



The Life of Henry the Fifth.

Enter Prologue.

O For a Muse of Fire, that would ascend
 The brightest Heaven of Invention:
 A Kingdom for a Stage, Princes to Act,
 And Monarchs to behold the swelling Scene.
 Then should the Warlike Harry, like himselfe,
 Assume the Port of Mars, and at his beeles
 (Least in, like Hounds) should Famine, Sword, and Fire
 Crouch for employment. But pardon, Gentles all:
 The flat vnrayed Spirits, that hath dar'd,
 On this vnworthy Scaffold, to bring forth
 So great an Object. Can this Cock-Pit hold
 The vastie fields of France? Or may we cramme
 Within this Wooden O, the very Cuskes
 That did affright the Ayre at Agincourt?
 O pardon: since a crooked Figure may
 Attest in little place a Million,
 And let vs, Cyphers to this great Account,

On your imaginarie Forces worke,
 Suppose within the Girdle of these Walls
 Are now confin'd two mightie Monarchies,
 Whose high, vp-reared, and abutting Fronts,
 The perillous narrow Ocean parts asunder.
 Peece out our imperfeliions with your thoughts:
 Into a thousand parts diuide one Man,
 And make imaginarie Puissance.
 Thinke when we talke of Horses, that you see them
 Printing their proud Hooses i' th' receiuing Earth:
 For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our Kings,
 Carry them here and there: Lumping o're Times;
 Turning th' accomplishment of many yeeres
 Into an Houre-glasse: for the which supplie,
 Admit me Chorus to this Historie;
 Who Prologue-like, your humble patience pray,
 Gently to heare, kindly to iudge our Play. Exit.

Actus Primus. Scœna Prima.

Enter the two Bishops of Canterbury and Ely.

Bish. Cant.

MY Lord, he tell you, that selfe Bill is vrg'd,
 Which in th' elcuth yere of y last Kings reign
 Was like, and had indeede against vs past,
 But that the scrambling and vnquiet time
 Did push it out of farther question.

Bish. Ely. But how my Lord shall we resist it now?

Bish. Cant. It must be thought on: if it passe against vs,

We loose the better halfe of our Possession:

For all the Temporall Lands, which men deuout

By Testament haue giuen to the Church,

Would they strip from vs; being valu'd thus,

As much as would maintaine, to the Kings honor,

Full fiftene Earles, and fiftene hundred Knights,

Six thousand and two hundred good Esquires:

And to reliefe of Lazars, and weake age

Of indigent faint Soules, past corporall toyle.

A hundred Almes-houses, right well supply'd:

And to the Coffers of the King beside,

A thousand pounds by th' yeere Thus runs the Bill.

Bish. Ely. This would drinke deepe.

Bish. Cant. I would drinke the Cup and all.

Bish. Ely. But what preuention?

Bish. Cant. The King is full of grace, and faire regard.

Bish. Ely. And a true louer of the holy Church.

Bish. Cant. The courses of his youth promis'd it not.

The breath no sooner left his Fathers body,

But that his wildnesse, mortify'd in him,

Seem'd to dye too: yea, at that very moment,

Consideration like an Angell came,

And whipt th'offending Adam out of him;

Leauing his body as a Paradise,

T'incelop and containe Celestiall Spirits.

Neuer was such a sodaine Scholler made:

Neuer came Reformation in a Flood,

With such a heady currance scowring faults:

Nor neuer Hydra-headed Wilfulnesse

So soone did loose his Seat; and all at once;

As in this King.

Bish. Ely. We are blessed in the Change.

Bish. Cant. Heare him but reason in Diuinitie;

And all-admiring, with an inward wish

You would desire the King were made a Prelate:

Heare him debate of Common-wealth Affaires;

You would say, it hath been all in all his study:

Lift his discourse of Warre; and you shall heare

A fearefull Battaile rendred you in Musique.

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Shakespeare, William. *The Life of Henry Fifth*. In *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies: published according to the true originall copies*. London: Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, 1623. Folger STC 22273 Fo.1 no.19

Shakespeare's First Folio (*Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies: published according to the true originall copies*. London: Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, 1623) contained thirty-six of Shakespeare's plays. Grouped into categories of comedies, histories, and tragedies, *The Life of Henry the Fifth* can be found in the histories, following *The Second part of K: Henry the fourth*. This was the third play to feature Henry as a protagonist; the first two, named after his father King Henry IV, feature "Prince Hal" before his ascension to the throne.

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