TRAGEDY OF HAMLET PRINCE OF DENMARK

by

William Shakespeare

哈姆雷特

[英] W. 莎士比亚 著

附赠：论哈姆雷特

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TRAGEDY OF HAMLET PRINCE OF DENMARK

by William Shakespeare

ARRANGED FOR REPRESENTATION AT THE
Royal Princess's Theatre

with
EXPLANATORY NOTES
by Charles Kean

And with

ON HAMLET

by A.C. Bradley
Formerly Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford

Liaoning People's Publishing House, China

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William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (26 April 1564-23 April 1616) was an English poet, playwright and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon". His extant works, including some collaborations, consist of about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, the authorship of some of which is uncertain. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

Shakespeare was born and brought up in Stratford-upon-Avon. At the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children: Susanna, and twins Hamnet and Judith. Between 1585 and 1592, he began a successful career in London as an actor, writer, and part-owner of a playing company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men. He appears to have retired to Stratford around 1613 at age 49, where he died three years later. Few records of Shakespeare's private life survive, and there has been considerable speculation about such matters as his physical appearance, sexuality, religious beliefs, and whether the works attributed to him were written by others.

In the 20th century, his work was repeatedly adopted and rediscovered by new movements in scholarship and performance. His plays remain highly popular today and are constantly studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

General Preface

Millions of Chinese are learning English to acquire knowledge and skills for communication in a world where English has become the primary language for international discourse. Yet not many learners have come to realize that the command of the English language also enables them to have an easy access to the world literary classics such as Shakespeare's plays, Shelley's poems, mark Twain's novels and Nietzsche's works which are an important part of liberal-arts education. The most important goals of universities are not vocational, that is, not merely the giving of knowledge and the training of skills.

In a broad sense, education aims at broadening young people's mental horizon, cultivating virtues and shaping their character. Lincoln, Mao Zedong and many other great leaders and personages of distinction declared how they drew immense inspiration and strength from literary works. As a matter of fact, many of them had aspired to become writers in their young age. Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) is said to take along with him two things, waking or sleeping: a book and a dagger, and the book is Iliad, a literary classic, by Homer. He would put these two much treasured things under his pillow when he went to bed.

Today, we face an unprecedented complex and changing world. To cope with this rapid changing world requires not only communication skills, but also adequate knowledge of cultures other than our own home culture. Among the most important developments in present-day global culture is the ever increasing cultural exchanges and understanding between different nations and peoples. And one of the best ways to know foreign cultures is to read their literary works, particularly their literary classics, the soul of a country's culture. They also give you the best language and the feeling of sublimity.

Liaoning People's Publishing House is to be congratulated for its foresight and courage in making a new series of world literary classics available to the reading public. It is hoped that people with an adequate command of the English language will read them, like them and keep them as their lifetime companions.

I am convinced that the series will make an important contribution to the literary education of the young people in china. At a time when the whole country is emphasizing "spiritual civilization", it is certainly a very timely venture to put out the series of literary classics for literary and cultural education.

Zhang Zhongzai
Professor
Beijing Foreign Studies University
July, 2013 Beijing

总 序

经典名著的语言无疑是最凝练、最优美、最有审美价值的。雪莱的那句“如冬已来临，春天还会远吗？”让多少陷于绝望的人重新燃起希望之火，鼓起勇气，迎接严冬过后的春天。徐志摩一句“悄悄的我走了，正如我悄悄的来；我挥一挥衣袖，不带走一片云彩”又让多少人陶醉。尼采的那句“上帝死了”，又给多少人以振聋发聩的启迪作用。

读经典名著，尤其阅读原汁原味作品，可以怡情养性，增长知识，加添才干，丰富情感，开阔视野。所谓“经典”，其实就是作者所属的那个民族的文化积淀，是那个民族的灵魂缩影。英国戏剧泰斗莎士比亚的《哈姆雷特》和《麦克白》等、“意大利语言之父”的但丁的《神曲》之《地狱篇》《炼狱篇》及《天堂篇》、爱尔兰世界一流作家詹姆斯·乔伊斯的《尤利西斯》及《一个艺术家的肖像》等、美国风趣而笔法超一流的著名小说家马克·吐温的《哈克历险记》以及《汤姆索亚历险记》等，德国著名哲学家尼采的《查拉图斯特拉如是说》及《快乐的科学》等等，都为塑造自己民族的文化积淀，做出了永恒的贡献，也同时向世界展示了他们所属的民族的优美剪影。

很多著名领袖如林肯、毛泽东等伟大人物，也都曾从经典名著中汲取力量，甚至获得治国理念。耶鲁大学教授查尔斯·希尔曾在题为《经典与治国理念》的文章，阐述了读书与治国之间的绝妙关系。他这样写道："在几乎所有经典名著中，都可以找到让人叹为观止、深藏其中的治国艺术原则。"

经典名著，不仅仅有治国理念，更具提升读者审美情趣的功能。世界上不同时代、不同地域的优秀经典作品，都存在一个共同属性：歌颂赞美人间的真善美，揭露抨击世间的假恶丑。

读欧美自但丁以来的经典名著，你会看到，西方无论是在漫长的黑暗时期，抑或进入现代进程时期，总有经典作品问世，对世间的负面，进行冷峻的批判。与此同时，也有更多的大家作品问世，热情讴歌人间的真诚与善良，使读者不由自主地沉浸于经典作品的审美情感之中。

英语经典名著，显然是除了汉语经典名著以外，人类整个进程中至关重要的文化遗产的一部分。从历史上看，英语是全世界经典阅读作品中，使用得最广泛的国际性语言。这一事实，没有产生根本性变化。本世纪相当长一段时间，这一事实也似乎不会发生任何变化。而要更深入地了解并切身感受英语经典名著的风采，阅读原汁原味的英语经典作品的过程，显然是必不可少的。

辽宁人民出版社及时并隆重推出"最经典英语文库"系列丛书，是具有远见与卓识的出版行为。我相信，这套既可供阅读，同时也具收藏价值的英语原版经

典作品系列丛书，在帮助人们了解什么才是经典作品的同时，也一定会成为广大英语爱好者、大中学生以及学生家长们挚爱的“最经典英语文库”。

北京外国语大学英语学院
北外公共外交研究中心
欧美文学研究中心主任
全国英国文学学会名誉会长

张中载 教授
2013年7月于北京

Is this book for you?

社会转型时期的一面镜子

莎士比亚四大悲剧之一的《哈姆雷特》，创作于1601年，时值欧洲文艺复兴运动进入晚期和英国伊丽莎白女王去世（1603年）前两年，因而，《哈姆雷特》不仅体现了文艺复兴的思想意识，而且反映了英国社会转型时期的种种矛盾冲突。

莎士比亚以早期的“丹麦王子复仇”的故事为框架，将文艺复兴时期所崇尚的古希腊罗马文化植入其中，使这部悲剧具有了新的时代背景，被认为是文艺复兴时期的一面镜子。丹麦王子哈姆雷特的叔叔克劳迪斯是一位马基雅弗利主义（参阅“最经典英语文库”第三辑的《君主论》）的信奉者，为达目的不择手段，他毒死了国王，篡夺了王位并娶了王后。哈姆雷特从国外回来以后，老国王的鬼魂告诉他自己致死的原因，哈姆雷特决定复仇。此时，国王克劳迪斯开始怀疑哈姆雷特，在大臣波洛涅斯的建议下，克劳迪斯利用大臣的女儿、哈姆雷特的情人奥菲利亚去试探哈姆雷特，被哈姆雷特识破。之后，克劳迪斯又指使哈姆雷特的两个同学罗森格兰兹和吉尔登斯顿去试探他，都被王子一一识破。哈姆雷特借一次剧团到宫廷演戏的机会，验证了老国王鬼魂的话。哈姆雷特在力图说服母亲疏远克劳迪斯国王时，误杀了躲在帷幕后面偷听的波洛涅斯。随后，国王派哈姆雷特去英国索

讨贡赋，想借别人之手除掉哈姆雷特。哈姆雷特识破阴谋，中途折返丹麦。奥菲利亚因父亲被情人所杀而精神失常，落水身亡。国王乘机挑拨波洛涅斯的儿子雷欧提斯以比剑为名，用毒箭刺死哈姆雷特。在最后一场比剑中，哈姆雷特、国王、王后及雷欧提斯同归于尽。

《哈姆雷特》的悲剧性包含了四个主要层次。

第一个层次涉及谋杀君王，篡夺王位，进而谋害王子的政治悲剧成分。克劳迪斯为达目的不择手段，殷勤、诚挚的外表下隐藏着魔鬼的内心。第二个层次涉及代表着文明进步的正面人物同丑恶与罪恶展开斗争的社会悲剧成分。在克劳迪斯周围聚集着波洛涅斯等一批趋炎附势、阿谀奉承的朝臣，他们为克劳迪斯的阴谋充当帮凶。第三个层次涉及因盲目而卷入政治冲突，导致毁灭的家庭悲剧成分。波洛涅斯自作聪明，事事插手，导致自己被误杀，女儿奥菲利亚疯癫溺水而死，儿子雷欧提斯则充当了克劳迪斯谋害哈姆雷特的工具，死于非命。第四个层次涉及爱情被摧残、被利用的悲剧成分。奥菲利亚的天真，皇后的缺乏辨别力，使她们都在险恶的环境中被利用而成为牺牲品。

主人公哈姆雷特的品格体现了欧洲文艺复兴时期的人文主义精神。文艺复兴时期正是欧洲社会从中世纪封建制度向近代资本主义转型的时期，植根于这一时期的人文主义思潮势必体现着新旧交织的历史特征。人文主义的产生与当时在大学兴起的哲学、医学、民法学、修辞学等人文学科密切相关，这些学科侧重讲授古希腊、罗马文化，强调人的实现的重要，更多地关注人而不是人以外的某种事物理论或学说。文艺复兴时期的人文主义正是资产阶级人性思想的最初形态，其本质就在

于它高扬作为一种理性动物的人的尊严的观念，崇尚古典文学在知识和精神自由中所展示出的人的本质，这一观念与中世纪天主教宣扬的经院哲学与神学命定论相对立。

哈姆雷特崇尚古希腊、罗马文化，注重对人性的思考，他一方面汲取了文艺复兴早期有关人类伟大的观念，同时又在现实中发现了人性渺小、卑微的一面。受苏格拉底“认识你自己”这一古老遗训的浸润，哈姆雷特不断自我审视，自我剖析，在克服怀疑、摒弃错误的过程中逐步走向高尚，这种自省精神对于人类追求真善美具有重要意义。忧郁和踌躇是哈姆雷特性格的一大特征。对“生存还是毁灭”（To be, or not to be, that is the question ）的思考，揭示了哈姆雷特始终秉持的社会责任感、宗教信仰以及理性主义的怀疑精神。在踌躇和怀疑中，他将复仇的过程升华为正义对邪恶的斗争，在社会转型的混乱时代，哈姆雷特所要担当的是重整乾坤的社会责任。

如果您是英文爱好者中的一员，希望您通过阅读英语原文，来欣赏这部作品，这无疑是种无法替代的精神享受。

如果您是学生家长，建议您给上中学或大学的孩子准备一套“最经典英语文库”，放在书架上。它们是永远不会过时的精神食粮。

如果您是正在学习的大中学生，也建议您抽空读读这些经时间检验的人类精神食粮文库里最经典的精品。一时读不懂不要紧，先收藏起来，放进您的书架里，等您长大到某个时候，您会忽然发现，自己开始能读，而且读懂了作品字里行间的意义时，那种喜悦感，是无法言述的，也是无与伦比的。您可能也会因此对走过的人生，有更深刻的感悟与理解。

关于这套图书的装帧设计与性价比：完全按欧美出版规则操作，从图书开本，到封面设计，从体例版式，到字体选取，但价钱却比欧美原版图书便宜三分之二，甚至更多。因此，从性价比看，它们也是最值得收藏的。

——马玉凤

TRAGEDY OF
HAMLET
PRINCE OF DENMARK

Dramatis Persons

GHOST OF HAMLET'S FATHER
HAMLET (*son to the former and nephew to the present King*)
GERTRUDE (*Queen of Denmark, and mother of Hamlet*)

CLAUDIUS (*King of Denmark*)

OPHELIA (*daughter of Polonius*)
LAERTES (*son To Polonius*)
POLONIUS (*Lord Chamberlain*)

HORATIO (*friend To Hamlet*)

VOLTEMAND }
CORNELIUS }
ROSENCRANTZ }
GUILDENSTERN } (*Courtiers*)
OSRICK }
GENTLEMEN }
A LORD }

PRIEST

MARCELLUS }
BERNARDO } (*Soldiers*)
FRANCISCO }

FORTINBRAS (Prince of Norway)
A PAPTAIN IN FORTINBRAS'S ARMY
AMBASSADORS TO DENMARK FROM ENGLAND

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER
SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

FIRST PLAYER
SECOND PLAYER
ACTRESS

STAGE DIRECTIONS

R. H. means Right Hand;
L. H. Left Hand;
U. E. Upper Entrance;
R. H. C. Enters through the Centre from the Right Hand;
L. H. C. Enters through the Centre from the Left Hand.

RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE PERFORMERS WHEN ON THE STAGE.

R. means on the Right side of the Stage;
L. on the Left side of the Stage;
C. Centre of the Stage;
R. C. Right Centre of the Stage;
L. C. Left Centre of the Stage.

The reader is supposed *to be on the Stage*, facing the audience.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The play of *Hamlet* is above all others the most stupendous monument of Shakespeare's genius, standing as a beacon to command the wonder and admiration of the world, and as a memorial to future generations, that the mind of its author was moved by little less than inspiration. *Lear*, with its sublime picture of human misery;—*Othello*, with its harrowing overthrow of a nature great and amiable;—*Macbeth*, with its fearful murder of a monarch, whose "virtues plead like angels trumpet-tongued against the deep damnation of his taking off,"—severally exhibit, in the most pre-eminent degree, all those mighty elements which constitute the perfection of tragic art—the grand, the pitiful, and the terrible. *Hamlet* is a history of mind—a tragedy of thought. It contains the deepest philosophy, and most profound wisdom; yet speaks the language of the heart, touching the secret spring of every sense and feeling. Here we have no ideal exaltation of character, but life with its blended faults and virtues,—a gentle nature unstrung by passing events, and thus rendered "out of tune and harsh."

The original story of Hamlet is to be found in the Latin pages of the Danish historian, Saxo Grammaticus, who died in the year 1208. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the French author, Francis de Belleforest, introduced the fable into a collection of novels, which were translated into English, and printed in a small quarto black letter volume, under the

title of the "Historie of Hamblett," from which source Shakespeare constructed the present tragedy.

Saxo has placed his history about 200 years before Christianity, when barbarians, clothed in skins, peopled the shores of the Baltic. The poet, however, has so far modernised the subject as to make Hamlet a Christian, and England tributary to the "sovereign majesty of Denmark." A date can therefore be easily fixed, and the costume of the tenth and eleventh centuries may be selected for the purpose. There are but few authentic records in existence, but these few afford reason to believe that very slight difference existed between the dress of the Dane and that of the Anglo-Saxon of the same period.

Since its first representation, upwards of two centuries and a half ago, no play has been acted so frequently, or commanded such universal admiration. It draws within the sphere of its attraction both the scholastic and the unlearned. It finds a response in every breast, however high or however humble. By its colossal aid it exalts the drama of England above that of every nation, past or present. It is, indeed, the most marvellous creation of human intellect.

CHARLES KEAN

CONTENTS

ACT V

ACT I

SCENE I

ELSINORE. A PLATFORM BEFORE THE CASTLE. NIGHT.

FRANCISCO *on his post. Enter to him* BERNARDO (L.H.)

Ber. Who's there?

Fran. (R.) Nay, answer me:[1] stand, and unfold[2] yourself.

Ber. Long live the king![3]

Fran. Bernardo?

Ber. He.

Fran. You come most carefully upon your hour.

Ber. 'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.

Fran. For this relief much thanks:

[*Crosses to* L.]

'Tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

Ber. Have you had quiet guard?

Fran. Not a mouse stirring.

Ber. Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch,[4] bid them make haste.

Fran. I think I hear them.—Stand, ho! Who's there?

Hor. Friends to this ground.

Mar. And liegemen to the Dane.[5]

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS (L.H.)

Fran. Give you good night.

Mar. O, farewell, honest soldier:
Who hath reliev'd you?

Fran. Bernardo hath my place.
Give you good night.

[*Exit* FRANCISCO, L.H.]

Mar. Holloa! Bernardo!

Ber. Say,
What, is Horatio there?

Hor. (*Crosses to* C.) A piece of him.[6]

Ber. (R.) Welcome, Horatio: welcome, good Marcellus.

Hor. What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?

Ber. I have seen nothing.

Mar. (L.) Horatio says, 'tis but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him,
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us:
Therefore I have entreated him, along
With us, to watch the minutes of this night;[7]
That, if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes,[8] and speak to it.

Hor. Tush! tush! 'twill not appear.

Ber. Come, let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we two nights have seen.[9]

Hor. Well, let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

Ber. Last night of all,
When yon same star that's westward from the pole
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus, and myself,
The bell then beating one—

Mar. Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!

Enter Ghost (L.H.)

Ber. In the same figure, like the king that's dead.

Hor. Most like:—it harrows me with fear and

wonder.[10]

Ber. It would be spoke to.

Mar. Speak to it, Horatio.

Hor. What art thou, that usurp'st this time of night,[11]
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? By heaven I charge thee, speak!

Mar. It is offended.

[Ghost *crosses to* R.]

Ber. See! it stalks away!

Hor. Stay!—speak!—speak, I charge thee, speak!

[*Exit* Ghost, R.H.]

Mar. 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

Ber. How now, Horatio! You tremble, and look pale:
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you of it?

Hor. Before heaven, I might not this believe,
Without the sensible and true avouch[12]
Of mine own eyes.

Mar. Is it not like the king?

Hor. As thou art to thyself:
Such was the very armour he had on,
When he the ambitious Norway combated.

Mar. Thus, twice before, and jump at this dead hour,[13]
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

Hor. In what particular thought to work,[14] I know not;
But in the gross and scope[15] of mine opinion,
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.[16]
In the most high and palmy[17] state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets.

Re-enter Ghost (R.H.)

But, (L.C.) soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me.

[HORATIO *crosses in front of the* Ghost *to* R. Ghost *crosses to* L.]

Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,[18]
Speak to me:
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,
Speak to me:
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
O, speak!
O, if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,[19]
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
Speak of it:—stay, and speak!

[*Exit* Ghost, L.H.]

Mar. 'Tis gone!
We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence.

Ber. It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

Hor. And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons.[20] I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet of the morn,
Doth with his lofty[21] and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day; and, at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit[22] hies
To his confine.
But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill:
Break we our watch up; and, by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.

[*Exeunt*, L.H.]

SCENE II

A ROOM OF STATE IN THE PALACE.

Trumpet March.

Enter the KING *and* QUEEN, *preceded by* POLONIUS, HAMLET,
LAERTES,[23] Lords, Ladies, *and* Attendants.

King. (R.C.) Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death

The memory be green;[24] and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe;
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature,
That we with wisest sorrow[25] think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
The imperial jointress of this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,[26]
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd[27]
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along:—For all, our thanks.
And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; What is't, Laertes?

Laer. (R.) My dread lord,
Your leave and favour[28] to return to France;
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France,
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

King. Have you your father's leave? What says Polonious?

Pol. (R.) He hath, my lord, (wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition; and, at last,
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent):[29]
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

King. Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will![30]
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,—

Ham. (L.) A little more than kin, and less than kind.[31]

[Aside.]

King. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Ham. Not so, my lord; I am too much i'the sun.[32]

Queen.(L.C.) Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour[33] off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy vailed lids[34]
Seek for thy noble father in the dust:
Thou know'st 'tis common, all that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

Ham. Ay, madam, it is common.

Queen. If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?

Ham. Seems, madam! nay, it is; I know not seems.
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Together with all forms, modes, shows of grief,
That can denote me truly: These, indeed, seem,
For they are actions that a man might play.
But I have that within which passeth show;[35]
These but the trappings[36] and the suits of woe.

King. 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father:
But, you must know, your father lost a father;
That father lost, lost his;[37] and the survivor bound,
In filial obligation, for some term
To do obsequious sorrow:[38] But to persever[39]
In obstinate condolement,[40] is a course

Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief:
It shows a will most incorrect to Heaven.[41]
We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing[42] woe; and think of us
As of a father: for let the world take note,
You are the most immediate to our throne;
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

Queen. Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

Ham. I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

King. Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply;
Be as ourself in Denmark.—Madam, come;
This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart:[43] in grace whereof,[44]
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,[45]
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell;
Re-speaking earthly thunder.

[*Trumpet March repeated. Exeunt* KING *and* QUEEN,
preceded by POLONIUS, Lords, Ladies, LAERTES, *and*
Attendants, R.H.]

Ham. O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself[46] into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon[47] 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world![48]
Fye on't! O fye! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.[49] That it should come to this!
But two months dead!—nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,

Hyperion to a satyr:[50] so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem[51] the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: And yet, within a month,—
Let me not think on't,—Frailty, thy name is Woman!—
A little month; or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears;—she married with my uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules.
It is not, nor it cannot come to, good:
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

Enter HORATIO, BERNARDO, *and* MARCELLUS (R.H.)

Hor. Hail to your lordship!

Ham. I am glad to see you well:
Horatio,—or I do forget myself.

Hor. The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

Ham. Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you:[52]
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?—
Marcellus?

[*Crosses to* C.]

Mar. (R.) My good lord,

Ham. (C.) I am very glad to see you; good even, sir.

[*To* BERNARDO, R.]

But what, in faith,[53] make you[54] from Wittenberg?[55]

Hor. (L.) A truant disposition, good my lord.

Ham. I would not hear your enemy say so;
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself: I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We'll teach you to drink deep, ere you depart.

Hor. My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

Ham. I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

Hor. Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.

Ham. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral bak'd meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe[56] in Heaven
Ere ever I had seen that day, Horatio!
My father,—Methinks, I see my father.

Hor. Where,
My lord?

Ham. In my mind's eye, Horatio.

Hor. I saw him once; he was a goodly king.[57]

Ham. He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.

[*Crosses to* L.]

Hor. (C.) My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

Ham. Saw who?

Hor. My lord, the king your father.

Ham. The king my father!

Hor. Season your admiration for a while[58]
With an attent ear; till I may deliver,
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
This marvel to you.

Ham. For Heaven's love, let me hear.

Hor. Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,
In the dead waste and middle of the night,[59]
Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father,
Arm'd at all points exactly, cap-a-pe,
Appears before them, and, with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walk'd
By their oppress'd and fear-surprisèd eyes,
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distill'd
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,[60]
Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did;
And I with them the third night kept the watch:
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
The apparition comes.

Ham. But where was this?

[*Crosses to* MARCELLUS.]

Mar. (R.) My lord, upon the platform where we watch'd.

Ham. (C.) Did you not speak to it?

Hor. (L.) My lord, I did;
But answer made it none: yet once methought
It lifted up its head, and did address[61]
Itself to motion, like as it would speak:
But, even then, the morning cock crew loud,
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away;
And vanish'd from our sight.

Ham. 'Tis very strange.

Hor. As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true;
And we did think it writ down[62] in our duty
To let you know of it.

Ham. Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.
Hold you the watch to-night?

Mar. We do, my lord.

Ham. Arm'd, say you?

Mar. Arm'd, my lord.

Ham. From top to toe?

Mar. My lord, from head to foot.

Ham. Then saw you not
His face?

Hor. O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.[63]

Ham. What, looked he frowningly?

Hor. A countenance more

In sorrow than in anger.

Ham. Pale or red?

Hor. Nay, very pale.

Ham. And fix'd his eyes upon you?

Hor. Most constantly.

Ham. I would I had been there.

Hor. It would have much amaz'd you.

Ham. Very like,
Very like. Stay'd it long?

Hor. While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

Mar.}
} Longer, Longer.
Ber.}

Hor. Not when I saw it.

Ham. His beard was grizzl'd, No?

Hor. It was, as I have seen it in his life,
A sable silver'd.

Ham. I will watch to-night;
Perchance, 'twill walk again.

Hor. (C.) I warrant it will.

Ham. If it assume my noble father's person,

I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape,
And bid me hold my peace.

[*Crosses to* L.]

I pray you all,
If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,
Let it be tenable[64] in your silence still;
And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
Give it an understanding, but no tongue;
I will requite your loves. So, fare you well:
Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,
I'll visit you.

Hor. (R.) Our duty to your honour.

Ham. Your loves, as mine to you: Farewell.

[*Exeunt* HORATIO, MARCELLUS, *and* BERNARDO, R.H.]

My father's spirit in arms! all is not well;
I doubt some foul play: 'would the night were come;
Till then sit still, my soul: Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.
[*Exit*, L.H.]

SCENE III

A ROOM IN POLONIUS'S HOUSE.

Enter LAERTES *and* OPHELIA (R.H.)

Laer. (L.C.) My necessaries are embarked: farewell:
And, sister, as the winds give benefit,[65]
Let me hear from you.

Oph. (R.C.) Do you doubt that?

Laer. For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,[66]
Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood;
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute.[67]

Oph. No more but so?

Laer. He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself; for on his choice depends
The safety and the health of the whole state.
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,
If with too credent ear you list his songs.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister;
And keep within the rear of your affection,[68]
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid[69] is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the moon:
Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes:
Be wary, then; best safety lies in fear:
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

Oph. I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven
Whilst, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,[70]
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own read.[71]

Laer. O, fear me not.
I stay too long;—but here my father comes.

Enter POLONIUS (L.H.)

Pol. Yet here, Laertes! aboard, aboard, for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,[72]
And you are staid for. There,—my blessing with you!

[*Laying his hand on* LAERTES' *head*.]

And these few precepts in thy memory—
Look thou character.[73] Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought[74] his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
Bear it, that the opposer may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice:
Take each man's censure,[75] but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy:
For the apparel oft proclaims the man;
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are most select and generous, chief in that.[76]
Neither a borrower nor a lender be:
For loan oft loses both itself and friend;
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.[77]
This above all,—To thine ownself be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell; my blessing season this in thee![78]

Laer. Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

[*Crosses to* L.]

Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well
What I have said to you.

