

The Life of King Henry the Fifth

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SCENE VII. The French camp, near Agincourt:

Enter the Constable of France, the LORD RAMBURES, ORLEANS, DAUPHIN, with others

Constable

Tut! I have the best armour of the world. Would it were day!

ORLEANS

You have an excellent armour; but let my horse have his due.

Constable

It is the best horse of Europe.

ORLEANS

Will it never be morning?

DAUPHIN

My lord of Orleans, and my lord high constable, you talk of horse and armour?

ORLEANS

You are as well provided of both as any prince in the world.

DAUPHIN

What a long night is this! I will not change my horse with any that treads but on four pasterns. Ca, ha! he bounds from the earth, as if his entrails were hairs; le cheval volant, the Pegasus, chez les narines de feu! When I bestride him, I soar, I am a hawk: he trots the air; the earth sings when he touches it; the basest horn of his hoof is more musical than the pipe of Hermes.

ORLEANS

He's of the colour of the nutmeg.

DAUPHIN

And of the heat of the ginger. It is a beast for Perseus: he is pure air and fire; and the dull elements of earth and water never appear in him, but only in Patient stillness while his rider mounts him: he is indeed a horse; and all other jades you may call beasts.

Constable

Indeed, my lord, it is a most absolute and excellent horse.

DAUPHIN

It is the prince of palfreys; his neigh is like the bidding of a monarch and his countenance enforces homage.

ORLEANS

No more, cousin.

DAUPHIN

Nay, the man hath no wit that cannot, from the rising of the lark to the lodging of the lamb, vary deserved praise on my palfrey: it is a theme as fluent as the sea: turn the sands into eloquent tongues, and my horse is argument for them all: 'tis a subject for a sovereign to reason on, and for a sovereign's sovereign to ride on; and for the world, familiar to us and unknown to lay apart their particular functions and wonder at him. I once writ a sonnet in his praise and began thus:

Wonder of nature,'--

ORLEANS

I have heard a sonnet begin so to one's mistress.

DAUPHIN

Then did they imitate that which I composed to my courser, for my horse is my mistress.

ORLEANS

Your mistress bears well.

DAUPHIN

Me well; which is the prescript praise and perfection of a good and particular mistress.

Constable

Nay, for methought yesterday your mistress shrewdly shook your back.

DAUPHIN

So perhaps did yours.

Constable

Mine was not bridled.

DAUPHIN

O then belike she was old and gentle; and you rode, like a kern of Ireland, your French hose off, and in your straight strossers.

Constable

You have good judgment in horsemanship.

DAUPHIN

Be warned by me, then: they that ride so and ride not warily, fall into foul bogs. I had rather have my horse to my mistress.

Constable

I had as lief have my mistress a jade.

DAUPHIN

I tell thee, constable, my mistress wears his own hair.

Constable

I could make as true a boast as that, if I had a sow to my mistress.

DAUPHIN

'Le chien est retourne a son propre vomissement, et la truie lavee au bourbier;' thou makest use of any thing.

Constable

Yet do I not use my horse for my mistress, or any such proverb so little kin to the purpose.

RAMBURES

My lord constable, the armour that I saw in your tent to-night, are those stars or suns upon it?

Constable

Stars, my lord.

DAUPHIN

Some of them will fall to-morrow, I hope.

Constable

And yet my sky shall not want.

DAUPHIN

That may be, for you bear a many superfluously, and
'twere more honour some were away.

Constable

Even as your horse bears your praises; who would
trot as well, were some of your brags dismounted.

DAUPHIN

Would I were able to load him with his desert! Will
it never be day? I will trot to-morrow a mile, and
my way shall be paved with English faces.

Constable

I will not say so, for fear I should be faced out of
my way: but I would it were morning; for I would
fain be about the ears of the English.

RAMBURES

Who will go to hazard with me for twenty prisoners?

Constable

You must first go yourself to hazard, ere you have them.

DAUPHIN

'Tis midnight; I'll go arm myself.

Exit

ORLEANS

The Dauphin longs for morning.

RAMBURES

He longs to eat the English.

Constable

I think he will eat all he kills.

ORLEANS

By the white hand of my lady, he's a gallant prince.

Constable

Swear by her foot, that she may tread out the oath.

ORLEANS

He is simply the most active gentleman of France.

Constable

Doing is activity; and he will still be doing.

ORLEANS

He never did harm, that I heard of.

Constable

Nor will do none to-morrow: he will keep that good name still.

ORLEANS

I know him to be valiant.

Constable

I was told that by one that knows him better than you.

ORLEANS

What's he?

Constable

Marry, he told me so himself; and he said he cared not who knew it

ORLEANS

He needs not; it is no hidden virtue in him.

Constable

By my faith, sir, but it is; never any body saw it but his lackey: 'tis a hooded valour; and when it appears, it will bate.

ORLEANS

Ill will never said well.

Constable

I will cap that proverb with 'There is flattery in friendship.'

ORLEANS

And I will take up that with 'Give the devil his due.'

Constable

Well placed: there stands your friend for the devil: have at the very eye of that proverb with 'A pox of the devil.'

ORLEANS

You are the better at proverbs, by how much 'A fool's bolt is soon shot.'

Constable

You have shot over.

ORLEANS

'Tis not the first time you were overshot.

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

My lord high constable, the English lie within fifteen hundred paces of your tents.

Constable

Who hath measured the ground?

Messenger

The Lord Grandpre.

Constable

A valiant and most expert gentleman. Would it were day! Alas, poor Harry of England! he longs not for the dawning as we do.

ORLEANS

What a wretched and peevish fellow is this king of England, to mope with his fat-brained followers so far out of his knowledge!

Constable

If the English had any apprehension, they would run away.

ORLEANS

That they lack; for if their heads had any intellectual armour, they could never wear such heavy head-pieces.

RAMBURES

That island of England breeds very valiant creatures; their mastiffs are of unmatchable courage.

ORLEANS

Foolish curs, that run winking into the mouth of a Russian bear and have their heads crushed like rotten apples! You may as well say, that's a valiant flea that dare eat his breakfast on the lip of a lion.

Constable

Just, just; and the men do sympathize with the mastiffs in robustious and rough coming on, leaving their wits with their wives: and then give them great meals of beef and iron and steel, they will eat like wolves and fight like devils.

ORLEANS

Ay, but these English are shrewdly out of beef.

Constable

Then shall we find to-morrow they have only stomachs to eat and none to fight. Now is it time to arm: come, shall we about it?

ORLEANS

It is now two o'clock: but, let me see, by ten We shall have each a hundred Englishmen.

Exeunt