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THE REPRESENTATION OF THE COMMON SOLDIERS IN *HENRY IVs* IN THE BACKGROUND OF ELIZABETHAN MILITARY LIFE

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SUMMARY

Shakespeare's history plays deal with the medieval kings and their times or with the Roman generals and their wars, which are surely projections of his own age. *Henry IVs* reflects precisely the plight of the common soldiers in Elizabethan England. Shakespeare is extensively humane in his presentation of the common soldiers in *Henry IVs*. The general attitude of Shakespeare to the common soldier is not only to portray them with the delight of a playwright but also to display them with the eye of a historian. In *Henry IVs*, Shakespeare's treatment of common soldiers is precise, realistic and authentic in the background of Elizabethan time. Shakespeare provides convincing details of military life in this play, which seem a clear window of his own time.

Key Words: Shakespeare; *Henry IVs*; Falstaff; Elizabethan army; Common soldiers.

ÖZET

Shakespeare'in tarihi oyunları çağının bir izdüşümü olarak ortaçağ krallarını ve onların dönemini, Romalı generallerin savaşlarını ele alır. *Henry IV* Elizabeth dönemi İngiltere'sindeki rütbesiz askerlerin kötü durumlarını açık bir şekilde gözler önüne serer. Shakespeare *Henry IV* adlı eserinde rütbesiz askerleri oldukça insancıl bir yaklaşımla yansıtmıştır. Shakespeare'in rütbesiz askerleri ele alırken genel tavrı onları sadece oyun yazarlığı zevkiyle değil aynı zamanda bir tarihçi gözüyle göstermesidir. Elizabeth dönemi arka planında, Shakespeare'in rütbesiz askerleri ele alışı açık, güvenilir ve gerçekçidir. Shakespeare bu eserinde ordu yaşantısını ikna edici bir şekilde gözler önüne serer, bu da yaşadığı zamana berrak bir pencere açtığını gösterir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Shakespeare; *Henry IV*; Falstaff; Elizabeth ordusu; Rütbesiz askerler.

Shakespeare's history plays which deal with the medieval kings and their times or with the roman generals and their wars are surely projections of his own age. The various aspects of life and society which Shakespeare depicts in the history plays represent Elizabethan England. One of these outlooks is his presenting of military matters in general and his handling of common soldiers in particular. Generally, the distinction of ranks in any military hierarchy is an accepted principle, but in Shakespeare this distinction is too clear and exhibits the attitude of a class-conscious society. The two parts of *Henry IV* reflects

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precisely the plight of the common soldiers in Elizabethan England. Shakespeare's presentation of the common soldiers displays a masterful combination of his skill as a playwright and his critical tendency as a historian.

It seems reasonable to have a brief look at the Tudor military organization in order to understand Shakespeare's common soldiers from the Elizabethan standpoint. L. Boynton maintains that Elizabeth I had no standing army. The constitutional position of Elizabeth's army was also not clear. With his accession to the throne, Henry VII had stripped the overmighty lords of their private armies and nationalized the defense forces of the country. The warring lords whom we find in constant political disputes and armed conflict in Shakespeare's history plays were now a thing of the past, and as a result of Henry VII's reforms, the national militia had become the principal military force of England. In Elizabeth's time the militia, backed by wartime levies, was the only instrument against external invasion or internal disturbance (90-95). E. P. Cheney sates that the levy was a wartime measure, but the militia was more or less a permanent or semi-permanent organization which was undoubtedly the forerunner of the standing army of 1660. The Old Indenture System was almost discarded and the traditional method of commissions of array was giving way to the normal machinery of the state authority. This meant that the Council would write to the Lords Lieutenant requiring them to keep a certain number of troops ready at a specified times. The Lord Lieutenant, the most powerful officer of the country, was at the head of this working machinery, and his essential duty was military (366-70). He was also "authorized to appoint muster-master to inspect the forces, and a provost marshal to administer martial law in time of rebellion or invasion" (Boynton 112). Yet, the provost marshal seems to have played "a small part until from 1589 onward the discharged soldiers returning from expeditions to France, the Netherlands and Ireland began to become a disorderly element in the community" (Boynton 112-3).

