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Title: The Merry Wives of Windsor

Author: William Shakespeare

Release date: November 1, 1998 [eBook #1517]
Most recently updated: September 19, 2025

Language: English

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1517

Credits: This etext was prepared by the PG Shakespeare Team, a team of about twenty Project Gutenberg volunteers.

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THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

by William Shakespeare

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HOST of the Garter Inn
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF
ROBIN, page to Falstaff
BARDOLPH, follower of Falstaff
PISTOL, follower of Falstaff
NYM, follower of Falstaff

Robert SHALLOW, a country justice
Abraham SLENDER, cousin to Shallow
Peter SIMPLE, servant to Slender
FENTON, a young gentleman

George PAGE, a Gentleman dwelling at Windsor
MISTRESS PAGE, his wife
MISTRESS ANNE PAGE, her daughter, in love with Fenton
WILLIAM PAGE, a boy, son to Page

Frank FORD, a Gentleman dwelling at Windsor
MISTRESS FORD, his wife

JOHN, Servant to Ford
ROBERT, Servant to Ford

SIR HUGH EVANS, a Welsh parson
DOCTOR CAIUS, a French physician
MISTRESS QUICKLY, servant to Doctor Caius
John RUGBY, servant to Doctor Caius

SERVANTS to Page, &c.

SCENE: Windsor and the neighbourhood

ACT I

SCENE I. Windsor. Before Page’s house

Enter Justice 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 Custalorum.

SLENDER.
Ay, and Ratolorum 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 luces in their coat.

SHALLOW.
It is an old coat.

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.

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

SHALLOW.
Not a whit.

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 hear it; it is a riot.

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.

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 George Page, which is pretty virginity.

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

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.

SHALLOW.
Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pound?

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

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

EVANS.
Seven hundred pounds, and possibilities, is goot gifts.

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

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, ho! Got pless your house here!

PAGE.
[_Within_.] Who’s there?

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.

Enter Page.

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.

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 redressed. 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 Sir John 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.

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. They carried me to the tavern and made me drunk, and afterwards picked my pocket.

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?

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.

EVANS.
Fery goot. I will make a prief of it in my notebook, and we will afterwards ’ork upon the cause with as great discreetly as we can.

FALSTAFF.
Pistol!

PISTOL.
He hears with ears.

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 a-piece of Yed Miller, by these gloves.

FALSTAFF.
Is this true, Pistol?

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.
[_Points at Nym_.] 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 sentences.

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 careers.

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.

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

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

Enter Mistress Ford, Mistress Page and her daughter Anne Page with wine.

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 but Slender._]

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 Allhallowmas last, a fortnight afore Michaelmas?

Enter Shallow and Sir Hugh Evans.

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.

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.

EVANS.
But that is not the question. The question is concerning your marriage.

SHALLOW.
Ay, there’s the point, sir.

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.

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.

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.

EVANS.
It is a fery discretion answer, save the fall is in the ’ord “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.

Enter Anne Page.

SHALLOW.
Here comes fair Mistress Anne.—Would I were young for your sake, Mistress Anne.

ANNE.
The dinner is on the table, my father desires your worships’ company.

SHALLOW.
I will wait on him, fair Mistress Anne.

EVANS.
’Od’s plessed will! I will not be absence at the grace.

[_Exeunt Shallow and Sir Hugh Evans._]

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

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

ANNE.
The dinner attends you, sir.

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

[_Exit Simple._]

A Justice of Peace sometime 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.
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.
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 veneys 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.
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.
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-favoured rough things.

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.
Not I, sir; pray you keep on.

SLENDER.
Truly, I will not go first; truly, la! I will not do you that wrong.

ANNE.
I pray you, sir.

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.

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.

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, Keiser, and Pheazar. 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.—Let me see thee froth and lime. I am at a word, follow.

[_Exit Host._]

FALSTAFF.
Bardolph, follow him. A tapster is a good trade. An old cloak makes a new jerkin; a withered servingman 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 behaviour, 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 cheaters 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 ’haviour 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’ th’ hoof, seek shelter, pack!
Falstaff will learn the humour of this 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 beguile the rich and poor.
Tester I’ll have in pouch when thou shalt lack,
Base Phrygian Turk!

NYM.
I have operations in my head 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 Ford.

PISTOL.
And I to Page 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 Ford 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 malcontents. I second thee. Troop on.

