

Henry V abbreviated

Act 4, Scene 1

Insight

Situation: Hoping to settle his men down and to offer them encouragement the night before the planned battle at Agincourt, Henry V disguises himself as one of his officers and mingles and talks anonymously with the troops.

HENRY: Methinks I could not die anywhere so contented as in the king's company, his cause being just and his quarrel honorable.

WILLIAMS: That's more than we know.

BATES: If his cause be wrong, our obedience to the king wipes the crime of it out of us.

WILLIAMS: But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make. I am afraid there are few die well that die in a battle. If these men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the king that led them to it.

HENRY: So, if a son that is by his father sent about merchandise do sinfully miscarry upon the sea, the imputation of his wickedness, by your rule, should be imposed upon his father that sent him.

Henry V to Bates and Williams

**The king's not bound to answer the endings
Of his men, for they purpose not the scenes
At their death when they purpose their duty.
Besides, if it come to swords, there is no
King can win with unspotted soldiers, be
His cause never so spotless. These men, though
They outstrip law, have no wings to fly from
God. War is His form of vengeance, where some
Men are punished for before-breach of the
King's law in now his quarrel. No more guilty
He if they die unprovided than he
Before guilty of their impiety,
If they now punished for their foul guilts sown,
For here every subject's soul is his own.**

HENRY: And in him that escapes, it were not sin to think that, making God so free an offer, He let him outlive that day to see His greatness and to teach others how they should prepare.

WILLIAMS: 'Tis certain, every man that dies ill, the ill upon his own head; the king is not to answer it.

BATES: I do not desire he should answer for me, and yet I determine to fight lustily for him.