleman had George's company; the purpose of his visit was to get more money. The gentleman bid him welcome and caused him to stay for dinner, where falling into conversation about his book, he found that it was as nearly finished as it was two months ago.

The gentleman, meaning to be gulled and tricked no longer, caused two of his men to bind George hand and foot in a chair. George asked them what they meant by it but received no verbal answer. The gentleman sent for a barber. George had a well-grown beard of an indifferent size, and the gentleman made the barber shave him beard and head, leaving George as bare of hair as he was of money. The barber was well contented for his pains because he left George looking like an old woman wearing a man's clothes,

and George's voice became it well, for his voice was more like that of a woman than a man.

"George," said the gentleman, "I have always treated you like a friend, and my purse has been open to you. You have a book of mine to translate, and you know it is a thing I highly esteem, but you have been slow to translate it, and therefore I have treated you in this fashion so that I might have the translation of my book finished, which shall be as much for your profit as my pleasure."

So then the gentleman commanded his serving-men to unbind George, and putting his hand into his pocket, he gave George two pairs of angels, saying, "M. Peele, drink this, and by the time you have finished translating my book, your beard will be grown. Until your beard grows again, I know that you will be ashamed to walk abroad."

George patiently took the gold, said little, and when it was dark night so that no one could see him, he took his leave of the gentleman, and went directly home.

I omit the wonder his wife made when she saw him, but imagine those who shall behold their husbands in such a situation. George went to bed, and before morning he had plotted sufficiently how to cry *quid pro quo* with his politic [scheming] gentleman.

NOTE:

Quid pro quo means "this for that." The gentleman had played a trick on George, and George was going to return the favor.

Chapter 6: How the Gentleman was Gulled for Shaving of George.

George had a daughter of the age of ten years, a girl of a pretty form and an excellent wit. All parts of her were like her father, save her middle, and she had so tutored George all night, that although he himself was the author of the scheme to get revenge on the gentleman, yet if he had been transformed into his daughter's shape, he could not have done it with more conceit [intelligence]. [In other words, although this was George's idea originally, she was able to greatly improve on it.]

George at that time dwelt at the Bank-side, from whence comes this she-sinew early in the morning with her hair disheveled, wringing her hands, and making such a pitiful moan with shrieks and tears, and beating of her breast, that the people were all amazed. Some marveled at the child, others tried to make her tell them what was wrong; but none could stop her by any means. She kept her journey, crying, "Oh, my father, my good father, my dear father, over the bridge!" through Cheapside, and so to the Old Bailey, where the gentleman sojourned.

Sitting herself down there, with a hundred people staring at her, she began to cry out, "Woe to that place, that my father ever saw it! I am a castaway! My mother is ruined!"

Hearing the noise, one of the gentleman's serving-men came down, looked at her, and knew her to be George Peele's daughter. He immediately ran up and told his master, who commanded his serving-man to bring her up.

The gentleman was in a cold sweat, fearing that George had, as a result of the wrong the gentleman did him the day before, in some way destroyed himself. When the girl came up, he demanded to know the reason why she so lamented and called upon her father.

George's flesh and blood, after a million sighs, cried out at him that he had made her father, her good father, drown himself.

These words once uttered, she fell into a counterfeit swoon, but the gentleman soon restored her. This news went to his heart, and he being a man of a very mild temperament, cheered up the girl, made his serving-men go and buy her new clothes from top to toe, said he would be a father to her, gave her five pounds, and told her to go home and carry it to her mother, and in the evening he would visit her.

At this, by little and little she began to be quiet and requested him to come and see her mother. He told her that he would not fail to visit her mother, and he told her to go home quietly.

So downstairs she went pertly, and the wondering people who had stayed at the door in order to hear the reason for her grief, received from her nothing but knavish answers, and home she went directly.

The gentleman was so crossed in mind, and disturbed in his thought at this unhappy occurrence that his soul could not be quiet until he had visited this woeful widow, as he thought George's wife to be, and immediately he went to Black Friars, hired a pair of rowers, and went directly to George Peele's house, where he found George's wife plucking the feathers of larks, the crying crocodile (George's daughter) turning the spit, and George pinned up in a blanket to keep warm as he worked at his translation.

