All's Well That Ends Well

By William Shakespeare

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Characters in the Play

HELEN, a gentlewoman of Rossillion

BERTRAM, Count of Rossillion

COUNTESS of Rossillion, Bertram's mother
In the Countess's household:
- STEWARD
- FOOL
- PAGE

PAROLLES, companion to Bertram

KING of France
LAFEW, a French lord
Later Captains in the army of the Duke of Florence:
- FIRST LORD
- SECOND LORD

Other LORDS in the court of the King of France
From the court of the King of France:
- FIRST GENTLEMAN
- SECOND GENTLEMAN
- GENTLEMAN, a "gentle Astringer"

FIRST SOLDIER, interpreter

The DUKE of Florence
A WIDOW of Florence
DIANA, the Widow's daughter
MARIANA, the Widow's neighbor

Attendants, Soldiers, Citizens of Florence, Servants

ACT 1

Scene 1

Enter young Bertram Count of Rossillion, his mother the Countess, and Helen, Lord Lafew, all in black.

COUNTESS In delivering my son from me, I bury a second husband.

BERTRAM And I in going, madam, weep o'er my father's death anew; but I must attend his Majesty's command, to whom I am now in ward, evermore in subjection.

LAFEW You shall find of the King a husband, madam; you, sir, a father. He that so generally is at all times good must of necessity hold his virtue to you, whose worthiness would stir it up where it wanted rather than lack it where there is such abundance.

COUNTESS What hope is there of his Majesty's amendment?

LAFEW He hath abandoned his physicians, madam, under whose practices he hath persecuted time with hope, and finds no other advantage in the process but only the losing of hope by time.

COUNTESS This young gentlewoman had a father—O, that "had," how sad a passage 'tis!—whose skill was almost as great as his honesty; had it stretched so far, would have made nature immortal, and death should have play for lack of work. Would for the King's sake he were living! I think it would be the death of the King's disease.

LAFEW How called you the man you speak of, madam?

COUNTESS He was famous, sir, in his profession, and it was his great right to be so: Gerard de Narbon.

LAFEW He was excellent indeed, madam. The King very lately spoke of him admiringly, and mourningly. He was skillful enough to have lived still, if knowledge could be set up against mortality.

BERTRAM What is it, my good lord, the King languishes of?

LAFEW A fistula, my lord.

BERTRAM I heard not of it before.

LAFEW I would it were not notorious.—Was this gentlewoman the daughter of Gerard de Narbon?

COUNTESS His sole child, my lord, and bequeathed to my overlooking. I have those hopes of her good that her education promises. Her dispositions she inherits, which makes fair gifts fairer; for where an unclean mind carries virtuous qualities, there commendations go with pity—they are virtues and traitors too. In her they are the better for their simpleness. She derives her honesty and achieves her goodness.

LAFEW Your commendations, madam, get from her tears.

COUNTESS 'Tis the best brine a maiden can season her praise in. The remembrance of her father never approaches her heart but the tyranny of her sorrows takes all livelihood from her cheek.—No more of this, Helena. Go to. No more, lest it be rather thought you affect a sorrow than to have—

HELEN I do affect a sorrow indeed, but I have it too.

LAFEW Moderate lamentation is the right of the dead, excessive grief the enemy to the living.

COUNTESS If the living be enemy to the grief, the excess makes it soon mortal.

BERTRAM Madam, I desire your holy wishes.

LAFEW How understand we that?

COUNTESS

Be thou blessed, Bertram, and succeed thy father
In manners as in shape. Thy blood and virtue
Contend for empire in thee, and thy goodness
Share with thy birthright. Love all, trust a few,
Do wrong to none. Be able for thine enemy
Rather in power than use, and keep thy friend
Under thy own life's key Be checked for silence,
But never taxed for speech. What heaven more will,
That thee may furnish and my prayers pluck down,
Fall on thy head. *To Lafew.* Farewell, my lord.
'Tis an unseasoned courtier. Good my lord,
Advise him.

LAFEW He cannot want the best that shall
Attend his love.

COUNTESS Heaven bless him.—Farewell, Bertram.

BERTRAM The best wishes that can be forged in your thoughts be servants to you. *Countess exits.* *To Helen.* Be comfortable to my mother, your mistress, and make much of her.

LAFEW Farewell, pretty lady. You must hold the credit of your father. *Bertram and Lafew exit.*

HELEN

O, were that all! I think not on my father,
And these great tears grace his remembrance more
Than those I shed for him. What was he like?
I have forgot him. My imagination
Carries no favor in 't but Bertram's.
I am undone. There is no living, none,
If Bertram be away. 'Twere all one
That I should love a bright particular star
And think to wed it, he is so above me.
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
Th' ambition in my love thus plagues itself:
The hind that would be mated by the lion
Must die for love. 'Twas pretty, though a plague,
To see him every hour, to sit and draw
His archèd brows, his hawking eye, his curls
In our heart's table—heart too capable
Of every line and trick of his sweet favor.

But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy
Must sanctify his relics. Who comes here?

Enter Parolles.

One that goes with him. I love him for his sake,
And yet I know him a notorious liar,
Think him a great way fool, solely a coward.
Yet these fixed evils sit so fit in him
That they take place when virtue's steely bones
Looks bleak i' th' cold wind. Withal, full oft we see
Cold wisdom waiting on superfluous folly.

PAROLLES Save you, fair queen.

HELEN And you, monarch.

PAROLLES No.

HELEN And no.

PAROLLES Are you meditating on virginity?

HELEN Ay. You have some stain of soldier in you; let me ask you a question. Man is enemy to virginity. How may we barricado it against him?

PAROLLES Keep him out.

HELEN But he assails, and our virginity, though valiant in the defense, yet is weak. Unfold to us some warlike resistance.

PAROLLES There is none. Man setting down before you will undermine you and blow you up.

HELEN Bless our poor virginity from underminers and blowers-up! Is there no military policy how virgins might blow up men?

PAROLLES Virginity being blown down, man will quicklier be blown up. Marry, in blowing him down again, with the breach yourselves made you lose your city. It is not politic in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity. Loss of virginity is rational increase, and there was never virgin got till virginity was first lost. That you were made of is metal to make virgins. Virginity by being once lost may be ten times found; by being ever kept, it is ever lost. 'Tis too cold a companion. Away with 't.

HELEN I will stand for 't a little, though therefore I die a virgin.

PAROLLES There's little can be said in 't. 'Tis against the rule of nature. To speak on the part of virginity is to accuse your mothers, which is most infallible disobedience. He that hangs himself is a virgin; virginity murders itself and should be buried in highways out of all sanctified limit as a desperate offendress against nature. Virginity breeds mites, much like a cheese, consumes itself to the very paring, and so dies with feeding his own stomach. Besides, virginity is peevish, proud, idle, made of self-love, which is the most inhibited sin in the canon. Keep it not; you cannot choose but lose by 't. Out with 't! Within ten year it will make itself two, which is a goodly increase, and the principal

itself not much the worse. Away with 't!
HELEN How might one do, sir, to lose it to her own liking?
PAROLLES Let me see. Marry, ill, to like him that ne'er it likes. 'Tis a commodity will lose the gloss with lying; the longer kept, the less worth. Off with 't while 'tis vendible; answer the time of request. Virginity, like an old courtier, wears her cap out of fashion, richly suited but unsuitable, just like the brooch and the toothpick, which wear not now. Your date is better in your pie and your porridge than in your cheek. And your virginity, your old virginity, is like one of our French withered pears: it looks ill, it eats dryly; marry, 'tis a withered pear. It was formerly better, marry, yet 'tis a withered pear. Will you anything with it?
HELEN Not my virginity, yet—
There shall your master have a thousand loves,
A mother, and a mistress, and a friend,
A phoenix, captain, and an enemy,
A guide, a goddess, and a sovereign,
A counselor, a traitress, and a dear;
His humble ambition, proud humility,
His jarring concord, and his discord dulcet,
His faith, his sweet disaster, with a world
Of pretty, fond adoptious christendoms
That blinking Cupid gossips. Now shall he—
I know not what he shall. God send him well.
The court's a learning place, and he is one—
PAROLLES What one, i' faith?
HELEN That I wish well. 'Tis pity—
PAROLLES What's pity?
HELEN
That wishing well had not a body in 't
Which might be felt, that we, the poorer born,
Whose baser stars do shut us up in wishes,
Might with effects of them follow our friends
And show what we alone must think, which never
Returns us thanks.

Enter Page.

PAGE Monsieur Parolles, my lord calls for you.
PAROLLES Little Helen, farewell. If I can remember thee, I will think of thee at court.
HELEN Monsieur Parolles, you were born under a charitable star.
PAROLLES Under Mars, I.
HELEN I especially think under Mars.
PAROLLES Why under Mars?
HELEN The wars hath so kept you under that you must needs be born under Mars.
PAROLLES When he was predominant.
HELEN When he was retrograde, I think rather.
PAROLLES Why think you so?
HELEN You go so much backward when you fight.

PAROLLES That's for advantage.
HELEN So is running away, when fear proposes the safety. But the composition that your valor and fear makes in you is a virtue of a good wing, and I like the wear well.
PAROLLES I am so full of businesses I cannot answer thee acutely. I will return perfect courtier, in the which my instruction shall serve to naturalize thee, so thou wilt be capable of a courtier's counsel and understand what advice shall thrust upon thee, else thou diest in thine unthankfulness, and thine ignorance makes thee away. Farewell. When thou hast leisure, say thy prayers; when thou hast none, remember thy friends. Get thee a good husband, and use him as he uses thee. So, farewell.

Parolles and Page exit.

HELEN

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie
Which we ascribe to heaven. The fated sky
Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.
What power is it which mounts my love so high,
That makes me see, and cannot feed mine eye?
The mightiest space in fortune nature brings
To join like likes and kiss like native things.
Impossible be strange attempts to those
That weigh their pains in sense and do suppose
What hath been cannot be. Who ever strove
To show her merit that did miss her love?
The King's disease—my project may deceive me,
But my intents are fixed and will not leave me.

She exits.

Scene 2

Flourish cornets. Enter the King of France with letters, two Lords, and divers Attendants.

KING

The Florentines and Senoys are by th' ears,
Have fought with equal fortune, and continue
A braving war.
FIRST LORD So 'tis reported, sir.
KING
Nay, 'tis most credible. We here receive it
A certainty vouched from our cousin Austria,
With caution that the Florentine will move us
For speedy aid, wherein our dearest friend
Prejudicates the business and would seem
To have us make denial.
FIRST LORD His love and wisdom,
Approved so to your Majesty, may plead
For amplest credence.
KING He hath armed our answer,
And Florence is denied before he comes.
Yet for our gentlemen that mean to see
The Tuscan service, freely have they leave

To stand on either part.
SECOND LORD It well may serve
A nursery to our gentry, who are sick
For breathing and exploit.

Enter Bertram, Lafew, and Parolles.

KING What's he comes here?
FIRST LORD
It is the Count Rossillion, my good lord,
Young Bertram.
KING Youth, thou bear'st thy father's face.
Frank nature, rather curious than in haste,
Hath well composed thee. Thy father's moral parts
Mayst thou inherit too. Welcome to Paris.
BERTRAM
My thanks and duty are your Majesty's.
KING
I would I had that corporal soundness now
As when thy father and myself in friendship
First tried our soldiership. He did look far
Into the service of the time and was
Discipled of the bravest. He lasted long,
But on us both did haggish age steal on
And wore us out of act. It much repairs me
To talk of your good father. In his youth
He had the wit which I can well observe
Today in our young lords; but they may jest
Till their own scorn return to them unnoted
Ere they can hide their levity in honor.
So like a courtier, contempt nor bitterness
Were in his pride or sharpness; if they were,
His equal had awaked them, and his honor,
Clock to itself, knew the true minute when
Exception bid him speak, and at this time
His tongue obeyed his hand. Who were below him
He used as creatures of another place
And bowed his eminent top to their low ranks,
Making them proud of his humility,
In their poor praise he humbled. Such a man
Might be a copy to these younger times,
Which, followed well, would demonstrate them now
But goers backward.
BERTRAM His good remembrance, sir,
Lies richer in your thoughts than on his tomb.
So in approof lives not his epitaph
As in your royal speech.
KING
Would I were with him! He would always say—
Methinks I hear him now; his plausive words
He scattered not in ears, but grafted them
To grow there and to bear. "Let me not live"—
This his good melancholy oft began
On the catastrophe and heel of pastime,
When it was out—"Let me not live," quoth he,
"After my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff

Of younger spirits, whose apprehensive senses
All but new things disdain, whose judgments are
Mere fathers of their garments, whose constancies
Expire before their fashions." This he wished.
I, after him, do after him wish too,
Since I nor wax nor honey can bring home,
I quickly were dissolvèd from my hive
To give some laborers room.
SECOND LORD You're lovèd, sir.
They that least lend it you shall lack you first.
KING
I fill a place, I know 't.—How long is 't, count,
Since the physician at your father's died?
He was much famed.
BERTRAM Some six months since, my lord.
KING
If he were living, I would try him yet.—
Lend me an arm.—The rest have worn me out
With several applications. Nature and sickness
Debate it at their leisure. Welcome, count.
My son's no dearer.
BERTRAM Thank your Majesty.

They exit. Flourish.

Scene 3

Enter Countess, Steward, and Fool.

COUNTESS I will now hear. What say you of this gentlewoman?
STEWARD Madam, the care I have had to even your content I wish might be found in the calendar of my past endeavors, for then we wound our modesty and make foul the clearness of our deservings when of ourselves we publish them.
COUNTESS What does this knave here? *To Fool.* Get you gone, sirrah. The complaints I have heard of you I do not all believe. 'Tis my slowness that I do not, for I know you lack not folly to commit them and have ability enough to make such knaveries yours.
FOOL 'Tis not unknown to you, madam, I am a poor fellow.
COUNTESS Well, sir.
FOOL No, madam, 'tis not so well that I am poor, though many of the rich are damned. But if I may have your Ladyship's good will to go to the world, Isbel the woman and I will do as we may.
COUNTESS Wilt thou needs be a beggar?
FOOL I do beg your good will in this case.
COUNTESS In what case?
FOOL In Isbel's case and mine own. Service is no heritage, and I think I shall never have the blessing of God till I have issue o' my body, for they say bairns are blessings.
COUNTESS Tell me thy reason why thou wilt marry.
FOOL My poor body, madam, requires it. I am driven

on by the flesh, and he must needs go that the devil drives.

COUNTESS Is this all your Worship's reason?

FOOL Faith, madam, I have other holy reasons, such as they are.

COUNTESS May the world know them?

FOOL I have been, madam, a wicked creature, as you and all flesh and blood are, and indeed I do marry that I may repent.

COUNTESS Thy marriage sooner than thy wickedness.

FOOL I am out o' friends, madam, and I hope to have friends for my wife's sake.

COUNTESS Such friends are thine enemies, knave.

FOOL You're shallow, madam, in great friends, for the knaves come to do that for me which I am aweary of. He that ears my land spares my team and gives me leave to in the crop; if I be his cuckold, he's my drudge. He that comforts my wife is the cherisher of my flesh and blood; he that cherishes my flesh and blood loves my flesh and blood; he that loves my flesh and blood is my friend. *Ergo*, he that kisses my wife is my friend. If men could be contented to be what they are, there were no fear in marriage, for young Charbon the Puritan and old Poysam the Papist, howsome'er their hearts are severed in religion, their heads are both one; they may jowl horns together like any deer i' th' herd.

