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AN ANALYSIS OF THE FALSTAFFIAN DEVICE

by

Gregory Foote, S.J.

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts**

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LIFE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It would seem that there is nothing more to be put down about Falstaff, so much having been written about him already; but it is not so. He was a great figure in the drama. He took the Elizabethan world by storm when he first appeared and he has only grown in stature since. He was a uniquely intriguing character, and what is more, he was loved like a real person.¹ And just as in real life it so often happens that no two men will have the same impression of a given third, so with Falstaff there seem to be as many variations of impressions of him as there are persons acquainted with him.

This thesis, however, will not deal in the ordinary way with the topics that are usually discussed in connection with Falstaff. There are, for instance, the discussions of his character, of his humor, of his comic descendants, and of that great bone of contention, the question of the final rejection at Westminster by Hal, just become Henry the Fifth. Beyond these, there is the further question of Falstaff's recall to life in the Merry

¹ Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, "The Story of Falstaff," Shakespeare's Workmanship, Cambridge, 1931, 115-117.

Wives of Windsor. But this, even more than the other headings mentioned, is beyond the scope of this thesis, for the Falstaff of the Merry Wives is not the same man.²

This study, then, is concerned with Falstaff in a different way. It will deal with him and his fellow Eastcheap characters as being the answer to Shakespeare's problems in attempting a play dealing with Prince Henry, the son of Bolingbroke. It is, therefore, the aim of this study to show that when Shakespeare came to the writing of the chronicle plays I Henry IV, II Henry IV, and Henry V, he needed something more than the mere historical facts themselves as recorded for him in Holinshed's Chronicles. In other words this study will attempt to show that the whole Falstaff group and all the Falstaff scenes supplied Shakespeare with the very thing he needed for his dramatic presentation of the story of Prince Hal. His problem was twofold at the outset. First, Holinshed did not supply enough data for the plays; secondly, Holinshed mentioned only briefly that the young prince had led a wild youth, but without giving sufficient details on this part of his life. Consequently, Shakespeare had the problem of finding material to fill this gap. Therefore, the theory this thesis will attempt to establish as its conclusion is that in the writing of the plays I and II Henry IV Shakespeare

² M. R. Ridley, Shakespeare's Plays: A Commentary, New York, 1938, 109-110.

needed the Falstaff characters and the Falstaff scenes. Moreover, it will go one step further in showing that in using these scenes he hit upon a new literary device in the treatment of historical subjects in the form of fiction. This discovery will be called the Falstaffian Device. However, the thesis will not attempt any review of previous literature with a view to showing that this device was new as Shakespeare employed it; rather, the section of this thesis dealing with the Falstaffian Device will look primarily to an exposition of its nature.

The over-all method which this thesis will follow in establishing its theory will be to point out the four great reasons why Shakespeare needed Falstaff and the Eastcheap characters when he came to the writing of his history plays about Prince Hal. Chapter two will deal with the first reason. That reason was that according to popular tradition Henry the Fifth had led something of a wild youth, and this was, consequently, an integral part of his life story, requiring inclusion in the plays. The same chapter will show how Shakespeare found the answer to this need of portraying Hal's wild youth in the ample description of Hal's relations with Falstaff. Chapter three will deal with the second reason. It was, in brief, that a foundation for tavern-life scenes had already been laid in an earlier play, The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth. In that play, one Sir John Oldcastle was one of the prince's tavern companions. This third chapter will explain how Sir John Oldcastle and the tavern group

of the older play were Sir John Falstaff and the Eastcheap characters in germ. It will try to show precisely how Oldcastle and his fellows from the Famous Victories were a second great reason why Shakespeare needed Falstaff. The fourth chapter of the thesis will treat of the third great reason. It was two-fold in aspect, but can be considered as one since both parts bear directly on the prince. First, it was Shakespeare's intention to develop the prince into King Henry the Fifth, the ideal of the warrior-king and a popular sovereign worthy to be a popular hero. Consequently, there had to be some sufficient reason for his early preference for the Boar's Head Tavern over his father's privy council and the nice protocol of court life. Secondly, Shakespeare had to portray the ideal king, Henry the Fifth, as a man of the people rather than a one-sided monarch. The fourth chapter, then, will explain how Shakespeare's need to portray the prince as just described was answered by Falstaff and his group. The fifth chapter will treat of the last of the four great reasons why Shakespeare needed Falstaff. This reason arises from the very nature of poetry and its essential difference from history. Briefly, it is this. Shakespeare based his chronicle plays dealing with the English royalty on Holinshed's Chronicles. Therefore, he was constrained to follow the events of recorded history as they had actually occurred. But, as a dramatist, he needed more scope, more freedom for the exercise of his own artistic invention than the purely factual account of Holinshed would allow. Since he

could take no liberties with historical fact, Shakespeare, to elevate his plays from the realm of scientific history to the plane of literary composition, had to have other characters besides those in Holinshed's Chronicles, characters whom he could develop and treat as his artistic skill demanded. For this he needed personages who were not known, who were either faintly historical or entirely fictitious. Of these he could develop the actions and characters at his own will. The fifth chapter, then, will show how Shakespeare, qua poet, needed Falstaff and the Eastcheap characters in his drama of historical fiction. The latter half of this same chapter will then explain the Falstaffian Device, for that device is nothing else than the use of such non-historical characters in literary fiction. The basic agreement of this device with the Aristotelian canons of art will also be pointed out in the same chapter. The sixth and final chapter of the thesis will contain a summary and the conclusion of the whole study.

Before going on to the proof of the theory just outlined, it seems that a brief review of the literature closely connected with the matter of this thesis would serve not only to indicate what previous investigations have been held on the subject, but also to demonstrate how the manner of this investigation differs from whatever has gone before.

The pieces of writing that come nearest to the actual matter of this thesis are to be found in the three following

works: (1) the essay, "The Story of Falstaff," taken from Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's book, Shakespeare's Workmanship, (2) The Fortunes of Falstaff by J. Dover Wilson, and (3) the essay, "Why Did Shakespeare Create Falstaff?" by Albert H. Tolman and taken from his book, Falstaff and Other Shakespearean Topics. Quiller-Couch states that Shakespeare has "set up a permanent artistic principle in the treatment of history by fiction."³ It is this same principle that this thesis calls the Falstaffian Device. Quiller-Couch then indicates briefly where the device came from and that it has been copied in literary historical drama and novels ever since. His treatment, however, is not as full as this will be, for this thesis will develop in chapter five what he has merely indicated. His essay then goes on to other aspects of the Falstaff question entirely outside the scope of this thesis.

J. Dover Wilson's book is entirely devoted to a character study and dramatic analysis of Falstaff, but it served as excellent background reading for this writer. The last of the three above mentioned authors, Albert Tolman, deals very well with the subject matter of the fourth chapter of this thesis, namely that Shakespeare created Falstaff as Prince Hal's reason for shunning the life of the court in favor of the life of the

3 Quiller-Couch, Shakespeare's Workmanship, 104.

tavern.⁴ He then proceeds to give his reasons why Shakespeare partially failed in this attempt, but that aspect of the question is not included in the present study.

It will be noted that this thesis deals exclusively with four reasons why Shakespeare needed Falstaff and the East-cheap characters and scenes. It is not therefore to be concluded that this writer considers these four as the only purposes which Falstaff serves in these history plays. Certainly there are more, but it is not the aim of this thesis to retail all of them here. Only those which have been considered to bear more directly on the Falstaffian Device, the focal point of this thesis, will be considered.

Consequently, to clarify still further the scope of this thesis, some of the other reasons for Shakespeare's use of Falstaff are given here by way of exclusion. They are that Shakespeare needed some extra material to fill out plays that would have been too short; that Shakespeare used Falstaff as a travesty upon the "high-born but pseudo-chivalry then on its last legs, and destined soon to pass away entirely;"⁵ that Shakespeare used Falstaff as a vehicle for the introduction of vulgarity and ribaldry for the masses; or as a vehicle of reform

⁴ Albert H. Tolman, "Why Did Shakespeare Create Falstaff?", Falstaff and Other Shakespearean Topics, New York, 1925, 1-13.

⁵ Beverley E. Warner, English History in Shakespeare's Plays, New York, 1894, 124.

of times and customs;⁶ or, finally, for comedy and relief from the serious actions of the plays. None of these is included in the thesis, which may now be begun.

⁶ H. J. Webb, "Falstaff's Tardy Tricks," MLN, Baltimore, LVIII, May, 1943, 277-279. Also, cf. Webb, "Falstaff's Clothes," MLN, LIX, March, 1944, 162-164.

CHAPTER II

THE TRADITION OF PRINCE HAL'S WILD YOUTH

When Shakespeare came to the writing of the three plays that were to deal with the popular story of Henry of Monmouth, both as Prince Hal in the Henry IV plays and later as king in Henry V, he had no choice but to picture Henry as all the world conceived of him. As king, Henry had won a very famous victory at Agincourt to establish England's claim to the French crown. This victory was destined never to be forgotten by loyal Englishmen as one of their nation's most exalted successes; and this, not because it led to Anglo-French unification (for it did not) but because it stood in their minds as a noble moment in their country's history. That victory alone, led by a young monarch at the head of a small and tired English force over a great host of confident French infantry and cavalry, was enough to enshrine any man in the hearts of his countrymen. That is what it did for Henry.

But united to the shining memory of the victor of Agincourt there was also the prevalent popular conception of the wild and headstrong life of Henry as heir apparent. Not all of the tradition was good. There was the reckless and riotous youth, the sudden change at the time of his coronation, and only then

the eminently successful period as king. Such as this was the average man's picture of Prince Hal who became King Henry the Fifth. And we are wrong if we think that only the period as king appealed to English hearts. Because of Agincourt we might almost say that the period of Henry as prince appealed no less.

It is a strange thing but true that there is in most men enough of the old Adam to be singularly attracted to a life like that of Henry. The saint who needed a conversion in his life is often more appealing than the saint who needed none. So it was with the English who lived after Henry. They would, of course, remember forever the victor of Agincourt, but they would never forget the carefree and reckless prince. It was of this man that Shakespeare had to write.

Shakespeare took his materials for the history plays almost exclusively from Holinshed whom he followed with great fidelity even in his errors.¹ And it is in Holinshed that much of the tradition of Hal's youthful escapades is to be found. The word tradition is used designedly for Holinshed was not what could be called a reliable or scientific historian. Boswell-Stone says of him, "I therefore warn the reader (if a caution be needed) to take with a large grain of salt what Holinshed, Halle, and the others relate concerning the youthful follies of Henry V.

1 Frederick S. Boas, Shakespeare and His Predecessors, London, 2nd. ed., 1939, 259.

the evil life and death of Cardinal Beaufort, and the crimes of Cardinal Wolsey."²

Nevertheless, Holinshed was Shakespeare's guide and for that reason it will be necessary to quote at some length what he recorded of Prince Hal in the Chronicles. Then, having seen what was the popular concept of Henry and having compared it with the testimony of later historians, it will appear why Shakespeare could not write the story of such a well known figure as Henry and leave out of it so interesting and even so integral a part.

At the beginning of his account of the reign of Henry the Fifth, speaking of the coronation day itself, Holinshed writes of the new king:

But this new king even at first appointing with himself, to shew that in his person princelie honors should change publike manners, he determined to put on him the shape of a new man. For as aforetime he had made himself a companion unto misrulie mates of dissolute order and life, he now banished them all from his presence (but not unrewarded or else unpreferred) inhibiting them upon a great paine, not once to approach, lodge, or sojourne within ten miles of his court or presence; and in their places he chose men of gravitie, wit, and high policie, by whose wise counsell he might at all times rule to his honor and dignitie; calling to mind how once to his offence of the king his father, he had with his fist stricken the chief justice for sending one of his minions (upon desert) to prison, when the justice stoutlie commanded himself also to be streict to ward, and he (then prince) obeyed. The king after expelled him out of his privie counsell, banisht him the court, and made the duke of Clarence (his younger brother) president of counsell

2 W. G. Boswell-Stone, Shakespeare's Holinshed: The Chronicles and the History Plays Compared, London, 1896, xiii.

in his stead. This reformation of the new king Christ. Okl. hath reported, fullie consenting with this. For saith he,

Ille inter juvenes paulo lascivior ante,
Defuncto genitore gravis constansque repente,
Moribus ablegat corruptis regis ab aula
Assuetos socios, et nugatoribus acrem
Poenam (si quis sua tecta reviserit) addit,
Atque ita mutatus fecit omnia principe digna,
Ingenio magno post consultoribus usus, etc.³

But now that the king was placed in the roiall seat of the realm, he virtuously considering in his mind, that all goodness cometh of God, determined to begin with something acceptable to his divine majestie, . . .⁴

It is clear from the above account that some kind of reformation in the life of Henry took place when he turned king. Shakespeare is faithful to this view of the prince's life, for he no doubt felt that as it was in the histories, so it had to be in the plays. The coronation scene depicting this change in the prince and the sentence of Falstaff's banishment describe all this as accurately as a poet could reproduce an event.⁵ But

3 Translation. He who before had been outstanding for lasciviousness even among the young men, at the death of his father suddenly became sober and mature, and from the royal seat banished his old companions with their corrupt morals and added stiff punishment should they ever again come under his roof. And thus changed, he performed all things worthy of a prince, thenceforward employing counsellors of great merit, etc. (Translation by this author.)