The gentleman, more gladdened by the unlooked-for life of George than saddened by the loss of his money, took part of the good cheer [food and drink] George had for supper, marveled at the cunning of the wench [George's daughter], and a few days later had a finished translation of his book.

NOTES:

At this time, the word “wench” could be used affectionately.

A sinew can be a rib in a leaf. George’s daughter is also a daughter of Eve.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “sinew” can also mean “Strength, energy, force.”

“Pertly” means fearlessly or boldly.

Chapter 7: The Jest of George Peele at Bristow.

George was at Bristow, and because he stayed in an inn there somewhat longer than his money would last him, his bill had grown so large that he could not get out of the stable the palfrey that should carry him to London.

It so fortuned at that instant that certain actors came to the town, and they stayed at that inn where George Peele was. To the actors, George was well known, being in that time an excellent poet and playwright. As such, he had the acquaintance of most of the best actors in England. To the trivial sort of actors, he was but so-so in his acquaintance of them. These actors were of the trivial sort. They knew George only by his reputation and not otherwise.

No more than three actors of the company came with the carriage. The rest of the company were behind, by reason of a long journey they had, so they could not act that night.

Hearing that, George had soon a stratagem in his head to get his horse free out of the stable and money in his purse to bear his expenses as he made his way up to London.

And this is the stratagem:

George went directly to the mayor and told him that he was a scholar and a gentleman and that he had a certain *History of the Knight of Rhodes*; and in addition, he had a piece about how Bristow was first founded and by whom, and a brief of all those who were mayor before him in that worshipful city. George requested that the mayor with his presence, and the rest of his brethren, would grace his labors.

The mayor gave George permission to produce the performance, and he also appointed him a place for the production, but as for himself, he could not be there because it was in the evening, but the mayor told him to make the

best use he could of the city, and very liberally gave him an angel, which George thankfully received.

George then went about the business. He got his stage made, his *History* advertised, and he rented the actors' costumes to flourish out his show, promising to pay them liberally. He also requested that they would favor him so much as to gather him his money at the door. (He did this because he thought it his best course to employ them, lest they should spy out his knavery, for they have perilous — dangerous — heads.)

They willingly agreed to do him any kindness that lay in them. In brief, they carried their costumes to the hall and placed themselves at the door. George in the meantime with the ten shillings he had been given by the mayor, delivered his horse out of Purgatory, and took him to the town's end, and there placed him, so the horse would be ready at his coming.

By this time the audience had come, and so forty shillings were gathered, which money George put in his purse, and putting on one of the actor's silk robes, after the trumpet had sounded three times, out on the stage he came, bowed low, and went forward with his Prologue, which was thus:

A trifling Toy, a Jest of no account, pardie [by God].

The Knight, perhaps you think for to be I:

Think on so still; for why [because] you know that thought is free,

Sit still a while, I'll send the actors to ye [you].

After saying the Prologue, he threw some fireworks that he had made out among the audience, and downstairs he went, got to his horse, and so with forty shillings he rode his horse

to London, leaving the actors to deal with the angry audience.

When George's jest was known, the actors' innocence excused them because they were as well gulled as the mayor and the audience.

NOTES:

A palfrey is a horse that is used for ordinary riding.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "thought is free" means "people are at liberty to think as they like."

A jest is a notable deed.

To be gulled is to be cheated and/or fooled.

Chapter 8: How George Gulled a Punk, Otherwise Called a Croshabell [Prostitute].

Coming to London, George fell in company with a cockatrice [prostitute] who pleased his eye so well that George drew close to her, and offered her wine, which the croshabell willingly accepted. To the tavern they went, where after a little idle talk, George fell to the question about the thing you know of. [In other words, he propositioned her.]

