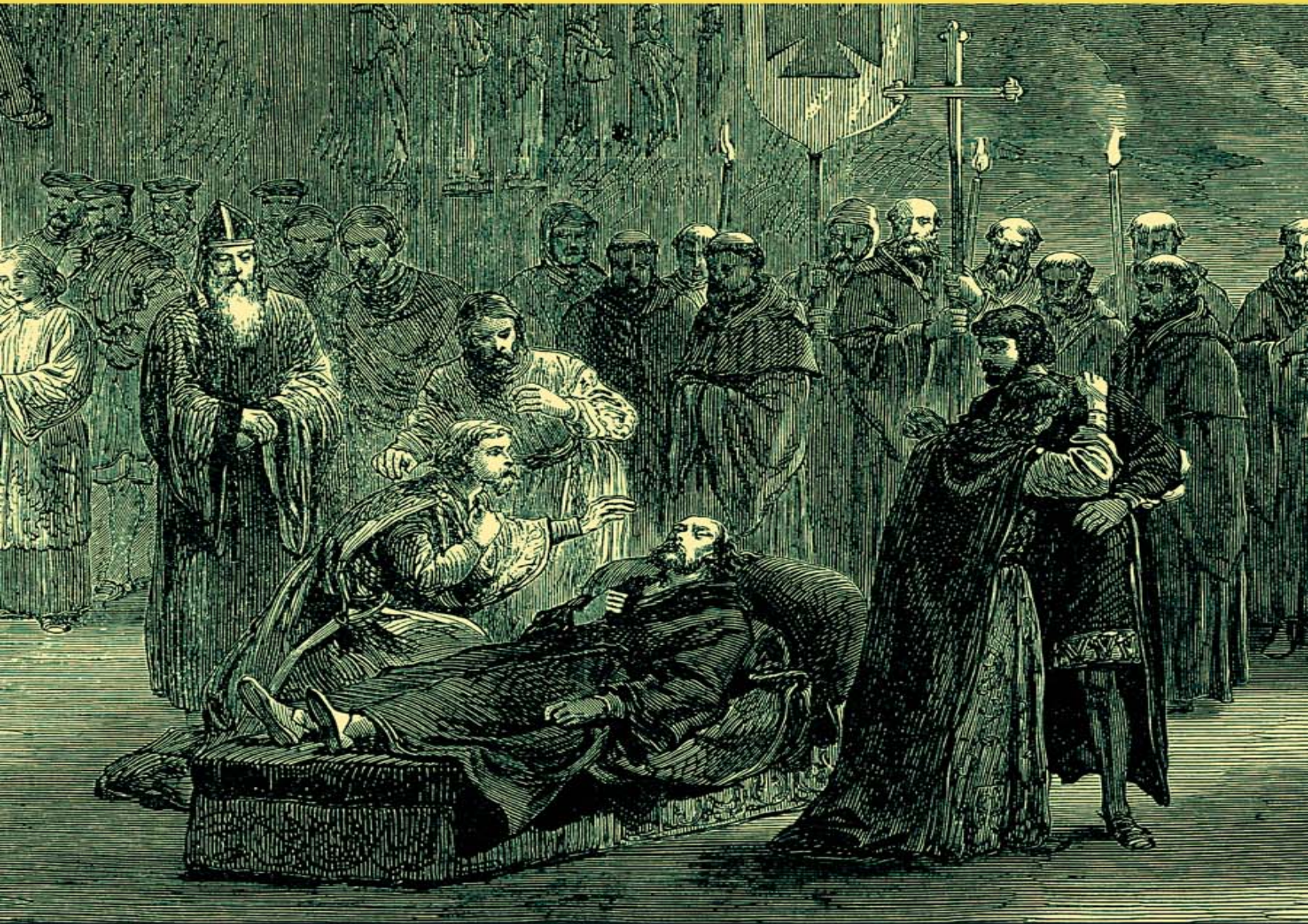


William Shakespeare

King John



+ Sidney Lee

The Classic Biography:
The Life of William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare and Sidney Lee

King John (The Unabridged Play) + The Classic Biography: The Life of William Shakespeare

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The Life of William Shakespeare

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King John

PERSONS REPRESENTED

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KING JOHN.

PRINCE HENRY, his son; afterwards KING HENRY III.

ARTHUR, Duke of Bretagne, son to GEFREY, late Duke of Bretagne,
the elder brother to King John.