4 "Henry the Fifth," Holinshed's Chronicles: Richard II 1398-1400, Henry IV, and Henry V, eds. R. S. Wallace and Alma Hansen, Oxford, 1923, 2.

5 II Henry IV, V, v, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Oxford Standard Edition, ed. W. J. Carey, New York, 538-539.

given such a change of heart in the new king, there had to be a sufficient reason for the change and at least some description of its terminus a quo. That is, Shakespeare had to particularize the faults that supposedly existed in the prince. That is the starting point of this thesis. The playwright needed some method of portraying these faults. This chapter will explain that need more fully; the following chapter will show why the Falstaff characters were the answer to that need. This chapter will point out merely that the youthful follies of the prince had somehow to be included in the plays.

Earlier in his chronicle, Holinshed tells of the time, toward the end of the reign of Henry the Fourth, Hal's father, when certain persons came to the king with slanderous reports against the heir apparent and how through them the prince was "liklie to be worne out of favor."⁶ Whether or not these reports were entirely false, as Hal protested to his father, can not be said; but, nevertheless, they were in Holinshed for Shakespeare and anyone else to read. That the prince's conduct was unbecoming his station owing to the riotous company that he had freely chosen for himself, this was all part of the tradition. Not only was this an excellent opportunity for Shakespeare to develop a complex and intriguing character, but, as has been said, it was part and parcel of the whole story.

6 "Henry the Fourth," Holinshed's Chronicles, 95.

How much of this tradition was based on fact would be hard to say; but that the tradition developed into something very near a legend cannot be denied, and legends are not easily put aside. It will always be baffling to determine precisely how much truth a legend contained, for it is of their nature to grow and to change in the gradual passage from generation to generation. What can be said about them, however, is that questionable as they may be in their ripened form, still they would not be at all unless there existed some fact, some kernel of truth, with which the tale began.

That there was just such a germ of truth which gave rise to the traditional picture of Prince Hal's youth is acknowledged even by the later historians of England. Lingard points out that during the prince's younger days there had been no great display of religious principle and that during his father's reign "among the wild and dissolute companions of the prince his pre-eminence in vice had been acknowledged."⁷ In a later historian of the English nation who calls the stories of the Prince's wild doings "mere folk tales current in the Elizabethan age, and fathered on Henry solely because of his vague reputation for riotous conduct,"⁸ the fact still remains that the reputation was there.

⁷ John Lingard, A History of England from the First Invasion of the Romans to the Accession of William and Mary, V, 2nd. ed., 1854, 3.

⁸ C. Oman, The History of England, eds. William Hunt and Reginald Poole, Vol. IV, London, 1906, 216.

The same author, throwing still more light on those early days, writes of Henry:

His panegyrist and biographer, Thomas of Elmham, confesses that in the days of his early manhood he was anything but steady and sober; not only was he gay and boisterous, a lover of wine and song, but he served "Venus no less fervently than Mars," not without public scandal. Moreover, he was hot-tempered, insolent and arrogant, and made many enemies. Walsingham, putting the matter more politely, observes that when he came to the throne he seemed to change his character, and to be turned into another man, distinguished by the qualities that he had previously lacked, honorable, modest, and grave. The details of his youth have been filled up by the genius of Shakespeare, but we must remember that the Prince Hal of the dramatist is a fancy portrait, constructed from those same slight hints in the chronicles which we possess ourselves, eeked out with untrustworthy Tudor gossip.⁹

That there was, then, a strong tradition of the youthful follies of the young prince, accepted by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, fostered by the early chroniclers and the popular passion for such tales, and supported by the historians of the nation, is now clear. With this in mind it is not difficult to see why any dramatist would feel largely inclined not to omit this part of the prince's life, and this not only because of the popular appeal such a story was bound to have, nor only because of the excellent opportunity such a story offered the creative artist, but simply because such was the story. It is therefore the contention of this thesis that Shakespeare did not feel free to omit it. The following chapters will show how Falstaff was

9 Ibid.

the logical vehicle for portraying it. It only remains now to show how Shakespeare introduced that tradition and carried it on in the plays.

Although there is only one play that carries his own name, Henry V, there are two more plays that carry the story of Prince Hal's life, I and II Henry IV. Still one more play is slightly connected with the prince, Richard II. All of these plays are closely connected and follow each other in close order (the reverse of that just given) as they tell the story of the house of Lancaster from its usurpation by Bolingbroke in Richard II to its highest point of prosperity in Henry V.¹⁰ Even as early as the close of Richard II Shakespeare introduced the tradition of the prince's early life. There Bolingbroke, who is shortly to be called Henry the Fourth, speaks of his son as displeasing him because of his conduct and companions.

Boling. Can no man tell me of my unthrifty son?
 'Tis Full three months since I did see him last.
 If any plague do hang over us, 'tis he.
 I would to God, my lords, he might be found:
 Inquire at London 'mongst the taverns there,
 For there, they say, he daily doth frequent,
 With unrestrained loose companions,
 Even such, they say, as stand in narrow lanes
 And beat our watch and rob our passengers;
 While he, young wanton and effeminate boy,
 Takes on the point of honor to support
 So dissolute a crew.

H. Percy. My lord, some two days since I saw the
 prince,
 And told him of these triumphs held at Oxford.

¹⁰ Quiller-Couch, Shakespeare's Workmanship, 107.

Boling. And what said the gallant?

H. Percy. His answer was: he would go unto the
stews,

And from the commonest creature pluck a glove,

And wear it as a favor; and with that

And with that would unhorse the lustiest challenger.¹¹

The implications in the father's worried speech are strong enough but in the son's reply to Henry Percy the very worst of the tradition of his riotous living is voiced. He will seek his honor by going among the brothels. However, this need not be taken literally, as even going to the stews just for the glove, nor worse, as going there for what else he could get. First of all, such a meaning comes as a real shock, as disappointing and disgusting in any nobleman's son, and actually unlike the Prince Hal of the next two plays. For in them, though similar remarks are common enough, they are always in the spirit of fit subjects for rough humor but never so that they are contaminating. Here, too, the reference should not be taken as contaminating, but as a retort thrown off in the spirit of contemptuous independence. Through the force of its comparing dishonor favorably to the honor of his father's triumphs at Oxford, it remains a strong reply and more in keeping with what is later seen of Prince Hal.

It has been said that because of the strong tradition that colored the popular conception of Prince Hal's early life, Shakespeare was compelled to give it proportionate notice in his

¹¹ Richard II, V, 111, 1-19, Complete Shakespeare,

plays. Just how much space he finally did devote to Falstaff and his group is remarkable. In the two plays that deal with Prince Hal, half (nineteen) of a total of thirty-eight scenes are directly concerned with the tradition, being either partially or entirely devoted to the Falstaff group. There is no act in either play that does not include at least one scene devoted to them. These scenes are carefully interwoven with the others which deal with the doings of the kings and lords, so that throughout the two plays there are never more than two scenes in a row dealing exclusively with either group, except at the very end where the Falstaff group is found in the last three scenes of the last act. This shows in another way that Shakespeare needed for his plays what Falstaff was able to provide.

The tradition of Hal's wild youth was wide-spread and well grounded. Consequently, Shakespeare had to give it a correspondingly ample treatment in his plays about the prince. This is precisely what he did.

CHAPTER III

FALSTAFF AND THE OLD PLAY, THE FAMOUS VICTORIES OF HENRY THE FIFTH

In the previous chapter it has been demonstrated that in the popular Elizabethan mind there was a tradition of loose living and rowdy companions connected with Prince Hal. Consequently, Shakespeare had no choice but to portray this section of Hal's life. What has been shown is not, strictly speaking, a need for Falstaff, but at least for someone like him. The reason for this is that in Holinshed, his source material, Shakespeare had found numerous hints and statements of the wild youth led by the prince. It was therefore incumbent upon Shakespeare to portray this section of the Prince's youth if his history play was to be true to the historical picture of Hal's early life. In other words, Shakespeare would have to adapt or invent scenes that would describe these youthful doings of the prince, things which Holinshed did not give in detail, but merely suggested in scattered hints and references. The present chapter will show more specifically that only the Falstaff group could answer this need of Shakespeare.

As a matter of fact Shakespeare did not have to look

far for what he needed. There was a play already written about Henry of Monmouth called The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth. It had been written before 1588. Actually there are only three chronicle plays extant which are dated before 1590,¹ and The Famous Victories "is of importance as being our earliest extant history or chronicle play, a type which became exceedingly popular. . ."² In that play its unknown author devotes the first half to Hal's reckless tavern life and low companions, and it was here that Shakespeare came for his own description of the youthful Hal. Speaking of the two parts of Shakespeare's Henry IV, Boas writes that "for the comic scenes he drew hints from an old play, The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth, which dealt in rough fashion with Prince Hal's youthful escapades and suggested the names of Gadshill, Eastcheap, and Sir John . . ."³

Before the conclusion of this chapter can be drawn, namely that Shakespeare needed these scenes of the Falstaff group rather than any other method of drawing Hal's early life, it will be necessary to prove that Shakespeare did not fully invent any of his plots, least of all his history plots, but borrowed and

1 George Pierce Baker, The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist, New York, 1914, 145.

2 Joseph Quincy Adams, Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas, Boston, 1924, 667

3 Boas, Shakespeare and his Predecessors, 260.

adapted them.⁴

It will not be sufficient to establish this point a posteriori. This could be done easily by listing the examples one after another of the fact that such was the case. Tolman, for instance, does this when he writes describing Shakespeare's use of one borrowed plot:

An excellent illustration of Shakespeare's manipulation of a borrowed story is offered if we compare the comedy "as You Like It" with its principal source, the euphuistic pastoral romance of Thomas Lodge, "Rosalynde," which appeared in 1590.⁵

But this method of going through Shakespeare's plays one by one and indicating that invariably he borrowed and adapted from some source-plot, either in literature or history, would only prove that he did, as a matter of record, take over his plots from other writings. The point of this chapter, however, is not that he used Falstaff for the Prince Hal section of the Henry plays, but that he had to. Consequently, it must be shown here not that Shakespeare borrowed, but why he borrowed. This is an a priori view of the case.

To answer the question why Shakespeare borrowed his plots it will be necessary to consider the working methods peculiar to the Elizabethan playwrights and the audience for

⁴ G. F. Bradby, About Shakespeare and His Plays, London, 1927, 42.

⁵ Tolman, Shakespearean Topics, 65.

which he wrote. It is well known that Shakespeare began writing at a time when plays were turned out very rapidly and, what is more, at a time when for financial reasons it was almost imperative that he write almost as speedily as possible.⁶ It is commonly acknowledged that Shakespeare was, as a matter of fact, capable of rapid composition, and the report that he wrote The Merry Wives of Windsor in a fortnight is not hard to accept. Quiller-Couch writes: "The evidence that Shakespeare was a rapid writer--an extremely rapid writer--cannot be contested."⁷

But it was not only he who wrote rapidly; it was the manner in which most plays at that time were written. That was an age of collaboration and competition in dramatic production. Men worked together at re-vamping old plays, working at a time when the play was in popular favor and demand, and they worked to out-do the rival companies. Such were the surroundings amid which the dramatist grew up. He learned by re-working old plays under the guidance of more experienced hands. Working together, they were able to supply each other's deficiencies or learn from a master the tricks and skills which would give the play what they themselves were unable to give it.⁸ Baker's explanation of all

6 Baker, Development of Shakespeare, 104.

7 Quiller-Couch, Shakespeare's Workmanship, 112.

8 Baker, Development of Shakespeare, 14.

this, especially the profit the young playwright derived, is clear and interesting and will help illustrate the point under discussion.

That is, Shakespeare in the first and second parts of Henry VI, probably made over, with Christopher Marlowe, work in the first instance by Marlowe, Greene, and Peele. One even finds three or four novices working together apparently sometimes collaborating act by act, sometimes taking each man an act to himself. The value of all this is evident when one remembers that some of the foremost dramatists have declared collaboration to be the best possible training a young playwright can have. Moreover, as already has been implied, much of the time of a young dramatist in Shakespeare's day went to making over plays once popular, but out of date. It is as if our public today would allow the young men who are in vain trying to have their crude productions presented to make over in accordance with the taste of the moment Uncle Tom's Cabin, East Lynne, and Meg Merrilies. . . . Here then, are two conditions at the outset of an Elizabethan dramatist's career--collaboration and adaptation of old plays to new social and intellectual conditions--very favorable to swift and large development of a man with inborn dramatic instinct.⁹

Such was Shakespeare's excellent apprenticeship. Its peculiar note is the new presentation of old material. It was an age of collaboration on old plays in keen competition with fellow dramatists which tended to produce men who were trained not to invent new plots but to better old ones, and that rapidly. This is the first reason why Shakespeare took over for Henry IV what he found in the Famous Victories. It was simply the practice of the times, the way plays were written then. It is not surprising then, that Shakespeare, who wrote for all times, was still a pro-

9 Ibid., 15-16.

duct of his own age with its special background.

