

But when the king come forth, and not till then,
Unto Southampton do we shift our scene.

Exit

2.1 *Enter Corporal NYM and Lieutenant BARDOLPH*

BARDOLPH Well met, Corporal Nym.

NYM Good morrow, Lieutenant Bardolph.

BARDOLPH What, are Ancient Pistol and you friends yet?

NYM For my part, I care not. I say little, but when time shall serve
there shall be smiles, but that shall be as it may. I dare not
fight, but I will wink and hold out mine iron. It is a simple one,
but what though? It will toast cheese, and it will endure cold as
another man's sword will, and there's an end.

BARDOLPH I will bestow a breakfast to make you friends, and we'll

41 when] *This edn (Blayney conj.)*; till F Act 2, Scene 1 3 Ancient] F; Ensign *Taylor* 8 there's an end] F; theres the humor of it Q

41 when the Peter Blayney's conjecture resolves much of the discomfort registered by Pope and others over the contradiction between the Chorus announcing arrival at Southampton and the immediate entry of the Eastcheap clowns. F's 'till the must be a compositor error by anticipation of 'till then' at the end of the line. An F manuscript reading 'when the' allows the Chorus to adjust his previous announcement about the transfer to Southampton, making allowance for the arrival of the clowns but avoiding explicit acknowledgement of their existence.

Act 2, Scene 1

o SD *Corporal* Barnabe Rich, in *A Pathway to Military Practise*, 1587, says 'Of the Corporall or Launce-*prezado*: It is much beneficial for the redines for service, that a company of men should be devided into fower squadrons, the weapons equally devided, and to be committed to the charge of foure Corporalls.' (G3).

o SD NYM In F Compositor B spells the name 'Nym' for this scene and 4.4, while Compositor A elsewhere spells it 'Nim'. Nym, a notably small and skinny man, does not appear in 2*H4*, but he is in *Wiv*. In thieving slang, to 'nim' meant to steal.

o SD *Lieutenant* BARDOLPH He is a corporal at 2*H4* 2.4.120, and at 3.2.2 below. Here the rank places him above 'Ancient' Pistol as well as Nym.

3 *Ancient* A rank below that of lieutenant but

above corporal. Originally bearer of a company's flag or ensign, it was the senior non-gentlemanly rank. Rich says 'As the Ensigne in the field is the honour of the bande, so the Ensign bearer in like case should be honoured by his company, and this reputation is best attained, by his owne courteous demeanour towards ye soldiers, the loove of them concerneth greatly his owne safety, in all perrilles and attempts' (61^v). Usually he was responsible for feeding the company, the 'sutler' post that Pistol claims for himself in line 88, for which honesty was an important qualification. In *Oth*. 'honest' Iago is Othello's 'ancient'. For the spelling, see Introduction, p. 70.

3 *Pistol* The name was pronounced 'pizzle'. Mrs. Rich says 'As the Ensigne in the field is the honour of the bande, so the Ensign bearer in like case should be honoured by his company, and this reputation is best attained, by his owne courteous demeanour towards ye soldiers, the loove of them concerneth greatly his owne safety, in all perrilles and attempts' (61^v). Usually he was responsible for feeding the company, the 'sutler' post that Pistol claims for himself in line 88, for which honesty was an important qualification. In *Oth*. 'honest' Iago is Othello's 'ancient'. For the spelling, see Introduction, p. 70.

3 *friends* The reason for the quarrel between Nym and Pistol only becomes clear at 15–17.

4–5 *shall . . . shall . . . shall be as it may* The emphatic 'shall' leads up to a very ordinary proverbial saying (Dent 1202), which Nym repeats as a catchphrase at 13, 18 and 101. His main comic idiom is the repetition of banal proverbial sayings.

6 *wink* close my eyes.

6 *iron* sword, useful for toasting cheese on.

7 *endure cold* Toasting cheese would make it hot, but not fighting.

8 *there's an end* Another proverbial catchphrase (Dent 1113.1). Q's alternative, 'there's the humour of it', is used by Nym more commonly in *Wiv*.

be all three sworn brothers to France. Let't be so, good
Corporal Nym. 10

NYM Faith, I will live so long as I may, that's the certain of it, and
when I cannot live any longer I will do as I may. That is my
rest, that is the rendezvous of it.

BARDOLPH It is certain, corporal, that he is married to Nell 15
Quickly, and certainly she did you wrong, for you were troth-
plight to her.

