HENRY IV.

PART I.

BEING AN ATTEMPT TO CONNECT SOME CHESHIRE PERSONS, CIRCUMSTANCES, AND PLACES WITH SHAKESPERE'S DRAMA OF THIS NAME.

BY

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I have chosen this drama for my subject, not merely because of its power to charm both hearers and readers, but because, as genius gives new interest to what it touches, so the many allusions in it to Cheshire men and local events may give them

"a touching grace
Of more distinct humanity."

Of all the poet's dramas, too, this, and the one which we formerly considered, contain the most frequent allusions to Cheshire and the neighbourhood. Before he became king, its monarch subject, and principal actor, among his other titles, was Baron of Halton, in this county, an honour in which he is now illustriously represented by Her Majesty. It was one of Bolingbroke's alledged reasons for rising against his sovereign, that he was debarred from suing livery of his lands, and, of those lands, the castle and honour of Halton were no unimportant portion. His son, Falstaff's Prince Hal, the gallant Prince of Wales, was Earl of Chester, and at one time lived much in the county; and it was a Cheshire man and his opponent, too, into whose mouth the poet has put this vivid and beautiful picture of him:

I saw young Harry with his beaver on,
His cuisses on his thighs, gallantly arm'd,
Rise from the ground like feather'd Mercury,
And vaulted with such ease into his seat
As if an angel dropped down from the clouds
To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,
And witch the world with noble horsemanship.

When the monarch's usurped throne was in jeopardy, the families of Venables, Vernon, Mascy, and Warburton, some of the best blood of the county, followed Hotspur to Shrewsbury, and after that fatal day Cheshire felt the full weight of his resentment. This story, too, follows naturally upon that to which you gave me your attention some time ago, and which I then promised to continue on some future occasion, if I had time and you had desired it. As then, so now, I shall endeavour to keep close to the poet's story and to his language, whenever I have occasion to quote the drama.

Henry IV. of France, who was subject to kleptomania, or the habit of taking things not his own, though he always restored them afterwards, used to say that if he had not been born a king he should have been hanged.* And his namesake, Henry IV., of England, who used to say that of all the men born on the same day as himself, he was the only one who wore a crown, was perhaps incited by that thought to the ambition of obtaining one. Well had it been for him, if, like his French namesake, his desire to possess had been followed by a like desire to restore; for then he had not felt the weight of his usurped crown so heavy, or found its lining formed of thorns instead of ermine. Scarcely was he seated on the throne, we are told, before a blazing star was seen in the heavens, which was thought to portend insurrection and bloodshed in Wales and Northumberland; † and, as if to justify the prognostic, the monarch's whole reign was one long series of plots and dangers, in which Wales and Northumberland bore the greatest share. He had bade Harry Percy look for his reward "when his infant fortune came to age;" and accordingly, he was scarcely seated on the throne when he made this young soldier Chief Justice of Chester, in the place of Scrope, Earl of Wiltshire, whom he had beheaded. In 1401, when the new Chief Justice set out to make a circuit in North Wales, he received "C marks to defray the expenses of himself and his retinue." ‡ It would seem that, in early times, any special education for a profession was not required. St. Eloi, from a

* Il estoit larron naturellemeut; il ne pouvait s' empescher de prendre ce qu 'il trouvoit, mais il le renvoyoit. Il dissoit que s' il n' eust eté roy, il eust esté pendu. Tallemant les Reaux Sketch of Henry IV. *Notes and Queries*, 1st March, 1862, p. 169.

† "A.D. 1401. In the monneth of March appeared a blazing starre, first betwixt the east and the north, and last of all putting fierce beames toward the north, forshewing peradventure the effusion of blood about the parts of Wales and Northumberland." *Notes and Queries*, Dec. 14th, 1848, p. 470.

‡ *Cheshire Records.*

smith, was made a bishop; and a little after Hotspur's time, Salisbury, a great warrior, passed at once from the camp to the woolsack. The *Cheshire Records* afford abundant evidence that the county was in a disturbed state, and needed a vigorous administration when Hotspur was made its Chief Justice. Glendower, claiming to be the rightful Prince of Wales, made inroads on the garrisons of Ruthin, Oswestry, and even nearer places. * One Robert del Fere and his company wandered over the country robbing, mutilating and committing even worse enormities on the the people by wholesale; whereupon resort was had to a sort of martial law, and John Domville, of Lymm, a great soldier of that time, Sir Hugh Browe, of Cheshire, and others, were commissioned to put an end to these enormities. Proclamation was also made throughout the county that none should quit or leave it with arms for any report of war outside; and that all persons, who, through fear of having their houses prostrated, had adhered to the enemy, should be pardoned on repairing to their own homes, and there abiding in peace. At the same time, a commission was issued to William ap Meredith ap Gruff and others to ordain watches in Hope-dale against Glendower and his forces; and the Prince, having made John Honor, Esquire, Constable of Harlech, commanded Dycon Mascy, of Sale, its then governor, to surrender to him the Castle and its stores. † Attention was paid at the same time to the artillery and ordnance; and Hugh le Fletcher, being appointed the keeper for Cheshire and Flintshire, was ordered to provide a sufficient supply of shafts and goose feathers for arrows. This last had probably some connection with the advance of the king and the prince into North Wales; when twenty Chester archers were ordered to guard the Commissariat to Denbigh, and orders were given for all knights, esquires, and other armed men of the county to obey the orders of Edmund, Earl of Stafford, and John, Bishop of St. Asaph, the king's lieutenants, while the prince was absent in North Wales; and for all constables, and keepers of fortresses in Cheshire, Flintshire, and Wales to repair to their several charges and remain there. But other troubles not so near home threatened the king, and Sir John Mascy, the High Sheriff of Cheshire, was ordered by the king's warrant, dated at Pontefract to repair with his men-at-arms and 500 archers to Newcastle, to resist the Scots; and the hundred of Edisbury was commanded to supply fifteen archers towards this contingent. There were troubles also at

* Williams' *Chronicle Richard* II., p. 283.

† *Cheshire Records.*

sea as well as by land, and a Cheshire warrant was sent out for carpenters to repair a barge at Liverpool, and to press sailors to serve in it under the Earl of Northumberland; and John de Molynton and Thomas de Capenhurst, two Cheshire men, were appointed to command the king's ship, "the Trinity," which a short time after was reported to be lying off the Reed Bank, not laden with munitions of war, but with wine from Rochelle.*

The early scenes of the drama of "Henry IV." are laid in London; and in the first act we are introduced to the king, Sir Walter Blunt, and the king's brother-in-law, Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland, that stalwart knight whose effigy in his collar of SS. and his suit of plate armour may be seen in Staindrop Church. Related either by his wife, his mother, or his sisters, to every earl in the kingdom, the king used to call them all his cousins; and in this originated the custom which the sovereign still uses in addressing every earl as his "right, trusty, and well-beloved cousin," a style which the first Napoleon imitated in addressing his marshals.

Describing himself as "shaken and wan with care," the king at his first appearance professes an intention to go upon a new crusade, to be commenced "in stronds afar remote."

"Therefore friends
As far as to the sepulchre af Christ
(Whose soldier now, under whose blessed cross
We are impressed and engaged to fight),
Forthwith a power of English shall we levy,
To chase these Pagans in those holy fields,
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed
For our advantage to the bitter cross."

To give more quaintness to his language the king is made to say the crusade shall be commenced in stronds afar remote, and here, as in other places, the poet designedly uses an antiquated word: thus we have "paraquite" and "popinjay" for parrot, "dial" for clock face, "estrages" for ostriches, and "corrivals" for rivals. These quaint words, however, must not be obsolete as well as antiquated, or we shall miss their meaning, as we do when he uses "feres" for vassals, and "mure" for wall, both of which have fallen out of use.

The king and Westmorland discuss the victory which had been just gained in the battle fought at Holmedon, near Wooler, in Northumberland, on the 14th September, 1402; the news of which the king says had reached him by

* *Cheshire Records.*

"A dear and true industrious friend,
Sir Walter Blunt, new lighted from his horse,
Stained with the variation of each soil
Betwixt that Holmedon and this seat of ours."