What has been said about plot borrowing in Elizabethan times is true of all types of plays, whether farce, comedy, history or tragedy. It is most true, however, of the history or chronicle play. This offers a further reason why Shakespeare should have taken over and adapted what he found in the Famous Victories. The obvious reason for this close adaptation is that history is not history if it is changed. That is, Shakespeare wanted to be faithful to historical fact, whereas tampering would have changed his plays to pure fiction. Moreover, it was in this decade from '88 to '98 that the chronicle play was most popular.¹⁰ Not only did all the leading dramatists of the day try this kind of play, Greene, Peele, Marlowe, Dekker, Jonson, and others as well as Shakespeare, but these plays became what Baker calls "the child of the universal instinct for dramatic expression quickened by the youthful and vigorous spirit of nationalism."¹¹

This spirit of nationalism had its definite causes. To begin with, those were the days of global exploration when the spirit of international envy grew strong. At home the death of Mary, Queen of Scots, and on the high seas the victory over the Spanish Armada gave promise of "a time of peace from internal dissention and outer attack in which England could wax glorious

10 Ibid., 145.

11 Ibid.

as she had never been before."¹² These causes from without nourished the national self-consciousness, and that this should be reflected in the drama of the times is only natural.

The interest in the chronicle play was further heightened by the rapid publishing of prose and poetry alike on historical subjects. This was due mainly to the succession of national histories printed between 1550 and 1590.¹³ Holinshed's first edition was published in 1577, and the second edition was brought out in 1587.¹⁴ In taking such topics as these offered for the subject matter of their plays, the dramatists were held to the actual facts of history as a minimum, and at most, the adaptation of situations. The chronicle play could not be fiction; it had to be true to its source, no matter how questionable one might think some of the tales there related. It had to be a dramatic presentation of the myriad details and facts found in the source book, all woven into a central story. Throwing further light on the question as to why Shakespeare should have borrowed the Eastcheap characters from the old history play, The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth, Baker, after explaining that the devising of fable and the construction of plot around it

12 Ibid., 144.

13 Ibid., 145.

14 Boswell-Stone, Shakespeare's Holinshed, ix.

was just where the Elizabethan dramatist was weakest, then goes on to say that just these tasks were the ones "which the Elizabethan playwright shirked as far as he possibly could. He preferred the re-presentation to creation of story, even in modified form."¹⁵

For these reasons, then, it is clear why this thesis can say that Shakespeare, because of the conditions of the times and the common practice of the playwrights of his day, had to borrow Falstaff.

It was not, however, only from the nature of the times and the practice of the dramatists that Shakespeare found it necessary to borrow and improve on the Eastcheap characters rather than invent an entirely new way of dramatizing Hal's follies. There was also the nature of his audience. To them what was represented, if skillfully done, was as good as new. How else explain the success of all his plays with their borrowed plots?

The fact is, the mood of the Elizabethan theatre-goer was delightfully childlike. He came, as the child comes, practically saying, "Tell me a story," and he cared not at all, provided the story was interestingly told, if he had heard it from another before. . . . What they demanded first of all in a play was a story.

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The advantage for the dramatist of this predominant interest in plot and this broad interpretation of the word "new" must be self evident. It permitted everybody, since there was no law of copyright, to plagiarize with impunity, and, if the results were really artistic, with acclaim. No period has ever more

fully realize the condition phrased by J. R. Lowell--
 "We call a thing his in the long run
 Who utters it clearest and best."¹⁶

Reared in such a setting, Shakespeare would never have considered not taking for the Prince Hal scenes in Henry IV what was already offered him in an earlier play. It is for these reasons that this thesis holds the contention that not only did Shakespeare need some vehicle for presenting Hal's youthful follies, but that the vehicle he chose had to be modelled on what he found in an old play. In other words, Shakespeare was bound to Gadshill, Eastcheap, and Sir John of the Famous Victories. Plus the reasons offered above for this borrowing from the earlier play, there are others which will now be discussed.

Earlier in this chapter the need and the fact of rapid composition by Elizabethan playwrights was mentioned. Its connection with these ideas of borrowing and adapting can now be shown. The men were busy, some of them actors as well as authors, and any device that would have saved time would have been seized upon. Furthermore, the practice of taking over ready-made situations must also have meant a great saving of imaginative effort, which, as is evident, could then be held in reserve to be poured out upon the characterization of the parts as well as in the poetry that tumbled from the players' lips.¹⁷ Bradby's remarks on

16 Ibid., 13, 14.

17 Bradby, About Shakespeare and His Plays, 45.

plot borrowing will make a fitting close to this section of the chapter, as they will shed more light on the question as to why Shakespeare had to use what he found in the Famous Victories.

We have, perhaps, a better right to wonder why, having chosen his story, he felt bound to adhere to even its most improbable details. . . . Possibly Shakespeare thought that as his audience was familiar with the story they would resent any tampering with it, and especially with its denouement. Or he may have felt that as the setting of the play was romance and not reality, the question of probability did not matter. In any case his attitude remains something of a puzzle. All that we can say is that, as a matter of fact, he never did take any liberties with his plots.¹⁸

What Bradby has to say about romance plots does not apply here, though his comment on that type of play is true, that Shakespeare's attitude is not fully clear to us. But where history plays are concerned, as has been pointed out at length, much of the puzzle of his attitude has been cleared up. Bradby serves to add one further reason to the many already given. Not only would an audience not mind hearing the same old story told over if told well, but they might actually resent any changes just because they did know it so well. That Bradby's remarks can apply to the histories as well as the romances, which he explicitly mentions, is clear from what he says elsewhere, that Shakespeare "did not invent his plots, and when he did not take them from history, he took them from the popular literature

18 Ibid., 46.

of the day."¹⁹ To this latter category, "popular literature of the day," belongs the old play, the Famous Victories. From it, as well as from history, came the two parts of Henry IV which present not only the story of the king and his battles, but also that of Sir John Falstaff, that reverend vice, misleader of youth, and boon companion of Prince Hal.

Before plotting the direction of the remaining part of the present chapter, it will be well first to summarize its progress to the present point. Building on the groundwork of the first section of the thesis, that Shakespeare needed some vehicle for his presentation of the tradition of Prince Hal's reckless youth, this chapter has already shown that if there was some such vehicle already extant, Shakespeare, following the practice of the times and the tastes of his audience, would seize upon it rather than invent something entirely his own. That such a work did exist in the form of an old play, The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth, has also been indicated. It now remains to describe that play briefly, though with special emphasis on the parts dealing with the prince and his companions. Among these latter Sir John Oldcastle will be singled out for special study, for it was he whom Shakespeare re-named Sir John Falstaff. Lastly, this chapter will treat of Falstaff's character, showing how the fat knight grew great under the pen of his borrower.

19 Ibid., 42.

The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth was one of the many history plays that came at a time of which Charles Norman writes that "ever since the defeat of the Spanish Armada in the stirring days of '88, the English had not ceased to marvel at and admire their own martial and maritime prowess."²⁰ This explains the Elizabethan interest in past history. It explains why the Famous Victories should have been written at all. The point here is that since the play had been written and produced, Shakespeare could not overlook it in writing on the same topic. It is from this play that Shakespeare, writing his own dramatic version of England's past history, took the hints and settings that led to his own great creation of Falstaff, the man most closely linked with the uncivil demeanor of Prince Hal's youth. What the connection is between Oldcastle and Falstaff and why the name was changed will be pointed out now so that one may refer to Falstaff what is said of Oldcastle in the Famous Victories.

When Shakespeare took over the character of Oldcastle from the old play, he originally took over the name too. Boas says that it is evident that the "fat knight was originally called Oldcastle. In the quarto edition of Part II the prefix Old (i.e., Oldcastle) occurs before a speech of Falstaff."²¹ In the first

²⁰ Charles Norman, So Worthy a Friend: William Shakespeare, New York, 1947, 141.

²¹ Boas, Shakespeare's Predecessors, 260.

scene of Part I, the first appearance of Falstaff and the prince, the latter calls Falstaff "my old lad of the castle."²² Later on in the second part Shallow speaks of Falstaff's having been a page to the Duke of Norfolk, a post which had verily been held by the real Oldcastle.²³ The historical Oldcastle was later burnt for Lollardy, and evidently either his relatives saw him in Henry IV and objected or else the fact came to the author's attention some other way so that he prudently decided to change the name. Having changed it to Falstaff, Shakespeare still wished to deny any connection between the real Oldcastle and the character in his play. In the Epilogue he has a dancer tell the audience that "Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man."²⁴ This was wise for feelings ran strong between the Lollards and the Catholics, and it was proper thus to lift the drama above the realm of controversy.²⁵

The Famous Victories which--at least as we have the text today--is not divided into acts and scenes and it covers the time embraced by Shakespeare's I and II Henry IV and Henry V. It includes nothing of Hotspur, Glendower, or Douglas, and very little of Henry IV besides his concern over his son's wild doings, his sickness, and his death. Roughly speaking, Hal is prince in the

23 II Henry IV, III, 11, 28-29.

24 II Henry IV, Epilogue, 35-36.

25 Boas, Shakespeare's Predecessors, 260.

first half of the Famous Victories and, after his father's death, king in the latter part. This last part of the old play is concerned with the matter of Shakespeare's Henry V including the invasion of France, the victories of Harfleur and Agincourt, and the wooing of Kate. Like Henry V, this part of the old play also has its comic sections, common soldiers engaging in farce.²⁶

Though the Famous Victories does not seem to have been written with definite acts and scenes marked for presentation, this writer has divided it into what could be taken as nineteen scenes. This has been done mainly for the sake of presenting a more orderly synopsis and of showing more clearly what part was played by the Eastcheap crew in Prince Hal's life. Such a synopsis does not seem to have been made before; it will give a clear view of just what Shakespeare had to build on and borrow from.

Scene 1, lines 1-131. The opening shows the Prince and his companions just having successfully robbed the king's carriers. The noisy group plans to go to the tavern at Eastcheap to spend their ill-gotten profits.

Sc. 2, 132-304. Here the night watch captures a thief, one of the prince's helpers. The place where the robbery took place is mentioned as Gads Hill. There is a report of a brawl at the Eastcheap tavern as a result of which the prince was taken into custody by the Mayor of London.

²⁶ "The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth," Adams, Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas. 667-690.

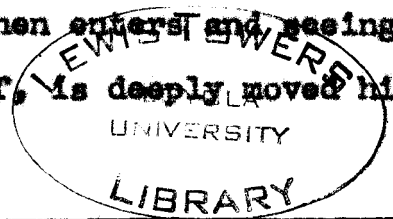
Sc. 3, 305-380. The king listens to the Mayor's report of his taking the prince into custody for disorderly conduct. Although the king is pleased with the Mayor's righteous and fearless upholding of law and order, he is deeply grieved over his son's neglect of the same.

Sc. 4, 381-520. The trial of the thief is held whereat the prince (apparently released from holding) strikes the Lord Chief Justice a blow on the ear and is promptly taken into custody again, this time to the Fleet.

Sc. 5, 521-608. Here there is a farcical re-enactment of the striking of the Lord Chief Justice. This is staged by two clownish fellows, John Cobbler, one of the night watch that had captured the thief, and Dericke, who had been the victim of the robbery. (These same two provide the farce in France later on in the play, referred to above.)

Sc. 6, 609-685. The prince is freed and returns to his companions. From them he hears of his father's sickness whereupon he joins in the hope that the king will die soon so that he may the sooner succeed to the crown. He and his companions then go to the palace to visit the king.

Sc. 7, 686-813. This scene opens with the king weeping over his son's foolish ways. The prince then enters and seeing his father so reduced by sickness and grief, is deeply moved him-



self. He is then reconciled with his father and swears that he will forever break off his contact with his wild companions.

Sc. 8, 818-840. This is another farce scene and serves to bring out the low quality of the prince's companions.

Sc. 9, 841-957. The sick king asleep, his son, the prince, enters the chamber repentant and sorrowful. Thinking the king to be dead, he takes away the crown. The king awakens shortly, misses the crown, and sends his lords to find the thief. They return with the prince holding the crown. Now the troubled king thinks that his son has not truly reformed, but young Harry then explains that he thought his father was dead, and so returns the crown. The king is pleased at this and, convinced of his son's sincerity, presents him with the crown and falls asleep again. The others all leave and the king dies.