[_Exeunt._]

SCENE IV. A room in Doctor Caius’s house

Enter Mistress Quickly and Simple.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
What, John Rugby!

Enter 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 anybody 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—

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.

[_Simple steps into 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.

[_Exit Rugby._]

[_Sings_.] _And down, down, adown-a, etc._

Enter Doctor Caius.

CAIUS
Vat is you sing? I do not like dese toys. Pray you, go and vetch me in my closet _une boîtine verte_, 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.

CAIUS.
Fe, fe, fe fe! Ma foi, il fait fort chaud. Je m’en vais à la cour—la grande affaire.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

Is it this, sir?

CAIUS.
Oui, mette-le au mon pocket. _Dépêche_, quickly—Vere is dat knave Rugby?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
What, John Rugby, John!

Enter Rugby.

RUGBY
Here, sir.

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.

CAIUS.
By my trot, I tarry too long. 'Od's me! _Qu'ay j'oublié?_ Dere is some simples in my closet dat I vill not for the varld I shall leave behind.

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

CAIUS.
O diable, diable! Vat is in my closet? Villainy! _Larron!_ [_Pulling Simple out_.] Rugby, my rapier!

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Good master, be content.

CAIUS.
Wherefore shall I be content-a?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
The young man is an honest man.

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.

CAIUS.
Vell?

SIMPLE.
Ay, forsooth, to desire her to—

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Peace, I pray you.

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.

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 throughly 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.

CAIUS.
You jack’nape, give-a dis letter to Sir Hugh. By gar, it is a

shallenge. I will cut his troat in de park, and I will teach a scurvy jackanape 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.

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-year!

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

[_Exeunt 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, think’st 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 today. 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 reading 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 precisian, 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, wicked world! One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with age, to show himself a young gallant! What an unweighed behaviour 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 “Greensleeves.” 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 villainy 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 woos 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 Pistol._]

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. Adieu.

[_Exit Nym._]

PAGE
[_Aside_.] “The humour of it,” quoth ’a! Here’s a fellow frights
English out of his wits.

FORD.
[_Aside_.] I will seek out Falstaff.

PAGE.
[_Aside_.] I never heard such a drawling, affecting rogue.

FORD.
[_Aside_.] If I do find it—well.

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

FORD.
[_Aside_.] ’Twas a good sensible fellow—well.

Mistress Page and Mistress Ford come forward.

PAGE.
How now, Meg?

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’d 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 toward 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.

Enter Host.

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.—How now, mine host?

HOST.
How now, bully rook? Thou’rt a gentleman.—Cavaliero 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, Cavaliero 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.

HOST.
What say’st thou, my bully rook?

[_Ford and the Host talk apart._]

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.

[_Shallow and Page talk apart. Ford and the Host come forward._]

HOST
Hast thou no suit against my knight, my guest cavaliero?

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, myn-heers?

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 had rather hear them scold than fight.

[_Exeunt Host, Shallow and Page._]

FORD
Though Page be a secure fool, and 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 gemini 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. Think’st 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 unconfinable baseness, it is as much as I can do to keep the terms of my honour precise. Ay, ay, 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 wouldst 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, goodwife.

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 attraction 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 anything; 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.—This news distracts me.

[_Exeunt Mistress Quickly and Robin._]

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 Pistol._]

FALSTAFF.
Sayst 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 with a cup of sack.

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!_

Enter Bardolph with Ford disguised as Brook.

FORD
God 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 emboldened 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 doting 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 warlike, courtlike, 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 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 blessed 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-favoured. 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 Falstaff._]

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.

CAIUS.
Jack Rugby!

RUGBY.
Sir?

CAIUS.
Vat is de clock, Jack?

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

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.

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.

CAIUS.
Villainy, take your rapier.

RUGBY.
Forbear; here’s company.

Enter Page, Shallow, Slender and Host.

HOST
God bless thee, bully doctor!

SHALLOW.
God save you, Master Doctor Caius!

PAGE.
Now, good Master Doctor!

SLENDER.
Give you good morrow, sir.

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?

CAIUS.
By gar, he is de coward Jack-priest of de vorld. He is not show his face.

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

CAIUS.
I pray you, bear witness 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 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, Monsieur Mockwater.

CAIUS.
Mockvater? Vat is dat?

HOST.
Mockwater, in our English tongue, is valour, bully.