The she-hobby [prostitute] was very dainty, which made George far more eager to bed her, and the lecherous animal offered much to obtain his desire. To conclude, nothing she would grant to except ready money, which was forty shillings, not a farthing less. If he would meet her price, she would tell him where he should meet her the next night.

George saw how the game went — she was more for lucre than for love — and thus he cunningly answered her:

“Gentlewoman, howsoever you speak, I do not think your heart agrees with your tongue; the money you demand is but to test me, and indeed it is only a trifle to me, but because it shall not be said I bought that item of you I prize so highly, I’ll give you a token — a gift — tomorrow that shall be more worth than your demand, if you please to accept it.”

“Sir,” said she, “it contents me well, and so, if it pleases you, at this time we’ll part, and tomorrow in the evening I will meet you where you shall appoint.”

The place of meeting was determined, and they kissed and parted. She went home, and George went into Saint Thomas Apostles, to a friend of his, from whom he knew he could get a petticoat on credit. (The first letter of his friend’s name begins with G.) He got a petticoat from his friend, at the price of five shillings, which money is still owed this day.

The next night being come, George and the croshabell met at the place appointed, which was a tavern. There they were to dine. That ended, George was to go home with her, to end his yeoman's plea in her common case.

But Master Peele had another drift in his head, for he so plied her with wine that in a small time she spun such a thread that she reeled homewards, and George was delighted to be her supporter. When to her house she came, with nothing so much painting in the inside, as her face had on the outside [her face had makeup, but her house had little paint inside] with much ado her maid got her to bed. The croshabell was no sooner put in bed than she fell fast asleep. Seeing that, George sent the maid for milk and a quart of sack [white wine] to make a medicinal drink.

But before the maid's return, George made so bold as to take up his own new petticoat, a fair gown that belonged to the croshabell, two gold rings that lay in the window, and away he went.

The gown and the gold rings he sold, and the petticoat he gave to his honest wife, one of the best deeds he ever did for her.

How the croshabell looked when she awoke and saw this, I was never there to know.

NOTES:

Words used for "prostitute" in this story: "punk," "croshabell," "cockatrice," "she-hobby."

"Croshabell" comes from *crouse*, which means "lively" and "bold" and *belle*, which means "attractive woman."

A cockatrice is a mythological monster: a two-legged dragon with the head of a rooster, aka cock.

A hobby-horse is a prostitute, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

To be gulled is to cheated and/or fooled.

A case is a vagina. The prostitute had a common case; in other words, she engaged in public relations.

A yeoman is a servant. One Elizabethan meaning of “servant” is lover. George is supposed to end his yeoman’s plea in the prostitute’s common case; this puns both on a law case and on sex.

Chapter 9: How George Read a Playbook to a Gentleman.

There was a gentleman whom God had endowed with a good living (income) to maintain his small wit and intelligence. He was not an absolute fool, and in this world he did have good fortune, and he was in a manner a friend to George, a friend who took great delight to have the first hearing of any work that George had done. The fool himself was a writer, and had a poetical invention of his own, which when he had with great labor finished writing his pages, their fatal end was for privy purposes. [That is, they were used as toilet paper.]

George had invited this self-conceited brock [proud stinking man] to hear him read out loud a score of sheets of paper. George's Christianly pen had written Finis to the famous play of *The Turkish Mahomet and Hyrin the Fair Greek*. Hyrin was in Italian called a courtesan; in Spain, a margarite; in French, a curtain; and in England, among the barbarous, a whore; but among the gentlefolk, their usual associates, a punk. Now, however, there is the latest refined word for them. The authority for the new word was brought from a climate as yet unconquered, the fruitful County of Kent, where they call each of them a croshabell, which is a word but recently used, and fitting with their trade, being of a lovely and courteous condition.

This fantastic — this odd man — whose brain was made of nothing but cork and sponge, wore his black satin suit, a gown with a collar furred with coney [rabbit skin], and his slippers. Being in the evening, he thought to hear George's book, and then to return to his inn. (This was not of the wisest, being of S. Bernard's.)

