

http://www.pluto.no

=====

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

=====



The Merry Wives of Windsor

Written: 1600

Published: 1602

Source: Specific source not established

Dramatis Personae

- > SIR JOHN FALSTAFF (FALSTAFF:)
- >
- > FENTON a gentleman.
- >
- > SHALLOW a country justice.
- >
- > SLENDER cousin to Shallow.
- >
- > FORD |
- > | two gentlemen dwelling at Windsor.
- > PAGE |
- >
- > WILLIAM PAGE a boy, son to Page.
- >
- > SIR HUGH EVANS a Welsh parson.
- >
- > DOCTOR CAIUS a French physician.
- >
- > Host of the Garter Inn. (Host:)
- >
- > BARDOLPH |
- > |
- > PISTOL | sharpers attending on Falstaff.
- > |
- > NYM |
- > |
- > ROBIN page to Falstaff.
- >
- > SIMPLE servant to Slender.
- >
- > RUGBY servant to Doctor Caius.
- >
- > MISTRESS FORD:
- >
- > MISTRESS PAGE:
- >
- > ANNE PAGE her daughter.
- >
- > MISTRESS QUICKLY servant to Doctor Caius.
- >
- > Servants to Page, Ford, &c.
- > (Servant:)
- > (First Servant:)
- > (Second Servant:)
- >
- > SCENE Windsor, and the neighbourhood.

Act I

=====

Scene I

Windsor. Before PAGE's house.

[Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

SHALLOW Sir Hugh, persuade me not; I will make a Star-chamber matter of it: if he were twenty Sir John Falstaffs, he shall not abuse Robert Shallow, esquire.

SLENDER In the county of Gloucester, justice of peace and 'Coram.'

SHALLOW Ay, cousin Slender, and 'Custalourum.

SLENDER Ay, and 'Rato-lorum' too; and a gentleman born, master parson; who writes himself 'Armigero,' in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation, 'Armigero.'

SHALLOW Ay, that I do; and have done any time these three hundred years.

SLENDER All his successors gone before him hath done't; and all his ancestors that come after him may: they may give the dozen white luses in their coat.

SHALLOW It is an old coat.

SIR HUGH EVANS The dozen white louses do become an old coat well; it agrees well, passant; it is a familiar beast to man, and signifies love.

SHALLOW The luce is the fresh fish; the salt fish is an old coat.

SLENDER I may quarter, coz.

SHALLOW You may, by marrying.

SIR HUGH EVANS It is marring indeed, if he quarter it.

SHALLOW Not a whit.

SIR HUGH EVANS Yes, py'r lady; if he has a quarter of your coat, there is but three skirts for yourself, in my simple conjectures: but that is all one. If Sir John Falstaff have committed disparagements unto you, I am of the church, and will be glad to do my benevolence to make atonements and compremises between you.

SHALLOW The council shall bear it; it is a riot.

SIR HUGH EVANS It is not meet the council hear a riot; there is no fear of Got in a riot: the council, look you, shall desire to hear the fear of Got, and not to hear a riot; take your vizaments in that.

SHALLOW Ha! o' my life, if I were young again, the sword should end it.

SIR HUGH EVANS It is petter that friends is the sword, and end it: and there is also another device in my prain, which peradventure prings goot discretions with it: there is Anne Page, which is daughter to Master Thomas Page, which is pretty virginity.

SLENDER Mistress Anne Page? She has brown hair, and speaks small like a woman.

SIR HUGH EVANS It is that fery person for all the orld, as just as you will desire; and seven hundred pounds of moneys, and gold and silver, is her grandsire upon his death's-bed--Got deliver to a joyful resurrections! --give, when she is able to overtake seventeen years old: it were a goot motion if we leave our pribbles and prabbles, and desire a marriage between Master Abraham and Mistress Anne Page.

SLENDER Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pound?

SIR HUGH EVANS Ay, and her father is make her a petter penny.

SLENDER I know the young gentlewoman; she has good gifts.

SIR HUGH EVANS Seven hundred pounds and possibilities is goot gifts.

SHALLOW Well, let us see honest Master Page. Is Falstaff there?

SIR HUGH EVANS Shall I tell you a lie? I do despise a liar as I do despise one that is false, or as I despise one that is not true. The knight, Sir John, is there; and, I beseech you, be ruled by your well-willers. I will peat the door for Master Page.

[Knocks]

What, hoa! Got pless your house here!

PAGE [Within] Who's there?

[Enter PAGE]

SIR HUGH EVANS Here is Got's plessing, and your friend, and Justice Shallow; and here young Master Slender, that peradventures shall tell you another tale, if matters grow to your likings.

PAGE I am glad to see your worships well.
I thank you for my venison, Master Shallow.

SHALLOW Master Page, I am glad to see you: much good do it your good heart! I wished your venison better; it was ill killed. How doth good Mistress Page?--and I thank you always with my heart, la! with my heart.

PAGE Sir, I thank you.

SHALLOW Sir, I thank you; by yea and no, I do.

PAGE I am glad to see you, good Master Slender.

SLENDER How does your fallow greyhound, sir? I heard say he was outrun on Cotsall.

PAGE It could not be judged, sir.

SLENDER You'll not confess, you'll not confess.

SHALLOW That he will not. 'Tis your fault, 'tis your fault; 'tis a good dog.

PAGE A cur, sir.

SHALLOW Sir, he's a good dog, and a fair dog: can there be more said? he is good and fair. Is Sir John Falstaff here?

PAGE Sir, he is within; and I would I could do a good office between you.

SIR HUGH EVANS It is spoke as a Christians ought to speak.

SHALLOW He hath wronged me, Master Page.

PAGE Sir, he doth in some sort confess it.

SHALLOW If it be confessed, it is not redress'd: is not that so, Master Page? He hath wronged me; indeed he hath, at a word, he hath, believe me: Robert Shallow, esquire, saith, he is wronged.

PAGE Here comes Sir John.

[Enter FALSTAFF, BARDOLPH, NYM, and PISTOL]

FALSTAFF Now, Master Shallow, you'll complain of me to the king?

SHALLOW Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge.

FALSTAFF But not kissed your keeper's daughter?

SHALLOW Tut, a pin! this shall be answered.

FALSTAFF I will answer it straight; I have done all this. That is now answered.

SHALLOW The council shall know this.

FALSTAFF 'Twere better for you if it were known in counsel: you'll be laughed at.

SIR HUGH EVANS Pauca verba, Sir John; goot worts.

FALSTAFF Good worts! good cabbage. Slender, I broke your head: what matter have you against me?

SLENDER Marry, sir, I have matter in my head against you;
and against your cony-catching rascals, Bardolph,
Nym, and Pistol.

BARDOLPH You Banbury cheese!

SLENDER Ay, it is no matter.

PISTOL How now, Mephostophilus!

SLENDER Ay, it is no matter.

NYM Slice, I say! pauca, pauca: slice! that's my humour.

SLENDER Where's Simple, my man? Can you tell, cousin?

SIR HUGH EVANS Peace, I pray you. Now let us understand. There is
three umpires in this matter, as I understand; that
is, Master Page, fidelicet Master Page; and there is
myself, fidelicet myself; and the three party is,
lastly and finally, mine host of the Garter.

PAGE We three, to hear it and end it between them.

SIR HUGH EVANS Fery goot: I will make a prief of it in my note-
book; and we will afterwards ork upon the cause with
as great discreetly as we can.

FALSTAFF Pistol!

PISTOL He hears with ears.

SIR HUGH EVANS The tevil and his tam! what phrase is this, 'He
hears with ear'? why, it is affectations.

FALSTAFF Pistol, did you pick Master Slender's purse?

SLENDER Ay, by these gloves, did he, or I would I might
never come in mine own great chamber again else, of
seven groats in mill-sixpences, and two Edward
shovel-boards, that cost me two shilling and two
pence apiece of Yead Miller, by these gloves.

FALSTAFF Is this true, Pistol?

SIR HUGH EVANS No; it is false, if it is a pick-purse.

PISTOL Ha, thou mountain-foreigner! Sir John and Master mine,
I combat challenge of this latten bilbo.
Word of denial in thy labras here!
Word of denial: froth and scum, thou liest!

SLENDER By these gloves, then, 'twas he.

NYM Be avised, sir, and pass good humours: I will say
'marry trap' with you, if you run the nuthook's
humour on me; that is the very note of it.

SLENDER By this hat, then, he in the red face had it; for
though I cannot remember what I did when you made me

drunk, yet I am not altogether an ass.

FALSTAFF What say you, Scarlet and John?

BARDOLPH Why, sir, for my part I say the gentleman had drunk himself out of his five senses.

SIR HUGH EVANS It is his five senses: fie, what the ignorance is!

BARDOLPH And being fap, sir, was, as they say, cashiered; and so conclusions passed the careires.

SLENDER Ay, you spake in Latin then too; but 'tis no matter: I'll ne'er be drunk whilst I live again, but in honest, civil, godly company, for this trick: if I be drunk, I'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves.

SIR HUGH EVANS So Got udge me, that is a virtuous mind.

FALSTAFF You hear all these matters denied, gentlemen; you hear it.

[Enter ANNE PAGE, with wine; MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE, following]

PAGE Nay, daughter, carry the wine in; we'll drink within.

[Exit ANNE PAGE]

SLENDER O heaven! this is Mistress Anne Page.

PAGE How now, Mistress Ford!

FALSTAFF Mistress Ford, by my troth, you are very well met: by your leave, good mistress.

[Kisses her]

PAGE Wife, bid these gentlemen welcome. Come, we have a hot venison pasty to dinner: come, gentlemen, I hope we shall drink down all unkindness.

[Exeunt all except SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

SLENDER I had rather than forty shillings I had my Book of Songs and Sonnets here.

[Enter SIMPLE]

How now, Simple! where have you been? I must wait on myself, must I? You have not the Book of Riddles about you, have you?

SIMPLE Book of Riddles! why, did you not lend it to Alice Shortcake upon All-hallowmas last, a fortnight afore Michaelmas?

SHALLOW Come, coz; come, coz; we stay for you. A word with you, coz; marry, this, coz: there is, as 'twere, a tender, a kind of tender, made afar off by Sir Hugh

here. Do you understand me?

SLENDER Ay, sir, you shall find me reasonable; if it be so,
I shall do that that is reason.

SHALLOW Nay, but understand me.

SLENDER So I do, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS Give ear to his motions, Master Slender: I will
description the matter to you, if you be capacity of it.

SLENDER Nay, I will do as my cousin Shallow says: I pray
you, pardon me; he's a justice of peace in his
country, simple though I stand here.

SIR HUGH EVANS But that is not the question: the question is
concerning your marriage.

SHALLOW Ay, there's the point, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS Marry, is it; the very point of it; to Mistress Anne Page.

SLENDER Why, if it be so, I will marry her upon any
reasonable demands.

SIR HUGH EVANS But can you affection the 'oman? Let us command to
know that of your mouth or of your lips; for divers
philosophers hold that the lips is parcel of the
mouth. Therefore, precisely, can you carry your
good will to the maid?

SHALLOW Cousin Abraham Slender, can you love her?

SLENDER I hope, sir, I will do as it shall become one that
would do reason.

SIR HUGH EVANS Nay, Got's lords and his ladies! you must speak
possitable, if you can carry her your desires
towards her.

SHALLOW That you must. Will you, upon good dowry, marry her?

SLENDER I will do a greater thing than that, upon your
request, cousin, in any reason.

SHALLOW Nay, conceive me, conceive me, sweet coz: what I do
is to pleasure you, coz. Can you love the maid?

SLENDER I will marry her, sir, at your request: but if there
be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may
decrease it upon better acquaintance, when we are
married and have more occasion to know one another;
I hope, upon familiarity will grow more contempt:
but if you say, 'Marry her,' I will marry her; that
I am freely dissolved, and dissolutely.

SIR HUGH EVANS It is a fery discretion answer; save the fall is in
the ort 'dissolutely:' the ort is, according to our
meaning, 'resolutely:' his meaning is good.

SHALLOW Ay, I think my cousin meant well.

SLENDER Ay, or else I would I might be hanged, la!

SHALLOW Here comes fair Mistress Anne.

[Re-enter ANNE PAGE]

Would I were young for your sake, Mistress Anne!

ANNE PAGE The dinner is on the table; my father desires your worships' company.

SHALLOW I will wait on him, fair Mistress Anne.

SIR HUGH EVANS Od's plessed will! I will not be absence at the grace.

[Exeunt SHALLOW and SIR HUGH EVANS]

ANNE PAGE Will't please your worship to come in, sir?

SLENDER No, I thank you, forsooth, heartily; I am very well.

ANNE PAGE The dinner attends you, sir.

SLENDER I am not a-hungry, I thank you, forsooth. Go, sirrah, for all you are my man, go wait upon my cousin Shallow.

[Exit SIMPLE]

A justice of peace sometimes may be beholding to his friend for a man. I keep but three men and a boy yet, till my mother be dead: but what though? Yet I live like a poor gentleman born.

ANNE PAGE I may not go in without your worship: they will not sit till you come.

SLENDER I' faith, I'll eat nothing; I thank you as much as though I did.

ANNE PAGE I pray you, sir, walk in.

SLENDER I had rather walk here, I thank you. I bruised my shin th' other day with playing at sword and dagger with a master of fence; three veneyes for a dish of stewed prunes; and, by my troth, I cannot abide the smell of hot meat since. Why do your dogs bark so? be there bears i' the town?

ANNE PAGE I think there are, sir; I heard them talked of.

SLENDER I love the sport well but I shall as soon quarrel at it as any man in England. You are afraid, if you see the bear loose, are you not?

ANNE PAGE Ay, indeed, sir.

SLENDER That's meat and drink to me, now. I have seen Sackerson loose twenty times, and have taken him by the chain; but, I warrant you, the women have so cried and shrieked at it, that it passed: but women, indeed, cannot abide 'em; they are very ill-favored rough things.

[Re-enter PAGE]

PAGE Come, gentle Master Slender, come; we stay for you.

SLENDER I'll eat nothing, I thank you, sir.

PAGE By cock and pie, you shall not choose, sir! come, come.

SLENDER Nay, pray you, lead the way.

PAGE Come on, sir.

SLENDER Mistress Anne, yourself shall go first.

ANNE PAGE Not I, sir; pray you, keep on.

SLENDER I'll rather be unmannerly than troublesome.
You do yourself wrong, indeed, la!

[Exeunt]

Scene II

The same.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE]

SIR HUGH EVANS Go your ways, and ask of Doctor Caius' house which is the way: and there dwells one Mistress Quickly, which is in the manner of his nurse, or his dry nurse, or his cook, or his laundry, his washer, and his wringer.

SIMPLE Well, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS Nay, it is petter yet. Give her this letter; for it is a 'oman that altogether's acquaintance with Mistress Anne Page: and the letter is, to desire and require her to solicit your master's desires to Mistress Anne Page. I pray you, be gone: I will make an end of my dinner; there's pippins and cheese to come.

[Exeunt]

Scene III

A room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter FALSTAFF, Host, BARDOLPH, NYM, PISTOL,
and ROBIN]

FALSTAFF Mine host of the Garter!

Host What says my bully-rook? speak scholarly and wisely.

FALSTAFF Truly, mine host, I must turn away some of my followers.

Host Discard, bully Hercules; cashier: let them wag; trot, trot.

FALSTAFF I sit at ten pounds a week.

Host Thou'rt an emperor, Caesar, Keisar, and Pheezar. I will entertain Bardolph; he shall draw, he shall tap: said I well, bully Hector?

FALSTAFF Do so, good mine host.

Host I have spoke; let him follow.

[To BARDOLPH]

Let me see thee froth and lime: I am at a word; follow.