The report which had reached the king, that 10,000 Scots and three knights had fallen in the battle, exceeded the truth; but the official account, the *Gazette* as we should now call it, makes the Scottish loss to be four earls, many bannerets, and a number of knights and esquires made prisoners, and a great number of others either slain or drowned in the Tweed, for which, as it is very ambiguously added, "we give God thanks." *

But I must stop here, to strip Sir Walter Blunt of the honour of being the first bringer of the news of this victory, the credit of which really belongs, not to him, but to Nicholas Marbury, probably a Cheshire man, and then an esquire of the Earl of Northumberland, who, in 1403, received from the king in reward for bringing such news, the grant of £40 a year for his life. Marbury was afterwards knighted, and made "master of the king's guns and works," and was reported after Agincourt, as entitled to two prisoners' ransoms; and the next year he was again retained to serve the king in France, with a retinue of four archers. †

The particulars of the victory at Holmedon having excited Westmorland's admiration, he exclaims, that it was indeed a subject for a prince to boast of, whereupon the king breaks out into a disparaging comparison between his son, the Prince of Wales, and young Harry Percy, and exclaims, "would it could be proved that the two had been exchanged in the cradle!" Hotspur, one of the heroes of the famous ballad of *Chevy Chase*, at the mention of whose name Glendower said the king always turned pale, obtained his pictorial name from the French and Scots, who used to say that while they were either sleeping or carousing he was always watching and heating his spurs. He made his first campaign at the siege of Berwick, in 1378, where he was so closely shut up, that it was said neither a wren nor a tomtit could come in or go out of the place without leave *(si pres qu' un oiselet n 'en put partir sans congé)*. But a warrior, however watchful, does not always escape, and Hotspur was taken prisoner and put to ransom at Otterburne, the battle in which the dying Douglas cheered his friends by

* Rymer's *Fœdera*, and a M.S. in Corpus Christi Library, Cambridge, which gives the names of those who were made prisoners, p. 170, No. 1.

† *Fœdera*, ix., 215. Sir P. Leycester's *Antiquities*, book C, 285. Sir Harris Nicolas' *Agincourt*, p. 61.

telling them that in him they should see fulfilled the prophecy, that a dead Douglas should win a field.*

The king, foreseeing that Hotspur's refusal to give up his prisoners would lose him their ransoms, which in old times was looked upon as one means of supporting the expenses of a war, complains to Westmorland that the victor withholds all his prisoners except the Earl of Fife. But Hotspur, whose very dreams were of "prisoners' ransoms and of soldiers slain," would have been right if he had refused to give up his prisoners; for in the north of England prisoners and their ransoms were always held to belong to their captors, and it was only the king's impatience that could have made him forget this. †

In the next scene, we are still in the king's palace, but with very different actors. These are the Prince of Wales and his roystering companions, Falstaff and Poins, who engage in a conversation, the wit of which sparkles like fire flies on a dark night. Falstaff, who was certainly not as a censorious critic, would have it a London landlord, might be some humorous acquaintance, who habitually made his fat sides a subject of merriment. Hear what he says of himself after his escape from drowning. "I had been drowned, but that the shore was shelvy and shallow; a death that I abhor, for water swells a man; and what a thing I should have been when I had been swelled! I should have been a mountain of mummy!" "Wit and width grow together" the fat knight might have adopted as his appropriate motto. Falstaff having asked the prince whether "mine hostess of the tavern was not a most sweet wench"? the prince retaliates by enquiring whether "a buff jerkin is not a sweet robe of durance?," a question which he dislikes, since it reminds him of "an ill-favoured serjeant or catchpole, in a buff or hide jerkin, greasy and beer stained, muffled in a cloak, that hides all but his red nose, with a clumsy dagger, like a bung knife, at his side, who is as ready to seize a debtor as a dog to seize a bear;" and the fat knight, who had so often administered to him "the potion of imprisonment in respect of poverty," disliked being reminded of the man in the buff jerkin, in whose custody we find him a little later in the drama.

Winter, one of the gunpowder conspirators, writing to his brother, tells him that "the jerkin man is come, but your robe of durance," meaning, I suppose, a defensive coat, "is not yet finished." ‡

* Knighton, 2696, 2728, *Lives of the Lindsays, I. pp.* 70, 78, 89. White's *Otterburn*, passim.

† White's *Otterburne*, 70.

‡ *Notes and Queries*, 3 May, 1862-3-4-5.

After remarking that they who take purses go by the moon and seven stars, and not by "Phœbus, he, that wandering knight so fair," Falstaff archly enquires of the prince whether, when he is king, "there shall be gallows standing in England, and resolution thus robbed as it is with the rusty curb of Old Father Antic the law?" Finally the whole party plan a robbery at Gadshill, and the prince, comparing Falstaff's mellow age with autumn, which ceases when the year is gently subsiding into winter, calls him, "All Hallo'wn summer," varied at other times by Martlemas and Martinmas summer; all names of a kindly period of the year, which, says a modern writer, "is the rekindling of summer without its heat, an autumn in its glories without its gloom."

Falstaff and Poins having retired, the prince, who remains behind, breaks into this soliloquy :—

> *P. Hen.* I know you all, and will yet 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 wondered at,
> For 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 wished-for come,
> And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.

In the third scene, in which we have the king, the Earl of Northumberland, his brother, Worcester, his son, Hotspur, and Sir Walter Blunt, we learn the secret of the king's jealousy of the Percies. In winning the crown by indirect means he had used the Percies as his ladder, and he now found the crown too great a debt to be owing from a king to a subject. The weight stifled gratitude, and so the Percies found it. Worcester complained that the king had begun to make them "strangers to his looks of love," and in order to cancel his obligations, the king seemed anxious to drive them into rebellion, a step for which the ambitious, irascible, and self-willed, but high-minded, Hotspur was but too ready.

In the course of this scene, where Hotspur denies that he had ever refused to surrender his prisoners, he gives this memorable description of the fop who demanded them :—

Hot. My liege, I did deny no prisoners;
But, I remember, when the fight was done,
When I was dry with rage and extreme toil,
Breathless and faint, leaning upon my sword,
Came there a certain lord, neat, trimly dress'd
Fresh as a bridegroom; and his chin, new reap'd,
Show'd like a stubble-land at harvest-home;
He was perfumed like a milliner;
And 'twixt his finger and his thumb he held
A pouncet-box, which ever and anon
He gave his nose, and took 't away again;
Who, therewith angry, when it next came there,
Took it in snuff: and still he smiled and talked;
And, as the soldiers bore dead bodies by,
He called them untaught knaves, unmannerly,
To bring a slovenly unhandsome corse
Betwixt the wind and his nobility.
With many holiday and lady terms
He questioned me; among the rest, demanded
My prisoners, in your majesty's behalf.
I then, all smiling, with my wounds being cold,
To be so pester'd with a popinjay,
Out of my grief and my impatience
Answer'd neglectingly, I know not what;
He should or should not;—for he made me mad,
To see him shine so brisk, and smell so sweet,
And talk so like a waiting-gentlewoman
Of guns, and drums, and wounds (God save the mark!)
And telling me the sovereign'st thing on earth
Was parmaceti for an inward bruise;
And that it was great pity, so it was,
That villainous saltpetre should be digg'd
Out of the bowels of the harmless earth,
Which many a good tall fellow had destroy'd
So cowardly; and that but for these vile guns
He would himself have been a soldier.
This bald unjointed chat of his, my lord,
I answer'd indirectly, as I said;
And, I beseech you, let not this report
Come current for an accusation,
Betwixt my love and your high majesty.