Oph. (*Crosses to* LAERTES.) 'Tis in my memory lock'd,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.[79]

Laer. Farewell.

[*Exit* LAERTES, L.H.]

Pol. What is it, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

Oph. So please you, something touching the lord Hamlet.

Pol. Marry, well bethought:
'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you;[80] and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:
If it be so (as so 'tis put on me,[81]
And that in way of caution), I must tell you,
You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behoves my daughter, and your honour.
What is between[82] you? give me up the truth.

Oph. He hath, my lord, of late, made many tenders
Of his affection to me.

Pol. Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl,
Unsifted[83] in such perilous circumstance.
Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

Oph. I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

Pol. Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby;
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly;
Or, you'll tender me a fool.

Oph. My lord, he hath importun'd me with love
In honourable fashion.

Pol. Ay, fashion you may call it; go to, go to.

Oph. And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,
With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

Pol. Ay, springes to catch woodcocks.[84] I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows: This is for all,—
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
Have you so slander any leisure moment,[85]
As to give words or talk with the lord Hamlet.
Look to't, I charge you: come your ways.

Oph. I shall obey, my lord.

[*Exeunt*, R.H.]

SCENE IV

THE PLATFORM. NIGHT.

Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, *and* MARCELLUS (L.H.U.E.)

Ham. The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

Hor. It is a nipping and an eager air.[86]

Ham. What hour now?

Hor. I think it lacks of twelve.

Mar. No, it is struck.

Hor. (R.C.) Indeed? I heard it not: then it draws near the season,
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

[*A Flourish of Trumpets, and Ordnance shot off without.*]

What does this mean, my lord?

Ham. (L.C.) The king doth wake to-night,[87] and takes his rouse,[88]
And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.

Hor. Is it a custom?

Ham. Ay, marry, is't:

[*Crosses to* HORATIO.]

But to my mind,—though I am native here,
And to the manner born,—it is a custom
More honour'd in the breach than the observance.

Enter Ghost (L.H.)

Hor. (R.H.) Look, my lord, it comes!

Ham. (C.) Angels and ministers of grace defend us!—
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,

Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,[89]
That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee—Hamlet,
King, father: Royal Dane: O, answer me!
Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell
Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,[90]
Have burst their cerements;[91] why the sepulchre,
Wherein we saw thee quietly in-urn'd,
Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws,
To cast thee up again! What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again, in complete steel,
Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous; and we fools of nature[92]
So horridly to shake our disposition[93]
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do?

[Ghost *beckons.*]

Hor. It beckons you to go away with it,
As if it some impartment did desire
To you alone.

[Ghost *beckons again.*]

Mar. Look, with what courteous action
It waves you to a more removed ground:[94]
But do not go with it.

Hor. No, by no means.

Ham. It will not speak; then I will follow it.

Hor. Do not, my lord.

Ham. Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee;[95]
And for my soul, what can it do to that,

Being a thing immortal as itself?

[Ghost *beckons.*]

It waves me forth again;—I'll follow it.

Hor. What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,[96]
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,[97]
And there assume some other horrible form,
And draw you into madness?

[Ghost *beckons.*]

Ham. It waves me still.—
Go on; I'll follow thee.

Mar. You shall not go, my lord.

Ham. Hold off your hands.

Hor. Be rul'd; you shall not go.

Ham. My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.[98]

[Ghost *beckons*]

Still am I call'd:—unhand me, gentlemen;

[*Breaking from them.*]

By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me:—[99]
I say, away!—Go on; I'll follow thee.

[*Exeunt* Ghost *and* HAMLET, L.H., *followed at a*

distance by
HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.]

SCENE V

A MORE REMOTE PART OF THE PLATFORM. NIGHT.

Re-enter Ghost *and* HAMLET (L.H.U.E.)

Ham. (R.) Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak; I'll go no further.

Ghost. (L.) Mark me.

Ham. I will.

Ghost. My hour is almost come,
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

Ham. Alas, poor ghost!

Ghost. Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

Ham. Speak; I am bound to hear.

Ghost. So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

Ham. What?

Ghost. I am thy father's spirit;
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,[100]

Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg'd away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul;[101] freeze thy young blood;
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres;
Thy knotted and combinèd locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,[102]
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine:[103]
But this eternal blazon[104] must not be
To ears of flesh and blood.—List, list, O, list!—
If thou didst ever thy dear father love,—

Ham. O Heaven!

Ghost. Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

Ham. Murder!

Ghost. Murder most foul, as in the best it is;
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.

Ham. Haste me to know it, that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.

Ghost. I find thee apt;
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,[105]
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear:
'Tis given out that, sleeping in mine orchard,[106]
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process[107] of my death
Rankly abus'd: but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

Ham. O, my prophetic soul! my uncle!

Ghost. Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,
Won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming virtuous queen:
O, Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!
From me, whose love was of that dignity,
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage; and to decline
Upon a wretch,[108] whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine!
But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air;
Brief let me be.—Sleeping within mine orchard,
My custom always in the afternoon,
Upon my secure[109] hour thy uncle stole,
With juice of cursed hebenon[110] in a vial,
And in the porches of mine ears did pour
The leperous distilment; whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man,
That, swift as quicksilver, it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body;
So did it mine;
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once despatch'd:[111]
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd;[112]
No reckoning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head.

Ham. O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!

Ghost. If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury[113] and damnèd incest.
But, howsoever thou pursu'st this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive

Against thy mother aught: leave her to Heaven,
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his ineffectual fire:[114]
Adieu, adieu, adieu! remember me.

[*Exit*, L.H.]

Ham. Hold, hold, my heart;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up.—Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe.[115] Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all forms, all pressures past,[116]
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter: yes, by heaven,
I have sworn't.

Hor. (*Without.*) My lord, my lord,—

Mar. (*Without.*) Lord Hamlet,—

Hor. (*Without.*) Heaven secure him!

Ham. So be it!

Mar. (*Without.*) Illo, ho, ho, my lord!

Ham. Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.[117]

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS (L.H.U.E.)

Mar. (R.) How is't, my noble lord?

Hor. (L.) What news, my lord?

Ham. (C.) O, wonderful!

Hor. Good my lord, tell it.

Ham.
No;
You will reveal it.

Hor. Not I, my lord, by heaven.

Mar. Nor I, my lord.

Ham. How say you, then; would heart of man once think it?
But you'll be secret?—

Hor.}
} Ay, by heaven, my lord.
Mar.}

Ham. There's ne'er a villain, dwelling in all Denmark—
But he's an arrant knave.[118]

Hor. There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.

Ham. Why, right; you are in the right;
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands, and part:
You as your business and desire shall point you,
For every man hath business and desire,
Such as it is;—and, for my own poor part,
Look you, I will go pray.

Hor. These are but wild and whirling words,[119] my

lord.

Ham. I am sorry they offend you, heartily.

Hor. There's no offence, my lord.

Ham. Yes, by Saint Patrick,[120] but there is, Horatio,
And much offence, too. Touching this vision here,
It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you:
For your desire to know what is between us,
O'er-master it[121] as you may. And now, good friends,
As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.

Hor. What is't, my lord?
We will.

Ham. Never make known what you have seen to-night.

Hor.}
} My lord, we will not.
Mar.}

Ham. Nay, but swear't.

Hor. Propose the oath, my lord.

Ham. Never to speak of this that you have seen.
Swear by my sword.

[HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS *place each their right hand on* HAMLET'S *sword.*]

Ghost. (*Beneath.*) Swear.

Hor. O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

Ham. And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.[122]
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
But come;—
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,
As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet
To put an antick disposition[123] on,—
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumber'd thus,[124] or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
As, *Well, we know*; or, *We could, an if we would*; or, *If we list to speak*;—or, *There be, an if they might*;—
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me:—This do you swear,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you!

[HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS *again place their hands on* HAMLET'S *sword.*]

Ghost. (*Beneath.*) Swear.

Ham. Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! So gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you:
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
May do, to express his love and friending to you,
Heaven willing, shall not lack.[125] Let us go in together;

[*Crosses to* L.]

And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
The time is out of joint;—O cursèd spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!
Nay, come, let's go together.

[*Exeunt* L.H.]

END OF ACT FIRST.

Notes

[Footnote I.1: *Me:*] *i.e., me* who am already on the watch, and have a right to demand the watch-word.

[Footnote I.2: *Unfold*] Announce, make known.

[Footnote I.3: *Long live the King.*] The watch-word.

[Footnote I.4: *The rivals of my watch*,] *Rivals*, for partners or associates.

[Footnote I.5: *And liegemen to the Dane.*] *i.e.*, owing allegiance to Denmark.

[Footnote I.6: *A piece of him.*] Probably a cant expression.

[Footnote I.7: *To watch the minutes of this night*; This seems to have been an expression common in Shakespeare's time.

[Footnote I.8: *Approve our eyes*,] To *approve*, in Shakespeare's age, signified to make good or establish.

[Footnote I.9: *What we have seen.*] We must here supply "with," or "by relating" before "what we have seen."

[Footnote I.10: *It harrows me with fear and wonder.*] *i.e.*, it confounds and overwhelms me.

[Footnote I.11: *Usurp'st this time of night*,] *i.e.*, abuses, uses against right, and the order of things.

[Footnote I.12: *I might not this believe, &c.*] I *could* not: it had not been permitted me, &c., without the full and perfect evidence, &c.

[Footnote I.13: *Jump at this dead hour*,] *Jump* and *just* were synonymous in Shakespeare's time.

[Footnote I.14: *In what particular thought to work*,] In what particular course to set my thoughts at work: in what particular train to direct the mind and exercise it in conjecture.

[Footnote I.15: *Gross and scope*] Upon the whole, and in a general view.

[Footnote I.16: *Bodes some strange eruption to our state*, *i.e.*, some political distemper, which will break out in dangerous consequences.

[Footnote I.17: *Palmy state*] Outspread, flourishing. Palm branches were the emblem of victory.

[Footnote I.18: *Sound, or use of voice*,] Articulation.

[Footnote I.19:

Uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,

So in Decker's Knight's Conjuring, &c. "If any of them had bound the spirit of gold by any charmes *in cares*, or in iron fetters,

under the ground, they should, *for their own soule's quiet (which, questionless, else would whine up and down*,)

not for the good of their children, release it."

[Footnote I.20:

And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons.]

Apparitions were supposed to fly from the crowing

of the cock, because it indicated the approach of day.

[Footnote I.21: *Lofty*] High and loud.

[Footnote I.22: *The extravagant and erring spirit*] *Extravagant* is, got out of his bounds. *Erring* is here used in the sense of wandering.

[Footnote I.23: Laertes is unknown in the original story, being an introduction of Shakespeare's.

[Footnote I.24: *Green*;] Fresh.

[Footnote I.25: *Wisest sorrow*] Sober grief, passion discreetly reined.

[Footnote I.26: *With a defeated joy*,] *i.e.*, with joy baffled; with joy interrupted by grief.

[Footnote I.27: *Barr'd*] Excluded—acted without the concurrence of.

[Footnote I.28: *Your leave and favour*] The favour of your leave granted, the kind permission. Two substantives with a copulative being here, as is the frequent practice of our author, used for an adjective and substantive: an adjective sense is given to a substantive.

[Footnote I.29: *Upon his will I sealed my hard consent:*] At or upon his earnest and importunate suit, I gave my full and final, though hardly obtained and reluctant, consent.

[Footnote I.30:

Take thy fair hour! time be thine;
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!

Catch the auspicious moment! be time thine own! and may the exercise of thy fairest virtue fill up those hours, that are wholly at your command!

[Footnote I.31: *A little more than kin, and less than kind.*] Dr. Johnson says that *kind* is the Teutonic word for *child*. Hamlet, therefore, answers to the titles of *cousin* and *son*, which the king had given him, that he was somewhat more than *cousin*, and less than *son*. Steevens remarks, that it seems to have been

another proverbial phrase: "The nearer we are in blood, the further we must be from love; the greater the *kindred* is, the less the *kindness* must be." *Kin* is still used in the Midland Counties for *cousin*, and *kind* signifies *nature*. Hamlet may, therefore, mean that the relationship between them had become *unnatural*.

[Footnote I.32: *I am too much i'the sun.*] Meaning, probably, his being sent for from his studies to be exposed at his uncle's marriage as his *chiefest courtier*, and being thereby placed too much in the radiance of the king's presence; or, perhaps, an allusion to the proverb, "*Out of Heaven's blessing, into the warm sun:*" but it is not unlikely that a quibble is meant between *son* and *sun*.

[Footnote I.33: *Nighted color* Black—night-like.

[Footnote I.34: *Vailed lids*] Cast down.

[Footnote I.35: *Which passeth show*;] *i.e.*, "external manners of lament."

[Footnote I.36: *Trappings*] *Trappings* are "furnishings."

[Footnote I.37: *That father lost, lost his*;] "That lost father (of your father, *i.e.*, your grandfather), or father so lost, lost his."

[Footnote I.38: *Do obsequious sorrow:*] Follow with becoming and ceremonious observance the memory of the deceased.

[Footnote I.39: *But to persever*] This word was anciently accented on the second syllable.

[Footnote I.40: *Obstinate condolement*,] Ceaseless and unremitted expression of grief.

[Footnote I.41: *Incorrect to Heaven.*] Contumacious towards Heaven.

[Footnote I.42: *Unprevailing*] Fruitless, unprofitable.

[Footnote I.43: *Sits smiling to my heart:*] *To* is *at*: gladdens my heart.

[Footnote I.44: *In grace whereof*,] *i.e.*, respectful regard or honour of which.

[Footnote I.45: *No jocund health, that Denmark drinks to-day*,] Dr. Johnson remarks, that the king's

intemperance is very strongly impressed; everything that happens to him gives him occasion to drink. The Danes were supposed to be hard drinkers.

[Footnote I.46: *Resolve itself*] *To resolve* is an old word signifying *to dissolve*.

[Footnote I.47: *His canon*] *i.e.*, his rule or law.

[Footnote I.48: *The uses of this world!*] *i.e.*, the habitudes and usages of life.

[Footnote I.49: *Merely.*] Wholly—entirely.

[Footnote I.50: *Hyperion to a satyr:*] An allusion to the exquisite beauty of Apollo, compared with the deformity of a satyr; that satyr, perhaps, being Pan, the brother of Apollo.]

[Footnote I.51: *Might not beteem*] *i.e.*, might not allow, permit.

[Footnote I.52: *I'll change that name with you.*] *i.e.*, do not call yourself my *servant*, you are my *friend*; so I shall call you, and so I would have you call me.

[Footnote I.53: *In faith.*] Faithfully, in pure and simple verity.

[Footnote I.54: *But what make you*] What is your object? What are you doing?

[Footnote I.55: *What, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?*] In Shakespeare's time there was a university at Wittenberg; but as it was not founded till 1502, it consequently did not exist in the time to which this play refers.

[Footnote I.56: *My dearest foe*] *i.e.*, my direst or most important foe. This epithet was commonly used to denote the strongest and liveliest interest in any thing or person, for or against.

[Footnote I.57: *Goodly king.*] *i.e.*, a good king.]

[Footnote I.58:

Season your admiration for a while
with an attent ear;]

i.e., suppress your astonishment for a short

time, that you may be the better able to give your attention to what we will relate.

[Footnote I.59: *In the dead waste and middle of the night*,] *i.e.*, in the dark and desolate vast, or vacant space and middle of the night. It was supposed that spirits had permission to range the earth by night alone.

[Footnote I.60: *With the act of fear*,] *i.e.*, by the influence or power of fear.

[Footnote I.61: *Address*] *i.e.*, make ready.]

[Footnote I.62: *Writ down*] Prescribed by our own duty.

[Footnote I.63: *He wore his beaver up.*] That part of the helmet which may be lifted up, to take breath the more freely.

[Footnote I.64: *Tenable*] *i.e.*, strictly maintained.

[Footnote I.65: *Benefit*,] Favourable means.

[Footnote I.66: *Trifling of his favour*,] Gay and thoughtless intimation.

[Footnote I.67: *Perfume and suppliance of a minute.*] *i.e.*, an amusement to fill up a vacant moment, and render it agreeable.

[Footnote I.68: *Keep within the rear of your affection*,] Front not the peril; withdraw or check every warm emotion: advance not so far as your affection would lead you.

[Footnote I.69: *The chariest maid*] Chary is cautious.

[Footnote I.70: *Puff'd and reckless libertine.*] Bloated and swollen, the effect of excess; and heedless and indifferent to consequences.

[Footnote I.71: *Recks not his own read.*] *i.e.*, heeds not his own lessons or counsel.

[Footnote I.72: *Shoulder of your sail*,] A common sea phrase.

[Footnote I.73: *Look thou character.*] *i.e.*, a word often used by Shakespeare to signify to *write, strongly infix*; the accent is on the second syllable.

[Footnote I.74: *Unproportion'd thought*] Irregular, disorderly thought.

[Footnote I.75: *Each man's censure*,] Sentiment, opinion.

[Footnote I.76: *Chief in that.*] *i.e.*, chiefly in that.

[Footnote I.77: *Husbandry*] *i.e.*, thrift, economical prudence.

[Footnote I.78: *Season this in thee!*] *i.e.*, infix it in such a manner as that it may never wear out.

[Footnote I.79: *Yourself shall keep the key of it.*] Thence it shall not be dismissed, till you think it needless to retain it.

[Footnote I.80: *Given private time to you*;] Spent his time in private visits to you.

[Footnote I.81: *As so 'tis put on me*,] Suggested to, impressed on me.

[Footnote I.82: *Is between*] *i.e.*, what has passed—what intercourse had.

[Footnote I.83: *Green girl, Unsifted*] *i.e.*, inexperienced girl. Unsifted means one who has not nicely *canvassed* and examined the peril of her situation.

[Footnote I.84: *Woodcocks.*] Witless things.]

[Footnote I.85: *Slander any leisure moment*,] *i.e.*, I would not have you so disgrace your most idle moments, as not to find better employment for them than lord Hamlet's conversation.

[Footnote I.86: *An eager air.*] *Eager* here means *sharp*, from *aigre*, French.

[Footnote I.87: *Doth wake to-night*,] *i.e.*, holds a late revel.

[Footnote I.88: *Takes his rouse*,] *Rouse* means drinking bout, carousal.

[Footnote I.89: *Questionable shape*,] To *question*, in our author's time, signified to *converse*. Questionable, therefore, means *capable of being conversed with.*

[Footnote I.90: *Hearsed in death*,] Deposited with the accustomed funeral rites.

[Footnote I.91: *Cerements*;] Those precautions

usually adopted in preparing dead bodies for sepulture.

[Footnote I.92: *Fools of nature*] *i.e.*, making sport for nature.

[Footnote I.93: *Disposition*] Frame of mind and body.

[Footnote I.94: *Removed ground:*] *Removed* for *remote*.

[Footnote I.95: *At a pin's fee*;] *i.e.*, the value of a pin.

[Footnote I.96: *What if it tempt you toward the flood, &c.*

Malignant spirits were supposed to entice their victims into places of gloom and peril, and exciting in them the deepest terror.

[Footnote I.97: *Beetles o'er his base into the sea*,] *i.e.*, projects darkly over the sea.

[Footnote I.98: *Nemean lion's nerve.*] Shakespeare, and nearly all the poets of his time, disregarded the quantity of Latin names. The poet has here placed the accent on the first syllable, instead of the second.

[Footnote I.99: *That lets me:*] To let, in the sense in which it is here used, means to hinder—to obstruct—to oppose. The word is derived from the Saxon.

[Footnote I.100: *To fast in fires*,] Chaucer has a similar passage with regard to eternal punishment *"And moreover the misery of Hell shall be in default of meat and drink."*

[Footnote I.101: *Harrow up thy soul*;] Agitate and convulse.

[Footnote I.102: *Hair to stand on end*,] A common image of that day.

[Footnote I.103: *The fretful porcupine:*] This animal being considered irascible and timid.

[Footnote I.104: *Eternal blazon*] *i.e.*, publication or divulgation of things eternal.

[Footnote I.105: *Rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf*,] *i.e.*, in indolence and sluggishness, by its torpid habits contributes to that morbid state of its juices which may figuratively be denominated rottenness.

[Footnote I.106: *Orchard*,] Garden.

[Footnote I.107: *Forged process*] *i.e.*, false report of proceedings.

[Footnote I.108: *Decline upon a wretch.*] Stoop with degradation to.

[Footnote I.109: *Secure*] Unguarded.

[Footnote I.110: *Hebenon*] Hebenon is described by Nares in his Glossary, as the juice of ebony, supposed to be a deadly poison.

[Footnote I.111: *Despatch'd:*] Despoiled—bereft.

[Footnote I.112: *Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd*;] To *housel* is to minister the sacrament to one lying on his death bed. *Disappointed* is the same as unappointed, which here means unprepared. *Unanel'd* is without extreme unction.

[Footnote I.113: *Luxury*] Lasciviousness.

[Footnote I.114: *Pale his uneffectual fire:*] *i.e.*, not seen by the light of day; or it may mean, shining without heat.

[Footnote I.115: *In this distracted globe.*] *i.e.*, his head distracted with thought.

[Footnote I.116: *Pressures past*,] Impressions heretofore made.

[Footnote I.117: *Come, bird, come.*] This is the call which falconers used to their hawk in the air when they would have him come down to them.

[Footnote I.118:

> *There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark—*
> *But he's an arrant knave.*

Hamlet probably begins these words in the ardour of confidence and sincerity; but suddenly alarmed at the magnitude of the disclosure he was going to make, and considering that, not his friend Horatio only, but another person was present, he breaks off suddenly:—"There's ne'er a villain in all Denmark that can match (perhaps he would have said) my uncle in villainy;

but recollecting the danger of such a declaration, he pauses for a moment, and then abruptly concludes:—"but he's an arrant knave."

[Footnote I.119: *Whirling words*,] Random words thrown out with no specific aim.

[Footnote I.120: *By Saint Patrick*,] At this time all the whole northern world had their learning from Ireland; to which place it had retired, and there flourished under the auspices of this Saint.

[Footnote I.121: *O'er-master it*] Get the better of it.

[Footnote I.122: *Give it welcome*.] Receive it courteously, as you would a stranger when introduced.

[Footnote I.123: *Antick disposition*] *i.e.*, strange, foreign to my nature, a disposition which Hamlet assumes as a protection against the danger which he apprehends from his uncle, and as a cloak for the concealment of his own meditated designs.

[Footnote I.124: *Arms encumber'd thus*,] *i.e.*, folded.

[Footnote I.125: *Friending to you–shall not lack*] Disposition to serve you shall not be wanting.

ACT II

SCENE I

A ROOM IN POLONIUS'S HOUSE.

Enter POLONIUS[1] (L.H.), *meeting Ophelia.* (R.H.)

Pol. How now, Ophelia! What's the matter?

Oph. O, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

Pol. With what, in the name of Heaven?

Oph. My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd;
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous in purport,
He comes before me.

Pol. Mad for thy love?

Oph. My lord, I do not know;
But, truly, I do fear it.

Pol. What said he?

Oph. He took me by the wrist, and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long staid he so;
At last,—a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound,
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk,[2]
And end his being: That done, he lets me go:
And, with his head over his shoulder turn'd,
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;
For out o'doors he went without their helps,
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

Pol. Come, go with me; I will go seek the king.
This is the very ecstacy of love;[3]
What, have you given him any hard words of late?

Oph. No, my good lord; but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters, and denied
His access to me.

Pol. That hath made him mad.
Come, go we to the king:
This must be known; which, being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.[4]
Come.

[*Exeunt* L.H.]

SCENE II

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE.

Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and* Attendants (R.H.)

King. (C.) Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from the understanding of himself,[5]
I cannot dream of: I entreat you both,
That you vouchsafe your rest[6] here in our court
Some little time: so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather,
Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,
That, open'd, lies within our remedy.

Queen. (R.C.) Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you;
And sure I am two men there are not living
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
So to expend your time with us a while,
Your visitation shall receive such thanks
As fits a king's remembrance.

Ros. (R.) Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,[7]
Put your dread pleasures more into command

Than to entreaty.

Guil. (R.) But we both obey,
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent,[8]
To lay our service freely at your feet.

King. Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

Queen. I do beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changèd son. Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.
[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and* Attendants, R.H.]

Enter POLONIUS (L.H.)

Pol. Now do I think (or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy[9] so sure
As it hath us'd to do), that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

King. (C.) O, speak of that; that do I long to hear.

Pol. (L.C.) My liege, and madam, to expostulate[10]
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time;
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,—
I will be brief:—Your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,
What is't, but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

Queen. (R.C.) More matter, with less art.

Pol. Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity;

And pity 'tis, 'tis true: a foolish figure;
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him, then: and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or, rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause:
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus,
Perpend.[11]
I have a daughter, have, while she is mine,
Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this: Now gather, and surmise.

[Reads] *To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified*
Ophelia,—[12]

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase, *beautified* is a vile phrase:
but you shall hear. Thus:

In her excellent white bosom,[13] *these*, &c.[14]

Queen. Came this from Hamlet to her?

Pol. Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.—
[*Reads.*]

Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt thou the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt, I love.

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers;[15] *I have not art to reckon my groans: but that I love thee best, O most best,*[16] *believe it. Adieu.*

Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him,[17]

Hamlet.

This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me:
And more above,[18] hath his solicitings,[19]
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,
All given to my ear.

King. But how hath she
Receiv'd his love?

Pol. What do you think of me?

King. As of a man faithful and honourable.

Pol. I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing
(As I perceived it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me), what might you,
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,
If I had play'd the desk or table book;[20]
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb;[21]
Or look'd upon this love with idle sight;[22]
What might you think? No, I went round to work,[23]
And my young mistress thus did I bespeak:
Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy sphere;
This must not be: and then I precepts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;[24]
And he, repuls'd (a short tale to make),
Fell into sadness; thence into a weakness;
Thence to a lightness; and, by this declension,
Into the madness wherein now he raves,
And all we mourn for.

King. Do you think 'tis this?

Queen. It may be, very likely.

Pol. Hath there been such a time (I'd fain know that,)
That I have positively said, *'tis so*,
When it proved otherwise?

King. Not that I know.

Pol. Take this from this, if it be otherwise:

[*Pointing to his head and shoulder.*]

If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

King. How may we try it further?

Pol. You know, sometimes he walks for hours together
Here in the lobby.

Queen. So he does, indeed.