COUNTESS Wilt thou ever be a foul-mouthed and calumnious knave?

FOOL A prophet I, madam, and I speak the truth the next way:

Sings. For I the ballad will repeat
Which men full true shall find:
Your marriage comes by destiny;
Your cuckoo sings by kind.

COUNTESS Get you gone, sir. I'll talk with you more anon.

STEWARD May it please you, madam, that he bid Helen come to you. Of her I am to speak.

COUNTESS Sirrah, tell my gentlewoman I would speak with her—Helen, I mean.

FOOL *sings*

"Was this fair face the cause," quoth she,
"Why the Grecians sackèd Troy?
Fond done, done fond.
Was this King Priam's joy?"
With that she sighèd as she stood,
With that she sighèd as she stood,
And gave this sentence then:
"Among nine bad if one be good,
Among nine bad if one be good,
There's yet one good in ten."

COUNTESS What, one good in ten? You corrupt the song, sirrah.

FOOL One good woman in ten, madam, which is a purifying o' th' song. Would God would serve the

world so all the year! We'd find no fault with the tithe-woman if I were the parson. One in ten, quoth he? An we might have a good woman born but or every blazing star or at an earthquake, 'twould mend the lottery well. A man may draw his heart out ere he pluck one.

COUNTESS You'll be gone, sir knave, and do as I command you!

FOOL That man should be at woman's command, and yet no hurt done! Though honesty be no Puritan, yet it will do no hurt; it will wear the surplice of humility over the black gown of a big heart. I am going, forsooth. The business is for Helen to come hither. *He exits.*

COUNTESS Well, now.

STEWARD I know, madam, you love your gentlewoman entirely.

COUNTESS Faith, I do. Her father bequeathed her to me, and she herself, without other advantage, may lawfully make title to as much love as she finds. There is more owing her than is paid, and more shall be paid her than she'll demand.

STEWARD Madam, I was very late more near her than I think she wished me. Alone she was and did communicate to herself her own words to her own ears; she thought, I dare vow for her, they touched not any stranger sense. Her matter was she loved your son. Fortune, she said, was no goddess, that had put such difference betwixt their two estates; Love no god, that would not extend his might only where qualities were level; Dian no queen of virgins, that would suffer her poor knight surprised without rescue in the first assault or ransom afterward. This she delivered in the most bitter touch of sorrow that e'er I heard virgin exclaim in, which I held my duty speedily to acquaint you withal, sithence in the loss that may happen it concerns you something to know it.

COUNTESS You have discharged this honestly. Keep it to yourself. Many likelihoods informed me of this before, which hung so tott'ring in the balance that I could neither believe nor misdoubt. Pray you leave me. Stall this in your bosom, and I thank you for your honest care. I will speak with you further anon. *Steward exits.*

Enter Helen.

Aside.

Even so it was with me when I was young.
If ever we are nature's, these are ours. This thorn
Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong.
Our blood to us, this to our blood is born.
It is the show and seal of nature's truth,
Where love's strong passion is impressed in youth.
By our remembrances of days foregone,

Such were our faults, or then we thought them none.
Her eye is sick on 't, I observe her now.
HELEN What is your pleasure, madam?
COUNTESS
You know, Helen, I am a mother to you.
HELEN
Mine honorable mistress.
COUNTESS Nay, a mother.
Why not a mother? When I said "a mother,"
Methought you saw a serpent. What's in "mother"
That you start at it? I say I am your mother
And put you in the catalogue of those
That were enwombèd mine. 'Tis often seen
Adoption strives with nature, and choice breeds
A native slip to us from foreign seeds.
You ne'er oppressed me with a mother's groan,
Yet I express to you a mother's care.
God's mercy, maiden, does it curd thy blood
To say I am thy mother? What's the matter,
That this distempered messenger of wet,
The many-colored Iris, rounds thine eye?
Why? That you are my daughter?
HELEN That I am not.
COUNTESS
I say I am your mother.
HELEN Pardon, madam.
The Count Rossillion cannot be my brother.
I am from humble, he from honored name;
No note upon my parents, his all noble.
My master, my dear lord he is, and I
His servant live and will his vassal die.
He must not be my brother.
COUNTESS Nor I your mother?
HELEN
You are my mother, madam. Would you were—
So that my lord your son were not my brother—
Indeed my mother! Or were you both our mothers,
I care no more for than I do for heaven,
So I were not his sister. Can 't no other
But, I your daughter, he must be my brother?
COUNTESS
Yes, Helen, you might be my daughter-in-law.
God shield you mean it not! "Daughter" and "mother"
So strive upon your pulse. What, pale again?
My fear hath catched your fondness! Now I see
The mystery of your loneliness and find
Your salt tears' head. Now to all sense 'tis gross:
You love my son. Invention is ashamed
Against the proclamation of thy passion
To say thou dost not. Therefore tell me true,
But tell me then 'tis so, for, look, thy cheeks
Confess it th' one to th' other, and thine eyes
See it so grossly shown in thy behaviors
That in their kind they speak it. Only sin
And hellish obstinacy tie thy tongue
That truth should be suspected. Speak. Is 't so?

If it be so, you have wound a goodly clew;
If it be not, forswear 't; howe'er, I charge thee,
As heaven shall work in me for thine avail,
To tell me truly.
HELEN Good madam, pardon me.
COUNTESS
Do you love my son?
HELEN Your pardon, noble mistress.
COUNTESS
Love you my son?
HELEN Do not you love him, madam?
COUNTESS
Go not about. My love hath in 't a bond
Whereof the world takes note. Come, come, disclose
The state of your affection, for your passions
Have to the full appeached.
HELEN, *kneeling* Then I confess
Here on my knee before high heaven and you
That before you and next unto high heaven
I love your son.
My friends were poor but honest; so 's my love.
Be not offended, for it hurts not him
That he is loved of me. I follow him not
By any token of presumptuous suit,
Nor would I have him till I do deserve him,
Yet never know how that desert should be.
I know I love in vain, strive against hope,
Yet in this captious and intenible sieve
I still pour in the waters of my love
And lack not to lose still. Thus, Indian-like,
Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun that looks upon his worshipper
But knows of him no more. My dearest madam,
Let not your hate encounter with my love
For loving where you do; but if yourself,
Whose agèd honor cites a virtuous youth,
Did ever in so true a flame of liking
Wish chastely and love dearly, that your Dian
Was both herself and Love, O then give pity
To her whose state is such that cannot choose
But lend and give where she is sure to lose;
That seeks not to find that her search implies,
But riddle-like lives sweetly where she dies.
COUNTESS
Had you not lately an intent—speak truly—
To go to Paris?
HELEN Madam, I had.
COUNTESS Wherefore?
Tell true.
HELEN, *standing*
I will tell truth, by grace itself I swear.
You know my father left me some prescriptions
Of rare and proved effects, such as his reading
And manifest experience had collected
For general sovereignty; and that he willed me
In heedfull'st reservation to bestow them

As notes whose faculties inclusive were
More than they were in note. Amongst the rest
There is a remedy, approved, set down,
To cure the desperate languishings whereof
The King is rendered lost.

COUNTESS
This was your motive for Paris, was it? Speak.

HELEN
My lord your son made me to think of this;
Else Paris, and the medicine, and the King
Had from the conversation of my thoughts
Haply been absent then.

COUNTESS But think you, Helen,
If you should tender your supposèd aid,
He would receive it? He and his physicians
Are of a mind: he that they cannot help him,
They that they cannot help. How shall they credit
A poor unlearnèd virgin, when the schools
Emboweled of their doctrine have left off
The danger to itself?

HELEN There's something in 't
More than my father's skill, which was the great'st
Of his profession, that his good receipt
Shall for my legacy be sanctified
By th' luckiest stars in heaven; and would your Honor
But give me leave to try success, I'd venture
The well-lost life of mine on his Grace's cure
By such a day, an hour.

COUNTESS Dost thou believe 't?

HELEN Ay, madam, knowingly.

COUNTESS
Why, Helen, thou shalt have my leave and love,
Means and attendants, and my loving greetings
To those of mine in court. I'll stay at home
And pray God's blessing into thy attempt.
Be gone tomorrow, and be sure of this:
What I can help thee to thou shalt not miss.

They exit.

ACT 2

Scene 1

Flourish cornets. Enter the King, attended, with divers young Lords, taking leave for the Florentine war; Bertram Count Rossillion, and Parolles.

KING
Farewell, young lords. These warlike principles
Do not throw from you.—And you, my lords, farewell.
Share the advice betwixt you. If both gain all,
The gift doth stretch itself as 'tis received
And is enough for both.
FIRST LORD 'Tis our hope, sir,
After well-entered soldiers, to return
And find your Grace in health.
KING
No, no, it cannot be. And yet my heart
Will not confess he owes the malady
That doth my life besiege. Farewell, young lords.
Whether I live or die, be you the sons
Of worthy Frenchmen. Let higher Italy—
Those bated that inherit but the fall
Of the last monarchy—see that you come
Not to woo honor but to wed it. When
The bravest questant shrinks, find what you seek,
That fame may cry you loud. I say farewell.
FIRST LORD
Health at your bidding serve your Majesty!
KING
Those girls of Italy, take heed of them.
They say our French lack language to deny
If they demand. Beware of being captives
Before you serve.
LORDS Our hearts receive your warnings.
KING Farewell.—Come hither to me.
The King speaks to Attendants, while Bertram, Parolles, and other Lords come forward.
FIRST LORD*, to Bertram*
O my sweet lord, that you will stay behind us!
PAROLLES
'Tis not his fault, the spark.
SECOND LORD O, 'tis brave wars.
PAROLLES
Most admirable. I have seen those wars.
BERTRAM
I am commanded here and kept a coil
With "Too young," and "The next year," and "'Tis too early."
PAROLLES
An thy mind stand to 't, boy, steal away bravely.

BERTRAM
I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock,
Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry
Till honor be bought up, and no sword worn
But one to dance with. By heaven, I'll steal away!
FIRST LORD
There's honor in the theft.
PAROLLES Commit it, count.
SECOND LORD
I am your accessory. And so, farewell.
BERTRAM I grow to you, and our parting is a tortured body.
FIRST LORD Farewell, captain.
SECOND LORD Sweet Monsieur Parolles.
PAROLLES Noble heroes, my sword and yours are kin. Good sparks and lustrous, a word, good metals. You shall find in the regiment of the Spinii one Captain Spurio with his cicatrice, an emblem of war, here on his sinister cheek. It was this very sword entrenched it. Say to him I live, and observe his reports for me.
FIRST LORD We shall, noble captain.
PAROLLES Mars dote on you for his novices.
Lords exit.
To Bertram. What will you do?
BERTRAM Stay the King.
PAROLLES Use a more spacious ceremony to the noble lords. You have restrained yourself within the list of too cold an adieu. Be more expressive to them, for they wear themselves in the cap of the time; there do muster true gait; eat, speak, and move under the influence of the most received star, and, though the devil lead the measure, such are to be followed. After them, and take a more dilated farewell.
BERTRAM And I will do so.
PAROLLES Worthy fellows, and like to prove most sinewy swordmen. *Bertram and Parolles exit.*

Enter Lafew, to the King.

LAFEW*, kneeling*
Pardon, my lord, for me and for my tidings.
KING I'll fee thee to stand up.
LAFEW*, standing*
Then here's a man stands that has brought his pardon.
I would you had kneeled, my lord, to ask me mercy,
And that at my bidding you could so stand up.
KING
I would I had, so I had broke thy pate
And asked thee mercy for 't.
LAFEW Good faith, across.
But, my good lord, 'tis thus: will you be cured
Of your infirmity?
KING No.

LAFEW O, will you eat
No grapes, my royal fox? Yes, but you will
My noble grapes, an if my royal fox
Could reach them. I have seen a medicine
That's able to breathe life into a stone,
Quicken a rock, and make you dance canary
With sprightly fire and motion, whose simple touch
Is powerful to araise King Pippen, nay,
To give great Charlemagne a pen in 's hand
And write to her a love line.
KING What "her" is this?
LAFEW
Why, Doctor She. My lord, there's one arrived,
If you will see her. Now, by my faith and honor,
If seriously I may convey my thoughts
In this my light deliverance, I have spoke
With one that in her sex, her years, profession,
Wisdom, and constancy hath amazed me more
Than I dare blame my weakness. Will you see her—
For that is her demand—and know her business?
That done, laugh well at me.
KING Now, good Lafew,
Bring in the admiration, that we with thee
May spend our wonder too, or take off thine
By wond'ring how thou took'st it.
LAFEW Nay, I'll fit you,
And not be all day neither.
He goes to bring in Helen.
KING
Thus he his special nothing ever prologues.

Enter Helen.

LAFEW*, to Helen* Nay, come your ways.
KING This haste hath wings indeed.
LAFEW Nay, come your ways.
This is his Majesty. Say your mind to him.
A traitor you do look like, but such traitors
His Majesty seldom fears. I am Cressid's uncle
That dare leave two together. Fare you well.
He exits.
KING
Now, fair one, does your business follow us?
HELEN Ay, my good lord,
Gerard de Narbon was my father,
In what he did profess well found.
KING I knew him.
HELEN
The rather will I spare my praises towards him.
Knowing him is enough. On 's bed of death
Many receipts he gave me, chiefly one
Which, as the dearest issue of his practice,
And of his old experience th' only darling,
He bade me store up as a triple eye,
Safer than mine own two, more dear. I have so,
And hearing your high Majesty is touched

With that malignant cause wherein the honor
Of my dear father's gift stands chief in power,
I come to tender it and my appliance
With all bound humbleness.
KING We thank you, maiden,
But may not be so credulous of cure,
When our most learnèd doctors leave us and
The congregated college have concluded
That laboring art can never ransom nature
From her inaidible estate. I say we must not
So stain our judgment or corrupt our hope
To prostitute our past-cure malady
To empirics, or to dissever so
Our great self and our credit to esteem
A senseless help when help past sense we deem.
HELEN
My duty, then, shall pay me for my pains.
I will no more enforce mine office on you,
Humbly entreating from your royal thoughts
A modest one to bear me back again.
KING
I cannot give thee less, to be called grateful.
Thou thought'st to help me, and such thanks I give
As one near death to those that wish him live.
But what at full I know, thou know'st no part,
I knowing all my peril, thou no art.
HELEN
What I can do can do no hurt to try
Since you set up your rest 'gainst remedy.
He that of greatest works is finisher
Oft does them by the weakest minister.
So holy writ in babes hath judgment shown
When judges have been babes. Great floods have flown
From simple sources, and great seas have dried
When miracles have by the great'st been denied.
Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
Where most it promises, and oft it hits
Where hope is coldest and despair most shifts.
KING
I must not hear thee. Fare thee well, kind maid.
Thy pains, not used, must by thyself be paid.
Proffers not took reap thanks for their reward.
HELEN
Inspirèd merit so by breath is barred.
It is not so with Him that all things knows
As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows;
But most it is presumption in us when
The help of heaven we count the act of men.
Dear sir, to my endeavors give consent.
Of heaven, not me, make an experiment.
I am not an impostor that proclaim
Myself against the level of mine aim,
But know I think and think I know most sure
My art is not past power nor you past cure.
KING
Art thou so confident? Within what space

Hop'st thou my cure?
HELEN The greatest grace lending grace,
Ere twice the horses of the sun shall bring
Their fiery torcher his diurnal ring;
Ere twice in murk and occidental damp
Moist Hesperus hath quenched her sleepy lamp;
Or four and twenty times the pilot's glass
Hath told the thievish minutes, how they pass,
What is infirm from your sound parts shall fly,
Health shall live free, and sickness freely die.
KING
Upon thy certainty and confidence
What dar'st thou venture?
HELEN Tax of impudence,
A strumpet's boldness, a divulgèd shame;
Traduced by odious ballads, my maiden's name
Seared otherwise; nay, worse of worst, extended
With vilest torture let my life be ended.
KING
Methinks in thee some blessèd spirit doth speak
His powerful sound within an organ weak,
And what impossibility would slay
In common sense, sense saves another way.
Thy life is dear, for all that life can rate
Worth name of life in thee hath estimate:
Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage, all
That happiness and prime can happy call.
Thou this to hazard needs must intimate
Skill infinite or monstrous desperate.
Sweet practicer, thy physic I will try,
That ministers thine own death if I die.
HELEN
If I break time or flinch in property
Of what I spoke, unpitied let me die,
And well deserved. Not helping, death's my fee.
But if I help, what do you promise me?
KING
Make thy demand.
HELEN But will you make it even?
KING
Ay, by my scepter and my hopes of heaven.
HELEN
Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand
What husband in thy power I will command.
Exempted be from me the arrogance
To choose from forth the royal blood of France,
My low and humble name to propagate
With any branch or image of thy state;
But such a one, thy vassal, whom I know
Is free for me to ask, thee to bestow.
KING
Here is my hand. The premises observed,
Thy will by my performance shall be served.
So make the choice of thy own time, for I,
Thy resolved patient, on thee still rely.
More should I question thee, and more I must,

Though more to know could not be more to trust:
From whence thou cam'st, how tended on; but rest
Unquestioned welcome and undoubted blessed.—
Give me some help here, ho!—If thou proceed
As high as word, my deed shall match thy deed.
Flourish. They exit, the King assisted.

