

William Shakespeare The Merry Wives of Windsor

Dramatis Personae

Sir John Falstaff Fenton, a young gentleman
Shallow, a country justice
Slender, cousin to Shallow
Ford, Gentleman dwelling at Windsor
Page, Gentleman dwelling at Windsor
William Page, a boy, son to Page
Sir Hugh Evans, a Welsh parson
Doctor Caius, a French physician
Host of the Garter Inn Bardolph, Pistol, Nym,
Followers of Falstaff Robin, page to Falstaff Simple,
servant to Slender
Rugby, servant to Doctor Caius
Mistress Ford, Mistress Page, Mistress Anne Page,
her daughter, in love with Fenton
Mistress Quickly, servant to Doctor Caius
Servants to Page, Ford, ect.

Scene: Windsor; and the neighbourhood.

Act I

Scene 1

Windsor. Before PAGE's house.

*Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR HUGH
EVANS.*

Robert 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.'

Robert Shallow

Ay, cousin Slender, and 'Custalourum.

Slender

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

Robert Shallow

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

Slender

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

Robert Shallow

It is an old coat.

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Robert Shallow

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

Slender

I may quarter, coz.

Robert Shallow

You may, by marrying.

Sir Hugh Evans

It is marring indeed, if he quarter it.

Robert Shallow

Not a whit.

Sir Hugh Evans

Yes, py'r lady; if he has a quarter of your coat, there is but three skirts for yourself, in my simple conjectures: but that is all one. If Sir John Falstaff have committed disparagements

unto

you, I am of the church, and will be glad to do my benevolence to make atonements and

compremisses

between you.

Robert Shallow

The council shall bear it; it is a riot.

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Robert Shallow

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

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Slender

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

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Master
Abraham and Mistress Anne Page.

Slender

Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred
pound?

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Slender

I know the young gentlewoman; she has good
gifts.

Sir Hugh Evans

Seven hundred pounds and possibilities is goot
gifts.

Robert Shallow

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

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Knocks

What, hoa! Got pless your house here!

Page

[Within] Who's there?

Enter PAGE.

Sir Hugh Evans

Here is Got's plessing, and your friend, and
Justice

Shallow; and here young Master Slender, that
peradventures shall tell you another tale, if
matters grow to your likings.

Page

I am glad to see your worships well.

I thank you for my venison, Master Shallow.

Robert 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.

Robert 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.

Robert Shallow

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

Page

A cur, sir.

Robert Shallow

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

Page

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

Sir Hugh Evans

It is spoke as a Christians ought to speak.

Robert Shallow

He hath wronged me, Master Page.

Page

Sir, he doth in some sort confess it.

Robert Shallow

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

Page

Here comes Sir John.

Enter FALSTAFF, BARDOLPH, NYM, and

PISTOL.

Falstaff

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

Robert Shallow

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

Falstaff

But not kissed your keeper's daughter?

Robert Shallow

Tut, a pin! this shall be answered.

Falstaff

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

Robert Shallow

The council shall know this.

Falstaff

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

Sir Hugh Evans

Pauca verba, Sir John; goot worts.

Falstaff

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

Slender

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

Bardolph

You Banbury cheese!

Slender

Ay, it is no matter.

Pistol

How now, Mephostophilus!

Slender

Ay, it is no matter.

Nym

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

Slender

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

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Page

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

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Falstaff

Pistol!

Pistol

He hears with ears.

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Falstaff

Pistol, did you pick Master Slender's purse?

Slender

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

Falstaff

Is this true, Pistol?

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Pistol

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

Slender

By these gloves, then, 'twas he.

Nym

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

Slender

By this hat, then, he in the red face had it; for though I cannot remember what I did when you
made me
drunk, yet I am not altogether an ass.

Falstaff

What say you, Scarlet and John?

Bardolph

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

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Bardolph

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

Slender

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

Sir Hugh Evans

So Got udge me, that is a virtuous mind.

Falstaff

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

*Enter ANNE PAGE, with wine; MISTRESS FORD
and MISTRESS PAGE, following.*

Page

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

Exit ANNE PAGE.

Slender

O heaven! this is Mistress Anne Page.

Page

How now, Mistress Ford!

Falstaff

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

Kisses her.

Page

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

*Exeunt all except SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR
HUGH EVANS.*

Slender

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

Enter SIMPLE

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

Simple

Book of Riddles! why, did you not lend it to
Alice

Shortcake upon All-hallowmas last, a fortnight
afore Michaelmas?

Robert Shallow

Come, coz; pme?

Slender

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

Robert Shallow

Nay, but understand me.

Slender

So I do, sir.

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Slender

Nay, I will do as my cousin Shallow says: I pray
you, pardon me; he's a justice of peace in his

country, simple though I stand here.

Sir Hugh Evans

But that is not the question: the question is concerning your marriage.

Robert Shallow

Ay, there's the point, sir.