Pol. At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him:
Mark the encounter: if he love her not,
And be not from his reason fallen thereon,
Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm, and carters.

King. We will try it.

Queen. But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

Pol. Away, I do beseech you both, away:
I'll board him presently.[25]

[*Exeunt* KING *and* QUEEN, R.H.]

Enter HAMLET, *reading* (L.C.)

Pol. How does my good lord Hamlet?

Ham. (C.) Excellent well.

Pol. (R.) Do you know me, my lord?

Ham. Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.[26]

Pol. Not I, my lord.

Ham. Then I would you were so honest a man.

Pol. Honest, my lord!

Ham. Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

Pol. That's very true, my lord.

Ham. For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god, kissing carrion,—Have you a daughter?[27]

Pol. I have, my lord.

Ham. Let her not walk i'the sun: conception is a blessing; but as your daughter may conceive,—friend, look to't, look to't, look to't.

[*Goes up stage.*]

Pol. (*Aside.*) Still harping on my daughter:—yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger.

[*Crosses to* L.]

I'll speak to him again.—What do you read, my lord?

Ham. (C.) Words, words, words.

Pol. (L.) What is the matter, my lord?

Ham. Between who?

Pol. I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

Ham. Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue[28] says here that old men have grey beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum; and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: All of which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for yourself, sir, shall be as old as I am, if, like a crab, you could go backward.

[*Crosses*, L.]

Pol. (*Aside.*) Though this be madness, yet there's method in it. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

Ham. Into my grave?

[*Crosses* R.]

Pol. (L.) Indeed, that is out o' the air.—How pregnant sometimes his replies[29] are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between

him and my daughter.—My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

Ham. (C.) You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withall, except my life, except my life, except my life.

Pol. Fare you well, my lord.

[*Exit* POLONIUS, L.H.]

Ham. These tedious old fools!

Pol. (*Without.*) You go to seek the lord Hamlet; there he is.

Ros. Heaven save you, sir!

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN (L.H.)

Guil. My honor'd lord!—

Ros. My most dear lord!—

Ham. My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern?

[*Crosses to* ROSENCRANTZ.]

Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both? What news?

Ros. (L.) None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

Ham. (C.) Then is dooms-day near: but your news is not true. In the beaten way of friendship,[30] what

make you at Elsinore?

Ros. To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

Ham. Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

Guil. (R.) What should we say, my lord?

Ham. Any thing—but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

Ros. To what end, my lord?

Ham. That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, [*taking their hands*,] by the consonancy of our youth,[31] by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer[32] could charge you withal, be even[33] and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no?

Ros. What say you?

[*To* GUILDENSTERN.]

Ham. Nay, then, I have an eye of you.[34]

[*Crosses* R.]

[*Aside.*]

—if you love me, hold not off.

Guil. My lord, we were sent for.

Ham. (*Returning* C.) I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather.[35] I have of late (but wherefore I know not) lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a steril promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express[36] and admirable! in action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon[37] of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me,—nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

Ros. My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

Ham. Why did you laugh, then, when I said, *Man delights not me?*

Ros. To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what Lenten entertainment[38] the players shall receive from you: we coted them on the way;[39] and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

Ham. He that plays the king shall be welcome, his majesty shall have tribute of me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man shall end his part in peace;[40] and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the

blank verse shall halt for't.[41]—What players are they?

Ros. Even those you were wont to take such delight in, the tragedians of the city.

Ham. How chances it, they travel?[42] their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways. Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?

Ros. No, indeed, they are not.

Ham. It is not very strange; for my uncle is king of Denmark,[43] and those that would make mouths at him[44] while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, an hundred ducats a-piece for his picture in little.[45] There is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[*Flourish of trumpets without.*]

Guil. There are the players.

Ham. Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands. You are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

Guil. In what, my dear lord?

Ham. I am but mad north-north west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a hern-shaw.[46]

[*Crosses* R.]

Pol. (*Without*, L.H.) Well be with you, gentlemen!

Ham. (*Crosses* C.) Hark you, Guildenstern;—and Rosencrantz: that great baby you see there is not yet

out of his swaddling-clouts.

Ros. (R.) Haply he's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

Ham. I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it.—You say right, sir: o'Monday morning; 'twas then, indeed.

Enter POLONIUS (L.H.)

Pol. My lord, I have news to tell you.

Ham. My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome,—

Pol. The actors are come hither, my lord.

Ham. Buz, buz![47]

Pol. Upon my honour,—

Ham. Then came each actor on his ass.[48]

Pol. The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastorical-comical, historical-pastoral, scene indivisible, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light.[49] For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.[50]

Ham. O, Jephthah, judge of Israel,—what a treasure hadst thou!

Pol. What a treasure had he, my lord?

Ham. Why,—*One fair daughter, and no more,*
The which he loved passing well.

Pol. Still harping on my daughter.

[*Aside.*]

Ham. Am I not i'the right, old Jephthah?

Pol. If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

Ham. Nay, that follows not.

Pol. What follows, then, my lord?

Ham. Why, *As by lot, God wot*,[51] and then, you know, *It came to pass, As most like it was*,—The first row of the pious Chanson[52] will show you more; for look, my abridgment comes.[53]

Enter Four or Five Players (L.H.)—POLONIUS *crosses behind*
HAMLET *to* R.H.

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all: O, old friend! Why, thy face is valanced[54] since I saw thee last; Com'st thou to beard me[55] in Denmark?—What, my young lady and mistress. By-'r-lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine.[56] You are welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers,[57] fly at anything we see: We'll have a speech straight: Come, give us a taste of your quality;[58] come, a passionate speech.

1st Play. (L.H.) What speech, my lord?

Ham. I heard thee speak me a speech once,—but it was never acted; or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million; 'twas

caviare to the general:[59] but it was an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning.[60] One speech in it I chiefly loved; 'twas Aeneas' tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of Priam's slaughter: If it live in your memory, begin at this line; let me see, let me see;—

The rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast,—'tis not so: it begins with Pyrrhus:

> *The rugged Pyrrhus,—he, whose sable arms*,
> *Black as his purpose, did the night resemble*,
> *Old grandsire Priam seeks.*

Pol. (R.) 'Fore Heaven, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

Ham. (C.) So proceed you.

> *1st Play.* (L.) *Anon he finds him*
> *Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,*
> *Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,*
> *Repugnant to command: Unequal match'd,*
> *Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;*
> *But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword* [61]
> *The unnerved father falls.*
> *But, as we often see, against some storm,*
> *A silence in the heavens, the rack*[62] *stand still,*
> *The bold wind speechless, and the orb below*
> *As hush as death; anon the dreadful thunder*
> *Doth rend the region; So, after Pyrrhus' pause,*
> *A roused vengeance sets him new a work;*
> *And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall*
> *On Mars's armour, forg'd for proof eterne,*
> *With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword*
> *Now falls on Priam.—*
> *Out, out, thou fickle Fortune!*

Pol. (R.) This is too long.

Ham. It shall to the barber's, with your beard.—Say on;—come to Hecuba.

1st Play. But who, ah woe, had seen the mobled queen—

Ham. The mobled queen?[63]

Pol. That's good; mobled queen is good.

1st Play. Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames;
A clout upon that head
Where late the diadem stood; and, for a robe,
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up;
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd,
'Gainst fortune's state would treason have pronounced.

Pol. Look, whether he has not turned his colour, and has tears in's
eyes.—Prithee, no more.

Ham. (C.) 'Tis well; I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon.—Good, my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used; for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time: After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

Pol. (R.) My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

Ham. Much better: Use every man after his desert, and who shall 'scape whipping? Use them after your

own honour and dignity: The less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

[*Crosses to* R.H.]

Pol. Come, sirs.

Ham. Follow him, friends: we'll hear a play to-morrow.

[*Exit* POLONIUS *with some of the* Players, L.H.]

Old friend

[*Crosses to* C.]

—My good friends

[*To* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.]

I'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore—can you play the murder of Gonzago?

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN, R.H.]

1st Play. Ay, my lord.

Ham. We'll have it to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would insert in't—could you not?

1st Play. Ay, my lord.

Ham. Very well.—Follow that lord; and look you mock him not.

[*Exit* Player, L.H.]

Now I am alone.
O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous, that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit,
That, from her working, all his visage wann'd;[64]
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit?[65] And all for nothing!
For Hecuba?
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue[66] for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;
Make mad the guilty, and appal the free;
Confound the ignorant, and amaze, indeed,
The very faculties of eyes and ears.
Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John a-dreams,[67] unpregnant of my cause,[68]
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damn'd defeat was made.[69] Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i'the throat,
As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this,
Ha?
Why, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall
To make oppression bitter;[70] or, ere this,
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal: Bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless[71] villain!
O, vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,

That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a scold, unpack my heart with words,
And fall a cursing, like a very drab,
A scullion!
Fye upon't! fye! About, my brains![72] I have heard
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul, that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;
I'll tent him to the quick:[73] if he do blench,[74]
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil: and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and, perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy
(As he is very potent with such spirits),
Abuses me to damn me: I'll have good grounds
More relative than this:[75] The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

[*Exit*, R.H.]

END OF ACT SECOND.

Notes

[Footnote II.1: *Polonius*,] Doctor Johnson describes Polonius as "a man bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observation, confident in his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, and declining into dotage. A man positive and confident, because he knows his mind was once strong, and knows not that it is become weak." The idea of dotage encroaching upon wisdom will solve all the phenomena of the character of Polonius.

[Footnote II.2: *His bulk*,] Frame.

[Footnote II.3: *Ecstacy of love*;] *i.e.*, madness of love. In this sense the word is now obsolete.

[Footnote II.4:

This must be known; which being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.

i.e., this must be made known to the king, for (being kept secret) the hiding Hamlet's love might occasion more mischief to us from him and the queen, than the uttering or revealing of it will occasion hate and resentment from Hamlet.

It was the custom of Shakespeare's age, to conclude acts and scenes with a couplet, a custom which was

continued for nearly a century afterwards.

[Footnote II.5: *The understanding of himself*,] *i.e.*, the just estimate of himself.

[Footnote II.6: *Vouchsafe your rest*] Please to reside.

[Footnote II.7: *Of us*,] *i.e.*, over us.

[Footnote II.8: *In the full bent*,] To the full stretch and range—a term derived from archery.

[Footnote II.9: *The trail of policy*] The *trail* is the *course* of an animal pursued by the scent.

[Footnote II.10: *Expostulate*] To *expostulate* is to discuss, to put the pros and cons, to answer demands upon the question.

Expose is an old term of similar import.

[Footnote II.11: *Perpend.*] *i.e.*, reflect, consider attentively.

[Footnote II.12: *Most beautified Ophelia*,] Heywood, in his

History of Edward VI., says "Katharine Parre, Queen Dowager to King Henry VIII., was a woman *beautified* with many excellent virtues." The same expression is frequently used by other old authors.

[Footnote II.13: *In her excellent white bosom*,] The ladies, in Shakespeare's time, wore pockets in the front of their stays.

[Footnote II.14: *These, &c.*] In our poet's time, the word *these* was usually added at the end of the superscription of letters.

[Footnote II.15: *I am ill at these numbers*;] No talent for these rhymes.

[Footnote II.16: *O most best*,] An ancient mode of expression.

[Footnote II.17: *Whilst this machine is to him*,] Belongs to, obey his impulse; so long as he is "a sensible warm motion," the similar expression to "While my wits are my own."

[Footnote II.18: *And more above*,] *i.e.*, moreover, besides.

[Footnote II.19: *His solicitings*,] *i.e.*, his love-

making, his tender expressions.

[Footnote II.20: *If I had played the desk, or table book*;] This line may either mean *if I had conveyed intelligence between them*, or, *known of their love, if I had locked up his secret in my own breast, as closely as it were confined in a desk or table book.*

[Footnote II.21: *Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb*;] *i.e.*, connived at it.

[Footnote II.22: *With idle sight*;] *i.e.*, with indifference.

[Footnote II.23: *Round to work*,] *i.e.*, roundly, without reserve.

[Footnote II.24: *Which done, she took the fruits of my advice*;] She took the *fruits* of advice when she obeyed advice, the advice was then made *fruitful.*—JOHNSON.

[Footnote II.25: *I'll board him presently.*] Accost, address him.

[Footnote II.26: *You are a fishmonger.*] This was an expression better understood in Shakespeare's time than at present, and no doubt was relished by the audience of the Globe Theatre as applicable to the Papists, who in Queen Elizabeth's time were esteemed enemies to the Government. Hence the proverbial phrase of *He's an honest man and eats no fish*; to signify he's a friend to the Government and a Protestant.

[Footnote II.27: *For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god, kissing carrion,—Have you a daughter?*] *i.e.*, Hamlet having just remarked that honesty is very rare in the world, adds, that since there is so little virtue, since corruption abounds everywhere, and maggots are *bred* by the sun, which is a god, even in a dead dog, Polonius ought to take care to prevent his daughter from walking in the sun, lest she should prove *"a breeder of sinners;"* for though *conception* (understanding) in general be a blessing, yet as Ophelia might chance to *conceive* (to be pregnant), it might be a calamity. Hamlet's

abrupt question, *"Have you a daughter?"* is evidently intended to impress Polonius with the belief of the Prince's madness.—MALONE.

[Footnote II.28: *The satirical rogue*] Hamlet alludes to Juvenal, who in his 10th Satire, describes the evils of long life.

[Footnote II.29: *How pregnant his replies*] Big with meaning.]

[Footnote II.30: *Beaten way of friendship*,] Plain track, open and unceremonious course.

[Footnote II.31: *Rights of our fellowship and constancy of our youth*,] Habits of familiar intercourse and correspondent years.

[Footnote II.32: *A better proposer*] An advocate of more address in shaping his aims, who could make a stronger appeal.

[Footnote II.33: *Even*] Without inclination any way.

[Footnote II.34: *Nay, then, I have an eye of you.*] *i.e.*, I have a glimpse of your meaning. Hamlet's penetration having shown him that his two friends are set over him as spies.

[Footnote II.35: *So shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather.*] Be beforehand with your discovery, and the plume and gloss of your secret pledge be in no feather shed or tarnished.

[Footnote II.36: *Express*] According to pattern, justly and perfectly modelled.

[Footnote II.37: *Paragon*] Model of perfection.

[Footnote II.38: *Lenten entertainment*] *i.e.*, sparing, like the entertainments given in Lent.

[Footnote II.39: *We coted them on the way*;] To cote, is to pass by, to pass the side of another. It appears to be a word of French origin, and was a common sporting term in Shakespeare's time.

[Footnote II.40: *The humorous man shall end his part in peace*;] The fretful or capricious man shall vent the whole of his spleen undisturbed.

[Footnote II.41: *The lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't.*] *i.e.*, the lady shall mar the measure of the verse, rather than not express herself freely and fully.

[Footnote II.42: *Travel?*] Become strollers.

[Footnote II.43: *It is not very strange; for my uncle is king of Denmark*;] This is a reflection on the mutability of fortune, and the variableness of man's mind.

[Footnote II.44: *Make mouths at him*] *i.e.*, deride him by antic gestures and mockery.

[Footnote II.45: *In little.*] In miniature.

[Footnote II.46: *I know a hawk from a hern-shaw.*] A hernshaw is a heron or hern. *To know a hawk from a hernshaw* is an ancient proverb, sometimes corrupted into *handsaw*. Spencer quotes the proverb, as meaning, *wise enough to know the hawk from its game.*

[Footnote II.47: *Buz, buz!*] Sir William Blackstone states that *buz* used to be an interjection at Oxford when any one began a story that was generally known before.

[Footnote II.48: *Then came each actor on his ass.*] This seems to be a line of a ballad.

[Footnote II.49: *Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light.*] An English translation of the tragedies of Seneca was published in 1581, and one comedy of Plautus, viz., the Menaechme, in 1595.

[Footnote II.50: *For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.*] The probable meaning of this passage is,—*For the observance of the rules of the Drama, while they take such liberties, as are allowable, they are the only men—writ* is an old word for *writing*.

[Footnote II.51: *As by lot, God wot*,] There was an old ballad entitled the song of Jephthah, from which these lines are probably quotations. The story of Jephthah was also one of the favourite subjects of ancient tapestry.

[Footnote II.52: *The first row of the pious Chanson*] This expression does not appear to be very well understood. Steevens tells us that the *pious chansons* were a kind of *Christmas carols*, containing some scriptural history thrown into loose rhymes, and sung about the streets. The *first row* appears to mean the *first division* of one of these.

[Footnote II.53: *My abridgment comes.*] Hamlet alludes to the players, whose approach will shorten his talk.

[Footnote II.54: *Thy face is valanced*] *i.e.*, fringed with a beard. The valance is the fringes or drapery hanging round the tester of a bed.

[Footnote II.55: *Com'st thou to beard me*] To *beard* anciently meant to set *at defiance*. Hamlet having just told the player that his face is valanced, is playing upon the word *beard*.

[Footnote II.56: *By the altitude of a chopine.*] A chioppine is a high shoe, or rather clog, worn by the Italians. Venice was more famous for them than any other place. They are described as having been made of wood covered with coloured leather, and sometimes *even half a yard high*, their altitude being proportioned to the rank of the lady, so that they could not walk without being supported.

[Footnote II.57: *Like French falconers*,] The French seem to have been the first and noblest falconers in the western part of Europe. The French king sent over his falconers to show that sport to King James the First.—*See Weldon's Court of King James.*

[Footnote II.58: *Quality*;] Qualifications, faculty.

[Footnote II.59: *Caviare to the general*;] Caviare is the spawn of fish pickled, salted, and dried. It is imported from Russia, and was considered in the time of Shakespeare a new and fashionable luxury, not obtained or relished by the vulgar, and therefore used by him to signify anything above their comprehension—general is here used for the

people.

[Footnote II.60: *As much modesty as cunning.*] As much propriety and decorum as skill.

[Footnote II.61: *Falls with the whiff and wind of his fell sword*] Our author employs the same image in almost the same phrase:

"The Grecians *fall*
Even in the fan and wind of your fair sword." *Tr. & Cress. V. 3. Tr.*

[Footnote II.62: *The rack*] The clouds or congregated vapour.

[Footnote II.63: *The mobled queen?*] Mobled is veiled, muffled, disguised.

[Footnote II.64: *All his visage wann'd*;] *i.e.*, turned pale or wan.

[Footnote II.65: *His whole functions suiting with forms to his conceit?*] *i.e.*, his powers and faculties—the whole energies of his soul and body giving material forms to his passion, such as tone of voice, expression of face, requisite action, in accordance with the ideas that floated in his conceit or imagination.

[Footnote II.66: *The cue*] The point—the direction.

[Footnote II.67: *Like John a-dreams*,] Or dreaming John, a name apparently coined to suit a dreaming, stupid person; he seems to have been a well-known character.

[Footnote II.68: *Unpregnant of my cause*,] *i.e.*, not quickened with a new desire of vengeance; not teeming with revenge.

[Footnote II.69: *Defeat was made.*] Overthrow.

[Footnote II.70: *Lack gall to make oppression bitter*;] *i.e.*, lack gall to make me feel the bitterness of oppression.

[Footnote II.71: *Kindless*] Unnatural.

[Footnote II.72: *About, my brains!*] Wits to work.

[Footnote II.73: *I'll tent him to the quick:*] *i.e.*, probe him—search his wounds.

[Footnote II.74: *Blench*,] Shrink, start aside.

[Footnote II.75: *More relative than this:*] Directly applicable.

ACT III

SCENE I

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE.

Three chairs on L.H., *one on* R.

Enter KING *and* QUEEN, *preceded by* POLONIUS. OPHELIA,
ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GIULDENSTERN, *following* (R.H.)

King. (C.) And can you, by no drift of conference,
Get from him why he puts on this confusion?

Ros. (R.) He does confess he feels himself distracted;
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

Guild. (R.) Nor do we find him forward[1] to be sounded
But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.

Queen. (R.C.) Did you assay him[2]
To any pastime?

Ros. Madam, it so fell out, that certain players
We o'er-raught on the way:[3] of these we told him;
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it: They are about the court;
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.

Pol. 'Tis most true:
And he beseech'd me to entreat your majesties
To hear and see the matter.

King. With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclin'd.
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

Ros. We shall, my lord.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN, R.H.]

King. Sweet Gertrude, leave us too;
For we have closely sent[4] for Hamlet hither,
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia:[5]
Her father and myself (lawful espials[6]),
Will so bestow ourselves, that, seeing, unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge;
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If't be the affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

Queen. (R.) I shall obey you:
And for your part, Ophelia,

[OPHELIA *comes down* L.H.]

I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness: so shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours.

Oph. Madam, I wish it may.

[*Exit* QUEEN, R.H.]

Pol. Ophelia, walk you here. Gracious, so please you,
We will bestow ourselves. Read on this book;

[*To* OPHELIA.]

That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this,—
'Tis too much prov'd,[7] that, with devotion's visage
And pious action, we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

King. O, 'tis too true! how smart
A lash that speech doth give my conscience!

[*Aside.*]

Pol. I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord.

[*Exeunt* KING *and* POLONIUS, R.H.2 E.,
and
OPHELIA, R.H.U.E.]

Enter HAMLET (L.H.)

Ham. To be, or not to be, that is the question:[8]
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,[9]
And, by opposing end them?—To die,—to sleep,
No more;—and by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die,—to sleep,—
To sleep! perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,[10]
Must give us pause:[11] There's the respect[12]
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,[13]
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,[14]
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make[15]
With a bare bodkin?[16] Who would fardels bear,[17]
To groan and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn[18]
No traveller returns,[19] puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus, conscience does make cowards of us all;[20]
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
And enterprises of great pith and moment,[21]
With this regard, their currents turn away,
And lose the name of action.[22]—

[OPHELIA *returns.*]

—Soft you now![23]
The fair Ophelia:—Nymph, in thy orisons[24]
Be all my sins remember'd.

Oph. (R.C.) Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?

Ham. (L.C.) I humbly thank you; well.

Oph. My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longèd long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them.

Ham. No, not I;
I never gave you aught.

Oph. My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;
And, with them, words of so sweet breath compos'd
As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

Ham. Ha, ha! are you honest?

Oph. My lord?

Ham. Are you fair?

Oph. What means your lordship?

Ham. That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.[25]

Oph. Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

Ham. Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd, than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness:[26] this was some time a paradox, but now the

time gives it proof. I did love you once.

Oph. Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Ham. You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock, but we shall relish of it:[27] I loved you not.

Oph. I was the more deceived.

Ham. Get thee to a nunnery: Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck[28] than I have thoughts to put them in,[29] imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do, crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

Oph. At home, my lord.

Ham. Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in's own house. Farewell.

Oph. O, help him, you sweet heavens!

Ham. If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry. Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery; farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go; go; go.

Oph. Heavenly powers, restore him!

Ham. I have heard of your paintings[30] too, well enough; Heaven hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another:[31] you jig, you amble, and you lisp,[32] and nickname Heaven's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance.[33] Go to, I'll no more of't; it hath made me mad.

[HAMLET *crosses to* R.H.]

I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one,[34] shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.

[*Exit* HAMLET, R.H.[35]]

Oph. (L.) O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,[36]
The glass of fashion[37] and the mould of form,[38]
The observ'd of all observers, quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his musick vows,[39]
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh:
O, woe is me,
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

[*Exit* OPHELIA, L.H.]

Re-enter KING *and* POLONIUS.

King. Love! his affections do not that way tend;
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul,
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
He shall with speed to England,
For the demand of our neglected tribute:
Haply, the seas, and countries different,
With variable objects, shall expel

This something-settled matter in his heart;
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

Pol. It shall do well: But yet I do believe
The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love. My lord, do as you please;
But, if you hold it fit, after the play,
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
To show his grief: let her be round with him;[40]
And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference. If she find him not,[41]
To England send him; or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

King. It shall be so:
Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go.

[*Exeunt*, L.H.]

SCENE II

Enter HAMLET *and a* Player (R.H.)

Ham. (C.) Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief[42] the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hands thus;[43] but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul, to hear a robustious perrywig-pated fellow[44] tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to

split the ears of the groundlings,[45] who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant;[46] it out-herods Herod:[47] Pray you, avoid it.

1st Play. (R.) I warrant your honour.

Ham. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor; suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time its form and pressure.[48] Now, this overdone, or come tardy off,[49] though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of which one[50] must, in your allowance,[51] o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely,[52] that, neither having the accent of christians, nor the gait of christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

[*Crosses to* R.]

1st Play. (L.) I hope we have reformed that indifferently[53] with us.

Ham. O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them:[54] for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators[55]

to laugh too; though, in the mean time, some necessary question[56] of the play be then to be considered: that's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready.

[*Exit* Player, L.H.]

Ham. What, ho, Horatio!

Enter HORATIO (R.H.)

Hor. Here, sweet lord, at your service.

Ham. Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation cop'd withal.[57]

Hor. O, my dear lord.

Ham. Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast, but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp;
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee,[58]
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul[59] was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself: for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Has ta'en with equal thanks: and bless'd are those
Whose blood and judgment[60] are so well co-mingled,
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.—Something too much of this.—

There is a play to-night before the king;
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death:
I pr'ythee when thou seest that act a-foot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul[61]
Observe my uncle: if his occulted guilt[62]
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen;
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy.[63] Give him heedful note:
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face;
And, after, we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.[64]

[HORATIO *goes off*, U.E.L.H.]

March. Enter KING *and* QUEEN, *preceded by* POLONIUS, OPHELIA,
HORATIO, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, Lords, Ladies, *and* Attendants.
KING *and* QUEEN *sit* (L.H.); OPHELIA (R.H.)

King. (L.) How fares our cousin Hamlet?

Ham. (C.) Excellent, i'faith; of the cameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-crammed: you cannot feed capons so.

King. I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.[65]

Ham. No, nor mine, now.[66] My lord,—you played once in the university, you say?[67]

[*To* POLONIUS, L.]

Pol. (L.C.) That did I, my lord; and was accounted a good actor.

Ham. (C.) And what did you enact?

Pol. I did enact Julius Ceasar:[68] I was killed i'the Capitol;
Brutus killed me.

Ham. It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.—Be the players ready?

Ros. Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.[69]

Queen. Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

[*Pointing to a chair by her side.*]

Ham. No, good mother, here's metal more attractive.

Pol. O, ho! do you mark that?

