

1 Henry IV

4.1

Enter Hotspur and the Earls of Worcester and Douglas

HOTSPUR

Well said, my noble Scot! If speaking truth
In this fine age were not thought flattery,
Such attribution should the Douglas have
As not a soldier of this season's stamp
Should go so general current through the world.
By God, I cannot flatter, I do defy
The tongues of soothers, but a braver place
In my heart's love hath no man than yourself.
Nay, task me to my word, approve me, lord.

5

DOUGLAS Thou art the king of honour. 10

No man so potent breathes upon the ground
But I will beard him.

HOTSPUR Do so, and 'tis well.

Enter a Messenger with letters

What letters hast thou there? I can but thank you.

MESSENGER These letters come from your father.

HOTSPUR

Letters from him? Why comes he not himself?

15

MESSENGER

He cannot come, my lord, he is grievous sick.

HOTSPUR

Zounds, how has he the leisure to be sick
In such a jostling time? Who leads his power?
Under whose government come they along?

MESSENGER

His letters bears his mind, not I, my lord. 20

Hotspur reads the letter

WORCESTER

I prithee tell me, doth he keep his bed?

MESSENGER

He did, my lord, four days ere I set forth;
And at the time of my departure thence
He was much feared by his physicians.

WORCESTER

I would the state of time had first been whole
Ere he by sickness had been visited.
His health was never better worth than now.

HOTSPUR

Sick now? Droop now? This sickness doth infect
The very life-blood of our enterprise.
'Tis catching hither, even to our camp. 30
He writes me here that inward sickness stays him,
And that his friends by deputation
Could not so soon be drawn; nor did he think it meet
To lay so dangerous and dear a trust
On any soul removed but on his own. 35
Yet doth he give us bold advertisement
That with our small conjunction we should on,
To see how fortune is disposed to us;
For, as he writes, there is no quailing now,
Because the King is certainly possessed 40
Of all our purposes. What say you to it?

WORCESTER

Your father's sickness is a maim to us.

HOTSPUR

A perilous gash, a very limb lopped off.
And yet, in faith, it is not. His present want
Seems more than we shall find it. Were it good 45
To set the exact wealth of all our states
All at one cast, to set so rich a main
On the nice hazard of one doubtful hour?
It were not good, for therein should we read
The very bottom and the sole of hope, 50
The very list, the very utmost bound,
Of all our fortunes.

DOUGLAS

Faith, and so we should, where now remains
A sweet reversion±±we may boldly spend
Upon the hope of what is to come in. 55
A comfort of retirement lives in this.

HOTSPUR

A rendezvous, a home to fly unto,
If that the devil and mischance look big
Upon the maidenhead of our affairs.

WORCESTER

But yet I would your father had been here. 60
The quality and hair of our attempt
Brooks no division. It will be thought
By some that know not why he is away
That wisdom, loyalty, and mere dislike
Of our proceedings kept the Earl from hence; 65
And think how such an apprehension
May turn the tide of fearful faction,
And breed a kind of question in our cause.
For, well you know, we of the off'ring side
Must keep aloof from strict arbitrement, 70
And stop all sight-holes, every loop from whence
The eye of reason may pry in upon us.
This absence of your father's draws a curtain
That shows the ignorant a kind of fear
Before not dreamt of.

HOTSPUR You strain too far. 75
I rather of his absence make this use:
It lends a lustre, and more great opinion,
A larger dare to our great enterprise,
Than if the Earl were here; for men must think
If we without his help can make a head 80
To push against a kingdom, with his help
We shall o'erturn it topsy-turvy down.
Yet all goes well, yet all our joints are whole.

DOUGLAS
As heart can think, there is not such a word
Spoke of in Scotland as this term of fear. 85
Enter Sir Richard Vernon

HOTSPUR
My cousin Vernon! Welcome, by my soul!

VERNON
Pray God my news be worth a welcome, lord.
The Earl of Westmorland, seven thousand strong,
Is marching hitherwards; with him Prince John.

HOTSPUR
No harm. What more?

VERNON And further I have learned 90
The King himself in person is set forth,
Or hitherwards intended speedily,

With strong and mighty preparation.

HOTSPUR

He shall be welcome too. Where is his son,
The nimble-footed madcap Prince of Wales, 95
And his comrades that daffed the world aside
And bid it pass?

VERNON

All furnished, all in arms,
All plumed like ostriches, that with the wind
□
Baiting like eagles having lately bathed, 100
Glittering in golden coats like images,
As full of spirit as the month of May,
And gorgeous as the sun at midsummer;
Wanton as youthful goats, wild as young bulls.
I saw young Harry with his beaver on, 105
His cuishes on his thighs, gallantly armed,
Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury,
And vaulted with such ease into his seat
As if an angel dropped down from the clouds
To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus, 110
And witch the world with noble horsemanship.

HOTSPUR

No more, no more! Worse than the sun in March,
This praise doth nourish agues. Let them come!
They come like sacrifices in their trim,
And to the fire-eyed maid of smoky war 115
All hot and bleeding will we offer them.
The maileÁd Mars shall on his altar sit
Up to the ears in blood. I am on fire
To hear this rich reprisal is so nigh,
And yet not ours! Come, let me taste my horse, 120
Who is to bear me like a thunderbolt
Against the bosom of the Prince of Wales.
Harry to Harry shall, hot horse to horse,
Meet and ne'er part till one drop down a corpse.
O, that GlyndwŶr were come!

VERNON

There is more news. 125

I learned in Worcester, as I rode along,
He cannot draw his power this fourteen days.

DOUGLAS

That's the worst tidings that I hear of yet.

WORCESTER

Ay, by my faith, that bears a frosty sound.

HOTSPUR

What may the King's whole battle reach unto?

130

VERNON

To thirty thousand.

HOTSPUR

Forty let it be.

My father and Glyndwŷr being both away,
The powers of us may serve so great a day.
Come, let us take a muster speedily.
Doomsday is near: die all, die merrily.

135

DOUGLAS

Talk not of dying; I am out of fear
Of death or death's hand for this one half year.

Exeunt