[Exit]

FALSTAFF Bardolph, follow him. A tapster is a good trade: an old cloak makes a new jerkin; a withered serving-man a fresh tapster. Go; adieu.

BARDOLPH It is a life that I have desired: I will thrive.

PISTOL O base Hungarian wight! wilt thou the spigot wield?

[Exit BARDOLPH]

NYM He was gotten in drink: is not the humour conceited?

FALSTAFF I am glad I am so acquit of this tinderbox: his thefts were too open; his filching was like an unskilful singer; he kept not time.

NYM The good humour is to steal at a minute's rest.

PISTOL 'Convey,' the wise it call. 'Steal!' foh! a fico for the phrase!

FALSTAFF Well, sirs, I am almost out at heels.

PISTOL Why, then, let kibes ensue.

FALSTAFF There is no remedy; I must cony-catch; I must shift.

PISTOL Young ravens must have food.

FALSTAFF Which of you know Ford of this town?

PISTOL I ken the wight: he is of substance good.

FALSTAFF My honest lads, I will tell you what I am about.

PISTOL Two yards, and more.

FALSTAFF No quips now, Pistol! Indeed, I am in the waist two yards about; but I am now about no waste; I am about thrift. Briefly, I do mean to make love to Ford's wife: I spy entertainment in her; she discourses, she carves, she gives the leer of invitation: I can construe the action of her familiar style; and the hardest voice of her behavior, to be Englished rightly, is, 'I am Sir John Falstaff's.'

PISTOL He hath studied her will, and translated her will, out of honesty into English.

NYM The anchor is deep: will that humour pass?

FALSTAFF Now, the report goes she has all the rule of her husband's purse: he hath a legion of angels.

PISTOL As many devils entertain; and 'To her, boy,' say I.

NYM The humour rises; it is good: humour me the angels.

FALSTAFF I have writ me here a letter to her: and here another to Page's wife, who even now gave me good eyes too, examined my parts with most judicious oeillades; sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly.

PISTOL Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

NYM I thank thee for that humour.

FALSTAFF O, she did so course o'er my exteriors with such a greedy intention, that the appetite of her eye did seem to scorch me up like a burning-glass! Here's another letter to her: she bears the purse too; she is a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty. I will be cheater to them both, and they shall be exchequers to me; they shall be my East and West Indies, and I will trade to them both. Go bear thou this letter to Mistress Page; and thou this to Mistress Ford: we will thrive, lads, we will thrive.

PISTOL Shall I Sir Pandarus of Troy become,
And by my side wear steel? then, Lucifer take all!

NYM I will run no base humour: here, take the
humour-letter: I will keep the havior of reputation.

FALSTAFF [To ROBIN] Hold, sirrah, bear you these letters tightly;
Sail like my pinnace to these golden shores.
Rogues, hence, avaunt! vanish like hailstones, go;
Trudge, plod away o' the hoof; seek shelter, pack!
Falstaff will learn the humour of the age,
French thrift, you rogues; myself and skirted page.

[Exeunt FALSTAFF and ROBIN]

PISTOL Let vultures gripe thy guts! for gourd and fullam holds,
And high and low beguiles the rich and poor:
Tester I'll have in pouch when thou shalt lack,

Base Phrygian Turk!

NYM I have operations which be humours of revenge.

PISTOL Wilt thou revenge?

NYM By welkin and her star!

PISTOL With wit or steel?

NYM With both the humours, I:

I will discuss the humour of this love to Page.

PISTOL And I to Ford shall eke unfold
How Falstaff, varlet vile,
His dove will prove, his gold will hold,
And his soft couch defile.

NYM My humour shall not cool: I will incense Page to
deal with poison; I will possess him with
yellowness, for the revolt of mine is dangerous:
that is my true humour.

PISTOL Thou art the Mars of malecontents: I second thee; troop on.

[Exeunt]

Scene IV

A room in DOCTOR CAIUS' house.

[Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY, SIMPLE, and RUGBY]

MISTRESS QUICKLY What, John Rugby! I pray thee, go to the casement,
and see if you can see my master, Master Doctor
Caius, coming. If he do, i' faith, and find any
body in the house, here will be an old abusing of
God's patience and the king's English.

RUGBY I'll go watch.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Go; and we'll have a posset for't soon at night, in
faith, at the latter end of a sea-coal fire.

[Exit RUGBY]

An honest, willing, kind fellow, as ever servant
shall come in house withal, and, I warrant you, no
tell-tale nor no breed-bate: his worst fault is,
that he is given to prayer; he is something peevish
that way: but nobody but has his fault; but let
that pass. Peter Simple, you say your name is?

SIMPLE Ay, for fault of a better.

MISTRESS QUICKLY And Master Slender's your master?

SIMPLE Ay, forsooth.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Does he not wear a great round beard, like a

glover's paring-knife?

SIMPLE No, forsooth: he hath but a little wee face, with a little yellow beard, a Cain-coloured beard.

MISTRESS QUICKLY A softly-sprighted man, is he not?

SIMPLE Ay, forsooth: but he is as tall a man of his hands as any is between this and his head; he hath fought with a warrener.

MISTRESS QUICKLY How say you? O, I should remember him: does he not hold up his head, as it were, and strut in his gait?

SIMPLE Yes, indeed, does he.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Well, heaven send Anne Page no worse fortune! Tell Master Parson Evans I will do what I can for your master: Anne is a good girl, and I wish--

[Re-enter RUGBY]

RUGBY Out, alas! here comes my master.

MISTRESS QUICKLY We shall all be shent. Run in here, good young man; go into this closet: he will not stay long.

[Shuts SIMPLE in the closet]

What, John Rugby! John! what, John, I say!
Go, John, go inquire for my master; I doubt
he be not well, that he comes not home.

[Singing]

And down, down, adown-a, &c.

[Enter DOCTOR CAIUS]

DOCTOR CAIUS Vat is you sing? I do not like des toys. Pray you, go and vetch me in my closet un boitier vert, a box, a green-a box: do intend vat I speak? a green-a box.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Ay, forsooth; I'll fetch it you.

[Aside]

I am glad he went not in himself: if he had found
the young man, he would have been horn-mad.

DOCTOR CAIUS Fe, fe, fe, fe! ma foi, il fait fort chaud. Je m'en vais a la cour--la grande affaire.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Is it this, sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS Oui; mette le au mon pocket: depeche, quickly. Vere is dat knave Rugby?

MISTRESS QUICKLY What, John Rugby! John!

RUGBY Here, sir!

DOCTOR CAIUS You are John Rugby, and you are Jack Rugby. Come, take-a your rapier, and come after my heel to the court.

RUGBY 'Tis ready, sir, here in the porch.

DOCTOR CAIUS By my trot, I tarry too long. Od's me! Qu'ai-j'oublie! dere is some simples in my closet, dat I will not for the varld I shall leave behind.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Ay me, he'll find the young man here, and be mad!

DOCTOR CAIUS O diable, diable! vat is in my closet? Villain! larron!

[Pulling SIMPLE out]

Rugby, my rapier!

MISTRESS QUICKLY Good master, be content.

DOCTOR CAIUS Wherefore shall I be content-a?

MISTRESS QUICKLY The young man is an honest man.

DOCTOR CAIUS What shall de honest man do in my closet? dere is no honest man dat shall come in my closet.

MISTRESS QUICKLY I beseech you, be not so phlegmatic. Hear the truth of it: he came of an errand to me from Parson Hugh.

DOCTOR CAIUS Vell.

SIMPLE Ay, forsooth; to desire her to--

MISTRESS QUICKLY Peace, I pray you.

DOCTOR CAIUS Peace-a your tongue. Speak-a your tale.

SIMPLE To desire this honest gentlewoman, your maid, to speak a good word to Mistress Anne Page for my master in the way of marriage.

MISTRESS QUICKLY This is all, indeed, la! but I'll ne'er put my finger in the fire, and need not.

DOCTOR CAIUS Sir Hugh send-a you? Rugby, baille me some paper. Tarry you a little-a while.

[Writes]

MISTRESS QUICKLY [Aside to SIMPLE] I am glad he is so quiet: if he had been thoroughly moved, you should have heard him so loud and so melancholy. But notwithstanding, man, I'll do you your master what good I can: and the very yea and the no is, the French doctor, my master,--I may call him my master, look you, for I keep his house; and I wash, wring, brew, bake, scour, dress meat and drink, make the beds and do all myself,--

SIMPLE [Aside to MISTRESS QUICKLY] 'Tis a great charge to
come under one body's hand.

MISTRESS QUICKLY [Aside to SIMPLE] Are you avised o' that? you
shall find it a great charge: and to be up early
and down late; but notwithstanding,--to tell you in
your ear; I would have no words of it,--my master
himself is in love with Mistress Anne Page: but
notwithstanding that, I know Anne's mind,--that's
neither here nor there.

DOCTOR CAIUS You jack'nape, give-a this letter to Sir Hugh; by
gar, it is a shallenge: I will cut his troat in dee
park; and I will teach a scurvy jack-a-nape priest
to meddle or make. You may be gone; it is not good
you tarry here. By gar, I will cut all his two
stones; by gar, he shall not have a stone to throw
at his dog:

[Exit SIMPLE]

MISTRESS QUICKLY Alas, he speaks but for his friend.

DOCTOR CAIUS It is no matter-a ver dat: do not you tell-a me
dat I shall have Anne Page for myself? By gar, I
vill kill de Jack priest; and I have appointed mine
host of de Jarteer to measure our weapon. By gar, I
will myself have Anne Page.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Sir, the maid loves you, and all shall be well. We
must give folks leave to prate: what, the good-jer!

DOCTOR CAIUS Rugby, come to the court with me. By gar, if I have
not Anne Page, I shall turn your head out of my
door. Follow my heels, Rugby.

[Exeunt DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY]

MISTRESS QUICKLY You shall have An fool's-head of your own. No, I
know Anne's mind for that: never a woman in Windsor
knows more of Anne's mind than I do; nor can do more
than I do with her, I thank heaven.

FENTON [Within] Who's within there? ho!

MISTRESS QUICKLY Who's there, I trow! Come near the house, I pray you.

[Enter FENTON]

FENTON How now, good woman? how dost thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY The better that it pleases your good worship to ask.

FENTON What news? how does pretty Mistress Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY In truth, sir, and she is pretty, and honest, and
gentle; and one that is your friend, I can tell you
that by the way; I praise heaven for it.

FENTON Shall I do any good, thinkest thou? shall I not lose my suit?

MISTRESS QUICKLY Troth, sir, all is in his hands above: but notwithstanding, Master Fenton, I'll be sworn on a book, she loves you. Have not your worship a wart above your eye?

FENTON Yes, marry, have I; what of that?

MISTRESS QUICKLY Well, thereby hangs a tale: good faith, it is such another Nan; but, I detest, an honest maid as ever broke bread: we had an hour's talk of that wart. I shall never laugh but in that maid's company! But indeed she is given too much to allicholy and musing: but for you--well, go to.

FENTON Well, I shall see her to-day. Hold, there's money for thee; let me have thy voice in my behalf: if thou seest her before me, commend me.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Will I? i'faith, that we will; and I will tell your worship more of the wart the next time we have confidence; and of other wooers.

FENTON Well, farewell; I am in great haste now.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Farewell to your worship.

[Exit FENTON]

Truly, an honest gentleman: but Anne loves him not; for I know Anne's mind as well as another does. Out upon't! what have I forgot?

[Exit]

Act II

=====

Scene I

Before PAGE'S house.

[Enter MISTRESS PAGE, with a letter]

MISTRESS PAGE What, have I scaped love-letters in the holiday-time of my beauty, and am I now a subject for them? Let me see.

[Reads]

'Ask me no reason why I love you; for though Love use Reason for his physician, he admits him not for his counsellor. You are not young, no more am I; go to then, there's sympathy: you are merry, so am I; ha, ha! then there's more sympathy: you love sack, and so do I; would you desire better sympathy? Let it suffice thee, Mistress Page,--at the least, if the love of soldier can suffice,--that I love thee. I will not say, pity me; 'tis

not a soldier-like phrase: but I say, love me. By me,
Thine own true knight,
By day or night,
Or any kind of light,
With all his might
For thee to fight, JOHN FALSTAFF'
What a Herod of Jewry is this! O wicked
world! One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with
age to show himself a young gallant! What an
unweighed behavior hath this Flemish drunkard
picked--with the devil's name!--out of my
conversation, that he dares in this manner assay me?
Why, he hath not been thrice in my company! What
should I say to him? I was then frugal of my
mirth: Heaven forgive me! Why, I'll exhibit a bill
in the parliament for the putting down of men. How
shall I be revenged on him? for revenged I will be,
as sure as his guts are made of puddings.

[Enter MISTRESS FORD]

MISTRESS FORD Mistress Page! trust me, I was going to your house.

MISTRESS PAGE And, trust me, I was coming to you. You look very
ill.

MISTRESS FORD Nay, I'll ne'er believe that; I have to show to the contrary.

MISTRESS PAGE Faith, but you do, in my mind.

MISTRESS FORD Well, I do then; yet I say I could show you to the
contrary. O Mistress Page, give me some counsel!

MISTRESS PAGE What's the matter, woman?

MISTRESS FORD O woman, if it were not for one trifling respect, I
could come to such honour!

MISTRESS PAGE Hang the trifle, woman! take the honour. What is
it? dispense with trifles; what is it?

MISTRESS FORD If I would but go to hell for an eternal moment or so,
I could be knighted.

MISTRESS PAGE What? thou liest! Sir Alice Ford! These knights
will hack; and so thou shouldst not alter the
article of thy gentry.

MISTRESS FORD We burn daylight: here, read, read; perceive how I
might be knighted. I shall think the worse of fat
men, as long as I have an eye to make difference of
men's liking: and yet he would not swear; praised
women's modesty; and gave such orderly and
well-behaved reproof to all uncomeliness, that I
would have sworn his disposition would have gone to
the truth of his words; but they do no more adhere
and keep place together than the Hundredth Psalm to
the tune of 'Green Sleeves.' What tempest, I trow,
threw this whale, with so many tuns of oil in his
belly, ashore at Windsor? How shall I be revenged

on him? I think the best way were to entertain him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust have melted him in his own grease. Did you ever hear the like?

MISTRESS PAGE Letter for letter, but that the name of Page and Ford differs! To thy great comfort in this mystery of ill opinions, here's the twin-brother of thy letter: but let thine inherit first; for, I protest, mine never shall. I warrant he hath a thousand of these letters, writ with blank space for different names--sure, more,--and these are of the second edition: he will print them, out of doubt; for he cares not what he puts into the press, when he would put us two. I had rather be a giantess, and lie under Mount Pelion. Well, I will find you twenty lascivious turtles ere one chaste man.

MISTRESS FORD Why, this is the very same; the very hand, the very words. What doth he think of us?

MISTRESS PAGE Nay, I know not: it makes me almost ready to wrangle with mine own honesty. I'll entertain myself like one that I am not acquainted withal; for, sure, unless he know some strain in me, that I know not myself, he would never have boarded me in this fury.

MISTRESS FORD 'Boarding,' call you it? I'll be sure to keep him above deck.

MISTRESS PAGE So will I if he come under my hatches, I'll never to sea again. Let's be revenged on him: let's appoint him a meeting; give him a show of comfort in his suit and lead him on with a fine-baited delay, till he hath pawned his horses to mine host of the Garter.

MISTRESS FORD Nay, I will consent to act any villany against him, that may not sully the chariness of our honesty. O, that my husband saw this letter! it would give eternal food to his jealousy.

MISTRESS PAGE Why, look where he comes; and my good man too: he's as far from jealousy as I am from giving him cause; and that I hope is an unmeasurable distance.

MISTRESS FORD You are the happier woman.

