

Henry IV Part 1 abbreviated

Act 5, Scene 2

Inspiration

Situation: On their return to the rebel camp, Worcester convinces his good friend Sir Richard Vernon not to tell Hotspur of Prince Harry's one-on-one offer. Only later does Worcester tell his nephew Hotspur the truth, initially having told him "the king will bid you battle presently." But Hotspur dismisses the comment, looking forward to the battle, inspiring his troops as only Shakespeare can recreate.

DOUGLAS: Arm, gentlemen, to arms. For I have thrown a brave defiance in King Henry's teeth.

WORCESTER: The Prince of Wales stepped forth before the king, and, nephew, challenged you to single fight.

HOTSPUR: O, would the quarrel lay upon our heads, and that no man might draw short breath today but I and Harry Monmouth! Seemed it in contempt?

VERNON: No, by my soul. I never in my life did hear a challenge urged more modestly. He gave you all the duties of a man, trimmed up your praises with a princely tongue. He made a blushing account of himself and chide his truant youth with grace. Then did he pause, but let me tell the world: if he outlive the envy of this day, England did never owe so sweet a hope so much misconstrued in his wantonness.

HOTSPUR: Cousin, I think thou art enamored on his follies.

A messenger enters.

MESSENGER: My lord, prepare. The king comes on apace.

Hotspur to his men

I thank him who cuts me with his message,
For I have not the gift of tongue nor sage
Counsel to lift your blood with persuasion.
Arm, arm with speed, and fellows, soldiers, friends,
Let each man do his best; each do what one
Has to do. Gentlemen, life for all ends
Too soon. To spend that shortness basely were
Too long if life's short ride were no longer
Than an hour. If we live, we'll commence
To tread on kings; if we die, princes fall
With us. Sound all the lofty instruments
Of war, and by that music let us all
Embrace, for some of us shall never see
A second time for such a courtesy.