

King Henry V

by William Shakespeare

Presented by Paul W. Collins

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Chapter One New Reign, Old Claims

Oh, for a *muse of fire* that would ascend the brightest heaven of *invention!*” cries the actor, striding forward. His voice booms out, quieting the crowd milling around three sides of the raised platform that juts out past two tall pillars to a roof over part of the stage, at the rear. “A *kingdom* for a stage, *princes* to act, and *monarchs* to behold the swelling scene!”

The theater’s more genteel patrons, clustered in the surrounding galleries’ three tiers, turn to listen, and the audience of one-penny patrons, standing on the ground, moves closer.

“*Then* should the warlike Harry, showing as *himself*, assume the part of *Mars*,”—god of war, “and at his heels, leashed in like hounds, should *famine*, *sword* and *fire* crouch, ready for *employment!*”

“But pardon, gentles all, the flat, unraisèd spirits that have dared on this unworthy scaffold to bring forth so great an objective! Can this cock-pit hold the vasty fields of *France*? Or may we cram within this wooden O the many helmets that did affright the air at *Agincourt*? Oh, *pardon!*”

“But, since a crookèd figure”—written number—“may attest in little place a *million*, let us, zeroes to this great accompt, on your imaginative forces work!”

“Suppose within the girdle of these walls are now confinèd two mighty *monarchies*, whose high-upreared and abutting fronts only a perilous, narrow ocean parts asunder! Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts: into a thousand parts divide one man, and make imaginary *puissance!*”—create an army. “Think, when we talk of horses, that you *see* them printing their proud hoofs i’ the receiving earth!”

“For ’tis *your thoughts* that now must bedeck our kings, carry them here and there—jumping o’er times, forcing the accomplishment of many years into an *hour-glass!*”

“For the *which* to supply, admit me as *Chorus* to this history—who, Prologue-like, humbly prays your patience, gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play....”

In a small chamber near the royal palace’s throne room in London, the Archbishop of Canterbury paces, worried about some legislation being considered by Parliament. “My lord, I’ll tell you: that same bill *against us* is being urgèd which in the eleventh year of the *last* king’s reign was likely!—and indeed had *passed*, but that the scrabbling and unquiet time did push it out of farther question.”

“But how, my lord, shall we now *resist* it?” asks another visitor to the capital, the Bishop of Ely, who came here just before the archbishop’s brief—interrupted—audience with the new king.

“It must be thought on! If it pass against us, we lose *the better half of our possessions!*—for all the temporal lands which devout men by testament have given to the *Church* would they strip from us!—being valued thus: as much as would maintain, to the *king’s* honour, fully *fifteen earls* and fifteen *hundred* knights, and *six thousand, two hundred* good *squires!*”—country gentlemen.

He shakes his head in disgust at the tax bill’s provisions. “For relief of lepers and weak agèd, for indigent, faint souls past corporal toil, a *hundred alms-houses*, right-well supplied!—and besides, to the *coffers of the king*, a *thousand pounds* by the year!”

“Thus runs the billing!”

The bishop is stunned. “This *would* drink deep!”

“’Twould drink *the cup and all!*”

“But what prevention?”

The archbishop stops. He pictures the young sovereign. “The king is full of grace and fair *regard*....”

“And a true lover of the Holy Church.”

But Canterbury frowns. “The courses of his *youth* promised it *not!*”

“The breath no sooner left his father’s body but that his wildness *seemed* to die *too*, mortified

in him!—yea, at that very moment *Consideration*, like an *angel*, came and whipped the offending Adam out of him, leaving his body as a *paradise*, to envelop and contain *celestial* spirits!”—as opposed to the wine in which Henry V reputedly indulged as dissolute *Prince Hal*.

“Never was such a *sudden scholar* made!—never came *reformation* in such a *flood*, with heady currents scouring faults!—nor never did Hydra-headed wilfulness so *soon* lose its seat—and *all at once*—as in this king!”

“We are blessed in the change,” says the bishop, hopeful despite the other priest’s harsh assessment.

As the archbishop continues, his lilting tone mocks Henry’s popular appeal. “Only hear him *reason* on divinity and, all *admiring*, with an inward wish you would desire that the king were made a *prelate*! Hear him debate on *commonwealth* affairs, you would say it hath been *all his study*! List to his discourse on *war*, and you shall hear a fearful battle rendered you in *music*! Turn him to any cause of *policy*, the Gordian knot of it *he* will unloose, familiar as his *garter*!

“When he speaks as a chartered *libertine*, the *air* is still!—and a *mute* Wonder lurketh in men’s ears to *steal his sentences*, so sweet and honey’d that the art *and* practic parts of life must be the mistresses of his *theoric*!”

The archbishop’s voice hardens. “Which is to wonder how his grace should *glean* it, since his addiction was to courses *vain*, his companions unlettered, *rude* and *shallow*, his hours filled up with *riots, banquets, and sports*!—and never was any *study* noted in him—any retirement, any sequestration from *open haunts* and *popular entertainments*!”

Bishop Ely shrugs. “The *strawberry* grows underneath the *nettle*, and wholesome berries thrive and ripen best when neighbored by fruit of *baser* quality; and so the prince *obscured*, under a veil of wildness, his *contemplation*—which no doubt grew like the summer grass, fastest by night, unseen, yet *crecive*”—rising—“in its faculty.”

“It must be so, for *miracles* are ceased,” says the archbishop, lamenting the time’s growing devotion to science, “and therefore we must needs admire the *means* how things are perfected.”

Ely is concerned. “But, my good lord, how now to *mitigate* this bill urged by the Commons? Doth his majesty incline to it?—or no....”

“He seems indifferent.

“Or rather *swaying* more upon our part than cherishing the exhibitors against us. For, with regard to *causes* now in hand which I have earlier opened to his grace, as touching upon France at large, I have made an *offer* to his majesty from our spiritual convocation: *to give a greater sum at one time* than ever the clergy did yet to his predecessors part withal!”

“How did this offer seem received, my lord?”

“With good acceptance by his majesty—save that there was not time enough to hear, as I perceived his grace would *fain* have done, the severals and unhidden passages”—particulars and revelations—“of *his true titles*, derived from Edward, his great-grandfather,”—England’s King Edward III, “to some certain dukedoms—and generally to the *crown and seat of France*!”

To pursue such a claim, the king would need much money, and a “gift” from supportive churchmen would be preferable to a controversial confiscation.

“What was the impediment that broke this off?”

“The *French ambassador* upon that instant craved *audience*!—and the moment, I think, is come to give him hearing. Is it four o’clock?”

“It is.”

“Then go we in to know his embassy—which I could with a ready *guess* declare before the Frenchman speaks a word of it!” The archbishop moves toward the door.

The bishop follows. “I’ll wait upon you; I long to hear it!”

Where is my gracious lord of Canterbury?” asks King Henry V in the tall throne room, which is now crowded with nobles and their attendants.

“Not here in presence,” the Duke of Exeter tells him.

“Send for him, good uncle.”

“Shall we call in the ambassador, my liege?” asks the Earl of Westmoreland.

“Not yet, my cousin; we would be resolvèd, before we hear him, of some things of weight that task our thoughts, concerning us and France.”

The two prelates enter, approach the throne, and bow.

“God and his angels guard your sacred throne, and make you long *become* it!” says the archbishop.

“We thank you.” King Henry cites the main concern. “My learned lord, we pray you to proceed, and *justly* and *religiously* unfold why the ‘law Salique’ that they have in France either should, or should not, bar us in our claim.

“And God forbid, my dear and faithful lord, that you should *fashion, wrest, or bend* your understanding in reading, or charge your soul”—burden it—“by opening too shrewdly *titles miscreated*, whose *right* suits not in native colours with the *truth!* For God doth know how many now in health shall drop their blood in approbation of what Your Reverence shall incite us to!

“Therefore take heed how you impawn our person, how you *awake* our sleeping *sword of war!* We charge you, in the name of God, *take heed!* For never did two such *kingdoms* contend without much fall of *blood!*—whose *guiltless* drops are every one a *woe*, a sore complaint ’gainst him whose *wrong* gives edge unto the swords that make such waste of brief mortality!

“Under this conjuration, *speak*, my lord; for we will hear, note, and believe in heart that what you speak is, in your conscience, washed as pure as is sin by baptism!”

The Archbishop of Canterbury moves forward and unfurls a document. “Then hear me, gracious sovereign, and you peers that owe your selves, your lives and services to this imperial throne.

“There is *no* bar to make against Your Highness’ claim to France but *this*, which they produce from Pharamond....” He reads aloud: “*In terram Salicam mulieres ne succedant*’—No woman shall succeed in Salique land.”

The archbishop looks up from the paper. “Which Salique land the French *unjustly* gloze to be the realm of *France*, and Pharamond the founder of this law and female bar.

“Yet *their own authors* faithfully affirm that the land Salique is in *Germany!*—between the floods of Sala and of Elbe, where Charles the Great, having subdued the Saxons, there left behind and settled certain French—who, holding in disdain the German women for some dishonest manners of their life, established then this law: to wit, *no female should be inheritrix in Salique land.* Which Salique, as I said, ’twixt Elbe and Sala, is at this day in Germany called Meisen.

“Then doth it well appear that Salique law was *not* devisèd for the realm of France—nor did the French *possess* the Salique land until four hundred, one and twenty years *after* the defunction of King Pharamond, idly supposed the *founder* of this law, who died within the year of our redemption Four Hundred Twenty-Six. Charles the Great subdued the Saxons, and did seat the French beyond the river Sala, in the year *Eight Hundred Five!*”

He can cite past French pretenders who ignored any bar to inheritance by or through females. “Besides, their writers say, *King Pepin*, who deposèd Childeric, did, as heir general, being descended of *Blithild*, who was daughter to King Clothair, make claim and title to the crown of France!

“Also *Hugh Capet*, who usurped the crown of Charles, the Duke of Lorraine, sole male heir of the true line and stock of Charles the Great, in order to find *his* title with some *shows* of truth—though in pure truth it was corrupt and nought—conveyed himself as heir to the *Lady Lingare*, daughter to Charlemagne, who was the son to Louis the emperor.

“And Louis the son of Charles the Great, also King Louis the Tenth, who was sole heir to the usurper Capet, could not keep quiet in his conscience, wearing the crown of France, till satisfied that fair *Queen Isabel*, his grandmother, was lineal of the *Lady Ermengare*, daughter to Charles, the foresaid Duke of Lorraine—by the which marriage the line of Charles the Great was reunited to the crown of France.”

He rolls up the document briskly. “So that, as clear as is the summer sun, King Pepin’s title, Hugh Capet’s claim, and King Louis’s satisfaction *all* appear to rely upon right and title of the *female!*”

“So do the kings’ of France *unto this day*, even if they would hold up this Salique law to bar *Your Highness’s* claiming from the female, and choose rather to hide themselves in a net than aptly to imbar their crookèd titles—*usurped* from your progenitors and *you!*”

In a loud, clear voice, King Henry asks, carefully, “May I with *right* and *conscience* make this claim?”

The archbishop nods solemnly. “Thus, and *upon my head*, dread sovereign! For in the Book of Numbers is it writ: ‘When the man dies and has no son, let the inheritance descend unto the *daughter.*’”

“Gracious lord, *stand for your own!*—*unwind* your bloody flag!—look back unto your mighty *ancestors!* Go, my dread lord, to your *great-grandsire’s* tomb, from whom you claim; invoke his *warlike* spirit! And your *great-uncle’s*—Edward the Black Prince, who on the French ground performed a tragedy: making *defeat* of the *full power of France* whiles his most-mighty father stood on a hill, smiling to behold his lion’s-whelp *forage* in the *blood of French nobility!*”

“Oh, *noble* English that could entertain with *half* their forces the full pride of France, and let *another* half stand laughing by, all out of work and cold for want of *action!*”

The Bishop of Ely steps forward. “Awake *remembrance* of those valiant dead, and with your puissant arm *renew their feats!*” the priest urges. “You are their *heir*; you sit upon their *throne*—the blood and courage that renownèd them runs in *your* veins!—and my thrice-puissant liege is in the very May-morn of his *youth*, ripe for exploits and mighty enterprises!”

“Your brother kings and monarchs of the earth do all *expect* that you should *rouse* yourself, as did the former lions of your blood!” argues Lord Exeter, the king’s uncle.

Lord Westmoreland concurs. “They know Your Grace hath *cause* and *means* and *might*—so have your *subjects!*—never king of England had nobles richer and more *loyal*, whose *hearts* have left their bodies, here in England, and lie pavilioned on the fields of *France!*”

“Oh, let their bodies *follow*, my dear liege!” urges the archbishop, “with *blood* and *sword* and *fire* to win your *right!*”

“In aid whereof we of the spirituality will raise Your Highness such a mighty sum as never did the clergy at one time bring in to any of your ancestors!”

King Henry considers carefully. “We must not only arm to invade the French, but lay down our proportions to defend against the *Scot*, who will make road upon us with all advantages”—encroach at any opportunity.

The archbishop commends the northern militias. “They of those marches, gracious sovereign, shall be a wall sufficient to defend our inland from the pilfering borderers.”

“We do not mean the coursing *snatchers* only,” says the king, “but fear the *main intendment* of the Scot, who hath been ever a giddy neighbour to us! For you shall read that my great-grandfather never went with his forces into France but that the Scot on his unfurnishèd kingdom came *pouring like the tide* into a breach, and amply, with brim-*fulness* of his force, galling the gleanèd land with hot assays, girding with grievous siege *castles* and *towns*, such that England, being empty of defence, hath shook and trembled at the perilous proximity!”

“She hath been then more *afearèd* than harmèd, my liege,” says the archbishop. “For England was but exemplèd here by *herself*: when all her *chivalry* hath been in France, and she a widow mourning of her nobles, she hath herself not only well *defended*, but taken and *impounded as a stray* the *King of Scots!*—whom she did send to France to fill King Edward’s fame with *prisoner kings*, and make her chronicle as rich with *praise* as is the ooze at bottom of the sea with sunless wrecks and sunken *treasures!*”

“But there’s a saying very old and true,” warns Westmoreland. “If that you will *France* to win, then with *Scotland* first begin!” For, once the eagle England be *at prey*, to her unguarded nest the weasel Scot comes sneaking, and sucks her princely eggs, playing the *mouse* in absence

of the cat, to tear and havoc more than it can eat!”

Says Exeter, “It follows then the cat must stay at home; yet that is but needless caution, since we have *locks* to safeguard necessities, and petty *traps* to catch the petty *thieves*. While that the armèd hand doth fight abroad, the *advisèd head* defends itself at home!—for government, through high and low and lower put into *parts*,”—as in singing, “doth keep in one consent, congruing in a full and natural close like *music!*”

The archbishop nods. “*True!* Therefore doth Heaven divide the state of Man in divers functions, setting endeavour in continual motion—which is fixèd, as an aim on a target, in obedience.

“For so work the *honey-bees*, creatures that by a rule in Nature teach the act of *order* to a *peopled* kingdom. They have a king and officers of sorts; while some, like *magistrates*, collect at home, others, like *merchants*, venture trade abroad; others, like *soldiers*, armèd in their stings, make boot upon the summer’s velvet buds—which pillaged, they with merry march bring home to the tent-royal of their emperor!—who, busied in his majesty, surveys the singing *masons* building roofs of gold, the civil *citizens* kneading up the honey, the poor, mechanic *porters* crowding in with their heavy burdens at his narrow gate, the sad-eyed *justice*, with his surly hum, delivering o’er to executioner’s pale the lazy, yawning drone.

“I this infer: that *many* things, having full reference to *one consent*, may work contrariously—as many *arrows* loosèd several ways come to *one mark*, as many *ways* meet in *one town*, as many fresh streams meet in one salt *sea*, as many lines end in the spiral’s *centre*, so may a *thousand* actions, once afoot, end in one *purpose*, and be all well borne, without defeat!

“Therefore to *France*, my liege! Divide your happy England into *four*, whereof take you *one* quarter into France, and you withal shall make all Gallia shake! If we, with *thrice* such powers left at home, cannot defend our own doors from a *dog*, let *us* be worried—and our nation lose the name of hardiness and policy!”

King Henry rises and nods. “Call in the messengers sent from the dauphin,” he tells an attendant, who bows and goes to find the emissaries of the young French prince. “Now are we well resolvèd,” says the king, “and, by God’s help—and *yours*, the noble sinews of our power—France being ours, we’ll bend it to our awe, or break it all to pieces!

“Either there we’ll sit, ruling in large and ample empery o’er France and all her almost-kingly dukedoms, or lay these bones in an unworthy urn, tombless, with no remembrance over them!

“Either our history shall with full mouth speak freely of our acts, or else our *grave*, not worshipped, without even a waxen epitaph, shall like a Turkish mute have a tongueless mouth!”

Side doors open, and noblemen from France are accompanied into the hall; they come before the king and bow.

Says Henry, “Now are we well prepared to know the pleasure of our fair cousin *dauphin*—for we hear your greeting is from him, not from the *king*.”

The older ambassador speaks with formal courtesy. “May’t please Your Majesty to give us leave *freely* to render what we have in charge?—or shall we *sparingly* show you, far off, the dauphin’s meaning in our embassy?”

“We are no tyrant, but a *Christian* king,” says Henry, “unto whose *grace* our passion is as subject as are our wretches fettered in our prisons. Therefore with frank and with uncurbèd plainness tell us the dauphin’s mind.”

“Thus, then, in few: Your Highness, lately sending unto France, did claim some certain dukedoms by the right of your great predecessor, King Edward the Third. In answer of which claim, the prince our master says that you savour too much of your *youth*, and bids you be advisèd there’s nought in France that can be *won with a nimble galliard!*”—danced away. “You cannot *revel* into dukedoms *there*,” he adds disdainfully. The new king’s reputation as the frivolous, dissolute Prince of Wales is well known abroad.

The ambassador signals attendants; two bring forward a big casket and open the lid. “He therefore sends you this tun of treasure meeter for *your* spirit, and, desires that you, in accepting

it, let the dukedoms that you claim hear no more of you.

“Thus the dauphin speaks,” he concludes haughtily.

“What treasure, Uncle?” the king asks Lord Exeter, who is standing near the ambassador.

“*Tennis-balls*, my liege!”

Henry’s face is hard. “We are *glad* the dauphin is so pleasant with us,” he tells the ambassador. “His present, and your pains, we *thank* you for.”

He moves forward, indignation rising, to confront the emissary. “When we have marched our ‘*racquets*’ for these balls, we will be *in France*, and by God’s grace play a set as shall strike his father’s *crown* into the wager! Tell him he hath started a match with such a wrangler that *all the courts of France* will be disturbèd with the chases!”

He turns and walks to the throne. “And we understand him *well*—how he comes o’er us with our wilder days, not measuring what *use* we made of them! We never *craved* this poor throne of England; and therefore did give ourself, living hence, to barbarous licence—as ’tis ever common that men are *merriest* when they are from *home*.

“But tell the dauphin I will keep my *state*—be like a *king*, and *show* my seal of greatness, when I do rouse me *on my throne of France*!”

“Although I have laid *by* my majesty, and plodded like a man of working-days, yet will I rise *there* with so full a glory that I will *dazzle all the eyes of France*!—yea, strike the dauphin *blind* to look upon us!

“And tell the *pleasant prince* this mock of his hath turned these balls to *gun-stones*!—and his *soul* shall stand sore chargèd for the wasteful *vengeance* that shall fly *with* them! For many a thousand shall this, his *mock*, mock *widows* out of their dear *husbands*!—mock *mothers* from their *sons*, mock *castles down*! And some are yet unbegotten and unborn that shall have cause to *curse* the dauphin’s scorn!

“But this lies all within the will of *God*!—to whom I do appeal, and in whose name, tell you the dauphin, *I am coming on*, to *venge* me as I may, and to put forth my rightful hand in a *well-hallowèd cause*!”

“So get you hence in peace—and tell the dauphin his jest will savour but of shallow wit when thousands more *weep* than did laugh at it!”

He motions to his guards. “Convey them with safe conduct.

“Fare you well,” he says grimly to the ambassador. As the French noblemen are hurried away their astonishment shows; they had hardly expected to return with a *declaration of war* from the profligate Prince Hal.

Lord Exeter, glaring down at the casket, shakes his head. “*This* was a merry message!”

“We hope to make the sender *blush* at it!” says King Henry. “Therefore, my lords, omit no fortunate hour that may give furtherance to our *expedition*,”—haste, “for we have now no thought in us but *France*!—save those to *God*, that run before *our* business.

“Therefore let our proportions for these wars be soon *collected*, and all things thought upon that may with reasonable swiftness add more feathers to our wings! For, before God, we’ll *chide* this dauphin *at his father’s door*!”

“For that let every man now task his thought, that this fair action may afoot be brought!”

On a busy street in London, an English officer encounters a soldier from his old infantry company. “Well *met*, Corporal *Nym*!”

“Good morrow, Lieutenant Bardolph.”

“What—are Ancient *Pistol* and you still friends?” During the battle to defeat the recent rebellion, the corporal had served with Pistol, the ensign and factotum of Sir John Falstaff, a fat old knight captaining some tatterdemalion troops.

“As for my part, I care not,” Nym replies. “I say little. And when *time* shall serve, there shall be smiles; but that shall be as it may. I dare not fight; but I will shut my eyes and hold out mine iron. It is a simple one; but *what*, though?—it will toast cheese, and it will endure cold as another

man's sword will. And there's an end."

Bardolph smiles and throws an arm around the smaller man's shoulders. "I will bestow a *breakfast* to make you friends; and we'll be all *three* sworn brothers going to France! Let it be so, good Corporal Nym!"

The sullen soldier is resigned to going. "'Faith, I will live so long as I may, that's the certain of it; and when I cannot live any longer, I will do as I may; that is, my *rest*; that is the *rendezvous* of it."