WILLIAM MARSHALL, Earl of Pembroke.

GEOFFREY FITZ-PETER, Earl of Essex, Chief Justiciary of England.

WILLIAM LONGSWORD, Earl of Salisbury.

ROBERT BIGOT, Earl of Norfolk.

HUBERT DE BURGH, Chamberlain to the King.

ROBERT FALCONBRIDGE, son to Sir Robert Falconbridge.

PHILIP FALCONBRIDGE, his half-brother, bastard son to King
Richard I.

JAMES GURNEY, servant to Lady Falconbridge.

PETER OF POMFRET, a prophet

PHILIP, King of France.

LOUIS, the Dauphin.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

CARDINAL PANDULPH, the Pope's legate.

MELUN, a French lord.

CHATILLON, Ambassador from France to King John.

ELINOR, Widow of King Henry II and Mother to King John.

CONSTANCE, Mother to Arthur.

BLANCH OF SPAIN, Daughter to Alphonso, King of Castile,
and Niece
to King John.

LADY FALCONBRIDGE, Mother to the Bastard and Robert
Falconbridge.

Lords, Citizens of Angiers, Sheriff, Heralds, Officers,
Soldiers, Messengers, Attendants and other Attendants.

SCENE: Sometimes in England, and sometimes in France.

ACT I.

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SCENE 1. Northampton. A Room of State in the Palace.

[Enter KING JOHN, QUEEN ELINOR, PEMBROKE, ESSEX, SALISBURY, and others, with CHATILLON.]

KING JOHN.

Now, say, Chatillon, what would France with us?

CHATILLON.

Thus, after greeting, speaks the King of France,
In my behaviour, to the majesty,
The borrow'd majesty of England here.

ELINOR.

A strange beginning:—borrow'd majesty!

KING JOHN.

Silence, good mother; hear the embassy.

CHATILLON.

Philip of France, in right and true behalf
Of thy deceased brother Geffrey's son,
Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim
To this fair island and the territories,—
To Ireland, Poictiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine;
Desiring thee to lay aside the sword
Which sways usurpingly these several titles,
And put the same into young Arthur's hand,
Thy nephew and right royal sovereign.

KING JOHN.

What follows if we disallow of this?

CHATILLON.

The proud control of fierce and bloody war,

To enforce these rights so forcibly withheld.

KING JOHN.

Here have we war for war, and blood for blood,
Controlment for controlment;—so answer France.

CHATILLON.

Then take my king's defiance from my mouth,
The farthest limit of my embassy.

KING JOHN.

Bear mine to him, and so depart in peace:
Be thou as lightning in the eyes of France;
For ere thou canst report I will be there,
The thunder of my cannon shall be heard:
So, hence! Be thou the trumpet of our wrath,
And sullen presage of your own decay.—
An honourable conduct let him have:—
Pembroke, look to 't. Farewell, Chatillon.
[Exeunt CHATILLON and PEMBROKE.]

ELINOR.

What now, my son! Have I not ever said
How that ambitious Constance would not cease
Till she had kindled France and all the world
Upon the right and party of her son?
This might have been prevented and made whole
With very easy arguments of love;
Which now the manage of two kingdoms must
With fearful bloody issue arbitrate.

KING JOHN.

Our strong possession and our right for us.

ELINOR.

Your strong possession much more than your right,
Or else it must go wrong with you and me:
So much my conscience whispers in your ear,
Which none but heaven and you and I shall hear.
[Enter the Sheriff of Northamptonshire, who whispers to
Essex.]

ESSEX.

My liege, here is the strangest controversy,
Come from the country to be judg'd by you,
That e'er I heard: shall I produce the men?

KING JOHN.

Let them approach.—

[Exit SHERIFF.]

Our abbeyes and our priories shall pay

This expedition's charge.

[Re-enter Sheriff, with ROBERT FAULCONBRIDGE and
PHILIP, his bastard Brother.]

What men are you?

BASTARD.

Your faithful subject I, a gentleman
Born in Northamptonshire, and eldest son,
As I suppose, to Robert Falconbridge,—
A soldier by the honour-giving hand
Of Coeur-de-lion knighted in the field.

KING JOHN.

What art thou?

ROBERT.

The son and heir to that same Falconbridge.

KING JOHN.

Is that the elder, and art thou the heir?

You came not of one mother then, it seems.

BASTARD.