In this speech there are a few words that call for a remark. One of these, the word *milliner*, calls up her who is now the arbitress of the female head-dress, and who, like the sturdy smith, who once forged casques and helmets, head-dresses of a different sort and for a different sex, had her name from Milan. In using holiday in opposition to lady,

the poet intended his two favourites—a pun and an antithesis, and meant both holy days, or days sacred, and lay days, or days secular, to be understood by it. The poet delighted in these antitheses. Many of his works abound in them, and we have several even in this drama: oneyers and moneyers, mobility and tranquillity, word and sword, raisin and reason, beauty and booty. Parmaceti, the fop's sovereign remedy for wounds was white wax, of which no one in the poet's day knew either what it was or whence it came, and the fop's pouncet-box, which he so mechanically applied to his nose, was a box pierced with holes or poinçoné, so as to allow some sharp scent to escape from it and make him sneeze. But there is one expression in the speech, which, I think, should be read not as the fop's, but as Hotspur's own. It is this: when the former had expressed his abhorrence of villainous saltpetre, "which many a good tall fellow had destroyed so cowardly," Hotspur finds himself in complete accordance with him, and fires with indignation at the thought of anything superseding that personal prowess which he loved so well, and he exclaims with an emphasis, "so indeed it was!"

This defence, as we might expect, failed to satisfy the king, and he retires, commanding Hotspur to send him his prisoners, and to forbear to speak of Mortimer, or he would hear from him in another sort, a threat which almost drives Hotspur beside himself, until his uncle returns and tries to pacify him

Wor. Peace, cousin, say no more;
And now I will unclasp a secret book,
And to your quick-conceiving discontents
I'll read you matter deep and dangerous,
As full of peril and adventurous spirit,
As to o'er-walk a current, roaring loud,
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear.

Catching his last words, Hotspur, as if rapt in spirit, exclaims:—

If he fall in good night, or sink, or swim!

But what mean these mysterious words which the commentators have not attempted to explain? Was it matter of indifference to Hotspur whether the king, if he fell in, ever got out again? Did he wish to see him buffeting the raving torrent? No, the king's escape, if he fell in, was no matter of indifference to him; but his excited imagination in an instant seized the idea of that wild species of mediæval justice which, under the form of the water ordeal, was administered to witches, who, on being accused, were thrown into a pool, where, if they swam they were adjudged guilty and put to death; while, on the

other hand, if they sank, they were held innocent, but left to drown.* Such was the fate that Hotspur meant to accord to the king.

But the poet too implicitly followed the chroniclers, when he made Hotspur call Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March and heir to the crown, his brother-in-law; for both those titles belonged to another Edmund Mortimer, who was nephew of Hotspur's brother-in-law, and then a prisoner of the king. In calling the Prince of Wales a sword and buckler Prince, Hotspur meant to disparage him as a roysterer, who oftener brandished his weapons in a tavern brawl than in a nobler field. He described him more justly, however, when he called him "the nimble footed mad-cap Harry, Prince of Wales,"—for so renowned was he for his fleetness of foot, that with no more assistance than two of his nobles, and without hounds, he could run down and take any deer in the largest park. But if we are to trust a modern poet he was exceeded even in this fleetness by a transatlantic hero.

> Swift of foot was Hiawatha,
> He could shoot an arrow from him,
> And run forward with such fleetness
> That the arrow fell behind him.
>
> LONGFELLOW.

In the next act we are transported into the court yard of an ancient hotel at Rochester, four sided and galleried, with a central area and gates to shut out all entrance by night—such a hostel was Chaucer's "Tabard," in Southwark, where those pilgrims assembled which have made it and him and them immortal. Here at an early hour before cock crow, while Charles' (or the Churl's) wain is over the great chimney, some carriers are assembling. One of them speaks of having a gammon of bacon and two races of ginger to deliver as far as Charing (for *Chère reine*) Cross, which would seem then to have been accounted a remote suburb of London; another of them commits the anachronism of having turkeys in his pannier, at a time when the new world was unknown, and those aldermanic birds had consequently not been seen at Guildhall. But, as some speakers indulge in startling contradictions, the poet was, perhaps, intentionally guilty of these anachronisms. I have heard a paradoxical speaker confess that he was not satisfied until he had more than once contradicted himself, or until he had been polygonal in his contradictions. Meanwhile, as the carriers were preparing to start, a thief's spy and his accomplice, the inn chamberlain, are astir, and counting their prey. The

* Hume's *History of England*, I, 224.

chamberlain having expressed some fears as to the danger of the business in hand, his companion bids him assure himself as he has the receipt of fernseed; which, not because of its smallness, or because of its being hidden almost out of sight, but for another reason, was then thought to render its possessor invisible. Notwithstanding Pliny's statement that the fern bore neither flower nor seed, our ancestors in mediæval times were aware that the plant had a seed; but to them, the spiritual world seemed nearer than to us; and they had a superstition that this seed, if gathered on St. John's Day, at the very instant of the saint's birth, had the property of rendering the bearer invisible. If Falstaff's description of Justice Shallow were true, he would have made a good thief's accomplice: for, according to him, the justice was like a man made after dinner out of a cheese-paring, and his dimensions to any thick sight were invisible; while he and all his apparel might be trussed into an eel-skin, and the case of a treble hautboy would be a mansion and a court for him.

In the next scene, Falstaff, Peto, Bardolph, and their setter, having, in pursuance of a preconcerted plan, attacked and robbed the travellers, are set upon by the Prince and Poins, disguised in visors and cased in buckram—a kind of coarse material made of linen stiffened with glue—who rob the robbers and carry off the booty, leaving them behind to find their way back to London as best they can. Taking purses on the highway seems to have been at one time looked upon, like poaching, as almost a venial offence, even when practised by a class above that of the poacher. Like poaching, it had about it a touch of danger and adventure. At the beginning of the 18th century it was not obsolete, as we see from the plot of Farquhar's *Beaux' Stratagem*. Falstaff told the chamberlain at Gadshill that there were Trojans he dreamed not of, who, for sport' sake were content to do the profession some grace. Lord Campbell tells us that the great Lord Holt in early life had been on the road, a strange course, which was far more likely to lead to the bar than the bench. Afterwards when he was once sitting as chief justice, he recognised an old associate in a prisoner he was trying. The man being found guilty and sentenced to death, the judge took an opportunity of visiting him in his cell, where, when he enquired after some of their old associates, the prisoner said to him, with a sigh, "Oh, my Lord, they are all hanged but me and your Lordship!" *

* *Lives of the Chief Justices*, II., 110.

The next scene, after carrying us very far northwards, lands us near to Warkworth.

> That worm-eaten hold of ragged stone
> Of Hotspur's father, old Northumberland.

A fine old place, which is even now so little of a ruin, that its late owner had a design to restore it and make it his occasional residence. The family arms with their motto "*Esperance ma comforte*," remain deeply carved over the great gateway, and the curious stranger may, as Hotspur once did, still wander through its old halls, or look from its lofty towers over the broad expanse of the earl's domains towards the west, and the still broader expanse of blue ocean towards the east. Its orchard, where Lord Bardolph knocked so long and called so loud to find its master, is no longer there; for the place in its time has had bad neighbours, and one of its noble owners once wrote in haste to inform the king that the Scots were at hand, and had threatened to give him light to put on his clothes at midnight. In one of the rooms of this castle Hotspur is reading, with a running commentary, a characteristic letter from a craven noble, who, having at first promised to join the rising, now draws back and writes his excuse. Hotspur's anonymous correspondent, the writer of the letter, happily not a Cheshire man, was no other than George Dunbar, the Scottish earl of March, who afterwards joined the king, and fought on his side at Shrewsbury. It was he who gave Blunt the first intelligence of the rebel's movements; and it was his Scottish title of March that led Blunt into the curious mistake of saying that he had his information from Lord Mortimer, of Scotland. Now, although there was at that time an Edmund Mortimer, who was Earl of March in England, there never was a Lord Mortimer of Scotland; and the whole confusion arose out of George Dunbar being Earl of March in Scotland, while Edmund Mortimer bore the same title in England.