[*Aside to the* KING.]

Ham. Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

[*Lying down at* OPHELIA'S *feet.*][70]

Oph. (R.) You are merry, my lord.

Ham. O, your only jig-maker.[71] What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.

Oph. Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

Ham. So long? Nay, then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables.[72] O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope

a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: But, by'r-lady, he must build churches, then.[73]

Oph. What means the play, my lord?

Ham. Miching mallecho;[74] it means mischief.

Oph. But what is the argument of the play?

Enter a Player *as* Prologue (L.H.) *on a raised stage.*

Ham. We shall know by this fellow.

Pro. For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.

[*Exit*, L.H.]

Ham. Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?[75]

Oph. 'Tis brief, my lord.

Ham. As woman's love.

Enter a KING *and a* QUEEN (L.H.) *on raised stage.*

P. King. (R.) Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart[76] gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbèd ground,[77]
Since love our hearts, and Hymen did our hands,
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

P. Queen. (L.) So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done!

But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must.

P. King. 'Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;
My operant powers their functions leave to do:[78]
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honour'd, belov'd; and, haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou——

P. Queen. O, confound the rest!
Such love must needs be treason in my breast:
In second husband let me be accurst!
None wed the second but who kill'd the first.

Ham. That's wormwood.

[*Aside to* HORATIO, R.]

P. King. I do believe you think what now you speak;
But what we do determine oft we break.[79]
So think you thou wilt no second husband wed;
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

P. Queen. Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light!
Sport and repose lock from me day and night!
Both here, and hence, pursue me lasting strife,
If, once a widow, ever I be wife!

P. King. 'Tis deeply sworn.

Ham. If she should break it now!—

[*To* OPHELIA.]

P. King. Sweet, leave me here awhile;
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
The tedious day with sleep.

[*Reposes on a bank*, R., *and sleeps.*]

P. Queen. Sleep rock thy brain;
And never come mischance between us twain!

[*Exit*, L.H.]

Ham. Madam, how like you this play?

Queen. The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

Ham. O, but she'll keep her word.

King. Have you heard the argument?[80] Is there no offence in't?

Ham. No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i'the world.

King. What do you call the play?

Ham. The mouse-trap.[81] Marry, how? Tropically.[82] This play is the image of a murder[83] done in Vienna: Gonzago is the Duke's name; his wife, Baptista: you shall see anon;—'tis a knavish piece of work: but what of that? your majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not: Let the galled jade wince,[84] our withers[85] are unwrung.

Enter LUCIANUS (L.H.)

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

Oph. You are as good as a chorus,[86] my lord.

Ham. I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying.[87] Begin, murderer; leave thy damnable faces, and begin. Come:—

——The croaking raven
Doth bellow for revenge.[88]

Luc. Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing;
Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds[89] collected,
With Hecat's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magick and dire property,
On wholesome life usurp[90] immediately.
[*Pours the poison into the Sleeper's Ears.*]

Ham. He poisons him i' the garden for his estate. His name's Gonzago: the story is extant, and written in very choice Italian: You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

King. Give me some light: away!

All. Lights, lights, lights!

[*Exeunt all*, R. *and* L., *but* HAMLET *and* HORATIO.]

Ham. Why, let the strucken deer go weep,[91]
The hart ungallèd play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep:
So runs the world away.—

O, good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pounds.
Didst perceive?

Hor. (R.) Very well, my lord.

Ham. (C.) Upon the talk of the poisoning.—

Hor. I did very well note him.

Ham. Ah, ah! come, some musick! come, the recorders!

[*Exit* HORATIO, R.H.]

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN (L.H.) HAMLET *seats himself in the chair* (R.)

Guil. (L.C.) Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

Ham. Sir, a whole history.

Guil. The king, sir,—

Ham. Ay, sir, what of him?

Guil. Is, in his retirement, marvellous distempered.[92]

Ham. With drink, sir?

Guil. No, my lord, with choler.

Ham. Your wisdom should show itself more rich to signify this to the doctor; for, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into more choler.

Guil. Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair.

Ham. I am tame, sir:—pronounce.

Guil. The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.

Ham. You are welcome.

Guil. Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment: if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

Ham. Sir, I cannot.

Guil. What, my lord?

Ham. Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseased! But, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command: or rather as you say, my mother: therefore no more, but to the matter: My mother, you say,—

Ros. (*Crosses to* C.) Then thus she says: Your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.[93]

Ham. O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration?—impart.

Ros. She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed.

Ham. We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?[94]

Ros. My lord, you once did love me.

Ham. And do still, by these pickers and stealers.[95]

[*Rises and comes forward*, C.]

Ros. (R.) Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you do, surely, bar the door of your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.[96]

Ham. Sir, I lack advancement.

Ros. How can that be, when you have the voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark?[97]

Ham. Ay, sir, but *While the grass grows*,—the proverb is something musty.[98]

Enter HORATIO *and* Musicians (R.H.)

O, the recorders:[99]—let me see one.—So; withdraw with you:—

[*Exeunt* HORATIO *and* Musicians R.H. GUILDENSTERN,
after speaking privately to ROSENCRANTZ, *crosses*
behind HAMLET *to* R.H.]

Why do you go about to recover the wind of me,[100] as if you would drive me into a toil?[101]

Guil. (R.) O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.[102]

Ham. (C.) I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guil. My lord, I cannot.

Ham. I pray you.

Guil. Believe me, I cannot.

Ham. I do beseech you.

Ros. (L.) I know no touch of it, my lord.

Ham. 'Tis as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music.[103] Look you, these are the stops.

Guil. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

Ham. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sdeath, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me.[104]

[*Crosses to* L.H.]

Enter POLONIUS (R.H.)

Pol. (R.) My lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently.

Ham. (C.) Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

Pol. By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

Ham. Methinks it is like a weasel.

Pol. It is backed like a weasel.

Ham. Or like a whale?

Pol. Very like a whale.

Ham. Then will I come to my mother by and by. They fool me to the top of my bent.[105] I will come by and by.

Pol. I will say so.

Ham. By and by is easily said.

[*Exit* POLONIUS, R.H.

Leave me, friends.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN, R.H.]

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business[106] as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother.
O, heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:
Let me be cruel, not unnatural;
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.
My tongueand soul in this be hypocrites:
How in my words someversheb e shent,

To give them seals never, my soul, consent.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER.

Enter KING, ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN (R.H.)

King. I like him not; nor stands it safe with us[107]
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;
I your commission will forthwith despatch,
And he to England shall along with you:
Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage;
For we will fetters put upon this fear,[108]
Which now goes too free-booted.

Ros. }
} We will haste us.
Guil.}

[*Cross behind the* KING, *and exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and*
GUILDENSTERN, L.H.]

Enter POLONIUS (R.H.)

Pol. My lord, he's going to his mother's closet:
Behind the arras I'll convey myself,[109]
To hear the process;[110] I'll warrant, she'll tax him home:
And, as you said, and wisely was it said,
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,

Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech of vantage.[111] Fare you well, my liege:

[POLONIUS *crosses to* L.H.]

I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

King. Thanks, dear my lord.

[*Exeunt* POLONIUS, L.H., *and* KING, R.H.]

Enter QUEEN *and* POLONIUS (L.H.)

Pol. He will come straight. Look, you lay home to him:[112]
Tell him his pranks have been too broad[113] to bear with,
And that your grace hath screen'd and stood between
Much heat and him. I'll sconce me even here.[114]
Pray you, be round with him.

Queen. I'll warrant you;
Fear me not:—withdraw, I hear him coming.

[POLONIUS *hides himself*, L.H.U.E.

Enter HAMLET (R.)

Ham. (R.C.) Now, mother, what's the matter?

Queen. (L.C.) Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Ham. Mother, you have my father much offended.

Queen. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Ham. Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

Queen. Why, how now, Hamlet!

Ham. What's the matter now?

Queen. Have you forgot me?

Ham. No, by the rood,[115] not so.
You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And—would it were not so!—you are my mother.

Queen. Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

Ham. Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

Queen. What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?
Help, help, ho!

Pol.

(*Behind.*)

What, ho! help!

Ham. How now! a rat?[116]

[*Draws.*]

Dead, for a ducat, dead!

[HAMLET *rushes off behind the arras.*]

Pol. (*Behind.*) O, I am slain!

[*Falls and dies.*]

Queen. O me, what hast thou done?

Ham.

(*Returning.*)

Nay, I know not:
Is it the king?

Queen. O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

Ham. A bloody deed!—almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

Queen. As kill a king!

Ham. Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

[*Goes off behind the arras, and returns.*]

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

[*To the dead body of* POLONIUS, *behind the arras*.]

I took thee for thy better.
Leave wringing of your hands: Peace; sit you down,

[*To the* QUEEN.]

And let me wring your heart: for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff;
If damnèd custom have not brazed it so,[117]
That it be proof and bulwark against sense.[118]

Queen.

(*Sits* R.C.)

What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?

Ham.

(*Seated* L.C.)

Such an act,
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;
Calls virtue, hypocrite; takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there;[119] makes marriage vows
As false as dicer's oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul;[120] and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words.—
Ah, me, that act!

Queen. Ah me, what act?

Ham. Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment[121] of two brothers.
See, what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls;[122] the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury[123]
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination, and a form, indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man;
This was your husband.—Look you now, what follows:
Here is your husband; like a mildew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother.[124] Have you eyes?

Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor?[125] Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love; for, at your age
The hey-day in the blood[126] is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgment: And what judgment
Would step from this to this?
O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine,[127] in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire.

Queen. O, Hamlet, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grainèd spots
As will not leave their tinct.[128]

Ham. Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,——[129]

Queen. O, speak to me no more;
No more, sweet Hamlet!

Ham. A murderer and a villain:
A slave that is not twentieth part the tythe
Of your precedent lord;—a vice of kings;[130]
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule;
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket![131]

Queen. No more!

Ham. A king
Of shreds and patches.[132]

[*Enter* Ghost, R.]

Save me

[*Starts from his chair*],

and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?

Queen. Alas, he's mad!

[*Rising.*]

Ham. (L.) Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, laps'd in time and passion,[133] lets go by
The important acting of your dread command?
O, say!

Ghost. (R.) Do not forget: This visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But, look, amazement on thy mother sits:
O, step between her and her fighting soul.
Speak to her Hamlet.

Ham. How is it with you, lady?

Queen. Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep.
O gentle son,

[*Crosses to* HAMLET.]

Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience.[134] Whereon do you look?

Ham. On him, on him!—Look you, how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable.[135] Do not look upon me;

Lest with this piteous action, you convert
My stern effects:[136] then what I have to do
Will want true colour; tears perchance, for blood.

Queen. To whom do you speak this?

Ham. Do you see nothing there?

Queen. Nothing at all; yet all that is, I see.[137]

Ham. Nor did you nothing hear?

Queen. No, nothing but ourselves.

Ham. Why, look you there! look, how it steals away!

[*Ghost crosses to* L.]

My father in his habit as he lived![138]
Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!

[*Exit* Ghost, L.H. HAMLET *sinks into chair* C. *The* QUEEN *falls on her knees by his side.*]

Queen. This is the very coinage of your brain:
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.[139]

Ham. Ecstasy!
My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music: It is not madness
That I have uttered: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word; which madness
Would gambol from.[140] Mother, for love of grace,

[*Rising.*]

Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks:
It will but skin and film[141] the ulcerous place,
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come.

Queen. O, Hamlet! thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Ham. O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night: but go not to my uncle's bed;

[*Raising the* QUEEN.]

Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
Once more, good night!
And when you are desirous to be bless'd,
I'll blessing beg of you.[142] For this same lord,

[*Pointing to* POLONIUS.]

I do repent:
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.

[*Exit* QUEEN, R.H.]

I must be cruel, only to be kind:
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.

[*Exit* HAMLET *behind the arras*, L.H.U.E.

END OF ACT THIRD.

Notes

[Footnote III.1: *Forward*] Disposed, inclinable.

[Footnote III.2: *Assay him to*] Try his disposition towards.

[Footnote III.3: *O'er-raught on the way:*] Reached or overtook.

[Footnote III.4 *Have closely sent*] *i.e.*, privately sent.

[Footnote III.5 *May here affront Ophelia:*] To affront is to come face to face—to confront.

[Footnote III.6 *Lawful espials*,] Spies justifiably inquisitive. From the French, *espier*.

[Footnote III.7 *Too much prov'd*,] Found by too frequent experience.

[Footnote III.8 *To be, or not to be, that is the question:*] Hamlet is deliberating whether he should continue to live, or put an end to his existence.

[Footnote III.9: *Or to take arms against a sea of troubles*,] *A sea of troubles* among the Greeks grew into a proverbial usage; so that the expression figuratively means, the troubles of human life, which flow in upon us, and encompass us round like a sea.

[Footnote III.10: *This mortal coil*,] Coil is here used in each of its senses, that of turmoil or bustle, and that which entwines or wraps round.

[Footnote III.11: *Must give us pause:*] *i.e.*, occasion for reflection.

[Footnote III.12: *There's the respect That makes calamity of so long life*;] The *consideration* that makes the evils of life so long submitted to, lived under.

[Footnote III.13: *The whips and scorns of time*,] Those sufferings of body and mind, those stripes and mortifications to which, in its *course*, the life of man is subjected.

[Footnote III.14: *Contumely*,] Contemptuousness, rudeness.

[Footnote III.15: *His quietus make*] Quietus means the official discharge of an account: from the Latin. Particularly in the Exchequer accounts, where it is still current. Chiefly used by authors in metaphorical senses.

[Footnote III.16: *A bare bodkin?*] Bodkin was an ancient term for a small dagger. In the margin of Stowe's Chronicle it is said that Caesar was slain with *bodkins*.

[Footnote III.17: *Who would fardels bear*,] Fardel is a burden. Fardellus, low Latin.

[Footnote III.18: *From whose bourn*] *i.e.*, boundary.

[Footnote III.19: *No traveller returns*,] The traveller whom Hamlet had seen, though he appeared in the same habit which he had worn in his life-time, was nothing but a shadow, "invulnerable as the air," and, consequently, *incorporeal*. The Ghost has given us no account of the region from whence he came, being, as he himself informed us, "forbid to tell the secrets of his prison-house."—MALONE.

[Footnote III.20: *Thus conscience does make cowards of us all*;] A state of doubt and uncertainty, a conscious feeling or apprehension, a misgiving "How our audit stands."

[Footnote III.21: *Of great pith and moment*,] *i.e.*, of great vigour and importance.

[Footnote III.22:

With this regard, their currents turn away,
And lose the name of action.]

From this sole consideration have their drifts diverted, and lose the character and name of enterprise.

[Footnote III.23: *Soft you now!*] A gentler pace! have done with lofty march!

[Footnote III.24: *Nymph, in thy orisons*] *i.e.*, in thy prayers. Orison is from *oraison*—French.

[Footnote III.25: *If you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.*] *i.e.*, if you really possess these qualities, chastity and beauty, and mean to support the character of both, your honesty should be so chary of your beauty, as not to suffer a thing so fragile to entertain discourse, or to be parleyed with.

The lady interprets the words otherwise, giving them the turn best suited to her purpose.

[Footnote III.26: *His likeness:*] Shakespeare and his contemporaries frequently use the personal for the neutral pronoun.

[Footnote III.27: *Inoculate our old stock, but we shall relish of it:*] So change the original constitution and properties, as that no smack of them shall remain. "Inoculate our stock" are terms in gardening.

[Footnote III.28: *With more offences at my beck*] That is, always ready to come about me—at my beck and call.

[Footnote III.29: *Than I have thoughts to put them in, &c.*] "To put a thing into thought," Johnson says, is "to think on it."

[Footnote III.30: *I have heard of your paintings*,] These destructive aids of beauty seem, in the time of Shakespeare, to have been general objects of satire.]

[Footnote III.31: *Heaven hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another:*] *i.e.*, Heaven hath given you one face, and you disfigure his image by

making yourself another.

[Footnote III.32: *You jig, you amble, and you lisp*,] This is an allusion to the manners of the age, which Shakespeare, in the spirit of his contemporaries, means here to satirise.

[Footnote III.33: *Make your wantonness your ignorance.*] You mistake by *wanton* affectation, and pretend to mistake by *ignorance*.

[Footnote III.34: *All but one shall live*;] *One* is the king.

[Footnote III.35: *To a nunnery, go. Exit Hamlet.*] There is no doubt that Hamlet's attachment to Ophelia is ardent and sincere, but he treats her with apparent severity because he is aware that Ophelia has been purposely thrown in his way; that spies are about them; and that it is necessary for the preservation of his life, to assume a conduct which he thought would be attributed to madness only.

[Footnote III.36: *The expectancy and rose of the fair state*,] The first hope and fairest flower. "The gracious mark o' the land."

[Footnote III.37: *Glass of fashion*] Speculum consuetudinis.—CICERO.

[Footnote III.38: *The mould of form*,] The cast, in which is shaped the only perfect form.

[Footnote III.39: *Musick vows*,] Musical, mellifluous.

[Footnote III.40: *Be round with him*;] *i.e.*, plain with him—without reserve.

[Footnote III.41: *If she find him not*,] Make him not out.

[Footnote III.42: *As lief*] As willingly.

[Footnote III.43: *Thus*;] *i.e.*, thrown out thus.

[Footnote III.44: *Robustious perrywig-pated fellow*] This is a ridicule on the quantity of false hair worn in Shakespeare's time, for wigs were not in common use till the reign of Charles the Second. *Robustious* means making an extravagant show of passion.

[Footnote III.45: *The ears of the groundlings*,]

The meaner people appear to have occupied the pit of the theatre (which had neither floor nor benches in Shakespeare's time), as they now sit in the upper gallery.

[Footnote III.46: *O'er-doing Termagant*;] The Crusaders, and those who celebrated them, confounded Mahometans with Pagans, and supposed Mahomet, or Mahound, to be one of their deities, and Tervagant or Termagant, another. This imaginary personage was introduced into our old plays and moralities, and represented as of a most violent character, so that a ranting actor might always appear to advantage in it. The word is now used for a scolding woman.

[Footnote III.47: *It out-herods Herod:*] In all the old moralities and mysteries this personage was always represented as a tyrant of a very violent temper, using the most exaggerated language. Hence the expression.

[Footnote III.48: *The very age and body of the time its form and pressure.*] *i.e.*, to delineate exactly the manners of the age, and the particular humours of the day—*pressure* signifying resemblance, as in a print.

[Footnote III.49: *Come tardy off*,] Without spirit or animation; heavily, sleepily done.

[Footnote III.50: *The censure of which one*] *i.e.*, the censure of one of which.

[Footnote III.51: *Your allowance*,] In your approbation.

[Footnote III.52: *Not to speak it profanely*,] *i.e.*, *irreverently*, in allusion to Hamlet's supposition that God had not made such men, but that they were only the handy work of God's assistants.]

[Footnote III.53: *Indifferently*] In a reasonable degree.]

[Footnote III.54: *Speak no more them is set down for them:*] Shakespeare alludes to a custom of his time, when the clown, or low comedian, as he would now be called, addressing the audience during the play, entered into a contest of raillery and sarcasm with

such spectators as chose to engage with him.

[Footnote III.55: *Barren spectators*] *i.e.*, dull, unapprehensive spectators.

[Footnote III.56: *Question*] Point, topic.

[Footnote III.57: *Cop'd withal.*] Encountered with.

[Footnote III.58: *Pregnant hinges of the knee*,] *i.e.*, bowed or bent: ready to kneel where *thrift*, that is, thriving, or emolument may follow sycophancy.]

[Footnote III.59: *Since my dear soul*] *Dear* is out of which arises the liveliest interest.

[Footnote III.60: *Whose blood and judgment*] Dr. Johnson says that according to the doctrine of the four humours, *desire* and *confidence* were seated in the blood, and judgment in the phlegm, and the due mixture of the humours made a perfect character.

[Footnote III.61: *The very comment of thy soul*] The most intense direction of every faculty.

[Footnote III.62: *Occulted guilt do not itself unkennel*] Stifled, secret guilt, do not develope itself.

[Footnote III.63: *As Vulcan's stithy.*] A stithy is the smith's shop, as stith is the anvil.

[Footnote III.64: *In censure of his seeming.*] In making our estimate of the appearance he shall put on.

[Footnote III.65: *I have nothing with this answer; these words are not mine.*] *i.e.*, they grow not out of mine: have no relation to anything said by me.

[Footnote III.66: *No, nor mine, now.*] They are now anybody's. Dr. Johnson observes, "a man's words, says the proverb, are his own no longer than while he keeps them unspoken.

[Footnote III.67:

You played once in the university, you say?

The practice of acting Latin plays in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge is very ancient, and continued to near the middle of the last century.

[Footnote III.68: *I did enact Julius Caesar:*] A Latin

play on the subject of Caesar's death, was performed at Christ-church, Oxford, in 1582.

[Footnote III.69: *They stay upon your patience.*] *Patience* is here used for *leisure*.

[Footnote III.70: *Lying down at Ophelia's feet.*] To lie at the feet of a mistress during any dramatic representation, seems to have been a common act of gallantry.

[Footnote III.71: *Jig-maker*,] Writer of ludicrous interludes. *A jig* was not in Shakespeare's time only a dance, but a ludicrous dialogue in metre; many historical ballads were also called *jigs*.

[Footnote III.72: *For I'll have a suit of sables.*] Wherever his scene might be, the customs of his country were ever in Shakespeare's thoughts. A suit trimmed with sables was in our author's own time the richest dress worn by men in England. By the Statute of Apparel, 24 Henry VIII., c. 13, (*article furres*), it is ordained, that none under the degree of an *Earl* may use *sables*.]

[Footnote III.73: *He must build churches, then.*] Such benefactors to society were sure to be recorded by means of the feast day on which the patron saints and founders of churches were commemorated in every parish. This custom has long since ceased.

[Footnote III.74: *Miching mallecho*;] To *mich* is a provincial word, signifying *to lie hid*, or *to skulk*, or *act by stealth*. It was probably once generally used. Mallecho is supposed to be corrupted from the Spanish *Malechor*, which means a poisoner.]

[Footnote III.75: *The posy of a ring?*] Such poetry as you may find engraven on a ring.

[Footnote III.76: *Phoebus' cart*] A chariot was anciently called a cart.

[Footnote III.77: *Tellus' orbèd ground*,] *i.e.*, the globe of the earth. Tellus is the personification of the earth, being described as the first being that sprung from Chaos.

[Footnote III.78: *My operant powers their functions leave to do:*] *i.e.*, my active energies cease to perform their offices.

[Footnote III.79: *What we do determine, oft we break.*] Unsettle our most fixed resolves.

[Footnote III.80: *The argument?*] The subject matter.

[Footnote III.81: *The mouse-trap.*] He calls it the mouse-trap, because it is the thing, In which he'll catch the conscience of the king.]

[Footnote III.82: *Tropically.*] *i.e.*, figuratively.

[Footnote III.83: *The image of a murder*,] *i.e.*, the lively portraiture, the correct and faithful representation of a murder, &c.

[Footnote III.84: *Let the galled jade wince*,] A proverbial saying.

[Footnote III.85: *Our withers are unwrung.*] Withers is the joining of the shoulder bones at the bottom of the neck and mane of a horse. *Unwrung* is *not pinched*.

[Footnote III.86: *You are as good as a chorus*,] The persons who are supposed to behold what passes in the acts of a tragedy, and sing their sentiments between the acts.

The use to which Shakespeare converted the chorus, may be seen in King Henry V.

[Footnote III.87: *I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying.*] This refers to the interpreter, who formerly sat on the stage at all *puppet shows*, and explained to the audience. *The puppets dallying* are here made to signify to the agitations of Ophelia's bosom.

[Footnote III.88:

The croaking raven
Doth bellow for revenge.]

i.e., begin without more delay; for the raven, foreknowing the deed, is already croaking, and, as it were, calling out for the revenge which will ensue.

[Footnote III.89: *Midnight weeds*] The force of the epithet *midnight*, will be best displayed by a corresponding passage in Macbeth:

"Root of hemlock, *digg'd i' the dark*."

[Footnote III.90: *Usurp*] Encroach upon.

[Footnote III.91: *Let the strucken deer go weep*,] Shakespeare, in *As you like it*, in allusion to the wounded stag, speaks of the *big round tears* which *cours'd one another down his innocent nose in piteous chase*. In the 13th song of Drayton's Polyolbion, is a similar passage—"*The harte weepeth at his dying; his tears are held to be precious in medicine.*"

[Footnote III.92: *Marvellous distempered.*] *i.e.*, discomposed.

[Footnote III.93: *Admiration.*] *i.e.*, wonder.]

[Footnote III.94: *Trade with us?*] *i.e.* Occasion of intercourse.

[Footnote III.95: *By these pickers and stealers.*] *i.e.*, by these hands. The phrase is taken from the Church catechism, where, in our duty to our neighbour, we are taught to keep our hands from *picking and stealing*.

[Footnote III.96: *You do freely bar the door of your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.*] By your own act you close the way against your own ease, and the free discharge of your griefs, if you open not the source of them to your friends.

[Footnote III.97: *You have the voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark?*] Though the crown was elective, yet regard was paid to the recommendation of the preceding prince, and preference given to royal blood, which, by degrees, produced hereditary succession.

[Footnote III.98: *"While the grass grows,"—the proverb is something musty.*] The proverb is, "*While the grass grows, the steed starves.*" Hamlet alludes to his own position, while waiting for his succession

to the throne of Denmark. A similar adage is, "*A slip between the cup and the lip.*"

[Footnote III.99: *Recorder.*] *i.e.* A kind of flute, or pipe.

[Footnote III.100: *Why do you go about to recover the wind of me*,] Equivalent to our more modern saying of *Get on the blind side.*

[Footnote III.101: *Into a toil?*] *i.e.*, net or snare.

[Footnote III.102: *If my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.*] If my sense of duty have led me too far, it is affection and regard for you that makes the carriage of that duty border on disrespect.

[Footnote III.103: *Govern these ventages—and it will discourse most eloquent music.*] Justly order these vents, or air-holes, and it will breathe or utter, &c.

[Footnote III.104: *Though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me.*] A *fret* is a stop or key of a musical instrument. Here is, therefore, a play upon the words. Though you cannot fret, stop, or vex, you cannot play or impose upon me.

