

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
compromises
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 work 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 fi

nd 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;
I hope, upon familiarity will grow more
contempt:
but if you say, 'Marry her,' I will marry her;
that
I am freely dissolved, and dissolutely.

Sir Hugh Evans

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

Robert Shallow

Ay, I think my cousin meant well.

Slender

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

Robert Shallow

Here comes fair Mistress Anne.

Re-enter ANNE PAGE

Would I were young for your sake,
Mistress Anne!

Anne Page

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

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
thrif. Briefly, I do mean to make love to
Ford's
wife: I spy entertainment in her; she
discourses,
she carves, she gives the leer of invitation:
I
can construe the action of her familiar
style; and
the hardest voice of her behavior, to be
Englished
rightly, is, 'I am Sir John Falstaff's.'

Pistol

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

Nym

The anchor is deep: will that humour pass?

Falstaff

Now, the report goes she has all the rule of

her

husband's purse: he hath a legion of angels.

Pistol

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

Nym

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

Falstaff

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

Pistol

Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

Nym

I thank thee for that humour.

Falstaff

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

Pistol

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

Nym

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

Falstaff

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

Exeunt FALSTAFF and ROBIN.

Pistol

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

Nym

I have operations which be humours of revenge.

Pistol

Wilt thou revenge?

Nym

By welkin and her star!

Pistol

With wit or steel?

Nym

With both the humours, I:
I will discuss the humour of this love to

Page.

Pistol

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

Nym

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

dangerous:
that is my true humour.

Pistol

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

Exeunt.

Scene 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