MISTRESS PAGE Let's consult together against this greasy knight. Come hither.

[They retire]

[Enter FORD with PISTOL, and PAGE with NYM]

FORD Well, I hope it be not so.

PISTOL Hope is a curtal dog in some affairs:
Sir John affects thy wife.

FORD Why, sir, my wife is not young.

PISTOL He wooes both high and low, both rich and poor,
Both young and old, one with another, Ford;
He loves the gallimaufry: Ford, perpend.

FORD Love my wife!

PISTOL With liver burning hot. Prevent, or go thou,
Like Sir Actaeon he, with Ringwood at thy heels:
O, odious is the name!

FORD What name, sir?

PISTOL The horn, I say. Farewell.
Take heed, have open eye, for thieves do foot by night:
Take heed, ere summer comes or cuckoo-birds do sing.
Away, Sir Corporal Nym!
Believe it, Page; he speaks sense.

[Exit]

FORD [Aside] I will be patient; I will find out this.

NYM [To PAGE] And this is true; I like not the humour
of lying. He hath wronged me in some humours: I
should have borne the humoured letter to her; but I
have a sword and it shall bite upon my necessity.
He loves your wife; there's the short and the long.
My name is Corporal Nym; I speak and I avouch; 'tis
true: my name is Nym and Falstaff loves your wife.
Adieu. I love not the humour of bread and cheese,
and there's the humour of it. Adieu.

[Exit]

PAGE 'The humour of it,' quoth a'! here's a fellow
frights English out of his wits.

FORD I will seek out Falstaff.

PAGE I never heard such a drawling, affecting rogue.

FORD If I do find it: well.

PAGE I will not believe such a Cataian, though the priest
o' the town commended him for a true man.

FORD 'Twas a good sensible fellow: well.

PAGE How now, Meg!

[MISTRESS PAGE and MISTRESS FORD come forward]

MISTRESS PAGE Whither go you, George? Hark you.

MISTRESS FORD How now, sweet Frank! why art thou melancholy?

FORD I melancholy! I am not melancholy. Get you home, go.

MISTRESS FORD Faith, thou hast some crotchets in thy head. Now,
will you go, Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE Have with you. You'll come to dinner, George.

[Aside to MISTRESS FORD]

Look who comes yonder: she shall be our messenger
to this paltry knight.

MISTRESS FORD [Aside to MISTRESS PAGE] Trust me, I thought on her:
she'll fit it.

[Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY]

MISTRESS PAGE You are come to see my daughter Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY Ay, forsooth; and, I pray, how does good Mistress Anne?

MISTRESS PAGE Go in with us and see: we have an hour's talk with
you.

[Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and MISTRESS QUICKLY]

PAGE How now, Master Ford!

FORD You heard what this knave told me, did you not?

PAGE Yes: and you heard what the other told me?

FORD Do you think there is truth in them?

PAGE Hang 'em, slaves! I do not think the knight would
offer it: but these that accuse him in his intent
towards our wives are a yoke of his discarded men;
very rogues, now they be out of service.

FORD Were they his men?

PAGE Marry, were they.

FORD I like it never the better for that. Does he lie at
the Garter?

PAGE Ay, marry, does he. If he should intend this voyage
towards my wife, I would turn her loose to him; and
what he gets more of her than sharp words, let it
lie on my head.

FORD I do not misdoubt my wife; but I would be loath to
turn them together. A man may be too confident: I
would have nothing lie on my head: I cannot be thus satisfied.

PAGE Look where my ranting host of the Garter comes:
there is either liquor in his pate or money in his
purse when he looks so merrily.

[Enter Host]

How now, mine host!

Host How now, bully-rook! thou'rt a gentleman.

Cavaleiro-justice, I say!

[Enter SHALLOW]

SHALLOW I follow, mine host, I follow. Good even and twenty, good Master Page! Master Page, will you go with us? we have sport in hand.

Host Tell him, cavaleiro-justice; tell him, bully-rook.

SHALLOW Sir, there is a fray to be fought between Sir Hugh the Welsh priest and Caius the French doctor.

FORD Good mine host o' the Garter, a word with you.

[Drawing him aside]

Host What sayest thou, my bully-rook?

SHALLOW [To PAGE] Will you go with us to behold it? My merry host hath had the measuring of their weapons; and, I think, hath appointed them contrary places; for, believe me, I hear the parson is no jester. Hark, I will tell you what our sport shall be.

[They converse apart]

Host Hast thou no suit against my knight, my guest-cavaleire?

FORD None, I protest: but I'll give you a pottle of burnt sack to give me recourse to him and tell him my name is Brook; only for a jest.

Host My hand, bully; thou shalt have egress and regress; --said I well?--and thy name shall be Brook. It is a merry knight. Will you go, An-heires?

SHALLOW Have with you, mine host.

PAGE I have heard the Frenchman hath good skill in his rapier.

SHALLOW Tut, sir, I could have told you more. In these times you stand on distance, your passes, stoccadoes, and I know not what: 'tis the heart, Master Page; 'tis here, 'tis here. I have seen the time, with my long sword I would have made you four tall fellows skip like rats.

Host Here, boys, here, here! shall we wag?

PAGE Have with you. I would rather hear them scold than fight.

[Exeunt Host, SHALLOW, and PAGE]

FORD Though Page be a secure fool, an stands so firmly on his wife's frailty, yet I cannot put off my opinion so easily: she was in his company at Page's house; and what they made there, I know not. Well, I will look further into't: and I have a disguise

to sound Falstaff. If I find her honest, I lose not my labour; if she be otherwise, 'tis labour well bestowed.

[Exit]

Scene II

A room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter FALSTAFF and PISTOL]

FALSTAFF I will not lend thee a penny.

PISTOL Why, then the world's mine oyster.
Which I with sword will open.

FALSTAFF Not a penny. I have been content, sir, you should lay my countenance to pawn; I have grated upon my good friends for three reprieves for you and your coach-fellow Nym; or else you had looked through the grate, like a geminy of baboons. I am damned in hell for swearing to gentlemen my friends, you were good soldiers and tall fellows; and when Mistress Bridget lost the handle of her fan, I took't upon mine honour thou hadst it not.

PISTOL Didst not thou share? hadst thou not fifteen pence?

FALSTAFF Reason, you rogue, reason: thinkest thou I'll endanger my soul gratis? At a word, hang no more about me, I am no gibbet for you. Go. A short knife and a throng! To your manor of Pickt-hatch! Go. You'll not bear a letter for me, you rogue! you stand upon your honour! Why, thou unconfined baseness, it is as much as I can do to keep the terms of my honour precise: I, I, I myself sometimes, leaving the fear of God on the left hand and hiding mine honour in my necessity, am fain to shuffle, to hedge and to lurch; and yet you, rogue, will ensconce your rags, your cat-a-mountain looks, your red-lattice phrases, and your bold-beating oaths, under the shelter of your honour! You will not do it, you!

PISTOL I do relent: what would thou more of man?

[Enter ROBIN]

ROBIN Sir, here's a woman would speak with you.

FALSTAFF Let her approach.

[Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY]

MISTRESS QUICKLY Give your worship good morrow.

FALSTAFF Good morrow, good wife.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Not so, an't please your worship.

FALSTAFF Good maid, then.

MISTRESS QUICKLY I'll be sworn,
As my mother was, the first hour I was born.

FALSTAFF I do believe the swearer. What with me?

MISTRESS QUICKLY Shall I vouchsafe your worship a word or two?

FALSTAFF Two thousand, fair woman: and I'll vouchsafe thee
the hearing.

MISTRESS QUICKLY There is one Mistress Ford, sir:--I pray, come a
little nearer this ways:--I myself dwell with master
Doctor Caius,--

FALSTAFF Well, on: Mistress Ford, you say,--

MISTRESS QUICKLY Your worship says very true: I pray your worship,
come a little nearer this ways.

FALSTAFF I warrant thee, nobody hears; mine own people, mine
own people.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Are they so? God bless them and make them his servants!

FALSTAFF Well, Mistress Ford; what of her?

MISTRESS QUICKLY Why, sir, she's a good creature. Lord Lord! your
worship's a wanton! Well, heaven forgive you and all
of us, I pray!

FALSTAFF Mistress Ford; come, Mistress Ford,--

MISTRESS QUICKLY Marry, this is the short and the long of it; you
have brought her into such a canaries as 'tis
wonderful. The best courtier of them all, when the
court lay at Windsor, could never have brought her
to such a canary. Yet there has been knights, and
lords, and gentlemen, with their coaches, I warrant
you, coach after coach, letter after letter, gift
after gift; smelling so sweetly, all musk, and so
rushling, I warrant you, in silk and gold; and in
such alligant terms; and in such wine and sugar of
the best and the fairest, that would have won any
woman's heart; and, I warrant you, they could never
get an eye-wink of her: I had myself twenty angels
given me this morning; but I defy all angels, in
any such sort, as they say, but in the way of
honesty: and, I warrant you, they could never get
her so much as sip on a cup with the proudest of
them all: and yet there has been earls, nay, which
is more, pensioners; but, I warrant you, all is one with her.

FALSTAFF But what says she to me? be brief, my good
she-Mercury.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Marry, she hath received your letter, for the which
she thanks you a thousand times; and she gives you
to notify that her husband will be absence from his

house between ten and eleven.

FALSTAFF Ten and eleven?

MISTRESS QUICKLY Ay, forsooth; and then you may come and see the picture, she says, that you wot of: Master Ford, her husband, will be from home. Alas! the sweet woman leads an ill life with him: he's a very jealousy man: she leads a very frampold life with him, good heart.

FALSTAFF Ten and eleven. Woman, commend me to her; I will not fail her.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Why, you say well. But I have another messenger to your worship. Mistress Page hath her hearty commendations to you too: and let me tell you in your ear, she's as fartuous a civil modest wife, and one, I tell you, that will not miss you morning nor evening prayer, as any is in Windsor, whoe'er be the other: and she bade me tell your worship that her husband is seldom from home; but she hopes there will come a time. I never knew a woman so dote upon a man: surely I think you have charms, la; yes, in truth.

FALSTAFF Not I, I assure thee: setting the attractions of my good parts aside I have no other charms.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Blessing on your heart for't!

FALSTAFF But, I pray thee, tell me this: has Ford's wife and Page's wife acquainted each other how they love me?

MISTRESS QUICKLY That were a jest indeed! they have not so little grace, I hope: that were a trick indeed! but Mistress Page would desire you to send her your little page, of all loves: her husband has a marvellous infection to the little page; and truly Master Page is an honest man. Never a wife in Windsor leads a better life than she does: do what she will, say what she will, take all, pay all, go to bed when she list, rise when she list, all is as she will: and truly she deserves it; for if there be a kind woman in Windsor, she is one. You must send her your page; no remedy.

FALSTAFF Why, I will.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Nay, but do so, then: and, look you, he may come and go between you both; and in any case have a nay-word, that you may know one another's mind, and the boy never need to understand any thing; for 'tis not good that children should know any wickedness: old folks, you know, have discretion, as they say, and know the world.

FALSTAFF Fare thee well: commend me to them both: there's my purse; I am yet thy debtor. Boy, go along with this woman.

[Exeunt MISTRESS QUICKLY and ROBIN]

This news distracts me!

PISTOL This punk is one of Cupid's carriers:
Clap on more sails; pursue; up with your fights:
Give fire: she is my prize, or ocean whelm them all!

[Exit]

FALSTAFF Sayest thou so, old Jack? go thy ways; I'll make more of thy old body than I have done. Will they yet look after thee? Wilt thou, after the expense of so much money, be now a gainer? Good body, I thank thee. Let them say 'tis grossly done; so it be fairly done, no matter.

[Enter BARDOLPH]

BARDOLPH Sir John, there's one Master Brook below would fain speak with you, and be acquainted with you; and hath sent your worship a morning's draught of sack.

FALSTAFF Brook is his name?

BARDOLPH Ay, sir.

FALSTAFF Call him in.

[Exit BARDOLPH]

Such Brooks are welcome to me, that o'erflow such liquor. Ah, ha! Mistress Ford and Mistress Page have I encompassed you? go to; via!

[Re-enter BARDOLPH, with FORD disguised]

FORD Bless you, sir!

FALSTAFF And you, sir! Would you speak with me?

FORD I make bold to press with so little preparation upon you.

FALSTAFF You're welcome. What's your will? Give us leave, drawer.

[Exit BARDOLPH]

FORD Sir, I am a gentleman that have spent much; my name is Brook.

FALSTAFF Good Master Brook, I desire more acquaintance of you.

FORD Good Sir John, I sue for yours: not to charge you; for I must let you understand I think myself in better plight for a lender than you are: the which hath something embolden'd me to this unseasoned intrusion; for they say, if money go before, all ways do lie open.

FALSTAFF Money is a good soldier, sir, and will on.

FORD Troth, and I have a bag of money here troubles me:
if you will help to bear it, Sir John, take all, or
half, for easing me of the carriage.

FALSTAFF Sir, I know not how I may deserve to be your porter.

FORD I will tell you, sir, if you will give me the hearing.

FALSTAFF Speak, good Master Brook: I shall be glad to be
your servant.

FORD Sir, I hear you are a scholar,--I will be brief
with you,--and you have been a man long known to me,
though I had never so good means, as desire, to make
myself acquainted with you. I shall discover a
thing to you, wherein I must very much lay open mine
own imperfection: but, good Sir John, as you have
one eye upon my follies, as you hear them unfolded,
turn another into the register of your own; that I
may pass with a reproof the easier, sith you
yourself know how easy it is to be such an offender.

FALSTAFF Very well, sir; proceed.

FORD There is a gentlewoman in this town; her husband's
name is Ford.

FALSTAFF Well, sir.

FORD I have long loved her, and, I protest to you,
bestowed much on her; followed her with a dotting
observance; engrossed opportunities to meet her;
fee'd every slight occasion that could but niggardly
give me sight of her; not only bought many presents
to give her, but have given largely to many to know
what she would have given; briefly, I have pursued
her as love hath pursued me; which hath been on the
wing of all occasions. But whatsoever I have
merited, either in my mind or, in my means, meed,
I am sure, I have received none; unless experience
be a jewel that I have purchased at an infinite
rate, and that hath taught me to say this:

'Love like a shadow flies when substance love pursues;
Pursuing that that flies, and flying what pursues.'

FALSTAFF Have you received no promise of satisfaction at her hands?

FORD Never.

FALSTAFF Have you importuned her to such a purpose?

FORD Never.

FALSTAFF Of what quality was your love, then?

FORD Like a fair house built on another man's ground; so
that I have lost my edifice by mistaking the place
where I erected it.

FALSTAFF To what purpose have you unfolded this to me?

FORD When I have told you that, I have told you all. Some say, that though she appear honest to me, yet in other places she enlargeth her mirth so far that there is shrewd construction made of her. Now, Sir John, here is the heart of my purpose: you are a gentleman of excellent breeding, admirable discourse, of great admittance, authentic in your place and person, generally allowed for your many war-like, court-like, and learned preparations.

FALSTAFF O, sir!

FORD Believe it, for you know it. There is money; spend it, spend it; spend more; spend all I have; only give me so much of your time in exchange of it, as to lay an amiable siege to the honesty of this Ford's wife: use your art of wooing; win her to consent to you: if any man may, you may as soon as any.

FALSTAFF Would it apply well to the vehemency of your affection, that I should win what you would enjoy? Methinks you prescribe to yourself very preposterously.

FORD O, understand my drift. She dwells so securely on the excellency of her honour, that the folly of my soul dares not present itself: she is too bright to be looked against. Now, could I could come to her with any detection in my hand, my desires had instance and argument to commend themselves: I could drive her then from the ward of her purity, her reputation, her marriage-vow, and a thousand other her defences, which now are too too strongly embattled against me. What say you to't, Sir John?