Scene 2

Enter Countess and Fool.

COUNTESS Come on, sir. I shall now put you to the height of your breeding.
FOOL I will show myself highly fed and lowly taught. I know my business is but to the court.
COUNTESS "To the court"? Why, what place make you special when you put off that with such contempt? "But to the court"?
FOOL Truly, madam, if God have lent a man any manners, he may easily put it off at court. He that cannot make a leg, put off 's cap, kiss his hand, and say nothing, has neither leg, hands, lip, nor cap; and indeed such a fellow, to say precisely, were not for the court. But, for me, I have an answer will serve all men.
COUNTESS Marry, that's a bountiful answer that fits all questions.
FOOL It is like a barber's chair that fits all buttocks: the pin-buttock, the quatch-buttock, the brawn-buttock, or any buttock.
COUNTESS Will your answer serve fit to all questions?
FOOL As fit as ten groats is for the hand of an attorney, as your French crown for your taffety punk, as Tib's rush for Tom's forefinger, as a pancake for Shrove Tuesday, a morris for May Day, as the nail to his hole, the cuckold to his horn, as a scolding quean to a wrangling knave, as the nun's lip to the friar's mouth, nay, as the pudding to his skin.
COUNTESS Have you, I say, an answer of such fitness for all questions?
FOOL From below your duke to beneath your constable, it will fit any question.
COUNTESS It must be an answer of most monstrous size that must fit all demands.
FOOL But a trifle neither, in good faith, if the learned should speak truth of it. Here it is, and all that belongs to 't. Ask me if I am a courtier; it shall do you no harm to learn.
COUNTESS To be young again, if we could! I will be a fool in question, hoping to be the wiser by your answer. I pray you, sir, are you a courtier?
FOOL O Lord, sir!—There's a simple putting off. More, more, a hundred of them.
COUNTESS Sir, I am a poor friend of yours that loves you.
FOOL O Lord, sir!—Thick, thick. Spare not me.
COUNTESS I think, sir, you can eat none of this homely

meat.
FOOL O Lord, sir!—Nay, put me to 't, I warrant you.
COUNTESS You were lately whipped, sir, as I think.
FOOL O Lord, sir!—Spare not me.
COUNTESS Do you cry "O Lord, sir!" at your whipping, and "spare not me"? Indeed your "O Lord, sir!" is very sequent to your whipping. You would answer very well to a whipping if you were but bound to 't.
FOOL I ne'er had worse luck in my life in my "O Lord, sir!" I see things may serve long but not serve ever.
COUNTESS I play the noble huswife with the time to entertain it so merrily with a fool.
FOOL O Lord, sir!—Why, there 't serves well again.
COUNTESS*, giving him a paper*
An end, sir. To your business. Give Helen this,
And urge her to a present answer back.
Commend me to my kinsmen and my son.
This is not much.
FOOL Not much commendation to them?
COUNTESS
Not much employment for you. You understand me.
FOOL Most fruitfully. I am there before my legs.
COUNTESS Haste you again.

They exit.

Scene 3

Enter Count Bertram, Lafew, and Parolles.

LAFEW They say miracles are past, and we have our philosophical persons to make modern and familiar things supernatural and causeless. Hence is it that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.
PAROLLES Why, 'tis the rarest argument of wonder that hath shot out in our latter times.
BERTRAM And so 'tis.
LAFEW To be relinquished of the artists—
PAROLLES So I say, both of Galen and Paracelsus.
LAFEW Of all the learned and authentic fellows—
PAROLLES Right, so I say.
LAFEW That gave him out incurable—
PAROLLES Why, there 'tis. So say I too.
LAFEW Not to be helped.
PAROLLES Right, as 'twere a man assured of a—
LAFEW Uncertain life and sure death.
PAROLLES Just. You say well. So would I have said.
LAFEW I may truly say it is a novelty to the world.
PAROLLES It is indeed. If you will have it in showing, you shall read it in what-do-you-call there.

He points to a paper in Lafew's hand.

LAFEW *reads A showing of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor.*
PAROLLES That's it. I would have said the very same.
LAFEW Why, your dolphin is not lustier. 'Fore me, I speak in respect—

PAROLLES Nay, 'tis strange, 'tis very strange; that is the brief and the tedious of it; and he's of a most facinorous spirit that will not acknowledge it to be the—

LAFEW Very hand of heaven.

PAROLLES Ay, so I say.

LAFEW In a most weak—

PAROLLES And debile minister. Great power, great transcendence, which should indeed give us a further use to be made than alone the recov'ry of the King, as to be—

LAFEW Generally thankful.

Enter King, Helen, and Attendants.

PAROLLES I would have said it. You say well. Here comes the King.

LAFEW *Lustig*, as the Dutchman says. I'll like a maid the better whilst I have a tooth in my head. Why, he's able to lead her a *coranto*.

PAROLLES *Mort du vinaigre!* Is not this Helen?

LAFEW 'Fore God, I think so.

KING
Go, call before me all the lords in court.
An Attendant exits.
Sit, my preserver, by thy patient's side,
And with this healthful hand, whose banished sense
Thou hast repealed, a second time receive
The confirmation of my promised gift,
Which but attends thy naming.

Enter three or four Court Lords.

Fair maid, send forth thine eye. This youthful parcel
Of noble bachelors stand at my bestowing,
O'er whom both sovereign power and father's voice
I have to use. Thy frank election make.
Thou hast power to choose, and they none to forsake.

HELEN
To each of you one fair and virtuous mistress
Fall when Love please! Marry, to each but one.

LAFEW*, aside*
I'd give bay Curtal and his furniture
My mouth no more were broken than these boys'
And writ as little beard.

KING Peruse them well.
Not one of those but had a noble father.

HELEN Gentlemen,
Heaven hath through me restored the King to health.

ALL
We understand it and thank heaven for you.

HELEN
I am a simple maid, and therein wealthiest
That I protest I simply am a maid.—
Please it your Majesty, I have done already.
The blushes in my cheeks thus whisper me:

"We blush that thou shouldst choose; but, be refused,
Let the white death sit on thy cheek forever;
We'll ne'er come there again."
KING Make choice and see.
Who shuns thy love shuns all his love in me.
HELEN
Now, Dian, from thy altar do I fly,
And to imperial Love, that god most high,
Do my sighs stream. *She addresses her to a Lord.*
Sir, will you hear my suit?
FIRST COURT LORD
And grant it.
HELEN Thanks, sir. All the rest is mute.
LAFEW*, aside* I had rather be in this choice than throw ambs-ace for my life.
HELEN*, to another Lord*
The honor, sir, that flames in your fair eyes
Before I speak too threat'ningly replies.
Love make your fortunes twenty times above
Her that so wishes, and her humble love.
SECOND COURT LORD
No better, if you please.
HELEN My wish receive,
Which great Love grant, and so I take my leave.
LAFEW*, aside* Do all they deny her? An they were sons of mine, I'd have them whipped, or I would send them to th' Turk to make eunuchs of.
HELEN*, to another Lord*
Be not afraid that I your hand should take.
I'll never do you wrong, for your own sake.
Blessing upon your vows, and in your bed
Find fairer fortune if you ever wed.
LAFEW*, aside* These boys are boys of ice; they'll none have her. Sure they are bastards to the English; the French ne'er got 'em.
HELEN*, to another Lord*
You are too young, too happy, and too good
To make yourself a son out of my blood.
FOURTH COURT LORD Fair one, I think not so.
LAFEW*, aside* There's one grape yet. I am sure thy father drunk wine. But if thou be'st not an ass, I am a youth of fourteen; I have known thee already.
HELEN*, to Bertram*
I dare not say I take you, but I give
Me and my service ever whilst I live
Into your guiding power.—This is the man.
KING
Why then, young Bertram, take her. She's thy wife.
BERTRAM
My wife, my liege? I shall beseech your Highness
In such a business give me leave to use
The help of mine own eyes.
KING Know'st thou not,
Bertram,

What she has done for me?
BERTRAM Yes, my good lord,
But never hope to know why I should marry her.
KING
Thou know'st she has raised me from my sickly bed.
BERTRAM
But follows it, my lord, to bring me down
Must answer for your raising? I know her well;
She had her breeding at my father's charge.
A poor physician's daughter my wife? Disdain
Rather corrupt me ever!
KING
'Tis only title thou disdain'st in her, the which
I can build up. Strange is it that our bloods,
Of color, weight, and heat, poured all together,
Would quite confound distinction, yet stands off
In differences so mighty. If she be
All that is virtuous, save what thou dislik'st—
"A poor physician's daughter"—thou dislik'st
Of virtue for the name. But do not so.
From lowest place whence virtuous things proceed,
The place is dignified by th' doer's deed.
Where great additions swell 's, and virtue none,
It is a dropsied honor. Good alone
Is good, without a name; vileness is so;
The property by what it is should go,
Not by the title. She is young, wise, fair;
In these to nature she's immediate heir,
And these breed honor. That is honor's scorn
Which challenges itself as honor's born
And is not like the sire. Honors thrive
When rather from our acts we them derive
Than our foregoers. The mere word's a slave
Debauched on every tomb, on every grave
A lying trophy, and as oft is dumb
Where dust and damned oblivion is the tomb
Of honored bones indeed. What should be said?
If thou canst like this creature as a maid,
I can create the rest. Virtue and she
Is her own dower, honor and wealth from me.
BERTRAM
I cannot love her, nor will strive to do 't.
KING
Thou wrong'st thyself if thou shouldst strive to
choose.
HELEN
That you are well restored, my lord, I'm glad.
Let the rest go.
KING
My honor's at the stake, which to defeat
I must produce my power.—Here, take her hand,
Proud, scornful boy, unworthy this good gift,
That dost in vile misprision shackle up
My love and her desert; that canst not dream
We, poising us in her defective scale,
Shall weigh thee to the beam; that wilt not know

It is in us to plant thine honor where
We please to have it grow. Check thy contempt;
Obey our will, which travails in thy good.
Believe not thy disdain, but presently
Do thine own fortunes that obedient right
Which both thy duty owes and our power claims,
Or I will throw thee from my care forever
Into the staggers and the careless lapse
Of youth and ignorance, both my revenge and hate
Loosing upon thee in the name of justice
Without all terms of pity. Speak. Thine answer.

BERTRAM
Pardon, my gracious lord, for I submit
My fancy to your eyes. When I consider
What great creation and what dole of honor
Flies where you bid it, I find that she which late
Was in my nobler thoughts most base is now
The praisèd of the King, who, so ennobled,
Is as 'twere born so.

KING Take her by the hand,
And tell her she is thine, to whom I promise
A counterpoise, if not to thy estate,
A balance more replete.

BERTRAM I take her hand.

KING
Good fortune and the favor of the King
Smile upon this contract, whose ceremony
Shall seem expedient on the now-born brief
And be performed tonight. The solemn feast
Shall more attend upon the coming space,
Expecting absent friends. As thou lov'st her
Thy love's to me religious; else, does err.

They exit. Parolles and Lafew stay behind, commenting of this wedding.

LAFEW Do you hear, monsieur? A word with you.

PAROLLES Your pleasure, sir.

LAFEW Your lord and master did well to make his recantation.

PAROLLES "Recantation"? My "lord"? My "master"?

LAFEW Ay. Is it not a language I speak?

PAROLLES A most harsh one, and not to be understood without bloody succeeding. My "master"?

LAFEW Are you companion to the Count Rossillion?

PAROLLES To any count, to all counts, to what is man.

LAFEW To what is count's man. Count's master is of another style.

PAROLLES You are too old, sir; let it satisfy you, you are too old.

LAFEW I must tell thee, sirrah, I write man, to which title age cannot bring thee.

PAROLLES What I dare too well do, I dare not do.

LAFEW I did think thee, for two ordinaries, to be a pretty wise fellow; thou didst make tolerable vent of thy travel; it might pass. Yet the scarves and the bannerets about thee did manifoldly dissuade me from believing thee a vessel of too great a burden.

I have now found thee. When I lose thee again, I care not. Yet art thou good for nothing but taking up, and that thou 'rt scarce worth.

PAROLLES Hadst thou not the privilege of antiquity upon thee—

LAFEW Do not plunge thyself too far in anger lest thou hasten thy trial, which if—Lord have mercy on thee for a hen! So, my good window of lattice, fare thee well; thy casement I need not open, for I look through thee. Give me thy hand.

PAROLLES My lord, you give me most egregious indignity.

LAFEW Ay, with all my heart, and thou art worthy of it.

PAROLLES I have not, my lord, deserved it.

LAFEW Yes, good faith, ev'ry dram of it, and I will not bate thee a scruple.

PAROLLES Well, I shall be wiser.

LAFEW Ev'n as soon as thou canst, for thou hast to pull at a smack o' th' contrary. If ever thou be'st bound in thy scarf and beaten, thou shalt find what it is to be proud of thy bondage. I have a desire to hold my acquaintance with thee, or rather my knowledge, that I may say in the default "He is a man I know."

PAROLLES My lord, you do me most insupportable vexation.

LAFEW I would it were hell pains for thy sake, and my poor doing eternal; for doing I am past, as I will by thee in what motion age will give me leave.

He exits.

PAROLLES Well, thou hast a son shall take this disgrace off me. Scurvy, old, filthy, scurvy lord! Well, I must be patient; there is no fettering of authority. I'll beat him, by my life, if I can meet him with any convenience, an he were double and double a lord. I'll have no more pity of his age than I would have of—I'll beat him, an if I could but meet him again.

Enter Lafew.

LAFEW Sirrah, your lord and master's married. There's news for you: you have a new mistress.

