

# AGINCOURT

by

**Michael Drayton**

(1563–1631)

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## AGINCOURT

Fair stood the wind for France  
When we our sails advance,  
Nor now to prove our chance  
    Longer will tarry;  
But putting to the main,  
At Caux, the mouth of Seine,  
With all his martial train  
    Landed King Harry.

And taking many a fort,  
Furnish'd in warlike sort,  
Marcheth tow'rds Agincourt  
    In happy hour;  
Skirmishing day by day  
With those that stopp'd his way,  
Where the French gen'ral lay  
    With all his power.

Which, in his height of pride,  
King Henry to deride,  
His ransom to provide  
    Unto him sending;  
Which he neglects the while  
As from a nation vile,  
Yet with an angry smile  
    Their fall portending.

And turning to his men,  
Quoth our brave Henry then,  
'Though they to one be ten  
    Be not amazed:  
Yet have we well begun;  
Battles so bravely won  
Have ever to the sun  
    By fame been raised.

'And for myself (quoth he)  
This my full rest shall be:  
England ne'er mourn for me  
    Nor more esteem me:  
Victor I will remain  
Or on this earth lie slain,  
Never shall she sustain  
    Loss to redeem me.

'Poitiers and Cressy tell,  
When most their pride did swell,  
Under our swords they fell:  
    No less our skill is  
Than when our grandsire great,  
Claiming the regal seat,  
By many a warlike feat  
    Lopp'd the French lilies.'

The Duke of York so dread  
The eager vaward led;  
With the main Henry sped  
    Among his henchmen.  
Excester had the rear,  
A braver man not there;  
O Lord, how hot they were  
    On the false Frenchmen!

They now to fight are gone,  
Armour on armour shone,  
Drum now to drum did groan,  
    To hear was wonder;  
That with the cries they make  
The very earth did shake:  
Trumpet to trumpet spake,  
    Thunder to thunder.

Well it thine age became,  
O noble Erpingham,  
Which didst the signal aim  
    To our hid forces!  
When from a meadow by,  
Like a storm suddenly  
The English archery  
    Stuck the French horses.

With Spanish yew so strong,  
Arrows a cloth-yard long  
That like to serpents stung,  
    Piercing the weather;  
None from his fellow starts,  
But playing manly parts,  
And like true English hearts  
    Stuck close together.

When down their bows they threw,  
And forth their bilbos drew,  
And on the French they flew,  
    Not one was tardy;  
Arms were from shoulders sent,  
Scalps to the teeth were rent,  
Down the French peasants went—  
    Our men were hardy.

This while our noble king,  
His broadsword brandishing,  
Down the French host did ding  
    As to o'erwhelm it;  
And many a deep wound lent,

His arms with blood besprent,  
And many a cruel dent  
Bruised his helmet.

Gloster, that duke so good,  
Next of the royal blood,  
For famous England stood  
With his brave brother;  
Clarence, in steel so bright,  
Though but a maiden knight,  
Yet in that furious fight  
Scarce such another.

Warwick in blood did wade,  
Oxford the foe invade,  
And cruel slaughter made  
Still as they ran up;  
Suffolk his axe did ply,  
Beaumont and Willoughby  
Bare them right doughtily,  
Ferrers and Fanhope.

Upon Saint Crispin's Day  
Fought was this noble fray,  
Which fame did not delay  
To England to carry.  
O when shall English men  
With such acts fill a pen?  
Or England breed again  
Such a King Harry?

(*Agincourt*, Michael Drayton - 1563–1631)

End

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