NYM I cannot tell. Things must be as they may. Men may sleep,
and they may have their throats about them at that time,
and some say knives have edges. It must be as it may. Though 20
patience be a tired mare, yet she will plod. There must be
conclusions. Well, I cannot tell.

Enter PISTOL and QUICKLY

BARDOLPH Here comes Ancient Pistol and his wife. Good
corporal, be patient here.

NYM How now, mine host Pistol? 25

PISTOL Base tyke, call'st thou me host? Now by this hand I swear I
scorn the term, nor shall my Nell keep lodgers.

HOSTESS No, by my troth, not long, for we cannot lodge and board

21 mare] Q; name F 22 tell] F; tell, and there is the humour of it Q 25 SH NYM] Q; not in F 26 tyke] F; slauc Q;
tick Taylor

10 **sworn brothers** Bardolph means a brother-
hood of thieves who swear loyalty to one another in
blood. 'France' makes it an anticipation of Henry's
declaration at Agincourt, 4.3.61-3.

13 **I will do as I may** A perversion of the
proverb used in 4-5. Here it compounds the
more usual expression 'I will die as I may.' In
view of the cause of the quarrel over which
Nym is grieving here, 'do' probably means sexual
doing.

14 **rest** (1) musically, a pause, (2) in primero
(a card game), the reserved stake, the last
chance.

14 **rendezvous** The first use of French in the
play. It meant not so much a meeting place as a
refuge.

15-16 **Nell Quickly** The Hostess of the
Eastcheap tavern in 2H4.

16-17 **troth-plight to engaged to marry.**

18 **I cannot tell** Proverbial (Dent T85.1). Nym
repeats it at the end of this speech.

19-20 **throats . . . knives** The first of several

references to cutting throats. See Introduction,
p. 27.

21 **mare** Q's reading uses the old proverb.
E. A. J. Honigmann, in *MLR* 50 (1955), 197, argues
for the F 'name' on the ground that the puns
Nym / name, plod / plot are deliberate distor-
tions of the proverb. But Nym's other proverbial
phrases are plodding and undistorted.

25 **SH NYM** Q's attribution of this line must be
right, since Nym is far more likely than the peace-
making Bardolph to replace Pistol's military title
with the insulting name of a taverner. The form of
address is a derisive allusion to his marriage to the
Hostess.

26 **tyke** a mongrel or cur. Malone notes a 'tick'
as a parasite, which would lodge on a 'host', and
a pun may be intended. But on the strength of
the frequent references to dogs in the play, F's
'tike' seems preferable. F *Lear* has a 'bobtail tike
or trundle-tail' in a list of dogs at 3.6.27.

27 **lodgers** By extension from the insulting
'host' of the previous line.

a dozen or fourteen gentlewomen that live honestly by the prick
of their needles but it will be thought we keep a bawdy house
straight. [*Nym draws his sword*] Oh, welladay, Lady, if he be not
hewn now, we shall see wilful adultery and murder committed. 30

[*Pistol draws his sword*]

BARDOLPH Good lieutenant, good corporal, offer nothing here.

NYM Pish.

PISTOL Pish for thee, Iceland dog, thou prick-eared cur of Iceland. 35

HOSTESS Good Corporal Nym, show thy valour, and put up your
sword.

[*They sheathe their swords*]

NYM Will you shog off? [*To Pistol*] I would have you *solus*.

PISTOL *Solus*, egregious dog? O viper vile! The *solus* in thy most
mervailous face, the *solus* in thy teeth, and in thy throat, and in
thy hateful lungs, yea, in thy maw, perdy, and, which is worse,
within thy nasty mouth! I do retort the *solus* in thy bowels, for I
can take, and Pistol's cock is up, and flashing fire will follow! 40

NYM I am not Barbason, you cannot conjure me. I have an humour

32 hewn] F; drawn *Theobald*; here *Walter*

31 straight at once.

31 SD *Nym draws his sword* Judging from the Hostess's cry about her new husband being 'hewn', Nym must draw his sword first. Neither F nor Q marks these actions.

32 hewn cut by a sword, reaped like corn. The word has behind it the figure of Death with his reaper's scythe.

32 SD *Pistol draws his sword* Bardolph's words at line 33 indicate that both Nym and Pistol have their swords out by now.

33 lieutenant A promotion, possibly as an appeasement for the stigma of 'mine host'. At 3.7.10 Llewellyn calls him an 'anchient lieutenant', or sub-lieutenant, a more precise designation.

33 offer make no challenge to combat.