Sc. 10, 958-1207. The new king, Henry V, casts off Oldcastle and his former companions when they meet him on the street. The new king then decides to win back the French crown, and so prepares for war. The French send him tennis balls and a carpet, signifying that the young king is more suited for tennis and the couch than for the battlefield and the tent. Before sailing the king sends for the Lord Chief Justice (the man he had trouble with earlier as prince) and places him in command of the government during his own absence in France.²⁷

Further synopsis which would cover scenes eleven to nineteen will be omitted, for it would not bear directly on the matter of this chapter. Enough has been given to demonstrate the matter from which Shakespeare borrowed and on which he was to improve in his own plays. Now, by considering more in detail the part of Oldcastle (he does not appear in the play after the tenth scene) it will appear that he was indeed the dramatic forerunner of Falstaff, though a much more loosely drawn character and one of whom no detailed description is given. Shakespeare took the hints offered in this old play and developed Oldcastle into a real personality.²⁸

Oldcastle's is not a big part. In all he has only fourteen speeches. Nevertheless, there are a few flashes of wit that mark him as related to Falstaff. A few lines from the anonymous Famous Victories will show that the prince's crew is the same as Shakespeare's Eastcheap characters. At the opening of the play the prince is discussing with them where they will go to spend their booty.

Hen. 5. Now sirs, how like you this? Was not this brauely done? For now the villaines dare not speak a word of it, I haue so feared them with words. Now, whither shall we go?

All. Why, my lord, you know our old hostes at Feuersham.

²⁸ However, there is no intention here to imply that Oldcastle was the only dramatic forerunner of Falstaff. His similarity to the Vices of the old Moralities is treated at length in J. Dover Wilson's book, The Fortunes of Falstaff.

Hen. 5. Our hostes at Feuersham! Blood, what shall we do there? We haue a thousand pound about vs, and we shall go to a pettie ale-house? No, no. You know the old tauerne in Eastcheape; there is good wine:-- besides, there is a pretie wench that can talk well; for I delight as much in their toongs as any part about them.

All. We are readie to waite vpon your Grace.

Hen. 5. Gogs Wounds, "wait"? we will go altogether; we are all fellowes. I tell you, sirs, and the king my father were dead, we would all be kings. Therefore, come away.

Ned. Gogs Wounds, brauely spoken, Harry!²⁹

Clearly this is the meagre source of all the fun at the Boar's Head in Shakespeare's Henry IV. From the barest hints given in the selection above, he adds Mistress Quickley and Doll Tear-sheat. The portrayal of Hal (called Hen. 5 in the text) in the Famous Victories had become part of the legend of that wayward young prince, and it could not be overlooked.

The gigantic wit of Falstaff is also, though vaguely, foreshadowed in the Famous Victories, as will be seen in the following selection. According to the division of the play given above, what follows would be from Scene 6. The action occurs after the prince has been freed for the second time, following his second run-in with the Lord Chief Justice.

Hen. 5. Come away, sirs. Gogs wounds, Ned! didst thou not see what a boxe on the eare I tooke my Lord Chief Justice?

Tom. By Gogs blood, it did me good to see it. It made his teethe iarre in his head!

Hen. 5. (Enter Sir John Old-Castle.) How now, Sir John Old-Castle, what newes with you?

Ioh. Old. I am glad to see your Grace at libertie. I

was come, I, to visit you in prison.

Hen. 5. To visit me! Didst thou not know that I am a princes son? Why, tis inough for me to looke into a prison, though I come not in my-selfe. But heres such adoo now-a-days--heres prisoning, heres hanging, whipping, and the diuel and all. But I tell you sirs, when I am king we will haue no such things. But, my lads, if the old king, my father, were dead, we would all be kings.

Ioh. Old. Hee is a good olde man; God take him to his mercy the sooner!³⁰

There is no difficulty at all in seeing Falstaff saying that last line. In fact, it is all but impossible not to be reminded of him, so nearly identical is the type of remark. So too, in the line, "I was come, I, to visit you in prison," with its pompous repetition of the first person pronoun, are we reminded of the humorous airs assumed by Falstaff in Shakespeare's plays.

The other places where Oldcastle is reminiscent of Falstaff occur in Scene 10, just after the coronation of Henry the Fifth. The old companions do not as yet know that they have been thrown over by their young friend. Oldcastle's first remark in this scene is one of glee over the death of the old king. "Dead! then, Gogs blood, we shall all be kings."³¹ Then, a little later he continues in the same vein, "Oh, how it did me good to see the king crowned! Methought his seate was like the figure of heauen, and his person like vnto a god."³²

30 Famous Victories, 615-631.

31 Ibid., 968-969.

32 Ibid., 989-992.

This is certainly Falstaff for the things he says. He has not yet been taught how to put his thoughts as well as he does in Henry IV, but the thoughts are there. There is the same admiration of the young prince, the same delight at the reign that is surely (he supposes) to ensue, and the same humorous vision of himself in a place of honor beside the new monarch.

"Out of these shadows, and the substance in Holinshed's Chronicles, came Shakespeare's Henry IV and Henry V; and with them, Falstaff and his crew."³³ That they were shadows will be apparent at the reading of Shakespeare's version. The characters or types of the old play become people for Shakespeare. This is eminently so with the fat knight whom he took over, name and all, from the anonymous old play. Falstaff, Shakespeare's mighty knight of humor, with an ease equal to his greatness, seems to have broken down the fortifications of all men's hearts. This intriguing mountain of humanity has become the prince of good fellows. Shakespeare has given him a body and a wit that surpass those of ordinary men.

Because of what has been said above regarding Shakespeare's borrowing from other men, it must not be thought that anything is taken away from him. That the credit for Falstaff goes almost entirely to Shakespeare does not, on the other hand,

142. 33 Norman, So Worthy a Friend: William Shakespeare,

take anything away from the contention of this chapter. That he had to borrow Falstaff from the Famous Victories has been shown. As a closing to this chapter, therefore, lest it seem to attempt to derogate from the work of Shakespeare, it will be necessary to point out as briefly as possible that the borrowed Oldcastle was so completely enlivened and transmogrified as to as to deserve being called a true dramatic creation.

Shakespeare's Falstaff is no hackneyed type, no common clown that might be found in a dozen men's ordinary work. The hulk of the man, his love of good meat and drink, his supreme banter at the Boar's Head, his exploit as highwayman at Gadshill, and his leading of a torn and tattered battalion to battle have all been so graphically depicted that he practically seems a familiar to any reader of Henry IV. Among the many sharply drawn impressions of him, the one which the prince gives at Gadshill is outstanding.

Prince Hal. Falstaff sweats to death,
And lards the lean earth as he walks along.
Were't not for laughing, I should pity him.³⁴

Those three lines tell more about Falstaff than the whole of the Famous Victories. Such is the difference between the hint that Shakespeare found and the reality that he left. It is the same with the humor of the two plays. The old play is mildly amusing and, no doubt, satisfied the patrons many an afternoon; but Fal-

34 I Henry IV, II, 11, 115-117.

staff like Tamburlaine a decade earlier, took the dramatic world by storm. The sharp wit, rough fun, and full-blown humor of the following passage represents but one of many that could be cited. Falstaff begins referring to the prince who has just hid his horse.

Fal. I am accursed to rob in that thief's company; the rascal hath removed my horse and tied him I know not where. If I travel but four foot by the squire further afoot I shall break my wind. . . . Eight yards of uneven ground is three-score and ten miles afoot with me, and the stony hearted villains know it well enough. A plague upon't when thieves cannot be true one to another. Whew! A plague upon you all! Give me my horse, you rogues; give me my horse and be hanged.

Prince. (Coming forward.) Peace, ye fat-guts! lie down! lay thine ear close to the ground, and list if thou canst hear the tread of travellers.

Fal. Have you any levers to lift me up again, being down? 'Sblood! I'll not bear mine own flesh so far afoot again for all the coin in thy father's exchequer. What a plague mean ye to colt me thus?

Prince. Thou liest: thou art not colted; thou art uncolted.

Fal. I prithe, good Prince Hal, help me to my horse, good king's son.

Prince. Out, you rogue! Shall I be your ostler?

Fal. Go, hang thyself in thine own heir apparent garters! If I be ta'en, I'll peach for this. An I have not ballads made on all of you, and sung to filthy tunes, let a cup of sack be my poison: when a jest is so forward, and afoot, too! I hate it.³⁵

The Famous Victories merely referred to the robbery at Gads Hill; in the play of Shakespeare the robbery is carried out with plenty of by-play, as the above passage shows. The point of the comparison is patent; the acorn in the shadow of the oak.

The less appealing side of Falstaff's character is not neglected, though whatever of him is revealed is accompanied by his humor. Shakespeare shows him to his audience growing great in body but wasting away his life in vulgarities. Much sack drunk, too many promises forgotten or evaded, too many lies told, too much pleasure sought, and never any cultivation of responsibility; all these mark him for a fall. For as Shakespeare had borrowed Falstaff, he borrowed the whole story. He therefore banished the fat knight from the new king's company at the end of the play.

K. Henry V. I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers;

How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!
I have long dreamed of such a kind of man,
So surfeit swelled, so old, and so profane,
But being awaked, I do despise my dream.³⁶

The judgment of many of the critics on this last meeting between the two old companions has not always been rational. They seem to have been deceived by the gigantic humor of the man as to his other qualities. So clever has this colossal character been in talking his way out of all moral responsibility that they seem to have been ready to swear that Falstaff can do no wrong, or perhaps, more accurately, that if Falstaff did it--no matter what--then it was all right. For they cannot stomach the final rejection by the newly crowned Hal. They have over-

³⁶ II Henry IV, V, v, 51-56.

looked the whole habit of Shakespeare in borrowing and adapting. He might improve on a character almost beyond all recognition by his dazzling success with him; but he would follow the plot as he found it.

CHAPTER IV

FALSTAFF AND PRINCE HAL'S PREFERENCE FOR THE TAVERN LIFE AND COMPANIONS OVER THOSE OF HIS FATHER'S COURT

Up to this point in the thesis it has been shown first, that the prince had somehow to be pictured amid riotous fellows of the tavern variety and secondly, in the previous chapter, that because of an old play, The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth, and the current and universal practice of the dramatists of that age, Shakespeare had to borrow in some form its scenes and characters. It was the practice of the time to take over old plots and characters rather than invent new ones. Thus the second great need of Falstaff has been explained in view of the fact that in the old play about Prince Hal there were just such characters as Falstaff and the Eastcheap companions. Consequently, the first two sections of the thesis have been proved, namely that Shakespeare needed Falstaff because of (1) the requirements of history and (2) the method followed by Shakespeare as peculiar to and distinctive of the playwrights of his time.

In the present chapter, however, Shakespeare's need for Falstaff and the tavern scenes will be shown from still another point of view, the view of the author himself. It will become

clear from the special aim of Shakespeare himself in writing the particular plays, I and II Henry IV, why the person of such a character as Falstaff had to become an essential part of the story. Shakespeare wanted his Hal to be portrayed as no other role in all the plays. Hal was to be England's ideal warrior-king, the king with the common touch. This king was to develop naturally from a spirited young prince who had lived in close contact with common folk, even the lowest of them. Out of such a one Shakespeare desired to fashion the true Englishman, something very similar to the thought of the popular phrase, "first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen."

The problem that presented itself to Shakespeare in view of this aim was complex. How was he to keep within the laws of probability in showing the prince's traditional spurning of the life at his father's court in favor of the company of riotous tavern fellows side by side with the same Prince Hal who was to become the prototype of English kingship as Henry the Fifth? Moreover, how was Shakespeare to preserve his popular, many-sided monarch-to-be from contamination at the hands of his own chosen and admittedly low companions? This chapter will attempt to show Falstaff as the effective answer to both these problems. It will attempt to show that Falstaff was the sufficient reason for Hal's overwhelming liking for the tavern life instead of the court. It will also try to show that both Falstaff's character itself, as well as Hal's final rejection of

him after his coronation, were sufficient to preserve the prince from the evil influence of the life that Falstaff stood for.

Perhaps it will be well to begin the discussion of Falstaff as the answer to this third need of Shakespeare with a brief preliminary glance at the character of the fat knight. Only because he is such a compelling personality can he answer the needs of Shakespeare. Only by exceptional character portrayal of Falstaff would it be safe to put the prince into his regular company without disgracing English sovereignty on the whole and Henry the Fifth, the mirror of Christian kings, in particular.

