

Ford

What a damned Epicurean rascal is this! My heart is ready to crack with impatience. Who says this is improvident jealousy? my wife hath sent to him; the hour is fixed; the match is made. Would any man have thought this? See the hell of having a false woman! My bed shall be abused, my coffers ransacked, my reputation gnawn at; and I shall not only receive this villanous wrong, but stand under the adoption of abominable terms, and by him that does me this wrong. Terms! names! Amaimon sounds well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are devils' additions, the names of fiends: but Cuckold! Wittol!—Cuckold! the devil himself hath not such a name. Page is an ass, a secure ass: he will trust his wife; he will not be jealous. I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my aqua-vitae bottle, or a thief to walk my ambling gelding, than my wife with herself; then she plots, then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they think in their hearts they may effect, they will break their hearts but they will effect. God be praised for my jealousy! Eleven o'clock the hour. I will prevent this, detect my wife, be revenged on Falstaff, and laugh at Page. I will about it; better three hours too soon than a minute too late. Fie, fie, fie! cuckold! cuckold! cuckold!

Fenton

From time to time I have acquainted you
With the dear love I bear to fair Anne 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;
The mirth whereof so larded with my matter,
That neither singly can be manifested,
Without the show of both; fat Falstaff
Hath a great scene: the image of the jest
I'll show you here at large. Hark, good mine host.
To-night at Herne's oak, just 'twixt twelve and one,
Must my sweet Nan present the Fairy Queen;
The purpose why, is here: in which disguise,
While other jests are something rank on foot,
Her father hath commanded her to slip
Away with Slender and with him at Eton
Immediately to marry: she hath consented: Now, sir,
Her mother, ever strong against that match
And firm for Doctor Caius, hath appointed
That he shall likewise shuffle her away,
While other sports are tasking of their minds,
And at the deanery, where a priest attends,
Straight marry her: to this her mother's plot

She seemingly obedient likewise hath
Made promise to the doctor. Now, thus it rests:
Her father means she shall be all in white,
And in that habit, when Slender sees his time
To take her by the hand and bid her go,
She shall go with him: her mother hath intended,
The better to denote her to the doctor,
For they must all be mask'd and vizarded,
That quaint in green she shall be loose enrobed,
With ribands pendent, flaring 'bout her head;
And when the doctor spies his vantage ripe,
To pinch her by the hand, and, on that token,
The maid hath given consent to go with him.

Mistress Page

What, have I scaped love-letters in the holiday-
time of my beauty, and am I now a subject for them?
Let me see.

[Reads]

'Ask me no reason why I love you; for though
Love use Reason for his physician, he admits him
not for his counsellor. You are not young, no more
am I; go to then, there's sympathy: you are merry,
so am I; ha, ha! then there's more sympathy: you
love sack, and so do I; would you desire better
sympathy? Let it suffice thee, Mistress Page,—at
the least, if the love of soldier can suffice,—
that I love thee. I will not say, pity me; 'tis
not a soldier-like phrase: but I say, love me. By me,
Thine own true knight,
By day or night,
Or any kind of light,
With all his might
For thee to fight, JOHN FALSTAFF'

What a Herod of Jewry is this! O wicked
world! One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with
age to show himself a young gallant! What an
unweighed behavior hath this Flemish drunkard
picked—with the devil's name!—out of my
conversation, that he dares in this manner assay me?
Why, he hath not been thrice in my company! What
should I say to him? I was then frugal of my
mirth: Heaven forgive me! Why, I'll exhibit a bill

in the parliament for the putting down of men. How shall I be revenged on him? for revenged I will be, as sure as his guts are made of puddings.

Mistress Ford

We burn daylight: here, read, read; perceive how I might be knighted. I shall think the worse of fat men, as long as I have an eye to make difference of men's liking: and yet he would not swear; praised women's modesty; and gave such orderly and well-behaved reproof to all uncomeliness, that I would have sworn his disposition would have gone to the truth of his words; but they do no more adhere and keep place together than the Hundredth Psalm to the tune of 'Green Sleeves.' What tempest, I trow, threw this whale, with so many tuns of oil in his belly, ashore at Windsor? How shall I be revenged on him? I think the best way were to entertain him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust have melted him in his own grease. Did you ever hear the like?

Mistress Quickly

Marry, this is the short and the long of it; you have brought her into such a canaries as 'tis wonderful. The best courtier of them all, when the court lay at Windsor, could never have brought her to such a canary. Yet there has been knights, and lords, and gentlemen, with their coaches, I warrant you, coach after coach, letter after letter, gift after gift; smelling so sweetly, all musk, and so rushling, I warrant you, in silk and gold; and in such alligant terms; and in such wine and sugar of the best and the fairest, that would have won any woman's heart; and, I warrant you, they could never get an eye-wink of her: I had myself twenty angels given me this morning; but I defy all angels, in any such sort, as they say, but in the way of honesty: and, I warrant you, they could never get her so much as sip on a cup with the proudest of them all: and yet there has been earls, nay, which is more, pensioners; but, I warrant you, all is one with her.

Mistress Page

There is an old tale goes that Herne the hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest,
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the tree and takes the cattle
And makes milch-kine yield blood and shakes a chain
In a most hideous and dreadful manner:
You have heard of such a spirit, and well you know
The superstitious idle-headed eld
Received and did deliver to our age
This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth

Sir Hugh:

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. 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 visaments in that. 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. And seven hundred pounds of moneys, and gold, and silver, is her grandsire upon his death's-bed give, when she is able to overtake seventeen years old. It were a good motion if we leave our pribbles and prabbles, and desire a marriage between Master Abraham and Mistress Anne Page.