The red-haired officer knows what's troubling the slender man. "It *is* certain, corporal, that he is married to Nell Quickly." The play on *kneel*—and in some cases *knell*—is commonly used for women in an ancient trade. "And certainly *she* did you wrong; for you were troth-plight to her."

"I cannot tell; things must be as they may." Nym frowns, eyes narrowing. "Men may *sleep*, and they may have their throats about them at that time; and some say *knives* have *edges*! It must be as it may; though Patience be a tired mare, yet she will plod. There must be *conclusions*; if *well*, I cannot tell," he adds darkly.

Bardolph looks past him on the street. "Here comes Ancient Pistol, and his wife! Good corporal, be patient *here*." He walks forward to meet the pair.

But Nym calls, "How now, *mine host Pistol*?" The ensign has married the widowed owner of a tavern in London's disreputable Eastcheap area. While it is not an inn, she is known as its *hostess* by patrons who go there to drink, dine, and avail themselves of certain amenities provided by her accommodating women who work there.

Pistol frowns. "Base *tike*, call'st thou me *host*? Now, by this hand, I swear, I *scorn* the term!—nor shall my Nell keep *lodgers*!"

Says she, straightening the hem of her gown, "*No*, by my troth... not *long*. For we cannot *lodge and board* a dozen or fourteen gentlewomen that live honestly by the prick of their needles, but it will be thought we keep a *bawdy* house straight!"

She looks up, appalled to see her husband and Nym brandishing swords. "*O well-a-day, Lady*, if he be not *drawn*!—now we shall see *wilful* adultery and *murder* committed!"

Bardolph steps between the two aging men. "Good *lieutenant*! Good *corporal*! Offer nothing here!"

"*Shit!*" growls Nym.

"*Shit for thee, island dog!*" replies Pistol. "Thou prick-eared *cur of Ireland!*"

Pleads the hostess, "Good Corporal Nym, show thy *valour* and *put up* your sword!"

"Will you *shog off*?" says Nym to the others. He glares at Pistol. "I would have you *solus*!"

Pistol is furious. "'*Solus*,' egregious dog? O *viper vile*! The *solus* in thy most mervailous *face*! The *solus* in thy *teeth*, and in thy *throat*, and in thy hateful *lungs*!—yea, in thy *maw*, *perdy*!—and, what is worse, *within thy nasty mouth*!"

"I do *retort* the *solus* into thy *bowels*! For I can *make*! When *Pistol's* cock is up,"—when his weapon is ready to discharge, "*flashing fire* will follow!"

Nym is defiant. "I am not *Barbason*!"—a demon. "You cannot conjure *me*! I have an humour to *knock you* indifferently *well*!" he says, his chin tipped up contemptuously. "If you grow *foul* with me, Pistol, I will *scour you* with my rapier, as I may, under fair terms! If you would walk this way, I would *prick your guts* a little, in good terms as I may! And that's the humour of it!"

"O *braggart* vile, and damnèd, furious *wight*! The *grave* doth *gape*, and doting *Death* is near!—therefore *exhale*!"—breathe your last.

Now Bardolph draws his sword. "*Hear me!*—hear me what *I* say! He that strikes the first stroke, I'll *run him through*, up to the *hilts*, as I am a soldier!"

Pistol seems about to reply; but he only nods and sheathes his blade. "An oath of mickle *might*; then fury shall abate." He grins as Nym puts away his sword. "Give me thy fist!—thy fore-foot"—a devil's trotter—"to me give!" he says, offering to shake hands. "Thy spirits are most tall!"

But Nym demurs, glowering. "I will *cut thy throat*, one time or other, given fair terms! That

is the humour of it!”

“*Couple a gorge!*” cries Pistol—mangled French for *cut-throat*—“*that* is the word! I thee defy again! O hound of Crete, think’st thou *my spouse* to get?”

“No! To the *hospital* go, and from the powdering tub of *infamy*”—a treatment for syphilis—“fetch forth the lazar hawk of Cressid’s kind,”—leprous whore, “*Doll Tearsheet*, she by name, and *her* espouse!” Doll is one of the tavern’s younger talents. “I have, and I will *hold*, the quondam *Quickly* for the only *she!*”

“And—” But he sees Falstaff’s page running toward them. “*Pauca*,”—as in *pauca verba*, Latin for *few words*, “there’s *enough!*” he says, disgusted. “Go to!”

The boy is nearly out of breath. “Mine host Pistol, you must come to *my master!*—and you, hostess! He is very sick, and would to *bed!*”

The impertinent page looks up at the red-complexioned lieutenant. “Good Bardolph, put thy *face* between his sheets, and do the office of a *warming-pan!* Faith, he’s very ill!”

“*Away*, you rogue!” growls the officer.

The hostess frowns, watching the small boy. “By my troth, he’ll yield the *crow* a pudding one of these days!” But she is concerned about the white-haired knight, once a carousing companion to Prince Hall; just after the coronation he was pensioned, but banished from the royal court, and ordered to reform. “The king has killed his *heart*,” she moans. “Good husband, *home, immediately!*” She hurries away to follow the page to her house, at the tavern.

Bardolph has sheathed his sword. “Come, shall I make you two *friends?* We must to *France* together!—why the devil should we keep knives to cut *one another’s* throats?”

Pistol nods agreement. “Let *floods* o’erswell!—and fiends for food *howl on!*”

“You’ll pay me the eight shillings I won of you at betting?” demands Nym.

Pistol only laughs. “Base is the slave that *pays!*”

Nym frowns. “*That* now I will *have!* That’s the humour of it.”

“As *manhood* shall compound!” cries Pistol. “Push home!” The two pull out their blades.

Bardolph again draws. “By this sword, he that makes the first *thrust*, I’ll *kill him!*—by this sword, I *will!*”

Pistol nods; he doesn’t want to fight. “His *word* is an *oath*, and oaths must have their course,” he tells Nym, ramming his sword into its sheath.

“Corporal Nym,” warns Bardolph, “an thou wilt be friends, *be* friends! An thou wilt not, why, then, be enemies with *me*, too! Prithee, *put up!*”

“I shall *have* my eight shillings I won of you at betting!”

Pistol compromises: “A *noble* shalt thou have, presented as *pay*—and *liquor* likewise will I give to thee!—and friendship shall combine in *brotherhood!* I’ll live by Nym, and Nym shall live by me, for I shall be *sutler*”—provisioner—“unto the camp, and *profits* will accrue! Is not this just? Give me thy *hand!*”

“I shall have my noble?”

“In *cash* most justly *paid.*”

Nym nods. “Well then *that’s* the humour of ’t.”

The three again sheathe their swords, just as the hostess returns, very distraught.

“As ever you came of women,”—she means *were born to them*, “come in *quickly* to Sir John!” she cries. “*Ah*, poor *heart!* He is so shaken of a burning quotidian *tertian*”—compounded fevers—“that it is most *lamentable* to *behold!* Sweet men, *come* to him!”

As they go, the corporal shakes his head sadly. “The king hath run bad humours into the knight; that’s the event of it!”

Pistol concurs. “Nym, thou hast spoke aright; his heart is fractured and corroborate.”

“The king is a good king,” says Nym loyally, “but it must be as it may; he passes *some* humours and *careers!*”—changes moods and charges away.

“Let us condole the knight,” Pistol tells his wife, hurrying along, “for, lambkins, *we* will *live!*”

Chapter Two Embarking

The player serving as Chorus returns. “Now all the youth of England are *on fire*, and silken dalliance in the *wardrobe* lies: now thrive the *armourers*—and *honour*’s the thought reigns solely in the breast of every man!

“They sell the pasture now to buy a *horse*, following the *mirror* of all Christian kings,”—the exemplary King Henry, “with wingèd heels, as English *Mercuries*!

“For now sits *Expectation* in the air; and hies a *sword* graven from hilt unto the point with *crowns* imperial: crowns and coronets promised to *Harry and his followers*!

“The French, advised by good intelligence of this most dreadful preparation, *shake* in their fear, and with pale *policy* seek to divert the English purposes.

“O England, molded to thy inward greatness like a little body with a mighty *heart*, what mightst thou *do*, what *honour* would be due thee, were *all* thy children kind and natural?”—devoted as they should be.

“But see thy *fault*! France”—its king—“hath in thee found out a nest of *hollow* bosoms, which he fills with treacherous crowns!”—the coins so called. “And *three* corrupted men—one, Richard, Earl of Cambridge, and the second, Henry, Lord Scroop of Masham, and the third, Sir Thomas Grey, knight, of Northumberland—have, for the gilt of France—oh, *guilt* indeed!—confirmed *conspiracy* with fearful France!

“And by their hands this grace of kings must *die*, if Hell and Treason hold their promises, *ere he take ship* for France!

“Then in *Southampton* linger your patience on, and well digest the abuse of distance,”—accept the shift of scene, “then forth with the play!

“The sum is paid; the traitors are agreed; the king is set out from London. And the scene is now transported, gentles, to Southampton; *there* is the playhouse now; there must you sit!

“And thus to *France* shall we convey you safe and bring you back, charming the narrow seas to give you gentle passage; for, if we may, we’ll not offend one stomach with our play!

“But, till then, only until the *king* come forth, unto Southampton do we shift our scene....”

Prince John of Lancaster, eldest of the king’s younger brothers and Duke of Bedford, is fretful. “Fore God, his grace is bold, to trust these traitors!”

The Duke of Exeter has confidence in his nephew’s judgment. “They shall be apprehended by and by.”

“How *smooth* and *even* they do bear themselves!” says the Earl of Westmoreland; the general is disgusted. “As if *allegiance* in their bosoms sat, crownèd with faith and constant loyalty!”

Most of the English infantry troops have marched here to join, at the vast port city of Southampton, in preparation for Henry V’s imminent invasion of France, one hundred and twenty miles across the sea at Harfleur on the Seine.

“The king hath note of all that they intend,” Prince John admits, “by interception which they dream not of.” His brother Humphrey nods.

“Aye,” growls Exeter, “but a man that was his bedfellow, with whom he hath dwelled, who had been cloyed with gracious *favours*,”—since childhood, Scroop has lived in the royal household, “that *he* should, for a foreign purse, so sell his sovereign’s life to *death and treachery*!”

They look to the door, as heralding trumpets are sounded outside.

The king, various attendants and some soldiers of his guard enter the building, which is beside the teeming docks, with several noblemen.

“Now sits the wind fair, and we will go aboard!” says Henry, turning to his companions. “My lord of Cambridge, and my kind lord of Masham, and you, my gentle knight, give me your

thoughts! Think you not that the powers we bear with us will cut their passage through the force of France, doing in execution the act for which we have in head assembled them?"

"No doubt, my liege, if each man do his best!" says Scroop.

"I doubt not that," says the king, "since we are well persuaded we'll carry not a heart with us from hence that grows not in a fair consent with *ours*, nor leave *behind* one that doth wish success and conquest to attend on us!"

"Never was monarch better feared and loved than is Your Majesty!" says Cambridge.

"There's not, I think, one subject that sits in heart-grief and uneasiness under the sweet shade of your government!"

"True!" says Sir Thomas Grey. "Those that were your *father's* enemies have steeped their galls in honey, and do serve you with hearts created of duty and of zeal!"

"We therefore have great cause of thankfulness," says Henry, "and shall forget the office of *our* hand sooner than acquittance"—rewarding, "of *desert* and *merit*, according to weight and worthiness."

Scroop smiles. "So servant shall with steelèd sinews toil, and labour shall refresh itself with hope to do Your Grace unceasing service!"

"We judge no less." Says the king, in happy magnanimity, "Uncle of Exeter, enlarge"—set free—"the man committed yesterday, who railed against our person. We consider it was excess of *wine* that set him on; and on this more advice we pardon him."

"That's *mercy*, but not much *security*," protests Scroop. "Let him be *punished*, sovereign, lest example breed, by *his* sufferance, *more* of such a kind!"

"Ah, yet let us be *merciful*."

"So *may* Your Highness, and yet punish, too," says Cambridge.

Adds Grey sternly, "Sir, you'll show *great* mercy if you give him *life*—after the taste of much *correction!*"

"Alas, your too-much love and care of me are heavy orisons"—prayers—"gainst this poor wretch," says the king. "If *little* faults proceeding in distemper shall not be winked at, how shall we stretch our eye when *capital crimes*—chewed, swallowed and digested—appear before us?"

"We'll yet enlarge that man," he tells Exeter, "though Cambridge, Scroop and Grey, in their dear care and tender preservation of our person, would have him punished."

"And now to our *French* cause! Who are the late-commissioners?"—persons yet to receive in writing their royal assignments.

"I one, my lord," says Cambridge. "Your Highness bade me ask for it today."

"So did you *me*, my liege," says Scroop.

"And I, my royal sovereign," notes Grey.

The king motions to an attendant, and receives three documents. "Then, Richard, Earl of Cambridge, there is yours; there yours, Lord Scroop of Masham; and, Sir Thomas Grey, knight of Northumberland, this same is yours. Read them—and know I *know* your worthiness!"

He tells the others, "My Lord of Westmoreland, and Uncle Exeter, we will aboard tonight!"

Henry glances at the traitors, and a slight smile appears. "Why, *how now*, gentlemen! What see you in those papers that you lose so much complexion?"

"Look ye, how they change!" he tells his brothers. "Their cheeks are *paper!*"

"Why, what read you there that hath so cowarded and chased your blood out of appearance?"

As the guards move forward, swords drawn, Cambridge kneels before the king. "I do *confess* my fault, and do submit me to Your Highness' mercy!"

Scroop and Grey kneel as well. "To which we *all* appeal!" says the northern knight.

The king regards them dourly. "The mercy that was alive in us just now, by your own counsel is suppressed and killed! You must not *dare*, for *shame*, to talk of mercy!—for your own arguments turn into your bosoms, as *dogs* upon their masters, *tearing* at you!"

He turns to the loyal lords. "See you, my princes and my noble peers, these English *monsters!*"—unnatural beings. "My Lord of *Cambridge* here—you know how apt our love was to

accord him all appertinents belonging to his honour; and this man hath, for a few light crowns,"—deficient-weight coins, "lightly *conspired*, and sworn unto the practises of *France*—to *kill us* here in 'Hampton!

"To the which this *knight*, no less for *bounty* bound to us than Cambridge is, hath likewise sworn!"

He steps toward Masham. "But, *oh*, what shall I say to *thee*, Lord Scroop?—thou *cruel*, *ingrateful*, *savage* and *inhuman* creature! *Thou*, that didst bear the key of all my counsels, that knew'st the very bottom of my *soul*—that almost mightst have *coined me into gold*, wouldst thou have practised on me for thy use—may it be *possible* that foreign hire could out of *thee* extract one *spark* of evil that might *annoy my finger*? 'Tis so strange, that, though the truth of it stands out as gross as black on white, my eye will scarcely *see* it!

"Treason and Murder *ever* kept together as two yokèd devils sworn to either's purpose, working in causes unnatural, so that Surprise did not exclaim at *them*. But *thou* 'gainst all *proportion* didst bring on *wonder* by *waiting on* Treason and on *Murder*!

"And whatever *cunning fiend* it was that wrought upon thee so preposterously hath got the *voice in Hell*"—acclamation there—"for *excellence*! All *other* devils that urge treason do but *tinker*, cobbling up a damnation using *patches* and *colours*, *forms* fetched from glistening *semblances* of *piety*. But he that tempted *thee*, bade thee '*Stand up!*'—gave thee no instance why thou shouldst do treason—unless to confer upon thee the *name* of '*traitor!*'

"If that same demon that hath gullèd thee thus should, with his lion gait, walk the *whole world*, he might return to vasty Tartarus back, and tell the legions,"—army of demons in Hell's lowest region, "I can never win a soul so *easily* as *that Englishman's!*"

"Oh, how thou hast *infected with mistrust* the sweetness of *avowal*! Do men show as *dutiful*? Why, so didst thou! Seem they grave and *learnèd*? Why, so didst thou! Come they of *noble family*? Why, so didst thou! Seem they *religious*? Why, so didst *thou!*

"Or are they in diet *spare*?—free from *gross* passion of either mirth or anger; constant in spirit, not swerving with the blood; garnished and decked in *modest* complement; not working with the ear without the eye, and in purgèd *judgment* trusting *neither* simply. Such and so firmly bolted didst thou *seem!*

"And thus *thy* fall hath left a kind of *blot*, marking the man *full-fraught* and *best* as indued with some *suspicion!*"

Scroop stares down, glumly silent.

"I will weep for *thee*," says the king harshly, "for this revolt of *thine*, methinks, is like another *Fall of Man!*

"Their faults are opened," he tells the Lord Exeter. "Arrest them to the answer of the *law*; and God *requite* their practises!"

Exeter moves forward as the king's guards pull the traitors to their feet. "I arrest *thee* of high treason, by the name of Richard, Earl of Cambridge. I arrest *thee* of high treason, by the name of Henry, Lord Scroop of Masham. I arrest *thee* of high treason, by the name of Thomas Grey, knight, of Northumberland."

"Our purposes God *justly* hath uncovered," moans Scroop, "and more than my death I repent my *fault!*—which I beseech Your Highness to forgive, although my body pay the price of it."

"As for me, the *gold* of France did not seduce, although I did admit it as a motive the sooner to effect what I intended," Cambridge confesses. "But God be thankèd for *prevention!*—which I in sufferance heartily will rejoice, beseeching God and you to pardon me."

Says Grey, "Never did *faithful* subject more rejoice at the discovery of most dangerous treason than *I* do at this hour joy o'er myself, prevented from a damnèd enterprise! My fault, but not my body, *pardon*, sovereign."

"God render unto you in *his* mercy!" says the king. "Hear your sentence."

"You have conspired against our royal person, *joined with an enemy* proclaimed, and from his coffers received a golden earnest for *our death!*—wherein you would have *sold your king* to

slaughter, his princes and his peers to *servitude*, his subjects to *oppression* and *contempt*, and his whole *kingdom* into *desolation*!

“Touching our person seek we no revenge. But we must so tender our *kingdom*’s safety, whose *ruin* you have sought, that to her laws we do deliver you. Get you therefore hence, poor miserable wretches, to your *death*! In the test whereof, may God in his mercy give you patience to endure in *true* repentance for all your dire offences!

“Bear them hence,” he tells the guards, who lead away Cambridge, Scroop and Grey.

“Now, lords, for *France*!—the enterprise whereof shall be to you and us alike *glorious*!

“We doubt not of a fair and fortunate war, since God so graciously hath brought to light this dangerous treason lurking in our way to hinder our beginnings. We doubt not now but every rub is smoothèd on our way!

“Then *forth*, dear countrymen! Let us deliver our puissance into the hand of God, putting it straight into expedition!

“Cheerly *to sea*! The signs of war *advance*!

“No king of England, if not king of *France*!”

Wringing a kerchief between her hands this morning before the tavern, the hostess, saddened and worried, wants to accompany the soldiers at least part of the way from London on their eighty-mile journey to join the still-amassing English forces.

“Prithee, honey-sweet husband, let me bring thee to *Staines*!”—a town to the west along the Thames, and northeast of Southampton.

“No,” replies Pistol, “for my manly *heart* doth yearn.” He turns to face the other men and the young page. “Bardolph, be blithe! Nym, rouse thy vaunting veins! Boy, bristle thy courage up!

“As for Falstaff, he is dead, and so we must mourn.”

Bardolph is downcast. “Would I were with him, wheresome’er he is, either in Heaven or in Hell.”

“Nay, surely he’s not in Hell!” protests the hostess. “He’s in Arthur’s bosom, if ever man went to Arthur’s bosom! ’A made a fine end, and went away as if he had been any *christom* child!

“’A parted even just between twelve and one, even at the turning o’ the tide—for after I saw him fumble with the sheets and play with flowers, and smile upon his fingers’ ends, I knew there was but one way; for his nose was as sharp as a pen, and ’a talked of green fields.

“How *now*, Sir John!” quoth I. ‘*What*, man? Be o’ good cheer!’

“Now ’a cried out, ‘God, God, God!’ three or four times, so I, to comfort him, bid him ’a should not think of *God*! I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts *yet*!

“So ’a bade me lay more bedclothes on his feet. I put my hand into the bed and felt them, and they were as cold as any *stone*; then I felt to his knees, and *they* were as cold as any stone; and so upward and *upward*, and *all* was as cold as any stone!”

Nym wipes his eyes. “They say he cried out against *sack*!”

“Aye, that ’a did,” she confirms.

“And against *women*,” adds Bardolph.

She frowns. “Nay, that ’a did *not*!”

“Yes, that ’a *did*,” the boy insists, “and said they were devils incarnate!”

“’A never could abide carnation,” the hostess explains. “’Twas a colour he never liked.”

“’A said once that the *devil* would have him about women,” recalls the page, old enough to note the double meaning.

“’A did in some sort, indeed, *handle* women,” the hostess concedes. “But then he was *rheumatic*,”—romantic, “and talked of the whore of *Babylon*!”—a benediction from Scripture, she likes to think.

The boy laughs, recalling the fat knight. “Do you not remember?—’a saw a flea stick upon Bardolph’s nose, and ’a said it was a *soul* burning in *hell-fire*!”

Says sadly sober Bardolph, “Well, the *fuel* is gone that maintained the fire; that’s all the

riches *I* got in his service.”

Corporal Nym wants to be on the road. “Shall we shog? The king will be *gone* from Southampton!” he warns.

“Come, let’s away,” says Pistol. “My love, give me thy lips! Look to my chattels and my movables. Let sense rule: the word is ‘pitch and *pay!*’”—he advises the hostess to collect immediately. “Trust none; for oaths are straws, men’s faiths are wafer-cakes, and *Hold fast*”—*hold fast* means *stay true*—“is only for the *dog*, my duck! Therefore, *caveto*”—caution—“be thy counsellor.”

He sees the tears in her eyes. “Go, clear thy crystals.

“Yoke-fellows in arms,” Pistol tells his comrades, “let us to *France!*—like horse-leeches, my boys, to suck, to *suck*, the very *blood* to suck!”