CAIUS.
By gar, then I have as much mockvater as de Englishman. Scurvy jack-dog priest! By gar, me vill cut his ears.

HOST.
He will clapper-claw thee tightly, bully.

CAIUS.
Clapper-de-claw? Vat is dat?

HOST.
That is, he will make thee amends.

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.

CAIUS.
Me tank you for dat.

HOST.
And, moreover, bully—but first, Master guest, and Master Page, and eke Cavaliero Slender, go you through the town to Frogmore.

PAGE
[_Aside to Host_.] Sir Hugh is there, is he?

HOST.
[_Aside to Page_.] He is there. See what humour he is in; and I will bring the doctor about by the fields. Will it do well?

SHALLOW.

[_Aside to Host_.] We will do it.

PAGE, SHALLOW and SLENDER
Adieu, good Master Doctor.

[_Exeunt Page, Shallow and Slender._]

CAIUS
By gar, me vill kill de priest, for he speak for a jackanape 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 game! Said I well?

CAIUS.
By gar, me tank 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?

CAIUS.
By gar, ’tis good; vell said.

HOST.
Let us wag, then.

CAIUS.
Come at my heels, Jack Rugby.

[_Exeunt._]

ACT III

SCENE I. A field near Frogmore

Enter Sir Hugh Evans and Simple.

EVANS.
I pray you now, good Master Slender’s servingman, and friend Simple by your name, which way have you looked for Master Caius, that calls

himself doctor of physic?

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

EVANS.
I most fehemently desire you, you will also look that way.

SIMPLE.
I will, Sir.

[_Exit Simple._]

EVANS
Pless my soul, how full of cholers 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—
Whenas I sat in Pabylon—
And a thousand vagram posies.
To shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals._

Enter Simple.

SIMPLE
Yonder he is, coming this way, 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.

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.
God save you, good Sir Hugh!

EVANS.
God 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?

EVANS.
There is reasons and causes for it.

PAGE.
We are come to you to do a good office, Master Parson.

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.

EVANS.

What is he?

PAGE.
I think you know him: Master Doctor Caius, the renowned French physician.

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?

EVANS.
He has no more knowledge in Hibbocrates 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.

SLENDER.
[_Aside_.] O, sweet Anne Page!

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

Enter Host, 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.

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

EVANS.
[_Aside to Caius_.] Pray you, use your patience. In good time.

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

EVANS.
[_Aside to 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_.] By Jeshu, I will knog your urinal about your knave’s cogscomb.

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?

EVANS.
As I am a Christians soul, now look you, this is the place appointed. I’ll be judgment by mine host of the Garter.

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

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. [_To Caius_.] Give me thy hand, terrestrial; so. [_To Evans_.] 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.

[_Exit Host._]

SHALLOW.
Afore God, a mad host! Follow, gentlemen, follow.

SLENDER.
[_Aside_.] O, sweet Anne Page!

[_Exeunt Shallow, Slender and Page._]

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

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.

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

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

[_Exeunt._]

SCENE II. A street in Windsor

Enter Mistress Page following 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 weathercock?

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 strikes_.] 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, Caius and Rugby.

SHALLOW, PAGE, etc.
Well met, Master Ford.

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.

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._]

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 Host._]

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 John and Robert with a great buck-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 John and Robert._]

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 Page._]

MISTRESS FORD.
Go to, then. We’ll use this unwholesome humidity, this gross watery pumpion; 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’s 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 lisping 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.

Enter Robin.

ROBIN.
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 behind the arras._]

Enter Mistress Page.

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 upon 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 absence. 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 as 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.
[_Comes out of hiding_.] 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, and none but thee. Help me away. Let me creep in here. I’ll never—

[_He goes into the basket; they cover him with dirty clothes._]

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

[_Exit Robin._]

MISTRESS FORD.
What, John! Robert! John!

Enter John and Robert.

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

Enter Ford, Page, 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?

JOHN and ROBERT.
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 John and Robert with the basket._]

Gentlemen, I have dreamed tonight; 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. [_Locks 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 Ford._]

EVANS
This is fery fantastical humours and jealousies.

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, Evans and Caius._]

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 tomorrow eight o’clock to have amends.

Enter Ford, Page, Caius and Sir Hugh Evans.

FORD
I cannot find him. Maybe 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.

EVANS.
If there be anypody in the house, and in the chambers, and in the coffers, and in the presses, heaven forgive my sins at the day of judgment!

