

famous, often places him in a rather uncomfortable position, his brilliant repartée invariably enables him to extricate himself without detracting in the least from his previous assertions. Many incidents throughout the play serve to bear out this statement, but perhaps the best example we can find, is where Falstaff appears as a man of action, to labor, as he says "in his vocation" the art of taking purses--and with the aid of his companions, arranges to relieve some unfortunate travellers of the cumbersome bags of gold which they bear. For some time the prince will not consent to become a member of the plundering party, but he is finally prevailed upon by Poins, who discloses to him a jest he has to execute. Accordingly, when Falstaff and three of his companions have accomplished the robbery and are dividing the spoils, the prince and Poins, thoroughly disguised, set upon them. "Falstaff, after a blow or two, and the rest run away, leaving the booty behind them." The successful pair of plotters then hasten to the appointed place of meeting, to await the coming of their baffled comrades. Soon Falstaff is ushered in, and in his animated description of the affair, tells how they had bound the travellers and taken their gold when another more numerous party came to the rescue. The odds then stood "a hundred upon poor four." Jack had been "at half sword with a dozen of them for two hours together." When Poins, till then an attentive listener, exclaims "Pray God, you have not murdered some of them," Falstaff answers him "that is past praying for." He goes on with his glowing recital, contradicting his every statement with the next, until he has "paid" seven of his assailants. "But," he continues, "as the devil would have it, three misbegotten knaves in Kendal green came at my back and let drive at me, for it was so dark, Hal, thou could'st not see thy hand." The prince has listened to him long enough. He can stand it no longer, and breaks forth

with the following:-- "Thy lies are like the father that begets them; gross as a mountain, open, palpable. Why, how could'st thou know these men in Kendal green, when it was so dark thou could'st not see thy hand? Come, tell us your reason; What sayest thou to this?" Jack is caught. There is surely no escape for him. His ready wit must prove but useless now. But, no. After a moment's hesitation he has devised a plan. Drawing up his obese figure to its most imposing height, he boldly faces the prince with, "What, upon compulsion? No, were I at the strappado or all the racks in the world I would not tell you on compulsion." The parry has succeeded, but the prince immediately assails him with a more determined thrust. He confronts him with the true story of the robbery, saying,—"We two saw you four set on four; you bound them and were masters of their wealth. Mark now, how plain a tale shall put you down. Then we two set on you four, and, with a word, outfaced you from your prize, and have it; yea, and can show it you here in the house." The tale of the prince is indeed plain, but how different from that which Falstaff has just been weaving! Again is the ingenuity of the latter taxed to its utmost capability, and this time even more severely than before. It is sorely tried, and proves equal to the occasion. Again he hesitates a moment, then with an amused chuckle, as if he had perpetrated an excellent joke, he addresses "Hal," with "By the Lord, I know ye as well as he that made ye. Why, hear ye, my masters: Was it for me to kill the heir apparent? should I turn upon the true prince? Why, thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules, but beware instinct, the lion will not touch the true prince. Instinct is a great matter; I was a coward on instinct." The humorous presence of mind of the fat rogue is again in evidence; and we cannot but laugh at his monstrous falsehoods, however much we disapprove of them.