

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

WEN of different classes and even individuals of the same class are often widely at variance with regard to their peculiar likes or dislikes, but one object for which there is a craving within the heart of every mortal, is the admiration of his fellowmen. It seems to be part of our very nature; and though a deplorable weakness when too prominently characteristic of any individual, has ever had an important bearing on the advancement and enlightenment of the world. This remark is applicable alike to all arts and sciences, but is true in an especial manner when referred to letters. For the history of the world bears witness to the fact that for every great poet, historian, or novelist that has labored at his profession with anything else as his primary motive, there are at least five or six whose sole object in writing was the fame and glory they expected thereby to gain.

Whether or not Shakespeare belonged to the latter class, his name is certainly linked with an enviable share of the admiration and applause of centuries. "The greatest dramatist the world has ever produced" is a title that reflects no small amount of credit on the land that gave him birth, but what a halo does it not shed around the brow of the fortunate individual, who, by his massive intellect and energetic perseverance has won it for himself! Such is the appellation by which Shakespeare is known, and richly has he deserved it. That his works have so long retained their wide-spread popularity is due no doubt to the fact that they contain many eminent beauties; but if they possess any one excellence which more than all others tends to display the wonderful genius of their gifted author, it is the distinct deliniation of the charac-

ters to which we are introduced. Well has it been said of Shakespeare that "he lived in each and every one of his characters." The astute villain Iago, the grasping, sanguinary Shylock, the morose and revengeful Hamlet, the hypocritical but well-meaning Brutus, the overly ambitious Lady Macbeth, the loving and true-hearted Cordelia, all alike form suitable subjects for the poet's versatile fancy, and all alike are vividly depicted by the poet's never-failing pen.

Nor did the bard of Avon confine his attention to serious personages only. The humorous side of life has also proved attractive for him; and one of the very best characters in any of the forty-three dramas assigned to him is to be found in "King Henry IV," in the person of the laugh-creating Jack Falstaff. On his very first appearance we are amused; and his ungainly corpulency recalls the words of the old song "He was three feet one way and five feet t'other, and he weighed five hundred pounds." He is not, however, the dull, idle, "happy go lucky" individual that his appearance would indicate. To know him we must study him. His every move gives us insight into some new phase of his character.

First we see him as a sensualist, "fat-witted with drinking old sack and sleeping upon benches after noon." Sack, a certain kind of wine, is his favorite drink. He proclaims it to be a generator of good wit, and thus leaves us to infer that it is because he likes to be witty, rather than because he likes the sack itself, that he consumes it with such eager gusto. Whether or not his frequent potions have any real bearing on the matter, he is certainly both very humorous and very witty; and though the detection of the enormous lies for which he is