George bid him welcome and told him he would gladly have his opinion of his book. The fool willingly condescended, and George began to read, and between every scene he

would make pauses, and demand his opinion, asking how he liked the carriage [execution] of it.

The fool said that he liked “wondrously well, the conveyance [execution of it].”

“Oh,” said George, “but the end is far better,” for he meant to carry out another kind of conveyance — a theft — before the two departed.

George was very tedious and slow in reading, and the night grew old.

“I protest,” said the gentleman, “that I have stayed overlong, and I fear I shall hardly get into my inn.”

“If you fear that,” said George, “we will have a clean pair of sheets, and you will enjoy a simple lodging here.”

“Here” was the room in the inn where George was staying.

This house-gull willingly embraced it, and to bed they went, where George in the middle of the night spied his time and put on the dormouse’s clothes (which were better than George’s), desired God to keep him in good rest, and honestly took his leave of him and the inn, which he owed four nobles.

When the drone awaked, and found himself so left, he had not the wit to be angry, but swore scurvily at his misfortune, and said, “I thought he would not have treated me this way.” And although it so pleased the Fates that he had another suit to put on [George’s old suit of clothing], yet he could not get away from thence until he had paid the money George owed to the inn, which for his credit he did, and when he came to his own lodging, in anger he made a poem of it:

Peele is no Poet, but a gull and a clown,

To take away my clothes and gown:

I vow by Jove, if I can see him wear it,
I'll give him a glyg [gleek, jibe], and patiently bear it.

NOTES:

I changed “invented to half a score sheets of paper” to “invited to hear him read out loud a score of sheets of paper.”

Some words for “fool” are “house-gull” and “dormouse” and “drone.”

A noble is a unit of money.

George Peele’s play *The Turkish Mahomet and Hyrin the Fair Greek* has been lost, assuming it ever existed.

Jove is Jupiter, King of the gods.

In this culture, it was not unusual for two people of the same sex to sleep in one bed.

Chapter 10: How George Peele Served Half a Score Citizens.

George once had invited half a score of his friends to a great supper, where they were surpassingly merry, no cheer wanting, wine enough, and music playing.

The night growing on, and being ready to depart, his friends called for a reckoning of the bill.

George swore that there was not a penny for them to pay. They, being men of good fashion, by no means would yield to that, but every man threw down money — some ten shillings, some five, some more — and protested that they would pay something.

“Well,” said George, taking up all the money, “seeing you will be so willful, you shall see what shall follow.”

He commanded the music to play, and while they were skipping and dancing, George got his cloak, sent up two bottles of hypocras wine, and left them. He also left them the reckoning to pay.

They, wondering at how long George was away, meant to be gone, but they were stopped by the way, and before they left, they were forced to pay the reckoning anew.

This showed a mind in George: He didn’t care whom he deceived as long as he profited for the present.

NOTES:

In this context, “to serve” means “to treat,” usually in an unpleasant manner.

Hypocras is a spiced, sugared wine.

Chapter 11: A Jest of George Going to Oxford.

Some half-dozen citizens who had often been solicitors with George, who was a Master of Art at the University of Oxford, requested that he would ride with them to the commencement, which was being held at midsummer.

George, willing to please the gentlemen, who were his friends, rode along with them. When they had ridden the better part of the way, they stopped at a village called Stoken, five miles from Wickham. Good cheer — food and drink — was ordered for dinner, and all the company was frolicsome, except for George, who could not be in that pleasant vein that ordinarily possessed him because he was without money. But he had not paced forty turns about the chamber before his brain had created a plan to get money for himself in a way that would bring him good reputation and yet would glean the money from someone in the company of his friends.

There was among them one excellent ass, a fellow who did nothing but briskly walk up and down the chamber, so that his money might be heard to clink in his pocket. George observed this fellow and secretly conveyed this fellow's gilt rapier and dagger into another chamber, and there secretly hid it. That done, he called up the bartender, and pawning his cloak to him borrowed five shillings for an hour or so, until his serving-man came (as he could enjoy himself well enough with five shillings). So much money George had, and then who was merrier than George?

