

The Merry Wives of Windsor

3.2

Enter Robin, followed by Mistress Page

MISTRESS PAGE Nay, keep your way, little gallant. You were wont to be a follower, but now you are a leader. Whether had you rather, lead mine eyes, or eye your master's heels?

ROBIN I had rather, forsooth, go before you like a man 5
than follow him like a dwarf.

MISTRESS PAGE O, you are a flattering boy! Now I see you'll be a courtier.

Enter Master Ford

FORD

Well met, Mistress Page. Whither go you?

MISTRESS PAGE Truly, sir, to see your wife. Is she at home? 10

FORD Ay, and as idle as she may hang together, for want of company. I think if your husbands were dead you two would marry.

MISTRESS PAGE Be sure of that±±two other husbands.

FORD Where had you this pretty weathercock? 15

MISTRESS PAGE I cannot tell what the dickens his name is my husband had him of.±±What do you call your knight's name, sirrah?

ROBIN Sir John Falstaff.

FORD Sir John Falstaff? 20

MISTRESS PAGE He, he; I can never hit on's name. There is such a league between my goodman and he! Is your wife at home indeed?

FORD Indeed she is.

MISTRESS PAGE By your leave, sir, I am sick till I see her. 25

Exeunt Robin and Mistress Page

FORD Has Page any brains? Hath he any eyes? Hath he any thinking? Sure they sleep; he hath no use of them. Why, this boy will carry a letter twenty mile, as easy as a cannon will shoot point-blank twelve score. He pieces out his wife's inclination; he gives her folly 30
motion and advantage. And now she's going to my wife, and Falstaff's boy with her. A man may hear this

shower sing in the wind. And Falstaff's boy with her.
Good plots±±they are laid; and our revolted wives share
damnation together. Well, I will take him; then torture 35
my wife, pluck the borrowed veil of modesty from the
so-seeming Mistress Page, divulge Page himself for a
secure and wilful Actaeon, and to these violent
proceedings all my neighbours shall cry aim.

[Clock strikes]

The clock gives me my cue, and my assurance bids me 40
search. There I shall find Falstaff. I shall be rather
praised for this than mocked, for it is as positive as the
earth is firm that Falstaff is there. I will go.

*Enter Master Page, Justice Shallow, Master Slender,
the Host of the Garter, Sir Hugh Evans, Doctor
Caius, and John Rugby*

SHALLOW, PAGE, ETC. Well met, Master Ford.

FORD *(aside)* By my faith, a good knot! *(To them)* I have 45
good cheer at home, and I pray you all go with me.

SHALLOW I must excuse myself, Master Ford.

SLENDER And so must I, sir. We have appointed to dine
with Mistress Anne, and I would not break with her
for more money than I'll speak of. 50

SHALLOW We have lingered about a match between Anne
Page and my cousin Slender, and this day we shall
have our answer.

SLENDER I hope I have your good will, father Page.

PAGE You have, Master Slender: I stand wholly for you. 55
(To Caius) But my wife, Master Doctor, is for you
altogether.

CAIUS Ay, be Gar, and de maid is love-a me. My nursh-a
Quickly tell me so mush.

HOST *(to Page)* What say you to young Master Fenton? 60
He capers, he dances, he has eyes of youth; he writes
verses, he speaks holiday, he smells April and May. He
will carry't, he will carry't; 'tis in his buttons he will
carry't.

PAGE Not by my consent, I promise you. The gentleman 65
is of no having. He kept company with the wild Prince
and Poins. He is of too high a region; he knows too
much. No, he shall not knit a knot in his fortunes with

the finger of my substance. If he take her, let him take
her simply: the wealth I have waits on my consent, 70
and my consent goes not that way.

FORD I beseech you heartily, some of you go home with
me to dinner. Besides your cheer, you shall have sport:
I will show you a monster. Master Doctor, you shall
go. So shall you, Master Page, and you, Sir Hugh. 75

SHALLOW Well, God be with you! *[Aside to Slender]* We
shall have the freer wooing at Master Page's.

Exeunt Shallow and Slender

CAIUS Go home, John Rugby; I come anon.

Exit Rugby

HOST Farewell, my hearts. I will to my honest knight
Falstaff, and drink canary with him. 80

Exit

FORD *(aside)* I think I shall drink in pipe-wine first with
him: I'll make him dance. *(To Page, Caius, and Evans)*
Will you go, gentles?

[PAGE, CAIUS, AND EVANS] Have with you to see this
monster. 85

Exeunt