PAROLLES I most unfeignedly beseech your Lordship to make some reservation of your wrongs. He is my good lord; whom I serve above is my master.

LAFEW Who? God?

PAROLLES Ay, sir.

LAFEW The devil it is that's thy master. Why dost thou garter up thy arms o' this fashion? Dost make hose of thy sleeves? Do other servants so? Thou wert best set thy lower part where thy nose stands. By mine honor, if I were but two hours younger, I'd beat thee. Methink'st thou art a general offense, and every man should beat thee. I think thou wast created for men to breathe themselves upon thee.

PAROLLES This is hard and undeserved measure, my

lord.
LAFEW Go to, sir. You were beaten in Italy for picking a kernel out of a pomegranate. You are a vagabond, and no true traveler. You are more saucy with lords and honorable personages than the commission of your birth and virtue gives you heraldry. You are not worth another word; else I'd call you knave. I leave you. *He exits.*
PAROLLES Good, very good! It is so, then. Good, very good. Let it be concealed awhile.

Enter Bertram Count Rossillion.

BERTRAM
Undone, and forfeited to cares forever!
PAROLLES What's the matter, sweetheart?
BERTRAM
Although before the solemn priest I have sworn,
I will not bed her.
PAROLLES What, what, sweetheart?
BERTRAM
O my Parolles, they have married me!
I'll to the Tuscan wars and never bed her.
PAROLLES France is a dog-hole, and it no more merits the tread of a man's foot. To th' wars!
BERTRAM There's letters from my mother. What th' import is I know not yet.
PAROLLES Ay, that would be known. To th' wars, my boy, to th' wars!
He wears his honor in a box unseen
That hugs his kicky-wicky here at home,
Spending his manly marrow in her arms
Which should sustain the bound and high curvet
Of Mars's fiery steed. To other regions!
France is a stable, we that dwell in 't jades.
Therefore, to th' war!
BERTRAM
It shall be so. I'll send her to my house,
Acquaint my mother with my hate to her
And wherefore I am fled, write to the King
That which I durst not speak. His present gift
Shall furnish me to those Italian fields
Where noble fellows strike. Wars is no strife
To the dark house and the detested wife.
PAROLLES
Will this *capriccio* hold in thee? Art sure?
BERTRAM
Go with me to my chamber, and advise me.
I'll send her straight away. Tomorrow
I'll to the wars, she to her single sorrow.
PAROLLES
Why, these balls bound; there's noise in it. 'Tis hard.
A young man married is a man that's marred.
Therefore away, and leave her bravely. Go.
The King has done you wrong, but hush, 'tis so.
They exit.

Scene 4

Enter Helen with a paper, and Fool.

HELEN My mother greets me kindly. Is she well?
FOOL She is not well, but yet she has her health. She's very merry, but yet she is not well. But, thanks be given, she's very well and wants nothing i' th' world, but yet she is not well.
HELEN If she be very well, what does she ail that she's not very well?
FOOL Truly, she's very well indeed, but for two things.
HELEN What two things?
FOOL One, that she's not in heaven, whither God send her quickly; the other, that she's in Earth, from whence God send her quickly.

Enter Parolles.

PAROLLES Bless you, my fortunate lady.
HELEN I hope, sir, I have your good will to have mine own good fortunes.
PAROLLES You had my prayers to lead them on, and to keep them on have them still.—O my knave, how does my old lady?
FOOL So that you had her wrinkles and I her money, I would she did as you say.
PAROLLES Why, I say nothing.
FOOL Marry, you are the wiser man, for many a man's tongue shakes out his master's undoing. To say nothing, to do nothing, to know nothing, and to have nothing is to be a great part of your title, which is within a very little of nothing.
PAROLLES Away. Thou 'rt a knave.
FOOL You should have said, sir, "Before a knave, thou 'rt a knave"; that's "Before me, thou 'rt a knave." This had been truth, sir.
PAROLLES Go to. Thou art a witty fool. I have found thee.
FOOL Did you find me in yourself, sir, or were you taught to find me?
PAROLLES …
FOOL The search, sir, was profitable, and much fool may you find in you, even to the world's pleasure and the increase of laughter.
PAROLLES A good knave, i' faith, and well fed.
Madam, my lord will go away tonight;
A very serious business calls on him.
The great prerogative and rite of love,
Which as your due time claims, he does acknowledge
But puts it off to a compelled restraint,
Whose want and whose delay is strewed with sweets,
Which they distill now in the curbèd time
To make the coming hour o'erflow with joy
And pleasure drown the brim.
HELEN What's his will else?

PAROLLES
That you will take your instant leave o' th' King
And make this haste as your own good proceeding,
Strengthened with what apology you think
May make it probable need.
HELEN What more commands he?
PAROLLES
That, having this obtained, you presently
Attend his further pleasure.
HELEN
In everything I wait upon his will.
PAROLLES I shall report it so. *Parolles exits.*
HELEN*, to Fool* I pray you, come, sirrah.
They exit.

Scene 5

Enter Lafew and Bertram.

LAFEW But I hope your Lordship thinks not him a soldier.
BERTRAM Yes, my lord, and of very valiant approof.
LAFEW You have it from his own deliverance.
BERTRAM And by other warranted testimony.
LAFEW Then my dial goes not true. I took this lark for a bunting.
BERTRAM I do assure you, my lord, he is very great in knowledge and accordingly valiant.
LAFEW I have then sinned against his experience and transgressed against his valor, and my state that way is dangerous since I cannot yet find in my heart to repent. Here he comes. I pray you make us friends. I will pursue the amity.

Enter Parolles.

PAROLLES*, to Bertram* These things shall be done, sir.
LAFEW*, to Bertram* Pray you, sir, who's his tailor?
PAROLLES Sir?
LAFEW O, I know him well. Ay, sir, he, sir, 's a good workman, a very good tailor.
BERTRAM*, aside to Parolles* Is she gone to the King?
PAROLLES She is.
BERTRAM Will she away tonight?
PAROLLES As you'll have her.
BERTRAM
I have writ my letters, casketed my treasure,
Given order for our horses, and tonight,
When I should take possession of the bride,
End ere I do begin.
LAFEW*, aside* A good traveler is something at the latter end of a dinner, but one that lies three thirds, and uses a known truth to pass a thousand nothings with, should be once heard and thrice beaten.— God save you, captain.
BERTRAM*, to Parolles* Is there any unkindness between my lord and you, monsieur?

PAROLLES I know not how I have deserved to run into my lord's displeasure.
LAFEW You have made shift to run into 't, boots and spurs and all, like him that leapt into the custard; and out of it you'll run again rather than suffer question for your residence.
BERTRAM It may be you have mistaken him, my lord.
LAFEW And shall do so ever, though I took him at 's prayers. Fare you well, my lord, and believe this of me: there can be no kernel in this light nut. The soul of this man is his clothes. Trust him not in matter of heavy consequence. I have kept of them tame and know their natures.—Farewell, monsieur. I have spoken better of you than you have or will to deserve at my hand, but we must do good against evil. *He exits.*
PAROLLES An idle lord, I swear.
BERTRAM I think not so.
PAROLLES Why, do you not know him?
BERTRAM
Yes, I do know him well, and common speech
Gives him a worthy pass.

Enter Helen.

Here comes my clog.
HELEN
I have, sir, as I was commanded from you,
Spoke with the King and have procured his leave
For present parting. Only he desires
Some private speech with you.
BERTRAM I shall obey his will.
You must not marvel, Helen, at my course,
Which holds not color with the time, nor does
The ministration and requirèd office
On my particular. Prepared I was not
For such a business; therefore am I found
So much unsettled. This drives me to entreat you
That presently you take your way for home,
And rather muse than ask why I entreat you;
For my respects are better than they seem,
And my appointments have in them a need
Greater than shows itself at the first view
To you that know them not. *Giving her a paper.*
This to my mother.
'Twill be two days ere I shall see you, so
I leave you to your wisdom.
HELEN Sir, I can nothing say
But that I am your most obedient servant—
BERTRAM
Come, come, no more of that.
HELEN And ever shall
With true observance seek to eke out that
Wherein toward me my homely stars have failed
To equal my great fortune.
BERTRAM Let that go.

My haste is very great. Farewell. Hie home.

HELEN

Pray, sir, your pardon.

BERTRAM Well, what would you say?

HELEN

I am not worthy of the wealth I owe,
Nor dare I say 'tis mine—and yet it is—
But, like a timorous thief, most fain would steal
What law does vouch mine own.

BERTRAM What would you have?

HELEN

Something, and scarce so much; nothing, indeed.
I would not tell you what I would, my lord. Faith,
yes:
Strangers and foes do sunder and not kiss.

BERTRAM

I pray you stay not, but in haste to horse.

HELEN

I shall not break your bidding, good my lord.—
Where are my other men?—Monsieur, farewell.

She exits.

BERTRAM

Go thou toward home, where I will never come
Whilst I can shake my sword or hear the drum.—
Away, and for our flight.

PAROLLES Bravely, *coraggio*!

They exit.

ACT 3

Scene 1

Flourish. Enter the Duke of Florence, the two French Lords, with a troop of Soldiers.

DUKE
So that from point to point now have you heard
The fundamental reasons of this war,
Whose great decision hath much blood let forth
And more thirsts after.
FIRST LORD Holy seems the quarrel
Upon your Grace's part, black and fearful
On the opposer.
DUKE
Therefore we marvel much our cousin France
Would in so just a business shut his bosom
Against our borrowing prayers.
SECOND LORD Good my lord,
The reasons of our state I cannot yield
But like a common and an outward man
That the great figure of a council frames
By self-unable motion; therefore dare not
Say what I think of it, since I have found
Myself in my incertain grounds to fail
As often as I guessed.
DUKE Be it his pleasure.
FIRST LORD
But I am sure the younger of our nation,
That surfeit on their ease, will day by day
Come here for physic.
DUKE Welcome shall they be,
And all the honors that can fly from us
Shall on them settle. You know your places well.
When better fall, for your avails they fell.
Tomorrow to th' field.

Flourish. They exit.

Scene 2

Enter Countess, with a paper, and Fool.

COUNTESS It hath happened all as I would have had it, save that he comes not along with her.
FOOL By my troth, I take my young lord to be a very melancholy man.
COUNTESS By what observance, I pray you?
FOOL Why, he will look upon his boot and sing, mend the ruff and sing, ask questions and sing, pick his teeth and sing. I know a man that had this trick of melancholy sold a goodly manor for a song.
COUNTESS Let me see what he writes and when he means to come. *She opens the letter.*
FOOL I have no mind to Isbel since I was at court. Our

old lings and our Isbels o' th' country are nothing like your old ling and your Isbels o' th' court. The brains of my Cupid's knocked out, and I begin to love as an old man loves money, with no stomach.

COUNTESS What have we here?

FOOL E'en that you have there. *He exits.*

COUNTESS *reads. I have sent you a daughter-in-law. She hath recovered the King and undone me. I have wedded her, not bedded her, and sworn to make the "not" eternal. You shall hear I am run away. Know it before the report come. If there be breadth enough in the world, I will hold a long distance. My duty to you.*

Your unfortunate son,

Bertram.

This is not well, rash and unbridled boy:
To fly the favors of so good a king,
To pluck his indignation on thy head
By the misprizing of a maid too virtuous
For the contempt of empire.

Enter Fool.

FOOL O madam, yonder is heavy news within, between two soldiers and my young lady.

COUNTESS What is the matter?

FOOL Nay, there is some comfort in the news, some comfort. Your son will not be killed so soon as I thought he would.

COUNTESS Why should he be killed?

FOOL So say I, madam, if he run away, as I hear he does. The danger is in standing to 't; that's the loss of men, though it be the getting of children. Here they come will tell you more. For my part, I only hear your son was run away. *He exits.*

Enter Helen, with a paper, and two Gentlemen.

FIRST GENTLEMAN*, to Countess* Save you, good madam.

HELEN

Madam, my lord is gone, forever gone.

SECOND GENTLEMAN Do not say so.

COUNTESS

Think upon patience, pray you.—Gentlemen,
I have felt so many quirks of joy and grief
That the first face of neither on the start
Can woman me unto 't. Where is my son, I pray you?

SECOND GENTLEMAN

Madam, he's gone to serve the Duke of Florence.
We met him thitherward, for thence we came,
And, after some dispatch in hand at court,
Thither we bend again.

HELEN

Look on his letter, madam; here's my passport.

She reads. When thou canst get the ring upon

my finger, which never shall come off, and show me
a child begotten of thy body that I am father to, then
call me husband. But in such a "then" I write a
"never."
This is a dreadful sentence.
COUNTESS
Brought you this letter, gentlemen?
SECOND GENTLEMAN Ay, madam,
And for the contents' sake are sorry for our pains.
COUNTESS
I prithee, lady, have a better cheer.
If thou engrossest all the griefs are thine,
Thou robb'st me of a moiety. He was my son,
But I do wash his name out of my blood,
And thou art all my child.—Towards Florence is he?
SECOND GENTLEMAN Ay, madam.
COUNTESS And to be a soldier?
SECOND GENTLEMAN
Such is his noble purpose, and, believe 't,
The Duke will lay upon him all the honor
That good convenience claims.
COUNTESS Return you thither?
FIRST GENTLEMAN
Ay, madam, with the swiftest wing of speed.
HELEN *reads*
Till I have no wife I have nothing in France.
'Tis bitter.
COUNTESS Find you that there?
HELEN Ay, madam.
FIRST GENTLEMAN
'Tis but the boldness of his hand, haply,
Which his heart was not consenting to.
COUNTESS
Nothing in France until he have no wife!
There's nothing here that is too good for him
But only she, and she deserves a lord
That twenty such rude boys might tend upon
And call her hourly mistress. Who was with him?
FIRST GENTLEMAN
A servant only, and a gentleman
Which I have sometime known.
COUNTESS Parolles was it not?
FIRST GENTLEMAN Ay, my good lady, he.
COUNTESS
A very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness.
My son corrupts a well-derivèd nature
With his inducement.
FIRST GENTLEMAN Indeed, good lady,
The fellow has a deal of that too much
Which holds him much to have.
COUNTESS You're welcome,
gentlemen.
I will entreat you when you see my son
To tell him that his sword can never win
The honor that he loses. More I'll entreat you
Written to bear along.

SECOND GENTLEMAN We serve you, madam,
In that and all your worthiest affairs.
COUNTESS
Not so, but as we change our courtesies.
Will you draw near?
She exits with the Gentlemen.
HELEN
"Till I have no wife I have nothing in France."
Nothing in France until he has no wife.
Thou shalt have none, Rossillion, none in France.
Then hast thou all again. Poor lord, is 't I
That chase thee from thy country and expose
Those tender limbs of thine to the event
Of the none-sparing war? And is it I
That drive thee from the sportive court, where thou
Wast shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark
Of smoky muskets? O you leaden messengers
That ride upon the violent speed of fire,
Fly with false aim; move the still-'pearing air
That sings with piercing; do not touch my lord.
Whoever shoots at him, I set him there;
Whoever charges on his forward breast,
I am the caitiff that do hold him to 't;
And though I kill him not, I am the cause
His death was so effected. Better 'twere
I met the ravin lion when he roared
With sharp constraint of hunger; better 'twere
That all the miseries which nature owes
Were mine at once. No, come thou home, Rossillion,
Whence honor but of danger wins a scar,
As oft it loses all. I will be gone.
My being here it is that holds thee hence.
Shall I stay here to do 't? No, no, although
The air of paradise did fan the house
And angels officed all. I will be gone,
That pitiful rumor may report my flight
To consolate thine ear. Come, night; end, day;
For with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal away.
She exits.

