

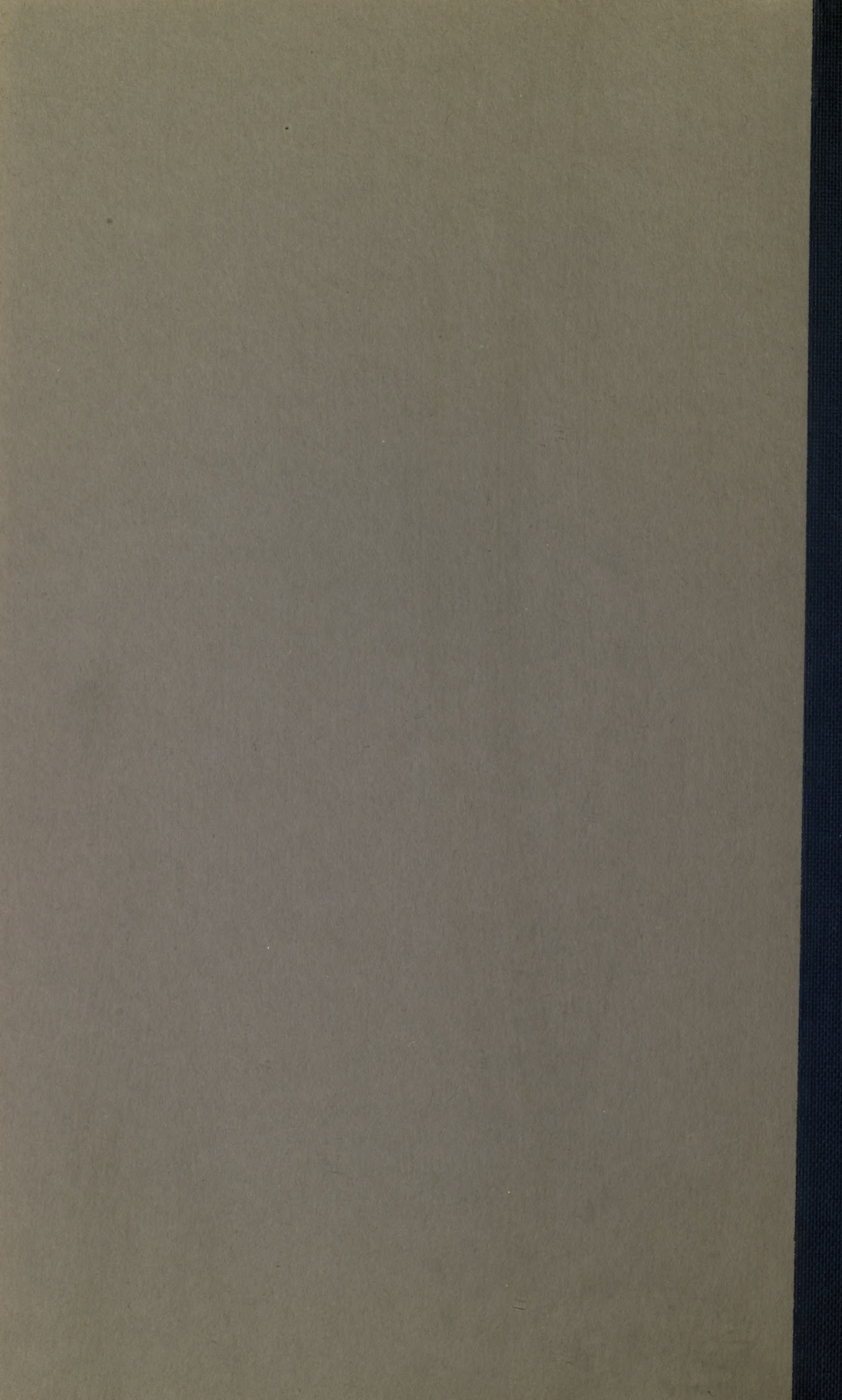
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The problem of the merry wives  
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THE SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION

THE PROBLEM OF  
'THE MERRY WIVES  
OF WINDSOR'

BY

THE RT. HON. J. M. ROBERTSON, M.P.

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READ  
NOVEMBER 9TH, 1917

## SYNOPSIS

THE problem of the two Falstaffs—Impossibility of placing the 'Wives' at any point in the sequence of the Falstaff plays—Clashing propositions—The probable early origination of the play—This compatible with the tradition of Elizabeth's commission—A 'Jealous Comedy' early in 1593—This suppressed because of the 'German' item in the plot—The quarto, though piratical, represents an early form of the play—In this, Falstaff is *not old*—The Queen's request pointed to a revival of the suppressed play, which she may possibly have seen—Falstaff (originally Oldcastle) now assimilated to the fat *old* Knight of the 'Henry IV' plays—The assimilation is incomplete: Mrs. Quickly remains young while Falstaff is made old—The adaptation not made by Shakespeare—Traces of Chapman at this stage—His possible collaboration in the original play—The Italian plot—Traces of Shakespeare in the quarto version—His share a small one in both stages—Falstaff not originally created by him—The later Mrs. Quickly (or simple 'Hostess') his work—Problems set up by the Falstaff group in the four Falstaff plays.

## THE PROBLEM OF 'THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.'

### § 1.

IN his charming paper on 'The Rejection of Falstaff'—a problem which calls for separate treatment—Professor A. C. Bradley puts with humorous resignation the dilemma created for Shakespeareans by acceptance of the traditional canon in regard to *The Merry Wives*:

Falstaff was degraded by Shakespeare himself. The original character is to be found alive in the two parts of *Henry IV*, dead in *Henry V*, and nowhere else. But not very long after these plays were composed, Shakespeare wrote, and he afterwards revised, the very entertaining piece called *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Perhaps his company wanted a new play on a sudden; or perhaps, as one would rather believe, the tradition may be true that Queen Elizabeth, delighted with the Falstaff scenes of *Henry IV*, expressed a wish to see the hero of them again, and to see him in love. Now it was no more possible for Shakespeare to show his own Falstaff in love than to turn twice two into five. But he could write in haste—the tradition says, in a fortnight—a comedy or farce differing from all his other plays in this, that its scene is laid in English middle-class life, and that it is prosaic almost to the end. And among the characters he could introduce a disreputable fat old Knight with attendants, and could call them Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym. And he could represent this Knight assailing, for financial purposes, the virtue of two matrons, and in the event baffled, duped, treated like dirty linen, beaten, burnt, pricked, mocked, insulted, and, worst of all, repentant and didactic. It is horrible. It is almost enough to convince one that Shakespeare himself could sanction the parody of Ophelia in the *Two Noble Kinsmen*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Oxford Lectures on Poetry,' 1909, pp. 247-8.