[Footnote III.105: *They fool me to the top of my bent.*] To the height; as far as they see me *incline* to go: an allusion to the utmost flexure of a bow.

[Footnote III.106: *Bitter business*] *i.e.*, shocking, horrid business.

[Footnote III.107: *Stands it safe with us*] Is it *consistent* with our security.

[Footnote III.108: *This fear*,] Bugbear.

[Footnote III.109: *Behind the arras I'll convey myself*,] The arras-hangings, in Shakespeare's time, were hung at such a distance from the walls, that a person might easily stand behind them unperceived.

[Footnote III.110: *To hear the process*;] The course of the conversation.

[Footnote III.111: *The speech of vantage.*] *i.e.*, opportunity or advantage of secret observations.

[Footnote III.112: *Lay home to him:*] Pointedly and closely charge him.

[Footnote III.113: *Pranks too broad*] Open and bold.

[Footnote III.114: *I'll 'sconce me even here.*] 'Sconce and ensconce are constantly used figuratively for *hide.* In "The Merry Wives of Windsor," Falstaff says, "I will *ensconce* me behind the arras."

[Footnote III.115: *By the rood*,] *i.e.*, the cross or crucifix.

[Footnote III.116: *How now! a rat?*] This is an expression borrowed from the History of Hamblet.

[Footnote III.117: *Have not braz'd it so*,] *i.e.*, soldered with brass.

[Footnote III.118: *Proof and bulwark against sense.*] Against all feeling.

[Footnote III.119: *Takes off the rose From the fair forehead of an innocent love, And sets a blister there*;] *i.e.*, takes the clear tint from the brow of unspotted, untainted innocence. "True or honest as the skin between one's brows" was a proverbial expression, and is frequently used by Shakespeare.

[Footnote III.120: *As from the body of contraction plucks The very soul*;] Annihilates the very principle of contracts. Contraction for marriage contract.

[Footnote III.121: *The counterfeit presentment*] *i.e.*, picture or mimic representation.

[Footnote III.122: *Hyperion's curls*;] Hyperion is used by Spenser with the same error in quantity.

[Footnote III.123: *A station like the herald Mercury*] Station is attitude—act of standing.

[Footnote III.124:

Like a mildew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother.]

This alludes to Pharaoh's dream, in the 41st chapter of Genesis.

[Footnote III.125: *Batten on this moor?*] Batten is to feed rankly.

[Footnote III.126: *Hey-day in the blood*] This

expression is occasionally used by old authors.

[Footnote III.127: *Thou canst mutine*] *i.e.*, rebel.

[Footnote III.128: *As will not leave their tinct.*] So dyed *in grain*, that they will not relinquish or lose their tinct—are not to be discharged. In a sense not very dissimilar he presently says,

> "Then what I have to do
> Will *want true colour*."]

[Footnote III.129: *An enseamed bed.*] *i.e.*, greasy bed of grossly fed indulgence.

[Footnote III.130: *A vice of kings*;] *i.e.*, a low mimick of kings. The vice was the fool of the old moralities or dramas, who was generally engaged in contests with the devil, by whom he was finally carried away. Dr. Johnson says the modern Punch is descended from the vice.

[Footnote III.131:

> *From a shelf the precious diadem stole*,
> *And put it in his pocket!*]

In allusion to the usurper procuring the crown as a common pilferer or thief, and not by open villainy that carried danger with it.

[Footnote III.132: *A king of shreds and patches.*] This is said, pursuing the idea of the *vice of kings*. The vice being dressed as a fool, in a coat of party-coloured patches.

[Footnote III.133: *Laps'd in time and passion*,] That having suffered time to slip, and passion to cool, &c. It was supposed that nothing was more offensive to apparitions than the neglect to attach importance to their appearance, or to be inattentive to their admonitions.

[Footnote III.134: *Cool patience.*] *i.e.*, moderation.

[Footnote III.135: *Make them capable.*] Make them intelligent—capable of conceiving.

[Footnote III.136: *My stem effects:*] *i.e.*, change the nature of my purposes, or what I mean to effect.]

[Footnote III.137: *Nothing at all; yet all that is, I see.*] It is in perfect consistency with the belief that all spirits were not only naturally invisible, but that they possessed the power of making themselves visible to such persons only as they pleased.

[Footnote III.138: *My father, in his habit as he lived!*] In the habit he was accustomed to wear when living.

[Footnote III.139:

This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.]

i.e., "Such shadows are the weak brain's forgeries." Ecstasy in this place, as in many others, means a temporary alienation of mind—a fit.

[Footnote III.140: *Gambol from.*] Start away from.

[Footnote III.141: *Skin and film*,] Cover with a thin skin.

[Footnote III.142:

And when you are desirous to be bless'd,
I'll blessing beg of you]

When you are desirous to receive a blessing from heaven (which you cannot, seriously, till you reform), I will beg to receive a blessing from you.

ACT IV

SCENE I

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE.

Enter KING *and* QUEEN, *from* (R.H.) *centre.*

King. There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves:
You must translate:[1] 'tis fit we understand them.
How does Hamlet?

Queen. Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier: In his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier, cries *A rat, a rat!*
And, in this brainish apprehension,[2] kills
The unseen good old man.

King. O heavy deed!
It had been so with us, had we been there:
Where is he gone?

Queen. To draw apart the body he hath kill'd.

King. The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,
But we will ship him hence: and this vile deed
We must, with all our majesty and skill,
Both countenance and excuse.—Ho, Guildenstern!

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN (L.H.)

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him:
Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body
Into the chapel.

[ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN *cross to* R.]

I pray you, haste in this.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN, R.H.]

Go, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends;
And let them know, both what we mean to do,
And what's untimely done.

[*Exit* QUEEN, R.C.]

How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:
He's lov'd of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes;
And where 'tis so, the offender's scourge is weigh'd,
But never the offence.[3]

Enter ROSENCRANTZ (R.)

How now! what hath befallen?

Ros. Where the dead body is bestowed, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

King. But where is he?

Ros. Without, my lord; guarded, to know your pleasure.

King. Bring him before us.

Ros. Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

Enter HAMLET, GUILDENSTERN, *and* Attendants (R.H.)

King. (C.) Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

Ham. (R.) At supper.

King. At supper? Where?

Ham. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politick worms[4] are e'en at him.

King. Where's Polonius?

Ham. In Heaven; send thither to see: if your messenger find him not there, seek him i'the other place yourself. But, indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

King. Go seek him there.

[*To* GUILDENSTERN.]

Ham. He will stay till you come.

[*Exit* GUILDENSTERN, R.H.]

King. Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,
Must send thee hence:
Therefore prepare thyself;
The bark is ready, and the wind at help,[5]
For England.

Ham. For England!

King. Ay, Hamlet.

Ham. Good.

King. So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

Ham. I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for England!—Farewell, dear mother.

King. Thy loving father, Hamlet.

Ham. My mother: Father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother. Come, for England.

[*Exit*, R.H.]

King. Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard;
Away! for everything is seal'd and done.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* Attendants, R.H.]

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught,
Thou may'st not coldly set[6]
Our sovereign process;[7] which imports at full,
By letters conjuring to that effect,[8]

The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For thou must cure me: 'Till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps,[9] my joys will ne'er begin.

[*Exit* KING, L.H.]

Enter QUEEN *and* HORATIO (R. *centre.*)

Queen. ——I will not speak with her.

Hor. She is importunate; indeed, distract:
'Twere good she were spoken with; for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

Queen. Let her come in.

[*Exit* HORATIO, R.C.]

Re-enter HORATIO, *with* OPHELIA (R. *centre.*)

Oph. Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

Queen. How now, Ophelia!

Oph. (C.)

[*Singing.*]

How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon.[10]

Queen. (L.C.) Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

Oph. Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

[*Sings.*]

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

Enter the KING (L.H.)

Queen. Nay, but, Ophelia,—

Oph. Pray you, mark.

[*Sings.*]

White his shroud as the mountain-snow,
Larded all with sweet flowers;[11]
Which bewept to the grave did go
With true-love showers.

King. How do you, pretty lady?

Oph. Well, Heaven 'ield you![12]

(*Crosses to the* KING.)

They say the owl was a baker's daughter.[13] We know
what we are, but know not what we may be.

King. Conceit upon her father.[14]

Oph. Pray, you, let us have no words of this; but when
they ask you what it means, say you this:

To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,

All in the morning betime,
And I, a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine:

King. Pretty Ophelia!

Oph. Indeed, without an oath, I'll make an end on't:

Then up he rose, and don'd his clothes,
And dupp'd [15] *the chamber door*;
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.

[*Crosses to* R.H.]

King. (L.) How long hath she been thus?

Oph. (R.) I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i'the cold ground. My brother shall know of it; and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night.

[*Exit*, R.C.]

King. Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you.

[*Exit* HORATIO, *through centre* R.]

O! this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death.
O, Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions!

Enter MARCELLUS (R. *centre.*)

King. What is the matter?

Mar. Save yourself, my lord:
The young Laertes, in a riotous head,[16]
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord;
They cry, *Choose we: Laertes shall be king!*
Caps, hands, and tongues, applaud it to the clouds,
Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!

[*Noise within*, R.C.]

Enter LAERTES, *armed*; Danes *following* (R. *centre.*)

Laer. Where is this king?—Sirs, stand you all without.

Dan. No, let's come in.

Laer. I pray you, give me leave.

Dan. We will, we will.

[*They retire without*, R.H.]

Laer. O, thou vile king,
Give me my father.

Queen

(*Interposing.*)

Calmly, good Laertes.

Laer. (R.) That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard;
Cries cuckold to my father; brands the harlot

Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brow
Of my true mother.[17]

King. (L.) What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?
Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person:
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,[18]
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will.
Let him go, Gertrude.

[QUEEN *obeys.*]

Laer. Where is my father?

King. Dead.

Queen. But not by him.

King. Let him demand his fill.

Laer. How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:
To hell, allegiance! To this point I stand,
That both the worlds I give to negligence,[19]
Let come what comes; only I'll be reveng'd
Most throughly for my father.

King. Who shall stay you!

Laer. My will, not all the world's:[20]
And, for my means, I'll husband them so well,
They shall go far with little.

King. Good Laertes,
That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensible in grief [21] for it,
It shall as level to your judgment 'pear
As day does to your eye.

Hor.

(*Without.*)

Oh, poor Ophelia!

King. Let her come in.

Enter OPHELIA (R.C.), *fantastically dressed with Straws and Flowers.*

Laer.

(*Goes up* L.C.)

O rose of May!
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!
O heavens! is't possible, a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?

Oph. (R.C.)

They bore him barefac'd on the bier;
And on his grave rain many a tear,—

Fare you well, my dove!

Laer.

(*Coming down* R.)

Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,
It could not move thus.

Oph. You must sing, *Down-a-down,*[22] *an you call him a-down-a.* O,

how well the wheel becomes it![23] It is the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.

Laer. This nothing's more than matter.

Oph. There's rosemary, that's for remembrance;[24] pray you, love, remember: and there is pansies,[25] that's for thoughts.

Laer. A document in madness; thoughts and remembrance fitted.

Oph. There's fennel for you,

(*crosses to the* KING *on* L.H.)

and columbines:[26] there's rue for you;

(*turns to the* QUEEN, *who is* R.C.)

and here's some for me:—we may call it herb of grace o'Sundays:[27]—you may wear your rue with a difference.[28]—There's a daisy:[29]—I would give you some violets,[30] but they withered all when my father died:—They say he made a good end,——

For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy—[31]

Laer. (R.) Thought and affliction,[32] passion, hell itself,
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

Oph.

And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,

He never will come again.

His beard was white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll:
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan:
Heaven 'a mercy on his soul!

And of all christian souls, I pray Heaven. Heaven be wi' you.

[*Exit* OPHELIA, R.C., QUEEN *following.*]

Laer. Do you see this, O Heaven?

King. (L.C.) Laertes, I must commune with your grief,[33]
Or you deny me right.
Be you content to lend your patience to us,
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.

Laer. (R.C.) Let this be so;
His means of death, his obscure funeral,—
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,[34]
No noble rite nor formal ostentation,—
Cry to be heard,[35] as 'twere from heaven to earth,
That I must call't in question.

King. So you shall;
And where the offence is let the great axe fall.[36]
How now! what news?

Enter BERNARDO (R.H.C.)

Ber. (C.) Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:
This to your majesty; this to the Queen.

King. From Hamlet! who brought them?

Ber. Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not.

King. Laertes, you shall hear them.—
Leave us.

[*Exit*, L.H.C.]
[Reads.]

High and mighty, You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom.[37] *To morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return.* HAMLET.

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

Laer. (R.) Know you the hand?

King. (L.) 'Tis Hamlet's character:[38] *Naked,—*

And in a postscript here, he says, *alone*.
Can you advise me?

Laer. I am lost in it, my lord. But let him come;
It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
Thus diddest thou.

King. If it be so, Laertes,
Will you be rul'd by me?

Laer. Ay, my lord;
So you will not o'er-rule me to a peace.

King. To thine own peace.

Some two months since,
Here was a gentleman of Normandy,
He made confession of [39] you;
And gave you such a masterly report,
For art and exercise in your defence,[40]
And for your rapier most especially,
That he cried out, 'twould be a sight indeed,
If one could match you: this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy,
That he could nothing do but wish and beg
Your sudden coming o'er, to play with you.
Now, out of this,—

Laer. What out of this, my lord?

King. Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?

Laer. Why ask you this?

King. Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:
We'll put on those shall praise your excellence,
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you; bring you, in fine, together,
And wager o'er your heads; he, being remiss,[41]
Most generous, and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils:[42] so that, with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated,[43] and, in a pass of practice,[44]
Requite him for your father.

Laer. I will do't:
And, for the purpose, I'll anoint my sword.
I bought an unction of a mountebank,
So mortal, that but dip a knife in it,

Where it draws blood no cataplasm[45] so rare,
Collected from all simples[46] that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death
That is but scratch'd withal: I'll touch my point
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.

King. (L.) Let's further think of this;
We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings,[47]
When in your motion[48] you are hot and dry,
(As make your bouts more violent to that end,)
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce;[49] whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,[50]
Our purpose may hold there. But stay, what noise?

Enter QUEEN (R.C.)

Queen. (C.) One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow: Your sister's drown'd, Laertes.

Laer. (R.) Drown'd! O, where?

Queen. There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
Therewith fantastick garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples;[51]
There, on the pendent boughs her cornet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies, and herself,
Fell in the weeping brook.

Laer. I forbid my tears: But yet
It is our trick:[52] nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will: when these are gone,
The woman will be out.[53]
Adieu, my lord:
I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,

But that this folly drowns it.[54]

[*Exeunt.* C.]

END OF ACT FOURTH.

Notes

[Footnote IV.1: *Translate:*] Interpret.

[Footnote IV.2: *In this brainish apprehension*,] Distempered, brainsick mood.

[Footnote IV.3: *Where the offender's scourge is weigh'd, But never the offence.*] When an offender is popular, the people never consider what his crime was, but they scrutinise his punishment.

[Footnote IV.4: *Politick worms*] *i.e.*, artful, cunning worms.

[Footnote IV.5: *The wind at help*,] *i.e.*, ready.

[Footnote IV.6: *May'st not coldly set*] Set is to value or estimate. "Thou may'st not *set little by it*, or *estimate it lightly*."

[Footnote IV.7: *Our sovereign process:*] *i.e.*, our royal design.

[Footnote IV.8: *By letters conjuring to that effect*,] The verb to conjure, in the sense of to supplicate, was formerly accented on the first syllable.

[Footnote IV.9: *Howe'er my haps*,] Chances of fortune.

[Footnote IV.10: *His sandal shoon.*] Shoon is the old plural of shoe. The verse is descriptive of a pilgrim. While this kind of devotion was in favour, love intrigues were carried on under that mask.

[Footnote IV.11: *Larded with sweet flowers*;] *i.e.*, Garnished with sweet flowers.

[Footnote IV.12: *Heaven 'ield you.*] Requite; yield you recompence.

[Footnote IV.13: *The owl was a baker's daughter.*] This is in reference to a story that was once prevalent among the common people of Gloucestershire.

[Footnote IV.14: *Conceit upon her father.*] Fancies respecting her father.

[Footnote IV.15: *Don'd and dupp'd*] *To don*, is to *do on*, or *put on*, as *doff* is to *do off*, or *put off*. To *dupp* is to *do up*, or *lift up* the latch.

[Footnote IV.16: *In a riotous head*,] The tide, strongly flowing, is said to pour in with a great *head*.]

[Footnote IV.17: *The chaste unsmirched brow of my true mother*]. *Unsmirched* is unstained, not defiled.

[Footnote IV.18: *Doth hedge a king*,] The word *hedge* is used by the gravest writers upon the highest subjects.

[Footnote IV.19: *Both the worlds I give to negligence*,] I am careless of my present and future prospects, my views in this life, as well as that which is to come.

[Footnote IV.20: *My will, not all the world's:*] *i.e.*, by my will as far as my will is concerned, not all the world shall stop me; and, as for my means, I'll husband them so well, they shall go far, though really little.

[Footnote IV.21: *Sensible in grief*] Poignantly affected with.

[Footnote IV.22: *You must sing Down-a-down*,] This was the burthen of an old song, well known in Shakespeare's time.

[Footnote IV.23: *How well the wheel becomes it!*]

This probably means that the song or charm is well adapted to those who are occupied at spinning at the wheel.

[Footnote IV.24: *There's rosemary, that's for remembrance*;] Rosemary was anciently supposed to strengthen the memory, and was carried at funerals and wore at weddings. It was also considered the emblem of fidelity in lovers; and at weddings it was usual to dip the rosemary in the cup, and drink to the health of the new married couple.

[Footnote IV.25: *There is pansies*,] *i.e.*, a little flower called *heart's-ease*. Pansies in French signifies *thoughts*.

[Footnote IV.26: *There's fennel for you, and columbines:*] Fennel was considered an emblem of flattery, and columbine was anciently supposed to be a *thankless flower*; signifying probably that the courtiers flattered to get favours, and were thankless after receiving them. Columbine was emblematical of forsaken lovers.

[Footnote IV.27: *There's rue for you; and here's some for me:—we may call it herb of grace o' Sundays:*] Probably a quibble is meant here, as *rue* anciently signified the same as *ruth*, *i.e.*, sorrow. In the common dictionaries of Shakespeare's time, it was called *herb of grace*. Ophelia wishes to remind the Queen of the sorrow and contrition she ought to feel for her unlawful marriage; and that she may wear her rue with peculiar propriety on Sundays, when she solicits pardon for the crime which she has so much occasion to *rue* and repent of.—MALONE.

[Footnote IV.28: *You may wear your rue with a difference.*] *i.e.*, to distinguish it from that worn by Ophelia, herself: because her tears flowed from the loss of a father—those of the Queen ought to flow for her guilt.

[Footnote IV.29: *There's a daisy:*] A daisy signified a warning to young women, not to trust the fair promises

of their lovers.

[Footnote IV.30: *I would give you some violets*,] Violets signified faithfulness.

[Footnote IV.31: *For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy,—*] Part of an old song.

[Footnote IV.32: *Thought and affliction*,] Thought here, as in many other places, means melancholy.

[Footnote IV.33: *I must commune with your grief*,] *i.e.*, confer, discuss, or argue with.

[Footnote IV.34: *No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones*,] Not only the sword, but the helmet, gauntlet, spurs, and tabard, (*i.e.*, a coat whereon the armorial ensigns were anciently depicted, from whence the term *coat* of armour), are hung over the grave of every knight.

[Footnote IV.35: *Cry to be heard*,] All these multiplied incitements are things which cry, &c.

[Footnote IV.36: *Let the great axe fall.*] *i.e.*, the axe that is to be laid to the root.

[Footnote IV.37: *Naked on your kingdom*,] *i.e.*, unprovided and defenceless.

[Footnote IV.38: *'Tis Hamlet's character*,] Peculiar mode of shaping his letters.

[Footnote IV.39: *Made confession of*] Acknowledged.

[Footnote IV.40: *In your defence*,] *i.e.*, "in your art and science of defence."

[Footnote IV.41: *He, being remiss*,] *i.e.*, unsuspicious, not cautious.

[Footnote IV.42: *Peruse the foils*;] Closely inspect them.

[Footnote IV.43: *A sword unbated*,] Not blunted, as foils are by a button fixed to the end.

[Footnote IV.44: *In a pass of practice*,] This probably means some favourite pass, some trick of fencing, with which Hamlet was inexperienced, and by which Laertes may be sure of success.

[Footnote IV.45: *No cataplasm*,] *i.e.*, poultice—a

healing application.

[Footnote IV.46: *Collected from all simples*,] *i.e.*, from all ingredients in medicine.

[Footnote IV.47: *On your cunnings*,] *i.e.*, on your dexterity.

[Footnote IV.48: *In your motion*] Exercise, rapid evolutions.

[Footnote IV.49: *For the nonce*;] *i.e.*, present purpose or design.

[Footnote IV.50: *Venom'd stuck*,] Thrust. Stuck was a term of the fencing school.

[Footnote IV.51: *Long purples*,] One of the names for a species of orchis, a common English flower.

[Footnote IV.52: *Our trick*:] Our course, or habit; a property that clings to, or makes a part of, us.

[Footnote IV.53:

When these are gone,
The woman will be out.]

When these tears are shed, this womanish passion will be over.

[Footnote IV.54: *But that this folly drowns it.*] *i.e.*, my rage had flamed, if this flood of tears had not extinguished it.

ACT V

SCENE I

A CHURCH YARD.

Enter two Clowns,[1] *with spades, &c.* (L.H.U.E.)

1st Clo. (R.) Is she to be buried in christian burial that willfully seeks her own salvation?

2nd Clo. (L.) I tell thee she is; therefore make her grave straight:[2] the crowner[3] hath set on her, and finds it Christian burial.

1st Clo. How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

2nd Clo. Why, 'tis found so.

1st Clo. It must be *se offendendo*;[4] it cannot be else. For here lies the point: If I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act: and an act hath three branches; it is, to act, to do, and to perform:[5] argal,[6] she drowned herself wittingly.

2nd Clo. Nay, but hear you, goodman delver.[7]

1st Clo. Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good: If the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes,[8] mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself: argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

2nd Clo. But is this law?

1st Clo. Ay, marry is't; crowner's-quest law.[9]

2nd Clo. Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out of christian burial.

1st Clo. Why, there thou say'st:[10] And the more pity that great folks should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even christian.[11] Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession.

2nd Clo. Was he a gentleman?[12]

1st Clo. He was the first that ever bore arms. I'll put another question to thee: if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself——[13]

2nd Clo. Go to.

1st Clo. What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

2nd Clo. The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

1st Clo. I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows

does well; But how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now, thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church: argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To't again, come.

2nd Clo. Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?

1st Clo. Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.[14]

2nd Clo. Marry, now I can tell.

1st Clo. To't.

2nd Clo. Mass, I cannot tell.

1st Clo. Cudgel thy brains no more about it,[15] for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and, when you are asked this question next, say, a grave-maker, the houses that he makes, last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan, and fetch me a stoup of liquor.[16]

[*Exit* 2nd Clown, L.H.U.E.]

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO (L.H.U.E.)

First Clown *digs and sings.*

In youth, when I did love, did love,[17]
Methought, it was very sweet,
To contract, O, the time, for, ah, my behove
O, methought, there was nothing meet.

Ham.

(*Behind the grave.*)

Has this fellow no feeling of his business, he sings at grave-making?

Hor.

(*On* HAMLET'S R.)

Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

Ham. 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.[18]

1st Clo.
But age, with his stealing steps,
Hath clawed me in his clutch,
And hath shipped me into the land,
As if I had never been such.

[*Throws up a skull.*]

Ham. That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: How the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder! This might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o'er-reaches; one that would circumvent Heaven, might it not?

Hor. It might, my lord.

[*Gravedigger throws up bones.*]

Ham. Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with them?[19] mine ache to think on't.

1st Clo.

[*Sings.*]

A pick-axe and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding sheet:[20]
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

[*Throws up a skull.*

Ham. There's another: Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddits now, his quillets,[21] his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce[22] with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? I will speak to this fellow.—Whose grave's this, sirrah?

1st Clo. Mine, sir.—

[*Sings.*]

O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

Ham. (R. *of grave.*) I think it be thine, indeed; for thou liest in't.

1st Clo. You lie out on't, sir, and therefore it is not yours: for my part, I do not lie in't, yet it is mine.

Ham. Thou dost lie in't, to be in't, and say it is thine: 'tis for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.

1st. Clo. 'Tis a quick lie, sir; 'twill away again, from me to you.

Ham. What man dost thou dig it for?

1st Clo. For no man, sir.

Ham. What woman, then?

1st Clo. For none, neither.

Ham. Who is to be buried in't?

1st Clo. One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead.

Ham. How absolute the knave is![23] we must speak by the card,[24]
or equivocation will undo us,

[*To* HORATIO, R.]

How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

1st Clo. Of all the days i'the year, I came to't that day that our last king Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

Ham. How long's that since?

1st Clo. Cannot you tell that? every fool can tell that: It was the very day that young Hamlet was born,[25] he that is mad, and sent into England.

Ham. Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

1st Clo. Why, because he was mad: he shall recover his wits there; or, if he do not, 'tis no great matter there.

Ham. Why?

1st Clo. 'Twill not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he.

Ham. How came he mad?

1st Clo. Very strangely, they say.

Ham. How strangely?

1st Clo. 'Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

Ham. Upon what ground?

1st Clo. Why, here in Denmark: I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

Ham. How long will a man lie i'the earth ere he rot?

1st Clo. 'Faith, if he be not rotten before he die, he will last you some eight year or nine year: a tanner will last you nine year.

Ham. Why he more than another?

1st Clo. Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade, that he will keep out water a great while; and your water is a sore decayer of your ill-begotten dead body. Here's a skull now, hath lain in the earth three-and-twenty years.

Ham. Whose was it?

1st Clo. O, a mad fellow's it was: Whose do you think it was?

Ham. Nay, I know not.

1st Clo. A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! he poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

Ham. This?

[*Takes the skull.*]

1st Clo. E'en that.

Ham. Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? Quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour[26] she must come; make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

Hor. What's that, my lord?

Ham. Dost thou think Alexander look'd o'this fashion i'the earth?

Hor. E'en so.

Ham. And smelt so? pah!