Hotspur's comments on the letter are interrupted by his wife, whose womanly instinct makes her fear that he is intending some secret enterprise, and this dialogue ensues between them:—

> " How, Kate? I must leave you within these two hours.
> *Lady.* O, my good lord, why are you thus alone?
> For what offence have I, this fortnight, been
> A banish'd woman from my Harry's bed?
> Tell me, sweet lord, what is't that takes from thee
> Thy stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep?
> Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth;
> And start so often when thou sitt'st alone?
> Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheeks;

And given my treasures, and my rights of thee,
To thick-ey'd musing and curs'd melancholy ?
In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watch'd,
And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars :
Speak terms of manage to thy bounding steed ;
Cry, Courage !— to the field ! And thou hast talk'd
Of sallies and retires ; of trenches, tents ;
Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets ;
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin ;
Of prisoners' ransom, and of soldiers slain,
And all the current of a heady fight.
Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war,
And thus hath so bestirr'd thee in thy sleep,
That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow,
Like bubbles in a late disturbed stream :
And in thy face strange motions have appear'd,
Such as we see when men restrain their breath
On some great sudden haste. O, what portents are these ?
Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,
And I must know it, else he loves me not.
Hot. What, ho ! is Gilliams with the packet gone ?

Lady Hotspur exerts her powers to discover her husband's secret, but she exerts them all in vain. Of this noble woman, who afterwards married the Lord Camoys, there is, according to Mr. Boutell, a high authority on such a subject, a fine monumental brass, supposed to be a true portrait of her, in the Church of Trotton, in Sussex.*

In the next act we have an amusing scene, in which the prince and Poins effectually dissipate the small wits of the drawer at the Boar's Head, by continually calling for him in opposite directions, while he answers nothing but anon, anon—a word derived from the Latin *ad nunc*, as for the nonce is from *pro nunc*. The wits of that time seem to have always desired to be on good terms with the tavern drawers, and when Ben Jonson was suddenly called upon to say grace at the marriage feast of Elizabeth of Bohemia, this was his impromptu reply :—

The King and Queen the Lord God bless,
The pfalsgrave, and the lady Bess ;
God bless the council of estate,
And Buckingham, the fortunate ;
And God bless every living thing,
That lives and moves and loves the King ;
God bless them all, and keep them safe,
And God bless me, and God bless Ralph !

* *Notes and Queries*, 4th Nov., 1865.

And when the king was displeased at the conclusion, in which his name was thus coupled with Ralph's, the poet pacified him by telling him that he and Ralph were his two best frinds; for that while Ralph gave him the best wine at the Mermaid, there was nothing else for which he was not indebted to his majesty. If the prince were not speaking in hyperbole when he said the vintner's cellar contained three or four score hogsheads of wine, the vintner must have been a man of capital. What some of his wines were, we may infer from the catalogue given of them in a lease of the customs made by Queen Elizabeth to her favourite Leycester, who for twenty-three years was Chamberlain of Chester. This catalogue gives us the names:—Malmseys, Muscadels, Bastards, Cutts, Tents, Sack, Romneys, Hollocks, Canaries, and Madeiras. But in the times of which the poet wrote, it was an anachronism to speak of sack, for that wine was not sold in taverns until 33 Henry VIII. This wine, taken with sugar, which was then both scarce and dear, was esteemed a delicacy in the poet's time, but the taste for wines is altered since, and, dry wines being now alone preferred, it can no longer be said with Fletcher that

"Sugar lures the taste the brains to drown!"*

Having before dissipated nearly all the drawer's small wits, the prince puts the remainder to flight, and nearly takes away his hearer's breath, as he exhausts his own; while, addressing the drawer, he says to him:—

"Wilt thou rob, this leathern jerkin,
Crystal button, nott pated, agate ring,
Puke stocking, caddis garter, smooth-
Tongued Spanish pouch——"

Puke, the mauve of the poet's day, was then a fashionable colour and Don Quixote, we are told, spent a considerable sum to have his jerkin of that colour. Nott, or nott pated, was to have the hair cut shock fashion, thick and short, so as to cushion the head, and not impede its free action in the helmet. These are intelligible, but some of the prince's other terms would even now puzzle wiser heads than that of Francis the drawer.

Just as this dialogue is concluding, Falstaff, Peto, Bardolph, and Gadshill arrive from the scene of the recent robbery; when Falstaff, exclaiming loudly upon all cowards, protests that ere he'll lead this life long, he'll sew and mend nether stocks and foot them too, an occupation in which in our own day some persons might be seen engaged under the windows of a London shop, a space into which Falstaff could not have

* *Purple Island.*

thrust his portly dimensions. When Falstaff, having said it was so dark that he could not see his hand, was asked how then he could tell that the persons who had set upon him were dressed in Kendal green, he might have answered *more suo*, that it was invisible green.

Between him and the prince there now arises an amusing recrimination as to the recent double robbery, which ends in a mock play, where Falstaff and the prince alternately take the part of the prince and his father. In the course of it, the prince calls the fat knight a huge bombard of sack, a term which is more likely than *au bon père* (meaning the Pope), to have been the origin of our drinking toast, a bumper.

The plot of the intending rising is now thickening fast, and we have next a scene in the archdeadon's house at Bangor, where Mortimer, Hotspur, and Glendower are engaged in dividing the kingdom they mean to win. Glendower, "who gave Amaimon the bastinado, made Lucifer cuckold, and swore the devil his liegeman on the cross of a Welsh hook," was a great adept in magic, but the Amaimon who suffered such rude treatment at his hands, and who, although omniscient, might be bound at certain hours of the night, was anything but a handsome person, for he had a wolf's head, a serpent's tail, dogs' teeth, and a raven's body. It had been no wonder, therefore, if he instead of Lucifer had been beguiled of his wife, as the poet suggests. While engaged in distributing their future conquests, the triumvirate very nearly came to a division, very different from what they at first intended. Cavilling at first over the tortuous windings of the Trent, Hotspur threatens that, instead of allowing it to bend back upon itself and at length flow into the Humber, he'll have it dammed up and made to fall into the Wash at Lynn. And again, he shewed such impatience of Glendower's magic, that he almost chafed that chieftain into a quarrel. Trying to pacify him, Mortimer says to him, "Fie, cousin Percy, how you cross my father!" And he replies:—

Hot. I cannot choose: sometime he angers me,
With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
Of the dreamer Merlin, and his prophecies;
And of a dragon and a finless fish,
A clip-wing'd griffin, and a moulten raven,
A couching lion, and a ramping cat,
And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff
As puts me from my faith. I tell you what,—
He held me, last night, at least nine hours,
In reckoning up the several devils' names
That were his lackeys: I cried, hum,—and well,—go to,—

But mark'd him not a word. Oh, he's as tedious
As is a tired horse, a railing wife;
Worse than a smoky house :—I had rather live
With cheese and garlic in a windmill, far,
Than feed on cates, and have him talk to me,
In any summer-house in Christendom.

In the end, Hotspur's and Mortimer's wives having joined them, the wife of the latter begins a Welsh song which, at Glendower's invocation, is followed by supernatural music in the air; upon which Hotspur, who had doubted his power to call spirits from the deep, with sly irony observes that he perceives the devil understands Welsh. Lamenting his ignorance of his wife's language, Mortimer, in rapture with her singing, exclaims when she has finished,—

"Thy tongue
Makes Welsh as sweet as ditties highly penn'd,
Sung by a fair queen in a summer bower,
With ravishing division to her lute!"

a passage in which the poet meant to compliment the Queen, who would at times, in her intercourse with him, relax from her usual stateliness. Once, as he was enacting before her the part of a monarch, she, it is said, intending to put him out, dropt her glove before him, when, instead of its disconcerting him, he merely stooped to pick it up and present it to her with this impromptu—

And though now bent on this high embassy,
Yet stoop we to pick up our cousin's glove.

To this scene of raillery, there succeeds one of much serious earnestness between the king and the Prince of Wales, in which the king expostulates with him on his disorderly course of life.