Most certain of one mother, mighty king,—
That is well known; and, as I think, one father:
But for the certain knowledge of that truth
I put you o'er to heaven and to my mother:—
Of that I doubt, as all men's children may.

ELINOR.

Out on thee, rude man! thou dost shame thy mother,
And wound her honour with this diffidence.

BASTARD.

I, madam? no, I have no reason for it,—
That is my brother's plea, and none of mine;
The which if he can prove, 'a pops me out
At least from fair five hundred pound a-year:
Heaven guard my mother's honour and my land!

KING JOHN.

A good blunt fellow.—Why, being younger born,
Doth he lay claim to thine inheritance?

BASTARD.

I know not why, except to get the land.
But once he slander'd me with bastardy:
But whe'er I be as true begot or no,
That still I lay upon my mother's head;
But that I am as well begot, my liege,—
Fair fall the bones that took the pains for me!—
Compare our faces and be judge yourself.
If old Sir Robert did beget us both,
And were our father, and this son like him,—
O old Sir Robert, father, on my knee
I give heaven thanks I was not like to thee!

KING JOHN.

Why, what a madcap hath heaven lent us here!

ELINOR.

He hath a trick of Coeur-de-lion's face;
The accent of his tongue affecteth him:
Do you not read some tokens of my son
In the large composition of this man?

KING JOHN.

Mine eye hath well examined his parts,
And finds them perfect Richard.—Sirrah, speak,
What doth move you to claim your brother's land?

BASTARD.

Because he hath a half-face, like my father;

With half that face would he have all my land:
A half-fac'd groat five hundred pound a-year!
ROBERT.

My gracious liege, when that my father liv'd,
Your brother did employ my father much,—
BASTARD.

Well, sir, by this you cannot get my land:
Your tale must be how he employ'd my mother.
ROBERT.

And once despatch'd him in an embassy
To Germany, there with the emperor
To treat of high affairs touching that time.
The advantage of his absence took the King,
And in the meantime sojourn'd at my father's;
Where how he did prevail I shame to speak,—
But truth is truth: large lengths of seas and shores
Between my father and my mother lay,—
As I have heard my father speak himself,—
When this same lusty gentleman was got.
Upon his deathbed he by will bequeath'd
His lands to me; and took it, on his death,
That this, my mother's son, was none of his;
And if he were, he came into the world
Full fourteen weeks before the course of time.
Then, good my liege, let me have what is mine,
My father's land, as was my father's will.

KING JOHN.

Sirrah, your brother is legitimate;
Your father's wife did after wedlock bear him;
And if she did play false, the fault was hers;
Which fault lies on the hazards of all husbands
That marry wives. Tell me, how if my brother,
Who, as you say, took pains to get this son,
Had of your father claim'd this son for his?
In sooth, good friend, your father might have kept
This calf, bred from his cow, from all the world;

In sooth, he might; then, if he were my brother's,
My brother might not claim him; nor your father,
Being none of his, refuse him. This concludes,—
My mother's son did get your father's heir;
Your father's heir must have your father's land.

ROBERT.

Shall then my father's will be of no force
To dispossess that child which is not his?

BASTARD.

Of no more force to dispossess me, sir,
Than was his will to get me, as I think.

ELINOR.

Whether hadst thou rather be a Falconbridge,
And like thy brother, to enjoy thy land,
Or the reputed son of Coeur-de-lion,
Lord of thy presence and no land beside?

BASTARD.

Madam, an if my brother had my shape
And I had his, Sir Robert's his, like him;
And if my legs were two such riding-rods,
My arms such eel-skins stuff'd, my face so thin
That in mine ear I durst not stick a rose
Lest men should say 'Look where three-farthings goes!'
And, to his shape, were heir to all this land,
Would I might never stir from off this place,
I would give it every foot to have this face;
I would not be Sir Nob in any case.

ELINOR.

I like thee well: wilt thou forsake thy fortune,
Bequeath thy land to him, and follow me?
I am a soldier, and now bound to France.

BASTARD.

Brother, take you my land, I'll take my chance:
Your face hath got five hundred pound a-year;
Yet sell your face for fivepence and 'tis dear.—
Madam, I'll follow you unto the death.

ELINOR.

Nay, I would have you go before me thither.

BASTARD.

Our country manners give our betters way.

KING JOHN.

What is thy name?

BASTARD.

Philip, my liege, so is my name begun;

Philip, good old Sir Robert's wife's eldest son.

