

The Two Noble Kinsmen

Prologue

Flourish. Enter Prologue

PROLOGUE

New plays and maidenheads are near akin:
Much followed both, for both much money giv'n
If they stand sound and well. And a good play,
Whose modest scenes blush on his marriage day
And shake to lose his honour, is like her 5
That after holy tie and first night's stir
Yet still is modesty, and still retains
More of the maid to sight than husband's pains.
We pray our play may be so, for I am sure
It has a noble breeder and a pure, 10
A learneÁd, and a poet never went
More famous yet 'twixt Po and silver Trent.
Chaucer, of all admired, the story gives:
There constant to eternity it lives.
If we let fall the nobleness of this 15
And the first sound this child hear be a hiss,
How will it shake the bones of that good man,
And make him cry from under ground, `O fan
From me the witless chaff of such a writer,
That blasts my bays and my famed works makes
lighter 20
Than Robin Hood'? This is the fear we bring,
For to say truth, it were an endless thing
And too ambitious to aspire to him,
Weak as we are, and almost breathless swim
In this deep water. Do but you hold out 25
Your helping hands and we shall tack about
And something do to save us. You shall hear
Scenes, though below his art, may yet appear
Worth two hours' travail. To his bones, sweet sleep;
Content to you. If this play do not keep 30
A little dull time from us, we perceive
Our losses fall so thick we must needs leave.

Flourish. Exit