Oldcastle of the Famous Victories was a stock character barely delineated at all. Falstaff of Henry IV is another man. He is new-made under the creative influence of Shakespeare. Out of the dust and ashes of a second-rate drama Shakespeare has summoned a character who has been called not infrequently the greatest comic creation of English literature. He is the embodiment of good fellowship. His wit is never at a loss. His humor is racy and genuine, and though pointed and disarmingly personal, it is never mean or petty or small. His conversation is not only alert and clever, but it reveals a wide background of knowledge, not the least manifestation of which is his acquaintance with the Bible. It was no mere country bumpkin that Prince Henry chose to flatter as his boon companion. That he was old did not take away from his spirit of mirth; that he was

fat and far from nimble only served to set off his mental agility to greater advantage. He was at home in the tavern, took his ease at his inn, and good food with plenty of drink was the staff of his life.

However, there is also the darker side of the picture. It was not only good food, but too much food; not only ale and sack, but no end to his consumption of it. Then there are the lies told, the bills unpaid, the promises made only to be broken, and, in general, a life that is serious only in avoiding the seriousness of life. For Falstaff lives as though he were beyond the moral law. He is wasting his life away in vulgarities. And although some critics would apparently like to free him from all responsibility or accountability to any moral code,¹ Sir John, at least, more moral than his critics, has his moments of remorse.

Fal. Bardolph, am I not fallen away vilely since this last action? do I not bate? do I not dwindle? Why, my skin hangs about me like an old lady's loose gown; I am withered like an old apple-john. Well, I'll repent, and that suddenly, when I am in some liking; I shall be out of heart shortly, and then I shall have no strength to repent. An I have not forgotten what the inside of a church is made of, I am a peppercorn, a brewer's horse: the inside of a church! Company, villanous company hath been the ruin of me.²

1 Cf. Maurice Morgann, "An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff," Shakespeare Criticism, ed. D. Nichol Smith, London, 1926, 181, 183, 186.

2 I Henry IV, III, iii, 1-12.

These pricks of a somnolent conscience, though, as Sir John himself admits, are not to be taken too seriously. Immediately after giving vent to the above penitent sentiments he realizes his own weakness in the matter of personal reform. Falstaff tells Bardolph, "I'll amend my life," as soon as "thou amend thy face."³ The intimation here is that Falstaff can as likely reform as Bardolph can alter the appearance of his big red nose. Indeed, within two minutes all remorse is completely forgotten as Falstaff falsely tells Mistress Quickly that his cheap, copper ring was "a seal-ring of my grandfather's, worth forty mark."⁴

But for all this his irresponsible nature is never spent nor his welcome worn out. Of those who knew him best, Mistress Quickly is perhaps second only to the prince. Considering the borrowing and loaning he practiced on her, the bills he never paid her, and the promise of marriage that he never kept nor intended to keep to her, the estimate she forms of him will be enlightening. The kind of feeling he inspired in her can be seen clearly in her words as he is leaving for the wars. "Well, fare thee well: I have known thee these twenty-nine years come peascod-time, but an honest and truer-hearted man--well, fare thee well."⁵ The good she would like to say of him she cannot say

3 Ibid., 27-30.

4 Ibid., 93-94.

5 II Henry IV, II, iv, 119-122.

--cannot, because it is not true. It is the sentimental critics who have gone ahead and said what his best friends were unable to say.

Falstaff knew he was no paragon of virtue. The peculiar thing is that he makes a joke even out of that. E. K. Chambers asks whether dishonesty ever found a more complete apology than in Falstaff's surprised protest after the Gadshill robbery, "Why, Hal, 'tis my vocation, Hal! 'tis no sin for a man to labor at his vocation."⁶ Chambers comments:

His strength lies in his complete ἀναιδέϊα (shamelessness.) Provided that he come off best in a bout of verbal fence, he is ready to accept any moral judgment that is formed of him with the most serene indifference.⁷

According to Duthie,

The Falstaff way of life, shared by the prince, is a life of unrestrained fun and sensuous enjoyment, a life of immoderate eating and drinking, a life in which highway robbery is an amusing pastime, a life of immorality, of prodigality, of license, of riot.⁸

And yet on the very next page this same writer continues with, "Now Falstaff is great fun: we all enjoy him."⁹ These are the two extremes in the battle of the critics over Falstaff's char-

⁶ E. K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey, New York, 1925, 126.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ G. I. Duthie, Shakespeare, New York, 1951, 140.

⁹ Ibid., 141.

acter. They show the type of complex personality Shakespeare had to create to answer his problem: how explain Hal's youthful tavern days? But Falstaff is no problem to himself. He does not care that he is a sinner; he only cares that others enjoy a joke with him, even if that involves having them believe, at least for a while, that black is white, that vice is virtue. In him it is easy to see that while it is right to hate the sin, it is easy to love the sinner. For him his morality, or lack of it, is, along with all other circumstances, merely a spring-board to his humor, his joie de vivre, his rollicking antics; and his lazy good-nature is basic to his practical, worldly-wise, easy-going philosophy of life. This great liar, this rascally knave, this old man vainly trying to hold on to the riotous pleasures of youth, and no seeker after honor,¹⁰ was Shakespeare's gigantic improvement on Holinshed and the Famous Victories. For Holinshed is dead and his Chronicles are mouldy with age; the Famous Victories is a forgotten play and its author is unknown: but Falstaff and Prince Hal live on.

It has been pointed out that Shakespeare borrowed the tales of Hal's reckless youth and sudden conversion from the chroniclers and popular tradition. In those sources there was

¹⁰ After feigning death at Shrewsbury rather than face a foe like Hotspur, Falstaff remarks to himself in familiar terms, "The better part of valor is discession, in the which better part I have saved my life." I Henry IV, V, iv, 120-122.

talk of wild days and a miraculous conversion; Shakespeare in a far truer spirit brings the prince's conduct within the ordinary rules of human conduct. He makes it seem reasonable that a young man of high spirits, of a free and open nature, would be repelled by the state of things that awaited him at the court of his father. For the force of Bolingbroke's character is felt powerfully wherever he appears. All the craft and subtlety and intricacies of politic motives would make the atmosphere of the court and council board difficult for Shakespeare's prince to breathe. Though he respects his father, though he may even approve of the policies of the crafty king, still he is reluctant to share in them and is never shown as taking any part in them. The conclusion is that as a young man his interests were carried elsewhere. Thus Shakespeare makes it seem only natural that he should be drawn away to some "tumultuous merry-makings where, laying off all distinct purpose, and untidying his mind into perfect dishabille, he can let his bounding spirits run out in transports of frolic and fun."¹¹ But the question is, if he is not attracted to the court life, and perhaps even repelled by it, to what sort of other attraction will he be drawn? It is here that Shakespeare needed Falstaff. Such a combination of charms and vices as he was, he became the child of dramatic necessity.

¹¹ Rev. H. N. Hudson, Shakespeare: His Life, Art, and Characters, Boston, 1872, 83.

He had to have charms to make his company worthy of a prince; but he had to have vices to live up to the traditions of the young Hal's unruly tavern fellows. Tolman is speaking of times like this, when the dramatist is forced to have characters of such and such a type and no other, when he says:

It certainly seems probable that the character of Falstaff, upon which the dramatist has lavished his power and the world its appreciation, is not a mere chance overflow of Shakespeare's creative energy, but is essential to his purpose and closely adapted thereto.¹²

Shakespeare worked hard on the portrayal of Prince Henry. Dowden says of Henry that it is he "whom Shakespeare admires and loves more than any other person in English history, afterwards to become Shakespeare's ideal king of England, . . ."¹³ Unlike the striking and warlike Hotspur, the prince does not think much of himself or his own honor, and while there is nothing to do at court where his strong father holds the reins of government in powerful grasp, he escapes from the cold proprieties of the court to the boisterous life and mirth of the tavern. Consequently, in picturing Falstaff, the long-time companion to this darling of English princes, Shakespeare had to make him worthy of the prince's attention. This he does with the special kind of humor with which he vests Falstaff. In the laughter

12 Tolman, Falstaff and Other Topics, 4.

13 Edward Dowden, Shakespeare, from "Literature Primers Series," ed. John Richard Green, New York, 1887, 98.

of the Boar's Head Tavern there is relaxation. Gordon's remarks on this type of humor are very well thought out and fit Falstaff so well that it will be necessary to quote them at some length here. They tell how the comic character, bored with the business of adapting and readapting himself to the society of which he is a member, slackens in the attention that is due to the precise and proper protocol of conventional manners. It is just this spirit that held such a fascination for the prince when in the company of Falstaff. After stating that Bergson is too prim to give this type of humor more than a passing nod, Gordon continues:

In some way or other he is absent, away from his work, taking it easy. He abandons social convention. Our first impulse is to accept the invitation to take it easy. For a short time, at all events, we join in the game. And that relieves us from the strain of living.¹⁴

Surely this is excellent! M. Bergson, no longer merely critical and prim, but with at least some of the strong air of Eastcheap in his lungs, M. Bergson is now bowling along, and his theory of comedy, at this glorious rate will presently be ample enough to embrace the comic world, to enclose in its orbit our Shakespeare as well as Moliere.

.....
 'It is perhaps the fault' he (Hazlitt now!) says, 'of Shakespeare's comic muse that he is too good natured and magnanimous. We sympathize with his characters more often than we laugh at them. His ridicule wants the sting of ill-nature. Falstaff himself is so great a joke rather for his being so huge a mass of enjoyment than that of absurdity.'¹⁵

¹⁴ This paragraph epitomizes Bergson's reluctant acknowledgment of the Shakespearean and Falstaffian type of comedy.

¹⁵ Hazlitt's comments on "the fault of Shakespeare's comic muse" are precisely on the matters which make Falstaff worthy to be Hal's close associate.

.....
 In the comedies, as we saw, it is always the ladies who win, and I think that we are agreed that they deserve their victory. But it is an easy victory; for the young men are never quite natural, which is as much as to say that they are never at their best. Can it be--I advance the suggestion in all timidity--can it be that women are at their best in the mixed society of men and women, and that men are at their best in the society of men?¹⁶ There is a passage on this matter in one of the letters of Keats. He had felt acutely this difference of feminine and male society, and had wondered at it:

Is it not extraordinary? he says. When among men, I have no evil thoughts, no malice, no spleen. I feel free to speak or be silent. I can listen, and from everyone I can learn. My hands are in my pockets. I am free from all suspicion, and comfortable.

Every man who reads this understands what Keats means. Here is something in the art of living--an atmosphere of ease, of tolerance, of humorous equality, and of lazy good-nature--which women, with all their gifts, have perhaps not yet achieved. This humorous masculine club room atmosphere Shakespeare has fixed forever in the Falstaff scenes. It is the great secret of the comedy of Henry IV that it is wholly masculine and unaffected by women. The only women in those scenes are Doll Tearsheet and Mistress Quickly, and you can see at once what informality this gives. One feels that when Shakespeare's ladies have retired, when they have quite left the neighborhood, Shakespeare's men are so much--I will not say happier, because that would be discourteous, but so much more themselves.¹⁷ They unbend, they take their ease. An air of masculine undress descends upon them. They give up wit, and take to humor. . . .

¹⁶ This reflects on the prince's getting away from the propriety of the court for the freedom of the tavern; for the court would be as confining to him as the "mixed society of men and women."

¹⁷ One also feels that when the king and the lords have retired, when their influence has quite left the neighborhood, Shakespeare's Hal, in the company of Falstaff, is shown to the English people without the veneer of position, a fellow Englishman, worthy to be their king.

Cheerful abuse of each other is the principal delight of Falstaff and his friends; and I have authority for saying that this is wholly unfeminine. I say things to my friends and my friends say things to me, which I am assured would end all friendship between two women. I believe that no fat lady ever lived who could take it like Falstaff. His friends exhaust the English language to find expressions for his shape, and the more they exert themselves, the more he loves them. . . .

You may call these scenes from Henry IV the 'smoking room' of Shakespeare's dramas: a little corner of the house where men can relax and be merely men.¹⁸

The Eastcheap scenes of Henry IV are the 'smoking room' to which Prince Hal was so masculinely attracted, a little corner of England where the heir apparent could relax and be merely a man. To devote so much space to quoting an author seemed good here, because the approach he gives to the Falstaff days of the prince is not only unique and accurate, but helps answer so well the first question at the beginning of this chapter: how was Shakespeare to present the traditional preference of the prince for the tavern over the court? Gordon's explanation of the Falstaffian humor is one of the very finest because it manifests such a sound understanding of human psychology.

Not only did Shakespeare need someone like Falstaff to make Hal's youthful fun seem reasonable, but also because the prince had to be the all-around man, popular, kind, and approach-

¹⁸ George Gordon, Shakespearean Comedy and Other Studies, Oxford, 1945, 10, 11, 31, 32, 33.

able. It was in Shakespeare's plan to present Bolingbroke's great son both as the pattern and ideal of English kingship and yet, at the same time, as a man with no pose or arrogance, who bears himself simply, talks modestly, and understands the lowly no less than the great. That Shakespeare needed Falstaff and the Eastcheap scenes to bring out this side of Henry the Fifth will be shown after a brief glance at the actual historical basis for such a conception of the man.

