

SHAKESPEARE

KING HENRY IV—PART I — TWELFTH NIGHT
TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR
THE TEMPEST

BY

THOMAS MARSH PARROTT

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

AND

ROBERT STOCKDALE TELFER

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SHAKESPEARE

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PREFACE

This book provides an authoritative text of four plays of Shakespeare in readable form and with sufficient apparatus for the use of the student. The plays are illustrative of four types of Shakespeare's work and are those most commonly read in introductory college English courses, notably the Freshman composition course and the Sophomore survey course.

With these students and the general reader in mind, the editors have disregarded textual problems and confined their attention to matters of interpretation and language. As the unsuspecting reader is most often misled by words of modern form and archaic usage, they have printed the glossary at the foot of the page. The notes are chiefly paraphrases of difficult passages. The introductory essays deal with the date, sources, and interpretation of the various plays.

The plays themselves are printed from the Neilson text, for the permission to use which the editors are indebted to Dr. Neilson, although they have allowed themselves to make certain minor changes.

KING HENRY IV

PART I

CONTENTS

Introduction to <i>King Henry IV, Part I</i>	1
<i>King Henry IV, Part I</i>	13
Introduction to <i>Twelfth Night</i>	125
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	136
Introduction to <i>The Tragedy of King Lear</i>	233
<i>The Tragedy of King Lear</i>	250
Introduction to <i>The Tempest</i>	381
<i>The Tempest</i>	392
Notes	475

Henry IV group of 4 - Richard II,
2 parts H. IV, Henry V. (tetralogy)

KING HENRY IV, PART I

INTRODUCTION

SHAKESPEARE'S first editors divided his plays in the Folio into the three classes of Comedy, Tragedy, and History; and of all his Histories there is none that was so successful in his own day and has been the source of such delight ever since as the First Part of King Henry Fourth, or, as the first publisher called it on a title page which served the purpose of an advertisement, *The History of Henrie the Fourth; With the battell at Shrewsburie between the King and Lord Henry Percy, surnamed Henrie Hotspur of the North. With the humourous conceits of Sir John Falstaff.*

Text.—This edition, the first quarto, appeared in 1598, probably soon after the entry, for copyright purposes, of the play in the Stationers' Register on February 25, 1598. A whole flock of quartos followed in 1599, 1604, 1608, 1613, 1622, 1632, and 1639. One of these, the quarto of 1613, seems to have been used as the copy from which the Folio text was printed with some corrections derived from the earlier editions. The first quarto, however, remains the authoritative text.

Date.—It has usually been held that Shakespeare wrote this play shortly before its publication, that is in 1597. But there is some reason to believe that in its first form, at least, it must be dated some years earlier. It forms part of a tetralogy of which Richard II is the first member and probably was composed immediately after that play, for which the generally accepted date is 1595. Some rather amusing evidence exists to show that Henry IV was carefully revised by.

6 Nov. 95-7 1

Shakespeare and that the revision was completed some time, perhaps immediately, before the publication. In a quaint old play, *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, of which we shall have more to say hereafter, Prince Hal's riotous companions included a certain Sir John Oldcastle. Now the historic Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, had indeed been a friend of Henry's youth, but he was anything but a riotous companion. On the contrary he was a brave soldier, a deeply religious man, and in the end a martyr, for he was condemned as a heretic, hung on a gallows and burnt "gallows and all." Shakespeare with his usual indifference to historical fact took over the name of Oldcastle from the old play and promoted its bearer to be the chief of Prince Henry's boon companions, a haunter of taverns, a highway robber, and a witty, but at times a rather foul-mouthed, jester. That he did so is shown by Prince Henry's calling this friend "my old lad of the castle" (I, ii, 46) and by a line (II, ii, 115) where the name of Oldcastle is required to complete the meter. A still stronger piece of evidence is found in a play dating 1618 which speaks of

"The play where the fat knight, hight Oldcastle,
Did tell you plainly what this honour was."

There was instant protest against such a caricature of the good knight, especially by one of his descendants, a Lord Cobham who held high office at the court of Elizabeth. Shakespeare was forced to apologise—see his words in the *Epilogue* to the *Second Part* "Oldcastle died a martyr and this (i.e. Falstaff) is not the man"—and to revise his play substituting another name for that of Oldcastle. Looking about in history, or rather perhaps in dramatic tradition, he came upon the name of another Sir John, a Fastolfe this time, who

had once owned the Boar's Head Tavern where Prince Hal was supposed to have gloried and drunk deep, and who was charged with having run away from battle in France. A slight alteration changed Fastolfe into Falstaff (or Falstalffe as it was first spelled) and so we get the name of Shakespeare's immortal hero.