Mutters the boy sourly, “And *that’s* but a wholesome food, they say.”

“Touch her soft mouth, and *march*,” Pistol tells the other men.

Bardolph kisses a powdery cheek. “Farewell, hostess.”

Nym is still jealous. “I *cannot* kiss; that is the humour of it,” he says. “But, ‘*Adieu.*’”

“Let housewifery appear,” urges Pistol. “Keep close, I thee command!”

The hostess watches tearfully as they walk away. “Farewell,” she calls, waving, “*Adieu!*”

Chapter Three France Considers

At his palace, King Charles VI and the French court discuss the invasion. “Thus come the English *with a full power* upon us!—and more than *carefully* it us concerns to answer *royally* in our defences!

“Therefore shall the Dukes of Berri and of Bretagne, of Brabant and of Orléans—and *you*, Prince Dauphin!—make forth with all dispatch to new-repair our towns for *war*, line them with men of courage and with means defendant!

“For England makes approaches as swiftly as *waters* into the sucking of a *gulf!* It befits us, then, to be provident—as *fear* may teach us out of late examples left by the neglected but fatal English upon our fields!”

But the young prince is calmly unconcerned. “My most redoubted father, it *is* meet we arm us ’gainst a foe. For though neither war nor any known quarrel were in question, peace itself should not so dull a kingdom but that defences, musters, preparations, should be maintained, assembled and collected as were a war in *expectation*.

“Therefore, I say ’tis meet we all go forth to view the sick and *feeble* parts of France.

“But 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*. For, my good liege, she is so idly king’d, her sceptre so outlandishly borne by a vain, giddy, shallow, moody youth, that fear attends her not.”

The king’s highest military commander objects: “Oh, *peace*, Prince Dauphin! You are *too much mistaken* in this king!

“Ask the recent ambassadors, Your Grace, with what great *state* he heard their embassy—how well supplied with noble *counsellors*, how *modest* in exception, and withal how terrible in *constant resolution!*—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!” Lucius Brutus feigned stupidity while plotting to oust the last Roman king.

“Well, ’tis not so, my lord high constable, but that we *think* it so,” says the dauphin. “It is no matter; in cases of defence ’tis best to weigh the enemy as more mighty than he seems, so the proportions of defence are *filled*, while a weak or niggardly projection doth, like a miser, *spoil* its spending by scanting a little cost.”

“Think *we* King Harry is *strong!*” the king tells them. “And, princes, look that you strongly *arm to meet him!*”

“The *kindred* of him hath been *fleshed* upon us!”—Henry’s forebears proved their strength by wreaking painful harm on the French, “and he is bred out of that bloody strain that hunted us in our familiar paths! Witness our too-much memorable shame when the army at Crécy fatally was struck, and all our princes captured by the hand of that black-named *Edward of Wales, Black Prince!*—whiles his *sire*, on mountain standing molten up in the air, crownèd with the golden sun, saw his heroical seed and *smiled* to see him *mangle* the work of Nature, and *deface* 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* in him!”

A knight strides through the long hall, and bows before the king. “Ambassadors from Harry, King of England, do crave admittance to Your Majesty.”

“We’ll give them immediate audience; go and bring them.” Charles regards the French lords. “You see this chase is *hotly pursued*, friends!”

The prince is annoyed. “*Turn head* and you *stop pursuit!*—for *coward dogs* most spend their mouths”—bark loudest—“when what they seem to threaten *runs*, far before them! Good my sovereign, *take the English up 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!*”

Lord Exeter and his train enter the hall and boldly approach the throne of France.

The king rises. “From our brother England?”

Exeter bows curtly. “From him. And thus he greets Your Majesty: he wills, 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, belong to *him*, and to his heirs—namely, the *crown* and all wide-stretchèd honours that pertain by custom and the ordinance of times unto *the King of France!*”

“That you may know ’tis no dubious nor no awkward claim, picked from the worm-holes of long-vanished days, nor from the dust of old oblivion rakèd,” says Exeter—pointedly, he heard the archbishop’s account of Salique law, “he sends you this most *memorable* lineage,”—he proffers a roll of parchment, “in every branch truly demonstrated, willing you to examine his pedigree.” One of Charles’s attendants accepts the document.

The duke continues: “And when you find him evenly derivèd from his *most* famed of famous ancestors, *Edward the Third*, he bids you then resign your crown and kingdom, improperly *withheld* from him, the native and true challenger.”

The French sovereign stares angrily at the Briton. “Or else what follows?”

“*Bloody constraint!* For if you hide the crown even in your *hearts*, there he *will* rake for it!

“Therefore in *fierce tempest* is he coming, in *thunder* and in *earthquake!*—like a *Jove* in that, if requiring fail, he will *compel!*”

“And in *the bowels of the Lord* he bids you: *deliver up the crown*, and take mercy on the poor souls for whom this hungry *war* opens its vasty jaws—or on *your* head fall the widows’ tears, the orphans’ cries over dead men’s blood, the pining maidens’ groans for husbands, fathers and betrothèd lovers that shall be swallowed in this controversy!

“This is his claim, his threatening—and my message, unless the *dauphin* be in presence here, to whom expressly I bring greeting, too....”

“As for *us*, we will consider of this further,” says the king, “Tomorrow shall you bear our full intent back to our brother England.”

“As for the dauphin” says the French prince, stepping forward, “*I* stand here for him! What to *him* from England?”

Exeter scowls. “*Scorn* and *defiance!*—*slight* regard!—*contempt!*—and anything that may not *misbecome* the mighty sender doth he prize *you* at! Thus says my king!

“And if your father’s highness do not, by granting all demands at large, *sweeten* the bitter

mock you sent his majesty, he'll call you to so *hot* an answer of it, *returning* your mock in second accent of his *ordnance!*"—with echoes of cannon-fire, "such that the *caves and womby vaultages* of France shall chide your trespass!"

The dauphin sneers. "Say *I*: if my father render pleasant return, it is against *my* will!—for I desire nothing but *odds* with England! *To that end*, as *matching* to his youth and vanity, I did present him with the Paris balls."

Exeter glowers. "He'll make your Paris *palace* shake for it, were it the mightiest court of mighty *Europe!* And be assurèd you'll find a *difference*, as we his subjects have in wonder found, 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 *waits* in France!"

But the king waves the English lord away. "*Tomorrow* shall you know our mind at full."

Exeter bows. "Dispatch us with all *speed,*" he warns, "lest that our king come here *himself* to question your delay—for he is footed in this land already!"

"You shall be soon dispatch'd with our conditions," says the king. "A night is but small breath and little pause to answer matters of this consequence."

Chapter Four Invasion

Chorus bounds forward on the stage. "Thus with imagined wing our swift scene flies, in motion of no less celerity than that of *thought!*"

"Suppose that you have seen the well appointed king at 'Hampton pier embark his royalty and his brave fleet, with silken streamers under the young Phoebus"—morning sun—"fanning!

"Play with your fancies, and in them behold upon hempen tackle the ship-boys climbing, hear the shrill whistle which doth order give to sounds confusèd, behold the spreaden sails, borne with the invisible and creeping wind!

"Draw a huge hull through the furrowed sea, breasting the lofty surge! Oh, do but think you stand upon the *bridge*, and behold a *city* on the inconstant billows dancing!—for so appears this *fleet majestic*, holding due course to Harfleur!

"Follow, *follow!* Grapple your minds to sternage of this navy, and leave your England as dead-midnight *still!*—guarded by grandsires, babies, and old women, either past or not arrivèd to pith and puissance! For who is he whose chin is enriched with *but one* appearing hair that will not follow these cullèd and choice-drawn cavaliers to France?

"Work, *work* your thoughts, and therein see a *siege!*—behold the *ordnance* on their carriages, with fatal mouths gaping on girded Harfleur!"—a high-walled city at the mouth of the Seine.

Chorus moves closer, arching an eyebrow. "Suppose the ambassador from the French *comes back*—tells Harry that the king doth offer him Katherine his *daughter*, and with her, to dowry, some petty and unprofitable dukedoms."

He laughs. "The offer *pleases not!*"

"And the nimble gunner, with linstock"—a long stick with a burning wick in its fork—"now the devilish *cannon* touches—"

A roar shatters the calm. "—and *down* goes all before them!"

Heard now are the sharp cracks of musket-fire, and trumpets' shrill alarms, and frantic cries of many men.

As he backs away into the weapons' drifting smoke, the actor beseeches, "Still be kind, and eke out our performance with your mind...."

Dozens of them carrying long scaling-ladders, English soldiers rush toward the city's walls, as Prince John, Prince Humphrey and Lord Exeter exhort their men to assail the French stronghold.

King Henry himself stands on rocky rubble in the dust still settling at an opening burst in a dark stone wall by iron balls from his artillery. Bloody sword held high, he urges his troops forward. "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, *once more!*—or *close the wall up* with our English dead!

"In *peace* there's nothing so becomes a man as modest stillness and humility—but when the blast of *war* blows in our ears, then imitate *the action of the tiger!*

"*Stiffen* the *sinews*, summon up the *blood*, disguise *fair* nature with hard-favoured *rage!* Then lend *the eye* a terrible aspect: let it peep through the portage of the head like a *brass cannon!*—let the *brow* o'erwhelm it as ominously as doth a gallèd rock o'erhang and jutty its confounded base, swilled with the wild and wasteful ocean!

"Now *set the teeth* and stretch the nostril *wide!*—hold hard the breath, and *bend up* every spirit *to his full height!*

"*On, on!* you *noblest English*, whose blood is fetched from fathers *war-proven!*—fathers that, like so many *Alexanders*, have in these parts from morn till even fought!—then sheathed their swords for *lack of argument!*

"Dishonour not your *mothers*; now *attest* that those whom you callèd fathers *did* beget you! Be model now to men of grosser blood, and *teach them how to war!*

"And *you*, good *yeomen*, whose limbs were *made in England*, show us here the *metal* of your posture! Let us swear that you are worthy your breeding!—which I doubt not, for there is none of you so mean and base that hath not a *noble lustre* in your eyes! I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips, straining upon the start!"

The cannon again blaze, spewing dark smoke, and men shout furiously as they run, swords thrust ahead, through the shattered wall.

"*The game's afoot!*" cries the king, leading the way. "*Follow your spirit*, and upon this charge cry, 'For *God*, for *Harry*, *England* and *Saint George!*'"

Motioning with his sword, Bardolph urges his companions forward: "*On, on, on, on, on!* To the breach, *to the breach!*" But when the big English guns again begin to boom, they slide back down into the damp shelter of a fresh trench—as does he.

Mutters Nym to himself, "Pray *thee*, corporal, *stay!*" He winces again as a volley of black iron whistles past, hurling back shards of rock, and raining fragments on them. "The knocks are *too hard!* The humour of it is *too hot!*—that is the very plain-song of it! And, for mine own part, I have not a *case* of lives!"

Crouching beside him, Pistol concurs. "Thy *plaint* song is most *just!*—for humours do *abound!*" he cries. With a shaking hand he brushes new gray powder from his coat, along with bits of pounded rock. "Knocks go and come, but God's *vassals* drop and *die!* Sword and shield in bloody field win only *immortal fame!*" Feeling quite mortal, he prefers a tangible take.

"Would I were in an alehouse in *London!*" moans the poor page, pressing further back against the soil and clay. "I would give all *my* fame for a pot of ale in *safety!*"

"And *I!*" says Pistol, ducking and sliding even lower in the grave-like trough, as heavy firing resumes. "If *wishes* would prevail with me, my purpose should not fail *within* me—thither would I *hie!*"

The boy, shielding his head with a thin arm as another shower of fractured stone falls around them, hears him, and is not surprised. *As duly, but not as truly, as bird doth sing on bough!*

Captain Fluellen stalks down the trench and stops before Bardolph. "*Up to the breach*, you *dogs!* *Avaunt*, you *scullions!*"—kitchen helpers.

"Be *merciful*, great duke, to men of *mould!*" pleads Pistol. "*Abate* thy rage, *abate* thy manly rage, *abate* thy rage, great duke! Good bawcock, 'bate thy rage; use *lenity*, sweet chuck!"

Nym tells the officer, "*Those* be *good* humours!—your '*honour*' wins *bad* humours!"

But Fluellen, brandishing his sword, drives the fearful men toward the clamorous fighting at the wall.

Left alone in the trench, the page considers the unwilling warriors. *I have observed these three swashers! As young as I am, I'm 'Boy' to them all; but if all three served, they could not be a man to me!—for indeed three such antic ones do not amount to a man!*

As for Bardolph, he is red-faced but white-livered!—by the means whereof he faces it out, but fights not! As for Pistol, he hath a killing tongue and a quiet sword!—by the means whereof he breaks his word, and keeps weapon whole! And as for Nym, he hath heard that men of few words are the best men—and therefore he scorns to say his prayers, lest he should be thought a coward, and his few, bad words are matched with as few good deeds!—for he never broke any man's head but his own—and that was against a post when he was drunk!

They will steal anything and call it 'purchased!' Bardolph stole a lute-case, bore it twelve leagues—then sold it for three half-pence! Nym and Bardolph are sworn brothers in filching, and in Calais they stole a fire-shovel! I knew by that piece of service that these men would carry coals!—a play on a phrase for perform the lowliest labor.

They would have me be as familiar with men's pockets as their gloves or their handkerchers—which makes much against my manhood; for if I should take from another's pocket to put into mine, it is a plain pocketing up of wrongs!

I must leave them, and seek some better service. Their villainy goes against even my meek stomach, and therefore I must cast it up!

The boy moves away from the dirt, and, carefully leaving the trench, trots among the advancing troops toward the British forces' main camp.

After days of fighting have passed with no decisive action, Captain Gower is looking for his friend. "Captain Fluellen, you must come immediately to the mines!—the Duke of Gloucester would speak with you!" The duke, Prince Humphrey, is directing efforts to excavate beneath sections of the city wall, then destroy them with gunpowder.

The scholarly Welshman frowns. "To the *mines*? Tell you the duke it is not so good to come to the mines; for, look you, the mines is not according to the disciplines of the war! The concavities of it is not sufficient; for, look you, the athversary—as you may discuss unto the duke, look you—has digt, himself, four yard under, the *countermines*!" Some of the digging English troops have died as sudden victims of defensive tunnels prepared by the French.

Fluellen shakes his head. "By *Cheshu*,"—his pronunciation of *Jesu*, "I think 'a will plough up all, if there is not better directions!"

The Englishman, too, is concerned. "The Duke of Gloucester, to whom the ordering of the siege is given, is altogether directed by an *Irishman*... a very valiant gentleman, i' faith."

"It is Captain Ma'morris, is it not?"

"I think it be."

"By *Cheshu*, he is as much an *ass* as any in the *world*!" cries Fluellen. "I will verify as much in his beard!"—to his face. "He has no more directions in the true disciplines of the wars, look you, of the Roman disciplines,"—the standards, "than has a *puppy-dog*!"

Gower nods past him. "Here 'a comes—and the Scots' captain, Captain Jamie, with him."

Fluellen turns to look. "Captain *Jamie* is a marvellous falourous gentleman, that is certain—and of great expedition and knowledge in th' aunchient wars, upon my particular knowledge of his directions! By *Cheshu*, *he* will maintain his argument as well as any military man in the world, in the disciplines of the pristine wars of the Romans!"

The two officers arrive and greet the others. "I say *gud-day*, Captain Fluellen!" smiles James. "God-den to Your Worship, good Captain James!"

"How now, Captain Macmorris!" says Gower. "Have you quit the mines? Have the pioneers"—the excavators—"given o'er?"

They have indeed stopped digging—to the disgust of the Irish captain. "By *Chrish, la!* Tish *ill done!* The work ish *give over*, the trompet sound the *retreat!*

"By my *hand* I swear, and my father's *soul*, the work ish *ill done!*—it ish *give over!*"

complains Macmorris. “In another *hour* I would have *blowed up the town*, so Chrish save me, *la!* Oh, tish ill done, tish *ill done*; by my hand, tish *ill done!*”

The Welsh captain wants to discuss tactical theory. “Captain Macmorris, I beseech you now, will you voutsafe me, look you, a few disputations with you, as partly touching or concerning the disciplines of the war, the Roman wars, in the way of argument, look you, in friendly communication—partly to satisfy my opinion, and partly for the satisfaction, look you, of my mind—as touching the direction of the military discipline! That is the point.”

The Scotsman is eager as well. “It sall be vary gud, gud feith, gud captains bath!” James tells them. “And I sall ’quit you with gud leve, as I may pick occasion!—that *sall* I, marry!”

But Macmorris scowls. “It is no time to *discourse*, so Chrish save me!” He surveys the turmoil surrounding them as French muskets fire outward from the main break in the wall. “The day is *hot!*—and the *weather!*—and the *wars!*—and *the king and the dukes!*—it is no time to *discourse!* The town is *beseched*, and the trumpet call us *to the breach!* And we *talk*, and, by Chrish, do *nothing!*

“’Tis *shame* for us *all!* So God sa’ me, ’tis shame to *stand still!*—it is *shame*, by me hand! And there is *throats* to be cut, and *works* to be done!—but there ish *nothing* done, so Chrish sa’ me, *la!*”

James protests angrily: “By the Mess, ere these eyes of mine take themselves to slomber, *ay’ll* de gud service, or *ay’ll* lig i’ the *grund* for it!—*aye*, or go to *death!*—and *ay’ll* pay ’t as valourously as I may, *that sall I suerly do!*—that is the breff and the long!” Still, he turns to Fluellen. “Marry, I *wad* full fain hear some question ’tween you tway....”

Fluellen nods. “Captain Macmorris, I think, look you, under your correction, there is not many of your nation—”

“Of *my* nation!” cries the Irishman—whose land is ruled by England. “What *ish* my nation? What ish *my nation?* Ish a *villain*, and a bastard, and a knave, and a rascal, who talks of *my* nation!”

“Look you, if you take the matter otherwise than is *meant*, Captain Macmorris, peradventure I shall think you do not use me with that affability as in discretion you *ought* to use me, look you—being as good a man as *yourself*, both in the disciplines of war, and in the derivation of my birth, and in other particularities.”

Macmorris glares at Fluellen. “I do not *know* you so good a man as *myself!* So Chrish save me, I will *cut off your head!*”

Captain Gower is conciliatory: “Gentlemen both, you will *mistake* each other—.”

“And that’s a *foul fault!*” cries James.

But now Gower raises a hand, listening; they can hear a trumpet. “The town sounds a *parley!*”

“Captain Macmorris, when there is more better opportunity to be required,” says Fluellen, as the four move toward the city, “look you, I will be so bold as to tell you: *I know the disciplines of war!* And there is an end!”

Standing on the parapet at Harfleur’s main gate, the garrison’s French commander and its civilian governor stares down at the English forces below and beyond, as King Henry and his train come forward.

England has invaded with thousands of troops: in addition to the foot soldiers armed with sword, axe and pike, they have—unlike the French—many archers. But encamped to the east of the besieged city, the British have suffered seriously from dysentery while waiting in the autumn rain and cold, poised to fight with Harfleur’s five hundred soldiers—or the other French forces expected to be sent here.

Looking up, Henry calls, “How yet resolves the governor of the town?”

“This is *the last parole we will admit!* Therefore to our best mercy give yourselves; or like to men proud of *destruction*, defy us to do our *worst!*”

“For, as I am a *soldier*, the name that in my thoughts becomes me best, if I *begin* the battery once again I will not leave this half-achievèd Harfleur till in her *ashes* she lie *buried*! The gates of *mercy* shall be all shut up, and the *fleshèd soldier*,”—combat veteran, “rough and hard of heart, in liberty of *bloody hand* shall range with conscience wide as *Hell*, mowing like *grass* your fresh, fair virgins and your flowering infants!

“What is it then to *me*, if impious *War*, arrayed in flames like to the *Prince of Fiends* with his smirchèd complexion, perform *all fell feats* enlinkèd to *waste and desolation*? What is’t to me, when *you yourselves* are the cause, if your pure maidens fall into the hands of hot and forcing *violation*?

“What rein can hold licentious wickedness when *down a hill* it makes a *fierce career*? We may as bootless send precepts urging the *leviathan* to *come ashore* as spend our vain command upon the *enragèd soldiers* in their *spoil*!

“Therefore, you men of Harfleur, take *pity* on your town and on your people while as yet my soldiers are *in my command*!—while as yet the cool and temperate wind of *grace* o’erblows the filthy and contagious clouds of heady *villainy, spoil* and *murder*!

“If *not*, why, in a moment look, *though blind*, to see the bloody soldier with foul hand defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking *daughters*!—your *fathers* taken by the silver beards, and their most reverend heads dashèd to the *walls*!—your naked *infants* spitted upon *pikes*, while their frenzied mothers with howls confusèd do *break the clouds* as did the wives of *Jewry* at *Herod’s* bloody, hunting *slaughtermen*!

“What *say* you? Will you *yield*, and this *avoid*?—or guilty of defiance be thus *destroyed*!”

The governor spreads his hands in abject dismay. “Our expectation hath this day an *end*! The dauphin, from whom succor we entreated, returns us that his powers are yet not *ready* to lift so great a siege!

“Therefore, great king, we yield our town and lives to thy soft mercy!

“Enter our gates; dispose of us and ours, for we no longer are defensible.”

“*Open your gates!*” demands King Henry.

He turns calmly to his commanders. “Come, Uncle Exeter, go you and enter Harfleur; there remain, and fortify it strongly ’gainst the French. Use mercy to them all.

“As for us, dear uncle, the winter coming on, and, sickness growing upon our soldiers, we will retire to Calais”—an area long controlled by the English in northern France, twenty-six miles across the strait from Dover. “Tonight in Harfleur we will be your guest; tomorrow for the *march* are we address.”

With a bold flourish of trumpets and drums, the English forces follow Lord Exeter and his officers through the wide city gates.

Chapter Five Responses

At King Charles’s Paris palace, one hundred miles southeast of Harfleur, Princess Katherine questions one of her waiting-gentlewomen.

