

King John

5.2

Enter, [marching] in arms, Louis the Dauphin, the Earl of Salisbury, Count Melun, the Earl of Pembroke, and Lord Bigot, with soldiers

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

My Lord Melun, let this be copied out,
And keep it safe for our remembrance.
Return the precedent to these lords again,
That having our fair order written down,
Both they and we, perusing o'er these notes, 5
May know wherefore we took the sacrament
And keep our faiths firm and inviolable.

SALISBURY

Upon our sides it never shall be broken.
And, noble Dauphin, albeit we swear
A voluntary zeal and an unurgeÁd faith 10
To your proceedings, yet believe me, Prince,
I am not glad that such a sore of time
Should seek a plaster by contemned revolt,
And heal the inveterate canker of one wound
By making many. O, it grieves my soul 15
That I must draw this metal from my side
To be a widow-maker! O, and there
Where honourable rescue and defence
Cries out upon the name of Salisbury!
But such is the infection of the time, 20
That for the health and physic of our right,
We cannot deal but with the very hand
Of stern injustice and confuseÁd wrong.
And is't not pity, O my grieveÁd friends,
That we the sons and children of this isle 25
Was born to see so sad an hour as this,
Wherein we step after a stranger, march
Upon her gentle bosom, and fill up
Her enemies' ranks? I must withdraw and weep
Upon the spot of this enforceÁd cause±± 30
To grace the gentry of a land remote,

And follow unacquainted colours here.
What, here? O nation, that thou couldst remove;
That Neptune's arms who clippeth thee about
Would bear thee from the knowledge of thyself
And gripple thee unto a pagan shore,
Where these two Christian armies might combine
The blood of malice in a vein of league,
And not to spend it so unneighbourly.

35

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

A noble temper dost thou show in this, 40
And great affections, wrestling in thy bosom,
Doth make an earthquake of nobility.
O, what a noble combat hast thou fought
Between compulsion and a brave respect!
Let me wipe off this honourable dew 45
That silverly doth progress on thy cheeks.
My heart hath melted at a lady's tears,
Being an ordinary inundation;
But this effusion of such manly drops,
This shower blown up by tempest of the soul, 50
Startles mine eyes, and makes me more amazed
Than had I seen the vaulty top of heaven
Figured quite o'er with burning meteors.
Lift up thy brow, renowneÁd Salisbury,
And with a great heart heave away this storm; 55
Commend these waters to those baby eyes
That never saw the giant world enraged,
Nor met with Fortune other than at feasts,
Full warm of blood, of mirth, of gossiping.
Come, come, for thou shalt thrust thy hand as deep 60
Into the purse of rich prosperity
As Louis himself. So, nobles, shall you all
That knit your sinews to the strength of mine.

[A trumpet sounds]

And even there methinks an angel spake!

Enter Cardinal Pandolf

Look where the holy legate comes apace,
To give us warrant from the hand of heaven,
And on our actions set the name of right
With holy breath.

65

PANDOLF Hail, noble prince of France!
The next is this. King John hath reconciled
Himself to Rome; his spirit is come in 70
That so stood out against the Holy Church,
The great metropolis and See of Rome;
Therefore thy threat'ning colours now wind up,
And tame the savage spirit of wild war,
That like a lion fostered up at hand 75
It may lie gently at the foot of peace,
And be no further harmful than in show.

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN
Your grace shall pardon me: I will not back.
I am too high-born to be propertied,
To be a secondary at control, 80
Or useful serving-man and instrument
To any sovereign state throughout the world.
Your breath first kindled the dead coal of wars
Between this chastised kingdom and myself,
And brought in matter that should feed this fire; 85
And now 'tis far too huge to be blown out
With that same weak wind which enkindled it.
You taught me how to know the face of right,
Acquainted me with interest to this land,
Yea, thrust this enterprise into my heart; 90
And come ye now to tell me John hath made
His peace with Rome? What is that peace to me?
I, by the honour of my marriage bed,
After young Arthur, claim this land for mine;
And now it is half conquered, must I back 95
Because that John hath made his peace with Rome?
Am I Rome's slave? What penny hath Rome borne,
What men provided, what munition sent
To underprop this action? Is't not I
That undergo this charge? Who else but I, 100
And such as to my claim are liable,
Sweat in this business and maintain this war?
Have I not heard these islanders shout out
'Vive le Roi!' as I have banked their towns?
Have I not here the best cards for the game, 105
To win this easy match played for a crown?