C. G. Cruickshank describes the general military situation of England in his book *Elizabeth's Army*. For Cruickshank, the year 1585 was the turning point of the reign. It was in 1585 that Spain replaced France as England's traditional enemy; it was also the year that marked the beginning of a period of war in which increasing numbers of men, therefore, in and around the Armada and post-Armada years became more and more pressing. In 1588, with the news of the approaching Armada, an unprecedented number of men gathered at Tilbury. "What might have been the most glorious campaign in the history of the British arms was condemned by fate to be little more than a haphazard general muster" (12-14). Cruickshank adds that in 1589 the government is compelled to send defensive expeditionary force against Philip's possible capture of Normandy and Brittany; and the military situation in Ireland where things are always explosive also demand a great supply of English troops. Then there were three combined military and naval expeditions of the time: to

Scotland under Lord Grey in 1560, to France under Willoughby in 1589, and to Cadiz under the joint command of Howard and Essex in 1596. All these campaigns made it imperative for the crown to find men and money for the defense of the kingdom (Cruikshank 15-19).

The number available through the voluntary channel was insignificant when it is compared to the number needed for the service. So the government introduced conscription in 1596. It was required of all able-bodied men between 16 and 60 to serve in the militia (Cruikshank 27). This meant a large-scale recruitment of people for which the Queen Elizabeth had her own method. John Stow records an episode which demonstrates how the government took advantage of the Sunday congregation in a church: "On an Easter day in 1596, when there came an order for one hundred men, so that all men being in their parish churches readie to have received the Communion, the Aldermen, their deputies, constables and other officers, were fain to close up the church doors, till they had pressed so many men" (qtd. in Cruikshank 24-25).

It is very difficult, as C. G. Langsam has rightly maintained, to draw a dividing line between a writer's inspiration from literary material and from personal observation of the actual facts of life (95). It seems that Shakespeare depends more upon his personal observation than upon his source material in his treatment of the common soldier. The constant flow of soldiers coming into and going out of London, gentlemen volunteers, the shire levy, the retired soldiers, mobilization and the fearful master were completely within Shakespeare's knowledge. Shakespeare was surely a meticulous observer of the handling of firearms, pike exercise and other forms of training at the "Mile End Green which had been a famous drill ground since the time of Henry VIII" (Cruikshank 37). This is obvious from Justice Shallow's eyewitness account of the little quiver fellow who "would manage you his piece thus, and 'a would about and about, and come you in and come you in . . . I shall never see such a fellow" (*2 Henry IV*, III ii). Pistol's question to the disguised king – "trail'st thou the puissant pike?" (*Henry V*, IV i) and Antony's comment about Octavius – "He at Philippi kept/His sword e'en like a dancer" (*Antony and Cleopatra*, III xi) also imply his personal observation of the soldiers' drilling and the weapon they used. J. W. Fortescue asserts that Shakespeare observed everything and his observation marked the bloody soldiery of the time and reproduced them with such genial satire and incomparable humor that in our delight of the dramatist we overlook the military historian. Falstaff, the fraudulent captain, Pistol, the swaggering ensign, Bardolph, the rascally corporal, Nym, the imposter who affects military brevity, Parolles, the damnable both side rogue, even Fuluellen, a brave honest man, but a pedant soaked in classical affections . . . all these had their counterparts in every shire of England and were probably to be seen daily on the drill ground at the Mile End (139-40).

Shakespeare displays these soldiers' roles in war and peace at home and abroad, and their post-war life. His knowledge of the higher ranks seems insufficient; but his treatment of the common soldier exhibits his precise knowledge of the lower ranks.