“*Alice, tu as été en Angleterre, et tu parles bien le langage.*” —You have been in England, and you speak the language well.

“*Un peu, madame.*” —A little, madam.

“*Je te prie, m’enseignes; il faut que j’apprenne à parler!*” —I pray you teach me; I must learn to *speak*! she says wryly. “*Comment appelez-vous la main en anglais?*” —What do you call *the hand* in English?

“*La main? Elle est appelée ‘dee hand.’*” —It is called *dee hand*.

Katherine tries: “*Dee hand. Et les doigts?*” —And the fingers?

“*Les doigts? ‘Ma foi, j’oublie les doigts; mais je me souviendrai.*” —’My faith, I forget the

fingers; but I'll remember. "*Les doigts... je pense qu'ils sont appelés 'dee fingres.' Oui, 'dee fingres!'*" —The fingers... I think they're called *dee fingres*. Yes, *dee fingres!*

The princess reviews: "*La main, dee hand; les doigts, dee fingres. Je pense que je suis le bon écolier; j'ai gagné deux mots d'anglais vite! Comment appelez-vous les ongles?*" —I think I'm a good student; I've quickly won two words! What do you call the nails?

"*Les ongles? Nous les appelons dee nails.*" —We call them *dee nails*.

"Dee nails. *Écoutez; dites-moi si je parle bien!*" —Listen; tell me if I speak well! "Dee hand, dee fingres, *et dee nails.*"

Alice nods. "*C'est bien dit, madame; il est fort bon anglais!*" —That's well said, madame; it's very good English!

"*Dites-moi l'anglais pour le bras.*" —Tell me the English for the arm.

"Dee arm, *madame.*"

"*Et le coude?*"

"Dee elbow."

Katherine nods. "Dee elbow. *Je m'en fais la répétition de tous les mots que vous m'avez appris dès à présent.*" —I'll try to repeat all the words you've given me just now.

"*Il est trop difficile, madame, comme je pense.*" —It's too difficult, madame, I would think.

"*Excusez-moi, Alice; écoutez!*" —Just listen. "Dee hand, dee fingres, dee nails, dee arms, dee bilbows."

A *bilbo* is a short sword. "Dee *elbow*, madame."

"*O Seigneur Dieu, je m'en oublie!*" —I'm forgetting! "Dee elbow. *Comment appelez-vous le col?*"

"Dee neck, *madame.*"

"Dee nick. *Et le menton?*"

"Dee chin."

"Dee sin. *Le col, de nick; de menton, dee sin.*"

"*Oui!*" says Alice. "*Sauf Votre Honneur, en vérité vous prononcez les mots aussi droit que les natifs d'Angleterre!*" —Yes! Saving Your Reverence, in truth you pronounce the words as rightly as the natives of England!

The princess is pleased. "*Je ne doute point d'apprendre, par la grâce de Dieu, et en peu de temps!*" —I'm certainly learning, by the grace of God, and in very little time!

Alice teases: "*N'avez vous pas déjà oublié ce que je vous ai enseigné?*" —Haven't you already forgotten what I've taught you?

"*Non! Je réciterai à vous promptement: dee hand, dee fingres, dee mails—*"

"Dee nails, *madame.*"

"Dee nails, dee arm, dee ill-bow."

"*Sauf votre honneur, dee elbow.*" —Saving Your Honor, dee *elbow*.

"*Ainsi dis-je,*" —*as I said*, "dee elbow, dee nick, *et dee sin. Comment appelez-vous le pied, et la robe?*" —What do you call the foot, and the gown?

"Dee foot, *madame, et dee con.*"

The French princess, hearing something like *foutre* and *coun—to fuck*, and *cunt*—is appalled. "Dee foot *et dee con! O Seigneur Dieu! Ce sont mots de son mauvais, corruptible, gros, et impudique, et non pour les dames d'honneur d'user!*" —O Dear Lord! They are wicked words, degrading, gross and impudent, and not for honorable ladies to use!

"*Je ne voudrais prononcer ces mots devant les seigneurs de France pour tout le monde!*" —I would not speak those words before the gentlemen of *France* for all the world!

"*Foh! Le foot et le con!*" she mutters, prompting a titter from Alice.

The princess grins mischievously. "*Néanmoins, je réciterai une autre fois ma leçon ensemble.*" —Nonetheless, I will recite one more time my lesson, all together. "Dee hand, dee fingres, dee nails, dee arm, dee elbow, dee nick, dee sin, dee *foot—dee con!*" she cries gaily.

Alice giggles. "*Excellent, madame!*"

Katherine laughs. “*C’est assez pour une fois. Allons-nous à dîner!*” —That’s enough for one time. Let’s go to lunch!

Amid dismayed lords in his palace at Rouen, fifty miles east of Harfleur, the fretful King of France examines a parchment map. “’Tis certain he hath passed the river Somme. . . .” Within a fortnight, King Henry’s army, weak with fever, has marched, unchallenged by French forces, about sixty miles north—more than half the distance to the safety of Calais.

“If he be not *fought* withal, my lord,” says the lord high constable angrily, “let us not live in *France!*—let us quit, *all*, and give our vineyards to the *barbarous* people!”—the English.

“*O Dieu vivant!*” cries the prince, disgusted. “Shall a few *sprigs* of us that our scions put into wild and *savage* stock,”—Englishmen born of French fathers, “devoid of our fathers’ *magnificence*, spring up so suddenly into the clouds, and survey their *grafters?*”

“Normans—but *bastard* Normans—Norman *bastards!*” cries Lord Bourbon. “*Mort de ma vie!*”—death of my life. “If they march along *unfought* withal, I will *sell* my dukedom to buy a dirty, slobbery *farm* in that nook-crammed isle of *Albion!*”—England.

“*Dieu de batailles!*”—god of battles, sputters the lord constable. “Whereof have *they* this *mettle?*—they on whom, as if in *despite*, the *sun* looks pale, killing their fruit with frowns! Is not their climate *foggy*, raw and *dull?* Can *water*, a drench for sur-reined *jades,*”—drink for weary horses, “or their sodden barley-broth”—weak beer—“decoct their cold blood to such valiant *heat?*”

He regards the other noblemen. “And shall *our* living blood, spirited with *wine*, seem *frosty?* Oh, for the *honour* of our *land*, let us not hang like drooping *icicles* upon our houses’ thatch whiles a more lusty people sweat drops of gallant *youth*”—semen—“in our rich fields! ‘Poor fuckers’ we may *well* call them, in their native words!”

The dauphin concurs. “By faith and honour, our madames *mock* at us, and plainly say *our* mettle is *bred out*, and they will give their bodies to the lust of *English* youth, to *new-store* France with *bastard warriors!*”

“They bid us to the English *dancing-schools,*” adds Lord Bourbon, “and teach *lavoltas* high, and swift *corantos*—saying our grace is only in our *heels*, and that we are most-lofty *run-aways!*”

The king is persuaded. “Where is Montjoy, the herald? Speed him hence! Let him greet England”—King Henry—“with our *sharp defiance!*”

“*Up*, princes!—and, with spirit of Honour edgèd more sharply than your *swords*, *hie to the field!*”

“Charles Delabreth, high constable of France; you, Dukes of Orléans, Bourbon, and of Berri, Alençon, Brabant, Bar, and Burgundy—Jacques Châtillon, Rambures, Vaudemont, Beaumont, Grandpré, Roussi, and Fauconberg—Foix, Lestrade, Bouciqualt, and Charolois—high dukes, great princes, barons, lords and knights, for your great seats, now *acquit* you of great *shames!*”

“*Bar* Harry England, who sweeps through our land with pennons painted in the blood of Harfleur! Rush upon his host as doth the melted snow into the valleys whose low, vassal seat the *Alps* doth spit and void its rheum upon! Go *down* upon him!—you have power enough!—and bring him to Rouen in a captive chariot *as our prisoner!*”

The lord high constable is pleased. “This *becomes* the great!

“*Sorry* am I his numbers are so *few*, his soldiers *sick* and *famished* in their march; for I am sure, when he shall see our army, he’ll drop his heart into the sink of *fear!*—and offer us his ransom as if it were an *achievement!*”

“Therefore, Lord Constable, haste Montjoy on,” orders the king, “and let him say to England that we send to know what ransom he will willingly give.

“Prince Dauphin, you shall stay with us in Rouen.”

“*Not so*, I do *beseech* Your Majesty!” cries the young lord, eager to share in the easy French victory.

“Be patient, for you shall remain with us.

“Now *forth*, lord constable and princes all, and quickly bring us word of *England’s fall!*”

Captain Gower, waiting with the English troops at the edge of the Ternoise River, hails a returning officer. “How now, Captain Fluellen! Come you from the bridge?”

“I assure you, there is very *excellent* services committed at the bridge!” the Welshman reports, of the fighting in which it was just seized.

“Is the Duke of Exeter safe?”

“The Duke of Exeter is as magnanimous as *Agamemnon*—and a man that I love and honour with my soul, and my heart and my duty and my life and my living, and my uttermost power! He is not—God be praised and blessed!—any hurt in the *world*, but keeps the pride most valiantly, with excellent discipline!

“There is an aunchient lieutenant there at the pridge; I think in my very conscience he is as valiant a man as *Mark Antony!* And he is a man of no estimation in the world; yet he did beseem him as *gallant*, as to *service!*”

“What do you call him?”

“He is called Aunchient Pistol.”

“I know him not.”

“Here is the man!” says Fluellen, as the ensign comes to him.

“Captain, I beseech thee to do me favours!” says Pistol. “The Duke of Exeter doth love thee well,” he notes.

“*Aye*, I praise God,” says Fluellen, “and I have *merited* some love at his hands!”

Pistol begins grandly: “Bardolph, a soldier firm and sound of heart, and of buxom valour, hath, by cruel Fate, and giddy Fortune’s furious, fickle wheel—that goddess blind, who stands upon the rolling, restless stone—”

“By your patience, Aunchient Pistol, Fortune is *painted* as blind,” Fluellen explains, “with a scarf afore her eyes to signify to you that Fortune is blind; and she is painted also with a wheel, to signify to you what is the *moral* of it: that she is turning, and inconstant, and mutability, and variation! And her foot, look you, is fixèd upon a spherical stone, which rolls, and rolls, and *rolls!* In good truth, the *poet* makes a most excellent description of it! Fortune is an excellent moral!”

Pistol persists. “Fortune is *Bardolph’s foe*, and *frowns* on him! For he hath stolen a pax,”—a church’s ivory crucifix, to be kissed during Mass, “and *hanged* must ’a be!

“A *damned* death! Let gallows gape for *dog!*—let *man* go free, and let not hemp his wind-pipe suffocate! But Exeter hath given the doom of *death* for a pax of little price!

“Therefore, go *speak!*—the duke will hear *thy* voice!—and let not Bardolph’s vital thread be cut with edge of *penny cord* and vile *reproach!* Speak, captain, for his life, and I will thee requite!”

“Aunchient Pistol, I do partly understand your meaning—”

“Why then, *rejoice* therefore!”

But Fluellen shakes his head. “Certainly, aunchient, it is not a thing to rejoice at. For if, look you, he were my *brother*, I would desire the duke to use his good pleasure and put him to execution—for *discipline* ought to be *used.*”

“*Die and be damned!*” cries Pistol. He makes a crude gesture, thrusting a thumb between fingers: “And *fig* for *thy* friendship!”

Says the officer stolidly. “It is well.”

“A fig of *Spain!*” adds the ensign, stalking away angrily. *Fig* suggests *scrotum*.

“Very good,” the mutters Welshman.

Captain Gower stares. “Why, this is an arrant, *counterfeit*, a *rascal!* I remember him now!—a *bawd*, a *cutpurse!*”

“I’ll assure you he uttered as brave *words* at the bridge as you shall see in a summer’s day!” says Fluellen. “But it is very well, what he has spoke to me—that is, well, I warrant you, when *time* is served”—when circumstances permit response.

Gower is disgusted. “Why, he gulls *fools*—a *rogue* who now and then goes to the wars to grace himself, on his return into London, under the *form* of a soldier!

“And such fellows are perfected”—well studied—“in the great commanders’ *names*; and they will teach you by rote where services were done—at such and such a sconce, at such a breach, at such a convoy; who came off bravely, who was shot, who disgraced; what terms the enemy stood on—and this they learn perfectly in the *phrase* of war, which they trick up with new-turned *oaths*!

“And what a beard of the *general’s* cut, and a horrid *suit* of the camp”—blood-stained clothes—“will do among foaming bottles and ale-washed wits is wonderful to be thought on!

“But you must learn to *know* such slanderers of the age,” he warns, “or else you may be marvellously mistook!”

The Welsh captain is patient. “I tell you what, Captain Gower: I *do* perceive he is not the man that he would gladly make *show* to the world he is. If I find a hole in his coat,”—catch him at mischief, “I will tell him my mind.”

They hear drums beaten with a firm cadence.

“Hark you, the king is coming,” says Fluellen, “and I must speak with him from the pridge!”

The captains bow as the royal party arrives with guards and flying colors.

“God pless Your Majesty!”

“How now, Fluellen!” says King Henry. “Camest thou from the bridge?”

“*Aye*, so please Your Majesty! The Duke of Exeter has very gallantly maintained the pridge! The French is gone off, look you; and there is gallant and most prave *passage*! Marry, th’ athversary *was* have possession of the pridge, but he is enforcèd to *retire*, and the Duke of Exeter is master of the pridge! I can tell Your Majesty, the duke is a prave man!”

“What men have been lost, Fluellen?”

“The perdition of th’ athversary hath been *very* great, *reasonable* great!

“Marry, for my part, I think the *duke* hath lost never a *man*, but for one that was liable to be executed, for *robbing a church*—one Bardolph, if Your Majesty know the man. His face is all bubukles and whelks and knobs in *flames o’ fire*!—and his lips, *bellows* at his *nose*!—and *it* is like a *coal* of fire, sometimes plue and sometimes red!

“But his nose is extinguished, and his fire’s *out*.”

“We would have *all* such offenders so cut off,” says the king. “And we give *express charge*,” he tells his brother Humphrey, “that in our marches through the country there be nothing compellèd from the *villages*—nothing taken but *paid for*, none of the French upbraided or abused in disdainful language! For when lenity and cruelty play for a *kingdom*,”—compete for subjects, “the *gentler* gamester is the soonest winner.”

A tucket is sounded, and they see a French herald riding forward, boldly, to meet the English king and his commanders.

Says Montjoy haughtily, dismounting, “You know me by my habit”—attire.

King Henry regards him sourly. “Well, then I know thee. What shall I know *from* thee?”

“My master’s mind.”

“Unfold it.”

“Thus says my *king*: ‘Say thou to Harry of England, though we seemèd dead, we did but *sleep*!—*advantage* is a better soldier than *rashness*.’

“‘Tell him we could have rebuked him at Harfleur, but that we thought it not good to *bruise an injury* till it were fully *ripe*. Now we speak upon our cue—and our voice is *imperial*!’

“‘England shall *repent* his folly, see his *weakness*, and admire our *sufferance*. Bid him therefore consider of his *ransom*!—which must proportion the losses we have borne, the subjects we have lost, the disgrace we have digested—which to recompense by *weight* would *bow* ‘his *royal pettiness*’ *under*! For *our* losses, his *exchequer* is too poor; as for the effusion of our *blood*, the *muster of his kingdom* too faint a number; and as for our disgrace, his *own person*, kneeling at our feet, but a *weak* and *worthless* satisfaction!

“To that add *defiance!* And tell him, for conclusion, he hath betrayed his *followers*, whose *condemnation is pronounced!*”

“So for my king and master; so much my office.”

“What is thy name?” asks King Henry. “I know thy *quality*,” he says dryly.

“Montjoy.”

“Thou dost thine office fairly. Turn thee back, and tell thy king: I, under no impediment, do not seek him now, but would be willing to march on to Calais. For, to say the sooth—though ’tis no wisdom to confess so much unto an enemy of craft and vantage—my people are with sickness much enfeebled, my numbers lessened; those few I *have*,” he says, noting Montjoy’s faint smirk, “almost no better than *so many French!* But when they were in *health*, I tell thee, herald, I thought that upon *one pair* of *English* legs did march *three Frenchmen!*”

“Yet, forgive me, God, that I do *brag* thus; this, your air of *France*, hath blown that vice into me! I must repent.

“Go, therefore,” he orders Montjoy. “Tell thy master I am here. My *ransom* is this frail and worthless trunk,”—body; he will offer nothing more, “my guard but a weak and *sickly* army.

“Yet tell him: *before God* we *will* move on—though France himself and *another* such neighbour stand in our way!”

He tosses a coin at the Frenchman. “*There’s* for thy labour, Montjoy. Go bid thy master well *advise* himself!

“If we may pass, we will; if we be *hindered*, we shall your tawny ground *with your red blood* discolour!

“And so, Montjoy, fare you well. The sum of all our answer is but this: we would not seek a battle, as we are—nor *as* we are say we will *shun* it! So tell your master.”

“I shall deliver so.” The stone-faced emissary bows. “Thanks to Your Highness.” He and his attendants ride back toward the French forces.

Prince Humphrey watches—worried; he is eager to have his full army, now divided by water, across the bridge. “I hope they will not come upon us *now!*”

“We are in *God’s* hand, brother, not in theirs,” says King Henry.

“March to the bridge. It now draws toward night. Beyond the river we’ll encamp ourselves.

“And on the morrow, bid then *march away!*”

Chapter Six Eager for Triumph

The lord high constable, Charles Delabreth, has assembled the French king’s forces in a huge encampment near the village of Agincourt, about twenty-five miles southeast of Calais—and directly in the northward path of the English army. But for tonight, he and his thousands of foot soldiers and horsemen must bide their time.

“*Tsk!* I have the best armour of the world!” growls the general, proud of the hundreds of nobles and knights with him, and snappish in his frustration, while pages sweat to polish the metal to gleaming. “Would it were *day!*”

“You have an excellent armour; but let my *horse* have its due,” says the Duke of Orléans, who commands the cavalry.

“It is the best horse of *Europe*,” says Delabreth carefully; for some years the Turks’ powerful forces have steadily encroached from the east.

Orléans, warming his hands by a fire against the cold of October, looks up into the starry sky. “Will it *never* be morning?”

A pompous son of King Charles VI and Queen Isabella—Louis, the eldest, and thus the dauphin—grows peevish; he thinks the older men are idly boasting about their personal perquisites. “My lord of Orléans, and my lord high constable, you talk of *horse* and *armour?*”

“You are as well provided with both as any prince in the world,” the duke assures him.

The dauphin paces in annoyance. “What a long night is this! I would not exchange *my* horse with any that treads on four pasterns!”—feet. He sweeps a hand upward in a wide arc: “*Ça, ha!*—he *bounds* from the earth, as if his entrails were *hairs*—*le cheval volant*, the *Pegasus*, *chez les narines de feu!*”—a flying horse, nostrils flaming.

“When I bestride him, I *soar*, I am a *hawk!*—he trots in the *air!*—the earth *sings* when he touches it!—the basest sound of his *hoof* is more musical than the pipe of Hermes!”

“He’s the colour of a nutmeg,” says the general.

“And of the *heat of ginger!*” retorts the prideful young prince. “It is a beast for *Perseus!* He is *pure air* and *fire*, and the *dull* elements of earth and water never appear in him except in patient stillness while his rider mounts him! *He* is indeed a *horse!*—and all *other* jades you may call beasts!”

“Indeed, my lord, it is a most absolute and excellent horse,” says Orléans.

“It is the *prince of palfreys!*” insists the dauphin. “His neigh is like the bidding of a *monarch*, and his countenance *enforces* homage!”

Orléans chuckles. “No more, cousin.”

“Nay, the man hath no *wit* that cannot, from the rising of the lark to the lodging of the lamb, vary in *deservèd praise* of *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—*’”

“I have heard a sonnet begin so to one’s mistress,” says the worldly general dryly.

The dauphin is undaunted. “Then it did *imitate* that which I composed to my courser, for my horse *is* my mistress!”

The lord constable gives him a knowing grin. “*Your* mistress bears *well.*”

“*Me* well!—which is the prescript praise and perfection of a *good* and *particular* mistress!”

“Nay—for methought yesterday your *mistress* harshly *shook your back!*”

“So perhaps did *yours,*” the prince replies.

“*Mine* was not *bridled!*”

“Ah, then belike she was *old* and gentle,” gibes the prince, “and you rode like a kern of Ireland,”—a common soldier, “your *French* hose off, and in your straight *strossers!*”—tight trousers, implying *bare legs*.

The lord high constable laughs. “You have good judgment in *whoresmanship.*”

“Be warned by me, then: they that ride so, and ride not warily, *fall into foul bogs!* I had rather have my *horse* as my mistress!”

“I had as lief have my mistress a *jade!*”—a whore, laughs the general.

“I’ll tell thee, constable, *my* mistress wears its *own* hair!” Prostitutes’ fine tresses are likely bought.

“I could make as true a boast as that if I had a *sow* as my mistress!” says the commander.

Louis resents his persistence: “‘*Le chien est retourné à son propre vomissement, et la truie lavée au boubier!*’”—the dog returns to its vomit, and the washed sow to the mud. “Thou makest use of *anything!*”

“Yet do I not use *my* horse for *my* mistress—nor any such *proverb* so little akin to the purpose!”

Young Lord Rambures, who is with them, spots the prince’s angry flush, and he tries to interrupt the testy competition. “My lord constable, the armour that I saw in your tent tonight—are those stars or suns upon it?”

“Stars, my lord.”

“*Some* of them will *fall* tomorrow, I hope,” mutters the sullen dauphin.

“And yet *my* sky shall not lack,” says the veteran general.

“That may *be*; for you bear a-many *superfluously*, and ’twere more honourable were some away!”

“It would trot even as well as the horse bearing your praises, if some of your *brags* were dismounted!”