FALSTAFF Master Brook, I will first make bold with your money; next, give me your hand; and last, as I am a gentleman, you shall, if you will, enjoy Ford's wife.

FORD O good sir!

FALSTAFF I say you shall.

FORD Want no money, Sir John; you shall want none.

FALSTAFF Want no Mistress Ford, Master Brook; you shall want none. I shall be with her, I may tell you, by her own appointment; even as you came in to me, her assistant or go-between parted from me: I say I shall be with her between ten and eleven; for at that time the jealous rascally knave her husband will be forth. Come you to me at night; you shall know how I speed.

FORD I am blest in your acquaintance. Do you know Ford, sir?

FALSTAFF Hang him, poor cuckoldly knave! I know him not:
yet I wrong him to call him poor; they say the
jealous wittolly knave hath masses of money; for the
which his wife seems to me well-favored. I will
use her as the key of the cuckoldly rogue's coffer;
and there's my harvest-home.

FORD I would you knew Ford, sir, that you might avoid him
if you saw him.

FALSTAFF Hang him, mechanical salt-butter rogue! I will
stare him out of his wits; I will awe him with my
cudgel: it shall hang like a meteor o'er the
cuckold's horns. Master Brook, thou shalt know I
will predominate over the peasant, and thou shalt
lie with his wife. Come to me soon at night.
Ford's a knave, and I will aggravate his style;
thou, Master Brook, shalt know him for knave and
cuckold. Come to me soon at night.

[Exit]

FORD What a damned Epicurean rascal is this! My heart is
ready to crack with impatience. Who says this is
improvident jealousy? my wife hath sent to him; the
hour is fixed; the match is made. Would any man
have thought this? See the hell of having a false
woman! My bed shall be abused, my coffers
ransacked, my reputation gnawn at; and I shall not
only receive this villanous wrong, but stand under
the adoption of abominable terms, and by him that
does me this wrong. Terms! names! Amaimon sounds
well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are
devils' additions, the names of fiends: but
Cuckold! Wittol!--Cuckold! the devil himself hath
not such a name. Page is an ass, a secure ass: he
will trust his wife; he will not be jealous. I will
rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh
the Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my
aqua-vitae bottle, or a thief to walk my ambling
gelding, than my wife with herself; then she plots,
then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they
think in their hearts they may effect, they will
break their hearts but they will effect. God be
praised for my jealousy! Eleven o'clock the hour.
I will prevent this, detect my wife, be revenged on
Falstaff, and laugh at Page. I will about it;
better three hours too soon than a minute too late.
Fie, fie, fie! cuckold! cuckold! cuckold!

[Exit]

Scene III

A field near Windsor.

[Enter DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY]

DOCTOR CAIUS Jack Rugby!

RUGBY Sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS Vat is de clock, Jack?

RUGBY 'Tis past the hour, sir, that Sir Hugh promised to meet.

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, he has save his soul, dat he is no come; he has pray his Pible well, dat he is no come: by gar, Jack Rugby, he is dead already, if he be come.

RUGBY He is wise, sir; he knew your worship would kill him, if he came.

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, de herring is no dead so as I vill kill him. Take your rapier, Jack; I vill tell you how I vill kill him.

RUGBY Alas, sir, I cannot fence.

DOCTOR CAIUS Villany, take your rapier.

RUGBY Forbear; here's company.

[Enter Host, SHALLOW, SLENDER, and PAGE]

Host Bless thee, bully doctor!

SHALLOW Save you, Master Doctor Caius!

PAGE Now, good master doctor!

SLENDER Give you good morrow, sir.

DOCTOR CAIUS Vat be all you, one, two, tree, four, come for?

Host To see thee fight, to see thee foin, to see thee traverse; to see thee here, to see thee there; to see thee pass thy punto, thy stock, thy reverse, thy distance, thy montant. Is he dead, my Ethiopian? is he dead, my Francisco? ha, bully! What says my AEsculapius? my Galen? my heart of elder? ha! is he dead, bully stale? is he dead?

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, he is de coward Jack priest of de world; he is not show his face.

Host Thou art a Castalion-King-Urinal. Hector of Greece, my boy!

DOCTOR CAIUS I pray you, bear vittness that me have stay six or seven, two, tree hours for him, and he is no come.

SHALLOW He is the wiser man, master doctor: he is a curer of souls, and you a curer of bodies; if you should fight, you go against the hair of your professions. Is it not true, Master Page?

PAGE Master Shallow, you have yourself been a great fighter, though now a man of peace.

SHALLOW Bodykins, Master Page, though I now be old and of the peace, if I see a sword out, my finger itches to

make one. Though we are justices and doctors and churchmen, Master Page, we have some salt of our youth in us; we are the sons of women, Master Page.

PAGE 'Tis true, Master Shallow.

SHALLOW It will be found so, Master Page. Master Doctor Caius, I am come to fetch you home. I am sworn of the peace: you have showed yourself a wise physician, and Sir Hugh hath shown himself a wise and patient churchman. You must go with me, master doctor.

Host Pardon, guest-justice. A word, Mounseur Mockwater.

DOCTOR CAIUS Mock-vater! vat is dat?

Host Mock-water, in our English tongue, is valour, bully.

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, den, I have as mush mock-vater as de Englishman. Scurvy jack-dog priest! by gar, me vill cut his ears.

Host He will clapper-claw thee tightly, bully.

DOCTOR CAIUS Clapper-de-claw! vat is dat?

Host That is, he will make thee amends.

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, me do look he shall clapper-de-claw me; for, by gar, me vill have it.

Host And I will provoke him to't, or let him wag.

DOCTOR CAIUS Me tank you for dat.

Host And, moreover, bully,--but first, master guest, and Master Page, and eke Cavaleiro Slender, go you through the town to Frogmore.

[Aside to them]

PAGE Sir Hugh is there, is he?

Host He is there: see what humour he is in; and I will bring the doctor about by the fields. Will it do well?

SHALLOW We will do it.

PAGE |
|
SHALLOW | Adieu, good master doctor.
|
SLENDER |

[Exeunt PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER]

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, me vill kill de priest; for he speak for a jack-an-ape to Anne Page.

Host Let him die: sheathe thy impatience, throw cold

water on thy choler: go about the fields with me
through Frogmore: I will bring thee where Mistress
Anne Page is, at a farm-house a-feasting; and thou
shalt woo her. Cried I aim? said I well?

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, me dank you for dat: by gar, I love you;
and I shall procure-a you de good guest, de earl,
de knight, de lords, de gentlemen, my patients.

Host For the which I will be thy adversary toward Anne
Page. Said I well?

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, 'tis good; vell said.

Host Let us wag, then.

DOCTOR CAIUS Come at my heels, Jack Rugby.

[Exeunt]

Act III

=====

Scene I

A field near Frogmore.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE]

SIR HUGH EVANS I pray you now, good master Slender's serving-man,
and friend Simple by your name, which way have you
looked for Master Caius, that calls himself doctor of physic?

SIMPLE Marry, sir, the pittie-ward, the park-ward, every
way; old Windsor way, and every way but the town
way.

SIR HUGH EVANS I most feheemently desire you you will also look that
way.

SIMPLE I will, sir.

[Exit]

SIR HUGH EVANS 'Pless my soul, how full of chollors I am, and
trempling of mind! I shall be glad if he have
deceived me. How melancholies I am! I will knog
his urinals about his knave's costard when I have
good opportunities for the ork. 'Pless my soul!

[Sings]

To shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sings madrigals;
There will we make our peds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies.
To shallow--

Mercy on me! I have a great dispositions to cry.

[Sings]

Melodious birds sing madrigals--
When as I sat in Pabylon--
And a thousand vagram posies.
To shallow &c.

[Re-enter SIMPLE]

SIMPLE Yonder he is coming, this way, Sir Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS He's welcome.

[Sings]

To shallow rivers, to whose falls-
Heaven prosper the right! What weapons is he?

SIMPLE No weapons, sir. There comes my master, Master
Shallow, and another gentleman, from Frogmore, over
the stile, this way.

SIR HUGH EVANS Pray you, give me my gown; or else keep it in your arms.

[Enter PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER]

SHALLOW How now, master Parson! Good morrow, good Sir Hugh.
Keep a gamester from the dice, and a good student
from his book, and it is wonderful.

SLENDER [Aside] Ah, sweet Anne Page!

PAGE 'Save you, good Sir Hugh!

SIR HUGH EVANS 'Pless you from his mercy sake, all of you!

SHALLOW What, the sword and the word! do you study them
both, master parson?

PAGE And youthful still! in your doublet and hose this
raw rheumatic day!

SIR HUGH EVANS There is reasons and causes for it.

PAGE We are come to you to do a good office, master parson.

SIR HUGH EVANS Fery well: what is it?

PAGE Yonder is a most reverend gentleman, who, belike
having received wrong by some person, is at most
odds with his own gravity and patience that ever you
saw.

SHALLOW I have lived fourscore years and upward; I never
heard a man of his place, gravity and learning, so
wide of his own respect.

SIR HUGH EVANS What is he?

PAGE I think you know him; Master Doctor Caius, the

renowned French physician.

SIR HUGH EVANS Got's will, and his passion of my heart! I had as lief you would tell me of a mess of porridge.

PAGE Why?

SIR HUGH EVANS He has no more knowledge in Hibocrates and Galen, --and he is a knave besides; a cowardly knave as you would desires to be acquainted withal.

PAGE I warrant you, he's the man should fight with him.

SHALLOW [Aside] O sweet Anne Page!

SHALLOW It appears so by his weapons. Keep them asunder: here comes Doctor Caius.

[Enter Host, DOCTOR CAIUS, and RUGBY]

PAGE Nay, good master parson, keep in your weapon.

SHALLOW So do you, good master doctor.

Host Disarm them, and let them question: let them keep their limbs whole and hack our English.

DOCTOR CAIUS I pray you, let-a me speak a word with your ear. Wherefore will you not meet-a me?

SIR HUGH EVANS [Aside to DOCTOR CAIUS] Pray you, use your patience: in good time.

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, you are de coward, de Jack dog, John ape.

SIR HUGH EVANS [Aside to DOCTOR CAIUS] Pray you let us not be laughing-stocks to other men's humours; I desire you in friendship, and I will one way or other make you amends.

[Aloud]

I will knog your urinals about your knave's cockscomb for missing your meetings and appointments.

DOCTOR CAIUS Diable! Jack Rugby, --mine host de Jarteer, --have I not stay for him to kill him? have I not, at de place I did appoint?

SIR HUGH EVANS As I am a Christians soul now, look you, this is the place appointed: I'll be judgement by mine host of the Garter.

Host Peace, I say, Gallia and Gaul, French and Welsh, soul-curer and body-curer!

DOCTOR CAIUS Ay, dat is very good; excellent.

Host Peace, I say! hear mine host of the Garter. Am I politic? am I subtle? am I a Machiavel? Shall I lose my doctor? no; he gives me the potions and the

motions. Shall I lose my parson, my priest, my Sir Hugh? no; he gives me the proverbs and the no-verbs. Give me thy hand, terrestrial; so. Give me thy hand, celestial; so. Boys of art, I have deceived you both; I have directed you to wrong places: your hearts are mighty, your skins are whole, and let burnt sack be the issue. Come, lay their swords to pawn. Follow me, lads of peace; follow, follow, follow.

SHALLOW Trust me, a mad host. Follow, gentlemen, follow.

SLENDER [Aside] O sweet Anne Page!

[Exeunt SHALLOW, SLENDER, PAGE, and Host]

DOCTOR CAIUS Ha, do I perceive dat? have you make-a de sot of us, ha, ha?

SIR HUGH EVANS This is well; he has made us his vlouting-stog. I desire you that we may be friends; and let us knog our prains together to be revenge on this same scall, scurvy cogging companion, the host of the Garter.

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, with all my heart. He promise to bring me where is Anne Page; by gar, he deceive me too.

SIR HUGH EVANS Well, I will smite his noddles. Pray you, follow.

[Exeunt]

Scene II

A street.

[Enter MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN]

MISTRESS PAGE Nay, keep your way, little gallant; you were wont to be a follower, but now you are a leader. Whether had you rather lead mine eyes, or eye your master's heels?

ROBIN I had rather, forsooth, go before you like a man than follow him like a dwarf.

MISTRESS PAGE O, you are a flattering boy: now I see you'll be a courtier.

[Enter FORD]

FORD Well met, Mistress Page. Whither go you?

MISTRESS PAGE Truly, sir, to see your wife. Is she at home?

FORD Ay; and as idle as she may hang together, for want of company. I think, if your husbands were dead, you two would marry.

MISTRESS PAGE Be sure of that,--two other husbands.

FORD Where had you this pretty weather-cock?

MISTRESS PAGE I cannot tell what the dickens his name is my husband had him of. What do you call your knight's name, sirrah?

ROBIN Sir John Falstaff.

FORD Sir John Falstaff!

MISTRESS PAGE He, he; I can never hit on's name. There is such a league between my good man and he! Is your wife at home indeed?

FORD Indeed she is.

MISTRESS PAGE By your leave, sir: I am sick till I see her.

[Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN]

FORD Has Page any brains? hath he any eyes? hath he any thinking? Sure, they sleep; he hath no use of them. Why, this boy will carry a letter twenty mile, as easy as a cannon will shoot point-blank twelve score. He pieces out his wife's inclination; he gives her folly motion and advantage: and now she's going to my wife, and Falstaff's boy with her. A man may hear this shower sing in the wind. And Falstaff's boy with her! Good plots, they are laid; and our revolted wives share damnation together. Well; I will take him, then torture my wife, pluck the borrowed veil of modesty from the so seeming Mistress Page, divulge Page himself for a secure and wilful Actaeon; and to these violent proceedings all my neighbours shall cry aim.

[Clock heard]

The clock gives me my cue, and my assurance bids me search: there I shall find Falstaff: I shall be rather praised for this than mocked; for it is as positive as the earth is firm that Falstaff is there: I will go.

[Enter PAGE, SHALLOW, SLENDER, Host, SIR HUGH EVANS, DOCTOR CAIUS, and RUGBY]

SHALLOW |

|
PAGE | Well met, Master Ford.

|
&C |

FORD Trust me, a good knot: I have good cheer at home; and I pray you all go with me.

SHALLOW I must excuse myself, Master Ford.

SLENDER And so must I, sir: we have appointed to dine with Mistress Anne, and I would not break with her for more money than I'll speak of.

SHALLOW We have lingered about a match between Anne Page and my cousin Slender, and this day we shall have our answer.

SLENDER I hope I have your good will, father Page.

PAGE You have, Master Slender; I stand wholly for you: but my wife, master doctor, is for you altogether.

DOCTOR CAIUS Ay, be-gar; and de maid is love-a me: my nursh-a Quickly tell me so mush.

Host What say you to young Master Fenton? he capers, he dances, he has eyes of youth, he writes verses, he speaks holiday, he smells April and May: he will carry't, he will carry't; 'tis in his buttons; he will carry't.

PAGE Not by my consent, I promise you. The gentleman is of no having: he kept company with the wild prince and Poins; he is of too high a region; he knows too much. No, he shall not knit a knot in his fortunes with the finger of my substance: if he take her, let him take her simply; the wealth I have waits on my consent, and my consent goes not that way.

FORD I beseech you heartily, some of you go home with me to dinner: besides your cheer, you shall have sport; I will show you a monster. Master doctor, you shall go; so shall you, Master Page; and you, Sir Hugh.

SHALLOW Well, fare you well: we shall have the freer wooing at Master Page's.

[Exeunt SHALLOW, and SLENDER]

DOCTOR CAIUS Go home, John Rugby; I come anon.