KING JOHN.

From henceforth bear his name whose form thou bear'st:

Kneel thou down Philip, but rise more great,—

Arise Sir Richard and Plantagenet.

BASTARD.

Brother by the mother's side, give me your hand:

My father gave me honour, yours gave land.—

Now blessed be the hour, by night or day,

When I was got, Sir Robert was away!

ELINOR.

The very spirit of Plantagenet!—

I am thy grandam, Richard; call me so.

BASTARD.

Madam, by chance, but not by truth; what though?

Something about, a little from the right,

In at the window, or else o'er the hatch;

Who dares not stir by day must walk by night;

And have is have, however men do catch:

Near or far off, well won is still well shot;

And I am I, howe'er I was begot.

KING JOHN.

Go, Falconbridge; now hast thou thy desire:

A landless knight makes thee a landed squire.—

Come, madam,—and come, Richard; we must speed

For France, for France, for it is more than need.

BASTARD.

Brother, adieu. Good fortune come to thee!

For thou wast got i' th' way of honesty.
[Exeunt all but the BASTARD.]

A foot of honour better than I was;
But many a many foot of land the worse.
Well, now can I make any Joan a lady:—
'Good den, Sir Richard:'—'God-a-mercy, fellow:'—
And if his name be George, I'll call him Peter:
For new-made honour doth forget men's names:
'Tis too respective and too sociable
For your conversion. Now your traveller,—
He and his toothpick at my worship's mess;—
And when my knightly stomach is suffic'd,
Why then I suck my teeth, and catechize
My picked man of countries:—'My dear sir,'—
Thus leaning on mine elbow I begin,—
'I shall beseech you'—that is question now;
And then comes answer like an ABC-book:—
'O sir,' says answer 'at your best command;
At your employment; at your service, sir:'—
'No, sir,' says question 'I, sweet sir, at yours:
And so, ere answer knows what question would,—
Saving in dialogue of compliment,
And talking of the Alps and Apennines,
The Pyrenean and the river Po,—
It draws toward supper in conclusion so.
But this is worshipful society,
And fits the mounting spirit like myself:
For he is but a bastard to the time,
That doth not smack of observation,—
And so am I, whether I smack or no;
And not alone in habit and device,
Exterior form, outward accoutrement,
But from the inward motion to deliver
Sweet, sweet, sweet poison for the age's tooth;
Which, though I will not practise to deceive,

Yet, to avoid deceit, I mean to learn;
For it shall strew the footsteps of my rising.—
But who comes in such haste in riding-robcs?
What woman-post is this? hath she no husband
That will take pains to blow a horn before her?
[Enter LADY FALCONBRIDGE, and JAMES GURNEY.]

O me, 'tis my mother!—w now, good lady!
What brings you here to court so hastily?
LADY FALCONBRIDGE.
Where is that slave, thy brother? where is he
That holds in chase mine honour up and down?
BASTARD.

My brother Robert? old Sir Robert's son?
Colbrand the giant, that same mighty man?
Is it Sir Robert's son that you seek so?
LADY FalcoNBRIDGE.
Sir Robert's son! Ay, thou unreverend boy,
Sir Robert's son: why scorn'st thou at Sir Robert?
He is Sir Robert's son, and so art thou.
BASTARD.

James Gurney, wilt thou give us leave awhile?
GURNEY.
Good leave, good Philip.
BASTARD.

Philip—sparrow!—James,
There's toys abroad:—anon I'll tell thee more.
[Exit GURNEY.]

Madam, I was not old Sir Robert's son;
Sir Robert might have eat his part in me
Upon Good-Friday, and ne'er broke his fast.
Sir Robert could do well: marry, to confess,
Could not get me; Sir Robert could not do it,—
We know his handiwork:—therefore, good mother,
To whom am I beholding for these limbs?

Sir Robert never help to make this leg.

LADY FALCONBRIDGE.

Hast thou conspired with thy brother too,
That for thine own gain shouldst defend mine honour?
What means this scorn, thou most untoward knave?

BASTARD.

Knight, knight, good mother,—Basilisco-like;
What! I am dubb'd; I have it on my shoulder.

But, mother, I am not Sir Robert's son:

I have disclaim'd Sir Robert and my land;

Legitimation, name, and all is gone:

Then, good my mother, let me know my father,—

Some proper man, I hope: who was it, mother?

LADY FalcoNBRIDGE.