“Would I were able to load him with his *deserving!*” The dauphin again turns to stare eastward. “Will it *never* be *day*? I will trot a mile tomorrow when my way shall be *paved with English faces!*”

“I will not say so, for fear I should be *faced* out of my way!”—repelled by looks, quips the general. “But I would it were *morning*, for *I* would fain be about the *ears* of the English!”—battering their heads.

Rambures offers a wager on his troops’ performance: “Who will go to hazard with me for *twenty* prisoners?”

“You must first go *yourself* into hazard ere you have them,” the general tells the untested officer.

The prince starts toward his tent. “’Tis midnight. I’ll go arm myself.” It takes time for his armorers to fasten all of the elaborate and costly pieces into place.

Orléans watches him hurry away. “The dauphin longs for morning.”

Rambures grins. “He longs to *eat the English!*”—devour the enemy.

“I think he *will* eat all *he* kills,” says the general.

Orléans objects: “By the white hand of my lady he’s a *gallant* prince!”

The lord constable laughs, imputing a second, ribald, meaning. “Swear by her *foot*, so that she may tread out of *that* oath!”

“He is simply the most *active* gentleman of *France!*”

Delabreth nods. “Doing *is* activity—and he *will* ever be *doing*.” The constable considers the royal busybody’s assertive but ineffectual presence a nuisance.

“He never did *harm* that I heard of.”

“Nor will do any *tomorrow*,” says the general—the enemy will not suffer at the popinjay’s hands. “He will keep *that* good name still!”

“I know him to be *valiant*,” protests the loyal duke.

“I was *told* that by one who knows him better than you.”

“Who’s that?”

“Marry, he told me so *himself!*—and said he cared not who knew it!”

“He need not; it is no *hidden* virtue in him.”

“By my faith, sir, but it *is*; never anybody saw it but his *lackey!* ’Tis a *hooded* valour!”—covered, like the eyes of a trained falcon on its perch. “And when it *appears*, it will *bate!*”—a play on both the falconry term for *flap its wings* and *abate*.

Orléans scoffs. “’Ill will never said *well*.””

“I will cap that proverb, with ‘There is *flattery* in friendship.’”

“And I will take up that with ‘Give the Devil his *due*.’”

“Well *placed*,” laughs the general. “There stands your *friend* for the *Devil!* I’ll *have* at the very eye of *that* proverb—with ‘A *pox* on the Devil!’”

Orléans’s smile is thin. “You are the better at proverbs—by this much: ‘A *fool*’s bolt’—arrow—‘is soon shot!’”—without due aim.

The constable laughs. “You have shot *over!*”—missed the mark.

“’Tis not the first time *you* were overshot!”—went too far, says the duke.

The arrival of a breathless captain ends their exchange. “My lord high constable, the English lie within fifteen hundred paces of your tents!”

“Who hath measured the ground?”

“The lord Grandpré.”

The general sighs. “A valiant and most *expert* gentleman,” he says, motioning to dismiss the

captain. "Would it were day!" he says to Orléans. "Alas, poor Harry of England! *He* longs not for the dawning as *we* do!"

The duke concurs. "What a *wretched* and *peevish* fellow is this King of England, to mope with his fat-brained followers so far out of his knowledge!"

"If the English had any apprehension,"—*understanding*, "they would *run away!*"

Orléans shrugs. "That they *lack*; for if their heads had any *intellectual* armour, they could never wear such heavy head-pieces!"—thick skulls.

Rambures sniffs. "That island of England breeds very *valiant* creatures: their *mastiffs* are of unmatchable courage."

"Foolish *curs* that run winking"—eyes closed—"into the mouth of a *Russian bear!*" says Orléans, "and have their heads crushed like rotten apples! You may as well say that's a *valiant flea* that dares eat his breakfast on the lip of a *lion!*"

"Just, *just!*" says the general. "And the *men* resemble the mastiffs in robustious and rough coming on, leaving their *wits* with their *wives!*" Still, he has seen them in battle. "But give them iron and steel, and great meals of *beef*, and they will *eat* like wolves and fight like *devils!*"

"Aye, but *these* English are direly *out* of beef!" notes the duke. The French are well aware of the invaders' privations, and of the debilitating illness rampant in their ranks.

"Then shall we find tomorrow they have stomachs only to *eat*, and none to *fight!*"

He rubs his hands together—in eagerness, not to warm them in the cold night air. "Now is it time to arm? *Come*, shall we about it?"

Orléans shakes his head. "It is about two o'clock." He moves closer to the fire.

"Just let me *see*, and by ten we shall have a *hundred* Englishmen *each!*"

Chapter Seven Waiting

The Chorus comes forward. "Now entertain conjecture of a time when a pouring of dark and creeping *murmur* fills the wide vessel of the universe."

Among the opposing forces as the embers of supper's cooking fires fade, thousands of soldiers turn restlessly in blankets on the ground, yearning for sleep.

"From camp to camp, through the fell womb of night, a hum from either still army sounds, and the fixed sentinels almost receive the secret whispers of each other's watch.

"Perimeter fire answers fire, and through their pale flames each battalion sees the other's umbered faces. Steed threatens steed in high and boastful neighs, piercing the night's dull ear! And from the tents, the armourers, accomplishing the knights, with busy hammers closing rivets up give dreadful note of preparation!

"The country cocks do crow and bells do toll, the *third* hour of drowsing morn to name.

"Proud of their numbers, and secure in soul, the lusty and overly confident French do play for"—wager on capturing—"the low-rated English as at *dice*—and chide the cripple, tardy-gaited *night*, which like a foul and ugly witch doth limp so tediously along!

"The poor condemnèd English, sitting patiently, like sacrifices, by their watchful fires, inly ruminate on the morning's danger; and their vesture—lean cheeks huddled glumly in lank, war-worn coats—presenteth them unto the gazing moon as so many horrid *ghosts*.

"Oh, now whoever will behold the royal *captain* of this ruined band, let him *cry praise* and *glory* upon his head!—for forth he goes and visits *all his host*, walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent—bids them *Good morrow!* with a modest smile, and calls them *brothers, friends* and *countrymen!*

"Upon his regal face there is no note of how dreadful an army hath enrouned them; nor doth he dedicate one jot of colour unto the weary and all-watchèd night, but *freshly* looks, and over-bears attaint with *cheerful* semblance and sweet *majesty*, such that every wretch, pining and pale

before, beholding *him* plucks *comfort* from his appearance!

“A largess *universal*, like the *sun*’s, his liberal eye doth give to every one, thawing cold fear so that all, lowly and gentle, behold, as may unworthiest the divine, a little touch of *Harry* in the night!

“And so our scene must to the *battle* fly; where—oh, the pity!—*we* shall, with four or five most vile and ragged *foils*, right ill-disposed in brawl ridiculous,”—in trivial simulation, “much disgrace the name of *Agincourt*!” It is a place of high renown in British legend.

“Yet sit and *see*, minding *true* things by what their mockeries be....”

While the British troops shiver in the dark on the frost-firmed fields, outside the royal tents, near a lone torch, King Henry V smiles at his brother Prince Humphrey, who is coming to join him. “Gloucester, ’tis true that we are in great danger; the greater, therefore, should our courage be!

“Good morrow, brother Bedford!” he cries cheerfully, hailing Prince John.

“God *Almighty*!” says the king reverently, looking up at the still-dark sky. He regards the noblemen. “There is some soul of *goodness* in things evil, would men observingly distil it out!—for our bad *neighbour* makes us *early stirrers*, which is both healthful and good husbandry!

“Besides, they are our outside *consciences*, and *preachers* to us all, admonishing that we should dress us fairly for our end!”—*purpose*, or *demise*. His drollery draws laughter; the other lords, too, are already clad in armor, dented and tarnished during months of use.

“Thus may we gather *honey* from the *weeds*,”—a play on a term for *garb*, “and take a morsel from the devil himself!”

Greeting a tall lord, he beams jovially. “Good *morrow*, old Sir Thomas Erpingham! A good, soft *pillow* for that good, white head were fitter than the churlish turf of France!”

“Not *so*, my liege!” says the knight, smiling. “*This* lodging likes me better, since I may say ‘Now I lie *like a king*!’”

King Henry laughs. “’Tis *good* for men to live their present pains upon *example*; so, the spirit is eased—and when the *mind* is quickened, no doubt the organs, though defunct and dead before, break upward from their drowsy grave, and with sloth *cast off*, newly move in fresh *legerity*!

“Lend me thy cloak, Sir Thomas,” he asks; the knight has handed it to a page to hold as he straps into place his sheathed sword and dagger.

“Brothers both, commend me to the princes”—other noble commanders—“in our camp,” says Henry, draping the heavy gray cloth across his broad shoulders. “Do my ‘good morrows’ to them, and desire them all anon to my pavilion.”

“We shall, my liege,” says Gloucester.

“Shall I attend Your Grace?” asks Erpingham.

“No, my good knight; go with my brothers to my lords of England. I and my bosom must debate awhile, and for that I would no other company.”

The knight bows deeply. “The Lord in *heaven bless* thee, noble Harry!”

The English commanders stride away.

God-a-mercy, old heart, thou speak’st cheerfully! says the king to himself. He again ponders the impending warfare, in which his weary soldiers must face the much-larger legions of fresh, eager, and well-fed French troops.

Pulling the dark cloak’s cowl up over his head, he ventures again into the sprawling array of canvas tents.

The king soon encounters an old soldier who stalks forward and confronts him: “*Chee vooz là?*”—a cockney rendition of the French for *Who are you, there?*

In the still-deep shadows, the hooded monarch is effectively disguised. “A friend.”

“*Discuss* unto me: art thou *officer*?” demands Pistol. “Or art thou *base, common* and *populace*?”

“I am a gentleman of a company”—with one as a volunteer.

“Trail’st thou the puissant *pike*?”—march with infantry pikemen.

“Even so.” Henry regards his former tavern companion. “What are you?”

“As good a gentleman as the *emperor*!”

“Then you are a better than the king.”

“The *king’s a bawcock*!” says Pistol proudly, “and a *heart of gold*!—a *lad of life*, an imp of *fame*—of *parents good*, of *fist most valiant*! I kiss his dirty *shoe*, and from *heart-string* I love the lovely bully!” He squints at the stranger. “What is thy name?”

“Harry le Roy.”

“*Leroy*—a *Cornish* name! Art thou of *Cornish crew*?”

“No, I am a *Welshman*.” Before coronation he had been Prince of Wales, where he was born.

“Know’st thou *Fluellen*?” demands Pistol.

“Yes.”

“Tell him I’ll knock his *leek* about his *pate* upon *Saint Davy’s day*!” The captain’s hat, which sports that pungent plant in its band, is to be assailed during the annual festival honoring David, Wales’ patron saint.

“Do not wear your dagger that day,” warns Harry, “lest he knock *that* about *yours*!” A knife’s haft is convenient for such work.

“Art thou his friend?”

“And his kinsman too.”

Pistol glares, raising a hand to gesture rudely. “The *figo* for thee, then!”

The stranger only nods. “I thank you,” he murmurs. “God be with you.”

“My name is *Pistol* callèd!” the soldier advises, for Captain *Fluellen*’s benefit, as he stamps away.

It sorts well with your fierceness!—hot but brief, thinks the king.

He draws the cloak closer and pulls the hood forward, putting his face into even deeper shadow. He stands and listens as two officers meet nearby, on a path among the many tents.

“Captain *Fluellen*!” says Gower.

“So,” says the other. “*Speak lower*, in the name of *Jesu Christ*!” he cautions; the French are near. “It is the greatest admiration of the universal world when the true and aunchient prerogatifes and laws of the wars is not *kept*!”

“If you would take the pains but to examine the wars of *Pompey the Great*, you shall find, I warrant you, that there is no tiddle-toddle nor pibble-pabble in *Pompey’s camp*! I warrant you, you shall find the *ceremonies* of the wars, and the *cares* of it, and the *forms* of it, and the *sobriety* of it, and the *modesty* of it, to be *otherwise*!”

“Why, the *enemy* is loud,” notes Gower. “You heard *him* all *night*!”

“If the enemy is an *ass* and a *fool* and a prating *coxcomb*, is it meet, think you, that *we* should also, look you, be an *ass* and a *fool* and a prating *coxcomb*? In your own *conscience*, now?” he demands, an eyebrow raised.

Gower smiles. “I will speak lower.”

“I pray you and beseech you that you *will*,” says *Fluellen*, clasping the other officer’s shoulder warmly as they head away together toward the line facing the French.

King Henry is pleased. *Though it appear a little out of fashion, there is much care and valour in this Welshman!*

As he stands watching, three of his foot-soldiers come forward on their way to the front, muskets in hand.

Alexander Court points east. “Brother *John Bates*, is not that the morning which breaks yonder?”

“I think it be; but we have no great cause to *desire* the approach of day!”

Michael Williams, big and burly, nods grimly. “We see yonder the beginning of the day, but I think we shall never see the *end* of it.” He halts, spotting the muffled figure beside the path.

“Who goes there?” he challenges.

“A friend.”

“Under what captain serve you?”

“Under Sir Thomas Erpingham’s cover.”

Williams nods. “A good old commander, and a most kind gentleman. I pray you, what thinks he of our estate?”

“Even as men wrecked upon a sandbar, that look to be washed off at the next tide.”

“He hath not told his thought to the *king!*” says Bates.

“No; nor it is not meet he should. For, though I speak it to *you*, I think the king is but a man, as *I* am: the violet smells to him as it doth to me; the element shows to him as it doth to me; all his senses have but human conditions. His *ceremonies* laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man; and though *his* emotions are higher mounted than ours, yet, when they *stoop*, they swoop with a like *wing!* Therefore when he sees reason for *fears*, as we do, beyond doubt his fears be of the same sharpness as are ours.

“Yet no man of reason should possess him with any apprehension or fear, lest he, by *showing* it, should dishearten his army.”

“He may show what *outward* courage he will,” says Bates, “but I believe, as cold a night as ’tis, he could still wish himself *in Thames*, up to the *neck!*—and so I would he *were*, and I *by* him, at all adventures, so we were quit *here!*”

“By my troth, I will speak *my* understanding of the king!” the stranger tells them earnestly. “I think he would not wish himself *anywhere but where he is!*”

“Then I would he were here *alone!*” replies Bates. “So should he be *sure* to be ransomed, and many a *poor* man’s life be saved!”

“I dare say you love him not so *ill* as to wish him here alone, howsoever you *speak* this, to feel other men’s minds,” says the hooded gentleman. “Methinks I could not die anywhere so contented as in the king’s company, his *cause* being *just*, and his quarrel *honourable!*”

“That’s more than *we* know,” says Williams, using a kerchief to wipe the sheen of dew from the barrel of his weapon.

“Aye—or more than we should *seek* after,” argues Bates, “for we know enough if we know we are the king’s *subjects*; if his cause be wrong, our obedience to the king wipes the crime of it out of us.”

“But if the cause be *not* good,” says Williams, “the king himself hath a *heavy reckoning* to make, when all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in battle, shall join together at the latter day,”—Judgment Day, “and cry, all, ‘We *died* at such a place!’—some swearing, some crying for a *surgeon*, some about their *wives* left poor behind them, some about the *debts* they owe, some about their *children* rawly left!

“I am afraid there are few die *well* that die in a battle; for how can they *charitably* dispose of anything, when *blood* is their argument? Now, if these men *do not* die well, it will be a black matter for the king that *led* them to it!—whom to disobey were against all proportion of subjection.”

Now the monk-like figure challenges: “So, if a *son* who is by his father sent after merchandise do *sinfully miscarry* upon the *sea*,”—turn pirate, “the imputation of *his* wickedness, by your rule, should be imposed upon his *father* that sent him! Or if a *servant*, under his master’s command transporting a sum of money, be assailed by robbers and die with many irreconciled iniquities,”—unconfessed sins, “you may call the business of the *master* the author of the servant’s damnation!

“But this is *not so!* The *king* is not bound to answer for the particular endings of his *soldiers*, the father of his *son*, nor the master of his *servant*—for they purpose not their *death* when they purpose their *services*.

“Besides, there is *no* king, be his *cause* ever so spotless, can try it out with *all-unspotted* soldiers, if it come to the arbitrement of swords! *Some* peradventure have on them the guilt of premeditated and contrived *murder*; some, of beguiling virgins with the broken seals of *perjury*;

some making the wars their bulwark have before gored the gentle bosom of peace with *pillage* and *robbery*! Now, if these men have defeated the *law*, and outrun *native* punishment, though they can outstrip *men*, they have no wings to fly from *God*! War is his *beadle*, war is his *vengeance*—so that men are punished for before-breach of the king’s laws, here in the king’s quarrel now!”

He sees an irony: “Where they feared *the death*,”—lawful but lethal punishment at home—“they have borne *life* away. And where they would be *safe*,”—fighting in a just cause, “they *perish*!”

“Then if they die unprovided,”—unreconciled with God, “no more is the *king* guilty of their damnation than he was *before* guilty of those impieties for which they are now visited.

“Every subject’s *duty* is the king’s; but every subject’s *soul* is his own. Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed: wash every mote out of his *conscience*! Then, dying *so*, death is to him *advantage*!—or, *not* dying, the time was *blessedly* lost wherein such preparation was gained!

“And in him that escapes, it were no sin to think that, having made God so fair an offer, He let him outlive that day to see *his greatness*, and to teach *others* how they should prepare.”

Williams must concur. “’Tis certain every man that dies *ill*, the ill’s upon his *own* head; the *king* is not to answer for it.”

“I do not *desire* he should answer for me,” says young Bates, “and yet I determine to fight *lustily* for him!” he adds loyally.

“I myself heard the king say he *would not be ransomed*,” the gentleman assures the soldiers.

“Aye, he *said* so to make us fight cheerfully,” grumbles Williams. “But when *our* throats are cut, *he* may be ransomed, and we ne’er the wiser!”

“If I live to see it, I will never trust his word after!” says the stranger.

“You *pay* him then!”—avenge it, laughs Williams. “*That’s* a perilous shot out of an *elder-gun*”—a wooden toy, “what a poor and private displeasure can do against a *monarch*! You may as well set about turning the sun to *ice* by fanning in its face with a peacock’s feather!

“You’ll never trust his *word* after!—come, ’tis a *foolish* saying!”

The stranger glares. “Your reproof is somewhat *too round*! I should be *angry* with you, if the time were convenient!”

“Let it be a *quarrel* between us, if you live,” Williams replies.

“I embrace it!”

“How shall I know thee again?”

“Give me any gage of thine, and I will wear it in my hatband; then, if ever thou darest acknowledge it, I *will* make it my quarrel!”

“Here’s my glove; give me another, of *thine*!”

“There!”

“This will I, also, wear in my cap,” says Williams, putting it there. “If ever thou come to me and say, after tomorrow, ‘This is *my* glove,’ by this hand, I will give thee a *box on the ear*!”

“If ever I live to see it, I will *challenge* it!”

Williams—a blacksmith at home—scoffs. “Thou darest as well be *hanged*!”

“Well, I *will* do it, though I overtake thee in the *king’s* company!”

“Keep thy word!” says Williams. “Fare thee well.” He starts away.

“Be friends, you English fools, be *friends*!” protests Bates. “We have *French* quarrels enough if you could tell how to *tally*!”

“Indeed, the French may lay twenty *French crowns* to one they will beat us, for they bear them on their *shoulders*,” laughs the king; the term can imply hair lost to syphilis. “But it is no English treason to *cut* French crowns,”—filch metal from the enemy nation’s coins, “and *today* the king *himself* will be a clipper!”

As the soldiers head toward their company’s battle position, Henry reflects.

Upon the king! Let us our lives, our souls, our debts, our careful wives, our children, and our

sins lay on the king!

We must bear all!—one hard condition, twin-born with greatness!—subject to the breath of every fool whose sense can feel no more than his own wringing! What infinite heart's-ease must kings neglect, that private men enjoy!

And what have kings that privates have not too, save ceremony—save general ceremony!

But what art thou, thou idle Ceremony? What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers? What are thy rents; what are thy comings in? O Ceremony, show me but thy worth! What is thy soul, for all the adoration?—art thou aught else but place, degree and form?—creating awe and fear in other men, wherein thou art less happy being feared than they in fearing!

What drink'st thou oft, instead of homage sweet, but poisoned flattery? Oh, be sick, great greatness, and bid thy Ceremony give thee cure! Think'st thou a fiery fever will be blown out by titles, from adulation?—will it succumb to flexure and low-bending? Canst thou, when thou command'st the beggar's knee, command the health of it?

No, thou proud dream, that play'st so subtly with a king's repose! I am a king that finds thee out! And I know 'tis not the balm—the sceptre and the ball, the sword, the mace, the crown imperial, the intertissued robe of gold and pearl, the elaborated title running 'fore the king, the throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp that beats upon the high shore of this world—no, not with all these, thrice-gorgeous Ceremony, not all these, laid in a bed majestical, can he sleep so soundly as the wretched slave, who with a body filled, crammed with calming bread, and a vacant mind, gets him to rest!—never sees horrid night as the child of Hell, but, like a lackey sweats in the eye of Phoebus from rise to set, and all night sleeps in Elysium!—and next day, after dawn doth rise and help Hyperion to his horse, follows so in the ever-running year, with profitable labour, to his grave!

And, but for ceremony, such a wretch, who wraps his days with toil and nights with sleep, had, beforehand, advantage of the king!

The slave, a member of the country's peace, enjoys it, but in gross brain little wots what watch the king keeps to maintain the peace whose hours the peasant best advantage!

The pensive monarch hears someone; he looks up to see Sir Thomas coming toward him.

“My lord, your nobles, missing your presence, seek through your camp to find you!”

Henry nods. “Good old knight, collect them all together at my tent. I'll be there before thee.”

Erpingham bows. “I shall do't, my lord.” He hurries away.