[Exit RUGBY]

Host Farewell, my hearts: I will to my honest knight Falstaff, and drink canary with him.

[Exit]

FORD [Aside] I think I shall drink in pipe wine first with him; I'll make him dance. Will you go, gentles?

All Have with you to see this monster.

[Exeunt]

Scene III

A room in FORD'S house.

[Enter MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE]

MISTRESS FORD What, John! What, Robert!

MISTRESS PAGE Quickly, quickly! is the buck-basket--

MISTRESS FORD I warrant. What, Robin, I say!

[Enter Servants with a basket]

MISTRESS PAGE Come, come, come.

MISTRESS FORD Here, set it down.

MISTRESS PAGE Give your men the charge; we must be brief.

MISTRESS FORD Marry, as I told you before, John and Robert, be ready here hard by in the brew-house: and when I suddenly call you, come forth, and without any pause or staggering take this basket on your shoulders: that done, trudge with it in all haste, and carry it among the whitsters in Datchet-mead, and there empty it in the muddy ditch close by the Thames side.

MISTRESS PAGE You will do it?

MISTRESS FORD I ha' told them over and over; they lack no direction. Be gone, and come when you are called.

[Exeunt Servants]

MISTRESS PAGE Here comes little Robin.

[Enter ROBIN]

MISTRESS FORD How now, my eyas-musket! what news with you?

ROBIN My master, Sir John, is come in at your back-door, Mistress Ford, and requests your company.

MISTRESS PAGE You little Jack-a-Lent, have you been true to us?

ROBIN Ay, I'll be sworn. My master knows not of your being here and hath threatened to put me into everlasting liberty if I tell you of it; for he swears he'll turn me away.

MISTRESS PAGE Thou'rt a good boy: this secrecy of thine shall be a tailor to thee and shall make thee a new doublet and hose. I'll go hide me.

MISTRESS FORD Do so. Go tell thy master I am alone.

[Exit ROBIN]

Mistress Page, remember you your cue.

MISTRESS PAGE I warrant thee; if I do not act it, hiss me.

[Exit]

MISTRESS FORD Go to, then: we'll use this unwholesome humidity, this gross watery pumpkin; we'll teach him to know turtles from jays.

[Enter FALSTAFF]

FALSTAFF Have I caught thee, my heavenly jewel? Why, now let me die, for I have lived long enough: this is the period of my ambition: O this blessed hour!

MISTRESS FORD O sweet Sir John!

FALSTAFF Mistress Ford, I cannot cog, I cannot prate, Mistress Ford. Now shall I sin in my wish: I would thy husband were dead: I'll speak it before the best lord; I would make thee my lady.

MISTRESS FORD I your lady, Sir John! alas, I should be a pitiful lady!

FALSTAFF Let the court of France show me such another. I see how thine eye would emulate the diamond: thou hast the right arched beauty of the brow that becomes the ship-tire, the tire-valiant, or any tire of Venetian admittance.

MISTRESS FORD A plain kerchief, Sir John: my brows become nothing else; nor that well neither.

FALSTAFF By the Lord, thou art a traitor to say so: thou wouldst make an absolute courtier; and the firm fixture of thy foot would give an excellent motion to thy gait in a semi-circled farthingale. I see what thou wert, if Fortune thy foe were not, Nature thy friend. Come, thou canst not hide it.

MISTRESS FORD Believe me, there is no such thing in me.

FALSTAFF What made me love thee? let that persuade thee there's something extraordinary in thee. Come, I cannot cog and say thou art this and that, like a many of these lispng hawthorn-buds, that come like women in men's apparel, and smell like Bucklersbury in simple time; I cannot: but I love thee; none but thee; and thou deservest it.

MISTRESS FORD Do not betray me, sir. I fear you love Mistress Page.

FALSTAFF Thou mightst as well say I love to walk by the Counter-gate, which is as hateful to me as the reek of a lime-kiln.

MISTRESS FORD Well, heaven knows how I love you; and you shall one day find it.

FALSTAFF Keep in that mind; I'll deserve it.

MISTRESS FORD Nay, I must tell you, so you do; or else I could not be in that mind.

ROBIN [Within] Mistress Ford, Mistress Ford! here's Mistress Page at the door, sweating and blowing and looking wildly, and would needs speak with you presently.

FALSTAFF She shall not see me: I will ensconce me behind the arras.

MISTRESS FORD Pray you, do so: she's a very tattling woman.

[FALSTAFF hides himself]

[Re-enter MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN]

What's the matter? how now!

MISTRESS PAGE O Mistress Ford, what have you done? You're shamed, you're overthrown, you're undone for ever!

MISTRESS FORD What's the matter, good Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE O well-a-day, Mistress Ford! having an honest man to your husband, to give him such cause of suspicion!

MISTRESS FORD What cause of suspicion?

MISTRESS PAGE What cause of suspicion! Out pon you! how am I mistook in you!

MISTRESS FORD Why, alas, what's the matter?

MISTRESS PAGE Your husband's coming hither, woman, with all the officers in Windsor, to search for a gentleman that he says is here now in the house by your consent, to take an ill advantage of his assence: you are undone.

MISTRESS FORD 'Tis not so, I hope.

MISTRESS PAGE Pray heaven it be not so, that you have such a man here! but 'tis most certain your husband's coming, with half Windsor at his heels, to search for such a one. I come before to tell you. If you know yourself clear, why, I am glad of it; but if you have a friend here convey, convey him out. Be not amazed; call all your senses to you; defend your reputation, or bid farewell to your good life for ever.

MISTRESS FORD What shall I do? There is a gentleman my dear friend; and I fear not mine own shame so much as his peril: I had rather than a thousand pound he were out of the house.

MISTRESS PAGE For shame! never stand 'you had rather' and 'you had rather:' your husband's here at hand, bethink you of some conveyance: in the house you cannot hide him. O, how have you deceived me! Look, here is a basket: if he be of any reasonable stature, he may creep in here; and throw foul linen upon him, as if it were going to bucking: or--it is whiting-time --send him by your two men to Datchet-mead.

MISTRESS FORD He's too big to go in there. What shall I do?

FALSTAFF [Coming forward] Let me see't, let me see't, O, let me see't! I'll in, I'll in. Follow your friend's counsel. I'll in.

MISTRESS PAGE What, Sir John Falstaff! Are these your letters, knight?

FALSTAFF I love thee. Help me away. Let me creep in here.
I'll never--

[Gets into the basket; they cover him with foul linen]

MISTRESS PAGE Help to cover your master, boy. Call your men,
Mistress Ford. You dissembling knight!

MISTRESS FORD What, John! Robert! John!

[Exit ROBIN]

[Re-enter Servants]

Go take up these clothes here quickly. Where's the
cowl-staff? look, how you drumble! Carry them to
the laundress in Datchet-meat; quickly, come.

[Enter FORD, PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

FORD Pray you, come near: if I suspect without cause,
why then make sport at me; then let me be your jest;
I deserve it. How now! whither bear you this?

Servant To the laundress, forsooth.

MISTRESS FORD Why, what have you to do whither they bear it? You
were best meddle with buck-washing.

FORD Buck! I would I could wash myself of the buck!
Buck, buck, buck! Ay, buck; I warrant you, buck;
and of the season too, it shall appear.

[Exeunt Servants with the basket]

Gentlemen, I have dreamed to-night; I'll tell you my
dream. Here, here, here be my keys: ascend my
chambers; search, seek, find out: I'll warrant
we'll unkennel the fox. Let me stop this way first.

[Locking the door]

So, now uncape.

PAGE Good Master Ford, be contented: you wrong yourself too much.

FORD True, Master Page. Up, gentlemen: you shall see
sport anon: follow me, gentlemen.

[Exit]

SIR HUGH EVANS This is fery fantastical humours and jealousies.

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, 'tis no the fashion of France; it is not
jealous in France.

PAGE Nay, follow him, gentlemen; see the issue of his search.

[Exeunt PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

MISTRESS PAGE Is there not a double excellency in this?

MISTRESS FORD I know not which pleases me better, that my husband is deceived, or Sir John.

MISTRESS PAGE What a taking was he in when your husband asked who was in the basket!

MISTRESS FORD I am half afraid he will have need of washing; so throwing him into the water will do him a benefit.

MISTRESS PAGE Hang him, dishonest rascal! I would all of the same strain were in the same distress.

MISTRESS FORD I think my husband hath some special suspicion of Falstaff's being here; for I never saw him so gross in his jealousy till now.

MISTRESS PAGE I will lay a plot to try that; and we will yet have more tricks with Falstaff: his dissolute disease will scarce obey this medicine.

MISTRESS FORD Shall we send that foolish carrion, Mistress Quickly, to him, and excuse his throwing into the water; and give him another hope, to betray him to another punishment?

MISTRESS PAGE We will do it: let him be sent for to-morrow, eight o'clock, to have amends.

[Re-enter FORD, PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

FORD I cannot find him: may be the knave bragged of that he could not compass.

MISTRESS PAGE [Aside to MISTRESS FORD] Heard you that?

MISTRESS FORD You use me well, Master Ford, do you?

FORD Ay, I do so.

MISTRESS FORD Heaven make you better than your thoughts!

FORD Amen!

MISTRESS PAGE You do yourself mighty wrong, Master Ford.

FORD Ay, ay; I must bear it.

SIR HUGH EVANS If there be any pody in the house, and in the chambers, and in the coffers, and in the presses, heaven forgive my sins at the day of judgment!

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, nor I too: there is no bodies.

PAGE Fie, fie, Master Ford! are you not ashamed? What spirit, what devil suggests this imagination? I

would not ha' your distemper in this kind for the
wealth of Windsor Castle.

FORD 'Tis my fault, Master Page: I suffer for it.

SIR HUGH EVANS You suffer for a pad conscience: your wife is as
honest a 'omans as I will desires among five
thousand, and five hundred too.

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, I see 'tis an honest woman.

FORD Well, I promised you a dinner. Come, come, walk in
the Park: I pray you, pardon me; I will hereafter
make known to you why I have done this. Come,
wife; come, Mistress Page. I pray you, pardon me;
pray heartily, pardon me.

PAGE Let's go in, gentlemen; but, trust me, we'll mock
him. I do invite you to-morrow morning to my house
to breakfast: after, we'll a-birding together; I
have a fine hawk for the bush. Shall it be so?

FORD Any thing.

SIR HUGH EVANS If there is one, I shall make two in the company.

DOCTOR CAIUS If dere be one or two, I shall make-a the turd.

FORD Pray you, go, Master Page.

SIR HUGH EVANS I pray you now, remembrance tomorrow on the lousy
knave, mine host.

DOCTOR CAIUS Dat is good; by gar, with all my heart!

SIR HUGH EVANS A lousy knave, to have his gibes and his mockeries!

[Exeunt]

Scene IV

A room in PAGE'S house.

[Enter FENTON and ANNE PAGE]

FENTON I see I cannot get thy father's love;
Therefore no more turn me to him, sweet Nan.

ANNE PAGE Alas, how then?

FENTON Why, thou must be thyself.
He doth object I am too great of birth--,
And that, my state being gall'd with my expense,
I seek to heal it only by his wealth:
Besides these, other bars he lays before me,
My riots past, my wild societies;
And tells me 'tis a thing impossible
I should love thee but as a property.

ANNE PAGE May be he tells you true.

FENTON No, heaven so speed me in my time to come!
Albeit I will confess thy father's wealth
Was the first motive that I woo'd thee, Anne:
Yet, wooing thee, I found thee of more value
Than stamps in gold or sums in sealed bags;
And 'tis the very riches of thyself
That now I aim at.

ANNE PAGE Gentle Master Fenton,
Yet seek my father's love; still seek it, sir:
If opportunity and humblest suit
Cannot attain it, why, then,--hark you hither!

[They converse apart]

[Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and MISTRESS QUICKLY]

SHALLOW Break their talk, Mistress Quickly: my kinsman shall
speak for himself.

SLENDER I'll make a shaft or a bolt on't: 'slid, 'tis but
venturing.

SHALLOW Be not dismayed.

SLENDER No, she shall not dismay me: I care not for that,
but that I am afeard.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Hark ye; Master Slender would speak a word with you.

ANNE PAGE I come to him.

[Aside]

This is my father's choice.
O, what a world of vile ill-favor'd faults
Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a-year!

MISTRESS QUICKLY And how does good Master Fenton? Pray you, a word with you.

SHALLOW She's coming; to her, coz. O boy, thou hadst a father!

SLENDER I had a father, Mistress Anne; my uncle can tell you
good jests of him. Pray you, uncle, tell Mistress
Anne the jest, how my father stole two geese out of
a pen, good uncle.

SHALLOW Mistress Anne, my cousin loves you.

SLENDER Ay, that I do; as well as I love any woman in
Gloucestershire.

SHALLOW He will maintain you like a gentlewoman.

SLENDER Ay, that I will, come cut and long-tail, under the
degree of a squire.

SHALLOW He will make you a hundred and fifty pounds jointure.

ANNE PAGE Good Master Shallow, let him woo for himself.

SHALLOW Marry, I thank you for it; I thank you for that good comfort. She calls you, coz: I'll leave you.

ANNE PAGE Now, Master Slender,--

SLENDER Now, good Mistress Anne,--

ANNE PAGE What is your will?

SLENDER My will! 'od's heartlings, that's a pretty jest indeed! I ne'er made my will yet, I thank heaven; I am not such a sickly creature, I give heaven praise.

ANNE PAGE I mean, Master Slender, what would you with me?

SLENDER Truly, for mine own part, I would little or nothing with you. Your father and my uncle hath made motions: if it be my luck, so; if not, happy man be his dole! They can tell you how things go better than I can: you may ask your father; here he comes.

[Enter PAGE and MISTRESS PAGE]

PAGE Now, Master Slender: love him, daughter Anne. Why, how now! what does Master Fenton here? You wrong me, sir, thus still to haunt my house: I told you, sir, my daughter is disposed of.

FENTON Nay, Master Page, be not impatient.

MISTRESS PAGE Good Master Fenton, come not to my child.

PAGE She is no match for you.

FENTON Sir, will you hear me?

PAGE No, good Master Fenton. Come, Master Shallow; come, son Slender, in. Knowing my mind, you wrong me, Master Fenton.

[Exeunt PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER]

MISTRESS QUICKLY Speak to Mistress Page.

FENTON Good Mistress Page, for that I love your daughter In such a righteous fashion as I do, Perforce, against all cheques, rebukes and manners, I must advance the colours of my love And not retire: let me have your good will.

ANNE PAGE Good mother, do not marry me to yond fool.

MISTRESS PAGE I mean it not; I seek you a better husband.

MISTRESS QUICKLY That's my master, master doctor.

ANNE PAGE Alas, I had rather be set quick i' the earth And bowl'd to death with turnips!

MISTRESS PAGE Come, trouble not yourself. Good Master Fenton,
I will not be your friend nor enemy:
My daughter will I question how she loves you,
And as I find her, so am I affected.
Till then farewell, sir: she must needs go in;
Her father will be angry.

FENTON Farewell, gentle mistress: farewell, Nan.

[Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE and ANNE PAGE]

MISTRESS QUICKLY This is my doing, now: 'Nay,' said I, 'will you cast
away your child on a fool, and a physician? Look on
Master Fenton:' this is my doing.

FENTON I thank thee; and I pray thee, once to-night
Give my sweet Nan this ring: there's for thy pains.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Now heaven send thee good fortune!

[Exit FENTON]

A kind heart he hath: a woman would run through
fire and water for such a kind heart. But yet I
would my master had Mistress Anne; or I would
Master Slender had her; or, in sooth, I would Master
Fenton had her; I will do what I can for them all
three; for so I have promised, and I'll be as good
as my word; but speciously for Master Fenton. Well,
I must of another errand to Sir John Falstaff from
my two mistresses: what a beast am I to slack it!