CAIUS.
Be gar, nor I too; there is nobodies.

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.

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.

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 tomorrow 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.
Anything.

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

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

FORD.
Pray you go, Master Page.

[_Exeunt all but Evans and Caius._]

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

CAIUS.
Dat is good, by gar, with all my heart.

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.

Alas, how then?

FENTON.
Why, thou must be thyself.
He doth object I am too great of birth,
And that my state being galled 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.
Maybe 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 wooed 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.
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 talk 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.
I come to him.
[_Aside_.] This is my father’s choice.
O, what a world of vile ill-favoured faults
Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a year!

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

[_They talk aside._]

SHALLOW.
[_To Slender_.] 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.
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.
Now, Master Slender.

SLENDER.
Now, good Mistress Anne.

ANNE.
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.
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 checks, rebukes, and manners,
I must advance the colours of my love
And not retire. Let me have your good will.

ANNE.
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.
Alas, I had rather be set quick i’ th’ earth,
And bowled 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._]

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 tonight
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.

FALSTAFF.
Bardolph, I say!

Enter Bardolph.

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. ’Sblood, 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.

Enter Bardolph with sack.

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

FALSTAFF.
Come, 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, sayst thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Eight and nine, sir.

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Peace be with you, sir.

[_Exit Mistress Quickly._]

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 disguised.

FORD
God 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 how sped you, sir?

FALSTAFF.
Very ill-favouredly, 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 villainous 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 horseshoe! Think of that—hissing hot—think of that, Master Brook.

FORD.
In good sadness, sir, I am sorry that for my sake you have suffered 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 Falstaff._]

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 half-penny purse, nor into a pepperbox. 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. The street

Enter Mistress Page, Mistress Quickly and William.

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 today?

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.

EVANS.
Come hither, William. Hold up your head, come.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Come on, sirrah. Hold up your head. Answer your master, be not afraid.

EVANS.
William, how many numbers is in nouns?

WILLIAM.
Two.

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

EVANS.
Peace your tattlings! What is “fair,” William?

WILLIAM.
Pulcher.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
Polecats? There are fairer things than polecats, sure.

EVANS.

You are a very simplicity ’oman; I pray you, peace.—What is _lapis_, William?

WILLIAM.
A stone.

EVANS.
And what is “a stone,” William?

WILLIAM.
A pebble.

EVANS.
No, it is _lapis_. I pray you remember in your prain.

WILLIAM.
Lapis.

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

WILLIAM.
Articles are borrowed of the pronoun, and be thus declined: _singulariter, nominativo, hic, haec, hoc_.

EVANS.
Nominativo, hig, haeg, hog, pray you, mark: _genitivo, huius_. Well, what is your accusative case?

WILLIAM.
Accusativo, hinc.

EVANS.
I pray you, have your remembrance, child. _Accusativo, hung, hang, hog_.

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

EVANS.
Leave your prabbles, ’oman.—What is the focative case, William?

WILLIAM.
O—_vocativo_—O—

EVANS.
Remember, William; focative is _caret_.

MISTRESS QUICKLY.
And that’s a good root.

EVANS.
’Oman, forbear.

MISTRESS PAGE.
Peace.

EVANS.
What is your genitive case plural, William?

WILLIAM.
Genitive case?

EVANS.
Ay.

WILLIAM.
Genitive: _horum, harum, horum_.

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

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 “whore ’m”!—Fie upon you!

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.
[_To Quickly_.] Prithee, hold thy peace.

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

WILLIAM.
Forsooth, I have forgot.

EVANS.

It is _qui, quae, quod_. If you forget your _quis_, 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.

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, compliment, 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.

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

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.

MISTRESS PAGE.
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.
Ay, 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 Ford._]

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 eats all the draff.”

[_Exit._]

Enter Mistress Ford with John and Robert.

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 Mistress Ford._]

JOHN.
Come, come, take it up.

ROBERT.
Pray heaven it be not full of knight again.

JOHN.
I hope not, I had lief as bear so much lead.

Enter Ford, Page, Shallow, 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 gin, 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.

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.

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.

[_Pulls clothes out of the basket._]

PAGE.
This passes.

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

FORD.
I shall find you anon.

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.

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, that searched a hollow walnut for his wife’s leman.” Satisfy me once more, once more search with me.

[_Exeunt John and Robert with the basket._]

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.
Why, 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.