35 Iceland dog a small, hairy, quarrelsome lap-dog. Harrison's 'Description of England' (in Volume I of Holinshed), p. 231, states of English dogs that 'The last sort of dogs consisteth of the currish kind, meet for manie toies: of which the whappet or prickeared curre is one . . . Besides these also we have sholts or curs dailie brought out of Iseland, and much made of among us, bicause of their sawcinesse and quarrelling.' Pistol's slur picks up the quarrelsomeness.

36 show . . . put up reveal . . . sheathe. The Hostess is either being verbally sophisticated or typically self-contradictory.

37 SD This is the moment for the swords to be put back in their carriages, in obedience to Bardolph's plea. The game of constant drawing and sheathing continues for the next forty lines.

38 shog off Slang addressed to the Hostess: go away.

38 *solus* A standard Latin stage direction, as with *exit* and *manet*. It means 'alone', though to Pistol it evidently means single, unmarried.

40 mervailous The original spelling for 'marvellous' was retained by Humphreys, on the grounds that it indicates a distinctive pronunciation. Taylor suggests that it was stressed on the second syllable. Holinshed spells it in Pistol's form.

40-2 face . . . bowels Pistol verbally takes Nym's insulting word step by step through his digestive system.

41 maw stomach.

43 take catch fire.

43 Pistol's cock (1) the striking-lever of a hand-gun, (2) his penis, or pizzle.

44 Barbason A devil. He is listed among the names of fiends in *Wiv.* 2.2.233.

44 conjure control by a magic spell.

44 humour Up to now Nym has not used the comic catchphrase he uses regularly in *Wiv.* He renews it at the end of this speech. Q redoubles his use in this and other scenes.

to knock you indifferently well. If you grow foul with me, Pistol, 45
I will scour you with my rapier, as I may, in fair terms. If you
would walk off I would prick your guts a little in good terms, as
I may, and that's the humour of it.

PISTOL O braggart vile, and damnèd furious wight, the grave doth 50
gape and doting death is near. Therefore exhale!
[*They draw their swords*]

BARDOLPH Hear me, hear me what I say. [*Draws his sword*] He
that strikes the first stroke, I'll run him up to the hilts, as I am a
soldier.

PISTOL An oath of mickle might, and fury shall abate. Give me thy
fist, thy forefoot to me give. Thy spirits are most tall. 55

NYM I will cut thy throat one time or other in fair terms, that is the
humour of it.

PISTOL Couple a gorge, that is the word. I defy thee again! O
hound of Crete, thinkst thou my spouse to get? No, to the 60
Spital go, and from the powdering tub of infamy fetch forth the
lazar kite of Cressid's kind, Doll Tearsheet, she by name, and

50 exhale] F; exall Q 58 Couple a gorge] F (*Couple a gorge*); Couple gorge Q; Coup la gorge Taylor

45 grow foul (1) speak of turds, (2) as a pistol, become fouled by firing.

46 scour clean a gun barrel with a ramrod.

46 in fair terms i.e. not foul terms, as Pistol has been doing. He repeats the phrase at line 56.

49–50 F sets these lines as verse, the only time it versifies Pistol in the play.

49 damnèd Pronunciation as a poetic double-syllable seems appropriate even if the lines are not formal verse.

49–50 the grave doth gape Ultimately from the Bishops' Bible, Isa. 5.14, 'Therefore gapeth hell'. See Introduction, p. 27, note 1. It became proverbial (Dent GG2). The newly crowned Henry uses precisely this phrase to Falstaff as a half joke ('Know / The grave doth gape for thee thrice wider . . .') in his speech banishing Falstaff.

50 exhale An extravagant word for drawing a sword. Taylor suggests 'ex-hale', from 'hale' or 'haul', to heave. Cercignani (p. 336) suggests that Q's 'exell' reflects the pronunciation.

51 SD *Draws his sword* By the time he makes his threat to skewer them up to the hilt of his sword (52), Bardolph too must have drawn.

54 mickle might great power. Used in 2H6

5.1.174 and elsewhere, the adjective's emphatically poetic character is marked by its use in *The Faerie Queene*, 2.4.7.

55 tall brave (contrasting Nym's 'spirits' with his small stature).

58 Couple a gorge Pistol is practising his French (strictly *couper la gorge*, or *coupez la gorge*). The cutting of French throats looms large at Agincourt. See Introduction, p. 25.

58 defy thee F makes prosaic the poetic word order adopted in Q.