Scene 3

Flourish. Enter the Duke of Florence, Bertram Count Rossillion, Drum and Trumpets, Soldiers, Parolles.

DUKE*, to Bertram*
The general of our horse thou art, and we,
Great in our hope, lay our best love and credence
Upon thy promising fortune.
BERTRAM Sir, it is
A charge too heavy for my strength, but yet
We'll strive to bear it for your worthy sake
To th' extreme edge of hazard.
DUKE Then go thou forth,
And Fortune play upon thy prosperous helm
As thy auspicious mistress.
BERTRAM This very day,

Great Mars, I put myself into thy file.
Make me but like my thoughts, and I shall prove
A lover of thy drum, hater of love.

All exit.

Scene 4

Enter Countess and Steward, with a paper.

COUNTESS
Alas! And would you take the letter of her?
Might you not know she would do as she has done
By sending me a letter? Read it again.
STEWARD *reads the letter*
I am Saint Jaques' pilgrim, thither gone.
Ambitious love hath so in me offended
That barefoot plod I the cold ground upon,
With sainted vow my faults to have amended.
Write, write, that from the bloody course of war
My dearest master, your dear son, may hie.
Bless him at home in peace, whilst I from far
His name with zealous fervor sanctify.
His taken labors bid him me forgive;
I, his despiteful Juno, sent him forth
From courtly friends, with camping foes to live
Where death and danger dogs the heels of worth.
He is too good and fair for death and me,
Whom I myself embrace to set him free.
COUNTESS
Ah, what sharp stings are in her mildest words!
Rinaldo, you did never lack advice so much
As letting her pass so. Had I spoke with her,
I could have well diverted her intents,
Which thus she hath prevented.
STEWARD Pardon me, madam.
If I had given you this at overnight,
She might have been o'erta'en. And yet she writes
Pursuit would be but vain.
COUNTESS What angel shall
Bless this unworthy husband? He cannot thrive
Unless her prayers, whom heaven delights to hear
And loves to grant, reprieve him from the wrath
Of greatest justice. Write, write, Rinaldo,
To this unworthy husband of his wife.
Let every word weigh heavy of her worth
That he does weigh too light. My greatest grief,
Though little he do feel it, set down sharply.
Dispatch the most convenient messenger.
When haply he shall hear that she is gone,
He will return; and hope I may that she,
Hearing so much, will speed her foot again,
Led hither by pure love. Which of them both
Is dearest to me, I have no skill in sense
To make distinction. Provide this messenger.
My heart is heavy, and mine age is weak.
Grief would have tears, and sorrow bids me speak.

They exit.

Scene 5

A tucket afar off. Enter old Widow of Florence, her daughter Diana, and Mariana, with other Citizens.

WIDOW Nay, come, for if they do approach the city, we shall lose all the sight.

DIANA They say the French count has done most honorable service.

WIDOW It is reported that he has taken their great'st commander, and that with his own hand he slew the Duke's brother. *A trumpet sounds.* We have lost our labor. They are gone a contrary way. Hark, you may know by their trumpets.

MARIANA Come, let's return again and suffice ourselves with the report of it.—Well, Diana, take heed of this French earl. The honor of a maid is her name, and no legacy is so rich as honesty.

WIDOW*, to Diana* I have told my neighbor how you have been solicited by a gentleman, his companion.

MARIANA I know that knave, hang him! One Parolles, a filthy officer he is in those suggestions for the young earl.—Beware of them, Diana. Their promises, enticements, oaths, tokens, and all these engines of lust are not the things they go under. Many a maid hath been seduced by them; and the misery is example that so terrible shows in the wrack of maidenhood cannot for all that dissuade succession, but that they are limed with the twigs that threatens them. I hope I need not to advise you further, but I hope your own grace will keep you where you are, though there were no further danger known but the modesty which is so lost.

DIANA You shall not need to fear me.

WIDOW I hope so.

Enter Helen as a pilgrim.

Look, here comes a pilgrim. I know she will lie at my house; thither they send one another. I'll question her.—God save you, pilgrim. Whither are bound?

HELEN*, as pilgrim* To Saint Jaques le Grand.
Where do the palmers lodge, I do beseech you?

WIDOW
At the Saint Francis here beside the port.

HELEN*, as pilgrim* Is this the way? *A march afar.*

WIDOW
Ay, marry, is 't.—Hark you, they come this way.—
If you will tarry, holy pilgrim,
But till the troops come by,
I will conduct you where you shall be lodged,
The rather for I think I know your hostess
As ample as myself.

HELEN*, as pilgrim* Is it yourself?

WIDOW If you shall please so, pilgrim.
HELEN, *as pilgrim*
I thank you, and will stay upon your leisure.
WIDOW
You came I think from France?
HELEN, *as pilgrim* I did so.
WIDOW
Here you shall see a countryman of yours
That has done worthy service.
HELEN, *as pilgrim* His name, I pray you?
DIANA
The Count Rossillion. Know you such a one?
HELEN, *as pilgrim*
But by the ear, that hears most nobly of him.
His face I know not.
DIANA Whatsome'er he is,
He's bravely taken here. He stole from France,
As 'tis reported, for the King had married him
Against his liking. Think you it is so?
HELEN, *as pilgrim*
Ay, surely, mere the truth. I know his lady.
DIANA
There is a gentleman that serves the Count
Reports but coarsely of her.
HELEN, *as pilgrim* What's his name?
DIANA
Monsieur Parolles.
HELEN, *as pilgrim* O, I believe with him.
In argument of praise, or to the worth
Of the great count himself, she is too mean
To have her name repeated. All her deserving
Is a reservèd honesty, and that
I have not heard examined.
DIANA Alas, poor lady,
'Tis a hard bondage to become the wife
Of a detesting lord.
WIDOW
I warrant, good creature, wheresoe'er she is,
Her heart weighs sadly. This young maid might do
her
A shrewd turn if she pleased.
HELEN, *as pilgrim* How do you mean?
Maybe the amorous count solicits her
In the unlawful purpose?
WIDOW He does indeed,
And brokes with all that can in such a suit
Corrupt the tender honor of a maid,
But she is armed for him and keeps her guard
In honestest defense.
MARIANA
The gods forbid else!

Drum and Colors. Enter Bertram Count Rossillion, Parolles, and the whole Army.

WIDOW So, now they come.

That is Antonio, the Duke's eldest son;
That, Escalus.
HELEN*, as pilgrim* Which is the Frenchman?
DIANA He,
That with the plume. 'Tis a most gallant fellow.
I would he loved his wife. If he were honester,
He were much goodlier. Is 't not a handsome gentleman?
HELEN*, as pilgrim* I like him well.
DIANA
'Tis pity he is not honest. Yond's that same knave
That leads him to these places. Were I his lady,
I would poison that vile rascal.
HELEN*, as pilgrim* Which is he?
DIANA
That jackanapes with scarves. Why is he melancholy?
HELEN*, as pilgrim* Perchance he's hurt i' th' battle.
PAROLLES Lose our drum? Well.
MARIANA He's shrewdly vexed at something. Look, he has spied us.
WIDOW*, to Parolles* Marry, hang you.
MARIANA*, to Parolles* And your courtesy, for a ring-carrier.

Bertram, Parolles, and the army exit.

WIDOW
The troop is passed. Come, pilgrim, I will bring you
Where you shall host. Of enjoined penitents
There's four or five, to Great Saint Jaques bound,
Already at my house.
HELEN*, as pilgrim* I humbly thank you.
Please it this matron and this gentle maid
To eat with us tonight, the charge and thanking
Shall be for me. And to requite you further,
I will bestow some precepts of this virgin
Worthy the note.
BOTH We'll take your offer kindly.

They exit.

Scene 6

Enter Bertram Count Rossillion and the French Lords, as at first.

FIRST LORD Nay, good my lord, put him to 't. Let him have his way.
SECOND LORD If your Lordship find him not a hilding, hold me no more in your respect.
FIRST LORD On my life, my lord, a bubble.
BERTRAM Do you think I am so far deceived in him?
FIRST LORD Believe it, my lord. In mine own direct knowledge, without any malice, but to speak of him as my kinsman, he's a most notable coward, an infinite and endless liar, an hourly promise-breaker, the owner of no one good quality worthy your Lordship's entertainment.
SECOND LORD It were fit you knew him, lest, reposing too far in his virtue, which he hath not, he might

at some great and trusty business in a main danger fail you.

BERTRAM I would I knew in what particular action to try him.

SECOND LORD None better than to let him fetch off his drum, which you hear him so confidently undertake to do.

FIRST LORD I, with a troop of Florentines, will suddenly surprise him. Such I will have whom I am sure he knows not from the enemy. We will bind and hoodwink him so, that he shall suppose no other but that he is carried into the leaguer of the adversary's when we bring him to our own tents. Be but your Lordship present at his examination. If he do not for the promise of his life, and in the highest compulsion of base fear, offer to betray you and deliver all the intelligence in his power against you, and that with the divine forfeit of his soul upon oath, never trust my judgment in anything.

SECOND LORD O, for the love of laughter, let him fetch his drum. He says he has a stratagem for 't. When your Lordship sees the bottom of his success in 't, and to what metal this counterfeit lump of ore will be melted, if you give him not John Drum's entertainment, your inclining cannot be removed. Here he comes.

Enter Parolles.

FIRST LORD*, aside to Bertram* O, for the love of laughter, hinder not the honor of his design. Let him fetch off his drum in any hand.

BERTRAM*, to Parolles* How now, monsieur? This drum sticks sorely in your disposition.

SECOND LORD A pox on 't! Let it go. 'Tis but a drum.

PAROLLES But a drum! Is 't but a drum? A drum so lost! There was excellent command, to charge in with our horse upon our own wings and to rend our own soldiers!

SECOND LORD That was not to be blamed in the command of the service. It was a disaster of war that Caesar himself could not have prevented if he had been there to command.

BERTRAM Well, we cannot greatly condemn our success. Some dishonor we had in the loss of that drum, but it is not to be recovered.

PAROLLES It might have been recovered.

BERTRAM It might, but it is not now.

PAROLLES It is to be recovered. But that the merit of service is seldom attributed to the true and exact performer, I would have that drum or another, or *hic jacet*.

BERTRAM Why, if you have a stomach, to 't, monsieur! If you think your mystery in stratagem can bring this instrument of honor again into his native quarter, be magnanimous in the enterprise and go

on. I will grace the attempt for a worthy exploit. If you speed well in it, the Duke shall both speak of it and extend to you what further becomes his greatness, even to the utmost syllable of your worthiness.

PAROLLES By the hand of a soldier, I will undertake it.

BERTRAM But you must not now slumber in it.

PAROLLES I'll about it this evening, and I will presently pen down my dilemmas, encourage myself in my certainty, put myself into my mortal preparation; and by midnight look to hear further from me.

BERTRAM May I be bold to acquaint his Grace you are gone about it?

PAROLLES I know not what the success will be, my lord, but the attempt I vow.

BERTRAM I know thou 'rt valiant, and to the possibility of thy soldiership will subscribe for thee. Farewell.

PAROLLES I love not many words. *He exits.*

FIRST LORD No more than a fish loves water. Is not this a strange fellow, my lord, that so confidently seems to undertake this business which he knows is not to be done, damns himself to do, and dares better be damned than to do 't?

SECOND LORD You do not know him, my lord, as we do. Certain it is that he will steal himself into a man's favor and for a week escape a great deal of discoveries, but when you find him out, you have him ever after.

BERTRAM Why, do you think he will make no deed at all of this that so seriously he does address himself unto?

FIRST LORD None in the world, but return with an invention and clap upon you two or three probable lies. But we have almost embossed him. You shall see his fall tonight; for indeed he is not for your Lordship's respect.

SECOND LORD We'll make you some sport with the fox ere we case him. He was first smoked by the old Lord Lafew. When his disguise and he is parted, tell me what a sprat you shall find him, which you shall see this very night.

FIRST LORD I must go look my twigs. He shall be caught.

BERTRAM Your brother he shall go along with me.

FIRST LORD As 't please your Lordship. I'll leave you. *He exits.*

BERTRAM
Now will I lead you to the house and show you
The lass I spoke of.

SECOND LORD But you say she's honest.

BERTRAM
That's all the fault. I spoke with her but once
And found her wondrous cold. But I sent to her,
By this same coxcomb that we have i' th' wind,
Tokens and letters, which she did re-send.
And this is all I have done. She's a fair creature.

Will you go see her?
SECOND LORD With all my heart, my lord.

They exit.

Scene 7

Enter Helen and Widow.

HELEN
If you misdoubt me that I am not she,
I know not how I shall assure you further
But I shall lose the grounds I work upon.
WIDOW
Though my estate be fall'n, I was well born,
Nothing acquainted with these businesses,
And would not put my reputation now
In any staining act.
HELEN Nor would I wish you.
First give me trust the Count he is my husband,
And what to your sworn counsel I have spoken
Is so from word to word; and then you cannot,
By the good aid that I of you shall borrow,
Err in bestowing it.
WIDOW I should believe you,
For you have showed me that which well approves
You're great in fortune.
HELEN Take this purse of gold,
And let me buy your friendly help thus far,
Which I will overpay and pay again
When I have found it. The Count he woos your daughter,
Lays down his wanton siege before her beauty,
Resolved to carry her. Let her in fine consent
As we'll direct her how 'tis best to bear it.
Now his important blood will naught deny
That she'll demand. A ring the County wears
That downward hath succeeded in his house
From son to son some four or five descents
Since the first father wore it. This ring he holds
In most rich choice. Yet, in his idle fire,
To buy his will it would not seem too dear,
Howe'er repented after.
WIDOW
Now I see the bottom of your purpose.
HELEN
You see it lawful, then. It is no more
But that your daughter, ere she seems as won,
Desires this ring, appoints him an encounter,
In fine, delivers me to fill the time,
Herself most chastely absent. After,
To marry her, I'll add three thousand crowns
To what is passed already.
WIDOW I have yielded.
Instruct my daughter how she shall persever
That time and place with this deceit so lawful
May prove coherent. Every night he comes
With musics of all sorts and songs composed

To her unworthiness. It nothing steads us
To chide him from our eaves, for he persists
As if his life lay on 't.
HELEN Why then tonight
Let us assay our plot, which, if it speed,
Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed,
And lawful meaning in a lawful act,
Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact.
But let's about it.

They exit.

ACT 4

Scene 1

Enter one of the French Lords, with five or six other Soldiers in ambush.

LORD He can come no other way but by this hedge corner. When you sally upon him, speak what terrible language you will. Though you understand it not yourselves, no matter. For we must not seem to understand him, unless some one among us whom we must produce for an interpreter.

FIRST SOLDIER Good captain, let me be th' interpreter.

LORD Art not acquainted with him? Knows he not thy voice?

FIRST SOLDIER No, sir, I warrant you.

LORD But what linsey-woolsey hast thou to speak to us again?

FIRST SOLDIER E'en such as you speak to me.

LORD He must think us some band of strangers i' th' adversary's entertainment. Now, he hath a smack of all neighboring languages. Therefore we must every one be a man of his own fancy, not to know what we speak one to another. So we seem to know is to know straight our purpose: choughs' language, gabble enough and good enough. As for you, interpreter, you must seem very politic. But couch, ho! Here he comes to beguile two hours in a sleep and then to return and swear the lies he forges. *They move aside.*

Enter Parolles.