First of all, there was the picture drawn by Holinshed of Henry the Fifth. He speaks glowingly of the new king as soon as he is crowned and recounts with favorable bias his teachings, advice, decisions, and battles. At the end of his short reign, Holinshed gives "His advice upon his death bed, worthy of so great and admirable a prince," after which he describes the effect on the hearers:

The noble men present, promised to observe his precepts and perform his desires; but their hearts were so pensive, so replenished with sorrow, that one could not for weeping behold another. . . . This Henrie was a king, of life without a spot, a prince whom all men loved, and of none disdained, a capteine against whom fortune never frowned, nor mischance once spurned, whose people him so severe a justicer both loved and obeyed (and so humane withall) that he left no offense unpunished, nor friendship unrewarded. . . .¹⁹

It was into such a man that Shakespeare had to fashion the fun-loving young prince. With Shakespeare this development was to

19 Holinshed, Chronicles, 129.

be no miracle, however, as it was with Holinshed. "[F] or miracles are ceased; And therefore we must needs admit the means How things are perfected."²⁰

Besides the praise heaped upon Henry of Monmouth as king, there is also one significant event recorded of him by Holinshed during the years as prince. There the story is told how one John Badde, a tailor, was sentenced to burning at the stake for holding heretical opinions on the Blessed Sacrament. He had not only contemptuously denied the presence of anything divine therein, but was so strong in his errors that he was brought to London all the way from the West of England, tried before the highest Ecclesiastical court, and condemned. It happened that the young Prince of Wales was present when the fire was lit, and moved by the groans of the unhappy man, ordered the fire to be plucked away. Then, after the man had recovered sufficiently, the prince urged him to recant, going so far as to offer him a pension for life. But as the victim refused, he was put back, the fire re-lit, and he died.²¹ Belloc's comments on this are to the point:

Now that incident--though it is but an isolated one--conveys many lessons. See in the first place, the

²⁰ Henry V, I, 1, 67-69.

²¹ Holinshed, "Henry IV," Chronicles, 86.

domestic nature of the time and the popular nature of its kingship; the personal interference of the heir to the throne; his personal conversation with the victim; . . . See, again, the attempt to save the victim, . . .²²

This is all part of the picture of Prince Hal, and Shakespeare, unable to draw the whole of the man if confined to the doings of the kings and lords, had to seek other means. Though this particular incident is not included in Henry IV, Shakespeare has tried to show the prince as having a genuine fellow-feeling with the humblest of his subjects. Surely the Eastcheap way of life was a wrong way of life, as Duthie explains,²³ but it had in it, besides its prodigality and riot, a very valuable element. It made Henry the Fifth a truly English monarch, a man of the people, beloved by them because he knew them and they knew him. Boas calls him the "personified genius of the race," what Achilles was to the Greeks, Roland to the Franks, Arthur to the Celts.²⁴ Later on, after his coronation when he has shaken off his youthful follies, he has retained from the early days his faculty for adapting himself to all sorts and conditions of men. Along these same lines, Bradley remarks on Henry's popularity

²² Hilaire Belloc, A History of England, III, New York, 1928, 185.

²³ Duthie, Shakespeare, 145.

²⁴ Boas, Shakespeare and His Predecessors, 281.

with English readers, "being, as he is, perhaps the most distinctly English of all Shakespeare's men."²⁵ The same author goes on to say

. . . [H]is youthful escapades have given him an understanding of simple folk, and sympathy with them; he is the author of the saying, 'There is some soul of goodness in things evil'; and he is much more obviously religious than most of Shakespeare's heroes. . . . And so he has been described as Shakespeare's ideal man of action; nay, it has even been declared that here for once Shakespeare disclosed his own ethical creed, and showed us his ideal, not simply of a man of action, but of a man.²⁶

Thus it is plain to see that without Falstaff and the Eastcheap scenes, Prince Hal could not have been drawn as he deserved to be according to the poet's mind. This practically completes the third point of this thesis: that to portray Hal, who was to be developed into Henry the Fifth in another play--part of the whole projected series on the Lancastrian Succession--Shakespeare needed what only Falstaff and the Eastcheap group of Characters could supply, that common touch that made Prince Hal dear to his people.

Before going on, however, it does seem necessary to demonstrate this from the play itself. It is especially striking in contrast with the other great historical figures, Bolingbroke,

²⁵ A. C. Bradley, "The Rejection of Falstaff," Oxford Lectures on Poetry, London, 1950, 256.

²⁶ Ibid.

his father, and hotspur, his great rival. The king is a cold and subtle politician; Hotspur seems a man with a one-track mind, to stand apart even from his closest followers as quite independent and unable to gear his own hot personality smoothly with other men. But the prince, who so lightly cast aside his dignities to mingle freely with his fellow-men, is clearly cast in another mold. He was able to seek out and gather from his dangerous experience with low fellows that spirit of sympathy with human actions from which a sovereign is almost necessarily excluded.²⁷ This is brought out most clearly in one of the scenes from the first part of Henry IV:

Scene IV.--Eastcheap. A Room in the Boar's Head Tavern. Enter the Prince and Poins.

Prince. Ned, prithee, come out of that fat room, and lend me thy hand to laugh a little.²⁸

Poins. Where hast thou been, Hal?²⁹

Prince. With three or four loggerheads amongst three or four score hogsheads.³⁰ I have sounded the very base string of humility. Sirrah, I am sworn brother to a leash of drawers, and can call them all by their christen names, as Tom, Dick, and Francis. They take it already upon their salvation that though I be but Prince of Wales, yet I am the king of courtesy; and tell me flatly I am no proud Jack, like Falstaff, but a Corinthian, a lad of mettle, a good boy,--by the lord, so they call me--and when I am king of England I shall command all the good lads in Eastcheap.³¹

27 Hudson, Shakespeare, Life, Art, Characters, 79-80

28 It may be validly supposed that the prince found little excuse for laughter at the court.

29 Hal has just come back from the Gadshill robbery.

30 Loggerheads are blockheads, presumably his helpers at Gadshill. Hogsheads are lower, those who were robbed, etc.

31 I Henry IV, II in. 1-16.

This passage shows how close Hal was to even the very lowest of the common people. He has been with loggerheads and hogsheads. He has sounded the very base string of humility. By this metaphor drawn from music, he means that there is no one lower to whom he can condescend. He also means, according to Tillyard's fine analysis, that "he is a bow that has got a response from the lowest string of the instrument, namely the drawers. We are to think that he has sounded all the other strings already."³² This is one of the main functions of the Falstaff group of characters, that through them the prince may complete the range of the human gamut.

Later on in the same scene, after some nonsense with the drawer, Francis, some foolishness for the sake of a laugh to while away the time till Falstaff shall appear, Poins and the prince are alone again. Poins is asking him what enjoyment he got from the prolonged jest with the drawer:

Poins. But hark ye; what cunning match have you made with this jest of the drawer? come, what's the issue?

Prince. I am now of all humours that have showed themselves humours since the old days of Goodman Adam to the pupil age of this present twelve o'clock of midnight.³³

Here the prince's wealth of humours is contrasted with the single humour of the one-sided Hotspur, as Tillyard points out when he

³² E.M.W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, New York, 1947, 276.

³³ I Henry IV, II., iv., 105-108.

writes that the prince, having learned to understand the drawers, has mastered all the springs of human conduct, and thus completed his education in the knowledge of men.³⁴ In comparing the drawers to dogs in the figure that the prince uses of himself, "sworn brother to a leash of drawers," Shakespeare shows how low in the scale of being the prince has descended, for the next step down from drawers would be on the brute level.³⁵ The heir apparent has stepped down to the lowest rung of the ladder. A nobleman by birth, he has preferred not to be a king without the common touch. They have called him the "king of courtesy," "no proud Jack," and have said flatly that when he is king of England he shall command all the good lads in Eastcheap. This is what Shakespeare wanted, a man of action, the ideal warrior-king, but one who would not only be king of England by birth but king of Englishmen's hearts, and that, by their own choice. This is why Shakespeare needed the Falstaff group and the Eastcheap scenes.

There is but one difficulty, that mentioned in the second question at the beginning of this chapter: how was Shakespeare to preserve his popular, many-sided, monarch-to-be from contemnation at the hands of his chosen and admittedly, low companions? Shakespeare accomplished this both by means of

³⁴ Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, 276.

³⁵ Ibid., 277.

Falstaff's character itself and by Hal's final rejection of him after his coronation. He begins the process of preserving Hal's reputation in the very first scene in which the prince appears. The plans for the Gadshill robbery have just been laid. Falstaff and Poins have just left the prince alone on the stage. He soliloquizes on his strange situation, showing that for him the robbery was more frolic than earnest, designed for fun in the madcap mood of youth.

Prince. I know you all, and will awhile uphold
 The unyok'd humour of your idleness:
 Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
 Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
 To smother up his beauty from the world,
 That when he please again to be himself,
 Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at,
 By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
 Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
 If all the year were playing holidays,
 To sport would be as tedious as to work;
 But when they seldom come, they wish'd for come,
 And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
 So, when this loose behaviour I throw off,
 And pay the debt I never promised,
 By how much better than my word I am
 By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
 And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
 My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
 Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
 Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
 I'll so offend to make offense a skill;
 Redeeming time when men think least I will.³⁶

This soliloquy, like any other of Shakespeare's, presents its problems. It can be taken as quite offensive, the secret thought of a calculating and prudish snob. But it can be interpreted

in another manner. It can be understood as an explanation to the audience of what is happening before their eyes and of what is going to happen as the play goes on. This way it is as if it were spoken more out of character than in character, a foretelling of what will happen in the story of the prince, not a cold and calculating plot. The latter would not fit the prince's character and it could not have been intended to be taken that way. What it does tell the audience is that the young prince is not the dupe of low climbers. It tells them that he knows well what he is doing, that no matter where the place or what the company, he is in command of himself just as he will one day be ruler of his country.

Secondly, there is the matter of Falstaff's character. This has already been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and it will be sufficient here to mention that in the second part of Henry IV Shakespeare gradually separates the fat knight and the young prince. There Falstaff's vices begin to show more and more: his scurvy treatment of the soldiers in his command, a new strain of insolence, more promises broken, new characters duped, more lies told, and never a sign of repentance withal. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the part of the prince's nature that shows when he is with Falstaff is, after all, only a part of his nature. There were many higher strings besides the base string.

It is said that a man shows his true colors in difficulty, and a brave man will be braver in danger. Perhaps Falstaff may be called brave in his humorous but constant refusal to accept any moral code. There is something that might be called bravery in his willingness to be forced into any corner and then battle his way out by the sheer cleverness of his wit. But as for the bravery that ordinarily goes by that name, it is only necessary to look to his words and actions on the real battlefield.

Fal. Hal, if thou see me down in the battle, and bestride me, so; 'tis a point of friendship.

Prince. Nothing but a colossus can do thee that friendship. Say thy prayers, and farewell.

Fal. I would it were bed-time, Hal, and all well.

Prince. Why, thou owest God a death. Exit.

Fal. 'Tis not due yet: I would be loath to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me? Well, 'tis no matter; honor pricks me on. Yea, but how if honor prick me off when I come on? How then? Can honor set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honor hath no skill in surgery then? No. What's honor? A word. What's that word honor? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died o'Wednesday? Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. Is it sensible, then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore, I'll none of it: honor is a mere scutcheon; and so ends my catechism. Exit.³⁷

It need hardly be remarked that men of honor and courage are not chameleons or sophists. Honor is not a mere scutcheon. Nor is "the better part of valor discretion,"³⁸ as Falstaff remarks

37 I Henry IV, V., i., 121-143.

38 I Henry IV, V., iv., 119-121.

when he has saved his life on the battlefield by playing 'possum.

Finally, if this is not enough to show that the prince had nothing to do with this seamy side of Falstaff, it is only necessary to consider the meeting of the two immediately after the coronation of Hal as Henry the Fifth. The new king enters with his train and Falstaff, Bardolph, Shallow and Pistol are standing by, waiting for him:

Fal. God save thy grace, King Hal! my royal Hal!

Pist. The heavens thee guard and keep, most royal
imp of fame!

Fal. God save thee, my sweet boy!

Ch. Just. Have you your wits? know you what 'tis
you speak?

Fal. My king! My Jove! I speak to thee, my
heart!

K. Hen. V. I know thee not, old man: fall to thy
prayers;

How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!

I have long dream'd of such a kind of man,

So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane;

But, being awak'd, I do despise my dream.³⁹

Quiller-Couch has called this "the most damnable piece of workmanship" in Shakespeare.⁴⁰ It is overdone. The speech goes on to preach at the former friend. But it is done. Shakespeare has rid Hal of Falstaff and the wrong things he stands for. Fortunately or unfortunately, according to the view taken, he had delineated Falstaff so well that it was painful to remove him from the picture. However, he led up gradually to the break between Hal and Falstaff, and it had to come. He did his best

39 II Henry IV, V., v., 45-46.

40 Quiller-Couch, Shakespeare's Workmanship, 121.

to make the strange transformation that he found in the records seem natural and credible.