I know not whether God will have it so,
For some displeasing service I have done,
That, in his secret doom, out of my blood
He'll breed revengement and a scourge for me;
But thou dost, in thy passages of life,
Make me believe, that thou art only mark'd
For the hot vengeance and the rod of heaven,
To punish my mistreadings. Tell me else
Could such inordinate and low desires,
Such poor, such bare, such lewd, such mean attempts,
Such barren pleasures, rude society,
As thou art match'd withal and grafted to,
Accompany the greatness of thy blood,
And hold their level with thy princely heart?
P. Hen. So please your majesty, I would I could
Quit all offences with as clear excuse,
As well as, I am doubtless, I can purge

Myself of many I am charg'd withal:
With such extenuation let me beg,
As, in reproof of many tales devis'd,—
Which oft the ear of greatness needs must hear,—
By smiling pickthanks and base newsmongers,
I may, for some things true, wherein my youth
Hath faulty wander'd and irregular,
Find pardon on my true submission.

K. Hen. God pardon thee!—yet let me wonder, Harry,
At thy affections, which do hold a wing
Quite from the flight of all thy ancestors.
Thy place in council thou hast rudely lost,
Which by thy younger brother is supplied;
And art almost an alien to the hearts
Of all the court and princes of my blood:
The hope and expectation of thy time
Is ruin'd; and the soul of every man
Prophetically does forethink thy fall.

P. Hen. I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord,
Be more myself.

K. *Hen.* For all the world,
As thou art to this hour, was Richard then
When I from France set foot at Ravenspurg;
And even as I was then, is Percy now.
Now by my sceptre, and my soul to boot,
He hath more worthy interest to the state,
Than thou, the shadow of succession:
For, of no right, nor colour like to right,
He doth fill fields with harness in the realm:
Turns head against the lion's armed jaws;
And, being no more in debt to years than thou,
Leads ancient lords and reverend bishops on,
To bloody battles, and to bruising arms.
What never-dying honour hath he got
Against renowned Douglas; whose high deeds,
Whose hot incursions, and great name in arms,
Holds from all soldiers chief majority,
And military title capital,
Through all the kingdoms that acknowledge Christ;
Thrice hath this Hotspur, Mars in swathing clothes,
This infant warrior, in his enterprises
Discomfited great Douglas; ta'en him once,
Enlarged him, and made a friend of him,
To fill the mouth of deep defiance up,
And shake the peace and safety of our throne.
And what say you to this? Percy, Northumberland,
The archbishop's grace of York, Douglas, Mortimer,

Capitulate against us, and are up.
But wherefore do I tell these news to thee?
Why, Harry, do I tell thee of my foes,
Which art my near'st and dearest enemy?

P. Hen. Do not think so, you shall not find it so,
And God forgive them that so much have sway'd
Your majesty's good thoughts away from me!
I will redeem all this on Percy's head,
And, in the closing of some glorious day,
Be bold to tell you that I am your son;
When I will wear a garment all of blood,
And stain my favours in a bloody mask,
Which, wash'd away, shall scour my shame with it.

Blunt, who now arrives, reports to the King that the rebels *met* at Shrewsbury on the 11th of the month (*i.e.*, on the 11th July, 1403), upon which the King, after telling him that this news is five days old, announces that his general forces will meet at Bridgenorth some twelve days afterwards. In those days, when roads were bad, and there were neither posts nor telegraphs, 12,000 men could have hardly have mustered and marched through the country, or taken up a position in which to fight, without the King having had more than five days intelligence that they had *met*. Besides which, if the King's forces were only to meet in twelve days at Bridgenorth, still a distance of two days' march from Shrewsbury, they must have arrived after the battle, which was fought at the latter place on the 21st July, a circumstance which, though it might have suited Falstaff, whose favourite motto was—

> The latter end of a fray, and the beginning of a feast,
> Suits a dull fighter and a keen guest!

would by no means have suited the King, whose throne was at stake. The fact is that the reading is faulty; and Sir Walter Blunt did not really say the rebels *met*, but that they *meet*, that is, will meet,—which at once restores the sense, and makes his report consistent.

Hotspur's party proclaimed that the late King was still alive, and his partisans were invited to meet him at Sandiway, near Delamere Forest, on St. Kenelm's Day, 17th July, at six o'clock. From which it appears that they took Cheshire on their way to Shrewsbury.*

The King, who was at the head of an army which had assembled to put down the Welsh, was at Burton when he first heard of Hotspur's movements. From that place he moved towards Shrewsbury. On

* *Harl. MS.* 1989, *fo.* 381.

the 17th July, he was at Lichfield, and on the 19th he reached Shrewsbury. Hotspur and the Earl of Worcester joined their forces at Stafford; and marching from thence towards Shrewsbury approached it only a few hours after the king had occupied it. His Cheshire friends, marching by Prees and Whitchurch, probably effected a junction with him between there and Shrewsbury.*

Struggling to reconcile the dramatic unities so as not to violate history in his plot, the poet gives us great variety in his scenes. From royalty in the last scene, in the next he brings us into the company of Falstaff and his corporal Bardolph, where the two engage in a conversation with more freedom than would be admitted between such officers now. In the course of their dialogue, Falstaff having jested about Bardolph's fiery nose, the latter, as no one likes to hear remarks made on his personal peculiarities, resents it, and asks Falstaff if his nose had ever done him any harm? to which he replies:—"No, I'll be sworn I make as good use of it as a man doth of a death's head or a memento mori. If thou wert any way given to virtue, I would swear by thy face; my oath should be, By this fire! but thou art altogether given over; and wert indeed, but for the light in thy face, the son of utter darkness. When thou rann'st up Gadshill in the night to catch my horse, if I did not think thou hadst been an *ignis fatuus*, there's no purchase in money. O, thou art a perpetual triumph, an everlasting bonfire-light! Thou hast saved me a thousand marks in links and torches, walking with thee in the night betwixt tavern and tavern: but the sack that thou hast drunk me would have bought me lights as good cheap, at the dearest chandler's in Europe. I have maintained that salamander of yours with fire, any time this two-and-thirty years; Heaven reward me for it!"

The prince and Poins now coming in, Falstaff, using his truncheon as a flute, and affecting a military march, advances to meet them. The ordinary encounter of wit between them takes place, and the prince informs Falstaff that he has procured him a charge of foot, and adds—

> "Meet me to-morrow in the Temple hall
> At two o'clock in the afternoon,
> There shalt thou know thy charge!"

The Temple, and its well known gardens, were frequented by many others besides lawyers in those days. There it was that, before the war of the roses, the rival courtiers plucked the red and the white

* Brooke's *Battle Fields, pp.* 4-5.

rose which afterwards became the badges of the contending houses. It was there that Warwick was heard to confess

> In the sharp nice quillets of the law,
> Good faith, I am not wiser than a daw!

In the fourth act, we find ourselves in the rebel camp near Shrewsbury, with a fair plain and Haghmond Abbey, nestling on a wooded hill, before us. To the right is the spot now called Battle Field, the Severn partly encircling it and having the royal camp on its banks; while beyond it is the venerable Skelton oak from which Glendower, like a chained eagle, is said to have watched the battle, which a flood in the river hindered him from joining. The giant carcase of this tree, which still remains, is certainly old enough to call up memories of the battle. To the left, and somewhat in the rear, is the abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul, in whose tower was the clock by which Falstaff averred that he had fought a measured hour.

In the opening scene of this act, we have Hotspur, Douglas, and Worcester in conference, when Hotspur thus addresses Douglas:—

> *Hot.* Well said, my noble Scot: If speaking truth,
> In this fine age, were not thought flattery,
> Such attribution should the Douglas have,
> As not a soldier of this season's stamp
> Should go so general current through the world.
> By heaven, I cannot flatter; I defy
> The tongues of soothers; but a braver place
> In my heart's love hath no man than yourself.

A messenger entering shortly afterwards with letters, announcing that Northumberland is prevented by sickness from bringing up his powers, Hotspur, viewing this illness seriously, exclaims:—

> "This sickness doth infect
> The very life blood of our enterprise,
> 'Tis catching hither even to our camp,!"