The *Henry IV* plays describe the Captain who is sent from London to preside over the commission of musters in the shire misuses with impunity both the king's press and the king's money. The captain slips in the rank through favor and deliberately selects for service the honest householders and people of some means so that they will be both anxious and able to buy out their release by bribery. Moreover, in order to fill up their places, he chooses the most immoral and wicked people such as vagabonds, rascals, villain and criminals from prison. The captain seems to depend on their practice of stealing, because these ragged recruits are penniless. His principal purpose is to earn money by fraudulent means. He also tries to make money by the muster roll full of fictitious names, or by leading his men to death in order to draw their dead-pay in the name of a soldier no longer in active service or a non-existent soldier.

Shakespeare displays that Falstaff is one of those captains who are fundamentally unqualified to command. When war breaks out, he is still in the Boarhead tavern where "dozen captains" go "Bareheaded, sweating, knocking at the taverns/And asking everyone for Sir John Falstaff" (*2 Henry IV*, II iv). He asks the Chief Justice to pray that

Our armies join not in a hot day; for, by the Lord, I take but two shirts out with me, and I mean not to sweat extraordinarily (*2 Henry IV*, I ii).

He is not pleased that the prince has procured for him a charge of foot: "I would it had been of horse" (*1 Henry IV*, III iii). Paul Jorgensen remarks "Falstaff's pronounced distaste for walking and his unlikely chance of escaping on foot from the battle" (69). Falstaff is uncolted again by not being given a charge of horse. He has got the charge of foot not by virtue of his own talent but through the favor of the prince. This kind of favoritism was prevalent in Elizabethan recruitment. A well-known courtier, historian and poet Sir Walter Raleigh records:

It was thought at first that the officers of the Royal Navy should be such as have been thoroughly practiced and very judicial, but sometimes by the special favour of the princes, and many times by the mediation of the great men for the preferment of their servants, and now and then by virtue of the purse and such like means, some people very raw and ignorant are very unworthily and unfitly nominated to those places when men of desert and ability are held back and unpreferred to the great hindrance of His Majesty's service (139-40).

Robert Barret asserts that many captains were chosen by favor, friendship or affection; “the fawning flatterer, the audacious prater, the subtle makeshift was preferred to the silent man and the plain dealing fellow (7). A bizarre example of selection of captains by the Justice of the Peace is quoted by Cruickshank:

When they appointed two men to serve as captains, who had not the slightest experience of war – moreover, one was too old and the other given to books and study – they were promptly admonished and told to make a better choice. It was very odd, said the Council, that people like these should be selected when there were so many able and experienced men in Dorset (21-22).

L. B. Campbell writes about another interesting instance of selection of captains and commanders. The defenders of the military profession of the time maintained that commanders were often appointed because of their influence with court. These commanders and their subordinates were sometimes not only incapable but also corrupt in their dealings with the soldiers whom they chose as means to private gain. The begging or stealing for a living on their return from the wars was not one option to make men zealous about becoming soldiers (248). Edward Grimestone recorded that Leicester appointed incompetent favorites as governors of cities and “put men into the admiralties of his own devotion, who had no knowledge of navigation” (955). Iago’s accusation against Othello regarding Cassio’s appointment reminds similar practices of favoritism in Elizabethan England. It must be noted that in *Othello* the accusation itself is a malicious lie because Casio deserves worthy of Othello’s preference. Yet, Iago’s disapproval of favoritism demonstrates its existence as a historically recognizable fact of Shakespeare’s England.

In *2 Henry IV* (III ii), the Gloucestershire levy shows Falstaff and Shallow (the captain and the Justice of the Peace in their roles as recruiting officers) deliberately abuse the power and responsibility with which they were entrusted by the royalty. The captain was the foremost officer at the commission of musters because he was supposed to be a specialist who could suggest on the matter of choosing the fitting man and weapon. This is verified by Essex’s recommendation that “muster-masters be sent down to all countries to see the people armed and trained, and at the special commandment of the Queen, a list of captains was made out and they were sent as muster-masters to every country with order to Lords Lieutenant to establish them in their position” (Cheney 370-71). However, this proved to be ill advised during the later part of the reign, for according to Paul Jorgensen, “under the current practice, the captain neither knows his soldiers, nor the soldiers their captain before the service, nor ever mean to meet again when the wars are ended” (132).