[*Gives the skull to HORATIO, who returns it to the grave-digger.*]

Hor. E'en so, my lord.

Ham. To what base uses may we return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till it find it stopping a bung-hole?

Hor. 'Twere to consider too curiously,[27] to consider

so.

Ham. No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: As thus; Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; And why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer barrel?

Imperial Caesar,[28] dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
O, that the earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw![29]

But soft! but soft! aside: Here comes the king,
The queen, the courtiers: Who is this they follow?
And with such maimèd rites?[30] This doth betoken
The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo its own life:[31] 'Twas of some estate.[32]
Couch we awhile, and mark.

[*Retiring with* HORATIO, R.H.]

Enter Priests, &c., *in procession; the corpse of* OPHELIA,
LAERTES *and* Mourners *following*; KING, QUEEN, *their*
Trains, *&c.*

Laer.

(L. *of the grave.*)

What ceremony else?

Ham. (R.) That is Laertes,
A very noble youth.

1st Priest.

(R. *of the grave.*)

Her obsequies have been as far enlarg'd
As we have warranty: Her death was doubtful;
And, but that great command o'ersways the order,[33]
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the last trumpet; for charitable prayers,
Shards,[34] flints, and pebbles, should be thrown on her:
Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants,[35]
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.[36]

Laer. Must there no more be done?

1st Priest. No more be done:
We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a *requiem*,[37] and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

Laer. O, from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,[38]
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

Ham. What, the fair Ophelia!

Queen.

(*Behind the grave*, C. *with the* KING.)

Sweets to the sweet: Farewell!

[*Scattering flowers.*]

I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;

I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
And not have strew'd thy grave.

Laer. O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head,
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense[39]
Depriv'd thee of!—Hold off the earth a while,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms:

[*Leaps into the grave.*]

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made,
To o'ertop old Pelion,[40] or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.

Ham.

(*Advancing.*)

What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis?—whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wand'ring stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers?—this is I,
Hamlet the Dane.

Laer.

(L., *leaping from the grave.*)

The devil take thy soul!

[*Grappling with him.*]

Ham. (R.C.) Thou pray'st not well.
I prithee, take thy fingers from my throat;
For, though I am not splenetive and rash,
Yet have I in me something dangerous,

Which let thy wisdom fear: Hold off thy hand!

King. Pluck them asunder.

Queen. (C.) Hamlet, Hamlet!

Ham. (R.C.) Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

Queen. O my son, what theme?

Ham. I lov'd Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.—What wilt thou do for her?

Queen. O, he is mad, Laertes.

Ham. Come, show me what thou'lt do:
Wou'lt weep? wou'lt fight? wou'lt fast? wou'lt tear thyself?
I'll do't.—Dost thou come here to whine?
To outface me[41] with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I:
And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,[42]
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa[43] like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,
I'll rant as well as thou.

Queen. This is mere madness:
And thus a while the fit will work on him;
Anon, as patient as the female dove,
When that her golden couplets are disclos'd,[44]
His silence will sit drooping.

Ham. Hear you, sir;
What is the reason that you use me thus?

I lov'd you ever: But it is no matter;
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew,[45] and dog will have his day.

[*Exit*, R.H.]

King. (C.) I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him.

[*Exit* HORATIO, R.H.]

Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son,

[*Exit* QUEEN, *attended*, R.H.]

Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech;[46]

[*To* LAERTES.]

We'll put the matter to the present push.—
This grave shall have a living monument:[47]
An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;
Till then, in patience our proceeding be.

[*The characters group round the grave.*]

SCENE II

HALL IN THE CASTLE.

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO (R.H.)

Ham. But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For by the image of my cause,[48] I see

The portraiture of his.

Hor. Peace! who comes here?

Enter OSRIC (L.H.)

Osr. Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

Ham. (C.) I humbly thank you, sir.—Dost know this water-fly?[49]

Hor. (R.) No, my good lord.

Ham. Thy state is the more gracious; for 'tis a vice to know him.

Osr. (L.) Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

Ham. I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit.[50] Your bonnet to his right use; 'tis for the head.

Osr. I thank your lordship, 'tis very hot.

Ham. No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly.

Osr. It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

Ham. But yet, methinks it is very sultry and hot,[51] for my complexion,—

Osr. Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, as 'twere,—I cannot tell how.—But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you, that he has laid a great wager on your head: Sir, this is the matter,—

Ham. I beseech you, remember——

[HAMLET *moves him to put on his hat.*]

Osr. Nay, good my lord; for mine ease, in good faith.[52] Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing:[53] Indeed, to speak feelingly of him,[54] he is the card or calendar of gentry,[55] for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.[56]

Ham. What imports the nomination of this gentleman?[57]

Osr. Of Laertes?

Ham. Of him, sir.

Osr. Sir, you are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is—

Ham. I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but, to know a man well, were to know himself.[58]

Osr. I mean, sir, for his weapon.

Ham. What is his weapon?

Osr. Rapier and dagger.

Ham. That's two of his weapons: but, well.

Osr. The king, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed,[59] as I take it, six French rapiers and poignards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers,[60] or so: Three of

the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.[61]

Ham. What call you the carriages?

Osr. The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

Ham. The phrase would be more german[62] to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides.

Osr. The king, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits; and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.[63]

Ham. How if I answer no?[64]

Osr. I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

Ham. Sir, it is the breathing time of day with me; let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win for him if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

Osr. Shall I deliver you so?

Ham. To this effect, sir; after what flourish your nature will.

Osr. I commend my duty to your lordship. [*Exit*, L.H.]

Hor. (R.) You will lose this wager, my lord.

Ham. (C.) I do not think so; since he went into France, I have been in continual practice; I shall win

at the odds.[65] But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart: but it is no matter.

Hor. Nay, good my lord.

Ham. It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving,[66] as would, perhaps, trouble a woman.

Hor. If your mind dislike any thing, obey it:[67] I will forestall their repair hither, and say, you are not fit.

Ham. Not a whit, we defy augury: there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.

[*Exeunt*, L.H.]

SCENE III

ROOM IN THE CASTLE.

KING *and* QUEEN, *on a dais*, LAERTES (R.), LORDS (R.),
LADIES (L.), OSRIC (R.) *and* Attendants, *with Foils, &c.,*
discovered (R.H.); *Tables* (R. *and* L.)—
Flourish of Trumpets.

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO (L.H.)

King. Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.

Ham. (*offering his hand to* LAERTES) Give me your
pardon, sir: I have done you wrong;

But pardon it, as you are a gentleman.
Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot my arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my brother.

Laer. (R.) I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most
To my revenge.
I do receive your offer'd love like love,
And will not wrong it.

Ham. I embrace it freely:
And will this brother's wager frankly play.
Give us the foils.

Laer. Come, one for me.

Ham. I'll be your foil, Laertes: in mine ignorance
Your skill shall, like a star i'the darkest night,
Stick fiery off indeed.[68]

Laer. You mock me, sir.

Ham. No, by this hand.

King. Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?

Ham. Very well, my lord;
Your grace hath laid the odds o'the weaker side.

King. I do not fear it; I have seen you both:
But since he's better'd,[69] we have therefore odds.

Laer. This is too heavy, let me see another.

Ham. This likes me well. These foils have all a length?

Osr. Ay, my good lord.

King. Set me the stoups of wine[70] upon that table.—

[Pages *exeunt* R. *and* L.]

If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit[71] in answer to the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;
The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup an union shall he throw,[72]
Richer than that which four successive kings
In Denmark's crown have worn.

[Pages *return with wine.*]

Give me the cup;
And let the kettle[73] to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,
Now the king drinks to Hamlet.—Come, begin;
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

Ham. Come on, sir.

Laer. Come, my lord.

[*They play.*]

Ham. One.

Laer. No.

Ham.
Judgment.

Osr. A hit, a very palpable hit.

Laer. Well:—again.

King. Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine;

[*Drops poison into the goblet.*]

Here's to thy health.

[*Pretends to drink.*]
[*Trumpets sound; and cannon shot off within.*]

Give him the cup.

Ham. I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile.

[Page *places the goblet on table*, L.]

Come.
Another hit; What say you?

[*They play.*]

Laer. A touch, a touch, I do confess.

King. Our son shall win.

Queen. The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.[74]

Ham. Good madam!—

[*Trumpets sound.*]

King. Gertrude, do not drink.

Queen. I have, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

King. It is the poison'd cup; it is too late.

[*Aside.*]

Laer. I'll hit him now
And yet it is almost against my conscience.

[*Aside.*]

Ham. Come, for the third, Laertes: You do but dally;
I pray you, pass with your best violence;
I am afeard you make a wanton of me.[75]

Laer. Say you so? come on.

[*They play.*]

[LAERTES *wounds* HAMLET; *then, in scuffling they change*
Rapiers, and HAMLET *wounds* LAERTES.]

King. Part them; they are incensed.

Ham. Nay, come, again.

[*The* QUEEN *falls back in her chair.*]

Osr.

(*Supporting* LAERTES, R.)

Look to the queen there, ho!

Hor.

(*Supporting* HAMLET, L.)

How is it, my lord?

Osr. How is't, Laertes?

Laer. Why, as a woodcock to my own springe,[76] Osric;
I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

Ham. How does the queen?

King. She swoons to see them bleed.

Queen. No, no, the drink, the drink,—O, my dear Hamlet,—
The drink, the drink! I am poison'd.

[*The* QUEEN *is conveyed off the stage by her attendant*
Ladies, *in a dying state*, L.H.U.E.]

Ham. O villainy! Ho! let the doors be lock'd:
Treachery! seek it out.

[LAERTES *falls.*]

Laer. (R.) It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou art slain;
No medicine in the world can do thee good,
In thee there is not half an hour's life;
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenom'd:[77] the foul practice[78]
Hath turn'd itself on me; lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again: Thy mother's poison'd:
I can no more: the king, the king's to blame.

Ham. The point
Envenom'd too! Then, venom, to thy work.
Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damnèd Dane,

Follow my mother.

[*Stabs the* KING, *who is borne away by his attendants, mortally wounded*, R.H.U.E.]

Laer. He is justly serv'd;
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet:
Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
Nor thine on me!

[*Dies.*]

Ham. (C.) Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee.
You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time (as this fell sergeant, death,[79]
Is strict in his arrest), O, I could tell you,—
But let it be. Horatio,
Report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

Hor. (L.) Never believe it:
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane:
Here's yet some liquor left.

[*Seizing the goblet on table*, L.]

Ham. As thou'rt a man,—
Give me the cup: let go; by heaven, I'll have it.

[*Dashes the goblet away.*]

O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me![80]
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absènt thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,

To tell my story.—
O, I die, Horatio;
The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit;[81]
The rest is silence.

[*Dies*, C., OSRIC *on his* R., *and* HORATIO *on his* L.]

Dead March afar off.

Curtain slowly descends.

The End

Notes

[Footnote V.1: *Enter two Clowns*,] These characters are not in the original story, but are introduced by Shakespeare.

[Footnote V.2: *Make her grave straight:*] *i.e.*, straightways, forthwith.

[Footnote V.3: *The crowner*] A corruption of coroner.

[Footnote V.4: *It must be se offendendo*;] A confusion of things as well as of terms: used for *se defendendo*, a finding of the jury in justifiable homicide.

[Footnote V.5: *To act, to do, and to perform:*] Warburton says, this is ridicule on scholastic divisions without distinction, and of distinctions without

difference.

[Footnote V.6: *Argal*,] A corruption of the Latin word, *ergo, therefore*.

[Footnote V.7: *Delver.*] *i.e.*, a digger, one that opens the ground with a spade.

[Footnote V.8: *If the man go to this water,—it is, will he, nill he, he goes*,] Still floundering and confounding himself. He means to represent it as a *wilful* act, and of course without any mixture of *nill* or nolens in] it. Had he gone, as stated, whether he *would or not*, it would not have been of his own accord, or his act.

[Footnote V.9: *Crowner's-quest law.*] Crowner's-quest is a vulgar corruption of coroner's inquest.

[Footnote V.10: *Why, there thou say'st*] Say'st something, speak'st to the purpose.

[Footnote V.11: *More than their even christian.*] An old English expression for fellow-christian.

[Footnote V.12: *Was he a gentleman?*] Mr. Douce says this is intended as a ridicule upon heraldry.

[Footnote V.13: *Confess thyself—*] Admit, or by acknowledgment pass sentence upon thyself, as a simpleton? "Confess, and be hanged," was a proverbial sentence.

[Footnote V.14: *Tell me that, and unyoke.*] Unravel this, and your day's work is done, your team may then unharness.

[Footnote V.15: *Cudgel thy brains no more about it*;] *i.e.*, beat about thy brains no more.

[Footnote V.16: *A stoup of liquor.*] A stoup is a jug.]

[Footnote V.17: *In youth, when I did love, did love.*] The three stanzas sung here by the Grave-Digger, are extracted, with a slight variation, from a little poem called *The Aged Lover renounceth Love*, written by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, who was beheaded in 1547. The song is to be found in Dr. Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*.

[Footnote V.18: *The hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.*] *i.e.*, its "palm less dulled or staled."

[Footnote V.19: *But to play at loggats with them?*] A *loggat* is a small *log*, or piece of wood; a diminutive from *log*. Hence *loggats*, as the name of an old game among the common people, and one of those forbidden by a statute of the 33rd of Henry VIII. A stake was fixed into the ground, and those who played threw *loggats* at it.

[Footnote V.20: *For and a shrouding sheet:*] For and is an ancient expression, answering to *and eke, and likewise*.

[Footnote V.21: *Where be his quiddits now, his quillets*, Quiddits are subtilties; quillets are nice and frivolous distinctions.

[Footnote V.22: *Knock him about the sconce*] *i.e.*, head.]

[Footnote V.23: *How absolute the knave is!*] Peremptory, strictly and tyrannously precise.

[Footnote V.24: *We must speak by the card*,] The *card* is the mariner's compass. Properly the paper on which the points of the wind are marked. Hence, *to speak by the card*, meant to speak with great exactness; true to a point.

[Footnote V.25: *The very day that young Hamlet was born*,] It would appear by this that Hamlet was thirty years old, and knew Yorick well, who had been dead twenty-two years.

[Footnote V.26: *Favour*] Feature, countenance, or complexion.

[Footnote V.27: *'Twere to consider too curiously*,] Be pressing the argument with too much critical nicety, to dwell upon mere possibilities.

[Footnote V.28: *Imperial Caesar*,] In some edition it is *imperious* Caesar. Imperious was a more ancient term, signifying the same as imperial.

[Footnote V.29: *The winter's flaw!*] *i.e.*, winter's blast.

[Footnote V.30: *Maimèd rites?*] Curtailed, imperfect.

[Footnote V.31: *Fordo its own life:*] Destroy.

[Footnote V.32: *'Twas of some estate.*] *i.e.*, of rank or station.

[Footnote V.33: *Command o'ersways the order*,] The course which ecclesiastical rules prescribe.

[Footnote V.34: *Shards*,] *i.e.*, broken pots or tiles.]

[Footnote V.35: *Virgin crants*,] *i.e.*, virgin garlands. Nares, in his Glossary, says that *crants* is a German word, and probably Icelandic.

[Footnote V.36: *Bringing home of bell and burial*,] Conveying to her last home with these accustomed forms of the church, and this sepulture in consecrated ground.

[Footnote V.37: *A requiem*,] A mass performed in Popish churches for the rest of the soul of a person deceased.

[Footnote V.38: *Churlish priest*,] Churlish is, figuratively, ill-humoured, ill-bred, uncourtly, "rustic and rude."

[Footnote V.39: *Ingenious sense*] Life and sense.

[Footnote V.40: *To o'ertop old Pelion*,] Pelion is one of a lofty range of mountains in Thessaly. The giants, in their war with the gods, are said to have attempted to heap Ossa and Olympus on Pelion, in order to scale Heaven.

[Footnote V.41: *Outface me*] *i.e.*, brave me.

[Footnote V.42: *Our ground*,] The earth about us.

[Footnote V.43: *Ossa*] A celebrated mountain in Thessaly, connected with Pelion, and in the neighbourhood of Mount Olympus.

[Footnote V.44: *Her golden couplets are disclos'd*,] To disclose, was anciently used for to *hatch*. A pigeon never lays more than two eggs.

[Footnote V.45: *The cat will mew, and dog, &c.*] "Things have their appointed course; nor have we power to divert it," may be the sense here conveyed.

[Footnote V.46: *Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech*;] Let the consideration of the topics then urged, confirm your resolution taken of quietly

waiting events a little longer.

[Footnote V.47: *This grave shall have a living monument:*] There is an ambiguity in this phrase. It either means an *endurable* monument such as will outlive time, or it darkly hints at the impending fate of Hamlet.

[Footnote V.48: *Image of my cause*,] Representation or character.

[Footnote V.49: *Dost know this water-fly?*] Dr. Johnson remarks that a *water-fly* skips up and down upon the surface of the water, without any apparent purpose or reason, and is thence the proper emblem of a busy trifler.

[Footnote V.50: *All diligence of spirit.*] "With the whole bent of my mind." A happy phraseology; in ridicule, at the same time that it was in conformity with the style of the airy, affected insect that was playing round him.

[Footnote V.51: *Very sultry and hot*,] Hamlet is here playing over the same farce with Osric which he had formerly done with Polonius. The idea of this scene is evidently suggested by Juvenal.

[Footnote V.52: *For mine ease, in good faith.*] From contemporary authors this appears to have been the ordinary language of courtesy in our author's own time.

[Footnote V.53: *An absolute–a great showing:*] A finished gentleman, full of various accomplishments, of gentle manners, and very imposing appearance.

[Footnote V.54: *To speak feelingly of him*,] With insight and intelligence.

[Footnote V.55: *Card or calendar of gentry*,] The card by which a gentleman is to direct his course; the calendar by which he is to choose his time, that what he does may be both excellent and seasonable.

[Footnote V.56: *The continent of what part a gentleman would see.*] The word continent in this sense is frequently used by Shakespeare; *i.e.*, you shall

find him *containing* and *comprising* every quality which a *gentleman* would desire to *contemplate* for imitation.

[Footnote V.57: *What imports the nomination, &c.*] What is the object of the introduction of this gentleman's name?

[Footnote V.58: *I dare not–lest I should compare–were to know himself.*] No one can have a perfect conception of the measure of another's excellence, unless he shall himself come up to that standard. Dr. Johnson says, I dare not pretend to know him, lest I should pretend to an equality: no man can completely know another, but by knowing himself, which is the utmost extent of human wisdom.

[Footnote V.59: *He has imponed*,] *i.e.*, to lay down as a stake or wager. Impono.

[Footnote V.60: *Hangers*,] That part of the girdle or belt by which the swords were suspended was, in our poet's time, called the *hangers*.

[Footnote V.61: *Very dear to fancy–very liberal conceit.*] Of exquisite invention, well adapted to their hilts, and in their conception rich and high fashioned.

[Footnote V.62: *More german*] More a-kin.

[Footnote V.63: *Vouchsafe the answer.*] Condescend to answer, or meet his wishes.

[Footnote V.64: *How if I answer, no?*] Reply.

[Footnote V.65: *I shall win at the odds*.] I shall succeed with the advantage that I am allowed.

[Footnote V.66: *Gain-giving*,] Misgiving.

[Footnote V.67: *If your mind, &c.*] If you have any presentiment of evil, yield to its suggestion.

[Footnote V.68: *Like a star i'the darkest night, stick fiery off*] Be made by the strongest relief to stand brightly prominent.

[Footnote V.69: *Better'd*,] He stands higher in estimation.

[Footnote V.70: *Stoups of wine*] Flagons of wine.

[Footnote V.71: *Quit in answer*] Make the wager

quit, or so far drawn.

[Footnote V.72: *An union shall he throw*,] *i.e.*, a fine pearl. To swallow a pearl in a draught seems to have been equally common to royal and mercantile prodigality. It may be observed that pearls were supposed to possess an exhilarating quality. It was generally thrown into the drink as a compliment to some distinguished guest, and the King in this scene, under the pretence of throwing a pearl into the cup, drops some poisonous drug into the wine.

[Footnote V.73: *Kettle*] *i.e.*, kettle drum.

[Footnote V.74: *The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.*] *i.e.*, drinks to your success.

[Footnote V.75: *You make a wanton of me.*] *i.e.*, you trifle with me as if you were playing with a child.

[Footnote V.76: *As a woodcock to my own springe.*] I have run into a springe like a woodcock, and into such a noose or trap as a fool only would have fallen into; one of my own setting.

[Footnote V.77: *Unbated, and envenom'd:*] *i.e.*, having a sharp point envenomed with poison.

[Footnote V.78: *The foul practice*] *i.e.*, the wicked trick which I have practised.

[Footnote V.79: *Fell sergeant, death*,] *i.e.*, cruel sergeant—sergeant being an officer of the law.

[Footnote V.80: *Live behind me!*] Survive me.

[Footnote V.81: *Quite o'ercrows my spirit*;] Overpowers, exults over; no doubt an image taken from the lofty carriage of a victorious cock.

The End

ON HAMLET

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ON HAMLET

The only way, if there is any way, in which a conception of Hamlet's character could be proved true, would be to show that it, and it alone, explains all the relevant facts presented by the text of the drama. To attempt such a demonstration here would obviously be impossible, even if I felt certain of the interpretation of all the facts. But I propose now to follow rapidly the course of the action in so far as it specially illustrates the character, reserving for separate consideration one important but particularly doubtful point.

1

We left Hamlet, at the close of the First Act, when he had just received his charge from the spirit of his father; and his condition was vividly depicted in the fact that, within an hour of receiving this charge, he had relapsed into that weariness of life or longing for death which is the immediate cause of his later inaction. When next we meet him, at the opening of the Second Act, a considerable time has elapsed, apparently as much as two months. The ambassadors sent to the King of Norway are just returning. Laertes, whom we saw leaving Elsinore, has been in Paris long enough to be in want of fresh supplies. Ophelia has obeyed her father's command, and has refused to receive Hamlet's visits or letters. What has

Hamlet done? He has put on an 'antic disposition' and established a reputation for lunacy, with the result that his mother has become deeply anxious about him, and with the further result that the King, who was formerly so entirely at ease regarding him that he wished him to stay on at Court, is now extremely uneasy and very desirous to discover the cause of his 'transformation.' Hence Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been sent for, to cheer him by their company and to worm his secret out of him; and they are just about to arrive. Beyond exciting thus the apprehensions of his enemy Hamlet has done absolutely nothing; and, as we have seen, we must imagine him during this long period sunk for the most part in 'bestial oblivion' or fruitless broodings, and falling deeper and deeper into the slough of despond.

Now he takes a further step. He suddenly appears unannounced in Ophelia's chamber; and his appearance and behaviour are such as to suggest both to Ophelia and to her father that his brain is turned by disappointment in love. How far this step was due to the design of creating a false impression as to the origin of his lunacy, how far to other causes, is a difficult question; but such a design seems certainly present. It succeeds, however, only in part; for, although Polonius is fully convinced, the King is not so, and it is therefore arranged that the two shall secretly witness a meeting between Ophelia and Hamlet. Meanwhile Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive, and at the King's request begin their attempts, easily foiled by Hamlet, to pluck out the heart of his mystery. Then the players come to Court, and for a little while one of Hamlet's old interests revives, and he is almost happy. But only for a little while. The emotion shown by the player in reciting the speech which tells of Hecuba's grief for her slaughtered husband awakes into burning life the slumbering sense of duty and shame. He must act. With the extreme

rapidity which always distinguishes him in his healthier moments, he conceives and arranges the plan of having the 'Murder of Gonzago' played before the King and Queen, with the addition of a speech written by himself for the occasion. Then, longing to be alone, he abruptly dismisses his guests, and pours out a passion of self-reproach for his delay, asks himself in bewilderment what can be its cause, lashes himself into a fury of hatred against his foe, checks himself in disgust at his futile emotion, and quiets his conscience for the moment by trying to convince himself that he has doubts about the Ghost, and by assuring himself that, if the King's behaviour at the play-scene shows but a sign of guilt, he 'knows his course.'

Nothing, surely, can be clearer than the meaning of this famous soliloquy. The doubt which appears at its close, instead of being the natural conclusion of the preceding thoughts, is totally inconsistent with them. For Hamlet's self-reproaches, his curses on his enemy, and his perplexity about his own inaction, one and all imply his faith in the identity and truthfulness of the Ghost. Evidently this sudden doubt, of which there has not been the slightest trace before, is no genuine doubt; it is an unconscious fiction, an excuse for his delay—and for its continuance.

A night passes, and the day that follows it brings the crisis. First takes place that interview from which the King is to learn whether disappointed love is really the cause of his nephew's lunacy. Hamlet is sent for; poor Ophelia is told to walk up and down, reading her prayer-book; Polonius and the King conceal themselves behind the arras. And Hamlet enters, so deeply absorbed in thought that for some time he supposes himself to be alone. What is he thinking of? 'The Murder of Gonzago,' which is to be played in a few hours, and on which everything depends? Not at all. He is meditating on suicide; and he finds that what stands in the way of it, and counterbalances

its infinite attraction, is not any thought of a sacred unaccomplished duty, but the doubt, quite irrelevant to that issue, whether it is not ignoble in the mind to end its misery, and, still more, whether death *would* end it. Hamlet, that is to say, is here, in effect, precisely where he was at the time of his first soliloquy ('O that this too too solid flesh would melt') two months ago, before ever he heard of his father's murder. His reflections have no reference to this particular moment; they represent that habitual weariness of life with which his passing outbursts of emotion or energy are contrasted. What can be more significant than the fact that he is sunk in these reflections on the very day which is to determine for him the truthfulness of the Ghost? And how is it possible for us to hope that, if that truthfulness should be established, Hamlet will be any nearer to his revenge?

His interview with Ophelia follows; and its result shows that his delay is becoming most dangerous to himself. The King is satisfied that, whatever else may be the hidden cause of Hamlet's madness, it is not love. He is by no means certain even that Hamlet is mad at all. He has heard that infuriated threat, 'I say, we will have no more marriages; those that are married, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are.' He is thoroughly alarmed. He at any rate will not delay. On the spot he determines to send Hamlet to England. But, as Polonius is present, we do not learn at once the meaning of this purpose.

