

1 Henry VI

1.3

Here alarum. The French are beaten back by the English with great loss. Enter Charles the Dauphin, the Duke of Alenc on, and Rene  Duke of Anjou

CHARLES

Who ever saw the like? What men have I?
Dogs, cowards, dastards! I would ne'er have fled,
But that they left me 'midst my enemies.

RENE 

Salisbury is a desperate homicide.
He fighteth as one weary of his life. 5
The other lords, like lions wanting food,
Do rush upon us as their hungry prey.

ALENC ON

Froissart, a countryman of ours, records
England all Olivers and Rolands bred
During the time Edward the Third did reign. 10
More truly now may this be verified,
For none but Samsons and Goliases
It sendeth forth to skirmish. One to ten?
Lean raw-boned rascals, who would e'er suppose
They had such courage and audacity? 15

CHARLES

Let's leave this town, for they are hare-brained slaves,
And hunger will enforce them to be more eager.
Of old I know them: rather with their teeth
The walls they'll tear down, than forsake the siege.

RENE 

I think by some odd gimmicks or device 20
Their arms are set, like clocks, still to strike on,
Else ne'er could they hold out so as they do.
By my consent we'll even let them alone.

ALENC ON Be it so.

Enter the Bastard of Orle ans

BASTARD

Where's the Prince Dauphin? I have news for him. 25

CHARLES

Bastard of Orle ans, thrice welcome to us.

BASTARD

Methinks your looks are sad, your cheer appalled.
Hath the late overthrow wrought this offence?
Be not dismayed, for succour is at hand.
A holy maid hither with me I bring, 30
Which, by a vision sent to her from heaven,
OrdaineÂd is to raise this tedious siege
And drive the English forth the bounds of France.
The spirit of deep prophecy she hath,
Exceeding the nine sibyls of old Rome. 35
What's past and what's to come she can descry.
Speak: shall I call her in? Believe my words,
For they are certain and unfallible.

CHARLES

Go call her in.

Exit Bastard

But first, to try her skill,
ReneÂ stand thou as Dauphin in my place. 40
Question her proudly; let thy looks be stern.
By this means shall we sound what skill she hath.
Enter [the Bastard of OrleÂans with] Joan la Pucelle,
armed

RENEÂ (as Charles)

Fair maid, is't thou wilt do these wondrous feats?

JOAN

ReneÂ, is't thou that thinkest to beguile me?
Where is the Dauphin? *(To Charles)* Come, come from
behind. 45

I know thee well, though never seen before.
Be not amazed. There's nothing hid from me.
In private will I talk with thee apart.
Stand back you lords, and give us leave awhile.
ReneÂ, Alenc on [and Bastard] stand apart

RENEÂ [to Alenc on and Bastard]

She takes upon her bravely, at first dash. 50

JOAN

Dauphin, I am by birth a shepherd's daughter,
My wit untrained in any kind of art.
Heaven and our Lady gracious hath it pleased
To shine on my contemptible estate.

Lo, whilst I waited on my tender lambs, 55
And to sun's parching heat displayed my cheeks,
God's mother deigneÁd to appear to me,
And in a vision, full of majesty,
Willed me to leave my base vocation
And free my country from calamity. 60
Her aid she promised, and assured success.
In complete glory she revealed herself±±
And whereas I was black and swart before,
With those clear rays which she infused on me
That beauty am I blest with, which you may see. 65
Ask me what question thou canst possible,
And I will answer unpremeditated.
My courage try by combat, if thou dar'st,
And thou shalt find that I exceed my sex.
Resolve on this: thou shalt be fortunate, 70
If thou receive me for thy warlike mate.

CHARLES

Thou hast astonished me with thy high terms.
Only this proof I'll of thy valour make:
In single combat thou shalt buckle with me.
An if thou vanquishest, thy words are true; 75
Otherwise, I renounce all confidence.

JOAN

I am prepared. Here is my keen-edged sword,
Decked with five flower-de-luces on each side±±
The which at Touraine, in Saint Katherine's
churchyard,
Out of a great deal of old iron I chose forth. 80

CHARLES

Then come a God's name. I fear no woman.

JOAN

And while I live, I'll ne'er fly from a man.
Here they fight and Joan la Pucelle overcomes

CHARLES

Stay, stay thy hands! Thou art an Amazon,
And fightest with the sword of Deborah.

JOAN

Christ's mother helps me, else I were too weak. 85

CHARLES

Whoe'er helps thee, 'tis thou that must help me.

Impatiently I burn with thy desire.
My heart and hands thou hast at once subdued.
Excellent Pucelle if thy name be so,
Let me thy servant, and not sovereign be. 90
'Tis the French Dauphin sueth to thee thus.

JOAN

I must not yield to any rites of love,
For my profession's sacred from above.
When I have chase'd all thy foes from hence,
Then will I think upon a recompense. 95

CHARLES

Meantime, look gracious on thy prostrate thrall.

RENEÂ *[to the other lords apart]*

My lord, methinks, is very long in talk.

ALENCËON

Doubtless he shrives this woman to her smock,
Else ne'er could he so long protract his speech.

RENEÂ

Shall we disturb him, since he keeps no mean? 100

ALENCËON

He may mean more than we poor men do know.
These women are shrewd tempters with their tongues.

RENEÂ *(to Charles)*

My lord, where are you? What devise you on?
Shall we give o'er Orleâns, or no?

JOAN

Why, no, I say. Distrustful recreants, 105
Fight till the last gasp; I'll be your guard.

CHARLES

What she says, I'll confirm. We'll fight it out.

JOAN

Assigned am I to be the English scourge.
This night the siege assuredly I'll raise.
Expect Saint Martin's summer, halcyon's days, 110
Since I have entered into these wars.
Glory is like a circle in the water,
Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself
Till, by broad spreading, it disperse to naught.
With Henry's death, the English circle ends. 115
Disperse'd are the glories it included.
Now am I like that proud insulting ship

Which Caesar and his fortune bore at once.

CHARLES

Was Mohammed inspireÁd with a dove?

Thou with an eagle art inspireÁd then. 120

Helen, the mother of great Constantine,

Nor yet Saint Philip's daughters were like thee.

Bright star of Venus, fall'n down on the earth,

How may I reverently worship thee enough?

ALENCÖON

Leave off delays, and let us raise the siege. 125

RENEÂ

Woman, do what thou canst to save our honours.

Drive them from OrleÂans, and be immortalized.

CHARLES

Presently we'll try. Come, let's away about it.

No prophet will I trust, if she prove false.

Exeunt