The food was brought up, and they set themselves down to eat their dinner, all full of mirth, especially my little fool, who drank not of the conclusion of their feast. Dinner ended, much prattling conversation had passed, and every man began to buckle on his weapons. At this time this Hitchcock discovered that his rapier was missing. Hearing this, all the company were amazed. The fool was besides his wits, for he

had borrowed it from a special friend of his, and he swore he would rather spend 20 nobles than lose that rapier.

“It is strange,” said George, “that it should be gone in this fashion. None are here but ourselves, and the fellows of the house.”

The fellows of the house were examined, but no rapier could be heard of. All the company of friends were much grieved, but George pretended to be particularly bothered and swore that it would cost him forty shillings, but he would know what had become of the rapier, if skill and knowledge could do it, and with that he made the hostler saddle his horse, for George would ride to a scholar, a friend of his, who had skill in such matters.

“Oh, good M. Peele,” said the fellow, “lack no money. Here are forty shillings, see what you can do, and if you please, I’ll ride along with you.”

“Not so,” said George, taking his forty shillings, “I’ll ride alone, and you be as merry as you can until my return.”

So George left them, and rode directly to Oxford. There he acquainted a friend of his with all the circumstances of the disappearance of the rapier. This friend immediately got on horseback and rode along with him to laugh at the jest.

When they came back, George told the company of friends that he had brought one of the rarest and most splendid men in England. They with much compliment bid the newcomer welcome. He, after putting on a distracted countenance and saying strange words, took this bullfinch by the wrist, and led him into the privy, and there willed him to put in his head, until he (the “scholar”) had written his name and counted to forty. The fool willingly did so. When that was done, the scholar asked him what he had seen?

“By my faith, sir, I smelt a villainous scent, but I saw nothing,” the fool said.

“Then I have the answer,” said the “scholar,” and with that he told him where his rapier was, saying, “It is just North-East, enclosed in wood near the earth.”

All of them made a diligent search for the rapier until George, who had hid it under a bench, found it, to the comfort of the fellow, the joy of the company, and the eternal credit of his friend, who was entertained with wine and sugar.

Having money in his pocket, George redeemed his cloak and rode merrily to Oxford, where this loach [fool] did not spare any expense because of the good fortune he had in the happy finding of his rapier.

NOTES:

The Elizabethans had no paper money; all coins were silver or gold.

The fool “drank not of the conclusion of their feast” may mean that the fool did not want the dinner to end.

Words meaning fool: “ass” and “Hitchcock” and “bullfinch” and “loach.”

A loach is a small European fish.

Chapter 12: How George Served His Hostess.

George was staying at an old widow's house, and he ran up so large a bill that his credit would stretch no farther because the widow had made a vow not to part with drink or food without receiving ready money.

Seeing the fury of his perverse hostess, George in grief stayed in his chamber, and he called to his hostess and told her, "You should understand that I am not without money, however poor I appear to you, and that my diet shall testify, but in the meantime, good hostess, send for this friend of mine."

She did, and his friend came. To this friend George imparted his mind, the effect of which was this: to pawn his cloak, hose, and doublet, unknown to his hostess.

George said, "For the next seven nights, I intend to keep my bed."

(Truly he spoke, for his intention was that the bed should not keep him any longer.)

Away the friend went to pawn George's apparel. George ordered good cheer for supper. This food was no shamle-butchers stuff, but according to the place. Because George's chamber was remote from the house, at the end of the garden, and because his apparel was gone, it appeared to him as the counter [prison], and therefore to comfort himself, he dealt in poultry.

His friend brought the money and supped with him, and George very liberally paid his hostess, but he caviled with her at her unkindness, vowing that while he lay there, none should attend and wait on him but his friend.

The hostess replied, "In God's name, I am well contented with that arrangement," meaning that she was happy to let George's friend and not her wait on George.

George was also happy with that arrangement, for none knew better than himself what he intended to do.