[Exit]

Scene V

A room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter FALSTAFF and BARDOLPH]

FALSTAFF Bardolph, I say,--

BARDOLPH Here, sir.

FALSTAFF Go fetch me a quart of sack; put a toast in't.

[Exit BARDOLPH]

Have I lived to be carried in a basket, like a
barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown in the
Thames? Well, if I be served such another trick,
I'll have my brains ta'en out and buttered, and give
them to a dog for a new-year's gift. The rogues
slighted me into the river with as little remorse as
they would have drowned a blind bitch's puppies,
fifteen i' the litter: and you may know by my size
that I have a kind of alacrity in sinking; if the
bottom were as deep as hell, I should down. I had
been drowned, but that the shore was shelvy and

shallow,--a death that I abhor; for the water swells
a man; and what a thing should I have been when I
had been swelled! I should have been a mountain of mummy.

[Re-enter BARDOLPH with sack]

BARDOLPH Here's Mistress Quickly, sir, to speak with you.

FALSTAFF Let me pour in some sack to the Thames water; for my
belly's as cold as if I had swallowed snowballs for
pills to cool the reins. Call her in.

BARDOLPH Come in, woman!

[Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY]

MISTRESS QUICKLY By your leave; I cry you mercy: give your worship
good morrow.

FALSTAFF Take away these chalices. Go brew me a pottle of
sack finely.

BARDOLPH With eggs, sir?

FALSTAFF Simple of itself; I'll no pullet-sperm in my brewage.

[Exit BARDOLPH]
How now!

MISTRESS QUICKLY Marry, sir, I come to your worship from Mistress Ford.

FALSTAFF Mistress Ford! I have had ford enough; I was thrown
into the ford; I have my belly full of ford.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Alas the day! good heart, that was not her fault:
she does so take on with her men; they mistook their erection.

FALSTAFF So did I mine, to build upon a foolish woman's promise.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Well, she laments, sir, for it, that it would yearn
your heart to see it. Her husband goes this morning
a-birding; she desires you once more to come to her
between eight and nine: I must carry her word
quickly: she'll make you amends, I warrant you.

FALSTAFF Well, I will visit her: tell her so; and bid her
think what a man is: let her consider his frailty,
and then judge of my merit.

MISTRESS QUICKLY I will tell her.

FALSTAFF Do so. Between nine and ten, sayest thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY Eight and nine, sir.

FALSTAFF Well, be gone: I will not miss her.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Peace be with you, sir.

[Exit]

FALSTAFF I marvel I hear not of Master Brook; he sent me word to stay within: I like his money well. O, here he comes.

[Enter FORD]

FORD Bless you, sir!

FALSTAFF Now, master Brook, you come to know what hath passed between me and Ford's wife?

FORD That, indeed, Sir John, is my business.

FALSTAFF Master Brook, I will not lie to you: I was at her house the hour she appointed me.

FORD And sped you, sir?

FALSTAFF Very ill-favoredly, Master Brook.

FORD How so, sir? Did she change her determination?

FALSTAFF No, Master Brook; but the peaking Cornuto her husband, Master Brook, dwelling in a continual 'larum of jealousy, comes me in the instant of our encounter, after we had embraced, kissed, protested, and, as it were, spoke the prologue of our comedy; and at his heels a rabble of his companions, thither provoked and instigated by his distemper, and, forsooth, to search his house for his wife's love.

FORD What, while you were there?

FALSTAFF While I was there.

FORD And did he search for you, and could not find you?

FALSTAFF You shall hear. As good luck would have it, comes in one Mistress Page; gives intelligence of Ford's approach; and, in her invention and Ford's wife's distraction, they conveyed me into a buck-basket.

FORD A buck-basket!

FALSTAFF By the Lord, a buck-basket! rammed me in with foul shirts and smocks, socks, foul stockings, greasy napkins; that, Master Brook, there was the rankest compound of villanous smell that ever offended nostril.

FORD And how long lay you there?

FALSTAFF Nay, you shall hear, Master Brook, what I have suffered to bring this woman to evil for your good. Being thus crammed in the basket, a couple of Ford's knaves, his hinds, were called forth by their mistress to carry me in the name of foul clothes to Datchet-lane: they took me on their shoulders; met the jealous knave their master in the door, who asked them once or twice what they had in their basket: I quaked for fear, lest the lunatic knave

would have searched it; but fate, ordaining he should be a cuckold, held his hand. Well: on went he for a search, and away went I for foul clothes. But mark the sequel, Master Brook: I suffered the pangs of three several deaths; first, an intolerable fright, to be detected with a jealous rotten bell-wether; next, to be compassed, like a good bilbo, in the circumference of a peck, hilt to point, heel to head; and then, to be stopped in, like a strong distillation, with stinking clothes that fretted in their own grease: think of that,--a man of my kidney,--think of that,--that am as subject to heat as butter; a man of continual dissolution and thaw: it was a miracle to scape suffocation. And in the height of this bath, when I was more than half stewed in grease, like a Dutch dish, to be thrown into the Thames, and cooled, glowing hot, in that surge, like a horse-shoe; think of that,--hissing hot,--think of that, Master Brook.

FORD In good sadness, I am sorry that for my sake you have sufferd all this. My suit then is desperate; you'll undertake her no more?

FALSTAFF Master Brook, I will be thrown into Etna, as I have been into Thames, ere I will leave her thus. Her husband is this morning gone a-birding: I have received from her another embassy of meeting; 'twixt eight and nine is the hour, Master Brook.

FORD 'Tis past eight already, sir.

FALSTAFF Is it? I will then address me to my appointment. Come to me at your convenient leisure, and you shall know how I speed; and the conclusion shall be crowned with your enjoying her. Adieu. You shall have her, Master Brook; Master Brook, you shall cuckold Ford.

[Exit]

FORD Hum! ha! is this a vision? is this a dream? do I sleep? Master Ford awake! awake, Master Ford! there's a hole made in your best coat, Master Ford. This 'tis to be married! this 'tis to have linen and buck-baskets! Well, I will proclaim myself what I am: I will now take the lecher; he is at my house; he cannot 'scape me; 'tis impossible he should; he cannot creep into a halfpenny purse, nor into a pepper-box: but, lest the devil that guides him should aid him, I will search impossible places. Though what I am I cannot avoid, yet to be what I would not shall not make me tame: if I have horns to make one mad, let the proverb go with me: I'll be horn-mad.

[Exit]

Act IV

=====

Scene I

A street.

[Enter MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS QUICKLY, and
WILLIAM PAGE]

MISTRESS PAGE Is he at Master Ford's already, think'st thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY Sure he is by this, or will be presently: but,
truly, he is very courageous mad about his throwing
into the water. Mistress Ford desires you to come suddenly.

MISTRESS PAGE I'll be with her by and by; I'll but bring my young
man here to school. Look, where his master comes;
'tis a playing-day, I see.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS]

How now, Sir Hugh! no school to-day?

SIR HUGH EVANS No; Master Slender is let the boys leave to play.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Blessing of his heart!

MISTRESS PAGE Sir Hugh, my husband says my son profits nothing in
the world at his book. I pray you, ask him some
questions in his accidence.

SIR HUGH EVANS Come hither, William; hold up your head; come.

MISTRESS PAGE Come on, sirrah; hold up your head; answer your
master, be not afraid.

SIR HUGH EVANS William, how many numbers is in nouns?

WILLIAM PAGE Two.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Truly, I thought there had been one number more,
because they say, ''Od's nouns.'

SIR HUGH EVANS Peace your tattlings! What is 'fair,' William?

WILLIAM PAGE Pulcher.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Polecats! there are fairer things than polecats, sure.

SIR HUGH EVANS You are a very simplicity 'oman: I pray you peace.
What is 'lapis,' William?

WILLIAM PAGE A stone.

SIR HUGH EVANS And what is 'a stone,' William?

WILLIAM PAGE A pebble.

SIR HUGH EVANS No, it is 'lapis:' I pray you, remember in your prain.

WILLIAM PAGE Lapis.

SIR HUGH EVANS That is a good William. What is he, William, that does lend articles?

WILLIAM PAGE Articles are borrowed of the pronoun, and be thus declined, Singulariter, nominativo, hic, haec, hoc.

SIR HUGH EVANS Nominativo, hig, hag, hog; pray you, mark: genitivo, hujus. Well, what is your accusative case?

WILLIAM PAGE Accusativo, hinc.

SIR HUGH EVANS I pray you, have your remembrance, child, accusative, hung, hang, hog.

MISTRESS QUICKLY 'Hang-hog' is Latin for bacon, I warrant you.

SIR HUGH EVANS Leave your prabbles, 'oman. What is the focative case, William?

WILLIAM PAGE O,--vocativo, O.

SIR HUGH EVANS Remember, William; focative is caret.

MISTRESS QUICKLY And that's a good root.

SIR HUGH EVANS 'Oman, forbear.

MISTRESS PAGE Peace!

SIR HUGH EVANS What is your genitive case plural, William?

WILLIAM PAGE Genitive case!

SIR HUGH EVANS Ay.

WILLIAM PAGE Genitive,--horum, harum, horum.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Vengeance of Jenny's case! fie on her! never name her, child, if she be a whore.

SIR HUGH EVANS For shame, 'oman.

MISTRESS QUICKLY You do ill to teach the child such words: he teaches him to hick and to hack, which they'll do fast enough of themselves, and to call 'horum:' fie upon you!

SIR HUGH EVANS 'Oman, art thou lunatics? hast thou no understandings for thy cases and the numbers of the genders? Thou art as foolish Christian creatures as I would desires.

MISTRESS PAGE Prithee, hold thy peace.

SIR HUGH EVANS Show me now, William, some declensions of your pronouns.

WILLIAM PAGE Forsooth, I have forgot.

SIR HUGH EVANS It is qui, quae, quod: if you forget your 'quies,' your 'quaes,' and your 'quods,' you must be

preeches. Go your ways, and play; go.

MISTRESS PAGE He is a better scholar than I thought he was.

SIR HUGH EVANS He is a good sprag memory. Farewell, Mistress Page.

MISTRESS PAGE Adieu, good Sir Hugh.

[Exit SIR HUGH EVANS]

Get you home, boy. Come, we stay too long.

[Exeunt]

Scene II

A room in FORD'S house.

[Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS FORD]

FALSTAFF Mistress Ford, your sorrow hath eaten up my sufferance. I see you are obsequious in your love, and I profess requital to a hair's breadth; not only, Mistress Ford, in the simple office of love, but in all the accoutrement, complement and ceremony of it. But are you sure of your husband now?

MISTRESS FORD He's a-birding, sweet Sir John.

MISTRESS PAGE [Within] What, ho, gossip Ford! what, ho!

MISTRESS FORD Step into the chamber, Sir John.

[Exit FALSTAFF]

[Enter MISTRESS PAGE]

MISTRESS PAGE How now, sweetheart! who's at home besides yourself?

MISTRESS FORD Why, none but mine own people.

MISTRESS PAGE Indeed!

MISTRESS FORD No, certainly.

[Aside to her]

Speak louder.

MISTRESS PAGE Truly, I am so glad you have nobody here.

MISTRESS FORD Why?

MISTRESS PAGE Why, woman, your husband is in his old lunes again: he so takes on yonder with my husband; so rails against all married mankind; so curses all Eve's daughters, of what complexion soever; and so buffets himself on the forehead, crying, 'Peer out, peer out!' that any madness I ever yet beheld seemed but

tameness, civility and patience, to this his distemper he is in now: I am glad the fat knight is not here.

MISTRESS FORD Why, does he talk of him?

MISTRESS PAGE Of none but him; and swears he was carried out, the last time he searched for him, in a basket; protests to my husband he is now here, and hath drawn him and the rest of their company from their sport, to make another experiment of his suspicion: but I am glad the knight is not here; now he shall see his own foolery.

MISTRESS FORD How near is he, Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE Hard by; at street end; he will be here anon.

MISTRESS FORD I am undone! The knight is here.

MISTRESS PAGE Why then you are utterly shamed, and he's but a dead man. What a woman are you!--Away with him, away with him! better shame than murder.

FORD Which way should he go? how should I bestow him? Shall I put him into the basket again?

[Re-enter FALSTAFF]

FALSTAFF No, I'll come no more i' the basket. May I not go out ere he come?

MISTRESS PAGE Alas, three of Master Ford's brothers watch the door with pistols, that none shall issue out; otherwise you might slip away ere he came. But what make you here?

FALSTAFF What shall I do? I'll creep up into the chimney.

MISTRESS FORD There they always use to discharge their birding-pieces. Creep into the kiln-hole.

FALSTAFF Where is it?

MISTRESS FORD He will seek there, on my word. Neither press, coffer, chest, trunk, well, vault, but he hath an abstract for the remembrance of such places, and goes to them by his note: there is no hiding you in the house.

FALSTAFF I'll go out then.

MISTRESS PAGE If you go out in your own semblance, you die, Sir John. Unless you go out disguised--

MISTRESS FORD How might we disguise him?

MISTRESS PAGE Alas the day, I know not! There is no woman's gown big enough for him otherwise he might put on a hat, a muffler and a kerchief, and so escape.

FALSTAFF Good hearts, devise something: any extremity rather than a mischief.

MISTRESS FORD My maid's aunt, the fat woman of Brentford, has a gown above.

MISTRESS PAGE On my word, it will serve him; she's as big as he is: and there's her thrummed hat and her muffler too. Run up, Sir John.

MISTRESS FORD Go, go, sweet Sir John: Mistress Page and I will look some linen for your head.

MISTRESS PAGE Quick, quick! we'll come dress you straight: put on the gown the while.

[Exit FALSTAFF]

MISTRESS FORD I would my husband would meet him in this shape: he cannot abide the old woman of Brentford; he swears she's a witch; forbade her my house and hath threatened to beat her.

MISTRESS PAGE Heaven guide him to thy husband's cudgel, and the devil guide his cudgel afterwards!

MISTRESS FORD But is my husband coming?

MISTRESS PAGE Ah, in good sadness, is he; and talks of the basket too, howsoever he hath had intelligence.

MISTRESS FORD We'll try that; for I'll appoint my men to carry the basket again, to meet him at the door with it, as they did last time.

MISTRESS PAGE Nay, but he'll be here presently: let's go dress him like the witch of Brentford.

MISTRESS FORD I'll first direct my men what they shall do with the basket. Go up; I'll bring linen for him straight.

[Exit]

MISTRESS PAGE Hang him, dishonest varlet! we cannot misuse him enough. We'll leave a proof, by that which we will do,
Wives may be merry, and yet honest too:
We do not act that often jest and laugh;
'Tis old, but true, Still swine eat all the draff.

[Exit]

[Re-enter MISTRESS FORD with two Servants]

MISTRESS FORD Go, sirs, take the basket again on your shoulders: your master is hard at door; if he bid you set it down, obey him: quickly, dispatch.

[Exit]

First Servant Come, come, take it up.

Second Servant Pray heaven it be not full of knight again.

First Servant I hope not; I had as lief bear so much lead.

[Enter FORD, PAGE, SHALLOW, DOCTOR CAIUS, and
SIR HUGH EVANS]

FORD Ay, but if it prove true, Master Page, have you any way then to unfool me again? Set down the basket, villain! Somebody call my wife. Youth in a basket! O you panderly rascals! there's a knot, a ging, a pack, a conspiracy against me: now shall the devil be shamed. What, wife, I say! Come, come forth! Behold what honest clothes you send forth to bleaching!

PAGE Why, this passes, Master Ford; you are not to go loose any longer; you must be pinioned.

SIR HUGH EVANS Why, this is lunatics! this is mad as a mad dog!

