

1 Henry VI

4.1

[Flourish.] Enter King Henry, the Duke of Gloucester, the Bishop of Winchester, the Duke of Exeter; Richard Duke of York, and the Earl of Warwick with white roses; the Earl of Suffolk and the Duke of Somerset with red roses; Lord Talbot, and the Governor of Paris

GLOUCESTER

Lord Bishop, set the crown upon his head.

WINCHESTER

God save King Henry, of that name the sixth!
Winchester crowns the King

GLOUCESTER

Now, Governor of Paris, take your oath
That you elect no other king but him;
Esteem none friends but such as are his friends, 5
And none your foes but such as shall pretend
Malicious practices against his state.
This shall ye do, so help you righteous God.
Enter Sir John Fastolf with a letter

FASTOLF

My gracious sovereign, as I rode from Calais
To haste unto your coronation 10
A letter was delivered to my hands,
[He presents the letter]
Writ to your grace from th' Duke of Burgundy.

TALBOT

Shame to the Duke of Burgundy and thee!
I vowed, base knight, when I did meet thee next,
To tear the Garter from thy craven's leg, 15
He tears it off

Which I have done because unworthily
Thou wast installed in that high degree.±±
Pardon me, princely Henry and the rest.
This dastard at the battle of Patay
When but in all I was six thousand strong, 20
And that the French were almost ten to one,

Before we met, or that a stroke was given,
Like to a trusty squire did run away;
In which assault we lost twelve hundred men.
Myself and divers gentlemen beside
Were there surprised and taken prisoners.
Then judge, great lords, if I have done amiss,
Or whether that such cowards ought to wear
This ornament of knighthood: yea or no?

25

GLOUCESTER

To say the truth, this fact was infamous
And ill beseeming any common man,
Much more a knight, a captain and a leader.

30

TALBOT

When first this order was ordained, my lords,
Knights of the Garter were of noble birth,
Valiant and virtuous, full of haughty courage,
Such as were grown to credit by the wars;
Not fearing death nor shrinking for distress,
But always resolute in most extremes.
He then that is not furnished in this sort
Doth but usurp the sacred name of knight,
Profaning this most honourable order,
And should±±if I were worthy to be judge±±
Be quite degraded, like a hedge-born swain
That doth presume to boast of gentle blood.

35

40

KING HENRY *(to Fastolf)*

Stain to thy countrymen, thou hear'st thy doom.
Be packing, therefore, thou that wast a knight.
Henceforth we banish thee on pain of death.

45

Exit Fastolf

And now, my Lord Protector, view the letter
Sent from our uncle, Duke of Burgundy.

GLOUCESTER

What means his grace that he hath changed his
style?

50

No more but plain and bluntly `To the King'?
Hath he forgot he is his sovereign?
Or doth this churlish superscription
Pretend some alteration in good will?
What's here? `I have upon especial cause,

55

Moved with compassion of my country's wrack
Together with the pitiful complaints
Of such as your oppression feeds upon,
Forsaken your pernicious faction
And joined with Charles, the rightful King of France.' 60
O monstrous treachery! Can this be so?
That in alliance, amity, and oaths
There should be found such false dissembling guile?

KING HENRY

What? Doth my uncle Burgundy revolt?

GLOUCESTER

He doth, my lord, and is become your foe. 65

KING HENRY

Is that the worst this letter doth contain?

GLOUCESTER

It is the worst, and all, my lord, he writes.

KING HENRY

Why then, Lord Talbot there shall talk with him
And give him chastisement for this abuse.

(*To Talbot*) How say you, my lord? Are you not
content? 70

TALBOT

Content, my liege? Yes. But that I am prevented,
I should have begged I might have been employed.

KING HENRY

Then gather strength and march unto him straight.
Let him perceive how ill we brook his treason,
And what offence it is to flout his friends. 75

TALBOT

I go, my lord, in heart desiring still
You may behold confusion of your foes.

Exit

*Enter Vernon wearing a white rose, and Basset
wearing a red rose*

VERNON (*to King Henry*)

Grant me the combat, gracious sovereign.

BASSET (*to King Henry*)

And me, my lord; grant me the combat, too.

RICHARD DUKE OF YORK (*to King Henry, pointing to Vernon*)

This is my servant; hear him, noble Prince. 80

SOMERSET (*to King Henry, pointing to Basset*)

And this is mine, sweet Henry; favour him.

KING HENRY
 Be patient, lords, and give them leave to speak.
 Say, gentlemen, what makes you thus exclaim,
 And wherefore crave you combat, or with whom?

VERNON
 With him, my lord; for he hath done me wrong. 85

BASSET
 And I with him; for he hath done me wrong.

KING HENRY
 What is that wrong whereof you both complain?
 First let me know, and then I'll answer you.