This is a vividly accurate statement of the case, as the traditional canon forces it on us. Professor Bradley leaves the problem without any attempt at a solution, not even dealing with some old attempts which might have indicated one. Certainly they were inadequate, but they were at points suggestive; and they raised up still further prodigies of perplexity, which insistently imply that there is something wrong with the traditional canon. It ought not, then, to be an unwelcome proposition to Professor Bradley and Shakespeareans in general that we have all been traditionally misinformed. And the proposition, I think, can be critically made out, with the result of substituting a true and intelligible conception for a medley of perplexities.

### § 2.

THE origination of *The Merry Wives* is a problem involving 1 and 2 *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, and is thus of comprehensive importance. Hitherto the authorship has never been even partially called in question, though the difficulty set up by the puzzling relation of the *Wives* to the historical plays was early recognised. Dr. Johnson held that it 'should be read between *K. Henry IV* and *K. Henry V*,' without attempting to face the mountainous objections. Malone, on the score of the references to the 'mad prince,'<sup>1</sup> and 'the wild prince and Poin,'<sup>2</sup> proposed to 'read it' between the two parts of *Henry IV*, equally ignoring the difficulties. In another note, admitting difficulties, he proposed to 'read' the play as Johnson placed it, but surmised that it was written after *Henry V*, the poet 'reviving' Falstaff and his followers for purposes of literary entertainment. Knight, in turn, held the *Wives* to be the earliest of the four plays dealing with Falstaff;

<sup>1</sup> Quarto, oak scene.

<sup>2</sup> Folio, III, ii, 74.



and Halliwell-Phillips, while somewhat confusedly declaring a position between 1 and 2 *Henry IV* to be the solution which involved the fewest inconsistencies, preferred to suppose that the Falstaff of the *Wives* is rustivating after his dismissal by the young King—a hopeless compromise.

Halliwell-Phillips, however, is the first to avow plainly that ‘it is quite impossible, under any supposition of date, to reconcile the Quickly of *The Merry Wives* with the Quickly of the historical plays.’<sup>1</sup> When indeed he proceeds to ask :

If we suppose, as Mr. Knight supposes, that the *Merry Wives* is first of all in order, how is it possible that Mistress Quickly, who is not a wife, could meet Falstaff at Windsor, and not recognise the hero of the Boar’s Head ?

he puts an entirely unintelligible dilemma. It is on his own hypothesis, and not on Knight’s, that a Mrs. Quickly who knows not Falstaff at Windsor is a puzzle. But every hypothesis in turn fails to secure chronological coherence for the series of Falstaff plays. The Falstaff of the *Wives* is to all intents and purposes as old as is he of the *Henry IV* plays, whom Mrs. Quickly has known for nine-and-twenty years ; while Falstaff himself (a bad witness, certainly) there professes to have maintained Bardolph’s salamander for two-and-thirty. And the incongruities do not end there. The action of the two *Henry IV* plays is continuous, ostensibly covering only a few months ; yet Mrs. Quickly (if it be she) is a wife in the first and either unmarried or a widow in the second, with no mention of her husband’s death. And the relations between Falstaff and Justice Shallow in 2 *Henry IV* and the *Wives* are equally incompatible.

All this, as it happens, is partly in the way of

<sup>1</sup> Introd. to S. S. ed. of the Quarto. Rep. in Hazlitt’s Sh. Lib., II, ii, 122.

theatrical evolution elsewhere. In the Italian comedy of types, personages with the same type-labels appear in many plays in succession; and Molière, who founds on Italian comedy, carries on the process, making Sganarelle, for instance, appear in a whole series of plays, in varying capacities. The origin of the name is not known; and it stands not for a personality but for a type, the cast of character being always the same, without any biographical identity. It was a way of giving ready effect to the comic gift of a particular actor—in this case, to Molière's own. But when a quasi-historical character is made to appear in quasi-historical plays in the same environment, he is posited as a real person, not as a type; and no one in the *Henry IV* plays is more real than Falstaff, sublimation of humour though he be. To re-introduce him, then, in a comedy of contemporary life, with some of his normal attendants, is an artistically anomalous proceeding, surprising on the part of Shakespeare, supposing the character to have been already 'created' in the historical plays. And the Falstaff of the *Wives* has certainly the appearance of being a reproduction, however inadequate, of the already projected fat old knight of the *Henry IV* plays. This is our dilemma. It was all very well for Dyce to protest that we should 'read' the play in no chronological connection, but take it simply as an independent piece. We do so perforce. But the literary problem remains; and Fleay, who concurs with Dyce, ought to have faced and handled it.

### § 3.

ON the face of the case, there is an unusual plausibility in the tradition about the production of the play at the behest of Queen Elizabeth; though it is to be noted that the item of her desiring to see 'Falstaff in love'

is not in the first form of the story, as given by Dennis (1702). That the piece was written in a fortnight is credible enough: some of Molière’s plays we are told (though the statement has been doubted) were produced in no more time, some in much less. But the fact that the play is almost wholly in prose might easily enough *suggest* the explanation of haste; and the story that Elizabeth wanted to see Falstaff in love is also a likely enough explanatory guess to account for the not very successful reproduction of the character. Dennis, of course, is not on that score to be suspected of inventing the tradition, for he held that the Falstaff of the *Wives* ‘is certainly superior to that of the Second Part of *Henry the Fourth*, so it can hardly be said to be inferior to that of the First.’ No one for a hundred years past, it is to be hoped, has acquiesced in that estimate, if anyone ever did. But as even Dennis held it ‘an attempt surpassing human wit’ to make such a play ‘all just and fit’ in a fortnight—though successful plays have been framed in less time—we may reasonably divine that in the seventeenth century many competent readers had recognised the falling-off in the Falstaff of the *Wives*. The tradition is thus open to suspicion as an explanatory myth. And as the explanation offered leaves us still hopelessly puzzled over the procedure assigned to Shakespeare, the spirit of criticism is fain to probe further, with the ultimate result of finding that the tradition may after all be valid, under a new interpretation.

If we dismiss all presuppositions and simply seek to divine the procedure from the plays themselves, our first cast is not unlikely to be what Halliwell-Phillipps dismissed as ‘the unsupported conjecture’ that the two Falstaffs ‘were originally two distinct characters.’ Immediately after calling it unsupported, he writes: ‘That the conjecture does explain several difficulties, I admit’; which would seem to be support.

That the dramatist who had presented the elderly Mistress Quickly and the fat old Falstaff should reproduce them in a different environment is abstractly conceivable. Very well, too, might he take the widow (or wife) back to her youth. But why should he make Mistress Quickly relatively young and leave Falstaff old? If the plot involved putting *her* in love, it would be intelligible, but no such thing is broached; and we have a relatively ineffective Quickly faced by a relatively unsuccessful Falstaff. Some Shakespearean touches, indeed, we find in both; and thereby hangs our solution; but in the main Mistress Quickly in the *Wives* is as unsatisfying as Falstaff.