Falstaff’s men exemplify two kinds of conscript. He is truthful about the

method and manner in which he has enlisted them (*1 Henry IV*, IV ii), frank and cold blooded when he dramatizes the whole process of recruitment in *2 Henry IV*, III ii. Falstaff is sincere in his explanation:

I have misus'd the King's press damnably. I have got, in exchange of a hundred and fifty soldiers, three hundred and odd pounds. I press me none but good householders, . . . and they have bought out their services; and now my whole charge consists of ancients, corporals, lieutenants, gentlemen of companies—slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs lick'd his sores, and such as indeed were never soldiers, but discarded unjust servingmen, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters, and ostlers trade-fall'n, the cankers of a calm world and a long peace, ten times more dishonorable ragged than an old feaz'd ancient: and such have I, to fill up the rooms of them as have bought out their services, that you would think that I had a hundred and fifty totter'd prodigals lately come from swine-keeping, from eating draff and husks. A mad fellow met me on the way and told me I had unloaded all the gibbets and press'd the dead bodies. No eye hath seen such scarecrows. I'll not march through Coventry with them, that's flat. Nay, and the villains march wide betwixt the legs, as if they had gyves on, for indeed I had the most of them out of prison. There's not a shirt and a half in all my company, and the half shirt is two napkins tack'd together and thrown over the shoulders like a herald's coat without sleeves; and the shirt, to say the truth, stol'n from my host at Saint Albons (*1 Henry IV*, IV ii).

Falstaff's explanations clarify a detailed scandalous malpractice of the Elizabethan captain. In the recruiting scene, Falstaff's pun upon Shadow's name, "Shadow will serve for summer, for we have a number of shadows fill up the muster book" (*2 Henry IV*, III ii) is an important reminder of "the captains' art of deception and corruption raised to a level of efficiency that has perhaps never been attained in any sphere since" (Cruikshank 140).

There is an interesting method in Falstaff's choice procedure. Of the five reluctant men called up by Shallow for recruitment; Falstaff makes a provisional choice of two 'likeliest', Mouldy and Bullcalf during the first session. Yet, in the interval, the two men bribe Bardolph three pounds, which was a good deal of money in Shakespeare's time. Bardolph tells him of money when Falstaff returns, and it is great surprise of the Justices Falstaff dismisses the two able bodied men: "for you Mouldy, stay at home till you are past service; and for your part, Bullcalf, grow till you come unto it. I will none of you" (*2 Henry IV*, III ii). When Shallow remonstrates, Falstaff comes fiercely to him with all the wounded pride of the presiding captain: "Will you tell me,

master Shallow, how to choose a man? Give me the spirit, master Shallow” (2 *Henry IV*, III ii). Falstaff knows the significance of physical fitness but he intentionally misapplies his knowledge of theory. His recruitment is not indiscriminate; he discriminates, but he does so only in the negative direction. That is he does exactly what he knows he must not do. There is a grim comedy in his reversal of values. He changes his opinion when it suits his convenience, and he does so with authority. The lord of lawlessness at the tavern is at work with the same ease and freedom in his new role as captain. It is a fact that money in the pocket is more important than enlisting appropriate soldiers.

