

Henry IV Part 2 abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 2

Counsel

Situation: Quick-witted Falstaff plays it a little loose and easy with the Chief Justice, doing his best to preempt the jurist and make light of the moment. The charismatic Falstaff wins the moment, so to speak, the Chief Justice offering Falstaff a kindly reprimand.

CHIEF JUSTICE: I talk not of his Majesty. I pray you let me speak with you. I think you are fallen into the disease, for you hear not what I say to you. To punish you by the heels would amend the attention of your ears. I sent for you, when there were matters against you for your life, to come speak with me.

FALSTAFF: As I was then advised by my learned counsel in the laws of this land-service, I did not come.

Chief Justice to Falstaff

Truth is, Sir John, you live in infamy;
Your means are slender and your waste great. He
That buckles himself in that great belt should
Seek to have less waist, and more means. And you,
Who trail the prince as his ill angel, would
Have been a better friend, if you'd not to
Have mislead the youthful prince, saying he
Your dog. Your day's service at Shrewsbury
Hath little gilded over your Gad's Hill
Exploit, but I'm loath to open this too
New-healed wound. Thank th' disturbed time for still
O'er this; we'll wake not a sleeping wolf. You
Are as a candle, burned out and fallow,
A wassail candle, my son, all tallow.

FALSTAFF: Not so, my lord. Your ill angel is light, but I hope he that looks upon me will take me without weighing. God send the companion a better prince. I cannot rid my hands of him.

CHIEF JUSTICE: Well, the king hath severed you. I hear you are going with Lord John of Lancaster against the Archbishop and the Earl of Northumberland.

FALSTAFF: Yea, I thank your pretty sweet wit for it. I would to God my name were not so terrible to the enemy as it is. I were better to be eaten to death with a rust than to be scoured to nothing with perpetual motion.

CHIEF JUSTICE: Well, be honest, be honest, and God bless your expedition. Fare you well. Commend me to my cousin Westmoreland.