Sir John Falstaff:

No quips now, Pistol. Indeed, I am in the waist two yards about, but I am now about no waste; I am about thrift. Briefly, I do mean to make love to Ford's wife. I spy entertainment in her. She discourses; she carves; she gives the leer of invitation. I 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 ocellades. Sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly. O, she did so course o'er my exteriors with such a greedy intention that the appetite of her eye did seem to scorch me up like a burning-glass. Here's another letter to her. She bears the purse too; she is a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty. I will be cheaters to them both, and they shall be exchequers to me; they shall be my East and West Indies, and I will trade to them both. Go bear thou this letter to Mistress Page—and thou this to Mistress Ford. We will thrive, lads, we will thrive.

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 content. But if you say "Marry her," I will marry her. That I am freely dissolved, and dissolutely. O, Mistress Anne! Come in to dinner? 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 venays 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' th' town?

Dr. Caius:

Vat is you sing? I do not like dese toys. Pray you, go and vetch me in my closet un boîtier vert, a box, a green-a box. Do intend vat I speak? A green-a box. -- Vere is dat knave Rugby? You, jack'nape, give-a this letter to Sir Hugh. By gar, it is a shallenge. I will cut his troat in de park, and I will teach a scurvy jackanape priest to meddle or make. You may be gone. It is not good you tarry here.—By gar, I will cut all his two stones. By gar, he shall not have a stone to throw at his dog Do not you tell-a me dat I shall have Anne Page for myself? By gar, I vill kill de jack priest; and I have appointed mine Host of de Jarteer to measure our weapon. By gar, I will myself have Anne Page. Rugby, come to the court with me. (To Mistress Quickly.) By gar, if I have not Anne Page, I shall turn your head out of my door.—Follow my heels, Rugby.

Mistress Page:

What, have I 'scaped love letters in the holiday time of my beauty, and am I now a subject for them? Let me see. (She reads.)

Ask me no reason why I love you, for though Love use Reason for his precisian, he admits him not for his counselor. You are not young; no more am I. Go to, then, there's sympathy. You are merry; so am I. Ha, ha, then, there's more sympathy. You love sack, and so do I. Would you desire better sympathy? Let it suffice thee, Mistress Page—at the least, if the love of soldier can suffice—that I love thee. I will not say pity me—'tis not a soldier-like phrase—but I say love me. By me, Thine own true knight, By day or night, Or any kind of light, With all his might For thee to fight.

John Falstaff.

John Falstaff?!! O wicked, wicked world! One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with age, to show himself a young gallant! What an unweighed behavior hath this Flemish drunkard picked—with the devil's name!—out of my conversation, that he dares in this manner assay me? Why, he hath not been thrice in my company! What should I say to him? I was then frugal of my mirth. Heaven forgive me! Why, I'll exhibit a bill in the Parliament for the putting down of men. How shall I be revenged on him? For revenged I will be, as sure as his guts are made of puddings.

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all musk—and so rushing, I warrant you, in silk and gold, and in such alligant terms, and in such wine and sugar of the best and the fairest, that would have won any woman's heart; and, I warrant you, they could never get an eye-wink of her. And yet there has been earls—nay, which is more, pensioners—but, I warrant you, all is one with her. But I have another messenger to your Worship. Mistress Page hath her hearty commendations to you too; and, let me tell you in your ear, she's as fartuous a civil modest wife, and one, I tell you, that will not miss you morning nor evening prayer, as any is in Windsor, whoe'er be the other. And she bade me tell your Worship that her husband is seldom from home, but she hopes there will come a time. I never knew a woman so dote upon a man. Surely, I think you have charms, la! Yes, in truth.

Ford (as Brook):

Sir, I hear you are a scholar—I will be brief with you—and you have been a man long known to me, though I had never so good means as desire to make myself acquainted with you. I shall discover a thing to you wherein I must very much lay open mine own imperfection. But, good Sir John, as you have one eye upon my follies, as you hear them unfolded, turn another into the register of your own, that I may pass with a reproof the easier, sith you yourself know how easy it is to be such an offender. There is a gentlewoman in this town—her husband's name is Ford. I have long loved her and, I protest to you, bestowed much on her, followed her with a doting observance, engrossed opportunities to meet her, fee'd every slight occasion that could but niggardly give me sight of her, not only bought many presents to give her, but have given largely to many to know what she would have given. Briefly, I have pursued her as love hath pursued me, which hath been on the wing of all occasions. But whatsoever I have merited, either in my mind or in my means, meed I am sure I have received none, unless experience be a jewel. That I have purchased at an infinite rate, and that hath taught me to say this: "Love like a shadow flies when substance love pursues, Pursuing that that flies, and flying what pursues."

Page:

And did he send you both these letters at an instant? Ha ha, 'Tis well, 'tis well. No more. Be not as extreme in submission as in offense. But let our plot go forward. Let our wives Yet once again, to make us public sport, Appoint a meeting with this old fat fellow, Where we may take him and disgrace him for it. How, to send him word they'll meet him in the park at midnight? Fie, fie, he'll never come. (Beat). You say he has been thrown in the rivers and has been grievously peaten as an old 'oman. Methinks there should be terrors in him, that he should not come. Methinks his flesh is punished; he shall have no desires. -- Well, let it not be doubted but he'll come. And in this shape when you have brought him thither, What shall be done with him? What is your plot?

Fenton:

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