In brief, this is how he treated his kind hostess:

After his clothing and money were gone, he took the feather-bed he lay on and gave it to his friend to slyly convey it away. This friend had as villainous a wolf in his belly as George, though the wolf was not altogether as wise as George, for that feather-bed they devoured in two days, feathers and all.

The feather-bed was no sooner digested, but away went the coverlet, sheets, and the blanket, and at the last dinner, when George's good friend perceived that nothing was left but the bed-cords, as the Devil would have it, straight came in the friend's mind the fashion of a halter [a noose around his neck as he was hung for theft].

Thinking of the noose, the foolish knave pretended to go to fetch a quart of sack [white wine] for his friend George. This sack to this day never saw a vintner's cellar because it never existed as the friend used it merely as an excuse to leave George's chamber. And so he left George in a cold chamber, a thin shirt, and a ravished bed, with no comfort left him except the bare bones of deceased capons.

In this distress George thought about what he might do because nothing was left to him. His eye wandered up and down the empty chamber, and by chance he spied an old suit of armor, at which sight George was the most joyful man in Christendom, for the armor of Achilles, which Ulysses and Ajax strove for, was not more precious to them than this old suit of armor was to him. He immediately clapped it upon his back, held the halberd [weapon that combined a spear-point and a battle-axe] in his hand, put the morion [helmet]

on his head, and so got out the back way and marched from Shoreditch to Clarkenwell, to the no small wonder of those spectators who beheld him.

After George arrived at the wished-for haven he sought, an old acquaintance of his furnished him with an old suit of clothing and an old cloak in exchange for his old armor.

How the hostess looked when she saw that metamorphosis in her chamber, judge those bomborts [people who serve liquor] who live by bartending, between the ages of fifty and sixty. [Bartenders of that age have experienced such things for themselves.]

NOTES:

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a doublet is a “close-fitting body-garment” worn by men.

George “dealt in poultry” may mean he hired a prostitute to comfort himself. At the time, the word “chick” could be used as a term of endearment for a woman. This bawdy interpretation, however, very well could be wrong. Once one knows how bawdy the Elizabethan playwrights were, one can find bawdiness where it is not intended. Possibly, the passage simply means he ate chicken rather than beef. (The capon bones that appear later in the story are chicken bones.) Often, however, the Elizabethan playwrights would have both an innocent meaning and a bawdy meaning in the same passage.

After the death of Achilles, the Greeks decided to award his armor to the best of the Greeks. The main contenders were Great Ajax and Odysseus. The Greeks awarded the armor to Odysseus. Great Ajax then went mad and committed suicide.

Regarding the last paragraph of the story:

I worked construction after graduating from a U.S.A. high school. My fellow workers would go to a certain bar and cash their checks. This bar had a pool table in an adjoining room, and my fellow workers, who were drinking, of course, held a spitting contest using the pool table as the field of contention. For the next few days, that room was closed.

Chapter 13: How He Served a Tapster [Bartender].

George was making merry with three or four of his friends in Pie Corner, where the bartender of the house was much given to poetry, for he had engrossed *The Knight of the Sun* and *Venus and Adonis*, and other pamphlets that the stripling had collected together, and knowing George to be a poet, he took great delight in his company, and out of his bounty would bestow a pair of cans [containers] of spirits on him.

George, observing the temperament of the bartender, meant soon to work upon him and take advantage of him.

“What will you say,” said George to his friends, “if out of this spirit of the cellar, I fetch a good angel [a gold coin] that shall invite us all to supper?”

“We would gladly see that,” said his friends.

“Content yourself,” said George. “You will be satisfied.”

The bartender ascended from the cellar with his two cans of spirits. He delivered one to M. Peele and the other to George’s friends, and he gave them kind welcome, but George, instead of giving him thanks, told the bartender not to trouble him, and then he said to his friends, “I protest, gentlemen, that I wonder you will urge me so much. I swear I don’t have it on me.”

“What is the matter?” said the bartender. “Has anyone angered you?”