It seems more than likely that when Shakespeare was forced to revise his play he gave it a thorough overhauling, cut down the historical scenes written in a somewhat stiff blank verse, and expanded the prose scenes into those masterpieces of comic humour which have been the delight of generations since. There was no descendant of Sir John Fastolfe to protest against such a portrayal of his ancestor as Shakespeare gave in the tavern scenes, on the highway near Gadshill, or on the battle-field of Shrewsbury.

Source.—Shakespeare drew the historical basis of his play from the standard English history of his day, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, which he had already used for his former plays on English history. In the main he followed his authority fairly closely. Certain changes he seems to have made for dramatic purposes. He represents the King as an old man (V, i, 13), evidently to contrast him with the exuberant youth of the Prince, whereas Henry IV was in the very prime of life at the battle of Shrewsbury where he is reported to have slain with his own hand thirty-six of his enemies. For a similar reason he has changed the age of Hotspur. As a matter of fact Henry Percy was older than the King, but Shakespeare planned to make him at once a rival and a foil to the Prince and therefore represents him as of the same age as Hal (III, ii, 103). There is no warrant in history for the Prince's challenge to Hotspur nor for his slaying him in single combat; Henry Percy fell by an unknown hand in the rout of the rebel

army. Hal's rescue of his father from the sword of Douglas seems to be taken from a poet's story of the war (Daniel—*Civil Wars*) rather than from history. And finally the interview between Hal and the King, in which the Prince regains his father's favour, took place not before the battle of Shrewsbury, but nearly ten years later. It is easy to see how much these changes add to the interest and heighten the dramatic value of the play.

Another quite different source supplied Shakespeare with some of the comic material of the play. This was the old play, *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*. Author and date of composition are unknown, but it was certainly on the stage before 1588, since the famous clown Tarleton, who is known to have acted in it, died in that year. We may well believe that it was one of the first plays that Shakespeare saw after he came to London, and naturally enough it left its mark upon him. But it would be a mistake to think that Shakespeare borrowed largely from this crude and early work; what he derived from it were certain hints and suggestions for scenes which he elaborated and developed with extraordinary comic power. Chief among these are the highway robbery, although the trick played by the Prince and Poins on Falstaff seems to be Shakespeare's own invention, and a scene of a mock rehearsal of Hal's striking the Chief Justice, which gave him the suggestion for the inimitable scene in which Falstaff and the Prince in turn rehearse his approaching interview with the King. In general it may be said that Shakespeare used all his art to tone down the picture of the riotous Prince presented in the old play. He does not let his hero actually rob the King's servants on the highway; he omits the scene of Hal's abuse of the Chief Justice, and he transforms

the vulgar ruffian of the *Famous Victories* into a mad-cap prince whose escapades are easily pardoned on the ground of youth and wild blood.

Type of Play.—Widely as Shakespeare departed from the conception of Prince Hal in the *Famous Victories*, it still seems clear that his use of that early work drew him back into the old, native tradition of the chronicle play. Marlowe, whose genius was essentially tragic, had transformed the crude mixture of horse-play and history into historical tragedy in *Edward II*, and had created the great tragic figure of Richard Crookback in his *True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*. The young Shakespeare, Marlowe's reverent disciple, had followed his lead and had written the tragic histories of *Richard III*, and *John*, and *Richard II*. But by the time he composed our play he had served his apprenticeship and felt free to abandon the stern tragedy of Marlowe for a more genial blend of fact and fiction, history and comic mirth. The *Famous Victories* dealt not only with Hal's youthful riots, but also with his conquest of France. Shakespeare planned to show his hero not only revelling in the Boar's Head Tavern, but victorious on the field of Shrewsbury. And as he reverted to the old native type his strength was renewed like that of the fabled giant. For the rough farce of the older chronicle he substituted the gayest scenes of broad comedy in English and grouped them about the most superb comic figure in all literature, Sir John Falstaff.

Falstaff.—Volumes have been written to analyse the character of Falstaff. It seems love's labours lost, for no reader so strait-laced as not to love old Jack will ever be moved to open his heart to him by the appeal of critical analysis. By universal consent the character of Falstaff is one of the supreme achievements of