It may be deduced that the Elizabethan Justice of the Peace is rarely a man of pleasing reputation. Falstaff describes Shallow when he becomes a Justice of the Peace: He was “a very genius of famine” and after he has got the position he had “land and beef” (2 *Henry IV*, III ii), through corrupt means. Shallow does not share the bribe money received by Bardolph. Falstaff threatened to recruit honest householders and men with steady employment, and let them off serving in exchange for payment because they would be most anxious and willing to buy out their release. Men with regular employment had a natural fear that they would not be accepted again by their employer when the wars were over, for their years in war would greatly changed their appetite for honest work. The Privy Council decided to release such people and substitute freeholders’ sons who would make fitting soldiers without causing unemployment problems when they returned (Cruikshank 99-100). The normal rules of recruitment would not exempt the honest householders from service even though they had family responsibilities at their homes. For that reason, they found the other method: They bought their release through bribery. Paul Jorgensen maintains that inflexible military considerations favored single men, and for that reason Leicester complained that he had been sent “householders and married men” and asked specifically for single men in the next levy (140).

Falstaff’s second group of recruits is the dead, scarecrows, rogues, rascals and vagabonds with whom he is ingloriously connected. Richard Hakluyt records how an officer was punished during the Cadiz expedition of 1596 for the kind of Falstaff indulging in electing his recruits: “A certain lieutenant was by sound of drumme publicly in all the streates disgraced, or rayther after a sort disgraced and cashiered for bearing any further office at that time, for the taking of money by way of corruption of certaine prest soldiers in the countrey, and for placing of others in their roomes more unfit for service and of less sufficiency and ability” (607). The government also fined those who bought back their discharge. Eleven men, for example, were found guilty of buying their discharge partly by cash payment and partly by handing over their equipment which the captains sold to a London merchant (Hakluyt 614). Falstaff’s honest admission – “for indeed, I had the most of them out of prison” (1 *Henry IV*, IV ii) – recalls a similar Elizabethan practice that obtained

universal condemnation at the time. Barnaby Rich records that “[i]n London, when they set forth soldiers, either they scour prisons of thieves or their streets of rogues and vagabonds, for he that is bound to find a man will seek such a one as is better lost than found” (36). In his other book, *Fruits of Long Experience*, Barnaby Rich is even harsher in his condemnation of this kind of recruitment: “When the wars shall be reformed and reduced to a more honorable course, we will endeavor ourselves to find out men of better worth. In the meantime, these may serve as befitting the discipline of this age” (62).

Mathew Sutcliff asserts that the constable was ordered to take up rogues or masterless men who deserved the gallows rather than service in war (62). The recruitment of rogues meant encouragement of crimes, for the criminal who was enlisted knew that no crime was so serious that he would be hanged for it; he had safe refuge in the army. Sir John Smyth notes that Newgate prison was emptied to reinforce the troops besieged at Le Havre. The recruits drawn from prison formed part of the first official expedition to the Low Countries in 1585 (qtd in Cruickshank 27). Baldolph’s command in *1 Henry IV*, III iii (“Yea, two and two, Newgate fashion) exhibits Shakespeare’s personal observation of how prisoners were marched off. The Privy Council also encourages recruitment of vagabonds and rouges, for it is thought that the country will be well rid of this menacing multitude and that peace will be ensured in the country. C. G. Cruickshank notes that in 1597 the Council authorized the levy of vagabonds to reinforce the expedition in Picardy. In London, 700 thieves were rounded up and the Council asked the Lord Mayor to catch another 200, because they thought that conscription of vagabonds had considerable advantages (28). J. W. Fortescue maintains that the Queen could not be induced to pay her soldiers. So, the troops were always seething with mutiny and thinned by desertion, and no gentleman of any self-respect would take command of them. Commissions fell into the hands of scoundrels who swindled their men and sent them out to plunder the country for their benefit (112). In the light of these practices, it is obvious that Falstaff’s choosing of recruits could not be different. Shakespeare’s criticism also indicates the same corruption as that of the other authors of his times.