Now if, on the other hand, we suppose with Knight that the *Wives* is the earlier play, *without* assuming with him that Shakespeare wholly wrote it, we at once get rid of some difficulties. Given an existing stage figure of a Mrs. Quickly, a young or youngish woman, in a play with the fat knight, a dramatist might very naturally present *her* as an elderly widow in a later play, making her say she had known the fat knight for twenty-nine years. The correlative question is this: Was the fat knight *old* when he was first presented? For the answer we must return to the 1602 Quarto, commonly called the 'first sketch,' of the *Merry Wives*. Long ago Knight recognised that though this was a mutilated and piratical version or report, it was none the less a version of an earlier form of the play than that we possess in the Folio. On this most of the critics are now agreed.<sup>1</sup> While the Quarto presents certain items which are lacking in the Folio, that has a quantity of clearly additional and substituted matter. Now, in the Quarto version, which yields a play evidently written long before 1602, *Falstaff is fat, but not old*. This fact, which has apparently escaped the notice

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Greg's valuable edition of the Quarto, in the Tudor and Stuart Library, 1910.

of all the editors, is of cardinal importance. In the completed play, we have these six references to Falstaff’s age :

You are not young : no more am I.

(Falstaff’s Letter : II, i, 6.)

One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with age to show himself a young gallant.

(Mrs. Page’s comment.)

Sayest thou so, old Jack? go thy ways. I’ll make more of thy old body than I have done.

(Falstaff to himself : II, ii, 145-6.)

This old fat fellow.

(Page’s description : IV, iv, 15.)

I went to her, Master Brooke, as you see, like a poor old man.

(Falstaff of himself : V, i, last speech.)

Old, cold, withered and of intolerable entrails.

(Page’s description : V, iv, 161-2.)

Now, five of these six passages are entirely absent from the Quarto. Falstaff himself there uses the phrases :

Ah, Jack, will thy old body yet hold out? . . .

Good body, I thank thee, and I’ll make more of thee than I ha’ done.

Sc. vi, 544-7.

Jest, ’tis well : have I lived to these years to be gulled now?

Sc. xviii, 1539-40.

but these are not avowals of old age, in a period in which men—Shakespeare included—vaguely called themselves old in their forties; and there is nothing in the piece to suggest that Falstaff is ‘old . . . withered.’ No character so speaks of him. Since, then, his old age in the expanded version is six times insisted on, and is never once really alleged in the Quarto, we are bound to infer that it was not indicated in the real ‘first sketch.’ In short, Falstaff at his first ‘Shakespearean’ appearance on the stage is simply fat and reasonably mature; and when Mrs. Quickly in 2 *Henry IV* says she has known him these twenty-nine years, she, also a known stage character and as such keeping

her maiden name, is as it were alluding to their early stage acquaintance. That is to say, *The Merry Wives* in its first form is the first in the series of the Falstaff plays as we have them.

## § 4.

THIS view, here reached by a simple collation of the plays, is strongly supported by the grounds offered long ago by Knight for his similar conclusion, namely, the allusions to 'cosen Garmombles' in the Quarto, and to the Germans, cozen-Germans, and the 'Duke de Jamany' in the Folio, in the obviously mutilated episode of horse-stealing. *Garmombles* is evidently an inversion of the name *Mümpelgart*, otherwise the 'Duke de Jarmany'; and the passages in question, telling of some use of post-horses without payment, must be held to connect with the visit of Count Mümpelgart (in his passport named Mombeliard), later Duke of Würtemberg<sup>1</sup> and Teck, who visited Windsor in 1592. Lord Howard had issued an order to all Justices of Peace, Mayors, and Bailiffs to provide the German nobleman with post horses in his travel to the seaside, and shipping thence, '*he pay[ing] nothing for the same.*'<sup>2</sup> It is pretty clear that the gratuitous use of post horses by the Count on his journey had in the play been wrought into an episode of horse-stealing, by way of a trick played on Mine Host by Dr. Caius and Sir Hugh, in revenge for his fooling of them in the duel episode.

<sup>1</sup> This title, as is noted by Cohn and Halliwell-Phillipps, accrued after 1592. It was possibly by way of disguising the reference to Count Mombeliard or Mümpelgart that the 'Garmaine Duke' is specified in both versions; but as the Count became Duke in August, 1593, his new title may have accrued before the first production of the piece under its present title.

<sup>2</sup> Document rep. by Knight, 'Studies in Shakespeare,' pp. 250-1; also by Halliwell-Phillipps, introd. cited; by Cohn, 'Shakespeare in Germany, p. xiii; and in introd. to Arden ed. of the plays.

From this two inferences follow. First, the play is likely to have been first produced not long after 1592. Knight urges that ‘What would be a good joke when the Court was at Windsor in 1593, with the visit of the Duke fresh in the memory of the courtiers, would lose its point at a later period.’ It is unnecessary to be precise; but it certainly seems very unlikely that the episode was not employed till ‘somewhere about 1598,’<sup>1</sup> when it would have been a very old story. Secondly, an early date is in keeping with the very fact that the play, in both texts, has visibly been mutilated at the points of the horse-stealing episode. Lord Howard’s order, giving the German Count the free use of English post-horses and shipping, meant either a *corvée* on individuals or an official undertaking to pay the bills—quite possibly the former, under Elizabeth’s régime. (Remember Falstaff’s outburst in this sense in 2 *Henry IV*, V, iii, 142-4.) Any protest or insinuation on the subject, then, would partake of ‘sedition’; and it is easily conceivable that a play in which governmental action was freely handled would be put under censorship. It may well have been, indeed, that the piece had to be for a time withdrawn; that during the interval Falstaff underwent development on other lines; and that it was ultimately revived in some such fashion as the tradition affirms.

Such a view is consistent with the alterations that the play has undergone. What has mainly happened in the expanded Folio version is a transference to Falstaff of the characteristic of age under which he had been so successfully presented in *Henry IV*. And here we have a possible fulfilment of the tradition. Queen Elizabeth may very well have seen or heard of the early play, and, after having seen *Henry IV*, may have asked to see ‘Falstaff in love,’ meaning the old play. In that case, it would have been revised and expanded, as it admittedly is in the Folio. But it does not follow

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Greg’s date for the first draft, agreeing with the general view.

that Shakespeare was the sole, or even in part, adapter. That is the assumption grafted on the tradition, but it is not given us in the evidence. What we do find is a new speech written to the address of the Queen, but put in a very inappropriate mouth, as indeed are the Fairy Queen's speeches in the Quarto. In the original play there is no allusion to Queen Elizabeth; whereas in the later version Mrs. Quickly as Queen of the fairies makes an entirely new speech, bringing in the Castle and its royal mistress. It is still more out of character, for her, than the first; and it is doubly out of character for her in her developed personality. Starting as a simple chattering go-between for everybody, she depends for her effect in the expanded play very much on her 'nice derangement of epitaphs,' rivalling Sir Hugh in her mis-handling of the Queen's English. In the *Henry IV* plays she is in the main a wholly humorous figure, the incarnation of the illiterate absurd. In the *Wives* Mrs. Ford calls her 'that foolish carrion.' Yet in the last Act she is made to deliver a speech in nearly the highest poetic style (which, however, is not very high) attained in the play. Did Shakespeare do this?

