

stranger makes you shy if he lets you see that he knows that. You are the dignity, the solidity of the world. The French are its passion, you are its reason; you are the bearers of restfulness.

Englishmen, when I want to think of you all together I think of Falstaff. You have lost most of his gaiety, you no longer dance round the maypole of Merrie England; oppressed by cares and expenditures you stand aloof from democracy and no longer respect aristocracy; your rich men cannot sit in the banqueting-hall where he rioted, for it is tumbling about their ears. But the root of you is Falstaffian: the poetic idealism of the Fat Knight still flowers in your sons, his philosophic acceptance of good and evil radiates out from the midst of you. The broad tolerances of England, her taste for liberty and ease, her occasional bluster and her boundless conceit, they are Falstaff.

Falstaff embodies all that is gross in England and much that is fine; his cowardice, his craft, his habit of flattery are no more English than they are Chinese: they are merely human. But the outer Falstaff is English, the lawless root of him yet more English, for you hate the law, and obey it only because you make it in such wise as not to chafe you. And he is your soul; he is the Englishman who conquered every shore and, a Bible in his hand, planted your flag among the savages; he is the unsteady boy who ran away to sea, the privateersman who fought the French and the Dutch; he is the cheerful, greedy, dull and obstinate Englishman, who is so wonderfully stupid and so wonderfully full of common-sense. Falstaff was never curbed by adversity: no more was the English race; it was, like him, too vain and too optimistic, too materially bounded by its immediate desires. Falstaff, you are the gigantic ancestor of the priests, merchants and soldiers who have conquered and held fields where never floated the lilies of the French or the castles of the