

Henry VIII abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

Insight

Situation: Norfolk irritates his friend Buckingham when he tells him about his recent trip to France where he watched the French and English kings attempt to outdo each other in an ostentatious display of excess, “all glittering, all in gold.” The “tournament” was organized by the Cardinal of York, Cardinal Wolsey, “second only to the king” in power.

Cardinal Wolsey enters. The Cardinal in his passage fixes his eye on Buckingham and Buckingham on him, both full of disdain. Cardinal Wolsey and his train exit.

BUCKINGHAM: This butcher’s cur is venom-mouthed, and I have not the power to muzzle him. A beggar’s learning outworths a noble’s blood. I read in ‘s looks matter against me, and his eye reviled me as his despised object. He’s gone to th’ king. I’ll follow and outstare him.

NORFOLK: Stay my lord.

Norfolk to Buckingham

What, are you angry? Ask God for temp’rance;
That is the medicine required to lance
Your disease. Let reason with your choler
Question what ‘tis you go about. Advise
Yourself as you might advise me. Vigor
In a full hot horse, unbridled by ties,
Exhausts him. Heat not a furnace for your
Foe so hot that it doth singe you. The more
Boiled a liquid, the more it doth o’erflow,
Wasting it; through violent swiftness one can
O’errun that which is attacked. There is no
English soul stronger to direct you than
Yourself. With the fluid of good reason
Douse the fire of too spirited passion.

BUCKINGHAM: Sir, I am thankful to you, and I’ll go along by your prescription. But this top-proud fellow --- I do know to be corrupt and treasonous.

NORFOLK: Say not “treasonous.”