

1 Henry IV

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Enter Harry Prince of Wales and Sir John Oldcastle

SIR JOHN Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?

PRINCE HARRY Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack, and unbuttoning thee after supper, and sleeping upon benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldst truly know. 5
What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day? Unless hours were cups of sack, and minutes capons, and clocks the tongues of bawds, and dials the signs of leaping-houses, and the blessed sun himself a fair hot wench in flame-coloured taffeta, I see no reason 10 why thou shouldst be so superfluous to demand the time of the day.

SIR JOHN Indeed you come near me now, Hal, for we that take purses go by the moon and the seven stars, and not 'By Phoebus, he, that wand'ring knight so fair'. 15
And I prithee, sweet wag, when thou art a king, as God save thy grace±±`majesty' I should say, for grace thou wilt have none±±

PRINCE HARRY What, none?

SIR JOHN No, by my troth, not so much as will serve to 20 be prologue to an egg and butter.

PRINCE HARRY Well, how then? Come, roundly, roundly.

SIR JOHN Marry then, sweet wag, when thou art king let not us that are squires of the night's body be called thieves of the day's beauty. Let us be 'Diana's foresters', 25 'gentlemen of the shade', 'minions of the moon', and let men say we be men of good government, being governed, as the sea is, by our noble and chaste mistress the moon, under whose countenance we steal.

PRINCE HARRY Thou sayst well, and it holds well too, for 30 the fortune of us that are the moon's men doth ebb and flow like the sea, being governed as the sea is by the moon. As for proof now: a purse of gold most resolutely snatched on Monday night, and most dissolutely spent on Tuesday morning; got with

swearing 'lay by!', and spent with crying 'bring in!';
now in as low an ebb as the foot of the ladder, and by
and by in as high a flow as the ridge of the gallows.

SIR JOHN By the Lord, thou sayst true, lad; and is not my
Hostess of the tavern a most sweet wench? 40

PRINCE HARRY As the honey of Hybla, my old lad of the
castle; and is not a buff jerkin a most sweet robe of
durance?

SIR JOHN How now, how now, mad wag? What, in thy
quips and thy quiddities? What a plague have I to do 45
with a buff jerkin?

PRINCE HARRY Why, what a pox have I to do with my
Hostess of the tavern?

SIR JOHN Well, thou hast called her to a reckoning many
a time and oft. 50

PRINCE HARRY Did I ever call for thee to pay thy part?

SIR JOHN No, I'll give thee thy due, thou hast paid all
there.

PRINCE HARRY Yea, and elsewhere so far as my coin would
stretch; and where it would not, I have used my credit. 55

SIR JOHN Yea, and so used it that were it not here apparent
that thou art heir apparent±±but I prithee, sweet wag,
shall there be gallows standing in England when thou
art king, and resolution thus fubbed as it is with the
rusty curb of old father Antic the law? Do not thou 60
when thou art king hang a thief.

PRINCE HARRY No, thou shalt.

SIR JOHN Shall I? O, rare! By the Lord, I'll be a brave
judge!

PRINCE HARRY Thou judgest false already. I mean thou 65
shalt have the hanging of the thieves, and so become
a rare hangman.

SIR JOHN Well, Hal, well; and in some sort it jumps with
my humour as well as waiting in the court, I can tell
you. 70

PRINCE HARRY For obtaining of suits?

SIR JOHN Yea, for obtaining of suits, whereof the hangman
hath no lean wardrobe. 'Sblood, I am as melancholy
as a gib cat, or a lugged bear.

PRINCE HARRY Or an old lion, or a lover's lute. 75

SIR JOHN Yea, or the drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe.

PRINCE HARRY What sayst thou to a hare, or the melancholy of Moor-ditch?

SIR JOHN Thou hast the most unsavoury similes, and art indeed the most comparative, rascalliest sweet young Prince. But Hal, I prithee trouble me no more with vanity. I would to God thou and I knew where a commodity of good names were to be bought. An old lord of the Council rated me the other day in the street about you, sir, but I marked him not; and yet he talked very wisely, but I regarded him not; and yet he talked wisely, and in the street too. 80 85

PRINCE HARRY Thou didst well, for wisdom cries out in the streets, and no man regards it.

SIR JOHN O, thou hast damnable iteration, and art indeed able to corrupt a saint. Thou hast done much harm upon me, Hal, God forgive thee for it. Before I knew thee, Hal, I knew nothing; and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked. I must give over this life, and I will give it over. By the Lord, an I do not, I am a villain. I'll be damned for never a king's son in Christendom. 90 95

PRINCE HARRY Where shall we take a purse tomorrow, Jack?