Enter Falstaff disguised as an old woman, led by Mistress Page.

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

FORD.
I’ll prat her. [_Beats him_.] Out of my door, you witch, you rag, you baggage, you polecat, you runnion! 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!

EVANS.
By 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 her 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, Caius, Evans and Shallow._]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Trust me, he beat him most pitifully.

MISTRESS FORD.
Nay, by th’ 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 tomorrow 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.

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.

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 ragged 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,
Disguised like Herne, with huge horns on his head.

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, oafs 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.

EVANS.

I will teach the children their behaviours, and I will be like a
jackanapes also, to burn the knight with my taber.

FORD.
That will be excellent. I'll go 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.

EVANS.
Let us about it. It is admirable pleasures and fery honest knaveries.

[_Exeunt Page, Ford and 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 moneyed, 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. He’ll 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, my 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.

FALSTAFF.
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 Simple._]

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.

EVANS
Where is mine host?

HOST.
What is the matter, sir?

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 Readings, 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 Evans._]

Enter Doctor Caius.

CAIUS.
Vere is mine host de Jarteer?

HOST.
Here, Master Doctor, in perplexity and doubtful dilemma.

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 that the court is know to come. I tell you for good will. Adieu.

[_Exit Doctor Caius._]

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 crestfallen as a dried pear. I never prospered since I forswore myself at primero. Well, if my wind were but long enough, 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 villainous 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 tellst thou me of black and blue? I was beaten myself into all the colours of the rainbow, and 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 answered 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, wherein fat Falstaff
Hath a great scene; the image of the jest
I’ll show you here at large. Hark, good mine host:
Tonight 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, even 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 dean’ry, 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 masked and vizarded—
That quaint in green she shall be loose enrobed,
With ribbons pendant 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, 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 tonight 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 tonight 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. The street in Windsor

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.

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

MISTRESS PAGE.
Fare you well, sir.

[_Exit 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 heartbreak.

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, and children as Fairies.

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 wearing a buck’s head.

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 “Greensleeves”, hail kissing-comfits and snow eringoes; let there come a tempest of provocation, I will shelter me here.

[_He embraces her._]

MISTRESS FORD.
Mistress Page is come with me, sweetheart.

FALSTAFF.
Divide me like a bribed 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!

[_A noise of horns within._]

MISTRESS PAGE.
Alas, what noise?

MISTRESS FORD.
Heaven forgive our sins!

FALSTAFF.
What should this be?

MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE.
Away, away!

[_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 Mistress Quickly as the Queen of Fairies, Sir Hugh Evans as a Satyr, Pistol as Hobgoblin, Anne Page and children as Fairies, carrying 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._]

EVANS
Where’s Bead? Go you, and where you find a maid
That ere she sleep has thrice her prayers said,
Rein 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, oafs, 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.
Th’ 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 em’rald tufts, flowers purple, blue and white,
Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery,
Buckled below fair knighthood’s bending knee.
Fairies use flowers for their charactery.
Away, disperse! But till ’tis one o’clock,
Our dance of custom round about the oak

Of Herne the hunter let us not forget.

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’erlooked 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.

EVANS.
Come, will this wood take fire?

[_They put the tapers to his fingers, and he starts._]

FALSTAFF.
O, o, o!

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 villainy.
Pinch him and burn him and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

[_During the song they pinch him, and Doctor Caius comes one way and steals away a boy in green; and Slender another way takes a boy in white; Fenton comes in and steals away Anne Page. A noise of hunting is heard within and all the fairies run away. Falstaff pulls off his buck’s head, and rises up._]

Enter Page, Ford, Mistress Page and Mistress Ford.

PAGE.
Nay, do not fly. I think we have watched 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?

[_She points to the horns._]

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!

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

FORD.
Well said, fairy Hugh.

EVANS.
And leave you 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 cox-comb of frieze? ’Tis time I were choked with a piece of toasted cheese.

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 thrust 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?

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 tonight 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 swinged him, or he should have swinged 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.

CAIUS
Vere is Mistress Page? By gar, I am cozened, I ha’ married _un garçon_, 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?

CAIUS.
Ay, by gar, and ’tis a boy. By gar, I’ll raise all Windsor.

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

Enter Fenton and Anne Page.

PAGE.
My heart misgives me. Here comes Master Fenton.—How now, Master Fenton!

ANNE.
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.
Th’ 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 eschewed 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._]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR ***

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