Henry pulls back the hood and looks upward. *O god of battles, steel my soldiers' hearts; possess them not with fear; take from them now the sense of counting, if the opposèd numbers pluck their hearts from them!*

But then he kneels, and bows his head. *Not today, O Lord, oh, not today!—think not upon the fault my father made in compassing the crown!*

Lord Bolingbroke, returning from banishment in France, assumed the throne as Henry IV by deposing King Richard II—who was soon murdered.

I have interrèd Richard's body anew; and on it have bestowed more contrite tears than from it issued forcèd drops of blood! Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay, who twice a day their withered hands hold up toward heaven, to pardon that blood! And I have built two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests sing ever for Richard's soul.

More will I do; though all that I can do is nothing worth, since that my penitence comes, after all, imploring pardon.

“My liege!”

My brother Gloucester's voice? Slowly, Henry rises.

He smiles at Prince Humphrey. “Aye, I know thy errand; I will go with thee.

“The day, my friends and all things wait for me.”

Pulling off the cloak, King Henry V strides forward.

Chapter Eight Ready to Fight

The Duke of Orléans adjusts his gleaming new gauntlets. “The sun doth *gild* our armour! Up, my lords!”

The dauphin, too, craves action. “*Montez à cheval! My horse!*” he demands. “Varlet! *L’acquérez!*” he cries, cuffing a too-slow servant. “*Hah!*”

Orléans beams at the other resplendent young man. “O brave spirit!”

“*Viva! Les eaux et la terre!*”—waters and earth!—cries the dauphin in jubilation.

“*Rien plus? L’air et la feu?*”—nothing more? Air and fire?

“*See you, cousin Orléans!*”—*just watch*. He hails the commander. “*Now, my lord constable!*”

The French general surveys the cavalry arrayed at the front, its long ranks shifting restively. “Hark how our steeds for present service neigh!”

“*Mount them, and make incision in their hides, so that their hot blood may spin into English eyes—and daub them with superfluous courage!*” demands the dauphin, eager for the rout. “*Ha!*”

Rambures protests facetiously: “What?—will you have them weep our horses’ blood? How, then, shall we behold their *natural* tears?”

They watch as a knight rides to them and hastily dismounts to bow. “The English are *embattled*,”—in formation, “you French peers!”

“*To horse, you gallant princes!*” says the lord high constable, “*straight to horse!*”

He nods toward the British camp. “Do but *behold* yon poor and starvèd band, and your fair *showing* shall *suck away their souls*, leaving them but the shells and *husks* of men!

“There is not *work* enough for *all* our hands!—scarce *blood* enough in all their sickly veins to give each naked *curtle-axe*”—used by foot soldiers—“a stain! Our French gallants shall today draw, but then *sheathe* for *lack of sport!*”

“Let us but *blow* on them—the *vapour* of our valour will o’erturn them!”

“’Tis positive ’gainst all exception, lords, that our superfluous *lackeys* and our *peasants*, who in unnecessary action swarm about our squares of battle”—the configuration common troops take—“were enough to purge this field of such a hilding foe, though *we*, upon this mountain’s basis by, took stand for idle speculation!”—as had England’s Edward III at Crécy. “But that *our* honours must not.

“What’s to say?—a very little! Little let us *do*, and all is done!”

“Then let the trumpets sound the *tucket’s* sonance!—and the note to *mount!*” he orders, signaling, “for our *approach* shall so much dire the field that England shall *crouch down in fear*, and *yield!*”

As Delabreth mounts his stallion, a nobleman already back from a look at the enemy rides up to his side.

“Why do you *stay* so long, my lords of France?” cries Lord Grandpré, reining in his stallion. “Yon *island carrion*, despairing of their *bones*, ill-favourèdly become the morning field! Their poor, ragged curtains”—scouts sent to spot the initial assault—“are let loose, and our *air*, in passing, shook them scornfully!”

“Big *Mars* seems *bankrupt* in their beggared host, and but faintly through a rusty visor peeps! Their *horsemen* sit with torch-staves in their hands like fixèd *candlesticks!* And their poor *jades*—hides and hips drooping, let down their heads, the gum down-roping from their pale, dead eyes; in their dry, dull mouths the gimmel bit lying foul with chewèd grass—are still and motionless while their *executors*, the knavish *crows*, fly o’er them, all impatient for their hour!”

He shakes his head in disgust. “Description cannot suit itself in *words* to demonstrate the like of such an army, in life so *lifeless* as it shows itself!”

“They have said their prayers,” says the old general quietly, “and they wait for death.”

The dauphin’s patience is exhausted. “Shall we go send them *dinners* and *fresh suits*, and

give their fasting horses *provender*," he demands, his voice shrill with sarcasm, "then *after* fight with them?"

"I stay but for my guidon," mutters the lord high constable. He motions to the herald. "I will a banner from a trumpeter take, and use *it* in my haste." The bright pennant is soon fastened to his lance, just behind the steel tip. "*To the field!*"

"Come, *come away!*"

"The sun is high, and we outwear the day!"

Blaring trumpets hasten the British troops toward combat positions, as their chief commanders confer at the front: Prince Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester; Prince John, Duke of Bedford; the Duke of Exeter; the Earls of Salisbury and Westmoreland; and Sir Thomas Erpingham, leader of the host of other knights.

"Where is the king?" asks Humphrey.

John answers: "The king *himself* rode to view their battle!"—the combined French forces.

"Of fighting men they have full three-score thousand," Westmoreland advises.

Exeter frowns, peering northward. "That's *five to one!*" he mutters. "Besides which, they all are *fresh*."

Cries Salisbury, undaunted, "*God's* arm strikes *with us!*—'tis a *fearful* odds!" He turns to the others as he mounts his horse. "God be wi' you, *princes all!* I'll to my charge.

"If we no more meet till we meet in heaven, then, *joyfully*, my noble lord of Bedford, my dear Lord Gloucester, and my good Lord Exeter, and my kind kinsmen, *warriors all, Adieu!*" He is grinning; the term is French; it means *until we meet with God*.

"*Fare well*, good Salisbury!" laughs John, "and *good luck* go with thee!"

"Farewell, kind lord! Fight *valiantly* today!" calls Exeter. "And yet I do thee wrong to mind thee of it, for thou art *framèd* of the firm truth of *valour!*" he says, as Salisbury rides away.

"He is as full of valour as of *kindness*—*princely* in both!" says John.

King Henry soon returns to join the noblemen, and he dismounts.

Lord Westmoreland has been looking out over the assembling ranks of British troops. "Oh, that we now had here but one *ten-thousandth* of those men in *England* that *do no work* today!"

"Who's he that wishes so?" demands the king, as a soldier receives his skittish steed's reins. "My cousin Westmoreland?"

"*No*, my fair cousin! If we are markèd to die, we are *enough* to be our country's loss, and if to *live*, the fewer *men*, the greater their shares of *honour*, by God's will!

"I pray thee, wish not *one man more!* By Jove, I am not covetous for gold, nor care I who doth feed upon my cost; it yearns me not if men my garments"—livery—"wear! Such outward things dwell not in my desires. But if it be a sin to *covet honour*, I am the most offending soul alive! No, 'faith, my coz, wish *not a man* from England! God's peace, I would not, for the best hope I have, lose so great an honour as methinks one man more would share *from me!*"

"So, do not wish one more—*rather*, Westmoreland, proclaim it throughout my host that he who hath no stomach to this fight, *let him depart!* His passport shall be made, and crowns for convoy put into his purse; we would not die in that man's company who questions his fellowship to die with us!

"This day is called the Feast of Crispian," the king notes, of the holiday named for two brothers martyred long ago. "He that outlives this day and comes safely home will stand a-tip-toe"—at his tallest—"when the day is named, and *rouse* him at the name of Crispian!

"He that shall live this day and see old age will yearly, on the vigil, *feast his neighbours*, and say, 'Tomorrow is Saint Crispian!' Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars, and say, 'These wounds I had on *Crispian's Day!*' Old men forget—but if all else be forgot, *yet* he'll remember—with enhancements—what feats he did *that day!*"

"Then shall *our names*, familiar in his mouth as household words—*Harry* the king, *Bedford* and *Exeter*, *Warwick* and *Talbot*, *Salisbury* and *Gloucester*—be, in their flowing cups, freshly

remembered! This story shall the good man teach his *son*—and *Crispin-Crispian* shall ne'er go by, from this day to the ending of the world, but that *we* in it shall be *remembered!*—we few, we *happy* few, we *band of brothers!* For he that sheds his blood today with me shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile, this day shall *gentle* his condition!

“And gentlemen in England now *a-bed* shall think themselves *accursèd* they were not *here*, and hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks who fought with us upon *Saint Crispian's Day!*”

Salisbury returns at a gallop, halting his lathered mount before the king. “My sovereign lord, bestow yourself *with speed!* The French are bravely in their battles *set*, and will with all expedience *charge on us!*”

King Henry nods, smiling at his commanders. “All things are ready, if our *minds* be so.”

Westmoreland laughs. “Perish the man whose mind is backward *now!*”

“Thou dost not wish more help from England, coz?” asks the king.

Westmoreland smiles. “*God's* will, my liege! *I* would that *you and I alone*, without more help, could fight this royal battle!”

Henry laughs. “Why, now thou hast *unwishèd* five thousand men!—which likes me better than to wish us one!

“You know your places. God be with you all!”

A tucket is heard as Montjoy, the French herald, rides calmly forward to face the English monarch. He nods, his smile smug. “Once more I come to know of thee, King Harry, if for thy *ransom* thou wilt now compound, before thy most assurèd *overthrow*—for certainly thou art so near the *gulf* thou needs must be *engluttèd!*”—swallowed.

“Besides,” says Montjoy haughtily, “in *mercy*, the constable desires of thee thou wilt mind thy followers of *repentance*, so that their souls may make a peaceful and a sweet retire from off these fields, where, poor wretches, their *bodies* must lie and fester!”

Constable? The King of England is annoyed. “Who hath sent thee *now?*”

“The Constable of France.”

“I pray thee, bear my *former* answer back.

“Bid them *achieve* me, and *then* sell my bones! *Good God!* Why should they *mock* poor fellows thus? The man that once did sell a lion's skin while the beast lived was *killed* while *hunting* it!

“*A-many* of our bodies shall no doubt find *native* graves,”—at home, “upon which, I trust, shall witness *live in brass* of this day's work! And those that leave their valiant bones in France, dying like *men*, though buried in your dunghills, *they shall be famed!* For here the *sun* shall greet them, and draw their *honours* up to *heaven*—leaving their reeking earthly parts to *choke your clime*, the smell whereof shall breed a *plague* in France!

“Mark the *abounding* valour in our English, who, being *dead*, like the bullet's grazing, break out into a *second* course of mischief, killing in a relapse of lethality!

“Let *me* speak arrogantly: tell the constable *we* are but warriors for the *working* day!—our frippery and our guilt are all besmirchèd from rainy marching in the painful field; there's not a piece of *feather* in our *host*—good argument, I hope, that *we will not fly!*” The British lords smile at the jest.

“If time hath worn us into slovenry, by the Mass, our *hearts* are in their *trim!* And my poor soldiers tell me that yet ere night they'll be in *fresher* robes—for they will pluck the gay new coats from o'er *your dead soldiers*, and *turn* them, in side out, from your service!

“If they do that—as, if God please, they *shall!*—*my* ransom will then have been levied!”

“Herald, save thou thy labour; come thou no more for ransom, gentle herald. They shall have *none*, I swear, but these *my joints!*—which, if they have as *I* will leave 'em, shall yield them *little*, tell the constable!”

Montjoy bows gravely. “I shall, King Harry; and so fare thee well.” He adds, ominously, “Thou never shalt hear herald any more.” He and his attendants ride back to the French side.

“I fear thou’lt *once* more come,” growls Harry, “again about *ransom!*”—for French noblemen.

The aging Duke of York comes forward and kneels. “My lord, most humbly on my knee I beg the leading of the vaward!”

King Henry V nimbly mounts his steed. “Take it, brave York!

“Now, soldiers, *march away!*”

And how thou pleasest, God, dispose the day....

Chapter Nine Agincourt

Alarums—horns’ harsh peals, drums’ insistent pounding—end the bright morning’s quiet, and the mighty armies collide, covering the soggy low sod between them with violent conflict. Under high-arcing flights of deadly English arrows, excursions of British foot-soldiers hurtle forward into man-to-man clashes; huge, fully armored French horses come pounding down the slope, their heavy, iron-shod hooves thudding bloodily among the invaders.

Edging along behind the main fighting with the boy, Pistol encounter a trembling French soldier. “*Yield, cur!*”

The beardless young man drops his clean new sword and says, hopefully, “*Je pense que vous êtes gentilhomme de bonne qualité....*” —I think you’re a well-born gentleman....

Pistol blinks. “*Call-ee-day?*” He frowns. “Art thou a *gentleman?* What is thy name?” he demands. “*Discuss!*”

“*Oh, Seigneur Dieu!*” moans the youth.

“*Ah!—Señor Jew should be a gentleman!*” says Pistol, highly pleased with his catch.

“Perpend my words, O Señor Jew, and *mark*, O Señor Jew, thou *diest* on point of *ox*”—his engraved blade—“unless, O señor, thou do give to me *egregious ransom!*”

“*Oh, prenez miséricorde! Avez pitié de moi!*” —Oh, yield mercy! Have pity on me!

“*Mwa shall not serve!*” insists his captor. “I will have *forty mwas*, or I will fetch thy guts out at thy throat in *dregs of crimson blood!*”

The well-dressed soldier pleads: “*Est-il impossible d’échapper la force de ton bras?*”—Is it impossible to escape the strength of your arm?

“*Brass, cur?*” cries Pistol. “Thou damned and luxurious mountain goat, offer’st me *brass?*”

“*Oh, pardonnez moi!*”

Pistol perks up. “Tell me thou *so?* Is that a *ton* of *mwas?* Come hither, boy!” he tells the page. “Ask this slave in French what is his name.”

“*Écoutez,*” says the boy. “*Comment êtes-vous appelé?*” —Listen. What are you called?

“*Monsieur Lefere.*”

The boy grins. “He says his name is Master Fer.” Master *Iron*.

“Master *Fair?*” says Pistol angrily. “I’ll *fair* him—and *firk* him and *ferret* him!” He gestures with his blade. “Discuss the same in French unto him!”

“I do not know the French for ‘fair and ferret and firk.’”

As his windfall wanes, Pistol scowls. “Bid him prepare; for I will cut his throat.”

The cowering prisoner asks the boy “*Que dit-il, monsieur?*” —What’s he saying?

“*Il me commande de vous dire que vous faites vous prêt; car ce soldat ici est disposé tout à cette heure de couper votre gorge!*” —He orders me to ask you to get yourself ready; for this soldier, here, means to cut your throat within the hour!

Pistol, waving his sword menacingly near the other man’s face, attempts some French: “Owy!—*cuppell gorge*, permafoy, peasant,”—Yes! *Cut throat*, by my faith, bumpkin, “unless thou give me *crowns*, brave *crowns!* Or mangled shalt thou be by this my sword!”

The young Frenchman falls to his knees. “*Oh, je vous supplie!*” —I beg you! “*Pour l’amour*

de Dieu, me pardonner! Je suis gentilhomme de bonne maison! Gardez ma vie, et je vous donnerai deux cents écus!"

Pistol is peevish. "What are his words?"

"He prays you to save his life; he is a gentleman of a good house—and for his ransom he will give you two hundred crowns!"

Pistol's eyes widen. He says, magnanimously, "Tell him my fury shall abate, and I the crowns will take."

"*Petit monsieur, que dit-il?*" —Little master, what says he?

The page replies: "*Encore qu'il est contre son jurement de pardonner aucun prisonnier!*" —Once again he's going against his vow, by pardoning a prisoner. "*Néanmoins, pour les écus que vous l'avez promis, il est content de vous donner la liberté, le franchisement.*" —Nevertheless, for the crowns that you've promised him, he is content to give you liberty, freedom.

The captive is most grateful: "*Sur mes genoux je vous donne mille remerciemens; et je m'estime heureux que je suis tombé entre les mains d'un chevalier, je pense, le plus brave, vaillant, et très distingué seigneur d'Angleterre!*"

"Expound unto me, boy," says Pistol.

"He gives you, upon his knees, a thousand thanks; and he esteems himself happy that he hath fallen into the hands of one, as he thinks, the most brave, valorous, and thrice-worthy *signieur* of England."

"As I suck blood I will some mercy show!" says Pistol gallantly. He motions to the Frenchman. "Follow me!"

"*Suivez-vous le grand capitaine,*" the boy tells the soldier.

As the profitable prisoner is lead away, the page watches Pistol glumly. *I did never know so full a voice to issue from so empty a heart! But the saying is true: 'The hollow vessel makes the greatest sound.'*

Bardolph and Nym had ten times more valour than this 'Roaring Devil' o' the old play! Everyone can pare his nails with a wooden dagger! They are both hanged—and so would this be, if he durst steal anything adventurously!

I must stay with the lackeys, with the luggage of our camp. The French king might make good prey of us, if he knew of it—for there is no one to guard it but boys!

"*Oh, diable!*" cries the lord high constable.

Moans the Duke of Orléans, "*Oh, Seigneur! Le jour est perdu!—tout est perdu!*" —Oh, Lord! The day is lost!—all is *lost!*

"*Mort de ma vie!* All is confounded, *all!*" groans the dauphin. "Reproach and everlasting *shame* sit mocking in our plumes! *Oh, méchante Fortune!*" —Oh, wicked Fortune!

He shouts, furiously, at retreating French infantry troops: "*Do not run away!*"

As a trumpet sounds a shaky call for retreat, Delabreth stares, appalled by the chaos. "Why, *all our ranks are broken!*"

"Oh, perdurable *shame!*" cries the prince, despairing. "Let us *stab ourselves!*" Amazed, He watches the British soldiers' inexorable advance. "Be *these* the wretches that we played at dice for?"

Once the French knights' massive, armored horses had managed to struggle free from the fields' thick mud, they charged after fleeing foot-soldiers—only to be impaled on the long, pointed stakes implanted by the British during the night. The French do not approve of an English innovation: archers in battle; but their troops, plodding forward through the muck, had been slowed not only by dead horses and the strewn corpses of comrades killed by British blades, but by knights whose polished armor—easily spotted from afar—had been pierced by arrows from powerful longbows.

Orléans spots King Henry boldly leading a foray. "Is this the king we sent to for his ransom?"

“*Shame and eternal shame, nothing but shame!*” moans the Duke of Bourbon. “Let us *die* in honour!” he cries, raising his sword. “Once more *back again!*—and he that will not follow Bourbon now, let him go hence, and with his cap in hand, like a base *pander*, wait at the chamber-door whilst by a slave no gentler than my *dog* his fairest *daughter* is *contaminated!*”

The general follows him, drawing his sword. “May *Disorder*, who hath spoiled us, *befriend* us now! Let us *in heaps* go offer up our lives!”

“We have enough yet living in the field to *smother* the English with our *throngs*, if any *order* might be brought about!” says Orléans angrily, joining them.

Bourbon charges away. “The *devil* take order now! I’ll to the *throng!*”

“Let life be *short*—else *shame* will be too long!”

Calls King Henry, sweat dripping from his chin, blood from his sword, to the battered knights with him, “*Well* have we done, *thrice-valiant* countrymen! But all’s not *done*; the French yet keep to the field.”

Lord Exeter staggers to him. “The Duke of York commends him to Your Majesty,” he rasps, weary from battle.

Asks the king happily, “*Lives* he, good uncle? Thrice within this hour I saw him *down*; thrice up again and fighting!—from helmet to the spur all *blood* he was!”

“In which array, brave soldier, doth he lie, enriching the plain,” says Exeter tearfully. “And by his bloody side, yoke-fellow to his honour-owning wounds, the noble Earl of Suffolk also lies.

“Suffolk first died; then York, all haggled over,”—grievously wounded, “comes to him where in gore he lay insteepèd, and, smoothing his beard, kisses the gashes that boldly did sprawl upon his face—and cries aloud, ‘*Tarry*, dear cousin Suffolk! My soul shall thine keep company to heaven! *Tarry*, sweet soul, for *mine*—then fly we abreast, as in this glorious and well-foughten field we kept together in our chivalry!’

“Upon those words, I came and urged him up”—knelt, and lifted his head. “He smiled me in the face, caught me by his hand, and, with a feeble grip, says, ‘Dear my lord, commend my service to my sovereign!’ So did he turn, and under Suffolk’s neck he drew his wounded arm, and kissed his cheek—and so espousèd death; with blood he sealed a testament of noble, enduring love.

“The gentle and sweet manner of it forced those waters from me which I would have stopp’d; but I had not so much of *man* in me, and all my *mother* came into mine eyes and gave me up to tears!”

King Henry puts a hand on his shoulder. “I blame you not; for, hearing this, *I* must perforce contend with mist-full eyes, or they will issue, too!

“But, *hark!*—what new alarum is this same?” he asks, at a blaring of horns. “The French have reinforced their scattered men!”

He surveys the beleaguered and dwindling British force, and his expression hardens; in this fresh fighting, no troops can be spared to guard captives. “Then every soldier kill his prisoners; give the word through,” he tells Exeter solemnly.

The king goes to confront the resurging French.

“*Killed the poys at the luggage!*” Captain Fluellen is aghast at what they have found, returning to their ransacked camp after it had been overwhelmed by French troops. “’Tis expressly *against the law of arms!* ’Tis as arrant a piece of *knavery*, mark you now, as can be offer’t! In your conscience, now, *is it not?*”

“’Tis certain there’s not a boy left alive,” says Captain Gower looking tearfully at the bloody, smoldering site. “And the cowardly scoundrels that *ran from the battle* ha’ done this slaughter!

“They have carried away or burned all that was in the *king’s* tent—wherefore the king, most worthily, hath caused every soldier to cut his prisoner’s throat!

“Oh, ’tis a gallant king!” The captain approves the supposed retaliation.

“Aye, he was born at *Monmouth*, Captain Gower.” The Welsh city is on the border with England. He thinks for a moment. “What call you the town’s name where Alexander the Pig was born?”