PAROLLES Ten o'clock. Within these three hours 'twill be time enough to go home. What shall I say I have done? It must be a very plausive invention that carries it. They begin to smoke me, and disgraces have of late knocked too often at my door. I find my tongue is too foolhardy, but my heart hath the fear of Mars before it, and of his creatures, not daring the reports of my tongue.

LORD*, aside* This is the first truth that e'er thine own tongue was guilty of.

PAROLLES What the devil should move me to undertake the recovery of this drum, being not ignorant of the impossibility and knowing I had no such purpose? I must give myself some hurts and say I got them in exploit. Yet slight ones will not carry it. They will say "Came you off with so little?" And great ones I dare not give. Wherefore? What's the instance? Tongue, I must put you into a butter-woman's mouth and buy myself another of Bajazeth's mule if you prattle me into these perils.

LORD, *aside* Is it possible he should know what he is, and be that he is?

PAROLLES I would the cutting of my garments would serve the turn, or the breaking of my Spanish sword.

LORD, *aside* We cannot afford you so.

PAROLLES Or the baring of my beard, and to say it was in stratagem.

LORD, *aside* 'Twould not do.

PAROLLES Or to drown my clothes and say I was stripped.

LORD, *aside* Hardly serve.

PAROLLES Though I swore I leapt from the window of the citadel—

LORD, *aside* How deep?

PAROLLES Thirty fathom.

LORD, *aside* Three great oaths would scarce make that be believed.

PAROLLES I would I had any drum of the enemy's. I would swear I recovered it.

LORD, *aside* You shall hear one anon.

PAROLLES A drum, now, of the enemy's—

Alarum within.

LORD, *advancing* *Throca movousus, cargo, cargo, cargo.*

ALL *Cargo, cargo, cargo, villianda par corbo, cargo.*

They seize him.

PAROLLES O ransom, ransom! Do not hide mine eyes.

They blindfold him.

FIRST SOLDIER *Boskos thromuldo boskos.*

PAROLLES

I know you are the Muskos' regiment,
And I shall lose my life for want of language.
If there be here German or Dane, Low Dutch,
Italian, or French, let him speak to me.
I'll discover that which shall undo the Florentine.

FIRST SOLDIER *Boskos vauvado,* I understand thee and can speak thy tongue. *Kerelybonto,* sir, betake thee to thy faith, for seventeen poniards are at thy bosom.

PAROLLES O!

FIRST SOLDIER O, pray, pray, pray! *Manka reuania dulche.*

LORD *Oscorbidulchos voliuorco.*

FIRST SOLDIER

The General is content to spare thee yet
And, hoodwinked as thou art, will lead thee on
To gather from thee. Haply thou mayst inform
Something to save thy life.

PAROLLES O, let me live,
And all the secrets of our camp I'll show,
Their force, their purposes. Nay, I'll speak that
Which you will wonder at.

FIRST SOLDIER But wilt thou faithfully?

PAROLLES If I do not, damn me.

FIRST SOLDIER *Acordo linta.* Come on, thou art

granted space.

He exits with Parolles under guard.
A short alarum within.

LORD
Go tell the Count Rossillion and my brother
We have caught the woodcock and will keep him muffled
Till we do hear from them.
SECOND SOLDIER Captain, I will.
LORD
He will betray us all unto ourselves.
Inform on that.
SECOND SOLDIER So I will, sir.
LORD
Till then I'll keep him dark and safely locked.

They exit.

Scene 2

Enter Bertram and the maid called Diana.

BERTRAM
They told me that your name was Fontibell.
DIANA
No, my good lord, Diana.
BERTRAM Titled goddess,
And worth it, with addition. But, fair soul,
In your fine frame hath love no quality?
If the quick fire of youth light not your mind,
You are no maiden but a monument.
When you are dead, you should be such a one
As you are now, for you are cold and stern,
And now you should be as your mother was
When your sweet self was got.
DIANA
She then was honest.
BERTRAM So should you be.
DIANA No.
My mother did but duty—such, my lord,
As you owe to your wife.
BERTRAM No more o' that.
I prithee do not strive against my vows.
I was compelled to her, but I love thee
By love's own sweet constraint, and will forever
Do thee all rights of service.
DIANA Ay, so you serve us
Till we serve you. But when you have our roses,
You barely leave our thorns to prick ourselves
And mock us with our bareness.
BERTRAM How have I sworn!
DIANA
'Tis not the many oaths that makes the truth,
But the plain single vow that is vowed true.
What is not holy, that we swear not by,
But take the high'st to witness. Then pray you, tell me,
If I should swear by Jove's great attributes

I loved you dearly, would you believe my oaths
When I did love you ill? This has no holding
To swear by him whom I protest to love
That I will work against him. Therefore your oaths
Are words, and poor conditions but unsealed,
At least in my opinion.
BERTRAM Change it, change it.
Be not so holy-cruel. Love is holy,
And my integrity ne'er knew the crafts
That you do charge men with. Stand no more off,
But give thyself unto my sick desires,
Who then recovers. Say thou art mine, and ever
My love as it begins shall so persever.
DIANA
I see that men may rope 's in such a snare
That we'll forsake ourselves. Give me that ring.
BERTRAM
I'll lend it thee, my dear, but have no power
To give it from me.
DIANA Will you not, my lord?
BERTRAM
It is an honor 'longing to our house,
Bequeathèd down from many ancestors,
Which were the greatest obloquy i' th' world
In me to lose.
DIANA Mine honor's such a ring.
My chastity's the jewel of our house,
Bequeathèd down from many ancestors,
Which were the greatest obloquy i' th' world
In me to lose. Thus your own proper wisdom
Brings in the champion Honor on my part
Against your vain assault.
BERTRAM Here, take my ring.
My house, mine honor, yea, my life be thine,
And I'll be bid by thee.
DIANA
When midnight comes, knock at my chamber window.
I'll order take my mother shall not hear.
Now will I charge you in the band of truth,
When you have conquered my yet maiden bed,
Remain there but an hour, nor speak to me.
My reasons are most strong, and you shall know them
When back again this ring shall be delivered.
And on your finger in the night I'll put
Another ring, that what in time proceeds
May token to the future our past deeds.
Adieu till then; then, fail not. You have won
A wife of me, though there my hope be done.
BERTRAM
A heaven on Earth I have won by wooing thee.
DIANA
For which live long to thank both heaven and me!
You may so in the end. *He exits.*
My mother told me just how he would woo
As if she sat in 's heart. She says all men

Have the like oaths. He had sworn to marry me
When his wife's dead. Therefore I'll lie with him
When I am buried. Since Frenchmen are so braid,
Marry that will, I live and die a maid.
Only, in this disguise I think 't no sin
To cozen him that would unjustly win.

She exits.

Scene 3

Enter the two French Lords and some two or three Soldiers.

FIRST LORD You have not given him his mother's letter?

SECOND LORD I have delivered it an hour since. There is something in 't that stings his nature, for on the reading it he changed almost into another man.

FIRST LORD He has much worthy blame laid upon him for shaking off so good a wife and so sweet a lady.

SECOND LORD Especially he hath incurred the everlasting displeasure of the King, who had even tuned his bounty to sing happiness to him. I will tell you a thing, but you shall let it dwell darkly with you.

FIRST LORD When you have spoken it, 'tis dead, and I am the grave of it.

SECOND LORD He hath perverted a young gentlewoman here in Florence of a most chaste renown, and this night he fleshes his will in the spoil of her honor. He hath given her his monumental ring and thinks himself made in the unchaste composition.

FIRST LORD Now God delay our rebellion! As we are ourselves, what things are we!

SECOND LORD Merely our own traitors. And, as in the common course of all treasons we still see them reveal themselves till they attain to their abhorred ends, so he that in this action contrives against his own nobility, in his proper stream o'erflows himself.

FIRST LORD Is it not meant damnable in us to be trumpeters of our unlawful intents? We shall not, then, have his company tonight?

SECOND LORD Not till after midnight, for he is dieted to his hour.

FIRST LORD That approaches apace. I would gladly have him see his company anatomized, that he might take a measure of his own judgments wherein so curiously he had set this counterfeit.

SECOND LORD We will not meddle with him till he come, for his presence must be the whip of the other.

FIRST LORD In the meantime, what hear you of these wars?

SECOND LORD I hear there is an overture of peace.

FIRST LORD Nay, I assure you, a peace concluded.

SECOND LORD What will Count Rossillion do then? Will he travel higher or return again into France?

FIRST LORD I perceive by this demand you are not altogether of his counsel.

SECOND LORD Let it be forbid, sir! So should I be a great deal of his act.

FIRST LORD Sir, his wife some two months since fled from his house. Her pretense is a pilgrimage to Saint Jaques le Grand, which holy undertaking with most austere sanctimony she accomplished. And, there residing, the tenderness of her nature became as a prey to her grief; in fine, made a groan of her last breath, and now she sings in heaven.

SECOND LORD How is this justified?

FIRST LORD The stronger part of it by her own letters, which makes her story true even to the point of her death. Her death itself, which could not be her office to say is come, was faithfully confirmed by the rector of the place.

SECOND LORD Hath the Count all this intelligence?

FIRST LORD Ay, and the particular confirmations, point from point, to the full arming of the verity.

SECOND LORD I am heartily sorry that he'll be glad of this.

FIRST LORD How mightily sometimes we make us comforts of our losses.

SECOND LORD And how mightily some other times we drown our gain in tears. The great dignity that his valor hath here acquired for him shall at home be encountered with a shame as ample.

FIRST LORD The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together. Our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not, and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues.

Enter a Servant.

How now? Where's your master?

SERVANT He met the Duke in the street, sir, of whom he hath taken a solemn leave. His Lordship will next morning for France. The Duke hath offered him letters of commendations to the King.

SECOND LORD They shall be no more than needful there, if they were more than they can commend. They cannot be too sweet for the King's tartness.

Enter Bertram Count Rossillion.

Here's his Lordship now.—How now, my lord? Is 't not after midnight?

BERTRAM I have tonight dispatched sixteen businesses, a month's length apiece. By an abstract of success: I have congeed with the Duke, done my adieu with his nearest, buried a wife, mourned for her, writ to my lady mother I am returning, entertained my convoy, and between these main parcels

of dispatch effected many nicer needs. The last was the greatest, but that I have not ended yet.

SECOND LORD If the business be of any difficulty, and this morning your departure hence, it requires haste of your Lordship.

BERTRAM I mean the business is not ended as fearing to hear of it hereafter. But shall we have this dialogue between the Fool and the Soldier? Come, bring forth this counterfeit module; has deceived me like a double-meaning prophesier.

SECOND LORD Bring him forth. Has sat i' th' stocks all night, poor gallant knave. *Soldiers exit.*

BERTRAM No matter. His heels have deserved it in usurping his spurs so long. How does he carry himself?

SECOND LORD I have told your Lordship already: the stocks carry him. But to answer you as you would be understood: he weeps like a wench that had shed her milk. He hath confessed himself to Morgan, whom he supposes to be a friar, from the time of his remembrance to this very instant disaster of his setting i' th' stocks. And what think you he hath confessed?

BERTRAM Nothing of me, has he?

SECOND LORD His confession is taken, and it shall be read to his face. If your Lordship be in 't, as I believe you are, you must have the patience to hear it.

Enter Parolles, blindfolded, with his Interpreter, the First Soldier.

BERTRAM A plague upon him! Muffled! He can say nothing of me.

FIRST LORD*, aside to Bertram* Hush, hush. Hoodman comes.—*Portotartarossa.*

FIRST SOLDIER*, to Parolles* He calls for the tortures. What will you say without 'em?

PAROLLES I will confess what I know without constraint. If you pinch me like a pasty, I can say no more.

FIRST SOLDIER *Bosko Chimurcho.*

FIRST LORD *Boblibindo chicurmurco.*

FIRST SOLDIER You are a merciful general.—Our general bids you answer to what I shall ask you out of a note.

PAROLLES And truly, as I hope to live.

FIRST SOLDIER*, as if reading a note First, demand of him how many horse the Duke is strong.*—What say you to that?

PAROLLES Five or six thousand, but very weak and unserviceable. The troops are all scattered, and the commanders very poor rogues, upon my reputation and credit, and as I hope to live.

FIRST SOLDIER Shall I set down your answer so?

PAROLLES Do. I'll take the Sacrament on 't, how and

which way you will.
BERTRAM*, aside* All's one to him. What a past-saving slave is this!
FIRST LORD*, aside to Bertram* You're deceived, my lord. This is Monsieur Parolles, the gallant militarist—that was his own phrase—that had the whole theoric of war in the knot of his scarf, and the practice in the chape of his dagger.
SECOND LORD*, aside* I will never trust a man again for keeping his sword clean, nor believe he can have everything in him by wearing his apparel neatly.
FIRST SOLDIER*, to Parolles* Well, that's set down.
PAROLLES "Five or six thousand horse," I said—I will say true—"or thereabouts" set down, for I'll speak truth.
FIRST LORD*, aside* He's very near the truth in this.
BERTRAM*, aside* But I con him no thanks for 't, in the nature he delivers it.
PAROLLES "Poor rogues," I pray you say.
FIRST SOLDIER Well, that's set down.
PAROLLES I humbly thank you, sir. A truth's a truth. The rogues are marvelous poor.
FIRST SOLDIER*, as if reading a note Demand of him of what strength they are o' foot.*—What say you to that?
PAROLLES By my troth, sir, if I were to live but this present hour, I will tell true. Let me see: Spurio a hundred and fifty, Sebastian so many, Corambus so many, Jaques so many; Guiltian, Cosmo, Lodowick and Gratii, two hundred fifty each; mine own company, Chitopher, Vaumond, Bentii, two hundred fifty each; so that the muster-file, rotten and sound, upon my life amounts not to fifteen thousand poll, half of the which dare not shake the snow from off their cassocks lest they shake themselves to pieces.
BERTRAM*, aside* What shall be done to him?
FIRST LORD*, aside* Nothing but let him have thanks. (*Aside to First Soldier.*) Demand of him my condition and what credit I have with the Duke.
FIRST SOLDIER*, to Parolles* Well, that's set down. *Pretending to read: You shall demand of him whether one Captain Dumaine be i' th' camp, a Frenchman; what his reputation is with the Duke, what his valor, honesty, and expertness in wars; or whether he thinks it were not possible with well-weighing sums of gold to corrupt him to a revolt.*—What say you to this? What do you know of it?
PAROLLES I beseech you let me answer to the particular of the inter'gatories. Demand them singly.
FIRST SOLDIER Do you know this Captain Dumaine?
PAROLLES I know him. He was a botcher's prentice in Paris, from whence he was whipped for getting the shrieve's fool with child, a dumb innocent that could not say him nay.
BERTRAM*, aside to First Lord* Nay, by your leave, hold

your hands, though I know his brains are forfeit to the next tile that falls.

FIRST SOLDIER Well, is this captain in the Duke of Florence's camp?

PAROLLES Upon my knowledge he is, and lousy.

FIRST LORD, *aside to Bertram* Nay, look not so upon me. We shall hear of your Lordship anon.

FIRST SOLDIER What is his reputation with the Duke?

PAROLLES The Duke knows him for no other but a poor officer of mine, and writ to me this other day to turn him out o' th' band. I think I have his letter in my pocket.

FIRST SOLDIER Marry, we'll search.

They search Parolles' pockets.

PAROLLES In good sadness, I do not know. Either it is there, or it is upon a file with the Duke's other letters in my tent.