Hast thou denied thyself a Falconbridge?

BASTARD.

As faithfully as I deny the devil.

LADY FALCONBRIDGE.

King Richard Coeur-de-lion was thy father:

By long and vehement suit I was seduc'd

To make room for him in my husband's bed:—

Heaven lay not my transgression to my charge!—

Thou art the issue of my dear offence,

Which was so strongly urg'd, past my defence.

BASTARD.

Now, by this light, were I to get again,

Madam, I would not wish a better father.

Some sins do bear their privilege on earth,

And so doth yours; your fault was not your folly:

Needs must you lay your heart at his dispose,—

Subjected tribute to commanding love,—

Against whose fury and unmatched force

The aweless lion could not wage the fight

Nor keep his princely heart from Richard's hand:

He that perforce robs lions of their hearts

May easily win a woman's. Ay, my mother,

With all my heart I thank thee for my father!
Who lives and dares but say, thou didst not well
When I was got, I'll send his soul to hell.
Come, lady, I will show thee to my kin;
And they shall say when Richard me begot,
If thou hadst said him nay, it had been sin:
Who says it was, he lies; I say 'twas not.
[Exeunt.]

ACT II.

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SCENE 1. France. Before the walls of Angiers.

[Enter, on one side, the ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA and Forces; on the other, PHILIP, King of France, LOUIS, CONSTANCE, ARTHUR, and Forces.]

KING PHILIP.

Before Angiers well met, brave Austria.—
Arthur, that great forerunner of thy blood,
Richard, that robb'd the lion of his heart,
And fought the holy wars in Palestine,
By this brave duke came early to his grave:
And, for amends to his posterity,
At our importance hither is he come
To spread his colours, boy, in thy behalf;
And to rebuke the usurpation
Of thy unnatural uncle, English John:
Embrace him, love him, give him welcome hither.

ARTHUR.

God shall forgive you Coeur-de-lion's death
The rather that you give his offspring life,
Shadowing their right under your wings of war:
I give you welcome with a powerless hand,
But with a heart full of unstained love,—
Welcome before the gates of Angiers, duke.

LOUIS.

A noble boy! Who would not do thee right?

AUSTRIA.

Upon thy cheek lay I this zealous kiss,
As seal to this indenture of my love,—

That to my home I will no more return,
Till Angiers, and the right thou hast in France,
Together with that pale, that white-fac'd shore,
Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides,
And coops from other lands her islanders,—
Even till that England, hedg'd in with the main,
That water-walled bulwark, still secure
And confident from foreign purposes,—
Even till that utmost corner of the west
Salute thee for her king: till then, fair boy,
Will I not think of home, but follow arms.
CONSTANCE.

O, take his mother's thanks, a widow's thanks,
Till your strong hand shall help to give him strength
To make a more requital to your love!
AUSTRIA.

The peace of heaven is theirs that lift their swords
In such a just and charitable war.
KING PHILIP.

Well then, to work: our cannon shall be bent
Against the brows of this resisting town.—
Call for our chiefest men of discipline,
To cull the plots of best advantages:
We'll lay before this town our royal bones,
Wade to the marketplace in Frenchmen's blood,
But we will make it subject to this boy.
CONSTANCE.

Stay for an answer to your embassy,
Lest unadvis'd you stain your swords with blood:
My Lord Chatillon may from England bring
That right in peace which here we urge in war;
And then we shall repent each drop of blood
That hot rash haste so indirectly shed.
KING PHILIP.

A wonder, lady!—lo, upon thy wish,

Our messenger Chatillon is arriv'd.
[Enter CHATILLON.]

What England says, say briefly, gentle lord;
We coldly pause for thee; Chatillon, speak.
CHATILLON.

Then turn your forces from this paltry siege,
And stir them up against a mightier task.
England, impatient of your just demands,
Hath put himself in arms: the adverse winds,
Whose leisure I have stay'd, have given him time
To land his legions all as soon as I;
His marches are expedient to this town,
His forces strong, his soldiers confident.
With him along is come the mother-queen,
An Ate, stirring him to blood and strife;
With her her neice, the Lady Blanch of Spain;
With them a bastard of the king's deceas'd:
And all the unsettled humours of the land,—
Rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries,
With ladies' faces and fierce dragons' spleens,—
Have sold their fortunes at their native homes,
Bearing their birthrights proudly on their backs,
To make a hazard of new fortunes here.
In brief, a braver choice of dauntless spirits
Than now the English bottoms have waft o'er
Did never float upon the swelling tide
To do offence and scathe in Christendom.
[Drums beat within.]

