

from Shakespeares Henry V.]

I.

Background: It is the English camp on the morning of the battle of Agincourt. The weary English face fresh French troops, and are outnumbered 5:1. The cousin of Henry V (the English King), Westmorland, has just been heard to say, "O that we now had here but one ten thousand of those men in England that do no work today!"

[Enter King Henry]

King Henry:

"What's he that wishes so?  
My cousin Westmorland? - No, my fair cousin.  
If we are mark'd to die, we are enough  
To do our country loss; and if to live,  
The fewer the men, the greater share of honor.  
God's will, I pray thee, wish not one man more..."

Rather proclaim it, Westmorland, through my host,  
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,  
Let him depart; his passport shall be made,  
And crowns for convoy put into his purse:  
We would not die in that man's company  
That fears his fellowship to die with us.

This day is called the Feast of Crispian.  
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home  
Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named.  
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.

He that shall live this day, and see old age,  
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,  
And say, "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian."  
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,  
And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."

Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot  
But he'll remember with advantages  
What feats he did that day.

Then shall our names,  
Familiar in his mouth as household words, -  
Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,  
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester, -  
Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered.

This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,

From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered -  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition.  
And gentlemen in England now abed  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's Day."

- Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 4, Scene 3 (David Bennington (Ed.), The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Vol. III (NY: Bantam Books, 1988).

## II.

[During the English attack upon the French city of Harfleur, the English have smashed through the wall which surrounds the city. Henry V rallies his troops and prepares to begin the next stage of the assault:]

King Henry:

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,  
Or close the wall up with our English dead!

In peace there's nothing so becomes a man  
As modest stillness and humility.  
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,  
Then imitate the action of the tiger:  
Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood,  
Disguise fair nature with hard-favored rage.  
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect...  
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostrils wide,  
Now hard the breath, and bend up every spirit  
To his full height...

And you, goodyeomen,  
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here  
The mettle of your pasture. Let us swear  
That you are worth your breeding, which I doubt not,  
For there is none of you so mean and base  
That hath not noble luster in your eyes.  
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,  
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot!  
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge  
Cry, 'God for Harry! England and Saint George!'"

### III.

[Henry V declares the following ultimatum to the Governor of Harfleur and its remaining defenders upon its walls. He describes this as the last parley.]

King Henry:

"Therefore, you men of Harfleur,  
Take pity of your town and of your people  
Whiles yet my soldiers are in my command,  
Whiles yet the cool and temperate wind of grace  
O'erblows the filthy and contagious clouds  
Of heady murder, spoil, and villainy.

If not, why, in a moment look to see  
The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand  
Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters;  
Your fathers taken by the silver beards  
And their most reverend heads dashed to the walls;  
Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,  
Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confused  
Do break the clouds...

What say you? Will you yield, and this avoid,  
Or, guilty in defense, be thus destroyed?"

- Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 3, Scene 1 and Scene 3. The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Vol. III. David Bevington (Ed.). (NY: Bantam Books, 1988).