FIRST SOLDIER Here 'tis; here's a paper. Shall I read it to you?

PAROLLES I do not know if it be it or no.

BERTRAM, *aside* Our interpreter does it well.

FIRST LORD, *aside* Excellently.

FIRST SOLDIER *reads* *Dian, the Count's a fool and full of gold—*

PAROLLES That is not the Duke's letter, sir. That is an advertisement to a proper maid in Florence, one Diana, to take heed of the allurement of one Count Rossillion, a foolish idle boy, but for all that very ruttish. I pray you, sir, put it up again.

FIRST SOLDIER Nay, I'll read it first, by your favor.

PAROLLES My meaning in 't, I protest, was very honest in the behalf of the maid, for I knew the young count to be a dangerous and lascivious boy, who is a whale to virginity and devours up all the fry it finds.

BERTRAM, *aside* Damnable both-sides rogue!

FIRST SOLDIER *reads*

When he swears oaths, bid him drop gold, and take it.
After he scores, he never pays the score.
Half won is match well made. Match, and well make it.
He ne'er pays after-debts. Take it before.
And say a soldier, Dian, told thee this:
Men are to mell with; boys are not to kiss.
For count of this: the Count's a fool, I know it,
Who pays before, but not when he does owe it.
Thine, as he vowed to thee in thine ear,
Parolles.

BERTRAM, *aside* He shall be whipped through the army with this rhyme in 's forehead.

SECOND LORD, *aside* This is your devoted friend, sir, the manifold linguist and the armipotent soldier.

BERTRAM, *aside* I could endure anything before but a cat, and now he's a cat to me.

FIRST SOLDIER, *to Parolles* I perceive, sir, by our

general's looks we shall be fain to hang you.
PAROLLES My life, sir, in any case! Not that I am afraid to die, but that, my offenses being many, I would repent out the remainder of nature. Let me live, sir, in a dungeon, i' th' stocks, or anywhere, so I may live.
FIRST SOLDIER We'll see what may be done, so you confess freely. Therefore once more to this Captain Dumaine: you have answered to his reputation with the Duke, and to his valor. What is his honesty?
PAROLLES He will steal, sir, an egg out of a cloister. For rapes and ravishments, he parallels Nessus. He professes not keeping of oaths. In breaking 'em he is stronger than Hercules. He will lie, sir, with such volubility that you would think truth were a fool. Drunkenness is his best virtue, for he will be swine-drunk, and in his sleep he does little harm, save to his bedclothes about him; but they know his conditions and lay him in straw. I have but little more to say, sir, of his honesty; he has everything that an honest man should not have; what an honest man should have, he has nothing.
FIRST LORD*, aside* I begin to love him for this.
BERTRAM*, aside* For this description of thine honesty? A pox upon him! For me, he's more and more a cat.
FIRST SOLDIER What say you to his expertness in war?
PAROLLES Faith, sir, has led the drum before the English tragedians. To belie him I will not, and more of his soldiership I know not, except in that country he had the honor to be the officer at a place there called Mile End, to instruct for the doubling of files. I would do the man what honor I can, but of this I am not certain.
FIRST LORD*, aside* He hath out-villained villainy so far that the rarity redeems him.
BERTRAM*, aside* A pox on him! He's a cat still.
FIRST SOLDIER His qualities being at this poor price, I need not to ask you if gold will corrupt him to revolt.
PAROLLES Sir, for a cardecu he will sell the fee-simple of his salvation, the inheritance of it, and cut th' entail from all remainders, and a perpetual succession for it perpetually.
FIRST SOLDIER What's his brother, the other Captain Dumaine?
SECOND LORD*, aside* Why does he ask him of me?
FIRST SOLDIER What's he?
PAROLLES E'en a crow o' th' same nest: not altogether so great as the first in goodness, but greater a great deal in evil. He excels his brother for a coward, yet his brother is reputed one of the best that is. In a retreat he outruns any lackey. Marry, in coming on he has the cramp.
FIRST SOLDIER If your life be saved, will you undertake

to betray the Florentine?
PAROLLES Ay, and the captain of his horse, Count Rossillion.
FIRST SOLDIER I'll whisper with the General and know his pleasure.
PAROLLES, *aside* I'll no more drumming. A plague of all drums! Only to seem to deserve well, and to beguile the supposition of that lascivious young boy the Count, have I run into this danger. Yet who would have suspected an ambush where I was taken?
FIRST SOLDIER There is no remedy, sir, but you must die. The General says you that have so traitorously discovered the secrets of your army and made such pestiferous reports of men very nobly held can serve the world for no honest use. Therefore you must die.—Come, headsman, off with his head.
PAROLLES O Lord, sir, let me live, or let me see my death!
FIRST SOLDIER That shall you, and take your leave of all your friends. *He removes the blindfold.* So, look about you. Know you any here?
BERTRAM Good morrow, noble captain.
SECOND LORD God bless you, Captain Parolles.
FIRST LORD God save you, noble captain.
SECOND LORD Captain, what greeting will you to my Lord Lafew? I am for France.
FIRST LORD Good captain, will you give me a copy of the sonnet you writ to Diana in behalf of the Count Rossillion? An I were not a very coward, I'd compel it of you. But fare you well.
Bertram and Lords exit.
FIRST SOLDIER You are undone, captain—all but your scarf; that has a knot on 't yet.
PAROLLES Who cannot be crushed with a plot?
FIRST SOLDIER If you could find out a country where but women were that had received so much shame, you might begin an impudent nation. Fare you well, sir. I am for France too. We shall speak of you there. *He exits.*
PAROLLES
Yet am I thankful. If my heart were great,
'Twould burst at this. Captain I'll be no more,
But I will eat and drink, and sleep as soft
As captain shall. Simply the thing I am
Shall make me live. Who knows himself a braggart,
Let him fear this, for it will come to pass
That every braggart shall be found an ass.
Rust, sword; cool, blushes; and Parolles live
Safest in shame. Being fooled, by fool'ry thrive.
There's place and means for every man alive.
I'll after them. *He exits.*

Scene 4

Enter Helen, Widow, and Diana.

HELEN
That you may well perceive I have not wronged you,
One of the greatest in the Christian world
Shall be my surety, 'fore whose throne 'tis needful,
Ere I can perfect mine intents, to kneel.
Time was, I did him a desirèd office
Dear almost as his life, which gratitude
Through flinty Tartar's bosom would peep forth
And answer thanks. I duly am informed
His Grace is at Marseilles, to which place
We have convenient convoy. You must know
I am supposèd dead. The army breaking,
My husband hies him home, where, heaven aiding
And by the leave of my good lord the King,
We'll be before our welcome.
WIDOW Gentle madam,
You never had a servant to whose trust
Your business was more welcome.
HELEN Nor you, mistress,
Ever a friend whose thoughts more truly labor
To recompense your love. Doubt not but heaven
Hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower,
As it hath fated her to be my motive
And helper to a husband. But O, strange men,
That can such sweet use make of what they hate
When saucy trusting of the cozened thoughts
Defiles the pitchy night! So lust doth play
With what it loathes for that which is away.
But more of this hereafter.—You, Diana,
Under my poor instructions yet must suffer
Something in my behalf.
DIANA Let death and honesty
Go with your impositions, I am yours
Upon your will to suffer.
HELEN Yet, I pray you—
But with the word "The time will bring on summer,"
When briers shall have leaves as well as thorns
And be as sweet as sharp. We must away.
Our wagon is prepared, and time revives us.
All's well that ends well. Still the fine's the crown.
Whate'er the course, the end is the renown.
They exit.

Scene 5

Enter Fool, Countess, and Lafew.

LAFEW No, no, no, your son was misled with a snipped-taffeta fellow there, whose villainous saffron would have made all the unbaked and doughy youth of a nation in his color. Your daughter-in-law had been alive at this hour, and your son here at home, more advanced by the King than by that red-tailed humble-bee I speak of.
COUNTESS I would I had not known him. It was the death of the most virtuous gentlewoman that ever

nature had praise for creating. If she had partaken of my flesh and cost me the dearest groans of a mother, I could not have owed her a more rooted love.

LAFEW 'Twas a good lady, 'twas a good lady. We may pick a thousand salads ere we light on such another herb.

FOOL Indeed, sir, she was the sweet marjoram of the salad, or rather the herb of grace.

LAFEW They are not herbs, you knave. They are nose-herbs.

FOOL I am no great Nebuchadnezzar, sir. I have not much skill in grass.

LAFEW Whether dost thou profess thyself, a knave or a fool?

FOOL A fool, sir, at a woman's service, and a knave at a man's.

LAFEW Your distinction?

FOOL I would cozen the man of his wife and do his service.

LAFEW So you were a knave at his service indeed.

FOOL And I would give his wife my bauble, sir, to do her service.

LAFEW I will subscribe for thee, thou art both knave and fool.

FOOL At your service.

LAFEW No, no, no.

FOOL Why, sir, if I cannot serve you, I can serve as great a prince as you are.

LAFEW Who's that, a Frenchman?

FOOL Faith, sir, he has an English name, but his phys'nomy is more hotter in France than there.

LAFEW What prince is that?

FOOL The black prince, sir, alias the prince of darkness, alias the devil.

LAFEW*, giving him money* Hold thee, there's my purse. I give thee not this to suggest thee from thy master thou talk'st of. Serve him still.

FOOL I am a woodland fellow, sir, that always loved a great fire, and the master I speak of ever keeps a good fire. But sure he is the prince of the world; let his Nobility remain in 's court. I am for the house with the narrow gate, which I take to be too little for pomp to enter. Some that humble themselves may, but the many will be too chill and tender, and they'll be for the flow'ry way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire.

LAFEW Go thy ways. I begin to be aweary of thee. And I tell thee so before because I would not fall out with thee. Go thy ways. Let my horses be well looked to, without any tricks.

FOOL If I put any tricks upon 'em, sir, they shall be jades' tricks, which are their own right by the law of nature. *He exits.*

LAFEW A shrewd knave and an unhappy.

COUNTESS So he is. My lord that's gone made himself

much sport out of him. By his authority he remains here, which he thinks is a patent for his sauciness, and indeed he has no pace, but runs where he will.

LAFEW I like him well. 'Tis not amiss. And I was about to tell you, since I heard of the good lady's death and that my lord your son was upon his return home, I moved the King my master to speak in the behalf of my daughter, which in the minority of them both his Majesty out of a self-gracious remembrance did first propose. His Highness hath promised me to do it, and to stop up the displeasure he hath conceived against your son there is no fitter matter. How does your Ladyship like it?

COUNTESS With very much content, my lord, and I wish it happily effected.

LAFEW His Highness comes post from Marseilles, of as able body as when he numbered thirty. He will be here tomorrow, or I am deceived by him that in such intelligence hath seldom failed.

COUNTESS It rejoices me that, I hope, I shall see him ere I die. I have letters that my son will be here tonight. I shall beseech your Lordship to remain with me till they meet together.

LAFEW Madam, I was thinking with what manners I might safely be admitted.

COUNTESS You need but plead your honorable privilege.

LAFEW Lady, of that I have made a bold charter. But I thank my God it holds yet.

Enter Fool.

FOOL O madam, yonder's my lord your son with a patch of velvet on 's face. Whether there be a scar under 't or no, the velvet knows, but 'tis a goodly patch of velvet. His left cheek is a cheek of two pile and a half, but his right cheek is worn bare.

LAFEW A scar nobly got, or a noble scar, is a good liv'ry of honor. So belike is that.

FOOL But it is your carbonadoed face.

LAFEW Let us go see your son, I pray you. I long to talk with the young noble soldier.

FOOL 'Faith, there's a dozen of 'em, with delicate fine hats, and most courteous feathers which bow the head and nod at every man.

They exit.

ACT 5

Scene 1

Enter Helen, Widow, and Diana, with two Attendants.

HELEN
But this exceeding posting day and night
Must wear your spirits low. We cannot help it.
But since you have made the days and nights as one
To wear your gentle limbs in my affairs,
Be bold you do so grow in my requital
As nothing can unroot you.

Enter a Gentleman, a gentle Astringer.

In happy time!
This man may help me to his Majesty's ear,
If he would spend his power.—God save you, sir.
GENTLEMAN And you.
HELEN
Sir, I have seen you in the court of France.
GENTLEMAN I have been sometimes there.
HELEN
I do presume, sir, that you are not fall'n
From the report that goes upon your goodness,
And therefore, goaded with most sharp occasions
Which lay nice manners by, I put you to
The use of your own virtues, for the which
I shall continue thankful.
GENTLEMAN What's your will?
HELEN, *taking out a paper* That it will please you
To give this poor petition to the King
And aid me with that store of power you have
To come into his presence.
GENTLEMAN
The King's not here.
HELEN Not here, sir?
GENTLEMAN Not indeed.
He hence removed last night, and with more haste
Than is his use.
WIDOW Lord, how we lose our pains!
HELEN All's well that ends well yet,
Though time seem so adverse and means unfit.—
I do beseech you, whither is he gone?
GENTLEMAN
Marry, as I take it, to Rossillion,
Whither I am going.
HELEN, *giving him the paper* I do beseech you, sir,
Since you are like to see the King before me,
Commend the paper to his gracious hand,
Which I presume shall render you no blame
But rather make you thank your pains for it.
I will come after you with what good speed

Our means will make us means.
GENTLEMAN This I'll do for you.
HELEN
And you shall find yourself to be well thanked
Whate'er falls more. We must to horse again.—
Go, go, provide.
They exit.

Scene 2

Enter Fool and Parolles.

PAROLLES*, holding out a paper* Good Monsieur Lavatch, give my lord Lafew this letter. I have ere now, sir, been better known to you, when I have held familiarity with fresher clothes. But I am now, sir, muddied in Fortune's mood, and smell somewhat strong of her strong displeasure.
FOOL Truly, Fortune's displeasure is but sluttish if it smell so strongly as thou speak'st of. I will henceforth eat no fish of Fortune's butt'ring. Prithee, allow the wind.
PAROLLES Nay, you need not to stop your nose, sir. I spake but by a metaphor.
FOOL Indeed, sir, if your metaphor stink I will stop my nose, or against any man's metaphor. Prithee, get thee further.
PAROLLES Pray you, sir, deliver me this paper.
FOOL Foh! Prithee, stand away. A paper from Fortune's close-stool, to give to a nobleman!

Enter Lafew.

Look, here he comes himself.—Here is a purr of Fortune's, sir, or of Fortune's cat—but not a musk-cat—that has fall'n into the unclean fishpond of her displeasure and, as he says, is muddied withal. Pray you, sir, use the carp as you may, for he looks like a poor, decayed, ingenious, foolish, rascally knave. I do pity his distress in my smiles of comfort, and leave him to your Lordship.
He exits.
PAROLLES My lord, I am a man whom Fortune hath cruelly scratched.
LAFEW And what would you have me to do? 'Tis too late to pare her nails now. Wherein have you played the knave with Fortune that she should scratch you, who of herself is a good lady and would not have knaves thrive long under her? There's a cardecu for you. Let the justices make you and Fortune friends. I am for other business.
PAROLLES I beseech your Honor to hear me one single word.
LAFEW You beg a single penny more. Come, you shall ha 't. Save your word.
PAROLLES My name, my good lord, is Parolles.
LAFEW You beg more than a word, then. Cock's my

passion; give me your hand. How does your drum?
PAROLLES O my good lord, you were the first that found me.
LAFEW Was I, in sooth? And I was the first that lost thee.
PAROLLES It lies in you, my lord, to bring me in some grace, for you did bring me out.
LAFEW Out upon thee, knave! Dost thou put upon me at once both the office of God and the devil? One brings thee in grace, and the other brings thee out. *Trumpets sound.* The King's coming. I know by his trumpets. Sirrah, inquire further after me. I had talk of you last night. Though you are a fool and a knave, you shall eat. Go to, follow.
PAROLLES I praise God for you.