“Alexander the *Great*.”

Fluellen frowns. “Why, I pray you, is not *pig* great? The pig, or the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous are all one reckonings, save the phrase is a little variations.”

“I think Alexander the Great was born in Macedon; his father was called *Philip of Macedon*, as I take it.”

Fluellen nods. “I think it is in Macedon where Alexander is born. I tell you, captain, if you look on the maps of the world, I warrant you shall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is both alike! There is a river in Macedon; and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth! It is called Wye at Monmouth; but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river; but ’tis all one, ’tis alike as my fingers is to my *fingers*, and there is *salmons* in both!

“If you mark Alexander’s life well, Harry of Monmouth’s life is come after it somewhat *well*; for there is figures in all things. Alexander, God knows and you know, in his rages and his furies and his wraths and his cholers and his moods and his displeasures and his indignations—and also there being a little intoxicates in his prains—did, in his ales and his angers, look you, kill his best friend, Clytus—”

“Our king is not like him in *that*,” frowns Gower. “*He* never killed any of his friends!”

“It is *not well done*, mark you now, to take the tales out of my mouth ere it is *made* and *finished!*” protests the Welshman. “I speak but in the *figures* and *comparisons* of it: as Alexander killed his friend Clytus, being in his ales and his cups, so also Harry Monmouth, being in his *right* wits and his *good* judgments, *turned away* the fat knight with the great-belly doublet. I have forgot his name; he was full of jests and gipes and knaveries and mocks....”

“Sir John Falstaff.”

“*That* is he. I’ll tell you there is *good* men born at *Monmouth!*”

They see noblemen approaching the camp on horseback. “Here comes his majesty,” says Gower.

Henry has just learned of the incident, riding here with him are Prince Humphrey, Lord Warwick, and Lord Exeter. They can see the evidence of atrocity.

“I was not *angry* since I came to France, until *this instant!*” cries the king. “Take a trumpet, herald; ride thou unto the horsemen on yon hill. If they will *fight* with us, bid them come down, or *void the field!*—they do *offend our sight!*”

“If they’ll do neither, we will come to *them*—and make them skirr away as swift as *stones* enforced from the old Assyrian *slings!* And we’ll *cut the throats* of those that we *take*—not a man of them shall taste our *mercy!*”

“Go and tell them so!” The herald nods, and rides swiftly away.

“Here comes the herald of the French, my liege,” says Exeter, as Montjoy and two attendants approach.

“His eyes are *humbler* than they used to be,” the prince observes.

“How now? What *means* this, herald?” demands Henry heatedly. “Know’st thou not that I have defined these *bones* of mine as ransom? Comest thou *again* for ransom?”

“No, great king,” says Montjoy. “I come to thee for *charitable licence*, that we may wander o’er this bloody field to look for our dead, and to bury them.

“And to sort our *nobles* from our common men. For many of our lords—woe the while!—lie soaked and drownèd in *mercenaries’* blood.

“So do your *vulgar* drench their peasant limbs with the blood of *princes* that their wounded steeds fret, fetlock-deep in *gore*, and with wild rage yerk out the armèd heels at their dead masters, killing them twice!

“Oh, give us leave, great king, to view the field in safety and dispose of their dead bodies.”

“I tell thee truly, herald, I know not if the day be ours or no,” says Henry coldly, “for yet a-many of your horsemen peer and gallop o’er the field.”

Montjoy flushes. “The day is yours.”

King Henry nods. “Praisèd be *God*, and not *our* strength, for it!

“What is this castle called that stands hard by?”

“They call it Agincourt.”

“Then call we this the field of Agincourt, fought on the *day of Crispin Crispianus!*” cries King Henry V.

Chapter Ten Scores Are Settled

Most of the French horsemen given the *fight or die* warning have died running; now the English captains have set about gathering their own troops and returning here to camp.

A Welsh officer, approaches the king and his brothers, with whom Montjoy still waits for his answer. The captain bows, and notes with pride. “Your *grandfather* of famous memory, an’t please Your Majesties, and your *great-uncle* Edward, the Plack Prince of *Wales*, as I have read in the chronicles, fought a most prave pattle here in France.”

“They did, Fluellen.”

“Your Majesty says very true! If Your Majesties is remembered of it, the *Welshmen* did good service in a garden where *leeks* did grow, wearing leeks in their *Monmouth* caps—which, Your Majesty know, to this hour is an honourable badge of the service! And I do believe Your Majesty takes no scorn to wear the leek upon Saint *Tavy*’s day....”

Henry smiles and nods. “I wear it for a memorable honour. For I am Welsh, you know, good countryman,” he adds dryly.

“All the water in *Wye* cannot wash Your Majesty’s Welsh plood out of your pody, I can tell you that! God pless it and preserve it, as long as it pleases his grace, and *his* majesty, too!”

“Thanks, good my countryman.”

“By *Jeshu*, I *am* Your Majesty’s countryman; I care not who know it! I will confess it to all the *’orld!* I need not to be ashamed of Your Majesty, praised be *God*, so long as Your Majesty is an honest man!”

“God keep me so.”

Henry glances at Montjoy. “Our herald, go with him; bring me just notice of the numbers dead on both our parts.”

As the heralds ride away, the king, looking out over troops milling nearby, points to a musketeer. “Call yonder fellow hither.”

Lord Exeter goes to him. “Soldier, you must come to the king.”

Asks Henry, as the man approaches, “Soldier, why wearest thou that *glove* in thy cap?”

Michael Williams bows. “An’t please Your Majesty, ’tis the gage of one that I should *fight* withal, if he be alive.”

“An Englishman?”

“An’t please Your Majesty, a *rascal* that *swaggered* at me last night!—who, if alive and ever dares to challenge this glove, I have sworn to give him *a box o’ th’ ear!* Or if I can see *my* glove in *his* cap, which he swore, as he was a soldier, he would wear if alive, I will strike it out soundly!”

Henry turns to the military scholar. “What think you, Captain Fluellen? Is it fit this soldier keep his oath?”

“He is a *craven* and a *villain* else, an’t please Your Majesty, in *my* conscience,” Fluellen replies firmly.

The king, looking at Williams, considers. “It may be that his enemy is a *gentleman* of some

great sort—quite *from* the answer of his degree”—above obligation to respond to a commoner.

Fluellen is certain. “Though he be as good a gentleman as the *Devil* is, as Lucifer and Belzebub himself, it is *necessary*, look Your Grace, that he *keep* his vow and his oath! If he be *perjured*, see you now, in *my* conscience his reputation is as arrant as ever a *villain* and a *Jacksauce* whose black shoe trod upon God’s ground and his earth!”

King Henry tells Williams, “Then keep thy vow, sirrah, when thou meetest the fellow.”

“So I *will*, my liege, as I live!”

“Who servest thou under?”

“Under Captain Gower, my liege.”

“Gower is a good captain,” Fluellen notes, “and is good knowledge, and literated in the wars.”

“Call him hither to me, soldier,” orders the king.

Williams bows. “I will, my liege.” He hurries away to find Gower.

Something seems to occur to the king; he pulls a worn glove from a pocket. “Here, Fluellen; wear thou this favour for me, and stick it in thy cap. When Alençon and myself were down together”—unhorsed, and locked in mortal combat—“I plucked this glove from his helm. If any man challenge this, he is a friend to Alençon—and an *enemy* to *our person*! If thou encounter any such, apprehend him, an thou dost love me.”

“Your Grace doo’s me as great honours as can be desired in the hearts of his subjects!” says Fluellen eagerly, tucking the glove under the band of his hat. “I would fain *see* this man that has but two legs”—an emasculated one—“who shall find himself *aggrieved* at this glove! That is all!—I would fain but see it *once*, and please God of his grace that I *might* see!”

“Knowest thou Gower?”

“He is my dear friend, an’t please you!”

“Pray thee, go seek him and bring him to my tent.”

Fluellen bows. “I will fetch him!” he says happily, and heads into the congregation of weary warriors.

King Henry quickly motions two noblemen closer. “My Lord of Warwick and my brother Gloucester, *follow Fluellen closely at the heels*! The glove which I have given him for a favour may perhaps purchase him a box o’ th’ ear!—it is *the soldier’s*!—I, by bargain, should wear it *myself*!

“Follow, good cousin Warwick; if that the soldier strike him—and I judge by his blunt bearing he will keep his word—some sudden mischief may arise of it; for I do know Fluellen *valiant*, and, touched with choler, hot as *gunpowder* will he *return* an injury!

“Follow and see there be no harm between them!”

The prince chuckles as he and the earl dash after the captain.

The king turns to a tall duke. “Come you with me, my uncle of Exeter.”

Williams tells Gower, as they stride along, “I warrant it is to *knight* you, captain!” They near the king’s pavilion, but suddenly Williams stops—he has spotted his glove.

Calls Fluellen, motioning the officer forward, “God’s will and his pleasure, captain! I beseech you now, come apace to the king! There is more *good* toward you peradventure than is in your knowledge to dream of!”

“Sir, know you this glove?” demands Williams, pointing to the one in his hat.

Fluellen’s eyes narrow. “*Know* the glove? I know the glove is *glove*....”

“*I know this!*” cries the soldier, knocking the Welsh captain’s hat off, “and thus I *challenge* it!”

“*Sblood!*” cries Fluellen. “An arrant *traitor* as any is in the universal *world*, or in *France*, or in *England!*” He retrieves the fallen hat.

Captain Gower stares at his soldier. “*How now*, sir? You *villain!*”

“Do you think I’ll be *forsworn*?”—violate my vow, asks Williams defiantly.

“Stand *away*, Captain Gower!” cries Fluellen. “I will give Treason his payment into *blows*, I warrant you!”

“I am no *traitor!*”

“That’s a *lie* in thy *throat!*” Fluellen summons soldiers approaching with Prince Humphrey and Lord Warwick. “I charge you, in his majesty’s name *apprehend* him!—he’s a friend of the *Duke Alençon’s!*”

But the earl asks, calmly, “How now, how now? What’s the matter?”

“My Lord of Warwick, *here*—praised be God for it!—is a *most contagious treason* come to light, look you, as you shall desire in a summer’s day!” He draws a breath and is ready to expound, no doubt at length, when he sees King Henry approaching. “Here is *his majesty!*”

“How now! What’s the matter?” demands the king.

Fluellen steps forward. “My liege, here is a villain and a *traitor!*—that, look Your Grace, has *struck* the glove which Your Majesty is take out of the helmet of Alençon!”

“My liege, that was *my* glove!” insists Williams, pulling its mate from his belt. “Here is the fellow of it!—and he that I gave it to in exchange promised to wear it in his cap! I promised to *strike* him, if he did! I met this man with my glove in his cap, and I have been as good as my word!”

Fluellen sneers. “Your Majesty, hear now, saving Your Majesty’s manhood, what an arrant, rascally, beggarly, lousy *knave* it is!”

He tugs the glove from his plumed hat. “I hope Your Majesty is pear me testimony and witness, and will avouchment, that this is the glove of *Alençon* that Your Majesty is give me; in your conscience, now!” He hands it to Henry.

“Give me *thy* glove, soldier,” says King Henry. “Look, *here* is the *fellow* of it: ’twas *I*, indeed, thou promised’st to strike!—and thou hadst given me *most bitter terms!*”

“An’t please Your Majesty, let his *neck* answer for it, if there is any martial law in the world!” says Fluellen.

The king regards the foot soldier. “How canst thou make me satisfaction?”

“All *offences*, my lord, come from the heart! Never came any from *mine* that might offend Your Majesty.”

“It was *ourself* thou didst abuse!”

“Your Majesty came not *like* yourself!—you appeared to me as but a common man—witness the *night*, your *garments*, your *aloneness!* And what Your Highness suffered under that shape, I beseech you take it for your *own* fault, and not mine! For had you been as I *took* you for, I made no offence; therefore, I beseech Your Highness pardon me!”

Henry smiles. “Here, Uncle Exeter, fill this glove with *crowns*, and give it to this fellow!” The duke does so, taking money from the leather pouch slung at his waist. Williams stares at the glove as it bulges out, growing heavy with coins.

“Keep it, fellow,” says the king. “And wear it for an honour in thy cap—till I do *challenge* it,” he adds, laughing. “Give him the crowns!”

“And, captain, you must needs be *friends* with him,” he urges the Welshman.

Fluellen nods agreement. “By this day and this light, the fellow has *mettle* enough in his *belly!*” But he opens his own purse to select a coin. “Hold; there is twelve-pence for you; and I pray you to serve Got, and keep you out of prawls and prabbles and quarrels and dissensions; and, I warrant you, it is the better for you!”

Williams scorns the counsel—and the pittance. “I will none of *your* money!”

“It is with a *good will*,” protests Fluellen. “I can tell you, it will serve you to mend your shoes! Come, wherefore should you be so pashful? Your shoes is not so good....” He carefully examines the shilling in his hand for signs of clipping. “’Tis a *good* silling, I warrant you, or I will exchange it....”

An English courtier approaches and bows before the king.

“Now, herald, are the dead numberèd?”

The man proffers a paper. "Here is the number of the slaughtered French." Lord Exeter unrolls it and starts to read.

"What prisoners of good sort are taken, Uncle?"

"Charles, Duke of Orléans, nephew to the king; John, Duke of Bourbon, and Lord Bouciqualt." He looks down the sheet to the tallies. "Of other lords and barons, knights and squires, full fifteen hundred—besides common men."

King Henry takes the document and looks at the last lines. "This note doth tell me of *ten thousand* French that in the field lie slain!

"Of *princes* in this number, and nobles bearing banners, there lie dead one hundred, twenty-six; added to these, of knights, esquires, and gallant gentlemen, eight thousand and four hundred—of the which, five hundred were but *yesterday* dubbèd *knights*!

"So that, in these ten thousand they have lost, there are but sixteen hundred *mercenaries*"—commoners paid to fight as foot-soldiers. "The rest are princes, barons, lords, knights, squires, and gentlemen of blood and quality!

"Among the names of those their nobles that lie dead: Charles Delabreth, high constable of France; Jaques of Châtillon, admiral of France; the master of the cross-bows, Lord Rambures; great master of France, the brave Sir Guichard Dolphin; John, Duke of Alençon; Anthony, Duke of Brabant, the brother of the Duke of Burgundy; and Edward, Duke of Bar.

"Of lusty earls, Grandpré and Roussi, Fauconberg and Foix, Beaumont and Marle, Vaudemont and Lestrale.

"*Here* was a royal fellowship of death!

"Where is the number of our English dead?" The herald hands him another paper.

"Edward, the Duke of York; the Earl of Suffolk; Sir Richard Ketly; Davy Gam, esquire; none else of name—and of all other men, but five and twenty!"

He looks up to the sky. "O God, *thine* arm was here!—and not to us, but to thine arm alone, ascribe we *all*! When, without stratagem, but in plain strokes and even play of battle, was ever known so great and little loss on one part and on the other?"

"Take it, God, for it is none but *thine*!"

"'Tis *wondrous*!" says Exeter.

"Come, go we in procession to the village," says the king, already thinking of the French population he intends to govern. "And be it—proclaim it through our host—*death to boast* of this, or take the praise from *God* which is his only!"

Fluellen is taken aback; he wants to savor the stunning military victory. "Is it not lawful, an please Your Majesty, to tell how many is killed?"

"Yes, captain; but with this acknowledgement: that *God* fought for us!"

"Yes, my conscience, He did us great good," Fluellen allows.

King Henry V tells the prince, "Do we all holy rites. Let there be sung '*Non nobis*' and '*Te Deum*.' The dead with charity enclose in clay.

"Then on to Calais; and to *England* then—where ne'er from France arrived more happy men!"

Chapter Eleven Victors in France

Vouchsafe to those that have not read the story, so I may prompt them onward!" the Chorus urges some in his audience, concerning the astonishing British victory achieved nearly two centuries earlier. "And such as *have*, I humbly pray them to admit the excuses of time, of numbers, and due course of things which cannot in their huge and proper life be here *presented*.

"Now we bear the king toward *Calais*! Grant him there; there *seen*, heave him away upon

your wingèd thoughts athwart the ocean!

“Behold the *English beach*, pale beside the flood, with men, with wives and boys whose shouts and claps *out-voice* the deep-mouthèd *sea!*—which like a mighty whiffler ’fore the king seems to *prepare his way!*”

“So let him land; then see him set on, solemnly, toward London.

“So swift a pace hath *thought* that even now you may imagine him upon Blackheath,”—just outside the capital, “where his lords desire him to have his bruised helmet and his bended sword *borne before him through the city!* He forbids it, being free of vainness and self-glorious pride, giving full trophy, signal and ostent quite *from himself—to God!*”

“But now behold, in the living forge and working-house of thought, how London doth pour out her citizens, the mayor, and all his brethren in best sort! Like the senators of the antique Rome, with the plebeians swarming at their heels, going forth to fetch-in their *conquering Caesar*, did they this *Harry!*”

“Now *in London* place him—for as yet the lamentation of the French invites the King of England to stay at home. The emperor”—Sigismund, secular ruler of the Holy Roman Empire—“is coming, in behalf of France, to set peace in order between them.

“But omit all the occurrences, whatever chancèd till Harry’s *return to France*, for there must we bring him—and myself have played out the *Interim*, by remembering to you ’tis *past!*”

“Then brook abridgment, and your eyes advance after your thoughts, straight back again to France....”

Two officers chat as they stroll through the English army’s new camp in Normandy, where, city by city, the French defenders, deeply riven by civil strife since his first invasion, have yielded to the forces of King Henry V.

Gower nods to his companion. “Aye, that’s right. But why wear you your leek today? Saint Davy’s day is past.”

“There is occasions and causes why and wherefore in all things,” replies Fluellen. “I will tell *you*, asse my friend, Captain Gower: the rascally, scald, beggarly, lousy, pragging knave *Pistol*, which you and yourself and all the world know to be no petter than a *fellow*, look you now, *of no merits!*—he is come to me yesterday and prings me *pread* and *salt*, look you—and bid me *eat my leek!*”

“It was in a place where I could not breed no contention with him; but I will be so bold as to wear it in my cap till I see him once *again*, and then I will tell him a little piece of my desires.”

The English captain points ahead. “Well, here he comes, swelling like a turkey-cock!”

“’Tis no matter for his *swellings* nor his turkey *cock!*” says the Welshman angrily. “God pless *you*, Aunchient *Pistol!* You *scurvy, lousy knave*, God pless *you!*”

Pistol stops, folds his arms, and faces Fluellen. “*Hmh!* Art thou *Bedlam?*”—fled from the London asylum. “Dost thou *thirst*, base Trojan, to have me fold up *Parca’s* fatal web?”—end the life spun by one of the Fates. He waves the captain aside. “*Hence!* I am qualmish at the *smell of leek!*”

Fluellen pulls off his hat to extract the fragrant, oniony herb from the band. “I peseech you heartily, *scurvy, lousy knave*, at my desires and my requests and my petitions, to *eat*, look you, this leek! *Because*, look you, you do not love it, nor your affections and your appetites and your digestions doo’s not agree with it, I would desire you to *eat* it!”

The corporal snorts. “Not for *Cadwallader* and all his *goats!*” The seventh-century king’s troops had defended Wales from invading Saxons.

Fluellen strikes Pistol’s head with the knob of the oaken cudgel in his left hand. “*There is one goat for you!*” He raises the leek in his right hand. “Will you be so good, *scauld knave*, as *eat* it?”

“*Base Trojan*, thou shalt *die!*” cries old Pistol, his scalp bleeding.

Fluellen moves closer. “You say very true, *scauld knave*—when *God’s* will is! I will desire you to live in the mean time, and *eat your victuals!* Come,” he says, striking him again, “there is

sauce for it!

“You called me yesterday *mountain squire*,”—one from the hills, “but I will make *you today* a squire of *low degree*! I pray you, *fall to!* If you can *mock* a leek, you can *eat* a leek!”

Gower sees that Pistol is trembling, and he urges restraint. “Enough, captain! You have astonished him.”

Fluellen is adamant. “I say I will make him eat some part of my leek, or I will peat his pate for *days!*”

“*Bite*, I pray you!” he insists to Pistol. “It is good for your fresh wound on your *ploody coxcomb!*”

The wiry old man stares at the shoot. “Must I bite?”

“Yes, certainly, and out of doubt and out of question, too, and ambiguities!”

“By this leek, I will most horribly *revenge!*” But Pistol winces as Fluellen moves forward. “I eat, and eat, I *swear!*”

“*Eat*, I pray you; there is not enough leek to *swear* by.” He grasps the man’s coat. “Will you have some more *sauce* to your leek?”

Pistol, red-faced, chews. “Quiet thy *cudgel!*—thou dost *see* I eat!”

“Much good you *do*, scauld knave, heartily! Nay, pray you *throw none away*,” he warns. “The skin is good for your broken coxcomb.

“When you take occasions to see leeks hereafter, I pray you not *mock* at ’em, that is all,” he says, feeling a bit of remorse, in spite of himself.

“Good,” mutters Pistol sourly, as he chews the remainder.

“Aye, leeks *is* good!” His anger abating, the captain regards the cowering graybeard. “Hold you, there is a groat to heal your pate.” Fluellen offers Pistol the small coin.

“*Me—a groat!*”

“Yes, verily; and in truth, you shall *take* it—or I have another leek in my *pocket* which you shall eat!”

Scowling, Pistol snatches the coin. “I *take* thy groat—in earnest of *revenge!*”

Fluellen shrugs, disgusted. “If I owe *you* anything, I will pay you in *cudgels!*—you shall be a *wood-monger*, and buy nothing of me *but cudgels!*” He turns to go. “God b’ wi’ you, and keep you, and heal your pate.”

After the Welshman has left, Pistol spits, several times, in anger and disgust. “All *Hell* shall stir for this!”