SIR JOHN Zounds, where thou wilt, lad! I'll make one; an I do not, call me villain and baffle me. 100

PRINCE HARRY I see a good amendment of life in thee, from praying to purse-taking.

SIR JOHN Why, Hal, 'tis my vocation, Hal. 'Tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation. 105

Enter Poins

Poins! Now shall we know if Gadshill have set a match. O, if men were to be saved by merit, what hole in hell were hot enough for him? This is the most omnipotent villain that ever cried 'Stand!' to a true man.

PRINCE HARRY Good morrow, Ned. 110

POINS Good morrow, sweet Hal. *(To Sir John)* What says Monsieur Remorse? What says Sir John, sack-and-sugar Jack? How agrees the devil and thee about thy soul, that thou soldest him on Good Friday last, for a

cup of Madeira and a cold capon's leg? 115

PRINCE HARRY Sir John stands to his word, the devil shall have his bargain, for he was never yet a breaker of proverbs: he will give the devil his due.

POINS (*to Sir John*) Then art thou damned for keeping thy word with the devil. 120

PRINCE HARRY Else he had been damned for cozening the devil.

POINS But my lads, my lads, tomorrow morning by four o'clock early, at Gads Hill, there are pilgrims going to Canterbury with rich offerings, and traders riding to 125 London with fat purses. I have visors for you all; you have horses for yourselves. Gadshill lies tonight in Rochester. I have bespoke supper tomorrow night in Eastcheap. We may do it as secure as sleep. If you will go, I will stuff your purses full of crowns; if you will 130 not, tarry at home and be hanged.

SIR JOHN Hear ye, Edward, if I tarry at home and go not, I'll hang you for going.

POINS You will, chops?

SIR JOHN Hal, wilt thou make one? 135

PRINCE HARRY Who, I rob? I a thief? Not I, by my faith.

SIR JOHN There's neither honesty, manhood, nor good fellowship in thee, nor thou camest not of the blood royal, if thou darest not stand for ten shillings.

PRINCE HARRY Well then, once in my days I'll be a 140 madcap.

SIR JOHN Why, that's well said.

PRINCE HARRY Well, come what will, I'll tarry at home.

SIR JOHN By the Lord, I'll be a traitor then, when thou art king. 145

PRINCE HARRY I care not.

POINS Sir John, I prithee leave the Prince and me alone. I will lay him down such reasons for this adventure that he shall go.

SIR JOHN Well, God give thee the spirit of persuasion and 150 him the ears of profiting, that what thou speakest may move and what he hears may be believed, that the true prince may, for recreation' sake, prove a false thief; for the poor abuses of the time want countenance. Farewell.

You shall find me in Eastcheap.

155

PRINCE HARRY Farewell, the latter spring; farewell, All-hallow summer.

Exit Sir John

POINS Now, my good sweet honey lord, ride with us tomorrow. I have a jest to execute that I cannot manage alone. Oldcastle, Harvey, Russell, and Gadshill shall rob those men that we have already waylaid±±yourself and I will not be there±±and when they have the booty, if you and I do not rob them, cut this head off from my shoulders.

PRINCE HARRY But how shall we part with them in setting forth? 165

POINS Why, we will set forth before or after them and appoint them a place of meeting, wherein it is at our pleasure to fail. And then will they adventure upon the exploit themselves, which they shall have no sooner achieved but we'll set upon them. 170

PRINCE HARRY Ay, but 'tis like that they will know us by our horses, by our habits, and by every other appointment, to be ourselves.

POINS Tut, our horses they shall not see±±I'll tie them in the wood; our visors we will change after we leave them; and, sirrah, I have cases of buckram for the nonce, to immask our noted outward garments. 175

PRINCE HARRY But I doubt they will be too hard for us.

POINS Well, for two of them, I know them to be as true-bred cowards as ever turned back; and for the third, if he fight longer than he sees reason, I'll forswear arms. The virtue of this jest will be the incomprehensible lies that this same fat rogue will tell us when we meet at supper: how thirty at least he fought with, what wards, what blows, what extremities he endured; and in the reproof of this lives the jest. 180 185

PRINCE HARRY Well, I'll go with thee. Provide us all things necessary, and meet me tomorrow night in Eastcheap; there I'll sup. Farewell. 190

POINS Farewell, my lord.

Exit

PRINCE HARRY

I know you all, and will a while uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness.
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds 195
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted he may be more wondered at
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapours that did seem to strangle him. 200
If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work;
But when they seldom come, they wished-for come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
So when this loose behaviour I throw off 205
And pay the debt I never promiseÁd,
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault, 210
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend to make offence a skill,
Redeeming time when men think least I will.

Exit