60 Spital The lazar hospital, a charitable institution for treating the poor, especially lepers.

60 powdering tub (1) a barrel for salting beef, (2) a sweating tub for treating venereal disease.

61 lazar kite of Cressid's kind a diseased carrion bird like Cressida. Leprosy was thought to be a venereal disease. See 1.1.15 n. The phrase is probably a memory of one in Barnabe Rich's book of stories, *Rich's Farewell to the Military Profession*, 1581, which provided the story on which *TN* is based, and which is alluded to in *Wiv*. It mentions 'these Kites of Cressides kind' on sig. r2^v. See also 4.8.57–8 n.

61 Doll Tearsheet She first appears in 2H4 2.4.

her espouse. I have, and I will hold the quondam Quickly for the only she, and *pauca*, there's enough. Go to.

Enter the BOY.

BOY Mine host Pistol, you must come to my master, and your hostess. He is very sick, and would to bed. Good Bardolph, put thy face between his sheets and do the office of a warming pan. Faith, he's very ill. 65

BARDOLPH Away, you rogue.

HOSTESS By my troth, he'll yield the crow a pudding one of these days. The king has killed his heart. Good husband, come home presently. 70

Exeunt [Hostess and Boy]

BARDOLPH Come, shall I make you two friends? We must to France together. Why the devil should we keep knives to cut one another's throats?

PISTOL Let floods o'erswell, and fiends for food howl on! 75

NYM You'll pay me the eight shillings I won of you at betting?

PISTOL Base is the slave that pays.

NYM That now I will have. That's the humour of it.

PISTOL As manhood shall compound. Push home.

[They] Draw [their swords]

BARDOLPH *[Draws his sword]* By this sword, he that makes the first thrust, I'll kill him, by this sword I will. 80

63 enough. Go to] *Rowe*; there's enough to go to F; there it is inough Q 64 your] F; you Q, *Hanmer* 66 face F; nose Q 71 SD *Exeunt*] *Capell*; *Exit.* F, Q

62 I have . . . hold A paraphrase of the wedding service.

62 quondam former (Latin).

63 pauca A Latin tag, *pauca verba*, in few words.

63 enough. Go to F's reading appears to be a compositorial error.

63 SD BOY Falstaff's boy from *2H4* 1.2.

64 Mine host The boy confirms Nym's taunt.

64 my master i.e. Falstaff.

64 your Q and *Hanmer* normalise, but F's reading is acceptable given the boy's reference to Pistol as a 'host' and the fight over possession of the Hostess.

66 face Bardolph's spectacular face looked red and heated, according to the boy at 3.2.28 and *Llewellyn's* more detailed description at 3.7.87–91. It features in jokes at *1H4* 3.3.20–33 and *2H4* 2.4.269–71.

69 yield . . . pudding A proverbial periphrasis for dying (Dent c860).

71 presently at once.

71 SD *Exeunt* Neither F nor Q gives any notice of the boy's departure. He may either leave with the Hostess or stay to witness the next bout of bravado and leave with the others at the end of the scene, where F gives no indication of how many leave. Since Falstaff is the boy's master, and since respectable women did not walk the streets unescorted by a male, it seems likely that the boy would accompany her to Falstaff. But see note to line 92.

77 Base . . . pays A poetic perversion of the proverb 'the poor man pays for all' (Dent M357).

79 As . . . compound real men fight rather than pay up.

PISTOL Sword is an oath, and oaths must have their course.

[*Sheathes his sword*]

BARDOLPH Corporal Nym, an thou wilt be friends, be friends. An thou wilt not, why then be enemies with me too. Prithee put up.

[*Nym sheathes his sword*]

PISTOL A noble shalt thou have, and present pay, and liquor likewise will I give to thee, and friendship shall combine, and brotherhood. I'll live by Nym and Nym shall live by me; is not this just? For I shall sutler be unto the camp, and profits will accrue. Give me thy hand. 85

NYM I shall have my noble? 90

PISTOL In cash, most justly paid.

NYM Well, then that's the humour of it.

Enter HOSTESS [*and* BOY]

HOSTESS As ever you come of women, come in quickly to Sir John. Ah, poor heart, he is so shaken of a burning quotidian tertian that it is most lamentable to behold. Sweet men, come to him. 95

NYM The king hath run bad humours on the knight; that's the even of it.