Falstaff’s recruitment of Shadow reminds one of the abuses of the Shakespeare’s time relating to the muster-roll. Falstaff’s mention, “we have a number of shadows fill up the muster book” (*2 Henry IV*, III ii) underlines the appalling malpractices related to the muster-role in Elizabeth’s army. The muster-roll in Elizabeth’s army was an important document as it was in all armies, because everything related to the troops depended upon the number supplied by the muster office which was under the control of the muster-master, and his boss, the captain. In connivance with the muster-master, the captain always made sure that the exact number on the roll should never be given to the government. C. G. Cruickshank claimed that if the exact number was given, it

would deprive the captain of the pay of the absentees or deserters whose place he always filled up the same number of ‘shadows’ of fictitious men. This kind of fraud was resorted to by the captains during the reign of Mary Tudor passed an act for the taking of musters in 1577 in order to prevent such persistence corruption (17). Such corruption reached an alarming level with the increase in the number of the people serving overseas during Elizabeth’s time. According to Cruickshank, the Queen and the Council took severe measures against such corruptions, but the captains were too cunning to be trapped. The number of the invisible in the Irish service exceeded all proportion. It sometimes reached a hundred percent (140). J. W. Fortescue writes that though the muster-roll of the army at the siege of Leith in Scotland in 1560 showed eight thousand men for whom the Queen paid the wages, only five thousand were actually with the colors, and the pay of the remaining three thousand went, of course, into the captain’s pocket (128).

Falstaff’s loss of 147 “mortal men, food for powder” (*1 Henry IV*, IV ii) is as much motivated by his greed for money as his recruitment of Shadow. He clearly mirrors the corrupt practices of the unscrupulous captain of Shakespeare’s England, too. Falstaff’s behavior reveals “Smyth’s indictment of the English captain’s behavior in the Low Countries, where, lured by the dead pay, captains used to send their men to dangerous exploits”, knowing that their was a good chance of their getting killed and of course, ensuring their own safety. The captains also allowed their men to go badly armed, in tattered uniforms, bare-legged and bare-footed; for this would help them to a quicker death (Cruickshank 55). Shakespeare does not mention the term ‘dead pay’. However, it is clear from Falstaff’s statement that nothing but the lure of dead pay could stimulate him to lead his men to the jaw death: “there’s not three of my hundred and fifty left alive” (*1 Henry IV*, V iii). Yet, Falstaff has no regret and grief for losing such a large number of men. His indifference betrays a hideous cruelty, the cynicism of a leader whose human response is altogether perished. His ‘food for powder’ articulates its complementary ‘food for worm’. Maynard Mack notes that

The comic account of Falstaff’s conscripted derelicts corrects and supplements the description of Hal’s army by a general who loves parade (*1 Henry IV*, IV I) and the anticipation of destroying it by a general who loves carnage (IV I). Falstaff’s cynical ‘they will fill a pit as well as better’ hangs over the ensuing battle enveloping especially those who are to fill a pit simply because the king has dressed them in his coats (641).

Falstaff’s men also resemble the poor soldiers of Shakespeare’s England in their bareness and nakedness. Falstaff, of course, does not care if his men are bare and naked. He can rely on their habit of stealing: “they will find linen enough on every hedge” (*1 Henry IV*, IV ii). However, there are evidences in the

play that Falstaff may have played a part in reducing them to bareness and nakedness for the sake of money. He orders Bardolph to give the soldiers their coats, but the account he gives of the clothing of his company seems very suspicious: "There's not a shirt and a half in all my company" (*1 Henry IV*, IV ii). The present practices suggest that normally the levies were provided with coat, money, arms and clothing when they were called up, and they were clothed in a variety of outfit. The distribution of uniforms was in the hands of the captains. The private soldiers "in the Netherlands sent the Privy Council many complaints that the captains were retaining uniforms which they themselves ought to have had for their comfort" (Cruikshank 92). Shakespeare does not display Falstaff or Bardolph making profits out of the privates' uniform. The only possible conclusion in the light of the present practices is that Falstaff and Bardolph sold the uniforms, because this is very likely and consistent with their characters.

