

Henry V abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

Inspiration

Situation: A financing-of-the-government bill that would extract from the church “the better half of our possessions” has two powerful clerics worried. The Bishop of Canterbury believes that through the young king there is a way he and the Bishop of Ely can save the church from what they believe would be a potentially devastating financial burden.

ELY: But what prevention?

CANTERBURY: The king is full of grace and fair regard.

ELY: And a true lover of the holy Church.

Canterbury to Ely

No sooner his father breathed his last sigh
But that the prince's wildness seemed to die.
That very moment, 'twas like an angel
Whose heavenly spirits enveloped him,
Making him a scholar, cleansing his soul
Of scouring faults, not before seen, as in
This king. 'Tis a wonder how he should glean
It, with his addiction to those friends seen
So rude, shallow and unlettered. Now hear
Him debate common matters; reason in
Divinity; 'tis music to our ear,
As honeyed wisdom, yet not having been
Seen with any study or any wants,
Or with sequestration from public haunts.

ELY: The strawberry grows underneath the nettle, and wholesome berries thrive and ripen best neighbored by fruit of baser quality; and so the Prince obscured his contemplation under the veil of wildness, which grew like the summer grass, fastest by night.

CANTERBURY: It must be so, for miracles are ceased.