“No, indeed,” said George. “I’ll tell you — it is this: There is a friend of ours in Newgate [a prison], for nothing but only the command of the justices, and he being now to be released, sent a message to me to bring him an angel. I love the man dearly well, and if he wants ten angels, he shall have them, for I know him to be sure to repay them, but here’s the

misery — either I must go home, or I must be forced to pawn this, an old Harry groat out of my pocket.”

The bartender looked at the old Harry groat and said, “Why, if it pleases you, sir, this is only a groat.”

A groat was a coin that was worth only four pence.

“No, sir,” said George. “I know it is only a groat, but this groat I will not lose for forty pounds because I received this from my mother as a testimony of a lease of a house I am to possess after her decease, and if I should lose this groat, I would be in a fair situation, and either I must pawn this groat, or there the fellow must lie still.”

A “fair situation” is ambiguous. The bartender thought that it meant a very bad situation, but George thought that if he could get an angel — a gold coin worth enough to buy a good meal and drinks for himself and his friends — for a mere groat, then that would be a fair, aka good, situation indeed.

The bartender said, “If it pleases you, I will lend you an angel on the security of the groat, and I will assure you that it shall be safe.”

“Will you?” said George. “As you are an honest man, lock it up in your chest, and let me have it whenever I call for it.”

“As I am an honest man, you shall,” said the bartender.

George delivered him his groat, and the bartender gave him ten shillings. To another tavern George and his friends went with the money, and there they merrily spent the money.

It turned out that a short time afterward, the bartender, making many of these missteps, fell to decay, and indeed was turned out of service, losing his job and having no more money in the world than this groat, and in this misery he met George, who was as poor as himself.

“Oh, sir,” said the bartender, “you are happily met. I have kept your groat safe, although since I saw you last, I have undergone great extremity; and I protest, except for that groat, I have not one penny in the world. Therefore I ask you, sir, to help me to my money and take back your pawn.”

“Not for the world,” said George. “You say that you have only that groat in the world. My bargain was that you should keep that groat until I demanded it from you, and I do not ask it from you. I will do you more good than that because you are an honest fellow: Keep that groat still, until I call for it. As long as you keep it, the proudest Jack in England cannot justly say that you are not worth a groat. If I were to take the groat from you, then they might justly say that, and so, honest Michael, farewell.”

So George left the poor bartender picking his fingers, with his head full of proclamations of what he might do.

At last, sighing, the bartender ended with this proverb:

For the price of a barrel of beer,
I have bought a groat’s worth of wit,
Is that not dear?

NOTES:

A groat is a coin worth four pence. A Harry groat is a groat that was coined by King Henry VIII.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an old Harry groat is a groat that “bears the king’s head with a long face and long hair.”

Chapter 14: How George Served a Gentlewoman.

George used to often go to a certain inn in this town, where a kinswoman of the good wives in the house, held a great pride and vain opinion of her own mother-wit. Her tongue was continually wagging like a pendulum, and because she had heard that George was a scholar, she thought she would find a time to give him notice that she had as much in her head, as was ever in her grandfather's. Yet in some things she differed from the women of those days: For their natural complexion was their beauty, but the beauty that Nature scanted her, this titmouse replenished by art, as her boxes of red and white makeup daily can testify.

At this time, putting on makeup was calling painting.

George arrived at the inn among other gallants, threw his cloak upon the table, greeted the gentlemen, and soon called for a cup of Canary wine. George had a pair of hose on, that for some offence dared not be seen in that hue they were first dyed in, but from the hose's first color being a youthful green, the hose's long age turned the green into a mournful black, and the hose's antiquity was in print: Its great age could be easily read. Perceiving that, this busy-body woman thought about how to give it to him to the quick, and drawing near M. Peele, looked upon his breeches.

"Indeed, sir," said she, "these are exceedingly well printed with great old age."

At which words, George being a little angered in his mind that his old hose were called in question, answered, "And by my faith, Mistress, your face is most damnably ill painted."

"What do you mean, sir?" she asked.

"By the Virgin Mary, I mean this, Mistress," said George, "That if it were not for printing and painting, my arse and

your face would grow out of reparations [would be in very bad shape].”