Shakespeare's genius. He derives ultimately from the stock character of Latin comedy, the *Miles Gloriosus*, the soldier who is at once a braggart and a coward. But in Shakespeare's hands this figure transcends the type and becomes a distinct, one may even say a unique, individual. There are many presentations of the Miles; there is but one Falstaff. In the first place he is not a coward, at least not in the ordinary sense of that word; he will fight, but no "longer than he sees reason" (I, ii, 183). In his own words "the better part of valour is discretion". Hence he runs away at Gadshill when after a blow or two he finds himself outnumbered two to one; for the same reason he shams death at Shrewsbury when matched in unequal combat with the doughty Douglas. But he never exhibits such base and panic fear as characterises the stock figure of the Miles.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Falstaff's character and one which adds immensely to its comic force is the extraordinary bundle of incongruities of which he is composed. Old, fat, and bibulous, he is yet an active highway robber; a gentleman by birth and breeding and an intimate of the Prince, he is a haunter of taverns and an associate with footpads; a soldier of some reputation and an officer in the King's army, he is not ashamed to abuse "the King's press", to feign death rather than fight it out, and to claim a victory that he has never won. A fluent and outrageous liar, his lies are never told with intent to deceive; no sensible man can think that Falstaff expected the Prince to believe his fantastic tale of the fifty or more men he fought with in the dark at Gadshill. A knight trained up in the court of a famous Duke of Norfolk (Pt. II, III, ii, 28-9) he scoffs at honour as a mere word of no substantial value. Could contradictions further go?

What endears Falstaff, however, to all right-minded readers is not this bundle of incongruities, but his quenchless and inexhaustible good-humour. No matter into what scrapes he falls or what dangers confront him, he never loses his cheery self-assurance. His world of thieves, politicians, and fighting men seems to him little more than a game, and he is always to play a part, any part in fact, in the spectacle. He will be a young robber stripping "fat chuffs" of their gold on the highway, or an indignant protester against having his own pockets picked while he took his ease in his inn. He can play the part of an offended king or a prodigal prince with equal ease, and his apologia spoken in the Prince's rôle for the character of the abused Falstaff is a masterpiece of specious and witty pleading. And Falstaff's wit is contagious; he is not only witty himself but the source of wit in others. Like Yorick his flashes of merriment set the table in a roar, and it is not surprising that Prince Hal fled the gloom and formality of his father's court to seek the society of this all-licensed jester at an Eastcheap tavern.

Prince Hal.—To the reader of today *King Henry IV* is the play of Falstaff. It is more than doubtful whether this was Shakespeare's purpose. The character of the fat knight, Oldcastle-Falstaff, seems to have grown on his hands until it tended to dominate the play. What Shakespeare planned, it seems plain, was to write a play centering about the youth of Henry V, the last great hero-king of England, the "mirror of all Christian kings". A tradition had firmly established itself in the folk-mind of Shakespeare's day that this hero had sown his wild oats with a liberal and reckless hand in the days of his youth, and on coming to the throne had experienced a sudden and almost miraculous conversion. Shakespeare, we may believe, had little

faith in such miracles, but he would be profoundly interested in the transformation of the wild prince into the hero-king; a character study of this kind always interested him, and there was in this case the additional reason that a play on this idol of folk-tradition would pack the theatre. It would, perhaps, be better to say a set of plays, for it is clear that from the beginning Shakespeare meant to carry on his hero from his first gay pranks to his crowning victory at Agincourt, to expand the short, crude *Famous Victories* into a trilogy like that on Henry VI, probably on the boards of Shakespeare's theatre at this very time. For *King Henry IV Part I* does not stand alone; it is the first of a three-part play of which *King Henry V* is the final member, and Hal as Prince and King is the protagonist of all three.

Regarded from this point of view all the characters of the play, and there is no play of Shakespeare's youth so crowded with clearly drawn and interesting characters, seem to fall into place about the central figure for whom they serve as foils and contrasts. There is first the old King, the politician and usurper, fighting hard to keep the crown he had won by crooked ways, suspicious of former friends, jealous of the power and reputation of Hotspur, and bitterly disappointed in his hopes for his son in whom with his embittered disposition he can see nothing but at best a wanton reveller, at worst an enemy of his throne and life. There is the group of rebels, among them the crafty and deceitful Worcester, a debased copy of the King, the weak and cowardly Northumberland, the headstrong and impetuous Percy, "the Hotspur of the North", covetous only of the honour to be won in fight. And there is the company of the Prince's friends among whom Falstaff shines pre-eminent, and Falstaff's utter irrespon-

sibility, his cheerful contempt of honour and of duty, all contrast, and are meant to contrast, with the behaviour of the Prince when the call to action comes.

