



Point: (*C. alarmed*) My masters, I pray you bear with us, and we will satisfy you, for we are merry folk who would make all as merry as ourselves. For, look you, there is humour in all things, and the truest philosophy is that which teaches us to find it and to make the most of it.

Elsie: (*struggling with one of the crowd*) Hands off, I say, unmannerly fellow! (*She boxes his ear.*)

Point: (*to 1st Citizen*) Ha! Didst thou hear her say, "Hands off"?

1st Citizen: Aye, I heard her say it, (*rubbing his ear*) and I felt her do it! What then?

Point: Thou dost not see the humour of it?

1st Citizen: Nay, if I do, hang me!

Point: Thou dost not? Now observe. She said, "Hands off!" Whose hands? Thine. Off whom? Off *her*. Why? Because she is a woman. Now, had she *not* been a woman, thine hands had not been set upon her at all. So the reason for the laying on of hands is the reason for the taking off of hands, and herein is contradiction contradicted! It is the very marriage of *pro* with *con*; and no such lopsided union either, as times go, for *pro* is not more unlike *con* than man is unlike woman—yet men and women marry every day with none to say, "Oh, the pity of it!" but I and fools like me! Now wherewithal shall we please you? We can rhyme you couplet, triolet, quatrain, sonnet, rondelet, ballade, what you will. Or we can dance you saraband, gondolet, carole, pimperl, or Jumping Joan.

Elsie: Let us give them the singing farce of the Merryman and his Maid—therein is song and dance, too.\*

All: Aye, the Merryman and his Maid! (*The Crowd disposes itself around the stage, leaving the center clear.*)

\*No. 7, "I have a song to sing, O", begins here.