Hearing this, she bit her lip, and in an apparent fury went down the stairs.

The gentlemen laughed at the sudden answer of George, and being seated at dinner, the gentlemen would necessarily have the company of this witty gentlewoman to dine with them. She with little denying came, hoping to cry quittance and get even with George.

When she was ascended, the gentlemen would necessarily place her by M. Peele. Because the two darted insults one at another, the gentlemen thought it suitable, for their own safety, that the witty gentlewoman and George should be placed nearest together.

George kindly entertained her, and being seated, he asked her to pass him the capon that was placed by her, and he would be so bold as to carve for his money.

And as she put out her arm to take the capon, George, who was sitting by her, let out a huge fart, which amazed all the company, so that each one looked upon the other, yet they knew from which direction it came.

“Peace,” said George, and jogged the witty gentlewoman on the elbow. “I will say it was I who farted.”

Hearing this, all the company of gentlemen fell into a huge laughter, but the witty gentlewoman fell into a fretting fury, vowing that she should never sleep quietly until she had gotten revenge on George for the wrong he had done to her, and so in a great anger she left their company.

NOTES:

In this context, “to serve” means “to treat,” usually in an unpleasant manner.

Canary wine is a sweet white wine that comes from the Canary Islands, which are located off the coast of northwestern Africa.

The Jack of a clock is a figurine on top of some clocks that strikes the bell and announces the passage of time.

A mistress is a female head of household.

In this culture, makeup was called paint.

A capon is a castrated rooster that has been fattened for eating.

According to “A Fashionable Vocabulary: Clothing and Fabrics”:

“When a fabric is described as *printed*, the design has been stamped with hot irons.”

Accessed 14 January 2021.

<<http://elizabethan.org/compendium/36.html>>.

I, of course, think that the gentlewoman was punning. The hose’s old age was “printed” in that anyone could “read” the hose’s old age by looking at the hose.

FINIS

APPENDIX A: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

APPENDIX B: SOME BOOKS BY DAVID BRUCE

Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature

Arden of Faversham: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Arraignment, or Poetaster: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Epicene: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humor: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The New Inn, or The Light Heart: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Sejanus' Fall: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's A Tale of a Tub: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: *Retellings*

Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: *Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text*

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: *A Retelling*

- Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling*
- Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings*
- Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose*
- The Famous Victories of Henry V: A Retelling*
- From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica*
- George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston's Eastward Ho! A Retelling*
- George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling*
- George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling*
- George Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling*
- George Peele's Edward I: A Retelling*
- George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling*
- George-a-Greene: A Retelling*
- The History of King Leir: A Retelling*
- Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*
- Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose*
- J.W. Gent.'s The Valiant Scot: A Retelling*
- Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica*
- John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English*
- John Ford's The Broken Heart: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: A Retelling*

- John Ford's The Lady's Trial: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: A Retelling*
- John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: A Retelling*
- John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Queen: A Retelling*
- John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Campaspe: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Endymion, The Man in the Moon: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Galatea: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Love's Metamorphosis: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Midas: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Mother Bombie: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Sappho and Phao: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's The Woman in the Moon: A Retelling*
- John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling*
- King Edward III: A Retelling*
- Mankind: A Medieval Morality Play (A Retelling)*
- Margaret Cavendish's The Unnatural Tragedy: A Retelling*
- The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling*
- The Summoning of Everyman: A Medieval Morality Play (A Retelling)*
- Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling*
- The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling*
- Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling*
- Thomas Middleton's A Chaste Maid in Cheapside: A Retelling*
- Thomas Middleton's Women Beware Women: A Retelling*
- Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's The Roaring Girl: A Retelling*

- Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's The Changeling: A Retelling*
- The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems*
- Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Coriolanus: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Henry V: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Henry VIII: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Retelling in Prose*

- William Shakespeare's King John: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's King Lear: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Richard II: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Richard III: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Tempest: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Two Noble Kinsmen: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale: A Retelling in Prose*