Evening comes. The approach of the play-scene raises Hamlet's spirits. He is in his element. He feels that he is doing *something* towards his end, striking a stroke, but a stroke of intellect. In his instructions to the actor on the delivery of the inserted speech, and again in his conversation with Horatio just before the entry of the Court, we see the true Hamlet, the Hamlet of the days before his father's death. But how characteristic it is that he appears quite as anxious that

his speech should not be ranted as that Horatio should observe its effect upon the King! This trait appears again even at that thrilling moment when the actor is just going to deliver the speech. Hamlet sees him beginning to frown and glare like the conventional stage-murderer, and calls to him impatiently, 'Leave thy damnable faces and begin!'

Hamlet's device proves a triumph far more complete than he had dared to expect. He had thought the King might 'blench,' but he does much more. When only six of the 'dozen or sixteen lines' have been spoken he starts to his feet and rushes from the hall, followed by the whole dismayed Court. In the elation of success—an elation at first almost hysterical—Hamlet treats Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are sent to him, with undisguised contempt. Left to himself, he declares that now he could

drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on.

He has been sent for by his mother, and is going to her chamber; and so vehement and revengeful is his mood that he actually fancies himself in danger of using daggers to her as well as speaking them.

In this mood, on his way to his mother's chamber, he comes upon the King, alone, kneeling, conscience-stricken and attempting to pray. His enemy is delivered into his hands.

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying:
And now I'll do it: and so he goes to heaven:
And so am I revenged.
That would be scanned.

He scans it; and the sword that he drew at the words, 'And now I'll do it,' is thrust back into its sheath. If

he killed the villain now he would send his soul to heaven; and he would fain kill soul as well as body.

That this again is an unconscious excuse for delay is now pretty generally agreed, and it is needless to describe again the state of mind which, on the view explained in our last lecture, is the real cause of Hamlet's failure here. The first five words he utters, 'Now might I do it,' show that he has no effective *desire* to 'do it'; and in the little sentences that follow, and the long pauses between them, the endeavour at a resolution, and the sickening return of melancholic paralysis, however difficult a task they set to the actor, are plain enough to a reader. And any reader who may retain a doubt should observe the fact that, when the Ghost reappears, Hamlet does not think of justifying his delay by the plea that he was waiting for a more perfect vengeance. But in one point the great majority of critics, I think, go astray. The feeling of intense hatred which Hamlet expresses is not the cause of his sparing the King, and in his heart he knows this; but it does not at all follow that this feeling is unreal. All the evidence afforded by the play goes to show that it is perfectly genuine, and I see no reason whatever to doubt that Hamlet would have been very sorry to send his father's murderer to heaven, nor much to doubt that he would have been glad to send him to perdition. The reason for refusing to accept his own version of his motive in sparing Claudius is not that his sentiments are horrible, but that elsewhere, and also in the opening of his speech here, we can see that his reluctance to act is due to other causes.

The incident of the sparing of the King is contrived with extraordinary dramatic insight. On the one side we feel that the opportunity was perfect. Hamlet could not possibly any longer tell himself that he had no certainty as to his uncle's guilt. And the external conditions were most favourable; for the King's remarkable behaviour at the play-scene would have

supplied a damning confirmation of the story Hamlet had to tell about the Ghost. Even now, probably, in a Court so corrupt as that of Elsinore, he could not with perfect security have begun by charging the King with the murder; but he could quite safely have killed him first and given his justification afterwards, especially as he would certainly have had on his side the people, who loved him and despised Claudius. On the other hand, Shakespeare has taken care to give this perfect opportunity so repulsive a character that we can hardly bring ourselves to wish that the hero should accept it. One of his minor difficulties, we have seen, probably was that he seemed to be required to attack a defenceless man; and here this difficulty is at its maximum.

This incident is, again, the turning-point of the tragedy. So far, Hamlet's delay, though it is endangering his freedom and his life, has done no irreparable harm; but his failure here is the cause of all the disasters that follow. In sparing the King, he sacrifices Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Laertes, the Queen and himself. This central significance of the passage is dramatically indicated in the following scene by the reappearance of the Ghost and the repetition of its charge.

Polonius is the first to fall. The old courtier, whose vanity would not allow him to confess that his diagnosis of Hamlet's lunacy was mistaken, had suggested that, after the theatricals, the Queen should endeavour in a private interview with her son to penetrate the mystery, while he himself would repeat his favourite part of eaves-dropper. It has now become quite imperative that the Prince should be brought to disclose his secret; for his choice of the 'Murder of Gonzago,' and perhaps his conduct during the performance, have shown a spirit of exaggerated hostility against the King which has excited general alarm. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern discourse to

Claudius on the extreme importance of his preserving his invaluable life, as though Hamlet's insanity had now clearly shown itself to be homicidal. When, then, at the opening of the interview between Hamlet and his mother, the son, instead of listening to her remonstrances, roughly assumes the offensive, she becomes alarmed; and when, on her attempting to leave the room, he takes her by the arm and forces her to sit down, she is terrified, cries out, 'Thou wilt not murder me?' and screams for help. Polonius, behind the arras, echoes her call; and in a moment Hamlet, hoping the concealed person is the King, runs the old man through the body.

Evidently this act is intended to stand in sharp contrast with Hamlet's sparing of his enemy. The King would have been just as defenceless behind the arras as he had been on his knees; but here Hamlet is already excited and in action, and the chance comes to him so suddenly that he has no time to 'scan' it. It is a minor consideration, but still for the dramatist not unimportant, that the audience would wholly sympathise with Hamlet's attempt here, as directed against an enemy who is lurking to entrap him, instead of being engaged in a business which perhaps to the bulk of the audience then, as now, seemed to have a 'relish of salvation in't.'

We notice in Hamlet, at the opening of this interview, something of the excited levity which followed the *dénouement* of the play-scene. The death of Polonius sobers him; and in the remainder of the interview he shows, together with some traces of his morbid state, the peculiar beauty and nobility of his nature. His chief desire is not by any means to ensure his mother's silent acquiescence in his design of revenge; it is to save her soul. And while the rough work of vengeance is repugnant to him, he is at home in this higher work. Here that fatal feeling, 'it is no matter,' never shows itself. No father-confessor could be more selflessly

set upon his end of redeeming a fellow-creature from degradation, more stern or pitiless in denouncing the sin, or more eager to welcome the first token of repentance. There is something infinitely beautiful in that sudden sunshine of faith and love which breaks out when, at the Queen's surrender,

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain,

he answers,

O throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.

The truth is that, though Hamlet hates his uncle and acknowledges the duty of vengeance, his whole heart is never in this feeling or this task; but his whole heart is in his horror at his mother's fall and in his longing to raise her. The former of these feelings was the inspiration of his first soliloquy; it combines with the second to form the inspiration of his eloquence here. And Shakespeare never wrote more eloquently than here.

I have already alluded to the significance of the reappearance of the Ghost in this scene; but why does Shakespeare choose for the particular moment of its reappearance the middle of a speech in which Hamlet is raving against his uncle? There seems to be more than one reason. In the first place, Hamlet has already attained his object of stirring shame and contrition in his mother's breast, and is now yielding to the old temptation of unpacking his heart with words, and exhausting in useless emotion the force which should be stored up in his will. And, next, in doing this he is agonising his mother to no purpose, and in despite of her piteous and repeated appeals for mercy. But the Ghost, when it gave him his charge, had expressly warned him to spare her; and here again the dead

husband shows the same tender regard for his weak unfaithful wife. The object of his return is to repeat his charge:

Do not forget: this visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose;

but, having uttered this reminder, he immediately bids the son to help the mother and 'step between her and her fighting soul.'

And, whether intentionally or not, another purpose is served by Shakespeare's choice of this particular moment. It is a moment when the state of Hamlet's mind is such that we cannot suppose the Ghost to be meant for an hallucination; and it is of great importance here that the spectator or reader should not suppose any such thing. He is further guarded by the fact that the Ghost proves, so to speak, his identity by showing the same traits as were visible on his first appearance—the same insistence on the duty of remembering, and the same concern for the Queen. And the result is that we construe the Ghost's interpretation of Hamlet's delay ('almost blunted purpose') as the truth, the dramatist's own interpretation. Let me add that probably no one in Shakespeare's audience had any doubt of his meaning here. The idea of later critics and readers that the Ghost is an hallucination is due partly to failure to follow the indications just noticed, but partly also to two mistakes, the substitution of our present intellectual atmosphere for the Elizabethan, and the notion that, because the Queen does not see and hear the Ghost, it is meant to be unreal. But a ghost, in Shakespeare's day, was able for any sufficient reason to confine its manifestation to a single person in a company; and here the sufficient reason, that of sparing the Queen, is obvious.

At the close of this scene it appears that Hamlet has

somehow learned of the King's design of sending him to England in charge of his two 'school-fellows.' He has no doubt that this design covers some villainous plot against himself, but neither does he doubt that he will succeed in defeating it; and, as we saw, he looks forward with pleasure to this conflict of wits. The idea of refusing to go appears not to occur to him. Perhaps (for here we are left to conjecture) he feels that he could not refuse unless at the same time he openly accused the King of his father's murder (a course which he seems at no time to contemplate); for by the slaughter of Polonius he has supplied his enemy with the best possible excuse for getting him out of the country. Besides, he has so effectually warned this enemy that, after the death of Polonius is discovered, he is kept under guard. He consents, then, to go. But on his way to the shore he meets the army of Fortinbras on its march to Poland; and the sight of these men going cheerfully to risk death 'for an egg-shell,' and 'making mouths at the invisible event,' strikes him with shame as he remembers how he, with so much greater cause for action, 'lets all sleep;' and he breaks out into the soliloquy, 'How all occasions do inform against me!'

This great speech, in itself not inferior to the famous 'To be or not to be,' is absent not only from the First Quarto but from the Folio. It is therefore probable that, at any rate by the time when the Folio appeared (1623), it had become customary to omit it in theatrical representation; and this is still the custom. But, while no doubt it is dramatically the least indispensable of the soliloquies, it has a direct dramatic value, and a great value for the interpretation of Hamlet's character. It shows that Hamlet, though he is leaving Denmark, has not relinquished the idea of obeying the Ghost. It exhibits very strikingly his inability to understand why he has delayed so long. It contains that assertion which so many critics forget, that he has 'cause and

will and strength and means to do it.' On the other hand—and this was perhaps the principal purpose of the speech—it convinces us that he has learnt little or nothing from his delay, or from his failure to seize the opportunity presented to him after the play-scene. For, we find, both the motive and the gist of the speech are precisely the same as those of the soliloquy at the end of the Second Act ('O what a rogue'). There too he was stirred to shame when he saw a passionate emotion awakened by a cause which, compared with his, was a mere egg-shell. There too he stood bewildered at the sight of his own dulness, and was almost ready to believe—what was justly incredible to him—that it was the mask of mere cowardice. There too he determined to delay no longer: if the King should but blench, he knew his course. Yet this determination led to nothing then; and why, we ask ourselves in despair, should the bloody thoughts he now resolves to cherish ever pass beyond the realm of thought?

Between this scene and the remainder of the play we must again suppose an interval, though not a very long one. When the action recommences, the death of Polonius has led to the insanity of Ophelia and the secret return of Laertes from France. The young man comes back breathing slaughter. For the King, afraid to put Hamlet on his trial (a course likely to raise the question of his own behaviour at the play, and perhaps to provoke an open accusation), has attempted to hush up the circumstances of Polonius's death, and has given him a hurried and inglorious burial. The fury of Laertes, therefore, is directed in the first instance against the King: and the ease with which he raises the people, like the King's fear of a judicial enquiry, shows us how purely internal were the obstacles which the hero had to overcome. This impression is intensified by the broad contrast between Hamlet and Laertes, who rushes headlong to his revenge, and is determined to have it though allegiance, conscience, grace and

damnation stand in his way. But the King, though he has been hard put to it, is now in his element and feels safe. Knowing that he will very soon hear of Hamlet's execution in England, he tells Laertes that his father died by Hamlet's hand, and expresses his willingness to let the friends of Laertes judge whether he himself has any responsibility for the deed. And when, to his astonishment and dismay, news comes that Hamlet has returned to Denmark, he acts with admirable promptitude and address, turns Laertes round his finger, and arranges with him for the murder of their common enemy. If there were any risk of the young man's resolution faltering, it is removed by the death of Ophelia. And now the King has but one anxiety,—to prevent the young men from meeting before the fencing-match. For who can tell what Hamlet might say in his defence, or how enchanting his tongue might prove?

Hamlet's return to Denmark is due partly to his own action, partly to accident. On the voyage he secretly possesses himself of the royal commission, and substitutes for it another, which he himself writes and seals, and in which the King of England is ordered to put to death, not Hamlet, but Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Then the ship is attacked by a pirate, which, apparently, finds its intended prize too strong for it, and makes off. But as Hamlet 'in the grapple,' eager for fighting, has boarded the assailant, he is carried off in it, and by promises induces the pirates to put him ashore in Denmark.

In what spirit does he return? Unquestionably, I think, we can observe a certain change, though it is not great. First, we notice here and there what seems to be a consciousness of power, due probably to his success in counter-mining Claudius and blowing the courtiers to the moon, and to his vigorous action in the sea-fight. But I doubt if this sense of power is more marked than it was in the scenes following the

success of the 'Murder of Gonzago.' Secondly, we nowhere find any direct expression of that weariness of life and that longing for death which were so marked in the first soliloquy and in the speech 'To be or not to be.' This may be a mere accident, and it must be remembered that in the Fifth Act we have no soliloquy. But in the earlier Acts the feelings referred to do not appear *merely* in soliloquy, and I incline to think that Shakespeare means to show in the Hamlet of the Fifth Act a slight thinning of the dark cloud of melancholy, and means us to feel it tragic that this change comes too late. And, in the third place, there is a trait about which doubt is impossible,—a sense in Hamlet that he is in the hands of Providence. This had, indeed, already shown itself at the death of Polonius, and perhaps at Hamlet's farewell to the King, but the idea seems now to be constantly present in his mind. 'There's a divinity that shapes our ends,' he declares to Horatio in speaking of the fighting in his heart that would not let him sleep, and of his rashness in groping his way to the courtiers to find their commission. How was he able, Horatio asks, to seal the substituted commission?

Why, even in that was heaven ordinant,

Hamlet answers; he had his father's signet in his purse. And though he has a presentiment of evil about the fencing-match he refuses to yield to it: 'we defy augury: there is special providence in the fall of a sparrow ... the readiness is all.'

Though these passages strike us more when put together thus than when they come upon us at intervals in reading the play, they have a marked effect on our feeling about Hamlet's character and still more about the events of the action. But I find it impossible to believe, with some critics, that they indicate any material change in his general

condition, or the formation of any effective resolution to fulfil the appointed duty. On the contrary, they seem to express that kind of religious resignation which, however beautiful in one aspect, really deserves the name of fatalism rather than that of faith in Providence, because it is not united to any determination to do what is believed to be the will of Providence. In place of this determination, the Hamlet of the Fifth Act shows a kind of sad or indifferent self-abandonment, as if he secretly despaired of forcing himself to action, and were ready to leave his duty to some other power than his own. *This* is really the main change which appears in him after his return to Denmark, and which had begun to show itself before he went,—this, and not a determination to act, nor even an anxiety to do so.

For when he returns he stands in a most perilous position. On one side of him is the King, whose safety depends on his death, and who has done his best to murder him; on the other, Laertes, whose father and sister he has sent to their graves, and of whose behaviour and probable attitude he must surely be informed by Horatio. What is required of him, therefore, if he is not to perish with his duty undone, is the utmost wariness and the swiftest resolution. Yet it is not too much to say that, except when Horatio forces the matter on his attention, he shows no consciousness of this position. He muses in the graveyard on the nothingness of life and fame, and the base uses to which our dust returns, whether it be a court-jester's or a world-conqueror's. He learns that the open grave over which he muses has been dug for the woman he loved; and he suffers one terrible pang, from which he gains relief in frenzied words and frenzied action,—action which must needs intensify, if that were possible, the fury of the man whom he has, however unwittingly, so cruelly injured. Yet he appears absolutely unconscious that he has injured

Laertes at all, and asks him:

What is the reason that you use me thus?

And as the sharpness of the first pang passes, the old weary misery returns, and he might almost say to Ophelia, as he does to her brother:

I loved you ever: but it is no matter.
'It is no matter': nothing matters.

The last scene opens. He narrates to Horatio the events of the voyage and his uncle's attempt to murder him. But the conclusion of the story is no plan of action, but the old fatal question, 'Ought I not to act?' And, while he asks it, his enemies have acted. Osric enters with an invitation to him to take part in a fencing-match with Laertes. This match—he is expressly told so—has been arranged by his deadly enemy the King; and his antagonist is a man whose hands but a few hours ago were at his throat, and whose voice he had heard shouting 'The devil take thy soul!' But he does not think of that. To fence is to show a courtesy, and to himself it is a relief,—action, and not the one hateful action. There is something noble in his carelessness, and also in his refusal to attend to the presentiment which he suddenly feels (and of which he says, not only 'the readiness is all,' but also 'it is no matter'). Something noble; and yet, when a sacred duty is still undone, ought one to be so ready to die? With the same carelessness, and with that trustfulness which makes us love him, but which is here so fatally misplaced, he picks up the first foil that comes to his hand, asks indifferently, 'These foils have all a length?' and begins. And Fate descends upon his enemies, and his mother, and himself.

But he is not left in utter defeat. Not only is his task at last accomplished, but Shakespeare seems to

have determined that his hero should exhibit in his latest hour all the glorious power and all the nobility and sweetness of his nature. Of the first, the power, I spoke before, but there is a wonderful beauty in the revelation of the second. His body already labouring in the pangs of death, his mind soars above them. He forgives Laertes; he remembers his wretched mother and bids her adieu, ignorant that she has preceded him. We hear now no word of lamentation or self-reproach. He has will, and just time, to think, not of the past or of what might have been, but of the future; to forbid his friend's death in words more pathetic in their sadness than even his agony of spirit had been; and to take care, so far as in him lies, for the welfare of the State which he himself should have guided. Then in spite of shipwreck he reaches the haven of silence where he would be. What else could his world-wearied flesh desire?

But *we* desire more; and we receive it. As those mysterious words, 'The rest is silence,' die upon Hamlet's lips, Horatio answers:

> *Now cracks a noble heart.*
> *Good night, sweet prince,*
> *And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.*

Why did Shakespeare here, so much against his custom, introduce this reference to another life? Did he remember that Hamlet is the only one of his tragic heroes whom he has not allowed us to see in the days when this life smiled on him? Did he feel that, while for the others we might be content to imagine after life's fitful fever nothing more than release and silence, we must ask more for one whose 'godlike reason' and passionate love of goodness have only gleamed upon us through the heavy clouds of melancholy, and yet have left us murmuring, as we bow our heads, 'This was the noblest spirit of them all'?

2

How many things still remain to say of Hamlet! Before I touch on his relation to Ophelia, I will choose but two. Neither of them, compared with the matters so far considered, is of great consequence, but both are interesting, and the first seems to have quite escaped observation.

(1) Most people have, beside their more essential traits of character, little peculiarities which, for their intimates, form an indissoluble part of their personality. In comedy, and in other humorous works of fiction, such peculiarities often figure prominently, but they rarely do so, I think, in tragedy. Shakespeare, however, seems to have given one such idiosyncrasy to Hamlet.

It is a trick of speech, a habit of repetition. And these are simple examples of it from the first soliloquy:

> *O God! God!*
> *How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable*
> *Seem to me all the uses of this world!*
> *Fie on't! ah fie!*

Now I ask your patience. You will say: 'There is nothing individual here. Everybody repeats words thus. And the tendency, in particular, to use such repetitions in moments of great emotion is well-known, and frequently illustrated in literature—for example, in David's cry of lament for Absalom.'

This is perfectly true, and plenty of examples could be drawn from Shakespeare himself. But what we find in Hamlet's case is, I believe, *not* common. In the first place, this repetition is a *habit* with him. Here are some more instances: 'Thrift, thrift, Horatio'; 'Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me'; 'Come, deal justly with me: come, come'; 'Wormwood, wormwood!' I do

not profess to have made an exhaustive search, but I am much mistaken if this *habit* is to be found in any other serious character of Shakespeare.

And, in the second place—and here I appeal with confidence to lovers of Hamlet—some of these repetitions strike us as intensely characteristic. Some even of those already quoted strike one thus, and still more do the following:

(*a*) *Horatio.* It would have much amazed you.
Hamlet. Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?
(*b*) *Polonius.* What do you read, my lord?
Hamlet. Words, words, words.
(*c*) *Polonius.* My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.
Hamlet. You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life.
(*d*) *Ophelia.* Good my lord, How does your honour for this many a day?
Hamlet. I humbly thank you, well, well, well.

Is there anything that Hamlet says or does in the whole play more unmistakably individual than these replies?

(2) Hamlet, everyone has noticed, is fond of quibbles and word-play, and of 'conceits' and turns of thought such as are common in the poets whom Johnson called Metaphysical. Sometimes, no doubt, he plays with words and ideas chiefly in order to mystify, thwart and annoy. To some extent, again, as we may see from the conversation where Rosencrantz and Guildenstern first present themselves, he is merely following the fashion of the young courtiers about him, just as in his love-letter to Ophelia he uses for the most part the fantastic language of Court Euphuism. Nevertheless in this trait there is something very characteristic. We should be

greatly surprised to find it marked in Othello or Lear or Timon, in Macbeth or Antony or Coriolanus; and, in fact, we find it in them hardly at all. One reason of this may perhaps be that these characters are all later creations than Hamlet, and that Shakespeare's own fondness for this kind of play, like the fondness of the theatrical audience for it, diminished with time. But the main reason is surely that this tendency, as we see it in Hamlet, betokens a nimbleness and flexibility of mind which is characteristic of him and not of the later less many-sided heroes. Macbeth, for instance, has an imagination quite as sensitive as Hamlet's to certain impressions, but he has none of Hamlet's delight in freaks and twists of thought, or of his tendency to perceive and play with resemblances in the most diverse objects and ideas. Though Romeo shows this tendency, the only tragic hero who approaches Hamlet here is Richard II., who indeed in several ways recalls the emasculated Hamlet of some critics, and may, like the real Hamlet, have owed his existence in part to Shakespeare's personal familiarity with the weaknesses and dangers of an imaginative temperament.

That Shakespeare meant this trait to be characteristic of Hamlet is beyond question. The very first line the hero speaks contains a play on words:

A little more than kin and less than kind.

The fact is significant, though the pun itself is not specially characteristic. Much more so, and indeed absolutely individual, are the uses of word-play in moments of extreme excitement. Remember the awe and terror of the scene where the Ghost beckons Hamlet to leave his friends and follow him into the darkness, and then consider this dialogue:

Hamlet. It waves me still. Go on; I'll follow thee.
Marcellus. You shall not go, my lord.

Hamlet. Hold off your hands.
Horatio. Be ruled; you shall not go.
Hamlet. My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
Still am I called.
Unhand me, gentlemen.
By heaven I'll make a ghost of him that lets me.

Would any other character in Shakespeare have used those words? And, again, where is Hamlet more Hamlet than when he accompanies with a pun the furious action by which he compels his enemy to drink the 'poison tempered by himself'?

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damn'd Dane,
Drink off this potion.
Is thy union here?
Follow my mother.

The 'union' was the pearl which Claudius professed to throw into the cup, and in place of which (as Hamlet supposes) he dropped poison in. But the 'union' is also that incestuous marriage which must not be broken by his remaining alive now that his partner is dead. What rage there is in the words, and what a strange lightning of the mind!

Much of Hamlet's play with words and ideas is imaginatively humorous. That of Richard II. is fanciful, but rarely, if ever, humorous. Antony has touches of humour, and Richard III. has more; but Hamlet, we may safely assert, is the only one of the tragic heroes who can be called a humorist, his humour being first cousin to that speculative tendency which keeps his mental world in perpetual movement. Some of his quips are, of course, poor enough, and

many are not distinctive. Those of his retorts which strike one as perfectly individual do so, I think, chiefly because they suddenly reveal the misery and bitterness below the surface; as when, to Rosencrantz's message from his mother, 'She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed,' he answers, 'We shall obey, were she ten times our mother'; or as when he replies to Polonius's invitation, 'Will you walk out of the air, my lord?' with words that suddenly turn one cold, 'Into my grave.' Otherwise, what we justly call Hamlet's characteristic humour is not his exclusive property, but appears in passages spoken by persons as different as Mercutio, Falstaff and Rosalind. The truth probably is that it was the kind of humour most natural to Shakespeare himself, and that here, as in some other traits of the poet's greatest creation, we come into close contact with Shakespeare the man.

3

The actor who plays the part of Hamlet must make up his mind as to the interpretation of every word and deed of the character. Even if at some point he feels no certainty as to which of two interpretations is right, he must still choose one or the other. The mere critic is not obliged to do this. Where he remains in doubt he may say so, and, if the matter is of importance, he ought to say so.

This is the position in which I find myself in regard to Hamlet's love for Ophelia. I am unable to arrive at a conviction as to the meaning of some of his words and deeds, and I question whether from the mere text of the play a sure interpretation of them can be drawn. For this reason I have reserved the subject for separate treatment, and have, so far as possible, kept it out of the general discussion of Hamlet's character.

On two points no reasonable doubt can, I think, be felt. (1) Hamlet was at one time sincerely and ardently

in love with Ophelia. For she herself says that he had importuned her with love in honourable fashion, and had given countenance to his speech with almost all the holy vows of heaven. (2) When, at Ophelia's grave, he declared,

> *I loved Ophelia; forty thousand brothers*
> *Could not, with all their quantity of love,*
> *Make up my sum,*

he must have spoken sincerely; and, further, we may take it for granted that he used the past tense, 'loved,' merely because Ophelia was dead, and not to imply that he had once loved her but no longer did so.

So much being assumed, we come to what is doubtful, and I will begin by stating what is probably the most popular view. According to this view, Hamlet's love for Ophelia never changed. On the revelation made by the Ghost, however, he felt that he must put aside all thoughts of it; and it also seemed to him necessary to convince Ophelia, as well as others, that he was insane, and so to destroy her hopes of any happy issue to their love. This was the purpose of his appearance in her chamber, though he was probably influenced also by a longing to see her and bid her a silent farewell, and possibly by a faint hope that he might safely entrust his secret to her. If he entertained any such hope his study of her face dispelled it; and thereafter, as in the Nunnery-scene and again at the play-scene, he not only feigned madness, but, to convince her that he had quite lost his love for her, he also addressed her in bitter and insulting language. In all this he was acting a part intensely painful to himself; the very violence of his language in the Nunnery-scene arose from this pain; and so the actor should make him show, in that scene, occasional signs of a tenderness which with all his efforts he cannot wholly conceal. Finally, over her grave the truth bursts

from him in the declaration quoted just now, though it is still impossible for him to explain to others why he who loved her so profoundly was forced to wring her heart.