The question has been raised whether the *Qu.* prefixed to the principal speech in the Folio stands for *Queen* (i.e., of the Fairies) or *Quickly*. But elsewhere *Qu.* and *Qui.* are used indifferently for *Quickly*; and of the four speeches assigned to the part in this scene, two have the prefix *Qui.* and two *Qu.* It is clear that *Quickly* was intended, she having been unquestionably Queen of the Fairies in the Quarto version. The same conclusion is reached by a survey of the situation. As Mr. Greg points out, 'many editors have been very properly shocked at the idea of Mrs. *Quickly* taking the part of the Fairy Queen, but they have fallen into a far worse error in giving the rôle to Anne! The part of Queen is just the one part which Anne cannot



possibly take if she is to make good her escape with Fenton.’<sup>1</sup> It is true that Mrs. Page has previously said: ‘My Nan shall be the queen of all the fairies’; but it is clear that if Anne drew all eyes to her by speaking throughout the scene, the mistakes of Dr. Caius and Slender could not well have been made. The part must be taken by Mrs. Quickly. The other women being present in their own characters, the boy who played her part was the only other qualified performer available. This might be reckoned a reason which would compel even Shakespeare to perpetrate an anomaly. But the diction of the speech is nearly as incompatible with Shakespeare’s authorship as is the placing of it; and at this point we are moved to ask whether any other hand can be identified in the anomalous matter.

§ 5.

IN the raising of such an issue, the first clues to be looked for are those of phrase, word, and idea; unless there is some mark of style that is specially salient. In mediocre Elizabethan work, the last is not often to be met with, by reason of the facility of the technique: what is more likely to stand out is a specialty of vocabulary or allusion; and it is so here. For instance, line 55 (Globe ed.) of Evans’s opening speech in the fairy scene points to Chapman’s *May-Day*, III, iii, 138-9 (ed. Parrott); and when we find in the same scene in that play the word ‘pinnacle,’ which in the Shakespeare Concordance occurs only in the *Wives* and in the non-Shakespearean 2 *Henry VI*, we are moved to query further.

Chapman is indeed about the last Elizabethan whom one would expect to find collaborating in a Shakespeare play; and only the discovery, quite unexpectedly

<sup>1</sup> Note, p. 89 of ed. of Quarto.

resulting from an inductive investigation, that he had a main hand in *Timon*, and apparently a share in other composite plays, could have prepared me to recognise any trace of him in the *Wives*. Such quests are obviously precarious; and must be conducted with circumspection even when, as in the present case, the problem of identification is only a subsidiary one. Clues of vocabulary, which in themselves are quite inconclusive, must be checked by tests of style, phrase, and matter, before even a hypothesis is justifiable. On the other hand, resemblances of plot and character cannot by themselves give ground for a theory of identity of authorship: the marked parallels, for instance, between the experiences of Lorenzo in *May-Day* and Falstaff in the *Wives*, or the resemblances of function between Mrs. Quickly and the Temperance of the other play, would count for little if not backed by parallels of phrase, style, and vocabulary. But such parallels there are.

As it happens, it is mainly in the expanded version that we find the verbal clues to Chapman which, to my thinking, tend to prove him to have had a hand in the piece; and several of them occur in Mrs. Quickly's new speech as Fairy Queen. 'Sapphire' and 'embroidery,' occurring in line 75, are both common Chapman words, of which the second occurs nowhere else in the Shakespeare plays, while 'sapphire' is found only in the composite *Comedy of Errors*. 'Charactery,' again (l. 77) occurs only in *Julius Cæsar*, which there is some reason to connect at points with Chapman; and that word too is found in his poetry.<sup>1</sup> 'Expressure,' yet again, occurs in the composite *Troilus and Cressida*, which I think can be shown to implicate Chapman to a large extent; and though it is found in *Twelfth Night* it is also a Chapman word.<sup>2</sup> 'Instalment' (67) occurs

<sup>1</sup> 'Ovid's Banquet of Sense,' st. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Epist. Ded. to Somerset, with trans. of *Odyssey*: Poems, p. 237a.

only here and, with another force, in the composite *Richard III*. Even apart from these clues, however, one might confidently pronounce that Shakespeare would never have put such poetry into the mouth of Mrs. Quickly.

Other clues of phrase and vocabulary in the expanded play may now be noted:

1. 'The beam of her view' (I, iii, 68; *cf.* *L. L. L.*, IV, iii, 28). Note 'the beam of any minds' eye' (*Hermes: Poems*, 296), 'your eyes' beams' (20th *Odyssey*, 373), and Chapman's many references to the 'visual ray.'

2. 'She is a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty'<sup>1</sup> (*Id.* 1. 76). Compare Chapman's poem, *De Guiana, Carmen Epicum*.

3. 'These are of the second edition' (II, i, 78). Compare:

The duke mistakes him . . . for some knight of the new edition.  
(*'Bussy D'Ambois,' I, ii.*)

4. 'Let the sky rain potatoes; let it . . . hail kissing comfits and snow eringoes' (V, iv, 24-27).

The words *potatoes* and *eringoes* occur nowhere else in the Concordance; and it has been attempted to date this play in respect of the fact that they are used by Lodge in his *Devils Incarnate* in 1596. But the commentators who explain and parallel the allusion have not noted that Chapman uses it in his *May-Day* (II, 511), where we have noted other clues to the *Wives*:

A banquet of oyster pies, *potatoes*, skirret-roots, *eringoes*, etc.

And we have 'potatoes' mentioned, with the same meaning, in *Byron's Conspiracy*, III, ii, 15.

<sup>1</sup> This phrase is not in the Quarto, which has only the other Folio phrase; 'They shall be my East and West Indies'—another support for the view that the original play dates before 1595—the year of Raleigh's voyage.

## 5. Compare further :

Everyone a *shower of comfits rains* . . .

In noise of that sweet *hail* her cries were drowned.

‘Hero and Leander,’ 6th Sestiad.