Captain Gower merely laughs. “*Go to!*—you are a *counterfeit*, a cowardly *knave!*”

“Will you *mock* at an ancient tradition, begun upon an honourable *respect*, and worn as a memorable trophy of predecessors’ *valour?*—yet dare not avouch in your *deeds* any of your *words!*”

“I have seen you gleeking and *galling* at this gentleman, twice or *thrice!* You thought because he could not speak English in the *native* garb he could therefore not handle an English *cudgel!* You find it *otherwise!* And henceforth, let a Welsh *correction* teach you a good English *condition!*”

“Fare ye well,” he says, still shaking his head as he strides away.

Pistol dabs above his stinging ear with a crumpled handkerchief.

Doth Fortune play the huswife with me now?

News have I that my Doll is dead i’ the hospital, of the malady of France—syphilis. And there my rendezvous is quite cut off.

He glances around at the outskirts of the vast camp. *Old I do wax; and from my weary limbs, honour is cudgelled.*

Slouching toward the tents he thinks of the Eastcheap tavern’s tawdry tenants. *Well, bawd I’ll turn—and somewhat lean to cutpurse or quick-hand.... To England I’ll I steal, and there will steal!*

Pistol brightens. *And patches will I get onto these cudgelled scars—and swear I got them in*

the Gallia wars!

King Henry V is jovial during his party's reception in the French palace at Troyes, eighty miles from Paris. "Peace to this meeting—wherefore we are met!" He bows politely to the king and queen. "Unto our brother France, and to our sister, health and fair time of day!"

He smiles at their daughter, the princess—"Joy and good wishes to our most fair and princely cousin Katherine!

"And as a branch and member of this royalty, by whom this great assembly is convened, we do salute *you*, Duke of Burgundy—and, French princes and peers, health to you all!"

The fighting is done, and King Charles VI is courteous in defeat. "Right joyous are we to behold your face, most worthy brother England, fairly met! So are *you*, princes English, every one!"

Says Queen Isabel, "May the issue of this good day and of this gracious meeting be as happy, brother England, as *we* are now glad to behold your eyes!—your eyes, which hitherto have borne in them, against the French that met them in their bent, the venom of murdering basilisks!

"We hope eyeballs have *lost* the fatal quality of such looks, and that this day shall fairly change all griefs and quarrels into love."

King Henry smiles. "To cry *amen* to that, thus we appear."

The queen turns to the visiting nobles. "You English princes all, I do salute you!" Accompanying Henry are his brothers, John, Humphrey and Thomas, and Lords Exeter, Warwick, and Westmoreland, among others.

A young French nobleman steps forward and bows. "My duty to you both, in equal love, great Kings of France and England!" says Lord Burgundy. "That I have laboured, with all my wits, my pains and strong endeavours, to bring Your Most Imperial Majesties unto this bar and royal interview, Your Mightinesses on both parts best can witness.

"Then since my office hath so far prevailed that, face to face and royal eye to eye, you have congregated, let it not disgrace me if I ask, before this royal view, what rub or what impediment there is, why that the naked, poor and mangled *Peace*, dear nurse of hearts and joyful births, should not in this best garden of the world, our fertile France, put *up* her lovely visage!

"*Alas*, she hath from France too long been chasèd, and all her husbandry doth lie in heaps, corrupting in its own fertility!

"Her *vine*, the merry cheerer of the heart, unpruned dies; her *hedges*, never pleached, like prisoners wildly overgrown with hair, put forth disordered twigs! Her fallow *leas* the damel, hemlock and rank fumitory doth root upon, while the coulter *rusts* that should deracinate such savagery! Even the *mead*, that erst brought sweetly forth the freckled cowslip, burnet and green clover, wanting the scythe, all uncorrected conceives *rankly* by idleness, losing both beauty and utility—and nothing teems but hateful docks, rough thistles, kecksies, burs.

"And as our vineyards, fallows, meads and hedge, defecting from their natures, grow in *wildness*—even so our houses and our selves and *children* have lost, or do not *learn* for want of time, the *sciences* that should *become* our country—grow but like *savages*—as soldiers will that nothing do but meditate on *blood*—to swearing and stern looks, diffuse attire, and everything that seems *unnatural*!

"Which to reduce into our *former* favour, you are assembled!

"And my speech entreats that I may know the bar why gentle Peace should not *expel* these circumstances, and bless us with her former qualities."

King Henry replies—firmly. "If, Duke of Burgundy, you would have the peace whose lack gives growth to the imperfections which you have cited, you must *buy* that peace with full accord to all our just *demands*—whose tenors and particular effects you have, enscheduled briefly, in your hands."

"The king hath heard them," says Burgundy, "to the which as yet there is no answer made."

"Well then the peace, which you before so urged, lies in his answer."

Says King Charles, "I have with but a cursory eye o'erglanced the articles. Pleaseth Your Grace to appoint some of your Council immediately to sit with us once more, with better heed to re-survey them, and we will soon pass our accepts in peremptory answer."

King Henry agrees. "Brother, we shall. Go, uncle Exeter, and brother Clarence, and you, brother Gloucester"—Prince Thomas and Prince Humphrey. "Warwick and Huntingdon, go with the king; and take with you free power to ratify, augment, or alter, as your wisdoms best shall see advantageable for our dignity, anything in or out of our demands, and we'll cosign thereto."

He turns to the queen. "Will you, fair sister, go with the princes, or stay here with us?"

"Our gracious brother, I will go with them," says Queen Isabel. "Haply a woman's voice may do some good, when articles too narrowly urgèd be stood on."

Henry smiles. "Yet leave our cousin Katherine here with us." He looks again at the pretty princess. "Within the *fore-rank* of our articles, she comprises our *capital* demand!"

Isabel nods. "She hath good leave"—full permission.

King Charles and his queen lead the Duke of Burgundy and the English lords, with all of their various attendants, into a hall furnished with tables and maps, pens and paper, where they are to settle the terms of this peace.

The young monarch approaches the French princess. "Fair Katherine—and *most* fair—will you vouchsafe to teach a soldier such terms as will enter at a lady's ear and plead his love-suit to her gentle heart?"

Katherine blushes. "Your Majesty shall mock at me!—I cannot speak your England!"

"Oh, fair Katherine, if you will love me soundly with your French *heart*, I will be glad to hear you confess it brokenly with your English tongue!" He regards her with open admiration. "Do you like me, Kate?"

"*Pardonnez-moi*," says she, "I cannot tell vut is '*like me*'...."

"An *angel* is like you, Kate, and you are like an angel!"

Katherine looks to her waiting-gentlewoman Alice. "*Que dit-il? Que je suis semblable à les anges?*"—What says he? That I look like the angels?

"*Oui, vraiment, 'sauf Votre Grâce, ainsi dit-il.*"—Yes, truly, 'save Your Grace, so he says.

"I said so, dear Katherine; and I must not blush to *affirm* it!"

She frowns. "*O bon Dieu! Les langues des hommes sont pleines de tromperies!*"

"What says she, fair one?" he asks Alice. "That the tongues of men are full of *deceits*?"

"*Oui*, dat dee tongues of dee mans is be full of *deceits*! Dat say dee princess."

Henry laughs. "The princess is the better *English* woman! I' faith, Kate, *my* wooing is *fit* for thy understanding; I am glad thou canst speak no better English, for, if thou couldst, thou wouldst find me such a *plain* king that thou wouldst think I had *sold my farm* to *buy* my crown!

"I know no ways to *mince* it in love, but directly do say '*I love you!*' And if you urge me farther—saying '*Do* you, in faith?'—I wear out my suit!"—exhaust my case.

He is genuinely taken with her. "Give me your answer; i' faith, *do!*—and so clap hands in a bargain!" He offers his hand to shake hers. "How say you, lady?"

Katherine is amused—and pleased. "'*Sauf Votre Honneur*,"—'Save Your Honor, "me understand *vell*."

"Marry, if you would put me to *verses* or *dancing* for your sake, Kate, why you *undid* me! For the one, I have neither *words* nor *measure*, and as for the other, I have no *strength* in measure,"—sense of timing, "yet a reasonable measure of *strength*. If I could win a lady at *leap-frog*, or by vaulting into my saddle with my *armour* on my back, be it spoken, under the correction of bragging, I should quickly leap unto a wife!" Katherine smiles, enjoying his ineptitude and earnestness. "Or if I might *buffet someone* for my love, or upon my horse *bound* for her favours, I could lay on like a *butcher*, and sit like a *jack-an-apes*,"—cling like a monkey, "never away!"

"But, before God, Kate, I cannot but look greenly—not gasp out my eloquence, nor offer any cunning in protestation—only *downright* oaths, which I never use till *urgèd*,"—truly moved, "nor

never break for urging!”—for any reason. “If thou canst love a fellow of this temper, Kate, whose face is not worth sunburning, who never looks in his mirror for love of anything *he* reads there, let *thine* eyes see my book.

“I speak to thee as a plain soldier. If thou canst love me for that, *take* me; if not, to say to thee that I shall die is true... but for *thy love*, by the Lord, no.

“Yet I do *love* thee! And while thou livest, dear Kate, take a fellow of plain and uncoined constancy,”—fidelity yet unbestowed, “for he *perforce* must do thee right, because he hath not the gift to woo in other places!

“As for these fellows of *infinite* tongue, who can *rhyme* themselves into ladies’ favours, they do always *reason* themselves *out* again!” Katherine doesn’t know the phrase *rhyme or reason*; but she can hear the frustration in his voice.

He paces. “What? A ‘speaker’ is but a *prater*; a rhyme is but a *ballad*. A good leg will fail, a straight back will stoop, a black beard will turn white, a curled pate will grow bald, a fair face will wither, a full eye will wax hollow!—but a good *heart*, Kate, is the sun and the moon!—or, rather, the *sun*, and *not* the moon: for it shines bright and never *changes*, but keeps its course *truly*!

“If thou would have such a one, take *me*; and take me, take a *soldier*; take a soldier, take a *king*!

“And what sayest thou, then, to my love? Speak, my fair—and *fairly*, I pray thee!”

She regards the handsome young man. “Is it poseeble dat I sould love dee enemy of France?”

“*No!*—it is *not* possible you should love the *enemy* of France, Kate! But, in loving *me*, you should love the *friend* of France!—for I love France so well that I will not part with a *village* of it: I will have it all *mine*!

“And, Kate, when France *is* mine and I am yours, then *yours* is France when you are *mine*!”

Katherine blinks. “I cannot tell vat *is* dat.”

“No, Kate? I will tell thee in French—which I am sure will hang upon my tongue like a new-married wife about her husband’s neck, hardly to be shook off.”

He speaks slowly. “*Je... quand sur le possession de France, et quand vous avez le possession de moi*—let me see, what then? Saint Denis, be my speed!—*donc votre est France, et vous êtes mienne*.”

He scratches at his chin. “It is as easy for me, Kate, to conquer a *kingdom* as to speak that much *more* French!” He sighs. “I shall never move thee in French, unless it be to *laugh* at me!”

Katherine does laugh. “*Sauf Votre Honneur, le français que vous parlez, il est meilleur que l’anglais lequel je parle!*” —’Save Your Honor, the French that you speak, it is better than such English as *I* speak!

“No, ’faith, is’t not, Kate,” he admits. “But thy speaking of my tongue, and I thine, most *truly* in falsity,”—forthrightly, despite errors, “must needs be granted to be much *at one!*”—in accord.

He moves closer, his eyes searching her face. “But, Kate, dost thou understand *thus* much English: Canst thou love me?”

Katherine returns his intense look—then blushes again, and looks down. “I cannot tell.”

Can’t *tell*, or can’t *say*? King Henry V glances at Alice. “Can any of your *neighbours* tell, Kate? I’ll ask *them*!

“Come, I *know* thou lovest me!—and at night, when you come into your closet,”—bed chamber, “you’ll question this gentlewoman about me! And I know, Kate, you will to her *dispraise* those parts in me that you *love with all your heart*!

“But, good Kate, mock me *mercifully!*—the rather, gentle princess, because I love thee *cruelly!*”—suffer the pangs of love.

“If ever thou beest mine, Kate—as I have a saving faith within me tells me thou *shalt*—I’ll have thee through a *scambling*”—in a time of turmoil, given threats from the east. “And therefore thou must needs prove a good *soldier*-breeder! Shall not thou and I, between Saint *Denis* and Saint *George*,”—patron saints of France and England, “compound a boy half French, half

English, that shall go to *Constantinople* and *take the Turk by the beard*? Shall we not? What sayest thou, my fair flower-de-luce?"

She understands some of them, but she hears too many words. "I do not know dat—"

"No, 'tis *hereafter* to *know*—but *now* to *promise*! Do now but promise, Kate, you will endeavour for your French part of such a boy! And, as for my English moiety,"—half, "take the word of a *bachelor* and a *king*!"

"How answer you, *la plus belle Katherine du monde, mon très cher et divin déesse*?"—the most beautiful Katherine in the world, my very dear and divine goddess.

Now Katherine grins. "Your Majestee 'ave *fausse* French enough to deceive dee most sage demoiselle dat is *en France*!"

"Now *fie* upon my false French!" cries Henry. "By mine honour, *in true English* I love thee, Kate! By which honour I dare not swear *thou* lovest *me*—yet my blood begins to *flatter* me that thou *dost*, the poor and untempting effect of my *visage* notwithstanding."

He again paces, fretfully. "Now beshrew my father's *ambition*! He was thinking of *civil wars* when he begot me; therefore was I created with a *stubborn outside*—with an aspect of *iron*, such that, when I come to woo ladies, I fright them.

"But, in faith, Kate, the *older* I wax the better I shall *appear*! My comfort is that *old age*, that ill layer-up"—poor preserver—"of *beauty*, can do no more spoil upon *my* face! Thou hast me, *if* thou hast me, at the *worst*; and thou shalt wear me, *if* thou wear me, better and *better*!"

"And therefore tell me, most fair Katherine, *will* you have me? Put off your maiden blushes; avouch the thoughts of your heart with the looks of an *empress*! Take me by the hand, and say 'Harry of England, I am *thine*!'—which word thou shalt no sooner bless mine ear withal but I will tell thee aloud, 'England is thine, Ireland is thine, France is thine, and Harry Plantagenet is thine!'—who, though I speak it before His face, if he be not fellow with the *best* King, thou shalt find the best king of good *fellows*!"

He moves closer. "Come, your answer in broken music,"—the kind sung in parts, "for thy *voice* is music and thy *English* broken! Therefore, *queen of all*, Katherine, break thy mind to me in broken English: wilt thou have me?"

She lowers her eyes. "Dat is as it sall please de *roi mon père*"—the king my father.

Henry smiles. "Aye, it will please him *well*, Kate!—it *shall* please him, Kate!"

"Den it sall also content me," says Katherine demurely.

"Upon that I kiss your hand,"—he does so—"and I call you *my queen*!"

Katherine glances at the smiling courtiers, as the king continues to hold her hand.

She tells Harry, "*Laissez, mon seigneur, laissez, laissez!*"—*Let go, my lord, let go, let go!* "*Ma foi, je ne veux point que vous abaissiez votre grandeur en baisant la main d'une de votre seigneurie indigne serviteur! Excusez-moi, je vous supplie, mon très-puissant seigneur!*"—My faith, I wish you wouldn't abase your grandeur by kissing the hand of one of Your Lordship's unworthy servants! Pardon me, I entreat my most-powerful lord!

Henry smiles mischievously. "Then I will kiss your *lips*, Kate!"

Katherine backs away. "*Les dames et demoiselles pour être baisées devant leur noces, il n'est pas la coutume de France!*"

Henry asks Alice, "Madame, my interpreter, what says she?"

"Dat it is not be dee fashion *pour les* ladies of France.... I cannot tell vat is '*baiser*' *en* English...."

"*To kiss*," laughs the king; she undoubtedly knows.

Now Alice grins. "Your Majesty *entendre* better *que moi*"—hears better than I.

"It is not a fashion for the maids in France to kiss before they are married, would *she* say?"

"*Oui, vraiment.*"—Yes, truly.

"Oh, Kate, precise customs *curtsy* to great kings!" says Henry, again taking her hand. "Dear Kate, *you and I* cannot be confined within the weak rules of a country's *fashion*!—we are the *makers* of manners, Kate!—and the liberty that attends *our* places stops the mouth of all find-

faults—as I will do *yours*, for upholding the strict fashion of your country by denying me a kiss! Therefore...” he says, leaning forward, “*patient* be, and yielding...” He kisses her, quite tenderly.

“You have *witchcraft* in your *lips*, Kate!” he cries, delighted. “There is more sugared eloquence in the *touch* of them than in the tongues of *all the French Council*, and they should sooner persuade Harry of England than a general petition of *monarchs!*”

As he starts to kiss her again, the doors swing open for the royal party. “Here comes your father.”

“God save Your Majesty,” says Lord Burgundy, coming to stand beside Henry, as King Charles and Queen Isabel return with the English noblemen. “My royal cousin, teach you our princess English?”

“I would have her learn, my fair cousin, how perfectly I *love* her,” says Henry. “And *that* is *good* English!”

Burgundy regards the smiling pupil. “Is she not apt?”

Henry sighs. “Our tongue”—the king’s personal English—“is rough, coz, and my *condition* is not smooth: having neither the voice nor the heart of *flattery* about me, I cannot so conjure up the spirit of *Love*”—Cupid—“in her such that he will appear in his true likeness.”

Burgundy—who had spotted the attempted kiss—smiles. He speaks quietly to the other young man he has come to know and admire. “Pardon the frankness of my mirth, if I answer you for that. If you would *conjure* in her, you must make a *circle!*”—one such as a wizard draws on the ground. “If you conjure up *Love* in her in his *true likeness*, he must appear *naked* and *blind!*”—as the little, winged archer. He chuckles. “Can you blame her then, being a maid yet rosèd over with the virgin crimson of modesty, if she deny the appearance of a *naked boy* in her naked-seeming *self*? It were, my lord, a hard condition for a *maid* to consent to!”

King Henry laughs. “Yet they do *close their eyes* and *yield*, while *Love* is *blind* and *compels!*”

“*They* are *excusèd*, my lord, when they *see* not what they do,” says Burgundy wryly.

“Then, good my lord, teach your cousin consent to *blinking!*”—shutting her eyes.

Burgundy grins. “I will wink at her consenting, my lord, if *you* will teach her to know thy *meaning!* For maids, well summered and kept warm, are like flies at Bartholomew Fair-tide—blind, though they have their eyes! And then they will endure *handling* which before would not abide *looking* on!”

“This moral tides me over to the time of *hot summer*,” says Henry, “and so I shall *catch* the fly your cousin at the latter end!—when *she* must be blind too!”

“As *love is*, my lord, *before* it loves.”

Henry nods. “It is so.” He looks up, and sees that the French courtiers are watching—and listening. “And *you* may, some of you, *thank* *Love* for *my* blindness—which cannot see many a fair French *city* because one fair French *maid* stands in my way!”

Says King Charles, “My lord, you see them *perspectively*”—as smaller, for being farther away, as in a painting. “*Cities*”—those in the French peace offer, along with Katherine—“are *turned into* a maid—for those which war hath never entered are *also* girdled by maiden walls.”

Henry asks him, “Shall Kate be my wife?”

Charles smiles. “So please you.”

“I am content,” Henry tells him happily, “that the maiden *cities* you talk of may *wait on her*,”—remain French, like ladies-in-waiting, “if the maid that stood in the way of my *wish* shall show me the way to my *will!*”

Charles nods agreement. “We have consented to all terms, within reason.”

“Is’t so, my lords of England?”

“The king hath granted every article,” Westmoreland tells Henry. “His daughter *first*, and then in sequel *all*, according to their firmly proposèd natures.”

Exeter notes, “He hath not yet subscribed only this: where Your Majesty demands that the

King of France, on having occasion to *write* for any matter of *grant*, shall name Your Highness in this form: ‘Our very dear son Henry, King of England, heir to France,’ and with addition in French, ‘*Notre très cher fils Henri, Roi d’Angleterre, Hèritier de France;*’ and thus, in Latin: ‘*Praeclarissimus filius noster Henricus, Rex Angliae, et Haeres Franciae.*’”

Charles now hastens to add, “Nor, brother, have I *this* so denied but that *your request* shall make me let it pass.”

“I pray you then, in love and dear alliance, let that one article rank with the rest; and thereupon give me your daughter.”

“*Take her, fair son!*” says King Charles. “And from *her* blood raise up *issue* to me, so that the contending kingdoms of France and England, whose very shores look pale with envy of each other’s happiness, may cease their hatred, and this dear conjunction plant neighbourhood and Christian-like accord in their sweet bosoms, so that never shall War advance his bleeding sword ’twixt England and fair France!”

“*Amen!*” cry the lords of two nations.

King Henry V turns to Princess Katherine. “Now, *welcome*, Kate!

“And bear me witness *all*, that here I kiss her as *my sovereign queen!*”

He does so, and the heralds’ trumpets sound a regal flourish.

Queen Isabel beams. “May God, the best maker of all marriages, combine your *hearts* in one, your *realms* in one! As man and wife, being two, are one in *love*, so be there ’twixt your kingdoms such espousal that never may ill office, or fell jealousy, which troubles oft the bed of blessèd marriage, thrust in between the paction of these kingdoms, to make divorce of their incorporate league—so that English may as *French*, French as *Englishmen*, receive *each other!*

“*God*, speak to this, ‘*Amen!*’”

“*Amen!*” The nobles’ voices echo through the high throne room.

“Prepare we for our marriage,” says Henry, “on which day, my lord of Burgundy, we’ll take your oath, and all the peers’, for surety of our league.

“Then shall I swear to Kate. And you to me,” he say, taking her hand. “And may our oaths well kept and prosperous be!”

As the crowded platform clears, Chorus comes to the front.

“Thus far, with rough and all-unable pen, our bending author hath pursued the story, in little room confining mighty men, mangling by starts the full course of their glory.

“Small time—but *in* that small most *greatly* lived this star of England!

“Fortune made his sword—by which the world’s best *garden* he achieved!”