Now this theory, if the view of Hamlet's character which I have taken is anywhere near the truth, is certainly wrong at one point, viz., in so far as it supposes that Hamlet's bitterness to Ophelia was a *mere* pretence forced on him by his design of feigning to be insane; and I proceed to call attention to certain facts and considerations, of which the theory seems to take no account.

1. How is it that in his first soliloquy Hamlet makes no reference whatever to Ophelia?

2. How is it that in his second soliloquy, on the departure of the Ghost, he again says nothing about her? When the lover is feeling that he must make a complete break with his past, why does it not occur to him at once that he must give up his hopes of happiness in love?

3. Hamlet does not, as the popular theory supposes, break with Ophelia directly after the Ghost appears to him; on the contrary, he tries to see her and sends letters to her. What really happens is that Ophelia suddenly repels his visits and letters. Now, *we* know that she is simply obeying her father's order; but how would her action appear to Hamlet, already sick at heart because of his mother's frailty, and now finding that, the moment fortune has turned against him, the woman who had welcomed his love turns against him too? Even if he divined (as his insults to Polonius suggest) that her father was concerned in this change, would he not still, in that morbid condition of mind, certainly suspect her of being less simple than she had appeared to him? Even if he remained free from *this* suspicion, and merely thought her deplorably weak, would he not probably feel anger against *her*, an anger like that of the hero of *Locksley Hall* against his Amy?

4. When Hamlet made his way into Ophelia's room, why did he go in the garb, the conventionally recognised garb, of the distracted *lover*? If it was necessary to convince Ophelia of his insanity, how was it necessary to convince her that disappointment in *love* was the cause of his insanity? His *main* object in the visit appears to have been to convince *others*, through her, that his insanity was not due to any mysterious unknown cause, but to this disappointment, and so to allay the suspicions of the King. But if his feeling for her had been simply that of love, however unhappy, and had not been in any degree that of suspicion or resentment, would he have adopted a plan which must involve her in so much suffering?

5. In what way are Hamlet's insults to Ophelia at the play-scene necessary either to his purpose of convincing her of his insanity or to his purpose of revenge? And, even if he did regard them as somehow means to these ends, is it conceivable that he would have uttered them, if his feeling for her were one of hopeless but unmingled love?

6. How is it that neither when he kills Polonius, nor afterwards, does he appear to reflect that he has killed Ophelia's father, or what the effect on Ophelia is likely to be?

7. We have seen that there is no reference to Ophelia in the soliloquies of the First Act. Neither is there the faintest allusion to her in any one of the soliloquies of the subsequent Acts, unless possibly in the words 'the pangs of despised love.' If the popular theory is true, is not this an astounding fact?

8. Considering this fact, is there no significance in the further fact (which, by itself, would present no difficulty) that in speaking to Horatio Hamlet never alludes to Ophelia, and that at his death he says nothing of her?

9. If the popular theory is true, how is it that neither in the Nunnery-scene nor at the play-scene does

Shakespeare insert anything to make the truth plain? Four words like Othello's 'O hardness to dissemble' would have sufficed.

These considerations, coupled with others as to Hamlet's state of mind, seem to point to two conclusions. They suggest, first, that Hamlet's love, though never lost, was, after Ophelia's apparent rejection of him, mingled with suspicion and resentment, and that his treatment of her was due in part to this cause. And I find it impossible to resist this conclusion. But the question how much of his harshness is meant to be real, and how much assumed, seems to me impossible in some places to answer. For example, his behaviour at the play-scene seems to me to show an intention to hurt and insult; but in the Nunnery-scene (which cannot be discussed briefly) he is evidently acting a part and suffering acutely, while at the same time his invective, however exaggerated, seems to spring from real feelings; and what is pretence, and what sincerity, appears to me an insoluble problem. Something depends here on the further question whether or no Hamlet suspects or detects the presence of listeners; but, in the absence of an authentic stage tradition, this question too seems to be unanswerable.

But something further seems to follow from the considerations adduced. Hamlet's love, they seem to show, was not only mingled with bitterness, it was also, like all his healthy feelings, weakened and deadened by his melancholy. It was far from being extinguished; probably it was *one* of the causes which drove him to force his way to Ophelia; whenever he saw Ophelia, it awoke and, the circumstances being what they were, tormented him. But it was not an absorbing passion; it did not habitually occupy his thoughts; and when he declared that it was such a love as forty thousand brothers could not equal, he spoke sincerely indeed but not truly. What he said

was true, if I may put it thus, of the inner healthy self which doubtless in time would have fully reasserted itself; but it was only partly true of the Hamlet whom we see in the play. And the morbid influence of his melancholy on his love is the cause of those strange facts, that he never alludes to her in his soliloquies, and that he appears not to realise how the death of her father must affect her.

The facts seem almost to force this idea on us. That it is less 'romantic' than the popular view is no argument against it. And psychologically it is quite sound, for a frequent symptom of such melancholy as Hamlet's is a more or less complete paralysis, or even perversion, of the emotion of love. And yet, while feeling no doubt that up to a certain point it is true, I confess I am not satisfied that the explanation of Hamlet's silence regarding Ophelia lies in it. And the reason of this uncertainty is that scarcely any spectators or readers of *Hamlet* notice this silence at all; that I never noticed it myself till I began to try to solve the problem of Hamlet's relation to Ophelia; and that even now, when I read the play through without pausing to consider particular questions, it scarcely strikes me. Now Shakespeare wrote primarily for the theatre and not for students, and therefore great weight should be attached to the immediate impressions made by his works. And so it seems at least possible that the explanation of Hamlet's silence may be that Shakespeare, having already a very difficult task to perform in the soliloquies—that of showing the state of mind which caused Hamlet to delay his vengeance—did not choose to make his task more difficult by introducing matter which would not only add to the complexity of the subject but might, from its 'sentimental' interest, distract attention from the main point; while, from his theatrical experience, he knew that the audience would not observe how unnatural it was that a man deeply in love, and forced

not only to renounce but to wound the woman he loved, should not think of her when he was alone. But, as this explanation is no more completely convincing to me than the other, I am driven to suspend judgment, and also to suspect that the text admits of no sure interpretation. [This paragraph states my view imperfectly.]

This result may seem to imply a serious accusation against Shakespeare. But it must be remembered that if we could see a contemporary representation of *Hamlet*, our doubts would probably disappear. The actor, instructed by the author, would make it clear to us by looks, tones, gestures, and by-play how far Hamlet's feigned harshness to Ophelia was mingled with real bitterness, and again how far his melancholy had deadened his love.

4

As we have seen, all the persons in *Hamlet* except the hero are minor characters, who fail to rise to the tragic level. They are not less interesting on that account, but the hero has occupied us so long that I shall refer only to those in regard to whom Shakespeare's intention appears to be not seldom misunderstood or overlooked.

It may seem strange that Ophelia should be one of these; and yet Shakespearean literature and the experience of teachers show that there is much difference of opinion regarding her, and in particular that a large number of readers feel a kind of personal irritation against her. They seem unable to forgive her for not having been a heroine, and they fancy her much weaker than she was. They think she ought to have been able to help Hamlet to fulfil his task. And they betray, it appears to me, the strangest misconceptions as to what she actually did.

Now it was essential to Shakespeare's purpose that

too great an interest should not be aroused in the love-story; essential, therefore, that Ophelia should be merely one of the subordinate characters; and necessary, accordingly, that she should not be the equal, in spirit, power or intelligence, of his famous heroines. If she had been an Imogen, a Cordelia, even a Portia or a Juliet, the story must have taken another shape. Hamlet would either have been stimulated to do his duty, or (which is more likely) he would have gone mad, or (which is likeliest) he would have killed himself in despair. Ophelia, therefore, was made a character who could not help Hamlet, and for whom on the other hand he would not naturally feel a passion so vehement or profound as to interfere with the main motive of the play. And in the love and the fate of Ophelia herself there was introduced an element, not of deep tragedy but of pathetic beauty, which makes the analysis of her character seem almost a desecration.

Ophelia is plainly quite young and inexperienced. She has lost her mother, and has only a father and a brother, affectionate but worldly, to take care of her. Everyone in the drama who has any heart is drawn to her. To the persons in the play, as to the readers of it, she brings the thought of flowers. 'Rose of May' Laertes names her.

Lay her in the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring!

—so he prays at her burial. 'Sweets to the sweet' the Queen murmurs, as she scatters flowers on the grave; and the flowers which Ophelia herself gathered—those which she gave to others, and those which floated about her in the brook—glimmer in the picture of the mind. Her affection for her brother is shown in two or three delicate strokes. Her love for her father is

deep, though mingled with fear. For Hamlet she has, some say, no deep love—and perhaps she is so near childhood that old affections have still the strongest hold; but certainly she has given to Hamlet all the love of which her nature is as yet capable. Beyond these three beloved ones she seems to have eyes and ears for no one. The Queen is fond of her, but there is no sign of her returning the Queen's affection. Her existence is wrapped up in these three.

On this childlike nature and on Ophelia's inexperience everything depends. The knowledge that 'there's tricks in the world' has reached her only as a vague report. Her father and brother are jealously anxious for her because of her ignorance and innocence; and we resent their anxiety chiefly because we know Hamlet better than they. Her whole character is that of simple unselfish affection. Naturally she is incapable of understanding Hamlet's mind, though she can feel its beauty. Naturally, too, she obeys her father when she is forbidden to receive Hamlet's visits and letters. If we remember not what *we* know but what *she* knows of her lover and her father; if we remember that she had not, like Juliet, confessed her love; and if we remember that she was much below her suitor in station, her compliance surely must seem perfectly natural, apart from the fact that the standard of obedience to a father was in Shakespeare's day higher than in ours.

'But she does more than obey,' we are told; 'she runs off frightened to report to her father Hamlet's strange visit and behaviour; she shows to her father one of Hamlet's letters, and tells him the whole story of the courtship; and she joins in a plot to win Hamlet's secret from him.' One must remember, however, that she had never read the tragedy. Consider for a moment how matters looked to *her*. She knows nothing about the Ghost and its disclosures. She has undergone for some time the pain of repelling her lover and

appearing to have turned against him. She sees him, or hears of him, sinking daily into deeper gloom, and so transformed from what he was that he is considered to be out of his mind. She hears the question constantly discussed what the cause of this sad change can be; and her heart tells her—how can it fail to tell her?—that her unkindness is the chief cause. Suddenly Hamlet forces his way into her chamber; and his appearance and his behaviour are those of a man crazed with love. She is frightened—why not? She is not Lady Macbeth. Rosalind would have been frightened. Which of her censors would be wholly unmoved if his room were invaded by a lunatic? She is frightened, then; frightened, if you will, like a child. Yes, but, observe, her one idea is to help Hamlet. She goes, therefore, at once to her father. To whom else should she go? Her brother is away. Her father, whom she saw with her own eyes and not with Shakespeare's, is kind, and the wisest of men, and concerned about Hamlet's state. Her father finds, in her report, the solution of the mystery: Hamlet is mad because she has repulsed him. Why should she not tell her father the whole story and give him an old letter which may help to convince the King and the Queen? Nay, why should she not allow herself to be used as a 'decoy' to settle the question why Hamlet is mad? It is all-important that it should be settled, in order that he may be cured; all her seniors are simply and solely anxious for his welfare; and, if her unkindness *is* the cause of his sad state, they will permit her to restore him by kindness. Was she to refuse to play a part just because it would be painful to her to do so? I find in her joining the 'plot' (as it is absurdly called) a sign not of weakness, but of unselfishness and strength.

'But she practised deception; she even told a lie. Hamlet asked her where her father was, and she said he was at home, when he was really listening behind a curtain.' Poor Ophelia! It is considered angelic in

Desdemona to say untruly that she killed herself, but most immoral or pusillanimous in Ophelia to tell *her* lie. I will not discuss these casuistical problems; but, if ever an angry lunatic asks me a question which I cannot answer truly without great danger to him and to one of my relations, I hope that grace may be given me to imitate Ophelia. Seriously, at such a terrible moment was it weak, was it not rather heroic, in a simple girl not to lose her presence of mind and not to flinch, but to go through her task for Hamlet's sake and her father's? And, finally, is it really a thing to be taken as matter of course, and no matter for admiration, in this girl that, from beginning to end, and after a storm of utterly unjust reproach, not a thought of resentment should even cross her mind?

Still, we are told, it was ridiculously weak in her to lose her reason. And here again her critics seem hardly to realise the situation, hardly to put themselves in the place of a girl whose lover, estranged from her, goes mad and kills her father. They seem to forget also that Ophelia must have believed that these frightful calamities were not mere calamities, but followed from *her* action in repelling her lover. Nor do they realise the utter loneliness that must have fallen on her. Of the three persons who were all the world to her, her father has been killed, Hamlet has been sent out of the country insane, and her brother is abroad. Horatio, when her mind gives way, tries to befriend her, but there is no sign of any previous relation between them, or of Hamlet's having commended her to his friend's care. What support she can gain from the Queen we can guess from the Queen's character, and from the fact that, when Ophelia is most helpless, the Queen shrinks from the very sight of her. She was left, thus, absolutely alone, and if she looked for her brother's return, she might reflect that it would mean danger to Hamlet.

Whether this idea occurred to her we cannot tell.

In any case it was well for her that her mind gave way before Laertes reached Elsinore; and pathetic as Ophelia's madness is, it is also, we feel, the kindest stroke that now could fall on her. It is evident, I think, that this was the effect Shakespeare intended to produce. In her madness Ophelia continues sweet and lovable.

Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

In her wanderings we hear from time to time an undertone of the deepest sorrow, but never the agonised cry of fear or horror which makes madness dreadful or shocking. And the picture of her death, if our eyes grow dim in watching it, is still purely beautiful. Coleridge was true to Shakespeare when he wrote of 'the affecting death of Ophelia,—who in the beginning lay like a little projection of land into a lake or stream, covered with spray-flowers quietly reflected in the quiet waters, but at length is undermined or loosened, and becomes a fairy isle, and after a brief vagrancy sinks almost without an eddy.'

5

I reluctantly pass by Polonius, Laertes and the beautiful character of Horatio, to say something in conclusion of the Queen and the King.

The answers to two questions asked about the Queen are, it seems to me, practically certain, (1) She did not merely marry a second time with indecent haste; she was false to her husband while he lived. This is surely the most natural interpretation of the words of the Ghost, coming, as they do, before his account of the murder. And against this testimony what force has the objection that the queen in the 'Murder of Gonzago' is not represented as an adulteress? Hamlet's mark in

arranging the play-scene was not his mother, whom besides he had been expressly ordered to spare. (2) On the other hand, she was *not* privy to the murder of her husband, either before the deed or after it. There is no sign of her being so, and there are clear signs that she was not. The representation of the murder in the play-scene does not move her; and when her husband starts from his throne, she innocently asks him, 'How fares my lord?' In the interview with Hamlet, when her son says of his slaughter of Polonius,

'A bloody deed!' Almost as bad, good mother, As kill a king and marry with his brother, the astonishment of her repetition 'As kill a king!' is evidently genuine; and, if it had not been so, she would never have had the hardihood to exclaim:

What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue In noise so rude against me?

Further, it is most significant that when she and the King speak together alone, nothing that is said by her or to her implies her knowledge of the secret.

The Queen was not a bad-hearted woman, not at all the woman to think little of murder. But she had a soft animal nature, and was very dull and very shallow. She loved to be happy, like a sheep in the sun; and, to do her justice, it pleased her to see others happy, like more sheep in the sun. She never saw that drunkenness is disgusting till Hamlet told her so; and, though she knew that he considered her marriage 'o'er-hasty', she was untroubled by any shame at the feelings which had led to it. It was pleasant to sit upon her throne and see smiling faces round her, and foolish and unkind in Hamlet to persist in grieving for his father instead of marrying Ophelia and making everything comfortable. She was fond of Ophelia and genuinely attached to her son (though willing to see her lover exclude him from the throne); and, no doubt, she considered equality of rank a mere trifle compared with the claims of love. The belief at the bottom of her heart was that the

world is a place constructed simply that people may be happy in it in a good-humoured sensual fashion.

Her only chance was to be made unhappy. When affliction comes to her, the good in her nature struggles to the surface through the heavy mass of sloth. Like other faulty characters in Shakespeare's tragedies, she dies a better woman than she had lived. When Hamlet shows her what she has done she feels genuine remorse. It is true, Hamlet fears it will not last, and so at the end of the interview he adds a warning that, if she betrays him, she will ruin herself as well. It is true too that there is no sign of her obeying Hamlet in breaking off her most intimate connection with the King. Still she does feel remorse; and she loves her son, and does not betray him. She gives her husband a false account of Polonius's death, and is silent about the appearance of the Ghost. She becomes miserable;

> *To her sick soul, as sin's true nature is,*
> *Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss.*

She shows spirit when Laertes raises the mob, and one respects her for standing up for her husband when she can do nothing to help her son. If she had sense to realise Hamlet's purpose, or the probability of the King's taking some desperate step to foil it, she must have suffered torture in those days. But perhaps she was too dull.

The last we see of her, at the fencing-match, is most characteristic. She is perfectly serene. Things have slipped back into their groove, and she has no apprehensions. She is, however, disturbed and full of sympathy for her son, who is out of condition and pants and perspires. These are afflictions she can thoroughly feel for, though they are even more common than the death of a father. But then she meets her death because she cannot resist the wish to please her son by drinking to his success. And more: when

she falls dying, and the King tries to make out that she is merely swooning at the sight of blood, she collects her energies to deny it and to warn Hamlet:

No, no, the drink, the drink,
—O my dear Hamlet,—
The drink, the drink!
I am poison'd.
[*Dies*].

Was ever any other writer at once so pitiless and so just as Shakespeare? Did ever any other mingle the grotesque and the pathetic with a realism so daring and yet so true to 'the modesty of nature'?

* * * * *

King Claudius rarely gets from the reader the attention he deserves. But he is very interesting, both psychologically and dramatically. On the one hand, he is not without respectable qualities. As a king he is courteous and never undignified; he performs his ceremonial duties efficiently; and he takes good care of the national interests. He nowhere shows cowardice, and when Laertes and the mob force their way into the palace, he confronts a dangerous situation with coolness and address. His love for his ill-gotten wife seems to be quite genuine, and there is no ground for suspecting him of having used her as a mere means to the crown. His conscience, though ineffective, is far from being dead. In spite of its reproaches he plots new crimes to ensure the prize of the old one; but still it makes him unhappy. Nor is he cruel or malevolent.

On the other hand, he is no tragic character. He had a small nature. If Hamlet may be trusted, he was a man of mean appearance—a mildewed ear, a toad, a bat; and he was also bloated by excess in drinking. People made mouths at him in contempt while his

brother lived; and though, when he came to the throne, they spent large sums in buying his portrait, he evidently put little reliance on their loyalty. He was no villain of force, who thought of winning his brother's crown by a bold and open stroke, but a cut-purse who stole the diadem from a shelf and put it in his pocket. He had the inclination of natures physically weak and morally small towards intrigue and crooked dealing. His instinctive predilection was for poison: this was the means he used in his first murder, and he at once recurred to it when he had failed to get Hamlet executed by deputy. Though in danger he showed no cowardice, his first thought was always for himself.

I like him not, nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range,

—these are the first words we hear him speak after the play-scene. His first comment on the death of Polonius is,

It had been so with us had we been there;

and his second is,

Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answered?
It will be laid to us.

He was not, however, stupid, but rather quick-witted and adroit. He won the Queen partly indeed by presents (how pitifully characteristic of her!), but also by 'witch-craft of his wit' or intellect. He seems to have been soft-spoken, ingratiating in manner, and given to smiling on the person he addressed ('that one may smile, and smile, and be a villain'). We see this in his speech to Laertes about the young man's desire to return to Paris. Hamlet scarcely ever speaks to him without an insult, but he never shows resentment,

hardly even annoyance. He makes use of Laertes with great dexterity. He had evidently found that a clear head, a general complaisance, a willingness to bend and oblige where he could not overawe, would lead him to his objects,—that he could trick men and manage them. Unfortunately he imagined he could trick something more than men.

This error, together with a decided trait of temperament, leads him to his ruin. He has a sanguine disposition. When first we see him, all has fallen out to his wishes, and he confidently looks forward to a happy life. He believes his secret to be absolutely safe, and he is quite ready to be kind to Hamlet, in whose melancholy he sees only excess of grief. He has no desire to see him leave the court; he promises him his voice for the succession; he will be a father to him. Before long, indeed, he becomes very uneasy, and then more and more alarmed; but when, much later, he has contrived Hamlet's death in England, he has still no suspicion that he need not hope for happiness:

till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.
Nay, his very last words show that he goes to death unchanged:
Oh yet defend me, friends, I am but hurt [=wounded],

he cries, although in half a minute he is dead. That his crime has failed, and that it could do nothing else, never once comes home to him. He thinks he can overreach Heaven. When he is praying for pardon, he is all the while perfectly determined to keep his crown; and he knows it. More—it is one of the grimmest things in Shakespeare, but he puts such things so quietly that we are apt to miss them—when the King is praying for pardon for his first murder he has just made his final arrangements for a second, the murder of Hamlet. But

he does not allude to that fact in his prayer. If Hamlet had really wished to kill him at a moment that had no relish of salvation in it, he had no need to wait. So we are inclined to say; and yet it was not so. For this was the crisis for Claudius as well as Hamlet. He had better have died at once, before he had added to his guilt a share in the responsibility for all the woe and death that followed. And so, we may allow ourselves to say, here also Hamlet's indiscretion served him well. The power that shaped his end shaped the King's no less.

For—to return in conclusion to the action of the play—in all that happens or is done we seem to apprehend some vaster power. We do not define it, or even name it, or perhaps even say to ourselves that it is there; but our imagination is haunted by the sense of it, as it works its way through the deeds or the delays of men to its inevitable end. And most of all do we feel this in regard to Hamlet and the King. For these two, the one by his shrinking from his appointed task, and the other by efforts growing ever more feverish to rid himself of his enemy, seem to be bent on avoiding each other. But they cannot. Through devious paths, the very paths they take in order to escape, something is pushing them silently step by step towards one another, until they meet and it puts the sword into Hamlet's hand. He himself must die, for he needed this compulsion before he could fulfil the demand of destiny; but he *must* fulfil it. And the King too, turn and twist as he may, must reach the appointed goal, and is only hastening to it by the windings which seem to lead elsewhere. Concentration on the character of the hero is apt to withdraw our attention from this aspect of the drama; but in no other tragedy of Shakespeare's, not even in *Macbeth*, is this aspect so impressive.

I mention *Macbeth* for a further reason. In *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* not only is the feeling of a supreme power or destiny peculiarly marked, but it has also

at times a peculiar tone, which may be called, in a sense, religious. I cannot make my meaning clear without using language too definite to describe truly the imaginative impression produced; but it is roughly true that, while we do not imagine the supreme power as a divine being who avenges crime, or as a providence which supernaturally interferes, our sense of it is influenced by the fact that Shakespeare uses current religious ideas here much more decidedly than in *Othello* or *King Lear*. The horror in Macbeth's soul is more than once represented as desperation at the thought that he is eternally 'lost'; the same idea appears in the attempt of Claudius at repentance; and as *Hamlet* nears its close the 'religious' tone of the tragedy is deepened in two ways. In the first place, 'accident' is introduced into the plot in its barest and least dramatic form, when Hamlet is brought back to Denmark by the chance of the meeting with the pirate ship. This incident has been therefore severely criticised as a lame expedient, but it appears probable that the 'accident' is meant to impress the imagination as the very reverse of accidental, and with many readers it certainly does so. And that this was the intention is made the more likely by a second fact, the fact that in connection with the events of the voyage Shakespeare introduces that feeling, on Hamlet's part, of his being in the hands of Providence. The repeated expressions of this feeling are not, I have maintained, a sign that Hamlet has now formed a fixed resolution to do his duty forthwith; but their effect is to strengthen in the spectator the feeling that, whatever may become of Hamlet, and whether he wills it or not, his task will surely be accomplished, because it is the purpose of a power against which both he and his enemy are impotent, and which makes of them the instruments of its own will.

Observing this, we may remember another significant point of resemblance between *Hamlet* and

Macbeth, the appearance in each play of a Ghost,—a figure which seems quite in place in either, whereas it would seem utterly out of place in *Othello* or *King Lear*. Much might be said of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, but I confine myself to the matter which we are now considering. What is the effect of the appearance of the Ghost? And, in particular, why does Shakespeare make this Ghost so *majestical* a phantom, giving it that measured and solemn utterance, and that air of impersonal abstraction which forbids, for example, all expression of affection for Hamlet and checks in Hamlet the outburst of pity for his father? Whatever the intention may have been, the result is that the Ghost affects imagination not simply as the apparition of a dead king who desires the accomplishment of *his* purposes, but also as the representative of that hidden ultimate power, the messenger of divine justice set upon the expiation of offences which it appeared impossible for man to discover and avenge, a reminder or a symbol of the connexion of the limited world of ordinary experience with the vaster life of which it is but a partial appearance. And as, at the beginning of the play, we have this intimation, conveyed through the medium of the received religious idea of a soul come from purgatory, so at the end, conveyed through the similar idea of a soul carried by angels to its rest, we have an intimation of the same character, and a reminder that the apparent failure of Hamlet's life is not the ultimate truth concerning him.

If these various peculiarities of the tragedy are considered, it will be agreed that, while *Hamlet* certainly cannot be called in the specific sense a 'religious drama,' there is in it nevertheless both a freer use of popular religious ideas, and a more decided, though always imaginative, intimation of a supreme power concerned in human evil and good, than can be found in any other of Shakespeare's tragedies. And this is probably one of the causes of the special popularity

of this play, just as *Macbeth*, the tragedy which in these respects most nearly approaches it, has also the place next to it in general esteem.

The End

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