6. ‘Gourd and fullim’ (dice: I, iii, 94) are named only here in the Shakespeare plays. They are mentioned also in Chapman’s *Monsieur D’Olive*, IV, i.

The following words, again, suggest Chapman’s vocabulary :

1. *Laundry* (I, ii, 5) occurs only in this play. Found in Chapman, 22nd Iliad, 135.

2. *Unmeasurable* (II, i, 109) occurs only here and in *Timon*. A Chapman word.

3. *Ransack’d* (II, ii, 306). Found in *Troilus* and in *Winter’s Tale*. Common in Chapman.

4. *Gnawn* (Id. l. 307). Only here. Used by Chapman in 19th Iliad, 54. *Unmeasurable* in same line.

5. *Vizarded* (IV, vi, 40). Occurs only here and in *Troilus*.

6. *Encircle* (IV, iv, 56). Occurs only here and, in participle, in 2 *Henry IV*. Chapman habitually uses ‘circle’ as a verb, and has many formations in *en*.

7. *Diffused* (IV, iv, 54). Found only here. *Diffusest* in the non-Shakespearean masque in the *Tempest*. Chapman has the word frequently in his Homer and elsewhere.

8. *Bloody* = affecting the blood (V, v, 99). This peculiar use is found in Chapman :

O Beauty, this same bloody siege of thine.

‘Ovid’s Banquet,’ st. 66.

The somewhat similar ‘bloody youth,’ in 2 *Henry IV*, IV, i, 34, is, however, Shakespeare’s, though he nearly always uses the word normally. But ‘bloody youth’ (=full-blooded youth) is yet another force.

Incidentally, and, of course, with no thought of

Chapman’s presence, Steevens long ago noted further (1) the parallel between Falstaff’s sentence (I, iii, 72):

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!

and these lines in Chapman’s rendering of the Homeric Hymn to the Sun:

A blaze burns from his golden burgonet  
Which to behold, exceeds the sharpest set  
Of any eye’s *intention*,

(2) the phrase (II, ii, 7) ‘your coach-fellow Nym,’ paralleled in Chapman’s translation of the 10th Iliad (403):

—their chariot-horse, as they coach-fellows were;<sup>1</sup>

and (3) the coincidence between ‘fires . . . unrak’d’ = not bauked-up (V, v, 48) and

—still rake up all thy fire  
In fair cool words

in his version of the 16th Odyssey (302). Steevens noted also (4) that the bear Sackerson (I, i, 307) is mentioned in *Sir Giles Goosecap*, a comedy now assigned by general consent to Chapman.

But without further stressing of vocabulary, it might suffice to ask whether Shakespeare about 1598 wrote the string of flat, double-ended lines which form the beginning of the speech of Fenton substituted in the Folio (IV, vi) for that in the Quarto (sc. xvii, l. 1405 sq.). The Folio reads:

From time to time I have acquainted you  
With the dear love I bear to fair Ann Page,  
Who mutually hath answer’d my affection,  
So far forth as herself might be her chooser,  
Even to my wish: I have a letter from her  
Of such contents as you will wonder at;

<sup>1</sup> Compare ‘his fellow coach-horse’: ‘Monsieur D’Olive,’ IV, i.

The mirth whereof so larded with my matter  
That neither singly can be manifested  
Without the show of both.

In this scene we have fifteen double-endings in 51 lines of blank verse, or nearly 30 per cent; a rate attained by the indisputable Shakespeare only in the plays written at the height of his power. But for that matter he was incapable at any time of such vamping as this. The same commonplace and monotonous versification occurs in Mrs. Page's account of Herne the hunter (IV, iii, 28-38) and in what follows. Here again the Folio version is a flat rewriting of a flat piece of verse in the Quarto (sc. xv, l. 264 *sq.*). To suppose that this is the kind of work Shakespeare would have turned out to please Queen Elizabeth is surely not permitted to us. In a note on scene xii of the Quarto (III, iv, of the expanded play), Mr. Greg points out that Fenton's opening words in the Folio:

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

imply just such a conversation as is given at this point in the Quarto, and adds:

It looks, at first sight, as though Shakespeare, in revising his play, had cut out the very weak passage in the Quarto and substituted these two lines. It must, however, be remembered that there is here no question of the original draft—if such existed—having been by any hand but Shakespeare's, and that it is difficult to imagine how a single one of the first ten lines of the Quarto text could come from his pen. They can only represent Shakespeare as rewritten by some literary hack. But in that case it is just as easy to suppose that the reporter, with but a vague recollection of the scene in his mind, began the conversation at the beginning instead of plunging into the middle of it as Shakespeare did. Such a proceeding is of a piece with his subsequent performance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note in ed. cited. p. 79.

That is to say, the flat verse in the Quarto is the work of the piratical reporter. I hesitate to differ from Mr. Greg on a matter of which he has made a special study; but I am driven to do so here. To his bold solution there are insurmountable objections, even if we ignore the fact that he has already offered the equally striking but much more plausible hypothesis that the primary reporter was the actor who played Mine Host, that being the part most accurately given in the Quarto. Frequently Mr. Greg has with justice charged incompetence on ‘the’ reporter, whoever he was; and now he inclines to credit him with the ability to vamp fluent if flat blank verse to fill out a conversation which Shakespeare had begun too abruptly.

The vital objection is that some of the *rewritten* verse in the Folio, such as the speech of Fenton to the Host, before cited, remains impossibly poor for Shakespeare in 1598. That being so, nothing is gained by the hypothesis that poor verse in the Quarto is the invention of the reporter, who, on a general view of his performance, seems the last man to have thought of rounding off a curtailed conversation in verse. Shakespeare probably did write the new dialogue between Fenton and Anne: it has something of his touch: but the rewritten speech of Fenton to the Host has not. And if we are compelled to admit non-Shakespearean work in the revised Folio version, we are doubly compelled to put in question Shakespeare’s authorship of the Quarto version as a whole. As given there, Fenton’s speech to the Host is only a little poorer than the rewritten version. It is not a case of Shakespeare rewriting Shakespeare; but of someone else rewriting *X*—possibly *X* himself. In the case of Mrs. Page’s rewritten speech on Herne the hunter, the same thing has happened; and concerning the whole scene Mr. Greg admits that ‘it is not impossible that the folio text may represent a reconstruction of later

date.<sup>1</sup> As regards Mrs. Page's speech it certainly does; and as certainly the reconstruction is not penned by Shakespeare. The line:

. In a most hideous and dreadful manner  
may suffice to settle that point.