. . . It must have been one of the chief attractions of the theme for Shakespeare to show precisely this conversion. No doubt he enjoyed depicting his hero's gay and thoughtless life, at war with all the morality which is founded on mere social convention. But at least as great must have been the pleasure he took, as a man of ripe experience, in vindicating that morality which he now felt to be the determining factor in human life--the morality of voluntary self-reform and self-control, without which there can be no concentration of purpose or systematic activity.⁴¹

⁴¹ George Brandes, William Shakespeare, New York, 1927, 200-201.

CHAPTER V

THE INNOVATION OF THE FALSTAFFIAN DEVICE

It is now time to study the last of the four great reasons why Shakspeare needed Falstaff. When Shakespeare first undertook the writing of the chronicle plays, both in accordance with the mood of the times and the current practice of the dramatists, he went, as has been pointed out in an earlier chapter, to old plays and the prose chronicles of English history for his plots. While such stories of the great men of the past held a strange fascination for the Elizabethan audience and consequently were assured of success if written up fairly well, yet these plays were not true poetry or great literature precisely because they were so heavily historical. There is a difference between history and poetry; it is the difference between science and literature. History is called a science by those who study it and are devoted to it. What it is not called is literature, in the sense of one of the fine arts. When it sometimes happens that a piece of history is very well written, it is said to partake of the nature of literature. This difference between history and poetry has been pointed out by many critics. They have shown the different qualities which the two types of writing entail. The first

to write of this difference was Aristotle:

It is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen--what is possible according to the law of probability and necessity. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and higher thing than history. For poetry tends to express the universal; history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. The particular is, for example, what Alcibiades did or suffered.¹

In borrowing from the old chronicles Shakespeare was hemmed in by the particular. This is essentially true for the reason that the characters of history were well known to his audience, and any tampering with the facts would have been recognized at once. Such facts were stubborn things for him to handle and try to elevate from the plane of history to that of literature. His fidelity to historical fact necessarily tended to clip the wings of his high-flown muse.

Johnson is reported as saying that greater abilities were required in a poet than in a historian because he employed higher powers in his art, powers that are quiescent in historical composition. He is referring to the imagination, which is not needed in the recounting of fact. When he says that penetration, accuracy, and some coloring are sufficient for the historian, he

¹ Aristotle, Poetics, 9, 1451b, as translated in Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, H. S. Butler, London, 1932, 35.

implies that something higher is needed in the poet.² Newman, too, in his commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle says that very same thing in other words:

Poetry, according to Aristotle, is a representation of the ideal. Biography and history represent individual characters and actual facts; poetry, on the contrary, generalizing from the phenomenon of nature and life, supplies us with pictures drawn, not after an existing pattern, but after a creation of the mind. Fidelity is the primary merit of biography and history; the essence of poetry is fiction.³

For the reason that the writer of chronicle plays is too much tied down by the sense of fact at the expense of his own creative imagination, Shakespeare had to look for characters on whom he could more freely exercise his own inventive powers. That was his great step in the treatment of history by fiction. He realized that if he were to adhere merely to the actual facts of history he would not be writing the best literature. Therefore, he had somehow to break away from the merely historical. Speaking of this very problem of Shakespeare's, Baker writes:

He might tamper with chronology; he could much develop minor figures only suggested in the histories; he might add new figures; but the great personages of history he must present in the main as history shows them.⁴

2 Samuel Johnson, "Boswell's Party at the Mitre," as given in The Literature of England, I, eds. Woods, Watt, and Anderson, Chicago, 1941, 1058.

3 John Henry Newman, Poetry, with Reference to Aristotle's Poetics, edited with introduction and notes by Albert S. Cook, Boston, 1891, 9-10.

4 Baker, Development of Shakespeare as Dramatist, 162.

The historian is at his best when his knowledge of the facts is the strongest. The poet, on the other hand, is at his best when freest from the shackles of historical fact.

The fact that some of his great tragic figures were taken from the records of the past did not hamper Shakespeare in his use of them. They were of the past that was misty and dim. Speaking of such figures as Lear, Coriolanus, Hamlet, and Macbeth, Quiller-Couch writes:

These, however, are legendary figures, evoked from the penumbra of Holinshed or Saxo Grammaticus; and Shakespeare calls them up almost in what shape he wills, to be re-inspired with life and to be played with as his genius may choose. Obviously he could not play thus with the houses of York and Lancaster whose rivalries were not only documented but fresh in men's memories. . . . The Elizabethan audience knew these champions of York and Lancaster.⁵

If then the audience knew the story of Hal and Hotspur too well for Shakespeare to take liberties with it, he had to find some other characters whom he could manipulate however he pleased without offending the historical sensibilities of the audiences. It was here that the Falstaff group could again be the answer to one of Shakespeare's needs. They were not historical, and consequently not known; he could do with them what he pleased. To write poetry--which is a higher thing than history--he had to turn his attention partially away from the historical figures and introduce, in accordance with his own creative imagination and the laws of probability and necessity, these other

⁵ Quiller-Couch, Shakespeare's Workmanship, 105-106.

characters and scenes. This had not been done before in the chronicle plays. Because of this introduction of non-historical figures the two parts of Henry IV are different from any of the history that had gone before. Charles Norman asks, "for what would it all be without him (Falstaff) but another chronicle play?"⁶ This device in the treatment of history by fiction or in the manner of the creative writer is called in this thesis the "Falstaffian Device."

It will be necessary to explain this more fully. In the treatment of the two parts of Henry IV, which taken together make a unit intended by the author, Shakespeare has revealed to the world a new method of treating historical fiction. That method involves the use of Falstaff and his crowd as foils, the better to bring out the story of the kings and princes which it is the chief purpose of the play to tell. This is clearly put by Quiller-Couch:

. . .It (the use of the Falstaff group) has set up a permanent artistic principle in the treatment of history by fiction; the principle that, in a drama or novel of this kind, your best protagonists, and the minor characters you can best treat with liveliness as with philosophy, are not those concerning whose sayings and doings you are circumscribed by known fact and documentary evidence, but rather some invented men and women--pawns in the game--upon whose actions and destinies you can make the great events play at will.⁷

6 Charles-Norman, So Worthy a Friend: William Shakespeare, New York, 1947, 143.

7 Quiller-Couch, Shakespeare's Workmanship, 104.

This was indeed something new.⁸ Not entirely new, but new in the sense that Shakespeare was the first to present the technique to the world as a fait accompli. He was the one who put together all the hints and leads and precedents and experiments of those who had gone before him. He was the one who gathered all the materials left him by others, united and formed them afresh, and finally presented to the world a perfected example of a principle that has been imitated and used by writers of historical fiction ever since. In other words, there is something new in the structure of the two parts of Henry IV; a technique that has been used again and again by such writers as Scott, Dickens, and others.⁹

The device, as it appears for the first time in Shakespeare, is this. The characters of history (in the case of Henry

8 Ibid., 103-104. The sense of the word new is explained by Quiller-Couch at the beginning of his essay of Falstaff. "Anyone coming to the two parts of King Henry IV--which in fact make one--can see that here is something new. . . . [H]e cannot miss to perceive, . . . an innovation upon the old methods of chronicle drama. I am not pretending, of course, that the innovation has come at a stroke; that as Pallas Athens from the head of Zeus, the invention sprang upon the world fully armed and complete out of Shakespeare's brain. For (1) as a matter of history, when a new and strong idea such as Elizabethan drama, starts fermenting, all manner of men bring their grapes to the vat; (2) as a matter of history, the germ of the Gad's Hill frolic is to be found in an old play, The Famous Victories of King Henry the Fifth on which Shakespeare undoubtedly worked; and (3) again as a matter of history, Prince Hal's youthful follies were a tradition so fixed in men's minds that no play about him could dispense with them."

9 Ibid., 104.

IV, Bolingbroke, Prince Hal, Hotspur, and the other lords of England) were well known to his audience simply because they were historical. But this did not leave the dramatist much freedom for the exercise of his own creative imagination, for his audience would know if he falsified the facts of history. Yet freedom is of the essence of creative art. Therefore, Shakespeare summoned to the stage other characters, "pawns in the game," who were either real, though little-known, men in history or men who were purely fictitious. With such characters to manipulate at will, the dramatist could still treat the great persons and events with historical accuracy and yet be left free to tell the story entirely in his own way. This he did by letting the great historical events play as he wished on the destinies of the lesser folk. Thus, the story of Falstaff is entirely his own, and yet his whole life is so connected with Prince Hal that to some extent, at least, when the story of the one is known, so is that of the other.

Such, then, is the innovation in the use of Falstaff in the history plays, Henry IV. Falstaff, of course, was not a pure figment of the author's brain, for he had his ancestors, both real and fictional, as has been pointed out earlier in this thesis. The fun and folly of Gadshill were not entirely new either, but were inspired by the Famous Victories. In this connection, it must be remembered, as Attwater remarks, that al-

though Shakespeare took as a source an existing old play, he completely rewrote it rather than dressed it up.¹⁰ It was also known that Prince Hal had led a rather wild life for a while, a way of life not at all becoming the heir to the throne of England; but when Shakespeare had done with these Falstaff characters and scenes it is plain that ninety-nine per cent of the credit as well as ninety-nine per cent of the filling in (of which Falstaff required so plentiful a share) was due to him. Shakespeare created him and developed him as the needs of the play required, and yet without any prejudice to the truly historical characters. Thus he presented the world with a drama that was both historical and poetic at the same time, neither quality excluding the other. Doing no essential harm to the story of Bolingbroke and Prince Hal, Shakespeare saved the principles of art by bringing to the foreground of the action a group of characters who were fictitious and whose destinies he could manipulate under the effects of the great events of the play. He had thus produced greater art than he could ever have done by merely adhering to the actual historical events of the reign of Henry. For poetry is the presentation of the universal in the guise of the particular, and that is a higher thing than the mere presentation of the particular, which is the aim of history. Speaking of the first part

¹⁰ A. L. Attwater, "Shakespeare's Sources," A Companion to Shakespeare Studies, eds. Harley Granville-Barker and G. B. Harrison, New York, 1934, 227.

of Henry IV, Baker writes:

When, however, one notices that six out of the fourteen scenes go to Falstaff and that almost half of the others are almost wholly the product of the author's imagination, one sees why it is that the critics have declared that in these plays historical fiction is born. Here the imagination of the dramatist revivifies historical facts both by making human and comprehensible details of scenes known at most to his audience only in outline and by adding figures that had no real historical existence.¹¹

All of this, then, was the Falstaffian Device, the name this thesis applies to Shakespeare's treatment of history by fiction.

Quiller-Couch mentions the names of some of the writers who have imitated this device since the time of Shakespeare. A brief glance at one or two of these subsequent uses of the Falstaffian Device will serve to clarify the general principle by showing it in other instances. Thus, Scott, one of the authors mentioned by Quiller-Couch and a novelist famous for his tales of historical fiction, makes use of the device in his novel Ivanhoe. In that story, Ivanhoe and Rowena are purely fictitious persons, yet their story of love and adventure constitutes the main plot of the novel. King Richard, on the other hand, the real historical figure of the book, appears very little in its pages. Yet it is because of him and the loyalty of the true Saxons to him and to what he represented that the fortunes of the hero and heroine are told. The whole plot depends not so much on the love story of Ivanhoe and Rowena as on the historical loyalty of Saxon

¹¹ Baker, Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist, 175-176.

subjects to Saxon royalty.

To take still another example of this, one can go to Dickens. The Tale of Two Cities carries the Falstaffian Device even further. The real protagonists of the story are Charles Darnay, Lucy Manette, and Sidney Carton, all three entirely spun out of the author's imagination. Dickens treats them as he wishes. The difference between this piece of historical fiction and Henry IV, is that here the historical backdrop, the true events of history, are not represented by historical and real persons (such as Shakespeare's King Henry IV and Hotspur) but by historical and real events and conditions of the times, namely, the French Revolution. The factual part of Dickens' story is told; a picture of the terrors and heartbreaks of the Revolution is drawn. It is nothing but a development of what Shakespeare first presented when he wanted to be true both to history and to the principles of creative art at one and the same time.