Presently, however, his spirits rally, and he proceeds:—

> "And yet it is not—this present want
> Seems more than we shall find it.
> Were it good to set the exact wealth of all our states
> All at one cast?"

But Worcester, who had offended the king too deeply to halt or go back, views the matter more seriously, and observes:—

> *Wor.* But yet I would your father had been here.
> The quality and air of our attempt
> Brooks no division: It will be thought

By some, that know not why he is away,
That wisdom, loyalty, and mere dislike
Of our proceedings, kept the earl from hence;
And think, how such an apprehension
May turn the tide of fearful faction,
And breed a kind of question in our cause!

At this period our Cheshire man, Sir Richard Vernon, of whom we must say a few words, appears upon the scene. Sir Richard, who was baron of Shipbroke, and a lineal descendant of the first baron of that place, was one of those who were examined on the Scrope and Grosvenor controversy in 1389, at which time he was 34 years of age. On the 4th June, 22 Rich. II. 1399, he went on the late king's service into Ireland; and when Hotspur rose, unable to forget his old master, he joined his standard, and rose with him. Of this Sir Richard, Sir Walter Scott makes Diana Vernon say, "There hangs the sword of my ancestor, who is sorely slandered by a sad fellow called Will Shakespere, whose Lancastrian partialities, and a certain knack of embodying them, has turned history upside down or, rather, inside out: and by that redoubted weapon hangs the mail of a still earlier Vernon, 'squire to the Black Prince, whose fate is the reverse of his descendant's, since he is indebted to the bard who undertook to celebrate him for good-will rather than for talents—

"Amiddes the rout you might discern one
Brave knight, with pipes on shield, yclept Vernon;
Like a born fiend along the plain he thundered,
Prest to be carving throats while others plundered."

Few Cheshire names were formerly more celebrated than that of Vernon. Besides those already mentioned, there was another, Richard Vernon, who was Speaker of the House of Commons in 1426, though he was possibly a Derbyshire man, and party to the celebrated colloquy in the Temple garden, when the roses were plucked as emblems of the rival houses.

We must not forget that, if Worcester had not prevented it, Sir Richard Vernon would have truly represented to Hotspur the result of their interview with the king, which would probably have spared the bloodshed at Shrewsbury.

Although Shakspere has not drawn the character of Sir Richard Vernon, we may judge of the poet's estimate of him by his making him the friend of Hotspur, and by the beauty of the language he continually makes him use.

Sir Richard now brings news that Prince John of Lancaster and the Earl of Westmorland are marching towards them; upon which Mortimer very naturally inquires after the Prince of Wales, and receives this glowing description of him and his host from Vernon—

> *Ver.* All furnish'd, all in arms:
> All plum'd, like estridges that wing the wind
> Bated,—like eagles having lately bath'd;
> Glittering in golden coats, like images;
> As full of spirit as the month of May,
> And gorgeous as the sun at midsummer;
> Wanton as youthful goats, wild as young bulls.

The poet's exactness in this description is borne out by the chroniclers, who inform us that the prince, wearing his full armour, could vault into his saddle with ease, a feat to which few of his contemporaries were equal. Impatient of hearing his rival's praises, Hotspur, breaking in upon the speaker, exclaims—

> "No more, no more; worse than the sun in March,
> This praise doth nourish agues!"

The scene now changes to a highway in Warwickshire, along which, under his own and Bardolph's leading, Falstaff's company are marching. Conscious how ill he has abused his powers in raising these men, the knight is loud in condemning their sorry appearance. They were, he says, never soldiers, but "discarded, unjust serving men; younger sons to younger brothers; revolted tapsters and ostlers, tradefallen; the cankers of a calm world and a long peace; ten times more dishonourably ragged than an old faced ancient." (That is, than a tattered standard, which the common people, corrupting the word ensign, still call an "ancient.") "A mad fellow, who met me on the road, told me I had unloaded all the gibbets, and pressed the dead bodies. I'll not march through Coventry with them, that's flat! Nay, and the villains march wide betwixt the legs, as if they had the gyves on, for, indeed, I had most of them out of prison. There's but a shirt and a half in all my company, and the half shirt is two napkins tacked together, and thrown over the shoulders like a herald's coat without sleeves; and the shirt, stolen from mine host of St. Alban's, or the red nosed innkeeper of Daventry; but that's all one, they'll find linen enough on every hedge." Oliver Cromwell, the last person whom we should suspect to have been familiar with the drama, in describing Hampden's troop characterises them as "decayed serving men and tapsters," which forcibly recalls Falstaff's description of his men. But an old story relates how the Protector himself once trode the boards as

Tactus, or Touch, in Brewer's masque or morality of *Lingua*, in which the following lines, which he must have spoken, may have helped to fire his ambition—

"Do I not sleep, and dream of this good luck, ha?
No, I am awake, I feel it now;
Mercury, all's my own! here's none
To cry half's mine.
Was ever man so fortunate as I?"

Falstaff's soliloquy is interrupted by the arrival of the Prince of Wales and the Earl of Westmorland; when, after mutual recognitions, the Prince commences this dialogue—

Tell me, Jack, whose fellows are these that come after?

F. Mine, Hal, mine.

P. I did never see such pitiful rascals.

F. Tut, tut; good enough to toss, food for gunpowder, and they'll fill a pit as well as a better; tush, man; mortal men, mortal men.

West. Ay but, Sir John, methinks they are exceeding poor and beggarly, too beggarly!

F. Well, for their poverty, I know not where they got that; and for their bareness, I am sure they never learned that of me!

The next scene finds us in the rebel camp, near Shrewsbury, where Hotspur, Worcester, Douglas, and Sir Richard Vernon are engaged in hot debate whether to give the king instant battle. Hotspur and Douglas are for it; while Worcester, looking for the arrival of Glendower and Mortimer, is against it; while Sir Richard Vernon thus advises—

"Come, come, it may not be;
I wonder much, being men of such great leading as you are,
That you perceive not what impediments
Drag back our expectation: certain horse*
Of my cousin Vernon's are not yet come up;
Your uncle's horse came but to-day,
And now their pride and mettle is asleep,
Their courage with hard labour tame and dull,
That not a horse is half the half himself."

But the trumpets now sound a parley, and Sir Walter Blunt brings this message from the king—

"The king hath sent to know
The nature of your griefs, and whereupon
You conjure from the breast of civil peace

* These laggard horse of his "cousin Vernon's" were those of Sir Richard Vernon of Harlaston, whose house, near Stockport, being at a greater distance from Shrewsbury than the rest, might account for his not arriving there so soon as the others.—*History of Cheshire.*

Such bold hostility, teaching his duteous land
Audacious cruelty; if that the king
Have any way your good deserts forgot,
Which he confesseth to be manifold,
He bids you name your griefs, and, with all speed,
You shall have your desires with interest,
And pardon absolute for yourself and these
Herein misled by your suggestion."

Hotspur, who had been once the king's dearest friend, but was now his bitterest enemy, aptly illustrated the poet's remark on that subject—

"Sweet love, I see, changing its property,
Turns to the sourest and most deadly hate."

And when Blunt has delivered his message Hotspur thus answers him in irony—

Hot. The king is kind; and, well we know, the king
Knows at what time to promise, when to pay.
My father, my uncle, and myself
Did give him that same royalty he wears:
And,—when he was not sixty-and-twenty strong,
Sick in the world's regard, wretched and low,
A poor unminded outlaw sneaking home,—
My father gave him welcome to the shore:
And,—when he heard him swear and vow to God
He came but to be duke of Lancaster,
To sue his livery and to beg his peace;
With tears of innocency and terms of zeal,—
My father, in kind heart and pity mov'd,
Swore him assistance, and perform'd it too.
Now, when the lords and barons of the realm
Perceiv'd Northumberland did lean to him,
The more and less came in with cap and knee;
Met him in boroughs, cities, villages;
Attended him on bridges, stood in lanes,
Laid gifts before him, proffer'd him their oaths,
Gave him their heirs; as pages follow'd him,
Even at the heels, in golden multitudes.
He presently,—as greatness knows itself,—
Steps me a little higher than his vow
Made to my father, while his blood was poor,
Upon the naked shore at Ravenspurg;
And now, forsooth, takes on him to reform
Some certain edicts, and some strait decrees,
Which lay too heavy on the commonwealth:
Cries out upon abuses, seems to weep
Over his country's wrongs; and, by his face,

This seeming brow of justice, did he win
The hearts of all that he did angle for.
Proceeded further; cut me off the heads
Of all the favourites that the absent king
In deputation left behind him here
When he was personal in the Irish war.