### § 6.

THAT Shakespeare did *some* work on the revised play is hardly to be doubted; but it is not easy to find it in the verse parts, save in Act III, sc. iv, as aforesaid. Fenton's last speech suggests him at the close; but it has five double-endings in eleven lines—again a proportion very unlikely for him in the nineties. That he did such nugatory fooling as the first scene of Act IV—a stop-gap scene to make time for the main action—is not credible; and indeed the whole development of the humours of Nym and Pistol, Sir Hugh and Dr. Caius and Mine Host, is something beneath him, being within the compass of almost any playwright of the day. But when Slender's dialogue is interpolated with:

I'll ne'er be drunk while 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;

and Mrs. Quickly's with:

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,

we are in a richer vein of humour than that of word-mangling, and nearer to the unmatched quality of the fun at the Boar's Head.

It is surely an exaggeration to say of the Falstaff of the *Wives*, as do the editors of 1 *Henry IV* in the Arden

<sup>1</sup> Ed. cited, p. 82.



series, that, ‘Devoid of wit or humour, he is there haled about like any “head-lugged bear,” to make sport for the vulgar court which is said to have commanded his resurrection.’<sup>1</sup> If Falstaff in this play were ‘devoid of wit or humour’ there would be no literary interest whatever in the part, which amounts to saying that it would be wholly non-Shakespearean. In several of the speeches, as above noted, we find both wit and humour. But it is certainly a just judgment that Falstaff here ‘is not a true re-embodiment of the old knight’ as we have him in *Henry IV*. As we have seen, the evolution is the other way about, the *old* knight being a new incarnation of the merely fat knight of the *Wives*. And, seeing that the play as we finally have it is actually a revision of the first version, it is doubly incredible that Shakespeare is the sole reviser.

What has happened is an adjustment of the revised play to the stage history of Falstaff. The allusion by Falstaff in the Quarto to ‘the mad Prince of Wales, . . . stealing his father’s deer,’ which dissociates Falstaff from Prince Hal, disappears in the Folio version, revised for an audience which now knew Falstaff as the Prince’s companion; and the description of Fenton by Page in the Folio (III, ii) as having kept company with the wild prince and Poins, which is not in the Quarto, is a gratuitous back-reference to *Henry IV*. Shakespeare, I think, would not have made it: it serves no useful purpose, and merely creates mystification by throwing the *Wives*’ story back two hundred years. This, indeed, was a flaw partly present in the first play—arising, perhaps, as a device to obscure the fact that the ‘Garmombles’ episode was contemporary; but to oust Prince Hal from one part of the play and reinstall him in another is not likely to have been a procedure of Shakespeare’s. He, I think, added neither this touch nor the rewritten verse-speeches of Fenton and

<sup>1</sup> Ed. cited, introd. p. xxxi,

Mrs. Quickly, which appear to be assignable to Chapman on the double grounds of vocabulary and style. On the latter head, it may suffice further to compare the Fairy Queen scene and the song with the interlude and songs in Act II of the *The Gentleman Usher* and with the rhymed speeches and songs in the *Mask of the Middle Temple*.

If it be argued that the Fairy Queen scene—apart from the extreme incongruity of giving such speeches to Quickly, Pistol and Sir Hugh—is good enough to be Shakespeare's (though even Mr. Hart admits that is not really good) I answer that it is certainly not too good for Chapman, to whom we are pointed by the specialties of vocabulary, some of them occurring in no other Shakespeare play. The author of the continuation of *Hero and Leander* could certainly have done such a scene, and a better song. Read the Tale of Teras, and you will avow that Chapman could have written this. And I know no other contemporary dramatist to whom it could be assigned by tests either of style or vocabulary.

### § 7.

BUT if we decide that Chapman is the chief reviser, apart from the case of Mrs. Quickly's prose and other items, to whom shall we assign the original play? This is really the hardest part of the problem. Fleay held that the *Wives* originated in the *Jealous Comedy* of January, 1593;<sup>1</sup> and this independently supports the view of Knight. Incidentally, Fleay suggests that in the *Jealous Comedy* Shakespeare worked 'with a coadjutor.' Why not 'adapted a bought play?' Weak as is the

<sup>1</sup> Henslowe's Diary, Greg's ed. i, 15; ii, 156. Mr. Greg, doubting Fleay's theory, asks: 'Why was the performance not repeated?' If the play was the original of the *Wives*, the answer is that, containing a full treatment of the 'Garmombles' episode, it was on that ground vetoed. The single mention in the Diary really strengthens Fleay's hypothesis.

Quarto version of the *Wives* in all poetical quality, it is a vigorous farcical piece; and its Falstaff, though far less resplendent than the companion of Prince Hal, is a successful comic figure as compared with almost anything else done before 1593. It is, however, hard to believe that anybody but Shakespeare put the touch:

You hear these matters denied, gentlemen: you hear it;  
the speech beginning:

Reason, you rogue, reason. Dost thou think I'll endanger my soul gratis?

and the rest of the dialogue anent Mistress Bridget's fan-handle; or the speeches describing the ducking. They all have something of the Falstaffian verve. But though Slender is well vignettèd, Shallow is not only far inferior to the Shallow of *Henry IV*; he is an essentially different conception; and in the historical play he is simply a new creation under an old name, newly and differently related to Falstaff, becoming a friend of Jack's youth, with no intervening episode of deer-killing.

The hypothesis, then, to which we are led by simple induction, is that the original play was drafted by another than Shakespeare, and that Shakespeare did but insert the best of the comic matter. Slender may or may not be his; but the mechanical fun of the French-English and Welsh-English of Dr. Caius and Sir Hugh is not his kind of humour, any more than is Sir Hugh's Latin lesson in the expanded play. That kind of fooling, indeed, is so much in the common way of Elizabethan comedy that in itself it offers no clue to the author. Lodge has such matter in his *Wounds of Civil War*; Greene in his *James IV*; and Dekker in his *Old Fortunatus* and *Shoemaker's Holiday*; to say nothing of later plays. But though Dekker might have drawn Mine Host, one cannot pretend to find in this play his finger-prints. Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym

are more cognate with the humouristic types of Chapman's comedies than with those of Dekker's, which are in general more human and less fantastic. Rather, the intricate structure of the play, with its interwoven plot, suggests the collaboration of several hands, so common in regard to plays in which Dekker worked. But before giving up the primary problem it is worth while to ask whether Chapman, whom we trace in the revision, had not at least a hand in the original. No one, probably, would say that the Quarto version of the *Wives* has in general quite the *facies* of an early Chapman comedy. Chapman, like Shakespeare, lays the scene of all his signed comedies abroad. The anonymous *Sir Giles Goosecap* and the composite *Eastward Ho!* are the only exceptions. But the romance of Fenton and Anne Page is closely comparable to the tales of crossed loves in *All Fools*, *May-Day*, and *The Gentleman Usher*. The *Wives* has, moreover, other plain points of kinship with *May-Day*, as before noted; and its direct debt to Italian fiction<sup>1</sup> is a feature which it shares with Chapman's comedy in general. In the main plot, in particular, the enterprise of Falstaff, with his fooling and humiliation, is closely parallel in the case of Lorenzo in *May-Day*; the part of Mrs. Quickly is a parallel to that of Temperance; and the jealousy of Ford is a companion-study to that of Cornelio in *All Fools*. As regards technique, too, there is not only identity of method between the *Wives* and *May-Day* in respect of the momentary passage from prose to blank verse when the lovers seriously appear as such, but a very noticeable similarity of tune and matter. Compare the speeches of Aurelio and Æmilia with those of Fenton and Anne in the Quarto:

*Aur.* Dear life, be resolute, that no respect,  
 Heighted above the compass of your love,  
 Depress the equal comfort it retains;

<sup>1</sup> See the Variorum and 'Arden' editions.

