

The Merry Wives of Windsor

1.4

Enter Mistress Quickly and Simple

MISTRESS QUICKLY What, John Rugby!

Enter 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 anybody in the house, here will be an old abusing of God's patience and the King's English. 5

RUGBY I'll go watch.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Go; and we'll have a posset for't soon at night, in faith, at the latter end of a seacoal fire.

Exit Rugby

An honest, willing, kind fellow as ever servant shall come in house withal; and, I warrant you, no telltale, 10 nor no breedbate. 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. 15

MISTRESS QUICKLY And Master Slender's your master?

SIMPLE Ay, forsooth.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Does he not wear a great round beard, like a glover's paring-knife?

SIMPLE No, forsooth; he hath but a little whey face, with 20 a little yellow beard, a Cain-coloured beard.

MISTRESS QUICKLY A softly spirited 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. 25

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Well, heaven send Anne Page no worse 30 fortune! Tell Master Parson Evans I will do what I can for your master. Anne is a good girl, and I wish±±

Enter Rugby

RUGBY Out, alas, here comes my master!

[Exit]

MISTRESS QUICKLY We shall all be shent. Run in here, good young man; for God's sake, go into this closet. He will not stay long. 35

Simple steps into the closet

What, John Rugby! John! What, John, I say!

[Enter Rugby]

[Speaking loudly] Go, John, go enquire for my master. I doubt he be not well, that he comes not home.

[Exit Rugby]

(Singing) 'And down, down, adown-a' *(etc.)* 40

Enter Doctor Caius

CAIUS Vat is you sing? I do not like dese toys. Pray you go and vetch me in my closet *un boÃtier vert* a box, a green-a box. Do intend vat I speak? A green-a box.

MISTRESS 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. 45

She goes to fetch the box

CAIUS *Fe, fe, fe, fe! Ma foi, il fait fort chaud! Je m'en vais aÁ la cour. La grande affaire.*

MISTRESS QUICKLY Is it this, sir?

CAIUS *Oui. Mets-le aÁ ma pochette. DeÃpeÃche,* quickly! Vere is dat knave Rugby? 50

MISTRESS QUICKLY What, John Rugby! John!

[Enter Rugby]

RUGBY Here, sir.

CAIUS You are John Rugby, and you are Jack Rugby. Come, take-a your rapier, and come after my heel to the court. 55

RUGBY 'Tis ready, sir, here in the porch.

He fetches the rapier

CAIUS By my trot, I tarry too long. 'Od's me, *qu'ai-j'* oublieÃ? Dere is some simples in my closet dat I vill not for the varld I shall leave behind. 60

MISTRESS QUICKLY *(aside)* Ay me, he'll find the young man there, and be mad.

CAIUS *(discovering Simple)* *O diable, diable!* Vat is in my closet? Villainy, *larron!* Rugby, my rapier!

He takes the rapier

MISTRESS QUICKLY Good master, be content. 65

CAIUS Wherefore shall I be content-a?

MISTRESS QUICKLY The young man is an honest man.

CAIUS What shall de honest man do in my closet? Dere
is no honest man dat shall come in my closet.

MISTRESS QUICKLY I beseech you, be not so phlegmatic. 70
Hear the truth of it. He came of an errand to me from
Parson Hugh.

CAIUS Vell.

SIMPLE Ay, forsooth, to desire her to±±

MISTRESS QUICKLY Peace, I pray you. 75

CAIUS Peace-a your tongue. (*To Simple*) 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.

MISTRESS QUICKLY This is all, indeed, la; but I'll ne'er put 80
my finger in the fire an need not.

CAIUS Sir Hugh send-a you?±±Rugby, *baile* me some
paper.

Rugby brings paper

(*To Simple*) Tarry you a little-a while.

Caius writes

MISTRESS QUICKLY (*aside to Simple*) I am glad he is so quiet. 85
If he had been throughly moved, you should have
heard him so loud and so melancholy. But
notwithstanding, man, I'll do 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 90
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
come under one body's hand. 95

MISTRESS QUICKLY (*aside to Simple*) Are you advised o' that?
You shall find it a great charge±±and to be up early,
and down late. But notwithstanding, to tell you in your
ear±±I would have no words of it±±my master himself
is in love with Mistress Anne Page. But notwithstanding 100
that, I know Anne's mind: that's neither here nor

there.

CAIUS (*giving the letter to Simple*) 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 105 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.

Exit Simple

MISTRESS QUICKLY Alas, he speaks but for his friend. 110

CAIUS It is no matter-a ver dat. 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. 115

MISTRESS QUICKLY Sir, the maid loves you, and all shall be well. We must give folks leave to prate, what the goodyear!

CAIUS Rugby, come to the court with me. (*To Mistress Quickly*) By Gar, if I have not Anne Page, I shall turn 120 your head out of my door. Follow my heels, Rugby.

MISTRESS QUICKLY You shall have Anne±±

Exeunt Caius and Rugby

±±ass-head of your own. No, I know Anne's mind for that. Never a woman in Windsor knows more of Anne's mind than I do, nor can do more than I do with her, 125 I thank heaven.

FENTON (*within*) Who's within there, ho!

MISTRESS QUICKLY Who's there, I trow?±±Come near the house, I pray you.

Enter Master Fenton

FENTON How now, good woman, how dost thou? 130

MISTRESS QUICKLY The better that it pleases your good worship to ask.

FENTON What news? How does pretty Mistress Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY In truth, sir, and she is pretty, and honest, and gentle, and one that is your friend. I can 135 tell you that by the way, I praise heaven for it.

FENTON Shall I do any good, thinkest thou? Shall I not lose my suit?

MISTRESS QUICKLY Troth, sir, all is in His hands above.
But notwithstanding, Master Fenton, I'll be sworn on ¹⁴⁰
a book she loves you. Have not your worship a wart
above your eye?

FENTON Yes, marry, have I. What of that?

MISTRESS QUICKLY Well, thereby hangs a tale. Good faith,
it is such another Nan!±±But I detest, an honest maid ¹⁴⁵
as ever broke bread.±±We had an hour's talk of that
wart. I shall never laugh but in that maid's company.±±
But indeed she is given too much to allicholy and
musing.±±But for you±±well±±go to!

FENTON Well, I shall see her today. Hold, there's money ¹⁵⁰
for thee. Let me have thy voice in my behalf. If thou
seest her before me, commend me.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Will I? I'faith, that I will. And I will
tell your worship more of the wart the next time we
have confidence, and of other wooers. ¹⁵⁵

FENTON Well, farewell. I am in great haste now.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Farewell to your worship.

Exit Fenton

Truly, an honest gentleman; but Anne loves him not,
for I know Anne's mind as well as another does.±±Out
upon't, what have I forgot? ¹⁶⁰

Exit