Upon Blunt's proposal, a conference ensues, and they at length dismiss him with a promise to send their answer in the morning.

In harmony with the momentous events which are at hand, and as if to prepare us for what is to come, the next scene opens in the archbishop's palace at York, where the archbishop is dispatching letters by a gentleman, whom he thus addresses—

"To-morrow, good Sir Michael, is a day
Wherein the fortune of ten thousand men
Must 'bide the touch."

In our day a trembling wire conveys a message over half the world in a few hours: news of the day at Shrewsbury would have taken one or two days to reach the archbishop; it was, therefore, only by the use of a poetical licence that the primate, so far away from Shrewsbury, was in possession of such exact intelligence of the coming strife. Fearing the worst, but trying to hope the best, to all his gentleman's attempts to reassure him he replies—

"I hope no less, yet needful 'tis to fear;
And, to prevent the worst, Sir Michael, speed:
For, if Lord Percy thrive not, ere the king
Dismiss his power he means to visit us,
For he hath heard of our confederacy,
And 'tis but wisdom to make strong against him;
Therefore make haste: I must go write again
To other friends; and so farewell, Sir Michael."

The archbishop's apprehensions of a visit from the king proved but too true, for ere another month had passed, as we learn from the Cheshire records, the king was at York.

In a late scene we were in the rebel camp; but now we are in the presence of the king, his sons the Prince of Wales and Prince John, Sir Walter Blunt, and Sir John Falstaff, whose minds are sobered with the sense of the coming struggle. It is early morning, the day is breaking; and as he casts his eye towards the east, and sees the woods on Haghmond Hill, the king draws attention to the sun-rise—

"How bloodily the sun begins to peer
Above yon busky hill! the day looks pale
At his distemperature."

To which the Prince of Wales rejoins—

"The southern wind
Doth play the trumpet to his purposes,
And, by his hollow rustling in the leaves,
Foretells a tempest and a blustering day!"

Their further discourse is here interrupted by the entrance of Vernon and Worcester, who come to learn more particulars of the king's offer of pardon; when the king, with some impetuosity, falls to upbraiding Worcester—

"How now, my lord of Worcester? 't is not well
That you and I should meet upon such terms
As now we meet: You have deceiv'd our trust;
And made us doff our easy robes of peace,
To crush our old limbs in ungentle steel;
This is not well, my lord, this is not well.
What say you to it? will you again unknit
This churlish knot of all-abhorred war?
And move in that obedient orb again,
Where you did give a fair and natural light;
And be no more an exhal'd meteor,
A prodigy of fear, and a portent
Of broached mischief to the unborn times?"

Undismayed by these reproaches, and only too ready on all occasions to remind the king of his obligations, Worcester at once replies—

"It pleas'd your majesty to turn your looks
Of favour from myself, and all our house;
And yet I must remember you, my lord,
We were the first and dearest of your friends.
For you my staff of office did I break
In Richard's time; and posted day and night
To meet you on the way, and kiss your hand,
When yet you were, in place and in account,
Nothing so strong and fortunate as I.
It was myself, my brother, and his son,
That brought you home, and boldly did outdare
The danger of the time."

And then, rather by inference than directly, he proceeds to show their grounds of complaint; when terms of accommodation are proposed, and Worcester at last returns, bearing this generous message from the Prince of Wales—

"Tell your nephew,
The Prince of Wales doth join with all the world
In praise of Harry Percy. By my hopes,
This present enterprise set off his head;

I do not think a braver gentleman,
More active valiant, or more valiant young,
More daring or more bold, is now alive
To grace this latter age with noble deeds!"

When Worcester and Vernon first, and afterwards the king and his train, have retired, leaving only the Prince of Wales and Falstaff on the stage, the latter, unable even at such a time to restrain his taste for jesting, thus addresses the prince—

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

On a former occasion, when the prince had desired him to lie down and listen whether he heard the thieves, Falstaff enquired whether he had "any levers to lift him up again, being down;" but now it is the prince's turn, and he quickly retorts—

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

And upon the fat knight saying "I would it were bed time, and all well," and then upon the prince saying, as he goes out, "Why thou owest heaven a death," the knight thus soliloquises—

"'Tis not due yet; I would be loth to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me? Well, 'tis no matter; Honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on? how then? Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is honour? A word. What is that word honour? Air. A trim reckoning!—Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. Is it insensible, 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: Honour is a mere scutcheon, and so ends my catechism."

In the next scene Worcester, knowing how deeply he had offended the king, thus addresses his companion Vernon—

"Treason is but trusted as the fox,
Who ne'er so tame, so cherished, and locked up,
Will have a wild trick of his ancestors.
Look how we can, or sad or merrily,
Interpretation will misquote our looks,
And we shall feed like oxen at a stall,
The better cherished still the nearer death."

In the end, and against his better judgment, he brings Vernon over to his councils, and, instead of reporting the royal offers truly, he briefly tells Hotspur, "The king will bid you battle presently;" upon which Hotspur, by Westmorland, who until now had remained a hostage in his tent, sends the king an instant defiance.

A battle is now imminent. Lady Hotspur's vision of "sallies and retires" is about to be realised, and 12,000 men on either side are to engage in deadly combat. We may see from Hotspur's language now how solemn are his thoughts—

"O gentlemen, the time of life is short;
To spend that shortness basely 'twere too long;
If life did ride upon the dial's point,
Still ending at the arrival of an hour."

In this figure his rapt imagination seems to see life riding on the long hand of the clock, and ending with each revolution of an hour.

From the preparation to the actual battle was but a moment; and now, amidst alarums, the bray of trumpets, and the sound of all the lofty instruments of war, we are on the field of Shrewsbury, near the rebel camp, amongst knights and gentlemen fighting hand to hand, the war cry on one side being "St. George!" and on the other "Esperance Percy!"

Sir Walter Blunt, honest and open as his name, having, in his too forward loyalty, assumed the king's coat, is singled out and slain by Douglas; and Falstaff, shortly afterwards finding his body, breaks out, as usual, in a soliloquy—

"Though I could 'scape shot-free at London, I fear the shot here: here's no scoring, but upon the pate.—Soft! who are you? Sir Walter Blunt;—there's honour for you: Here's no vanity! I am as hot as molten lead, and as heavy, too: Heaven keep lead out of me! I need no more weight than mine own bowels.—I have led my ragamuffins where they are pepper'd: there's not three of my hundred and fifty left alive; and they are for the town's end, to beg during life. But who comes here?"

In this soliloquy he is cut short by the prince, who asks—

"What, stand'st thou idle here? lend me thy sword:
Many a nobleman lies stark and stiff
Under the hoofs of vaunting enemies,
Whose deaths are unreveng'd: Prithee, lend me thy sword.

Fal. O Hal, I prithee, give me leave to breathe awhile.—Turk Gregory never did such deeds in arms as I have done this day. I have paid Percy, I have made him sure.

P. Hen. He is, indeed: and living to kill thee. I prithee, lend me thy sword.

Fal. Nay, Hal, if Percy be alive thou gett'st not my sword; but take my pistol, if thou wilt.