And shall I now give o'er the yielded set?
No, no, on my soul, it never shall be said.

PANDOLF

You look but on the outside of this work.

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

Outside or inside, I will not return 110
Till my attempt so much be glorified
As to my ample hope was promiseÁd
Before I drew this gallant head of war,
And culled these fiery spirits from the world
To outlook conquest and to win renown 115
Even in the jaws of danger and of death.

A trumpet sounds

What lusty trumpet thus doth summon us?

Enter the Bastard

BASTARD

According to the fair play of the world,
Let me have audience; I am sent to speak.
My holy lord of Milan, from the King 120
I come to learn how you have dealt for him,
And as you answer I do know the scope
And warrant limited unto my tongue.

PANDOLF

The Dauphin is too wilful-opposite,
And will not temporize with my entreaties. 125
He flatly says he'll not lay down his arms.

BASTARD

By all the blood that ever fury breathed,
The youth says well. Now hear our English king,
For thus his royalty doth speak in me.
He is prepared, and reason too he should. 130
This apish and unmannerly approach,
This harnessed masque and unadviseÁd revel,
This unhaired sauciness and boyish troops,
The King doth smile at, and is well prepared
To whip this dwarfish war, these pigmy arms, 135
From out the circle of his territories.
That hand which had the strength even at your door
To cudgel you and make you take the hatch,
To dive like buckets in concealeÁd wells,

To crouch in litter of your stable planks, 140
 To lie like pawns locked up in chests and trunks,
 To hug with swine, to seek sweet safety out
 In vaults and prisons, and to thrill and shake
 Even at the crying of your nation's crow,
 Thinking his voice an armeÁd Englishman; 145
 Shall that victorious hand be feebled here
 That in your chambers gave you chastisement?
 No! Know the gallant monarch is in arms,
 And like an eagle o'er his eyrie towers
 To souse annoyance that comes near his nest. 150
 (*To the English lords*)
 And you degenerate, you ingrate revolts,
 You bloody Neros, ripping up the womb
 Of your dear mother England, blush for shame;
 For your own ladies and pale-visaged maids
 Like Amazons come tripping after drums; 155
 Their thimbles into armeÁd gauntlets change,
 Their needles to lances, and their gentle hearts
 To fierce and bloody inclination.

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

There end thy brave, and turn thy face in peace.
 We grant thou canst outscold us. Fare thee well: 160
 We hold our time too precious to be spent
 With such a brabblér.

PANDOLF Give me leave to speak.

BASTARD

No, I will speak.

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN We will attend to neither.±±
 Strike up the drums, and let the tongue of war
 Plead for our interest and our being here. 165

BASTARD

Indeed your drums, being beaten, will cry out;
 And so shall you, being beaten. Do but start
 An echo with the clamour of thy drum,
 And even at hand a drum is ready braced
 That shall reverberate all as loud as thine. 170
 Sound but another, and another shall
 As loud as thine rattle the welkin's ear,
 And mock the deep-mouthed thunder; for at hand,

Not trusting to this halting legate here,
Whom he hath used rather for sport than need,
Is warlike John; and in his forehead sits
A bare-ribbed Death, whose office is this day
To feast upon whole thousands of the French.

175

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

Strike up our drums to find this danger out.

BASTARD

And thou shalt find it, Dauphin, do not doubt. 180

[Drums beat.] Exeunt the Bastard [at one door],
all the rest, [marching, at another door]