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978-1-108-00594-4 - The Merry Wives of Windsor, Volume 22

William Shakespeare

Excerpt

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THE MERRY WIVES  
OF WINDSOR

## The scene : Windsor

### CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF

FENTON, *a young gentleman*

ROBERT SHALLOW, *a country justice*

ABRAHAM SLENDER, *his wise cousin*

FRANK FORD }  
 GEORGE PAGE } *two citizens of Windsor*

WILLIAM PAGE, *a boy, son to Master Page*

SIR HUGH EVANS, *a Welsh parson*

DOCTOR CAIUS, *a French physician*

*The Host of the Garter Inn*

BARDOLPH }  
 PISTOL } *irregular humorists, followers of Falstaff*  
 NYM }

ROBIN, *page to Falstaff*

SIMPLE, *servant to Slender*

JOHN RUGBY, *servant to Doctor Caius*

JOHN }  
 ROBERT } *servants to Master Ford*

MISTRESS FORD }  
 MISTRESS PAGE } *the merry wives*

ANNE PAGE, *her daughter, beloved of Fenton*

MISTRESS QUICKLY, *servant to Doctor Caius*

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[1. 1.] *A street in Windsor, before the house of Master Page  
Trees and a seat*

*Justice SHALLOW, SLENDER, and Sir HUGH EVANS  
approach, holding lively conversation*

*Shallow* [*boily*]. 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* [*nodding*]. 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 10  
three hundred years.

*Slender*. All his successors—gone before him—have done’t: and all his ancestors—that come after him—may... They may give the dozen white luses in their coat.

*Shallow* [*proudly*]. 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* [*coldly*]. The luce is the fresh fish—the salt fish is an old †cod. 20

*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’rlady: if he has a quarter of your coat,

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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.

30

*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 God in a riot: the council, look you, shall desire to hear the fear of God, 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 better that friends is the sword, and end it: and there is also another device in my brain, which peradventure brings good discretions with it....There is Anne Page, which is daughter to Master Thomas Page, which is pretty virginity.

40

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

*Evans.* It is that very person for all the world, as just as you will desire, and seven hundred pounds of moneys, and gold, and silver, is her grandsire, upon his death's-bed—God deliver to a joyful resurrection!—give, when she is able to overtake seventeen years old....It were a good motion if we leave our prattles and prabbles, and desire a marriage between Master Abraham and Mistress Anne Page.

50

†*Shallow.* Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pound?

*Evans.* Ay, and her father is make her a better penny.

†*Shallow.* I know the young gentlewoman. She has good gifts.

*Evans.* Seven hundred pounds, and possibilities, is good gifts.

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1. 1. 60

## OF WINDSOR

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*Shallow.* Well, let us see honest Master Page...Is Falstaff 60  
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 and calls*] What, ho! Got-pleas your  
house here!

*Page* [*from within*]. Who's there?

*Evans.* Here is Got's plesing, and your friend, and  
Justice Shallow, and here young Master Slender...that 70  
peradventures shall tell you another tale, if matters grow  
to your likings.

*Page* [*opens the door and comes out*]. 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. 80

*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 90  
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.

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## THE MERRY WIVES

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*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,  
100 saith he is wronged.*Page.* Here comes Sir John.*Sir JOHN FALSTAFF, BARDOLPH, NYM, and  
PISTOL come from the house**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.110 *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 afterward picked my pocket.]120 *Bardolph.* You Banbury cheese! [*he draws his sword*]*Slender.* Ay, it is no matter.*Pistol.* How now, Mephostophilus! [*he also draws*]*Slender* [*faintly*]. Ay, it is no matter.

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I. I. 124

## OF WINDSOR

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*Nym* [*pricks him with his sword*]. Slice, I say; pauca, pauca: slice! that's my humour.

*Slender* [*desperate*]. Where's Simple, my man? can you tell, cousin?

*Evans* [*comes between them*]. Peace, I pray you...[*the three withdraw*] Now let us understand...[*takes out a notebook*] There is three umpires in this matter, as I understand; [*writes*] 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. 130

*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. [*he writes again*]

*Falstaff*. Pistol.

*Pistol*. He hears with ears.

*Evans* [*looks up*]. The tevil and his tam! what phrase is this, 'He hears with ear'? why, it is affectations. 140

*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, 150

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.

[*pointing at Nym*]

*Nym*. Be avised, sir, and pass good humours: I will say

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'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  
160 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,  
170 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.

*During this talk ANNE PAGE, bearing wine, comes from the house, with Mistress PAGE and Mistress FORD*

*Page.* Nay daughter, carry the wine in—we'll drink within. [*she obeys*]

*Slender.* O heaven...this is Mistress Anne Page!

*Page.* How now, Mistress Ford!

*Falstaff.* Mistress Ford, by my troth, you are very well  
180 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.

[*all but Slender enter the house*]

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



*SIMPLE comes up the street*

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 190 Michaelmas?

*SHALLOW and EVANS return to look for SLENDER*

*Shallow.* Come coz, come coz, we stay for you...[*taking him by the arm*] 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* [*at his other side*]. Give ear to his motions; Master 200 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. 210

*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

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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  
220 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  
230 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 'ort 'dissolutely': the 'ort is, according to our meaning, 'resolutely': his meaning is goot.

*Shallow.* Ay...I think my cousin meant well.

240 *Slender.* Ay, or else I would I might be hanged, la!

*ANNE PAGE returns*

*Shallow.* Here comes fair Mistress Anne; [*he bows*] Would I were young for your sake, Mistress Anne!

*Anne* [*curtsies*]. The dinner is on the table. My father desires your worships' company.

*Shallow.* I will wait on him, fair Mistress Anne.

*Evans* [*hurries in*]. Od's plessed-will...I will not be absence at the grace. [*Shallow follows*]