For since it finds a firm consent in both,  
And both our births and years agree so well,  
If both our aged parents should refuse,  
For any common object of the world,  
To give their hands to ours, let us resolve  
To live together like our lives and souls.

*Æm.* I am resolved, my love ; and yet, alas !  
So much affection to my father's will  
Consorts the true desires I bear to you,  
That I would have no spark of our love seen  
Till his consent be ask'd, and so your father's.

*Aur.* So runs the natural current of my wish,  
And with such staid and circumspect respects  
We may so serve and govern our desires  
That till fit observation of our fathers  
Prefer the notion to them, we may love  
Without their knowledge and the skill of any,  
Save only of my true friend Lodovic.

*Æm.* I wonder where he is ?

*Aur.* Not far, I know.

For in some place he watcheth to prevent  
The feared danger of your father's presence.

*May Day, IV, ii.*

*Fen.* Tell me, sweet Nan, how dost thou yet resolve,  
Shall foolish Slender have thee to his wife ?  
Or one as wise as he, the learned Doctor ?  
Shall such as they enjoy thy maiden heart ?  
Thou know'st that I have always loved thee, dear,  
And thou hast oft times swore the like to me.

*Anne.* Good Master Fenton, you may assure yourself  
My heart is settled upon none but you.  
'Tis as my father and [my] mother please :  
Get their consent, you quickly shall have mine.

*Fen.* Thy father thinks I love thee for his wealth,  
[And] I must needs confess at first that drew me ;  
But since thy virtues wiped that trash away,  
I love thee, Nan, and so dear is it set,  
That whilst I live I ne'er shall thee forget.

*Mrs. Quickly.* God's pity, here comes her father !

The situation is identical; the speeches are as like in diction and matter as peas in a pod; and in both cases we at once step back into the bustling prose of the Italian comedy of realistic intrigue. The love plot, then, could perfectly well be Chapman's; and here and there we have what appear to be *his* finger-prints. The use of 'mutual' in Aurelio's phrase, 'the mutual current of my wish,' is one of Chapman's tics, and we have it in the Quarto line:

And mutually her love again to me.      Sc. xvii, l. 1407.

and twice again in the expanded play:

Who *mutually* hath answered my affection.      (IV, vi, 10.)  
Pinch him, fairies, *mutually*.      (V, v, 103.)

Compare:

And mutually combine  
In either's empire.      Trans. of 4th Iliad, 73.  
Betwixt whom mutual gifts were given.      6th Iliad, 226.  
In mutual slaughters.      11th Iliad, 462.  
Nor these two entertain'd less mind of mutual prejudice.  
16th Iliad, 694.  
The either host fells other mutually.      18th Iliad, 153.  
To do what fits, and reason mutually.      4th Odyssey, 289.

The shaft,  
Golden and mutual, with which love compressed  
Both th'envied lovers.  
'Andromeda Liberata': Poems, p. 191a.  
Where all their herds had mutual place to drink.  
'Achilles' Shield': Shepherd's ed., p. 556b.

With mutual force  
The conflict joined.      *Id. Ib.*

To you, right worthy princes,  
I wish for all your favours pour'd on me  
The love of all these ladies mutually.  
'Byron's Conspiracy,' V, ii.

Another apparent mark is the 'Thou shalt have egress and regress' in scene v, l. 435 (II, i, 225), a phrase which occurs nowhere else in the Shakespeare plays, but is found thrice in Chapman—twice in one scene in *All Fools* (IV, 287, 317), where it figures as a legalism, and again in *May-Day* (II, 466). 'Pickt-hatch' (sc. vi = II, ii, 19), found only in this play in the Shakespeare Concordance, occurs also in Chapman (*Sir Giles Goosecap*, III, i, 68). The cognate expression 'red lattice' (II, ii, 28, found also in 2 *Henry IV*, II, ii, 86), is not in the Quarto; but as the speech of Falstaff is there clearly curtailed at that point, it is likely to have been in the old play; and this again is one of Chapman's items of slang (*All Fools*, V, i, 69; *May-Day*, I, 372). 'All the colours in the rainbow,' which does not recur in the Shakespeare plays till the *Winter's Tale*, occurs in Chapman's *Monsieur D'Olive*, III, ii. *Emulate* (sc. x, l. 848 = III, iii, 58), which elsewhere in Shakespeare's plays occurs only as an adjective in the sense of *emulous*, in *Hamlet*, is again a common verb of Chapman's. *Egregious* (sc. xi, l. 1031), which disappears from the rewritten speech in the amended play (III, iv), and which figures elsewhere in suspect passages in *All's Well* and *Henry V*, is another common Chapmanism. Such clues are singly slight, but collectively suggestive. It remains, however, doubtful whether Chapman framed a whole play so early as 1593, though we know him to have been intimate with Marlowe, who died in that year. All that we are entitled to affirm is that he appears to have had a hand in the original *Wives*, probably under the title of *The Jealous Comedy*; but that his entry *may* have been later, in a recast of that play after its official suppression.

§ 8.

THE essential point is the induction which reveals that Falstaff is not primarily projected in *Henry IV*. Already

we knew that in that play he originally figured as Sir John Oldcastle, a name still indicated in Prince Hal's 'my old lad o' the Castle.' The use of the name being unquestionably a libel on the historic personage, it was changed to Falstaff upon the protest of his descendants and of other people; and in the Epilogue to *2 Henry IV* we have the disclaimer of the management. But the stage character had become famous under the old name, concerning which the legend long lingered. Now, the stage figure is first traceable in the poor old play of *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, written about 1588, probably by Tarleton the actor, as Fleay opines. It is in fact the merest actor's work, having no gleam of literary merit, but a certain primitive vigour of movement. In this old play as we have it, it is practically certain, the part of Oldcastle is much curtailed, being in fact almost elided. In the opening scene, which follows a highway robbery, Prince Henry says:

But, Sirs, I marvel that Sir John Oldcastle comes not away :  
zounds, see where he comes ;

but Oldcastle does *not* come. Either his part is wholly deleted, or his speeches have been put in the mouths of other characters. Throughout the play he makes only one appearance, in the sixth scene, where he exchanges a few words with the prince, the latter boasting of how he will upset things when he is king. In scene x, where the suddenly reformed king harshly dismisses his former companions—a proceeding piously copied in *2 Henry IV*—Oldcastle is not even mentioned; but the *Exeunt Knights* may be taken to have originally included him. He has practically disappeared from the play.

