

King John abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 1

Disdain

Situation: Wedding plans for the young couple are being made. Constance is infuriated, telling Austria, who continues to wear a lion's hide as a cape, to "duff it for shame, and hang a calfskin on those cowardly limbs," upsetting everyone. Pandulph, the pope's emissary, has entered and will become a major player.

PANDULPH: Hail you anointed deputies of heaven! To thee, King John, my holy errand is, I, Pandulph from Pope Innocent, do in his name religiously demand why thou against the Church so willfully dost spurn. This, in our foresaid Holy Father's name, Pope Innocent, I do demand of thee.

King John to Cardinal Pandulph

What early set of questions can force the
Free breath of a sacred king? Dost thou see,
Cardinal, thou canst not devise a name
Less worthy to charge me to answer so,
Or ridiculous as the pope. The same
Goes for his aides who doth attempt to go
Hand-to-hand, to tithe or tax in these our
Lands. As we reign under the tower
Of God, we will alone uphold without
The assistance of a mortal hand. Why
Are we led by this pardoning, devout
Priest who accepts gold as sin's ransom? I
Most outspokenly alone do oppose
The church's pope, and count his friends my foes.

KING PHILIP: Brother of England, you blaspheme in this.

PANDULPH: Then, by the lawful power that I have, thou shalt stand cursed and excommunicated.

CONSTANCE: O, good father cardinal, cry thou "Amen" to my keen curses, for without my wrong there is no tongue hath power to curse him right.