Henry has been called Shakespeare's "ideal man of action" and the phrase is, perhaps, the best key to Shakespeare's treatment of his character development and gradual, rather than sudden, transformation. At the beginning of the play in a time of peace Henry turns from the formal councils and intrigues of his father's court to find vent for his energies in practical jokes and high revelry with Falstaff and his gang. His much debated soliloquy (I, ii) may be taken in part as Shakespeare's explanation to the audience that *his* prince was not quite the thoughtless scamp of popular tradition, but it is something more; it is Henry's avowal that he is content to play the madcap for a time, but that when the call comes he will rise and shine. In his interview with his father he makes little attempt to apologise for his way of life, suggests that he has been slandered by pickthanks and news-mongers, and only breaks out in passion when the blinded King insults him with the suggestion that he is likely to enlist under the rebel Percy. This unbearable accusation is the call to action, and the Prince vows to "make this northern youth exchange his glorious deeds for my indignities". The rest of the play is devoted in the main to showing how he kept this vow. He never sinks back into the rake of Eastcheap—one brief interview with Falstaff to whom he enters marching, and he is off to the wars with thirty miles to ride before dinner. He takes a leading part in the action that follows, challenges Percy to single combat, slays him on the battlefield, rescues his father from the hand of Douglas, and establishes himself as the sword and shield of the English throne.

The evolution of Hal's character does not end with

this play. Every reader should follow it through the *Second Part* and note the widening breach between Falstaff and the Prince and the final renunciation of Sir John by the new-crowned King. It would be useless to discuss here this much debated scene; to every careful reader of the play it should be clear that Henry as King must break sharply and at once all the ties that bound him to such a rogue as Falstaff, and the touch of bitterness in his final speech may be explained perhaps by a lingering sense of shame that he had once stooped to make merry in the fat knight's company. He has other things to think of now; civil dissension to be composed, the conquest of France to be achieved. He is no longer the wild prince, nor even the soldier of Shrewsbury, but a king with all a king's opportunities, cares, and duties. And in the last play of the series, *Henry V*, Shakespeare shows us his hero in the rôle of king and conqueror.

Political significance.—One other phase of this play deserves at least passing mention, its political significance. This may not be at once apparent to the reader of today; it can hardly have failed to appeal to the audience of Shakespeare's time. It is a well-worn commonplace that the age of Elizabeth was marked by an outburst of patriotism. It is, perhaps, less generally recognised that this patriotism centered around the figure of the sovereign. Elizabeth was England, as so often in Shakespeare's plays a monarch simply styles himself by the name of his country, England, for example, or France. The age of feudalism was passing into history; the age of monarchy, more or less absolute, was approaching. The Tudor dynasty in England achieved the final overthrow of the great feudal barons who were essentially responsible for the devastating civil Wars of the Roses; but this was not accomplished

without a struggle. At the beginning of her sister's reign a group of nobles proclaimed Lady Jane Grey Queen in the place of Mary. Elizabeth herself had to crush the rising of the Northern Earls, to send Norfolk, head of the English peerage, to the block, and in her last days to sacrifice her once loved favorite, Essex. The success of Tudor monarchs in dealing with the last struggles of feudalism is to be attributed in the main to popular support. The nation had come to realise that only through the monarch could unity and civil peace be obtained and preserved, and the Tudors were, in the best sense of the word, popular monarchs.

Here as elsewhere Shakespeare is a true representative of his age, and the picture that he gives us in this play is of a struggle between the two opposing principles of feudalism and monarchy. He is not unfair to the past; in fact the character of Hotspur, the incarnation of the feudal age, is so nobly presented that a modern reader might be tempted to prefer him to the Prince. But Shakespeare has labelled him once for all in the phrase "a very valiant rebel". All his splendid personal qualities were to Shakespeare as dust in the balance when weighed against his disloyalty. It is quite wrong to think of Hotspur as a type of medieval chivalry; he is no "very perfect gentle knight", but one of the turbulent barons of the late middle ages who made and deposed kings, and who cherished personal ambition and family pride above loyalty or patriotism. The great scene of Act III when the conspirators parcel out the kingdom between them may delight a reader of today by its brilliant wit and vivid characterisation; it had a deeper significance in Shakespeare's time. Here, he seems to say, is what a feudal baron would do if he had the power, turn over all the West

to a Welshman, seize the North for himself, and confine the titular king of England to the narrow limits of the South.

Over against this splendid representation of a dying age Shakespeare places the figure of the Prince, the embodiment of all that Elizabethans desired in a sovereign; bravery, affability, generosity and above all loyalty to the throne and the idea of national unity. Hal has no personal grudge against Hotspur, but he is very sure that "one England cannot brook a double reign". And so Hotspur falls and deserves to fall, all good Elizabethans would think; the sword of the Prince is the symbol of the power of the sovereign.

Final appreciation.—Such then is this play, a chronicle history of the old native type, a genial blend of historic fact and comedy, written by the greatest of English dramatists at the very height of his power, crowded with brilliant characters, presenting the supreme figure of irresponsible mirth, and containing, for its day, at least, a deep and true lesson of loyalty and patriotism.