Now, as the *Victories* was entered on the Register in 1594, but apparently not published till 1598, it is not unlikely that the Oldcastle matter in the play was the reason—or one of the reasons—for its being held back.



It finally appears after Shakespeare’s company have had to take Oldcastle out of *their* plays, and then with Oldcastle practically eliminated. But now arises the question whether Falstaff had not originally been Oldcastle in the *Merry Wives* also. Mr. Greg has pointed out that in scene xvi (l. 1305) of the Quarto version of that play, the Host’s remark :

Sir John, there’s his Castle, his standing bed, his trundle bed, suggests that there too he was originally ‘o’ the Castle,’ as in *Henry IV*. And there are other clues. In the Folio, Fenton’s speech before cited goes on thus :

Without the shew of both : fat Falstaff  
Hath a great scene.

Here the rewritten line is unmetrical, and ‘Oldcastle’ would make it scan more correctly. Still, a ‘therein’ or ‘wherein’ would also rectify it. In the Quarto, the corresponding line (1411) will not read with its context :

Her father still against her choice  
Doth seek to marry her to foolish Slender,  
And in a robe of white<sup>1</sup> this night disguised,  
*Wherein fat Falstaff had a mighty scare,*<sup>2</sup>  
Must Slender take and carry her to Catlen [? Eaton].

Nothing can be here inferred save a process of adaptation ; but in the two other verse lines (1268, 1276) in which Falstaff is named, the diction is again suspiciously suggestive of manipulation :

Now *for that* Falstaff hath been so deceived . . .  
*For to* affright *fat* Falstaff in the woods.

If we can safely found on the unmetrical line in the Folio, the substitution may have had to be made in the

<sup>1</sup> Apparently a reporter’s error for *green*.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Greg queries: ‘*Hath a mighty scene.*’

expanded play *after revision*; and that possibility complicates the problem. But when we note that for the Host's 'Sir John, there's his Castle' in the Quarto version there has been substituted in the Folio (IV, 5, 6):

There's *his chamber, his house, his castle*, his standing bed and truckle bed;

*chamber* and *house* being put before *castle*, and the 'Sir John' left out, so as to obliterate the allusion, we are at least confirmed in our inference that the original phrase turned upon the name Oldcastle; and we may reasonably conclude that the change of name was made in the three plays about the same time.

### § 9.

FINALLY, on the view that the *Wives* is the primary play, and that it had been only in part worked up by Shakespeare, we can at least understand the development of the Oldcastle-Falstaff group in *Henry IV*. Oldcastle had presumably been introduced as a comic and knavish character in the old *Famous Victories*, probably on the lines of the Sir John Harpool of *Sir John Oldcastle*, in which Lord Cobham is vindicated, but the comic attraction is not lost. This stage Sir John was unhistorically utilised in the early *Wives* (or *Jealous Comedy*), and, raised to a far higher comic power, was recast by Shakespeare in 1 *Henry IV*, which, however, probably, had a pre-Shakespearean existence. The stage value and the literary charm of Falstaff lie in his wit, apart from which, in the *Wives*, he would be a mere blundering butt; and in *Henry IV* his wit is sublimated to such a point that as butt he is at his best. In the *Wives*, Pistol can joke at his expense; in *Henry IV*, the wit is the monopoly of the master. And there are other changes in the group. In 1 *Henry IV* we have simply a 'Hostess' of the Boar's Head, who is *not* named Mrs.

Quickly, that name appearing merely in our current list of *dramatis personæ*, which is not given in the Folio; and she is 'an honest man's wife.' Further, we have neither Nym nor the Page, the latter reappearing only in Part II, and Nym only in *Henry V*; while in Part I we have Poins, Gadshill, and Peto, the first two coming from the *Victories*, where Poins is Ned, and Gadshill is a name given to the thief by Derick.

It is only in Part II that the Hostess becomes Mrs. Quickly, and here there are fresh modifications, which raise the question whether the revision of the *Wives* took place *between* the production of the First and Second Parts of *Henry IV*. I incline to think that it did; and on *this* view we may agree with Malone to 'read' the play in that order, under the many qualifications now given. But there is never any complete adjustment. In Part I the Hostess is a distinct character, a treasure in that respect; in Part II she becomes 'old Mistress Quickly,' either a widow retaining her maiden name or still unmarried; and in her talk with Doll Tearsheet she reverts partly to the personality of the *Wives*, who makes fun for barren spectators by mangling words. After having Falstaff arrested for debt, she agrees, in an immortal scene, to marry him and sell household stuff to furnish him with money. Here she is the true Hostess of Part I: a little later she forgets her relation, becomes again the Mrs. Quickly of the *Wives*, presents Doll to her affianced, and, recalling that she has known him twenty-nine years, passes from the scene, to re-enter for a moment in *Henry V*, where, in another masterstroke, she describes Falstaff's death. To the same end of using all available material, the Shallow of Windsor becomes Shallow of Gloucestershire, and is wholly recreated by the master's hand, in scenes which, like that of Doll and Falstaff, show him the most modern of realists when he cared to be. Falstaff and Shallow meet without any Windsor

episode to remember; though Mrs. Quickly at her farewell very obscurely recalls it in declaring brokenly that she had not known 'an honester and truer-hearted man.' It is true that the difference made in Shallow in 2 *Henry IV* could consist with the traditional view that the *Wives* is the later play. Either order is at this point abstractly conceivable. But the superiority of the *Henry IV* Shallow, no less than the relative youth of Falstaff and Mrs. Quickly in the Quarto, is explicable only on the view here put.

It is impossible, on a considerate review of it all, to believe that Shakespeare had been the sole draftsman of the *Wives*, or the first moulder of either Falstaff (Oldcastle) or Mrs. Quickly, though he doubtless touched the knight in the early play, and Mrs. Quickly in the expanded version. And when, ostensibly after two Falstaff plays in which there is no Nym, that primitive humorist appears in *Henry V* in his old fashion, we are driven to ask where he has been in the interval, and whether it is Shakespeare who, after discarding him from Falstaff's train, thus reproduces him. There is a literary problem involved in Part II of *Henry IV*; but there is a much bulkier one involved in *Henry V*, which calls for vigilant handling.





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