

FALSTAFF

Now, master Brook, you come to know what hath passed between me and Ford's wife? Master Brook, I will not lie to you: I was at her house the hour she appointed me: her husband, dwelling in a continual 'larum of jealousy, comes me in the instant of our encounter, and at his heels a rabble of his companions, thither provoked and instigated by his distemper, and, forsooth, to search his house for his wife's love. As good luck would have it, comes in one Mistress Page; gives intelligence of Ford's approach; and, in her invention and Ford's wife's distraction, they conveyed me into a buck-basket. There, they rammed me in with foul shirts and smocks, socks, foul stockings, greasy napkins; that, Master Brook, there was the rankest compound of villanous smell that ever offended nostril. Being thus crammed in the basket, a couple of Ford's knaves, his hinds, were called forth by their mistress to carry me in the name of foul clothes to Datchet-lane: they took me on their shoulders; met the jealous knave their master in the door, who asked them once or twice what they had in their basket: I quaked for fear, lest the lunatic knave would have searched it; but fate, held his hand. Well: on went he for a search, and away went I for foul clothes. But mark, Master Brook: to be stopped in, like a strong distillation, with stinking clothes that fretted in their own grease: think of that, that am as subject to heat as butter; a man of continual dissolution and thaw: it was a miracle to scape suffocation. And in the height of this bath, when I was more than half stewed in grease, to be thrown into the Thames, and cooled, glowing hot, in that surge, like a horse-shoe; think of that,--hissing hot,--think of that, Master Brook.