

Henry V

2.4

*Flourish. Enter King Charles the Sixth of France,
the Dauphin, the Constable, and the Dukes of Berri
and [Bourbon]*

KING CHARLES

Thus comes the English with full power upon us,
And more than carefully it us concerns
To answer royally in our defences.
Therefore the Dukes of Berri and of Bourbon,
Of Brabant and of OrleÂans shall make forth, 5
And you Prince Dauphin, with all swift dispatch
To line and new-repair our towns of war
With men of courage and with means defendant.
For England his approaches makes as fierce
As waters to the sucking of a gulf. 10
It fits us then to be as provident
As fear may teach us, out of late examples
Left by the fatal and neglected English
Upon our fields.

DAUPHIN

My most redoubted father,
It is most meet we arm us 'gainst the foe, 15
For peace itself should not so dull a kingdom±±
Though war, nor no known quarrel, were in
question±±
But that defences, musters, preparations
Should be maintained, assembled, and collected
As were a war in expectation. 20
Therefore, I say, 'tis meet we all go forth
To view the sick and feeble parts of France.
And let us do it with no show of fear,
No, with no more than if we heard that England
Were busied with a Whitsun morris dance. 25
For, my good liege, she is so idly kinged,
Her sceptre so fantastically borne
By a vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth,
That fear attends her not.

CONSTABLE

O peace, Prince Dauphin.

You are too much mistaken in this king. 30
Question your grace the late ambassadors
With what great state he heard their embassy,
How well supplied with age and counsellors,
How modest in exception, and withal
How terrible in constant resolution, 35
And you shall find his vanities forespent
Were but the outside of the Roman Brutus,
Covering discretion with a coat of folly,
As gardeners do with ordure hide those roots
That shall first spring and be most delicate. 40

DAUPHIN

Well, 'tis not so, my Lord High Constable.
But though we think it so, it is no matter.
In cases of defence 'tis best to weigh
The enemy more mighty than he seems.
So the proportions of defence are filled ±± 45
Which, of a weak and niggardly projection,
Doth like a miser spoil his coat with scanting
A little cloth.

KING CHARLES

Think we King Harry strong.
And princes, look you strongly arm to meet him.
The kindred of him hath been fleshed upon us, 50
And he is bred out of that bloody strain
That haunted us in our familiar paths.
Witness our too-much-memorable shame
When Crécy battle fatally was struck,
And all our princes captived by the hand 55
Of that black name, Edward, Black Prince of Wales,
Whiles that his mountant sire, on mountain standing,
Up in the air, crowned with the golden sun,
Saw his heroical seed and smiled to see him
Mangle the work of nature and deface 60
The patterns that by God and by French fathers
Had twenty years been made. This is a stem
Of that victorious stock, and let us fear
The native mightiness and fate of him.

Enter a Messenger

MESSENGER

Ambassadors from Harry, King of England, 65

Do crave admittance to your majesty.

KING CHARLES

We'll give them present audience. Go and bring them.

Exit Messenger

You see this chase is hotly followed, friends.

DAUPHIN

Turn head and stop pursuit. For coward dogs
Most spend their mouths when what they seem to
threaten 70

Runs far before them. Good my sovereign,
Take up the English short, and let them know
Of what a monarchy you are the head.
Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin
As self-neglecting.

Enter the Duke of Exeter, [attended]

KING CHARLES From our brother England? 75

EXETER

From him, and thus he greets your majesty:
He wills you, in the name of God Almighty,
That you divest yourself and lay apart
The borrowed glories that by gift of heaven,
By law of nature and of nations, 'longs 80
To him and to his heirs, namely the crown,
And all wide-stretch'd honours that pertain
By custom and the ordinance of times
Unto the crown of France. That you may know
'Tis no sinister nor no awkward claim, 85
Picked from the worm-holes of long-vanished days,
Nor from the dust of old oblivion raked,
He sends you this most memorable line,
In every branch truly demonstrative,
Willing you over-look this pedigree, 90
And when you find him evenly derived
From his most famed of famous ancestors,
Edward the Third, he bids you then resign
Your crown and kingdom, indirectly held
From him, the native and true challenger. 95

KING CHARLES Or else what follows?

EXETER

Bloody constraint. For if you hide the crown

Even in your hearts, there will he rake for it.
Therefore in fierce tempest is he coming,
In thunder and in earthquake, like a Jove, 100
That if requiring fail, he will compel;
And bids you, in the bowels of the Lord,
Deliver up the crown, and to take mercy
On the poor souls for whom this hungry war
Opens his vasty jaws; and on your head 105
Turns he the widows' tears, the orphans' cries,
The dead men's blood, the pining maidens' groans,
For husbands, fathers, and betrothed lovers
That shall be swallowed in this controversy.
This is his claim, his threat'ning, and my message±± 110
Unless the Dauphin be in presence here,
To whom expressly I bring greeting too.

KING CHARLES

For us, we will consider of this further.
Tomorrow shall you bear our full intent
Back to our brother England.

DAUPHIN

For the Dauphin, 115

I stand here for him. What to him from England?

EXETER

Scorn and defiance, slight regard, contempt;
And anything that may not misbecome
The mighty sender, doth he prize you at.
Thus says my king: an if your father's highness 120
Do not, in grant of all demands at large,
Sweeten the bitter mock you sent his majesty,
He'll call you to so hot an answer for it
That caves and womb'd vaultages of France
Shall chide your trespass and return your mock 125
In second accent of his ordinance.

DAUPHIN

Say if my father render fair return
It is against my will, for I desire
Nothing but odds with England. To that end,
As matching to his youth and vanity, 130
I did present him with the Paris balls.

EXETER

He'll make your Paris Louvre shake for it,

Were it the mistress court of mighty Europe.
And be assured, you'll find a diff'rence,
As we his subjects have in wonder found, 135
Between the promise of his greener days
And these he masters now: now he weighs time
Even to the utmost grain. That you shall read
In your own losses, if he stay in France.

KING CHARLES *[rising]*
Tomorrow shall you know our mind at full. 140
Flourish

EXETER
Dispatch us with all speed, lest that our king
Come here himself to question our delay±±
For he is footed in this land already.

KING CHARLES
You shall be soon dispatched with fair conditions.
A night is but small breath and little pause 145
To answer matters of this consequence.
[Flourish.] Exeunt