P. Hen. Give it me: What, is it in the case?

Fal. Ay, Hal; 'tis hot, 'tis hot; there's that will sack a city. [*The* PRINCE *draws out a bottle of sack.*]

P. Hen. What, is it a time to jest and dally now? [*Throws it at him, and exit.*]

Fal. If Percy be alive I'll pierce him, if he do come in my way, so: if he do not, if I come in his willingly, let him make a carbonado of me. I like not such grinning honour as Sir Walter hath: Give me life, which if I can save, so; if not, honour comes unlooked for, and there's an end." [*Exit.*

Falstaff, in comparing his deeds of arms with Turk Gregory's, pointed at Pope Hildebrand, who assumed the name of Gregory, and whose fierce and unscrupulous contest with the Emperor about the right of investitures had obtained him an ill name, He died in 1073, but his name remained still in bad odour; which made the poet unchristianise him, and call him, what he was in character, a Turk.

When the prince drew from the knight's holster a bottle of sack, instead of a pistol, the time was too hot for a jest, or the knight might have told him he had a charge in each holster,—in the one a pistol for his enemies, and in the other a bottle for his friends.

The king, who was in every part of the field, performed prodigies of valour, and not less than six and thirty of his enemies, it is said, bit the dust under his sword. The Prince of Wales, by whom he was nobly supported, received a wound in the face; upon which the king wished him to withdraw from the field for a time—

"I prithee,
Harry, withdraw thyself, thou bleed'st too much.'

But, little heeding such a request, the prince replies—

"Heaven forbid a shallow scratch should drive
The Prince of Wales from such a field as this,
Where stained nobility lies trodden on,
And rebels' arms triumph in massacres!"

The battle being renewed in another part of the field, the Douglas, amidst fresh alarums, enters and attacks the king, when he is put to flight by the Prince of Wales, who rushes to his father's rescue.

While Hotspur, in another part of the field, engages the Prince of Wales, the Douglas re-enters and engages Falstaff, who, after making a show of resistance, falls down as if slain.

In the contest between the prince and Hotspur victory declares for the prince, and his rival falls, mortally wounded. Lying on the earth, he attempts to address his vanquisher, but, with the words upon his lips, death stops his breath, and the prince takes up and finishes the sentence—

Hot. O, Harry, thou hast robb'd me of my youth:
I better brook the loss of brittle life
Than the proud titles thou hast won of me;
They wound my thoughts worse than thy sword my flesh:—

But thought 's the slave of life, and life time's fool;
And time, that takes survey of all the world,
Must have a stop. O, I could prophesy,
But that the earthy and cold hand of death
Lies on my tongue:—No, Percy, thou art dust,
And food for—— [*Dies.*

P. Hen. For worms, brave Percy: Fare thee well, great heart!
Ill-weav'd ambition, how much art thou shrunk!
When that this body did contain a spirit
A kingdom for it was too small a bound,
But now two paces of the vilest earth
Is room enough."

The prince, however, has no sooner retired than Falstaff, rising slowly, takes up the expression of the prince as to seeing him embowelled, and thus begins to moralise on it—

"Embowelled! if thou embowel me to-day, I'll give you leave to powder me and eat me to-morrow. 'Sblood, 't was time to counterfeit, or that hot termagant Scot had paid me scot and lot too. Counterfeit? I lie, I am no counterfeit: To die is to be a counterfeit; for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man: but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. The better part of valour is discretion; in the which better part I have saved my life. 'Zounds, I am afraid of this gunpowder Percy, though he be dead: How if he should counterfeit too, and rise? I am afraid he would prove the better counterfeit. Therefore I'll make him sure: yea, and I'll swear I killed him. Why may not he rise, as well as I? Nothing confutes me but eyes, and nobody sees me. Therefore, sirrah [*stabbing him*], with a new wound in your thigh, come you along with me."

And then, lugging along Hotspur's body, he meets the Prince of Wales and Prince John, and this dialogue ensues—

P. Hen. Come, brother John, full bravely hast thou flesh'd thy maiden sword.

P. John. But soft! who have we here?
Did you not tell me this fat man was dead?

P. Hen. I did; I saw him dead,
Breathless and bleeding on the ground.
Art thou alive?
Or is it phantasy that plays upon our eyesight?
I prithee, speak; we will not trust our eyes
Without our ears: thou art not what thou seem'st.

Fal. No, that's certain; I am not a double man: but if I be not Jack Falstaff then am I a Jack. There is Percy: [*throwing the body down*] if your father will do me any honour, so; if not, let him kill the next Percy himself. I look to be either an earl or a duke, I can assure you."

Very shortly after the trumpets sound a victory, and the Prince of Wales exclaims—

"Come, brother, let us to the highest of the field,
To see what friends are living, who are dead."

When they have withdrawn, Falstaff characteristically rejoins—

"I'll follow, as they say, for reward. He that rewards me, Heaven reward him!"

In Falstaff's time rewards in the West occupied the same place that *backsheish* now does in the East; stipulated payments were not thought to be a sufficient remuneration for services, and each knight and man-at-arms who was engaged before Agincourt, over and above his wages, stipulated that he should have rewards. In Shakspere's time this custom extended to the players, and, while their wages for a performance was £6 : 13 : 4, they received half as much more in reward: and it is but charity to an immortal name to believe that some such bad practice, prevailing in the courts of law, led to the fall of the poet's most illustrious contemporary, the great Chancellor Bacon.

The trumpets sound a second time; the field has been won, the victory is complete; and the king enters with the Prince of Wales, Prince John, the Earl of Westmorland, and others in his train; the Earl of Worcester and Sir Richard Vernon following as prisoners, and we hear the king addressing this reproach to the Earl of Worcester—

"Thus ever did rebellion find rebuke,
Ill-spirited Worcester, did we not send grace,
Pardon, and terms of love to all of you?
And wouldst thou turn our offers contrary?
Misuse the terror of thy kinsman's trust?
Three knights upon our party slain to-day,
A noble earl, and many a creature also,
Had been alive this hour
If, like a Christian, thou hadst truly borne,
Betwixt our armies, true intelligence."

And order is then given to bear Worcester and Vernon to their death.

The Prince of Wales, having announced that Douglas has been taken, obtains from the king leave to dispose of him, and thereupon he gracefully releases him without ransom. The Douglases, though a great race, were not successful soldiers. At Otterburne, the supposed Chevy Chase, one of them pointed to himself as fulfilling a prophecy that a dead man of his race should win a battle; and our Douglas, the Douglas of Hotspur, "the beaten Douglas," as Shakspere calls him, the "Tine man or Lose man," as he is called by the Scots,—was a very unfortunate commander. It was truly said of him that he was either defeated, wounded, or made prisoner in every battle in which he

was engaged. He was wounded and made prisoner by Hotspur at Holmedon, and he had now again been made prisoner by the king.

The scene falls as the king, forgetting how lately he had been a successful rebel himself, utters these words—

> "Rebellion in this land shall lose his sway,
> Meeting the check of such another day."

Having thus endeavoured to fulfil the purpose which I proposed to myself at the commencement, it only remains for me to say a few words by way of conclusion.

A learned writer who at the beginning of this century wrote an account of the rebellion of 1745, committed his work, which he called "De Motu per Britanniam Civico," to the press in elegant Latin, thinking, perhaps, that a dead language would be the fittest medium for transmitting to posterity the account of what he hoped would be the last English rebellion. If such were his hope, we shall all of us accord to it a hearty and cordial "Amen."

But the drama on which we have here been occupied is written in no dead language, but in one that will never die.

The story of Shrewsbury, which shews us what civil war is, may well make us thankful that we have so long escaped its horrors, and wish that such a blessing may long be ours! Meanwhile, it is not among our least blessings that Shakspere's language is our mother tongue; and that in his pages we have events, characters, and incidents illustrated in such endless variety and with such delight as may make us adopt the words, which are almost Shakspere's, and which a late poet has put in the mouth of a great but unfortunate queen—

> "You poets hold a court,
> Which whoso visits not hath lost all title
> To that nobility which endures for ages,
> Where kings are proud to enter: there's no clime,
> Nor age, not even the heav'n of heav'ns, but sends,
> Summoned by your plumed herald Fantasy,
> Its embassage of noblest images
> To do you service, and ye entertain them
> Right royally, do make them move to music,
> That they forget the sound of their own spheres!"