The interruption of their churlish drums
Cuts off more circumstance: they are at hand;
To parley or to fight: therefore prepare.
KING PHILIP.
How much unlook'd-for is this expedition!
AUSTRIA.

By how much unexpected, by so much
We must awake endeavour for defence;
For courage mounteth with occasion:
Let them be welcome, then; we are prepar'd.
[Enter KING JOHN, ELINOR, BLANCH, the BASTARD,
PEMBROKE, Lords, and Forces.]

KING JOHN.

Peace be to France, if France in peace permit
Our just and lineal entrance to our own!
If not, bleed France, and peace ascend to heaven,
Whiles we, God's wrathful agent, do correct
Their proud contempt that beats his peace to heaven!

KING PHILIP.

Peace be to England, if that war return
From France to England, there to live in peace!
England we love; and for that England's sake
With burden of our armour here we sweat.
This toil of ours should be a work of thine;
But thou from loving England art so far
That thou hast under-wrought his lawful king,
Cut off the sequence of posterity,
Outfaced infant state, and done a rape
Upon the maiden virtue of the crown.
Look here upon thy brother Geoffrey's face:—
These eyes, these brows, were moulded out of his:
This little abstract doth contain that large
Which died in Geoffrey; and the hand of time
Shall draw this brief into as huge a volume.
That Geoffrey was thy elder brother born,
And this his son; England was Geoffrey's right,
And this is Geoffrey's: in the name of God,
How comes it then, that thou art call'd a king,
When living blood doth in these temples beat,
Which owe the crown that thou o'er-masterest?

KING JOHN.

From whom hast thou this great commission, France,

To draw my answer from thy articles?

KING PHILIP.

From that supernal judge that stirs good thoughts

In any breast of strong authority,

To look into the blots and stains of right.

That judge hath made me guardian to this boy:

Under whose warrant I impeach thy wrong;

And by whose help I mean to chastise it.

KING JOHN.

Alack, thou dost usurp authority.

KING PHILIP.

Excus,—it is to beat usurping down.

ELINOR.

Who is it thou dost call usurper, France?

CONSTANCE.

Let me make answer;—thy usurping son.

ELINOR.

Out, insolent! thy bastard shall be king,

That thou mayst be a queen, and check the world!

CONSTANCE.

My bed was ever to thy son as true

As thine was to thy husband; and this boy

Liker in feature to his father Geffrey

Than thou and John in manners,—being as like

As rain to water, or devil to his dam.

My boy a bastard! By my soul, I think

His father never was so true begot:

It cannot be, an if thou wert his mother.

ELINOR.

There's a good mother, boy, that blots thy father.

CONSTANCE.

There's a good grandam, boy, that would blot thee.

AUSTRIA.

Peace!

BASTARD.

Hear the crier.

AUSTRIA.

What the devil art thou?

BASTARD.

One that will play the devil, sir, with you,
An 'a may catch your hide and you alone.
You are the hare of whom the proverb goes,
Whose valour plucks dead lions by the beard:
I'll smoke your skin-coat an I catch you right;
Sirrah, look to 't; i' faith I will, i' faith.

BLANCH.

O, well did he become that lion's robe
That did disrobe the lion of that robe!

BASTARD.

It lies as sightly on the back of him
As great Alcides' shows upon an ass:—
But, ass, I'll take that burden from your back,
Or lay on that shall make your shoulders crack.

AUSTRIA.

What cracker is this same that deafs our ears
With this abundance of superfluous breath?

KING PHILIP.

Louis, determine what we shall do straight.

LOUIS.

Women and fools, break off your conference.—
King John, this is the very sum of all,—
England and Ireland, Anjou, Touraine, Maine,
In right of Arthur, do I claim of thee:
Wilt thou resign them, and lay down thy arms?

KING JOHN.

My life as soon:—I do defy thee, France.
Arthur of Bretagne, yield thee to my hand;
And out of my dear love, I'll give thee more
Than e'er the coward hand of France can win:
Submit thee, boy.

ELINOR.

Come to thy grandam, child.

CONSTANCE.

Do, child, go to it' grandam, child;
Give grandam kingdom, and it' grandam will
Give it a plum, a cherry, and a fig.
There's a good grandam!

ARTHUR.