BASSET
 Crossing the sea from England into France,
 This fellow here with envious carping tongue 90
 Upbraided me about the rose I wear,
 Saying the sanguine colour of the leaves
 Did represent my master's blushing cheeks
 When stubbornly he did repugn the truth
 About a certain question in the law 95
 Argued betwixt the Duke of York and him,
 With other vile and ignominious terms;
 In confutation of which rude reproach,
 And in defence of my lord's worthiness,
 I crave the benefit of law of arms. 100

VERNON
 And that is my petition, noble lord;
 For though he seem with forgeÁd quaint conceit
 To set a gloss upon his bold intent,
 Yet know, my lord, I was provoked by him,
 And he first took exceptions at this badge, 105
 Pronouncing that the paleness of this flower
 Bewrayed the faintness of my master's heart.

RICHARD DUKE OF YORK
 Will not this malice, Somerset, be left?

SOMERSET
 Your private grudge, my lord of York, will out,
 Though ne'er so cunningly you smother it. 110

KING HENRY
 Good Lord, what madness rules in brainsick men
 When for so slight and frivolous a cause

Such factious emulations shall arise?
 Good cousins both of York and Somerset,
 Quiet yourselves, I pray, and be at peace. 115

RICHARD DUKE OF YORK
 Let this dissension first be tried by fight,
 And then your highness shall command a peace.

SOMERSET
 The quarrel toucheth none but us alone;
 Betwixt ourselves let us decide it then.

RICHARD DUKE OF YORK
 There is my pledge. Accept it, Somerset. 120

VERNON *(to King Henry)*
 Nay, let it rest where it began at first.

BASSET *(to King Henry)*
 Confirm it so, mine honourable lord.

GLOUCESTER
 Confirm it so? Confounded be your strife,
 And perish ye with your audacious prate!
 Presumptuous vassals, are you not ashamed 125
 With this immodest clamorous outrage
 To trouble and disturb the King and us?
 And you, my lords, methinks you do not well
 To bear with their perverse objections,
 Much less to take occasion from their mouths 130
 To raise a mutiny betwixt yourselves.
 Let me persuade you take a better course.

EXETER
 It grieves his highness. Good my lords, be friends.

KING HENRY
 Come hither, you that would be combatants.
 Henceforth I charge you, as you love our favour, 135
 Quite to forget this quarrel and the cause.
 And you, my lords, remember where we are±±
 In France, amongst a fickle wavering nation.
 If they perceive dissension in our looks,
 And that within ourselves we disagree, 140
 How will their grudging stomachs be provoked
 To wilful disobedience, and rebel!
 Beside, what infamy will there arise
 When foreign princes shall be certified
 That for a toy, a thing of no regard, 145

King Henry's peers and chief nobility
Destroyed themselves and lost the realm of France!
O, think upon the conquest of my father,
My tender years, and let us not forgo
That for a trifle that was bought with blood. 150
Let me be umpire in this doubtful strife.
I see no reason, if I wear this rose,

He takes a red rose

That anyone should therefore be suspicious
I more incline to Somerset than York. 155
Both are my kinsmen, and I love them both.
As well they may upbraid me with my crown
Because, forsooth, the King of Scots is crowned.
But your discretions better can persuade
Than I am able to instruct or teach,
And therefore, as we hither came in peace, 160
So let us still continue peace and love.
Cousin of York, we institute your grace
To be our regent in these parts of France;
And good my lord of Somerset, unite
Your troops of horsemen with his bands of foot, 165
And like true subjects, sons of your progenitors,
Go cheerfully together and digest
Your angry choler on your enemies.
Ourself, my Lord Protector, and the rest,
After some respite, will return to Calais, 170
From thence to England, where I hope ere long
To be presented by your victories
With Charles, Alenc on, and that traitorous rout.

*Flourish. Exeunt all but York, Warwick,
Vernon, and Exeter*

WARWICK

My lord of York, I promise you, the King
Prettily, methought, did play the orator. 175

RICHARD DUKE OF YORK

And so he did; but yet I like it not
In that he wears the badge of Somerset.

WARWICK

Tush, that was but his fancy; blame him not.
I dare presume, sweet Prince, he thought no harm.

RICHARD DUKE OF YORK

An if I wist he did±±but let it rest. 180

Other affairs must now be manageÁd.

Exeunt all but Exeter

EXETER

Well didst thou, Richard, to suppress thy voice;

For had the passions of thy heart burst out

I fear we should have seen deciphered there

More rancorous spite, more furious raging broils, 185

Than yet can be imagined or supposed.

But howsoe'er, no simple man that sees

This jarring discord of nobility,

This shouldering of each other in the court,

This factious bandying of their favourites, 190

But that it doth presage some ill event.

'Tis much when sceptres are in children's hands,

But more when envy breeds unkind division:

There comes the ruin, there begins confusion.

Exit