

**THE FIRST SKETCH OF  
SHAKESPEARE'S MERRY  
WIVES OF WINDSOR**

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The First Sketch of Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor by James Orchard Halliwell

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EDITED BY  
JAMES ORCHARD HALLIWELL, ESQ.

F.R.S., HON. M.B.I.A., F.S.A., F.R.A.S., &c.

Φασι δε και Λραγον πυθεσθαι αυτου [Τιμωνος], πως την 'Ομηρου ποιησιν  
ασφαλως κτησαιτο' τον δε ειπειν, Ει τοις αρχαιοις αντιγραφοις εντυγχανοι,  
και μη τοις ηδη διαρθωμενοις.

*Diog. Laert., lib. ix., in vit. Timon.*



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## INTRODUCTION.

Early in the last century, eighty-six years after the death of Shakespeare, an unsuccessful comedy was produced at Drury Lane Theatre, under the title of "The Comical Gallant." This play was heralded forth in the bills of the day as the work of Mr. John Dennis, but it was merely an alteration of the "Merry Wives of Windsor,"\* and a very poor attempt at an improvement of that admirable comedy. The author of this performance, however, was sufficiently well satisfied with its merits to undertake the expence of printing it; and it was accordingly published in the year 1702, with a long dedicatory epistle, from which I make the following extract, putting in Italics those portions of it to which

\* The *dramatis personæ* are much the same as in the Merry Wives, except that Dennis has added one new character, the Host of the Bull, who is brother to Mrs. Ford; and Fenton is represented as nephew to Mrs. Ford. Dennis has rewritten about half of the dialogue, and materially changed the conduct of the piece.—See Genest's "Account of the English Stage," 8vo., Bath, 1832, vol. ii., p. 248.