Good my mother, peace!
I would that I were low laid in my grave:
I am not worth this coil that's made for me.

ELINOR.

His mother shames him so, poor boy, he weeps.

CONSTANCE.

Now, shame upon you, whe'er she does or no!
His grandam's wrongs, and not his mother's shames,
Draws those heaven-moving pearls from his poor eyes,
Which heaven shall take in nature of a fee:
Ay, with these crystal beads heaven shall be brib'd
To do him justice, and revenge on you.

ELINOR.

Thou monstrous slanderer of heaven and earth!

CONSTANCE.

Thou monstrous injurer of heaven and earth!
Call not me slanderer: thou and thine usurp
The dominations, royalties, and rights,
Of this oppressed boy: this is thy eldest son's son,
Infortunate in nothing but in thee:
Thy sins are visited in this poor child;
The canon of the law is laid on him,
Being but the second generation
Removed from thy sin-conceiving womb.

KING JOHN.

Bedlam, have done.

CONSTANCE.

I have but this to say,—
That he is not only plagued for her sin,
But God hath made her sin and her the plague

On this removed issue, plagu'd for her
And with her plague, her sin; his injury
Her injury,—the beadle to her sin;
All punish'd in the person of this child,
And all for her: a plague upon her!

ELINOR.

Thou unadvised scold, I can produce
A will that bars the title of thy son.

CONSTANCE.

Ay, who doubts that? a will, a wicked will;
A woman's will; a canker'd grandam's will!

KING PHILIP.

Peace, lady! pause, or be more temperate:
It ill beseems this presence to cry aim
To these ill-tuned repetitions.—

Some trumpet summon hither to the walls
These men of Angiers: let us hear them speak
Whose title they admit, Arthur's or John's.
[Trumpet sounds. Enter citizens upon the walls.]

FIRST CITIZEN.

Who is it that hath warn'd us to the walls?

KING PHILIP.

'Tis France, for England.

KING JOHN.

England for itself:—

You men of Angiers, and my loving subjects,—

KING PHILIP.

You loving men of Angiers, Arthur's subjects,
Our trumpet call'd you to this gentle parle.

KING JOHN.

For our advantage; therefore hear us first.
These flags of France, that are advanced here
Before the eye and prospect of your town,
Have hither march'd to your endamage;—
The cannons have their bowels full of wrath,

And ready mounted are they to spit forth
Their iron indignation 'gainst your walls:
All preparation for a bloody siege
And merciless proceeding by these French
Confronts your city's eyes, your winking gates;
And, but for our approach, those sleeping stones
That as a waist doth girdle you about,
By the compulsion of their ordinance
By this time from their fixed beds of lime
Had been dishabited, and wide havoc made
For bloody power to rush upon your peace.
But, on the sight of us, your lawful king,—
Who, painfully, with much expedient march,
Have brought a countercheck before your gates,
To save unscratch'd your city's threatn'd cheeks,—
Behold, the French, amaz'd, vouchsafe a parle;
And now, instead of bullets wrapp'd in fire,
To make a shaking fever in your walls,
They shoot but calm words folded up in smoke,
To make a faithless error in your ears:
Which trust accordingly, kind citizens,
And let us in, your king; whose labour'd spirits,
Forwearied in this action of swift speed,
Craves harbourage within your city-walls.
KING PHILIP.

When I have said, make answer to us both.
Lo, in this right hand, whose protection
Is most divinely vow'd upon the right
Of him it holds, stands young Plantagenet,
Son to the elder brother of this man,
And king o'er him and all that he enjoys:
For this down-trodden equity we tread
In warlike march these greens before your town;
Being no further enemy to you
Than the constraint of hospitable zeal
In the relief of this oppressed child

Religiously provokes. Be pleased then
To pay that duty which you truly owe
To him that owes it, namely, this young prince:
And then our arms, like to a muzzled bear,
Save in aspect, hath all offence seal'd up;
Our cannons' malice vainly shall be spent
Against the invulnerable clouds of heaven;
And with a blessed and unvex'd retire,
With unhack'd swords and helmets all unbruise'd,
We will bear home that lusty blood again
Which here we came to spout against your town,
And leave your children, wives, and you, in peace.
But if you fondly pass our proffer'd offer,
'Tis not the roundure of your old-fac'd walls
Can hide you from our messengers of war,
Though all these English, and their discipline,
Were harbour'd in their rude circumference.
Then, tell us, shall your city call us lord
In that behalf which we have challeng'd it?
Or shall we give the signal to our rage,
And stalk in blood to our possession?