PISTOL Nym, thou hast spoke the right, his heart is fractured and corroborate. 100

83–4 BARDOLPH . . . put up F; *Nym*. I shall haue my eight shillings I wonne of you at beating? Q 88 profits] F; profit Q 92 that's] F2; that F 92 of it] Q; of t F 93 come of] F; came of Q, F2

82 **Sword** i.e. God's word.

83 **an** if.

84 Q's addition is a renewal of the demand made at line 76. Most editions include it on the grounds that Pistol's next speech is a direct reply. But the sword-waving has only interrupted Pistol's answer to the original demand, which he now gives.

85 a **noble** a coin worth one-third of a pound, or six shillings and eightpence, which is distinctly less than eight shillings.

85 **present day** cash immediately.

87 **by Nym** Possibly an allusion to nimming as theft.

88 **sutler** seller of food.

92 If the boy leaves with the Hostess at line 65, he should return here. Along with Nym and Bardolph he should be present to hear Pistol declare 'me will live' at line 103, since the three of them do not.

93 **come of** Q normalises the F reading, which has a bawdy edge to it, as in 'come off'. In *2H4* 2.4.40 and 41 Falstaff says 'to serve bravely is to come halting off', and in the next line 'to come off the breach with his pike bent'.

94–5 **quotidian tertian** A quotidian fever recurred daily, a tertian every third day. When joined, it was thought that both regimes prevailed, which made it the worst kind of sickness. See A. A. Mendilow, 'Falstaff's death of a sweat', *SQ* 9 (1958), 479–83.

97 **run bad humours** Nym's idiom means (1) that Henry made Falstaff melancholy, or (2) that he vented his bad temper on Falstaff.

97 **the even** the plain truth.

99–100 **fracted and corroborate** fractured and made secure. Like most of Pistol's poetical lexis, each word sounds stronger than it means.

NYM The king is a good king, but it must be as it may. He passes
some humours and careers.

PISTOL Let us condole the knight, for, lambkins, we will live.

Exeunt

2.2 *Enter* EXETER, BEDFORD *and* WESTMORLAND

BEDFORD 'Fore God, his grace is bold to trust these traitors.

EXETER They shall be apprehended by and by.

WESTMORLAND How smooth and even they do bear themselves,
As if allegiance in their bosoms sat,
Crownèd with faith and constant loyalty. 5

BEDFORD The king hath note of all that they intend
By interception which they dream not of.

EXETER Nay, but the man that was his bedfellow,
Whom he hath dulled and cloyed with gracious favours;
That he should for a foreign purse so sell 10
His sovereign's life to death and treachery!

Sound trumpets. Enter the KING, SCROOP, CAMBRIDGE
and GRAY [*and* OFFICERS]

KING Now sits the wind fair, and we will aboard.
My lord of Cambridge and my kind lord Masham,
And you my gentle knight, give me your thoughts.

103 SD *Exeunt.*] Q; *not in F* Act 2, Scene 2 0 SD BEDFORD] F; Gloster Q 1 SH BEDFORD] F; *Glost.* Q 11 treachery!
F; treachery / *Exe.* O the Lord of Massham. Q 13 lord Masham] *This edn;* Lord of *Masham* F

102 *careers* full gallops. Nym means that he has
moods which include some made gallops.

103 *we will live* An emphatic affirmation that
Falstaff's companions will outlive him. In fact, only
Pistol lives beyond Act 4.

Act 2, Scene 2

3–5 Q omits this speech, together with Henry's
reference to Westmorland in line 67, as one of its
economies over the English lords. In Q Gloucester
continues with 8–11, and Exeter interjects Scroop's
name as Masham.

5 *Crownèd* The Chorus has already declared
that the 'hollow bosoms' have been filled with gold.

8 *bedfellow* close friend. It was not unusual for
friends to share a bed. Iago claims to have done so

with Cassio in *Oth.* 3.3.414. In *A Knack to Know
a Knave* the king says 'thou wast once bedfellow
to the king . . . I loved thee as my second selfe'
(line 549). In *Oldcastle* Scroop is named as Henry's
bedfellow and offers to assassinate him while in bed
(line 2095).

9 *cloyed* clogged with sweetness.

10 *a foreign purse* The French money is noted
by Holinshed, but so is the link of Cambridge with
Mortimer and the alternative line to the crown,
which is omitted here.

11 *sovereign's* The word-play on crowns makes
this second pun on gold sovereigns inevitable.

13 *lord Masham* The second 'of' was
probably a Compositor B repetition from the ear-
lier use. Usually Shakespeare varies the syntax in
such cases.