

Henry V, Part One

Act IV, sc. 1 (line 16 - intercut)

TALBOT

Shame to the Duke of Burgundy and thee!

I vow'd, base knight, when I did meet thee next,

To tear the garter from thy craven's leg,

Plucking it off

Which I have done, because unworthily

Thou wast installed in that high degree.

Pardon me, princely Henry, and the rest

This dastard, at the battle of Patay,

When but in all I was six thousand strong

And that the French were almost ten to one,

Before we met or that a stroke was given,

Like to a trusty squire did run away:

In which assault we lost twelve hundred men;

Myself and divers gentlemen beside

Were there surprised and taken prisoners.

Then judge, great lords, if I have done amiss;

Or whether that such cowards ought to wear

This ornament of knighthood, yea or no.

GLOUCESTER

To say the truth, this fact was infamous

And ill beseeming any common man,

Much more a knight, a captain and a leader.

TALBOT

When first this order was ordain'd, my lords,
Knights of the garter were of noble birth,
Valiant and virtuous, full of haughty courage,
Such as were grown to credit by the wars;
Not fearing death, nor shrinking for distress,
But always resolute in most extremes.
He then that is not furnish'd in this sort
Doth but usurp the sacred name of knight,
Profaning this most honourable order,
And should, if I were worthy to be judge,
Be quite degraded, like a hedge-born swain
That doth presume to boast of gentle blood.