They exit.

Scene 3

Flourish. Enter King, Countess, Lafew, the two French Lords, with Attendants.

KING
We lost a jewel of her, and our esteem
Was made much poorer by it. But your son,
As mad in folly, lacked the sense to know
Her estimation home.
COUNTESS 'Tis past, my liege,
And I beseech your Majesty to make it
Natural rebellion done i' th' blade of youth,
When oil and fire, too strong for reason's force,
O'erbears it and burns on.
KING My honored lady,
I have forgiven and forgotten all,
Though my revenges were high bent upon him
And watched the time to shoot.
LAFEW This I must say—
But first I beg my pardon: the young lord
Did to his Majesty, his mother, and his lady
Offense of mighty note, but to himself
The greatest wrong of all. He lost a wife
Whose beauty did astonish the survey
Of richest eyes, whose words all ears took captive,
Whose dear perfection hearts that scorned to serve
Humbly called mistress.
KING Praising what is lost
Makes the remembrance dear. Well, call him hither.
We are reconciled, and the first view shall kill
All repetition. Let him not ask our pardon.
The nature of his great offense is dead,
And deeper than oblivion we do bury
Th' incensing relics of it. Let him approach
A stranger, no offender, and inform him
So 'tis our will he should.
GENTLEMAN I shall, my liege. *He exits.*
KING
What says he to your daughter? Have you spoke?

LAFEW
All that he is hath reference to your Highness.
KING
Then shall we have a match. I have letters sent me
That sets him high in fame.

Enter Count Bertram.

LAFEW He looks well on 't.
KING I am not a day of season,
For thou mayst see a sunshine and a hail
In me at once. But to the brightest beams
Distracted clouds give way. So stand thou forth.
The time is fair again.
BERTRAM My high-repented blames,
Dear sovereign, pardon to me.
KING All is whole.
Not one word more of the consumèd time.
Let's take the instant by the forward top,
For we are old, and on our quick'st decrees
Th' inaudible and noiseless foot of time
Steals ere we can effect them. You remember
The daughter of this lord?
BERTRAM Admiringly, my liege. At first
I stuck my choice upon her, ere my heart
Durst make too bold a herald of my tongue;
Where the impression of mine eye infixing,
Contempt his scornful perspective did lend me,
Which warped the line of every other favor,
Scorned a fair color or expressed it stol'n,
Extended or contracted all proportions
To a most hideous object. Thence it came
That she whom all men praised and whom myself,
Since I have lost, have loved, was in mine eye
The dust that did offend it.
KING Well excused.
That thou didst love her strikes some scores away
From the great compt. But love that comes too late,
Like a remorseful pardon slowly carried,
To the great sender turns a sour offense,
Crying "That's good that's gone!" Our rash faults
Make trivial price of serious things we have,
Not knowing them until we know their grave.
Oft our displeasures, to ourselves unjust,
Destroy our friends and after weep their dust.
Our own love, waking, cries to see what's done,
While shameful hate sleeps out the afternoon.
Be this sweet Helen's knell, and now forget her.
Send forth your amorous token for fair Maudlin.
The main consents are had, and here we'll stay
To see our widower's second marriage day.
COUNTESS
Which better than the first, O dear heaven, bless,
Or, ere they meet, in me, O nature, cesse!
LAFEW
Come on, my son, in whom my house's name

Must be digested, give a favor from you
To sparkle in the spirits of my daughter,
That she may quickly come.
Bertram gives him a ring.
By my old beard
And ev'ry hair that's on 't, Helen that's dead
Was a sweet creature. Such a ring as this,
The last that e'er I took her leave at court,
I saw upon her finger.

BERTRAM Hers it was not.

KING
Now, pray you, let me see it, for mine eye,
While I was speaking, oft was fastened to 't.
Lafew passes the ring to the King.
This ring was mine, and when I gave it Helen,
I bade her if her fortunes ever stood
Necessitied to help, that by this token
I would relieve her. *To Bertram.* Had you that craft to reave her
Of what should stead her most?

BERTRAM My gracious sovereign,
Howe'er it pleases you to take it so,
The ring was never hers.

COUNTESS Son, on my life,
I have seen her wear it, and she reckoned it
At her life's rate.

LAFEW I am sure I saw her wear it.

BERTRAM
You are deceived, my lord. She never saw it.
In Florence was it from a casement thrown me,
Wrapped in a paper which contained the name
Of her that threw it. Noble she was, and thought
I stood ungaged, but when I had subscribed
To mine own fortune and informed her fully
I could not answer in that course of honor
As she had made the overture, she ceased
In heavy satisfaction and would never
Receive the ring again.

KING Plutus himself,
That knows the tinct and multiplying med'cine,
Hath not in nature's mystery more science
Than I have in this ring. 'Twas mine, 'twas Helen's,
Whoever gave it you. Then if you know
That you are well acquainted with yourself,
Confess 'twas hers and by what rough enforcement
You got it from her. She called the saints to surety
That she would never put it from her finger
Unless she gave it to yourself in bed,
Where you have never come, or sent it us
Upon her great disaster.

BERTRAM She never saw it.

KING
Thou speak'st it falsely, as I love mine honor,
And mak'st conjectural fears to come into me
Which I would fain shut out. If it should prove

That thou art so inhuman—'twill not prove so,
And yet I know not. Thou didst hate her deadly,
And she is dead, which nothing but to close
Her eyes myself could win me to believe
More than to see this ring.—Take him away.
My forepast proofs, howe'er the matter fall,
Shall tax my fears of little vanity,
Having vainly feared too little. Away with him.
We'll sift this matter further.

BERTRAM If you shall prove
This ring was ever hers, you shall as easy
Prove that I husbanded her bed in Florence,
Where yet she never was. *He exits, under guard.*

KING
I am wrapped in dismal thinkings.

Enter a Gentleman.

GENTLEMAN Gracious sovereign,
Whether I have been to blame or no, I know not.
He gives the King a paper.
Here's a petition from a Florentine
Who hath for four or five removes come short
To tender it herself. I undertook it,
Vanquished thereto by the fair grace and speech
Of the poor suppliant, who, by this, I know
Is here attending. Her business looks in her
With an importing visage, and she told me,
In a sweet verbal brief, it did concern
Your Highness with herself.

KING *reads* *Upon his many protestations to marry me*
when his wife was dead, I blush to say it, he won
me. Now is the Count Rossillion a widower, his
vows are forfeited to me and my honor's paid to him.
He stole from Florence, taking no leave, and I follow
him to his country for justice. Grant it me, O king.
In you it best lies. Otherwise a seducer flourishes,
and a poor maid is undone.
Diana Capilet.

LAFEW I will buy me a son-in-law in a fair, and toll for this. I'll none of him.

KING
The heavens have thought well on thee, Lafew,
To bring forth this discov'ry.—Seek these suitors.
Go speedily, and bring again the Count.
Gentleman and Attendants exit.
I am afeard the life of Helen, lady,
Was foully snatched.

COUNTESS Now justice on the doers!

Enter Bertram under guard.

KING
I wonder, sir, since wives are monsters to you
And that you fly them as you swear them lordship,
Yet you desire to marry.

Enter Widow and Diana.

What woman's that?
DIANA
I am, my lord, a wretched Florentine,
Derivèd from the ancient Capilet.
My suit, as I do understand, you know
And therefore know how far I may be pitied.
WIDOW
I am her mother, sir, whose age and honor
Both suffer under this complaint we bring,
And both shall cease without your remedy.
KING
Come hither, count. Do you know these women?
BERTRAM
My lord, I neither can nor will deny
But that I know them. Do they charge me further?
DIANA
Why do you look so strange upon your wife?
BERTRAM
She's none of mine, my lord.
DIANA If you shall marry,
You give away this hand, and that is mine;
You give away heaven's vows, and those are mine;
You give away myself, which is known mine,
For I by vow am so embodied yours
That she which marries you must marry me,
Either both or none.
LAFEW*, to Bertram* Your reputation comes too short
for my daughter. You are no husband for her.
BERTRAM*, to the King*
My lord, this is a fond and desp'rate creature
Whom sometime I have laughed with. Let your
Highness
Lay a more noble thought upon mine honor
Than for to think that I would sink it here.
KING
Sir, for my thoughts, you have them ill to friend
Till your deeds gain them. Fairer prove your honor
Than in my thought it lies.
DIANA Good my lord,
Ask him upon his oath if he does think
He had not my virginity.
KING
What sayst thou to her?
BERTRAM She's impudent, my lord,
And was a common gamester to the camp.
DIANA
He does me wrong, my lord. If I were so,
He might have bought me at a common price.
Do not believe him. O, behold this ring,
Whose high respect and rich validity
Did lack a parallel. Yet for all that
He gave it to a commoner o' th' camp,
If I be one.

COUNTESS He blushes, and 'tis hit.
Of six preceding ancestors that gem,
Conferred by testament to th' sequent issue,
Hath it been owed and worn. This is his wife.
That ring's a thousand proofs.
KING*, to Diana* Methought you said
You saw one here in court could witness it.
DIANA
I did, my lord, but loath am to produce
So bad an instrument. His name's Parolles.
LAFEW
I saw the man today, if man he be.
KING
Find him, and bring him hither. *Attendant exits.*
BERTRAM What of him?
He's quoted for a most perfidious slave,
With all the spots o' th' world taxed and debauched,
Whose nature sickens but to speak a truth.
Am I or that or this for what he'll utter,
That will speak anything?
KING She hath that ring of yours.
BERTRAM
I think she has. Certain it is I liked her
And boarded her i' th' wanton way of youth.
She knew her distance and did angle for me,
Madding my eagerness with her restraint,
As all impediments in fancy's course
Are motives of more fancy; and in fine
Her infinite cunning with her modern grace
Subdued me to her rate. She got the ring,
And I had that which any inferior might
At market price have bought.
DIANA I must be patient.
You that have turned off a first so noble wife
May justly diet me. I pray you yet—
Since you lack virtue, I will lose a husband—
Send for your ring. I will return it home,
And give me mine again.
BERTRAM I have it not.
KING*, to Diana* What ring was yours, I pray you?
DIANA
Sir, much like the same upon your finger.
KING
Know you this ring? This ring was his of late.
DIANA
And this was it I gave him, being abed.
KING
The story, then, goes false you threw it him
Out of a casement?
DIANA I have spoke the truth.

Enter Parolles.

BERTRAM
My lord, I do confess the ring was hers.

KING
You boggle shrewdly. Every feather starts you.—
Is this the man you speak of?
DIANA Ay, my lord.
KING
Tell me, sirrah—but tell me true, I charge you,
Not fearing the displeasure of your master,
Which, on your just proceeding, I'll keep off—
By him and by this woman here what know you?
PAROLLES So please your Majesty, my master hath been an honorable gentleman. Tricks he hath had in him which gentlemen have.
KING Come, come, to th' purpose. Did he love this woman?
PAROLLES Faith, sir, he did love her, but how?
KING How, I pray you?
PAROLLES He did love her, sir, as a gentleman loves a woman.
KING How is that?
PAROLLES He loved her, sir, and loved her not.
KING As thou art a knave and no knave. What an equivocal companion is this!
PAROLLES I am a poor man, and at your Majesty's command.
LAFEW He's a good drum, my lord, but a naughty orator.
DIANA Do you know he promised me marriage?
PAROLLES Faith, I know more than I'll speak.
KING But wilt thou not speak all thou know'st?
PAROLLES Yes, so please your Majesty. I did go between them, as I said; but more than that he loved her, for indeed he was mad for her, and talked of Satan and of limbo and of furies and I know not what. Yet I was in that credit with them at that time, that I knew of their going to bed and of other motions, as promising her marriage, and things which would derive me ill will to speak of. Therefore I will not speak what I know.
KING Thou hast spoken all already, unless thou canst say they are married. But thou art too fine in thy evidence. Therefore stand aside.
To Diana.
This ring you say was yours?
DIANA Ay, my good lord.
KING
Where did you buy it? Or who gave it you?
DIANA
It was not given me, nor I did not buy it.
KING
Who lent it you?
DIANA It was not lent me neither.
KING
Where did you find it then?
DIANA I found it not.
KING
If it were yours by none of all these ways,

How could you give it him?
DIANA I never gave it him.
LAFEW This woman's an easy glove, my lord; she goes off and on at pleasure.
KING
This ring was mine. I gave it his first wife.
DIANA
It might be yours or hers for aught I know.
KING*, to Attendants*
Take her away. I do not like her now.
To prison with her, and away with him.—
Unless thou tell'st me where thou hadst this ring,
Thou diest within this hour.
DIANA I'll never tell you.
KING
Take her away.
DIANA I'll put in bail, my liege.
KING
I think thee now some common customer.
DIANA*, to Bertram*
By Jove, if ever I knew man, 'twas you.
KING
Wherefore hast thou accused him all this while?
DIANA
Because he's guilty and he is not guilty.
He knows I am no maid, and he'll swear to 't.
I'll swear I am a maid, and he knows not.
Great king, I am no strumpet. By my life,
I am either maid or else this old man's wife.
KING
She does abuse our ears. To prison with her.
DIANA
Good mother, fetch my bail. *Widow exits.* Stay, royal sir.
The jeweler that owes the ring is sent for,
And he shall surety me. But for this lord
Who hath abused me as he knows himself,
Though yet he never harmed me, here I quit him.
He knows himself my bed he hath defiled,
And at that time he got his wife with child.
Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick.
So there's my riddle: one that's dead is quick.
And now behold the meaning.

Enter Helen and Widow.

KING Is there no exorcist
Beguiles the truer office of mine eyes?
Is 't real that I see?
HELEN No, my good lord,
'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see,
The name and not the thing.
BERTRAM Both, both. O, pardon!
HELEN
O, my good lord, when I was like this maid,
I found you wondrous kind. There is your ring,

And, look you, here's your letter. *She takes out a paper.* This it says:
When from my finger you can get this ring
And are by me with child, etc. This is done.
Will you be mine now you are doubly won?

BERTRAM

If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly,
I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly.

HELEN

If it appear not plain and prove untrue,
Deadly divorce step between me and you.—
O my dear mother, do I see you living?

LAFEW

Mine eyes smell onions. I shall weep anon.—
To Parolles. Good Tom Drum, lend me a handkercher.
So, I thank thee. Wait on me home.
I'll make sport with thee. Let thy courtesies alone.
They are scurvy ones.

KING

Let us from point to point this story know,
To make the even truth in pleasure flow.
To Diana. If thou be'st yet a fresh uncroppèd flower,
Choose thou thy husband, and I'll pay thy dower.
For I can guess that by thy honest aid
Thou kept'st a wife herself, thyself a maid.
Of that and all the progress more and less,
Resolvedly more leisure shall express.
All yet seems well, and if it end so meet,
The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet.

Flourish.

EPILOGUE

The King's a beggar, now the play is done.
All is well ended if this suit be won,
That you express content, which we will pay,
With strift to please you, day exceeding day.
Ours be your patience, then, and yours our parts.
Your gentle hands lend us, and take our hearts.

All exit.