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Slender

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

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Robert Shallow

Cousin Abraham Slender, can you love her?

Slender

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

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Robert 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.

Robert 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;

Robert Shallow

I will wait on him, fair Mistress Anne.

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Exeunt SHALLOW and SIR HUGH EVANS.

Anne Page

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

Slender

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

Anne Page

The dinner attends you, sir.

Slender

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

Exit SIMPLE.

A justice of peace sometimes may be beholding
to his

friend for a man. I keep but three men and a boy
yet, till my mother be dead: but what though? Yet

I

live like a poor gentleman born.

Anne Page

I may not go in without your worship: they will

not

sit till you come.

Slender

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

Anne Page

I pray you, sir, walk in.

Slender

I had rather walk here, I thank you. I bruised
my shin th' other day with playing at sword and
dagger with a master of fence; three 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 Page

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

Slender

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

Anne Page

Ay, indeed, sir.

Slender

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

Re-enter PAGE.

Page

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

Slender

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

Page

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

Slender

Nay, pray you, lead the way.

Page

Come on, sir.

Slender

Mistress Anne, yourself shall go first.

Anne Page

Not I, sir; pray you, keep on.

Slender

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

Exeunt.

Scene 2

The same.

Enter SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE.

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Simple

Well, sir.

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Exeunt.

Scene 3

A room in the Garter Inn.

*Enter FALSTAFF, Host, BARDOLPH, NYM,
PISTOL, [p]and ROBIN.*

Falstaff

Mine host of the Garter!

Host

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

Falstaff

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

Host

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

Falstaff

I sit at ten pounds a week.

Host

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

Falstaff

Do so, good mine host.

Host

I have spoke; let him follow.

To BARDOLPH

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

Exit.

Falstaff

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

Bardolph

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

Pistol

O base Hungarian wight! wilt thou the spigot
wield?

Exit BARDOLPH.

Nym

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

Falstaff

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

Nym

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

Pistol

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

Falstaff

Well, sirs, I am almost out at heels.

Pistol

Why, then, let kibes ensue.

Falstaff

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

Pistol

Young ravens must have food.

Falstaff

Which of you know Ford of this town?

Pistol

I ken the wight: he is of substance good.

Falstaff

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

Pistol

Two yards, and more.

Falstaff

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

Pistol

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

Nym

The anchor is deep: will that humour pass?

Falstaff

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

Pistol

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

Nym

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

Falstaff

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

Pistol

Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

Nym

I thank thee for that humour.

Falstaff

O, she did so course o'er my exteriors with such a

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

Pistol

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

Nym

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

Falstaff

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

His dove will prove, his gold will hold,
And his soft couch defile.

Nym

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

Pistol

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

Exeunt.

Scene 4

A room in DOCTOR CAIUS' house.

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY, SIMPLE, and RUGBY.

Hostess Quickly

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

Rugby

I'll go watch.

Hostess 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.

Hostess Quickly

And Master Slender's your master?

Simple

Ay, forsooth.

Hostess 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.

Hostess 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.

Hostess 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.

Hostess Quickly

Well, heaven send Anne Page no worse fortune!
Tell

Master Parson Evans I will do what I can for your master: Anne is a good girl, and I wish —

Re-enter RUGBY.

Rugby

Out, alas! here comes my master.

Hostess Quickly

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

Shuts SIMPLE in the closet

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

Singing

And down, down, adown-a, amp;c.

Enter DOCTOR CAIUS.

Doctor Caius

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

Hostess Quickly

Ay, forsooth; I'll fetch it you.

Aside

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

Doctor Caius

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

Hostess Quickly

Is it this, sir?

Doctor Caius

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

Hostess Quickly

What, John Rugby! John!

Rugby

Here, sir!

Doctor Caius

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

Rugby

'Tis ready, sir, here in the porch.

Doctor Caius

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

Hostess Quickly

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

Doctor Caius

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

Pulling SIMPLE out

Rugby, my rapier!

Hostess Quickly

Good master, be content.

Doctor Caius

Wherefore shall I be content-a?

Hostess Quickly

The young man is an honest man.

Doctor Caius

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

Hostess Quickly

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

Doctor Caius

Vell.

Simple

Ay, forsooth; to desire her to —

Hostess Quickly

Peace, I pray you.

Doctor Caius

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

Simple

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

Hostess Quickly

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

Doctor Caius

Sir Hugh send-a you? Rugby, baille me some
paper.

Tarry you a little-a while.

Writes.

Hostess Quickly

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

Simple

[Aside to MISTRESS QUICKLY] 'Tis a great
charge to

come under one body's hand.

Hostess Quickly

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

Doctor Caius

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

Exit SIMPLE.

Hostess Quickly

Alas, he speaks but for his friend.

Doctor Caius

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

Hostess Quickly

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

Doctor Caius

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

Exeunt DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY.

Hostess 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.