At this point it ought to be emphasized explicitly that the Falstaffian Device need not always be employed in the same manner in which it originally existed. A difference has just been pointed out in regard to Dickens' use of it. Another difference can now be indicated by returning to Scott. Quiller-Couch states that he got the trick from Falstaff and used it again and again in his novels. He writes:

. . . Thus not only does Shakespeare give Scott the trick of Dugald Dalgetty, Dumas the trick of the Three Musketeers, Charles Reade the trick of Dennis the Bur-

gundian; not only is Mistress Quickley the artistic mother of Madame Sans Gene; but if we take almost any historical novel of the first class--Esmond, or L'Homme Qui Rit, or The Cloister and the Hearth, or La Chartreuse de Parme, or The Tale of Two Cities, or Tolstoy's War and Peace--we shall find the protagonists of the story evoked from the vaguest shadows of history, when they are not (as more often happens) pure figments of the author's brain.¹²

Scott does not, however, use the device in exactly the same way as Shakespeare, nor in some respects, as well. Once Shakespeare had introduced Falstaff, he allowed him to grow to his full stature. He let him live freely in the drama. That this made a great difference between Shakespeare and Scott is plain to anyone reading the two men's works. He will notice that Shakespeare's characters live as more fully developed individuals than Scott's. Speaking of Scott's partial inability to unlock the intimacies of personality, W. J. Dawson writes:

He does possess a real insight into the souls of abnormal, grotesque, or very humble persons. But in the main, this is a gift which Scott lacks. He sees the pageant of life but not its mystery; tells us how men act but not how they feel. Shakespeare did both and hence the soul of Hamlet is better known than his history. If Scott had painted Hamlet we should have known his history but not his soul.¹³

The difficulty with Scott's characters stems from his own literary principles. Falstaff, on the other hand, is sharply delineated, clearly limned. He was borrowed as a mere type but under Shakespeare's guiding genius he became an individual and

¹² Quiller-Couch, Shakespeare's Workmanship, 104-105.

¹³ W. J. Dawson, The Makers of English Fiction, New York, 1905, 63.

established himself as one of the unforgettable characters of literature. He was much better known to any audience present at Henry IV than the king after whom the play is named. But Scott, according to his own canons, could never have created a Falstaff, even if he had the otherwise necessary talent. Therefore his heroes do not become as real as Falstaff, who has established himself as one of the most memorable characters of fiction. The reason for this will appear from Scott's own principles as given here:

Usually he did not make the character who was historically most prominent, for example a King Richard or a Cromwell, the central personage of the plot; . . . It was better to place purely imaginary characters, about whose personality and deeds the reader has no previous information, in the center of events. Moreover, these central characters, usually lovers, must not be of such highly individual natures as to monopolize the reader's interest; for what was of greatest interest in an historical novel was not what the lovers were and did, but the historical circumstances amid which they moved. Often the central characters were young and of no marked peculiarities who found themselves involved in powerful social or political movements and surrounded by characters much more forceful than themselves. To Scott, these technically secondary characters were the most significant.¹⁴

Scott, then, got the idea from Shakespeare. But he made what he considered the minor (because fictitious) characters take central roles in the action. In the technical sense of the plot they are primary characters, but in the historical sense they are not the significant characters. Scott puts the histori-

¹⁴ Ernest Bernbaum, Guide through the Romantic Movement, Vol. I, New York, 1938, 1913.

cally significant characters into secondary position in the technical sense of the plot.

Shakespeare did not make these distinctions. Because Scott restricted the delineation of his fictional characters, his art suffers; because Shakespeare put as much effort into the portrayal of Falstaff as the king and the prince, he has achieved greater art. For Scott the heroes and heroines may not be too highly individualized lest they monopolize the reader's interest. But if the chief characters may not be fully developed as real persons, then by that much does the work fail to be an imitation of men in action. This accounts for Scott's characters who seem at times to be somewhat unreal, more types than individuals, with the tendency to be wooden, painted, stiff, and too rigidly predictable. In other words, many of Scott's characters do not change.¹⁵ One of the critics has remarked that he is "a little lacking in depth and subtlety; he has an eye mainly for strongly marked characteristics, and many of his persons are but superficially delineated."¹⁶ Samuel C. Chew writes of Scott's characterization as follows:

With the anxieties and aspirations of men and women considered as individuals he concerned himself scarcely at all; their private lives are of interest only as they are part of history. Working within these limita-

¹⁵ Louis Cazamian, A History of English Literature, by Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, New York, 1935, 1832.

¹⁶ T. F. Henderson, "Sir Walter Scott," The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. XII, New York, 1932, 26.

tions he could not give a "three dimensional" quality to his heroes and heroines.¹⁷

Shakespeare, on the other hand, instinctively realized that in the drama the audience was not asking for statuesque figures but that it wanted real persons, like themselves and the people they knew; complex, mature, and individual. Unlike Scott, he would have said that both sets of characters are important, that both should enjoy full development. This is what he had done in Henry IV.

What has been said of Scott in regard to his character portrayal has not been intended disparagingly. It has been said only for the sake of comparison, the better to explain the Falstaffian Device. This is not the place for a complete study of Scott's powers as an author. As for the comparison between the two men, however, Carlyle's comments can aptly close its discussion. After writing that "[n]o fresher paintings of Nature can be found than Scott's; hardly anywhere a wider sympathy with man;" he too thinks of Shakespeare and comparison.

Shakespeare fashions his characters from the heart outwards, your Scott fashions them from the skin inwards, never getting near the heart of them. The one set become living men and women, the other amount to little more than mechanical cases, deceptively painted automatons.¹⁸

17. Samuel C. Chew, "Sir Walter Scott," A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh, Part IV, New York, 1948, 1216.

18 Quotation cited from Carlyle in The Cambridge History of English Literature by T. F. Henderson in his article above mentioned. It would not be fair to let the quotation stand alone, and Henderson comments, "Though a characteristically exaggerated pronouncement, it is undeniable that there is a soupeçon of truth in it." Vol. XIII, 26.

The really remarkable thing is that Shakespeare not only was the first to present this device to the world but that the device was developed to such perfection at the very beginning. This is evident not only in the excellent character portrayal lavished on both sets of characters, historical and non-historical but also in the closely knit interweaving of the story of the prince with the fortunes of Falstaff. Shakespeare needed Falstaff because the mere historical data of the king, prince, and lords left too little scope for the creative artist; but the way he actually made the whole Falstaff group integral to the plot stands out as a great feature of Shakespeare's workmanship. From the standpoint of character portrayal, too, it is clear what a marvelous piece of workmanship is the development of Oldcastle into Falstaff.

In answer to the question that naturally comes to mind at this point, how such a fine dramatic portrayal as Falstaff could be developed from such meagre beginnings, Quiller-Couch has an interesting comment:

No true artist develops or fashions a real character, once brought to birth, any more than a mother thenceforth develops or fashions a child. It has a separate life: it takes charge; the older it grows the more it takes charge. . . . Artists do not develop or fashion these characters to any extent of which those words are descriptive. . . . [E]ach in turn has charge of Shakespeare.¹⁹

19 Quiller-Couch, Shakespeare's Workmanship, 115-116.

Thus it was that Falstaff grew, always along the lines of probability and necessity, of course, but still freely, as freely as any real person grows, though at the same time his growth is according to the very stable laws of his nature.

So, then, did Shakespeare create the character he needed to give life and reality to his chronicle plays, I and II Henry IV. This chapter has pointed out Shakespeare's need for the Falstaff group in order to keep his plays from being merely history on the stage. The intermingling of the historical with the non-historical in the same plot thus gave rise to the Falstaffian Device.

The following chapter will carry the argument no further, but will draw the four parts of the thesis together to present the whole thought in a simple and complete conspectus. This chapter can be closed with no more fitting words than those of Quiller-Couch, from whom the starting point of this thesis was taken:

In this short study I shall not indulge in any panegyric on Falstaff; and I ask the reader to credit this to a Roman fortitude, since they say that all who write about Falstaff, loving him, write well.²⁰

20 Ibid., 117.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

It has been the aim of the writer of these pages to establish Shakespeare's need of Falstaff in the two plays, I and II Henry IV. At the very beginning of this thesis it was pointed out that there were a great variety of reasons why Shakespeare could use such a character as Falstaff and such scenes as those of Eastcheap, Gadshill, and the Boar's Head Tavern. There it was explained that in this thesis only four of Shakespeare's greater needs for Falstaff would be discussed. Each of these great needs has been explained in its own separate chapter, each one building partially on what had gone before. Thus, the thesis is that Shakespeare needed Falstaff in the writing of his chronicle plays, Henry IV. The conclusion of each of the four main chapters has always been the same, namely that Shakespeare needed Falstaff; but each of the chapters proves the thesis in a different way, for different reasons. Consequently, the proof for the thesis has been cumulative or intensive. The conclusion remains the same, but gains in intensity and strength with each of the four separate proofs. The four proofs are based upon (1) the requirements of history, (2) the method followed by Shakespeare as

peculiar to and distinctive of the playwrights of his time, (3) the special aim of Shakespeare in writing the particular plays, I and II Henry IV, and (4) the requirements of literature itself.

Chapters two, three, and four, which correspond to the first three proofs of this thesis, are comparatively simple in their make-up. Chapter five, however, in which the fourth proof is contained, is slightly more complex, for besides showing again Shakespeare's need for Falstaff, it goes on to demonstrate just what was the result of his use of this character. That use was called the Falstaffian Device, from which the title of this thesis has been taken, An Analysis of the Falstaffian Device. Strictly speaking, the analysis of the device as such appears only in the fifth chapter, but as the device would never have appeared in its special form as found in the Henry IV plays, if Shakespeare had not had the three other needs for Falstaff as pointed out in the preceding chapters of the thesis, it has seemed acceptable to name the whole study after what has been formally considered in the fifth chapter alone. Furthermore, it is the fifth chapter that is truly the heart of this thesis which was originally conceived as showing how Shakespeare's need of Falstaff, especially according to the principles of true literary art, has resulted in that something new which is here called the Falstaffian Device. Thus, to repeat,

this thesis has taken its title from its most important and distinctive part.

The conclusion of the thesis will now be drawn in the form of a brief summary, thus gathering its four sections into their proper unity.

Each of the four cardinal chapters has been intended to show why Shakespeare needed Falstaff for four separate and distinct reasons. The first of these sections, Chapter II, examines what is not, strictly speaking, a need for Falstaff, but for at least someone like him, for the reason that Shakespeare used Holinshed for his source material in these chronicle plays and that in Holinshed there were to be found numerous hints and statements of the wild youth led by Prince Hal, the son of Bolingbroke, Henry IV. It was therefore incumbent upon Shakespeare to portray this section of the prince's youth if his history play was to be true to the historical picture of his early life. That this had to be done precisely through Falstaff is not said. Suffice it that the prince had somehow to be pictured amid riotous fellows of the tavern sort.

The second section, contained in Chapter III, goes one step further, showing that because of an old play, The Famous Victories of Henry V, a play which actually pictured the prince among such low companions, and because of the current and universal practice of the dramatists of that age, the practice of taking over old plots and characters rather than in-

venting new ones, Shakespeare had to borrow in some form these scenes and characters. This is, in fact, what he did, for Falstaff's name was originally Sir John Oldcastle, and Oldcastle was borrowed from the Famous Victories.

In the third section of the thesis, contained in Chapter IV, it is again shown that Shakespeare needed this Falstaff and the Eastcheap scenes, but this time because of his long range aim in writing the whole Lancastrian Tetralogy of plays beginning with Richard II, through I and II Henry IV, and ending with Henry V. The reasoning here is that Shakespeare had to prepare Prince Hal in the Henry IV plays for the exalted role he planned for him as England's ideal warrior-king, the king with the common touch, in the play which bears his name, Henry V. It was in presenting the young prince in close contact with the common folk, even the lowest of them, that Shakespeare could make him a true Englishman, king of his people's hearts as well as a mere political head of his nation.

The last section of the thesis, Chapter V, gives the most important reason of all why Shakespeare needed Falstaff. It is most important of the four reasons because it is most closely connected with the true nature of creative literature. The poet is a higher artist than the historian, just as the poem is higher than any history, for poetry employs higher faculties in its author. But if Shakespeare adhered merely to the history of the kings of England as given in Holinshed, the sense of his-

torical fact would hamper the free play of his poetic and creative imagination. Therefore, for the sake of poetry, it was necessary to introduce into his history plays characters not well known in history but created persons whom he could treat as his art demanded. In doing this, Shakespeare introduced a new principle in the treatment of history by fiction, a permanent principle which has been imitated ever since in historical fiction. The principle can be formulated as follows: in this type of literature the characters one can best treat with liveliness are not the great personages of history (for in portraying the deeds and words of such people one is constrained by the sense of actual fact), but created characters, who can, precisely because invented, be manipulated according to the creative needs of the author. It is also pointed out how this device has been imitated by two of the greatest English authors of historical fiction, Charles Dickens and Sir Walter Scott. This is the Falstaffian Device. Without it, Henry IV would be just another chronicle play. With it, Shakespeare has given us one of his greatest plays and some of his most memorable characters.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Gregory P. Foote, S. J., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dec. 28, 1952
Date

John B. Courath, S. J.
Signature of Adviser