SHALLOW Indeed, Master Ford, this is not well, indeed.

FORD So say I too, sir.

[Re-enter MISTRESS FORD]

Come hither, Mistress Ford; Mistress Ford the honest woman, the modest wife, the virtuous creature, that hath the jealous fool to her husband! I suspect without cause, mistress, do I?

MISTRESS FORD Heaven be my witness you do, if you suspect me in any dishonesty.

FORD Well said, brazen-face! hold it out. Come forth, sirrah!

[Pulling clothes out of the basket]

PAGE This passes!

MISTRESS FORD Are you not ashamed? let the clothes alone.

FORD I shall find you anon.

SIR HUGH EVANS 'Tis unreasonable! Will you take up your wife's clothes? Come away.

FORD Empty the basket, I say!

MISTRESS FORD Why, man, why?

FORD Master Page, as I am a man, there was one conveyed out of my house yesterday in this basket: why may not he be there again? In my house I am sure he is: my intelligence is true; my jealousy is reasonable. Pluck me out all the linen.

MISTRESS FORD If you find a man there, he shall die a flea's death.

PAGE Here's no man.

SHALLOW By my fidelity, this is not well, Master Ford; this

wrongs you.

SIR HUGH EVANS Master Ford, you must pray, and not follow the imaginations of your own heart: this is jealousies.

FORD Well, he's not here I seek for.

PAGE No, nor nowhere else but in your brain.

FORD Help to search my house this one time. If I find not what I seek, show no colour for my extremity; let me for ever be your table-sport; let them say of me, 'As jealous as Ford, Chat searched a hollow walnut for his wife's leman.' Satisfy me once more; once more search with me.

MISTRESS FORD What, ho, Mistress Page! come you and the old woman down; my husband will come into the chamber.

FORD Old woman! what old woman's that?

MISTRESS FORD Nay, it is my maid's aunt of Brentford.

FORD A witch, a quean, an old cozening quean! Have I not forbid her my house? She comes of errands, does she? We are simple men; we do not know what's brought to pass under the profession of fortune-telling. She works by charms, by spells, by the figure, and such daubery as this is, beyond our element we know nothing. Come down, you witch, you hag, you; come down, I say!

MISTRESS FORD Nay, good, sweet husband! Good gentlemen, let him not strike the old woman.

[Re-enter FALSTAFF in woman's clothes, and
MISTRESS PAGE]

MISTRESS PAGE Come, Mother Prat; come, give me your hand.

FORD I'll prat her.

[Beating him]

Out of my door, you witch, you hag, you baggage, you polecat, you runyon! out, out! I'll conjure you, I'll fortune-tell you.

[Exit FALSTAFF]

MISTRESS PAGE Are you not ashamed? I think you have killed the poor woman.

MISTRESS FORD Nay, he will do it. 'Tis a goodly credit for you.

FORD Hang her, witch!

SIR HUGH EVANS By the yea and no, I think the 'oman is a witch indeed: I like not when a 'oman has a great peard; I spy a great peard under his muffler.

FORD Will you follow, gentlemen? I beseech you, follow;
see but the issue of my jealousy: if I cry out thus
upon no trail, never trust me when I open again.

PAGE Let's obey his humour a little further: come,
gentlemen.

[Exeunt FORD, PAGE, SHALLOW, DOCTOR CAIUS, and
SIR HUGH EVANS]

MISTRESS PAGE Trust me, he beat him most pitifully.

MISTRESS FORD Nay, by the mass, that he did not; he beat him most
unpitifully, methought.

MISTRESS PAGE I'll have the cudgel hallowed and hung o'er the
altar; it hath done meritorious service.

MISTRESS FORD What think you? may we, with the warrant of
womanhood and the witness of a good conscience,
pursue him with any further revenge?

MISTRESS PAGE The spirit of wantonness is, sure, scared out of
him: if the devil have him not in fee-simple, with
fine and recovery, he will never, I think, in the
way of waste, attempt us again.

MISTRESS FORD Shall we tell our husbands how we have served him?

MISTRESS PAGE Yes, by all means; if it be but to scrape the
figures out of your husband's brains. If they can
find in their hearts the poor unvirtuous fat knight
shall be any further afflicted, we two will still be
the ministers.

MISTRESS FORD I'll warrant they'll have him publicly shamed: and
methinks there would be no period to the jest,
should he not be publicly shamed.

MISTRESS PAGE Come, to the forge with it then; shape it: I would
not have things cool.

[Exeunt]

Scene III

A room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter Host and BARDOLPH]

BARDOLPH Sir, the Germans desire to have three of your
horses: the duke himself will be to-morrow at
court, and they are going to meet him.

Host What duke should that be comes so secretly? I hear
not of him in the court. Let me speak with the
gentlemen: they speak English?

BARDOLPH Ay, sir; I'll call them to you.

Host They shall have my horses; but I'll make them pay;
I'll sauce them: they have had my house a week at
command; I have turned away my other guests: they
must come off; I'll sauce them. Come.

[Exeunt]

Scene IV

A room in FORD'S house.

[Enter PAGE, FORD, MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD,
and SIR HUGH EVANS]

SIR HUGH EVANS 'Tis one of the best discretions of a 'oman as ever
I did look upon.

PAGE And did he send you both these letters at an instant?

MISTRESS PAGE Within a quarter of an hour.

FORD Pardon me, wife. Henceforth do what thou wilt;
I rather will suspect the sun with cold
Than thee with wantonness: now doth thy honour stand
In him that was of late an heretic,
As firm as faith.

PAGE 'Tis well, 'tis well; no more:
Be not as extreme in submission
As in offence.
But let our plot go forward: let our wives
Yet once again, to make us public sport,
Appoint a meeting with this old fat fellow,
Where we may take him and disgrace him for it.

FORD There is no better way than that they spoke of.

PAGE How? to send him word they'll meet him in the park
at midnight? Fie, fie! he'll never come.

SIR HUGH EVANS You say he has been thrown in the rivers and has
been grievously peaten as an old 'oman: methinks
there should be terrors in him that he should not
come; methinks his flesh is punished, he shall have
no desires.

PAGE So think I too.

MISTRESS FORD Devise but how you'll use him when he comes,
And let us two devise to bring him thither.

MISTRESS PAGE There is an old tale goes that Herne the hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest,
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the tree and takes the cattle
And makes milch-kine yield blood and shakes a chain
In a most hideous and dreadful manner:
You have heard of such a spirit, and well you know

The superstitious idle-headed eld
Received and did deliver to our age
This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth.

PAGE Why, yet there want not many that do fear
In deep of night to walk by this Herne's oak:
But what of this?

MISTRESS FORD Marry, this is our device;
That Falstaff at that oak shall meet with us.

PAGE Well, let it not be doubted but he'll come:
And in this shape when you have brought him thither,
What shall be done with him? what is your plot?

MISTRESS PAGE That likewise have we thought upon, and thus:
Nan Page my daughter and my little son
And three or four more of their growth we'll dress
Like urchins, ouphes and fairies, green and white,
With rounds of waxen tapers on their heads,
And rattles in their hands: upon a sudden,
As Falstaff, she and I, are newly met,
Let them from forth a sawpit rush at once
With some diffused song: upon their sight,
We two in great amazedness will fly:
Then let them all encircle him about
And, fairy-like, to pinch the unclean knight,
And ask him why, that hour of fairy revel,
In their so sacred paths he dares to tread
In shape profane.

MISTRESS FORD And till he tell the truth,
Let the supposed fairies pinch him sound
And burn him with their tapers.

MISTRESS PAGE The truth being known,
We'll all present ourselves, dis-horn the spirit,
And mock him home to Windsor.

FORD The children must
Be practised well to this, or they'll ne'er do't.

SIR HUGH EVANS I will teach the children their behaviors; and I
will be like a jack-an-apes also, to burn the
knight with my taber.

FORD That will be excellent. I'll go and buy them vizards.

MISTRESS PAGE My Nan shall be the queen of all the fairies,
Finely attired in a robe of white.

PAGE That silk will I go buy.

[Aside]

And in that time
Shall Master Slender steal my Nan away
And marry her at Eton. Go send to Falstaff straight.

FORD Nay I'll to him again in name of Brook

He'll tell me all his purpose: sure, he'll come.

MISTRESS PAGE Fear not you that. Go get us properties
And tricking for our fairies.

SIR HUGH EVANS Let us about it: it is admirable pleasures and fery
honest knaveries.

[Exeunt PAGE, FORD, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

MISTRESS PAGE Go, Mistress Ford,
Send quickly to Sir John, to know his mind.

[Exit MISTRESS FORD]

I'll to the doctor: he hath my good will,
And none but he, to marry with Nan Page.
That Slender, though well landed, is an idiot;
And he my husband best of all affects.
The doctor is well money'd, and his friends
Potent at court: he, none but he, shall have her,
Though twenty thousand worthier come to crave her.

[Exit]

Scene V

A room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter Host and SIMPLE]

Host What wouldst thou have, boor? what: thick-skin?
speak, breathe, discuss; brief, short, quick, snap.

SIMPLE Marry, sir, I come to speak with Sir John Falstaff
from Master Slender.

Host There's his chamber, his house, his castle, his
standing-bed and truckle-bed; 'tis painted about
with the story of the Prodigal, fresh and new. Go
knock and call; hell speak like an Anthropophaginian
unto thee: knock, I say.

SIMPLE There's an old woman, a fat woman, gone up into his
chamber: I'll be so bold as stay, sir, till she come
down; I come to speak with her, indeed.

Host Ha! a fat woman! the knight may be robbed: I'll
call. Bully knight! bully Sir John! speak from
thy lungs military: art thou there? it is thine
host, thine Ephesian, calls.

FALSTAFF [Above] How now, mine host!

Host Here's a Bohemian-Tartar tarries the coming down of
thy fat woman. Let her descend, bully, let her
descend; my chambers are honourable: fie! privacy?
fie!

[Enter FALSTAFF]

FALSTAFF There was, mine host, an old fat woman even now with me; but she's gone.

SIMPLE Pray you, sir, was't not the wise woman of Brentford?

FALSTAFF Ay, marry, was it, mussel-shell: what would you with her?

SIMPLE My master, sir, Master Slender, sent to her, seeing her go through the streets, to know, sir, whether one Nym, sir, that beguiled him of a chain, had the chain or no.

FALSTAFF I spake with the old woman about it.

SIMPLE And what says she, I pray, sir?

FALSTAFF Marry, she says that the very same man that beguiled Master Slender of his chain cozened him of it.

SIMPLE I would I could have spoken with the woman herself; I had other things to have spoken with her too from him.

FALSTAFF What are they? let us know.

Host Ay, come; quick.

SIMPLE I may not conceal them, sir.

Host Conceal them, or thou diest.

SIMPLE Why, sir, they were nothing but about Mistress Anne Page; to know if it were my master's fortune to have her or no.

FALSTAFF 'Tis, 'tis his fortune.

SIMPLE What, sir?

FALSTAFF To have her, or no. Go; say the woman told me so.

SIMPLE May I be bold to say so, sir?

FALSTAFF Ay, sir; like who more bold.

SIMPLE I thank your worship: I shall make my master glad with these tidings.

[Exit]

Host Thou art clerkly, thou art clerkly, Sir John. Was there a wise woman with thee?

FALSTAFF Ay, that there was, mine host; one that hath taught me more wit than ever I learned before in my life; and I paid nothing for it neither, but was paid for my learning.

[Enter BARDOLPH]

BARDOLPH Out, alas, sir! cozenage, mere cozenage!

Host Where be my horses? speak well of them, varletto.

BARDOLPH Run away with the cozeners; for so soon as I came beyond Eton, they threw me off from behind one of them, in a slough of mire; and set spurs and away, like three German devils, three Doctor Faustuses.

Host They are gone but to meet the duke, villain: do not say they be fled; Germans are honest men.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS]

SIR HUGH EVANS Where is mine host?

Host What is the matter, sir?

SIR HUGH EVANS Have a care of your entertainments: there is a friend of mine come to town tells me there is three cozen-germans that has cozened all the hosts of Readins, of Maidenhead, of Colebrook, of horses and money. I tell you for good will, look you: you are wise and full of gibes and vlouting-stocks, and 'tis not convenient you should be cozened. Fare you well.

[Exit]

[Enter DOCTOR CAIUS]

DOCTOR CAIUS Vere is mine host de Jarteer?

Host Here, master doctor, in perplexity and doubtful dilemma.

DOCTOR CAIUS I cannot tell vat is dat: but it is tell-a me dat you make grand preparation for a duke de Jamany: by my trot, dere is no duke dat the court is know to come. I tell you for good vill: adieu.

[Exit]

Host Hue and cry, villain, go! Assist me, knight. I am undone! Fly, run, hue and cry, villain! I am undone!

[Exeunt Host and BARDOLPH]

FALSTAFF I would all the world might be cozened; for I have been cozened and beaten too. If it should come to the ear of the court, how I have been transformed and how my transformation hath been washed and cudgelled, they would melt me out of my fat drop by drop and liquor fishermen's boots with me; I warrant they would whip me with their fine wits till I were as crest-fallen as a dried pear. I never prospered since I forswore myself at primero. Well, if my wind were but long enough to say my prayers, I would repent.

[Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY]

Now, whence come you?

MISTRESS QUICKLY From the two parties, forsooth.

FALSTAFF The devil take one party and his dam the other! and so they shall be both bestowed. I have suffered more for their sakes, more than the villanous inconstancy of man's disposition is able to bear.

MISTRESS QUICKLY And have not they suffered? Yes, I warrant; speciously one of them; Mistress Ford, good heart, is beaten black and blue, that you cannot see a white spot about her.

FALSTAFF What tellest thou me of black and blue? I was beaten myself into all the colours of the rainbow; and I was like to be apprehended for the witch of Brentford: but that my admirable dexterity of wit, my counterfeiting the action of an old woman, delivered me, the knave constable had set me i' the stocks, i' the common stocks, for a witch.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Sir, let me speak with you in your chamber: you shall hear how things go; and, I warrant, to your content. Here is a letter will say somewhat. Good hearts, what ado here is to bring you together! Sure, one of you does not serve heaven well, that you are so crossed.

FALSTAFF Come up into my chamber.

[Exeunt]

Scene VI

Another room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter FENTON and Host]

Host Master Fenton, talk not to me; my mind is heavy: I will give over all.

FENTON Yet hear me speak. Assist me in my purpose,
And, as I am a gentleman, I'll give thee
A hundred pound in gold more than your loss.

Host I will hear you, Master Fenton; and I will at the least keep your counsel.

FENTON From time to time I have acquainted you
With the dear love I bear to fair Anne Page;
Who mutually hath answer'd my affection,
So far forth as herself might be her chooser,
Even to my wish: I have a letter from her
Of such contents as you will wonder at;
The mirth whereof so larded with my matter,
That neither singly can be manifested,
Without the show of both; fat Falstaff

Hath a great scene: the image of the jest
I'll show you here at large. Hark, good mine host.
To-night at Herne's oak, just 'twixt twelve and one,
Must my sweet Nan present the Fairy Queen;
The purpose why, is here: in which disguise,
While other jests are something rank on foot,
Her father hath commanded her to slip
Away with Slender and with him at Eton
Immediately to marry: she hath consented: Now, sir,
Her mother, ever strong against that match
And firm for Doctor Caius, hath appointed
That he shall likewise shuffle her away,
While other sports are tasking of their minds,
And at the deanery, where a priest attends,
Straight marry her: to this her mother's plot
She seemingly obedient likewise hath
Made promise to the doctor. Now, thus it rests:
Her father means she shall be all in white,
And in that habit, when Slender sees his time
To take her by the hand and bid her go,
She shall go with him: her mother hath intended,
The better to denote her to the doctor,
For they must all be mask'd and vizarded,
That quaint in green she shall be loose enrobed,
With ribands pendent, flaring 'bout her head;
And when the doctor spies his vantage ripe,
To pinch her by the hand, and, on that token,
The maid hath given consent to go with him.