FIRST CITIZEN.

In brief: we are the King of England's subjects:
For him, and in his right, we hold this town.

KING JOHN.

Acknowledge then the king, and let me in.

CITIZEN.

That can we not; but he that proves the king,
To him will we prove loyal: till that time
Have we ramm'd up our gates against the world.

KING JOHN.

Doth not the crown of England prove the king?
And if not that, I bring you witnesses,
Twice fifteen thousand hearts of England's breed,—

BASTARD.

Bastards, and else.

KING JOHN.

To verify our title with their lives.

KING PHILIP.

As many and as well-born bloods as those,—

BASTARD.

Some bastards too.

KING PHILIP.

Stand in his face, to contradict his claim.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Till you compound whose right is worthiest,

We for the worthiest hold the right from both.

KING JOHN.

Then God forgive the sin of all those souls

That to their everlasting residence,

Before the dew of evening fall, shall fleet,

In dreadful trial of our kingdom's king!

KING PHILIP.

Amen, Amen!—Mount, chevaliers; to arms!

BASTARD.

Saint George, that swunged the dragon, and e'er since

Sits on his horse' back at mine hostess' door,

Teach us some fence!—Sirrah [To AUSTRIA.], were I at home,

At your den, sirrah, with your lioness,

I would set an ox-head to your lion's hide,

And make a monster of you.

AUSTRIA.

Peace! no more.

BASTARD.

O, tremble, for you hear the lion roar.

KING JOHN.

Up higher to the plain; where we'll set forth

In best appointment all our regiments.

BASTARD.

Speed, then, to take advantage of the field.

KING PHILIP.

It shall be so;—[To LOUIS.] and at the other hill
Command the rest to stand.—God and our right!
[Exeunt severally.]

[After excursions, enter a French Herald, with trumpets,
to the gates.]

FRENCH HERALD.

You men of Angiers, open wide your gates
And let young Arthur, Duke of Bretagne, in,
Who, by the hand of France, this day hath made
Much work for tears in many an English mother,
Whose sons lie scatter'd on the bleeding ground;
Many a widow's husband grovelling lies,
Coldly embracing the discolour'd earth;
And victory, with little loss, doth play
Upon the dancing banners of the French,
Who are at hand, triumphantly display'd,
To enter conquerors, and to proclaim
Arthur of Bretagne England's king and yours.
[Enter an ENGLISH HERALD, with trumpets.]

ENGLISH HERALD.

Rejoice, you men of Angiers, ring your bells:
King John, your king and England's, doth approach,
Commander of this hot malicious day:
Their armours, that march'd hence so silver-bright,
Hither return all gilt with Frenchmen's blood;
There stuck no plume in any English crest
That is removed by a staff of France,
Our colours do return in those same hands
That did display them when we first march'd forth;
And, like a jolly troop of huntsmen, come
Our lusty English, all with purpled hands,
Dy'd in the dying slaughter of their foes:
Open your gates and give the victors way.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Heralds, from off our towers, we might behold,
From first to last, the onset and retire
Of both your armies; whose equality
By our best eyes cannot be censured:
Blood hath bought blood, and blows have answer'd
blows;
Strength match'd with strength, and power confronted
power:
Both are alike, and both alike we like.

One must prove greatest: while they weigh so even,
We hold our town for neither; yet for both.

[Enter, on one side, KING JOHN, ELINOR, BLANCH, the
BASTARD, and

Forces; at the other, KING PHILIP, LOUIS, AUSTRIA, and
Forces.]

KING JOHN.

France, hast thou yet more blood to cast away?
Say, shall the current of our right run on?
Whose passage, vex'd with thy impediment,
Shall leave his native channel, and o'erswell
With course disturb'd even thy confining shores,
Unless thou let his silver water keep
A peaceful progress to the ocean.

KING PHILIP.

England, thou hast not sav'd one drop of blood
In this hot trial, more than we of France;
Rather, lost more: and by this hand I swear,
That sways the earth this climate overlooks,
Before we will lay down our just-borne arms,
We'll put thee down, 'gainst whom these arms we bear,
Or add a royal number to the dead,
Gracing the scroll that tells of this war's loss
With slaughter coupled to the name of kings.

BASTARD.

Ha, majesty! how high thy glory towers