DULL SIDES

NATHANIEL Very reverend sport, truly, and done in the

testimony of a good conscience.

HOLOFERNES The deer was, as you know, *sanguis*, in

blood, ripe as the pomewater, who now hangeth

like a jewel in the ear of *caelo*, the sky, the welkin, 5

the heaven, and anon falleth like a crab on the face

of *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth.

NATHANIEL Truly, Master Holofernes, the epithets are

sweetly varied, like a scholar at the least. But, sir, I

assure you, it was a buck of the first head. 10

HOLOFERNES Sir Nathaniel, *haud credo*.

DULL ’Twas not a *haud credo*, ’twas a pricket.

HOLOFERNES Most barbarous intimation! Yet a kind of

insinuation, as it were, *in via*, in way, of explication;

*facere*, as it were, replication, or rather, *ostentare*, to 15

show, as it were, his inclination, after his undressed,

unpolished, uneducated, unpruned, untrained, or

rather unlettered, or ratherest, unconfirmed fashion,

to insert again my *haud credo* for a deer.

DULL I said the deer was not a *haud credo*, ’twas a 20

pricket.

HOLOFERNES Twice-sod simplicity, *bis coctus*!

O thou monster ignorance, how deformed dost thou

look!

NATHANIEL

Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred 25

in a book.

He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk

ink. His intellect is not replenished. He is only an

animal, only sensible in the duller parts.

And such barren plants are set before us that we 30

thankful should be—

Which we of taste and feeling are—for those parts

that do fructify in us more than he.

For as it would ill become me to be vain, indiscreet,

or a fool, 35

So were there a patch set on learning, to see him in

a school.

But *omne bene*, say I, being of an old father’s mind:

Many can brook the weather that love not the wind.

DULL

You two are bookmen. Can you tell me by your wit 40

What was a month old at Cain’s birth that’s not

five weeks old as yet?

HOLOFERNES Dictynna, goodman Dull, Dictynna,

goodman Dull.

DULL What is “dictima”? 45

NATHANIEL

A title to Phoebe, to Luna, to the moon.

HOLOFERNES

The moon was a month old when Adam was no

more.

And raught not to five weeks when he came to

fivescore. 50

Th’ allusion holds in the exchange.

DULL ’Tis true indeed. The collusion holds in the

exchange.

HOLOFERNES God comfort thy capacity! I say, th’ allusion

holds in the exchange. 55

DULL And I say the pollution holds in the exchange, for

the moon is never but a month old. And I say besides

that, ’twas a pricket that the Princess killed.

HOLOFERNES Sir Nathaniel, will you hear an extemporal

epitaph on the death of the deer? And, to humor 60

the ignorant, call I the deer the Princess killed a

pricket.

NATHANIEL *Perge*, good Master Holofernes, *perge*, so it

shall please you to abrogate scurrility.

HOLOFERNES I will something affect the letter, for it 65

argues facility.

The preyful princess pierced and pricked

a pretty pleasing pricket,

Some say a sore, but not a sore till now made

sore with shooting. 70

The dogs did yell. Put “l” to “sore,” then sorel

jumps from thicket,

Or pricket sore, or else sorel. The people fall

a-hooting.

If sore be sore, then “L” to “sore” makes fifty 75

sores o’ sorel.

Of one sore I an hundred make by adding but one

more “L.”

NATHANIEL A rare talent.

DULL*, aside* If a talent be a claw, look how he claws 80

him with a talent.

HOLOFERNES This is a gift that I have, simple, simple—

a foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms,

figures, shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions,

revolutions. These are begot in the ventricle 85

of memory, nourished in the womb of *pia mater*,

and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion. But

the gift is good in those in whom it is acute, and I

am thankful for it.

NATHANIEL Sir, I praise the Lord for you, and so may 90

my parishioners, for their sons are well tutored by

you, and their daughters profit very greatly under

you. You are a good member of the

commonwealth.

HOLOFERNES *Mehercle*, if their sons be ingenious, 95

they shall want no instruction; if their daughters be

capable, I will put it to them. But *Vir sapis qui pauca*

*loquitur*. A soul feminine saluteth us.