Shakespeare's observation of the post-war misery of the common soldier and the deficiency of the government to rehabilitate them properly is precisely expressed in Falstaff's statement that the three survivors of his crew "are for the town's end to beg during life" (*1 Henry IV*, V iii). There was also the most notorious group of pretended soldiers. In addition to these, there are a menacing group of rogues and vagabonds who had escaped military service. They got mixed up with the genuine war returnees and the number thus increased beyond all proportion. It was impossible to separate the genuine soldiers from the imposter ones. J. W. Draper claims that these discharged soldiers, both genuine and fake, came to London and lived a riotous life, sometimes robbing as pretty thieves and highwaymen but more often begging (414). Poin's "lades", whom he orders at Gadshill to fall upon the "pilgrims going to Canterbury with which offerings, and traders riding to London with fat purses" (*1 Henry IV*, I ii), and Falstaff's gang of rogues of all sorts and conditions, "other Trojans", mad Mustachios, "purple-hued malt-worms", "the foot-land rakers", "long-staff six penny strikers", belonged to these Elizabethan highwaymen whom J. B. Black described in his book, *The Reign of Elizabeth* (264). According to Black, there were no fewer than twenty categories of thieves and swindlers each with its own specialty (264).

Another corruption of Elizabethan army was mutiny and disorder in the military camps and in the battlefields. According to Cruikshank, many of the Elizabethan commanders denied the soldiers their pay and were directly responsible for mutiny and disorder in the camp and the battle. On the other hand, there were many others who, like the Duke of Norfolk, underlined the significance of keeping the troops paid. It is a fact that soldiers mutinied if they could not afford to buy the daily necessities of life (168). Some of Shakespeare's commanders know well this delicate matter. Hastings who is the commander of the Archbishop's army in *2 Henry IV*, IV ii orders his captain:

“Go captain, and deliver to the army / This new of peace. Let them have pay and part”.

Shakespeare's common soldiers in *Henry IVs* are conspicuous in their variety of behavior and attitude towards life. The common soldier's desertion habit inspired by cowardice is the common complaint by the commanders of the time. They are poor, graceless creatures, runaway rogues and vagabonds, tattered, ragged, pale cowards marked to suffer under corrupt officers, from recruitment through post-war beggary. These people are Shakespeare's observation about the truthful personality of the Elizabethan military life. Shakespeare mainly reveals two aspects of Elizabethan army: 1. its weak discipline as a result of the unwise and corrupt choice of officers and 2. its inefficient and wrong method of administration which deprived the soldier of his pay and due rewards. Of course, there are other reasons for the general reluctance of the common soldiers to serve in the Elizabethan army. One of the most important reasons was the idea of state and nation that were too abstract concepts for the average soldiers to comprehend them and fight for the sake of state and nation with enthusiasm.

Shakespeare is extensively humane in his presentation of the common soldiers not only in *Henry IVs*, but also in his other plays, e.g. Pistol in *Henry V* and Parolles in *All's Well That Ends Well*. He shows their weaknesses as simple human frailties and defects. None of the Shakespeare's common soldiers, not even the unscrupulous captain Falstaff is awarded capital punishment except Bardolph. He denounces their vices, but he at the same time feels what a hard lot the common soldier has:

.....Thus are poor servitors,
When others sleep upon their quiet beds,
Constrained to watch in darkness, rain and cold.
(*1 Henry IV II I*).

He is profoundly aware of the difficulties of those who have fought for their country. Shakespeare also feels the same tone of sympathy and humanity in his sonnet 25:

The painful warrior famoused for fight, After a thousand victories
once foil'd, Is from the book of honour razed quite, And all the
rest forgot for which he toil'd

The general attitude of Shakespeare to the common soldier is not only to portray them with the delight of a playwright but also to display them with the eye of a historian. Shakespeare's treatment of common soldiers is precise, realistic and authentic in the

background of Elizabethan time. In *Henry IVs*, Shakespeare provides convincing details of military life, which seem a clear window of his own time.

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