Host Which means she to deceive, father or mother?

FENTON Both, my good host, to go along with me:
And here it rests, that you'll procure the vicar
To stay for me at church 'twixt twelve and one,
And, in the lawful name of marrying,
To give our hearts united ceremony.

Host Well, husband your device; I'll to the vicar:
Bring you the maid, you shall not lack a priest.

FENTON So shall I evermore be bound to thee;
Besides, I'll make a present recompense.

[Exeunt]

Act V

=====

Scene I

A room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS QUICKLY]

FALSTAFF Prithee, no more prattling; go. I'll hold. This is
the third time; I hope good luck lies in odd
numbers. Away I go. They say there is divinity in
odd numbers, either in nativity, chance, or death. Away!

MISTRESS QUICKLY I'll provide you a chain; and I'll do what I can to

get you a pair of horns.

FALSTAFF Away, I say; time wears: hold up your head, and mince.

[Exit MISTRESS QUICKLY]

[Enter FORD]

How now, Master Brook! Master Brook, the matter will be known to-night, or never. Be you in the Park about midnight, at Herne's oak, and you shall see wonders.

FORD Went you not to her yesterday, sir, as you told me you had appointed?

FALSTAFF I went to her, Master Brook, as you see, like a poor old man: but I came from her, Master Brook, like a poor old woman. That same knave Ford, her husband, hath the finest mad devil of jealousy in him, Master Brook, that ever governed frenzy. I will tell you: he beat me grievously, in the shape of a woman; for in the shape of man, Master Brook, I fear not Goliath with a weaver's beam; because I know also life is a shuttle. I am in haste; go along with me: I'll tell you all, Master Brook. Since I plucked geese, played truant and whipped top, I knew not what 'twas to be beaten till lately. Follow me: I'll tell you strange things of this knave Ford, on whom to-night I will be revenged, and I will deliver his wife into your hand. Follow. Strange things in hand, Master Brook! Follow.

[Exeunt]

Scene II

Windsor Park.

[Enter PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER]

PAGE Come, come; we'll couch i' the castle-ditch till we see the light of our fairies. Remember, son Slender, my daughter.

SLENDER Ay, forsooth; I have spoke with her and we have a nay-word how to know one another: I come to her in white, and cry 'mum;' she cries 'budget;' and by that we know one another.

SHALLOW That's good too: but what needs either your 'mum' or her 'budget?' the white will decipher her well enough. It hath struck ten o'clock.

PAGE The night is dark; light and spirits will become it well. Heaven prosper our sport! No man means evil but the devil, and we shall know him by his horns. Let's away; follow me.

[Exeunt]

Scene III

A street leading to the Park.

[Enter MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and
DOCTOR CAIUS]

MISTRESS PAGE Master doctor, my daughter is in green: when you
see your time, take her by the hand, away with her
to the deanery, and dispatch it quickly. Go before
into the Park: we two must go together.

DOCTOR CAIUS I know vat I have to do. Adieu.

MISTRESS PAGE Fare you well, sir.

[Exit DOCTOR CAIUS]

My husband will not rejoice so much at the abuse of
Falstaff as he will chafe at the doctor's marrying
my daughter: but 'tis no matter; better a little
chiding than a great deal of heart-break.

MISTRESS FORD Where is Nan now and her troop of fairies, and the
Welsh devil Hugh?

MISTRESS PAGE They are all couched in a pit hard by Herne's oak,
with obscured lights; which, at the very instant of
Falstaff's and our meeting, they will at once
display to the night.

MISTRESS FORD That cannot choose but amaze him.

MISTRESS PAGE If he be not amazed, he will be mocked; if he be
amazed, he will every way be mocked.

MISTRESS FORD We'll betray him finely.

MISTRESS PAGE Against such lewdsters and their lechery
Those that betray them do no treachery.

MISTRESS FORD The hour draws on. To the oak, to the oak!

[Exeunt]

Scene IV

Windsor Park.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS, disguised, with others as Fairies]

SIR HUGH EVANS Trib, trib, fairies; come; and remember your parts:
be pold, I pray you; follow me into the pit; and
when I give the watch-'ords, do as I pid you:
come, come; trib, trib.

[Exeunt]

Scene V

Another part of the Park.

[Enter FALSTAFF disguised as Herne]

FALSTAFF The Windsor bell hath struck twelve; the minute draws on. Now, the hot-blooded gods assist me! Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa; love set on thy horns. O powerful love! that, in some respects, makes a beast a man, in some other, a man a beast. You were also, Jupiter, a swan for the love of Leda. O omnipotent Love! how near the god drew to the complexion of a goose! A fault done first in the form of a beast. O Jove, a beastly fault! And then another fault in the semblance of a fowl; think on 't, Jove; a foul fault! When gods have hot backs, what shall poor men do? For me, I am here a Windsor stag; and the fattest, I think, i' the forest. Send me a cool rut-time, Jove, or who can blame me to piss my tallow? Who comes here? my doe?

[Enter MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE]

MISTRESS FORD Sir John! art thou there, my deer? my male deer?

FALSTAFF My doe with the black scut! Let the sky rain potatoes; let it thunder to the tune of Green Sleeves, hail kissing-comfits and snow eringoes; let there come a tempest of provocation, I will shelter me here.

MISTRESS FORD Mistress Page is come with me, sweetheart.

FALSTAFF Divide me like a bribe buck, each a haunch: I will keep my sides to myself, my shoulders for the fellow of this walk, and my horns I bequeath your husbands. Am I a woodman, ha? Speak I like Herne the hunter? Why, now is Cupid a child of conscience; he makes restitution. As I am a true spirit, welcome!

[Noise within]

MISTRESS PAGE Alas, what noise?

MISTRESS FORD Heaven forgive our sins

FALSTAFF What should this be?

MISTRESS FORD |

| Away, away!

MISTRESS PAGE |

[They run off]

FALSTAFF I think the devil will not have me damned, lest the oil that's in me should set hell on fire; he would never else cross me thus.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS, disguised as before; PISTOL, as Hobgoblin; MISTRESS QUICKLY, ANNE PAGE, and

others, as Fairies, with tapers]

MISTRESS QUICKLY Fairies, black, grey, green, and white,
You moonshine revellers and shades of night,
You orphan heirs of fixed destiny,
Attend your office and your quality.
Crier Hobgoblin, make the fairy oyes.

PISTOL Elves, list your names; silence, you airy toys.
Cricket, to Windsor chimneys shalt thou leap:
Where fires thou find'st unraked and hearths unswept,
There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry:
Our radiant queen hates sluts and sluttery.

FALSTAFF They are fairies; he that speaks to them shall die:
I'll wink and couch: no man their works must eye.

[Lies down upon his face]

SIR HUGH EVANS Where's Bede? Go you, and where you find a maid
That, ere she sleep, has thrice her prayers said,
Raise up the organs of her fantasy;
Sleep she as sound as careless infancy:
But those as sleep and think not on their sins,
Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides and shins.

MISTRESS QUICKLY About, about;
Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out:
Strew good luck, ouches, on every sacred room:
That it may stand till the perpetual doom,
In state as wholesome as in state 'tis fit,
Worthy the owner, and the owner it.
The several chairs of order look you scour
With juice of balm and every precious flower:
Each fair instalment, coat, and several crest,
With loyal blazon, evermore be blest!
And nightly, meadow-fairies, look you sing,
Like to the Garter's compass, in a ring:
The expressure that it bears, green let it be,
More fertile-fresh than all the field to see;
And 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' write
In emerald tufts, flowers purple, blue and white;
Let sapphire, pearl and rich embroidery,
Buckled below fair knighthood's bending knee:
Fairies use flowers for their character.
Away; disperse: but till 'tis one o'clock,
Our dance of custom round about the oak
Of Herne the hunter, let us not forget.

SIR HUGH EVANS Pray you, lock hand in hand; yourselves in order set
And twenty glow-worms shall our lanterns be,
To guide our measure round about the tree.
But, stay; I smell a man of middle-earth.

FALSTAFF Heavens defend me from that Welsh fairy, lest he
transform me to a piece of cheese!

PISTOL Vile worm, thou wast o'erlook'd even in thy birth.

MISTRESS QUICKLY With trial-fire touch me his finger-end:

If he be chaste, the flame will back descend
And turn him to no pain; but if he start,
It is the flesh of a corrupted heart.

PISTOL A trial, come.

SIR HUGH EVANS Come, will this wood take fire?

[They burn him with their tapers]

FALSTAFF Oh, Oh, Oh!

MISTRESS QUICKLY Corrupt, corrupt, and tainted in desire!
About him, fairies; sing a scornful rhyme;
And, as you trip, still pinch him to your time.

SONG.

Fie on sinful fantasy!
Fie on lust and luxury!
Lust is but a bloody fire,
Kindled with unchaste desire,
Fed in heart, whose flames aspire
As thoughts do blow them, higher and higher.
Pinch him, fairies, mutually;
Pinch him for his villany;
Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

[During this song they pinch FALSTAFF. DOCTOR CAIUS
comes one way, and steals away a boy in green;
SLENDER another way, and takes off a boy in white;
and FENTON comes and steals away ANN PAGE.
A noise of hunting is heard within. All the
Fairies run away. FALSTAFF pulls off his buck's
head, and rises]

[Enter PAGE, FORD, MISTRESS PAGE, and MISTRESS FORD]

PAGE Nay, do not fly; I think we have watch'd you now
Will none but Herne the hunter serve your turn?

MISTRESS PAGE I pray you, come, hold up the jest no higher
Now, good Sir John, how like you Windsor wives?
See you these, husband? do not these fair yokes
Become the forest better than the town?

FORD Now, sir, who's a cuckold now? Master Brook,
Falstaff's a knave, a cuckoldly knave; here are his
horns, Master Brook: and, Master Brook, he hath
enjoyed nothing of Ford's but his buck-basket, his
cudgel, and twenty pounds of money, which must be
paid to Master Brook; his horses are arrested for
it, Master Brook.

MISTRESS FORD Sir John, we have had ill luck; we could never meet.
I will never take you for my love again; but I will
always count you my deer.

FALSTAFF I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass.

FORD Ay, and an ox too: both the proofs are extant.

FALSTAFF And these are not fairies? I was three or four times in the thought they were not fairies: and yet the guiltiness of my mind, the sudden surprise of my powers, drove the grossness of the foppery into a received belief, in despite of the teeth of all rhyme and reason, that they were fairies. See now how wit may be made a Jack-a-Lent, when 'tis upon ill employment!

SIR HUGH EVANS Sir John Falstaff, serve Got, and leave your desires, and fairies will not pinse you.

FORD Well said, fairy Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS And leave your jealousies too, I pray you.

FORD I will never mistrust my wife again till thou art able to woo her in good English.

FALSTAFF Have I laid my brain in the sun and dried it, that it wants matter to prevent so gross o'erreaching as this? Am I ridden with a Welsh goat too? shall I have a coxcomb of frize? 'Tis time I were choked with a piece of toasted cheese.

SIR HUGH EVANS Seese is not good to give putter; your belly is all putter.

FALSTAFF 'Seese' and 'putter'! have I lived to stand at the taunt of one that makes fritters of English? This is enough to be the decay of lust and late-walking through the realm.

MISTRESS PAGE Why Sir John, do you think, though we would have the virtue out of our hearts by the head and shoulders and have given ourselves without scruple to hell, that ever the devil could have made you our delight?

FORD What, a hodge-pudding? a bag of flax?

MISTRESS PAGE A puffed man?

PAGE Old, cold, withered and of intolerable entrails?

FORD And one that is as slanderous as Satan?

PAGE And as poor as Job?

FORD And as wicked as his wife?

SIR HUGH EVANS And given to fornications, and to taverns and sack and wine and metheglins, and to drinkings and swearings and starings, pribbles and prabbles?

FALSTAFF Well, I am your theme: you have the start of me; I am dejected; I am not able to answer the Welsh flannel; ignorance itself is a plummet o'er me: use me as you will.

FORD Marry, sir, we'll bring you to Windsor, to one Master Brook, that you have cozened of money, to whom you should have been a pander: over and above that you have suffered, I think to repay that money will be a biting affliction.

PAGE Yet be cheerful, knight: thou shalt eat a posset to-night at my house; where I will desire thee to laugh at my wife, that now laughs at thee: tell her Master Slender hath married her daughter.

MISTRESS PAGE [Aside] Doctors doubt that: if Anne Page be my daughter, she is, by this, Doctor Caius' wife.

[Enter SLENDER]

SLENDER Whoa ho! ho, father Page!

PAGE Son, how now! how now, son! have you dispatched?

SLENDER Dispatched! I'll make the best in Gloucestershire know on't; would I were hanged, la, else.

PAGE Of what, son?

SLENDER I came yonder at Eton to marry Mistress Anne Page, and she's a great lubberly boy. If it had not been i' the church, I would have swung him, or he should have swung me. If I did not think it had been Anne Page, would I might never stir!--and 'tis a postmaster's boy.

PAGE Upon my life, then, you took the wrong.

SLENDER What need you tell me that? I think so, when I took a boy for a girl. If I had been married to him, for all he was in woman's apparel, I would not have had him.

PAGE Why, this is your own folly. Did not I tell you how you should know my daughter by her garments?

SLENDER I went to her in white, and cried 'mum,' and she cried 'budget,' as Anne and I had appointed; and yet it was not Anne, but a postmaster's boy.

MISTRESS PAGE Good George, be not angry: I knew of your purpose; turned my daughter into green; and, indeed, she is now with the doctor at the deanery, and there married.

[Enter DOCTOR CAIUS]

DOCTOR CAIUS Vere is Mistress Page? By gar, I am cozened: I ha' married un garcon, a boy; un paysan, by gar, a boy; it is not Anne Page: by gar, I am cozened.

MISTRESS PAGE Why, did you take her in green?

DOCTOR CAIUS Ay, by gar, and 'tis a boy: by gar, I'll raise all Windsor.

[Exit]

FORD This is strange. Who hath got the right Anne?

PAGE My heart misgives me: here comes Master Fenton.

[Enter FENTON and ANNE PAGE]

How now, Master Fenton!

ANNE PAGE Pardon, good father! good my mother, pardon!

PAGE Now, mistress, how chance you went not with Master Slender?

MISTRESS PAGE Why went you not with master doctor, maid?

FENTON You do amaze her: hear the truth of it.
You would have married her most shamefully,
Where there was no proportion held in love.
The truth is, she and I, long since contracted,
Are now so sure that nothing can dissolve us.
The offence is holy that she hath committed;
And this deceit loses the name of craft,
Of disobedience, or unduteous title,
Since therein she doth evitate and shun
A thousand irreligious cursed hours,
Which forced marriage would have brought upon her.

FORD Stand not amazed; here is no remedy:
In love the heavens themselves do guide the state;
Money buys lands, and wives are sold by fate.

FALSTAFF I am glad, though you have ta'en a special stand to
strike at me, that your arrow hath glanced.

PAGE Well, what remedy? Fenton, heaven give thee joy!
What cannot be eschew'd must be embraced.

FALSTAFF When night-dogs run, all sorts of deer are chased.

MISTRESS PAGE Well, I will muse no further. Master Fenton,
Heaven give you many, many merry days!
Good husband, let us every one go home,
And laugh this sport o'er by a country fire;
Sir John and all.

FORD Let it be so. Sir John,
To Master Brook you yet shall hold your word
For he tonight shall lie with Mistress Ford.

[Exeunt]