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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK ***

SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDY
OF
HAMLET,
PRINCE OF DENMARK.

ARRANGED FOR REPRESENTATION AT THE
ROYAL PRINCESS'S THEATRE

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES,

BY

CHARLES KEAN, F. S. A.

AS PERFORMED ON

MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 1859.

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BRADBURY AND EVANS, 11, BOUVERIE STREET.

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[Dramatis Personæ](#)

[Preface](#)

Act I	Scene 1	Elsinore. A platform before the Castle
	Scene 2	A room of state in the Palace
	Scene 3	A room in Polonius's house
	Scene 4	The platform.
	Scene 5	A more remote part of the platform

[Notes](#)

Act II	Scene 1	A room in Polonius's house
	Scene 2	A room in the Castle
	Notes	
Act III	Scene 1	A room in the Castle
	Scene 2	A room in the same
	Scene 3	The Queen's chamber
	Notes	
Act IV	Scene 1	A room in the Castle
	Notes	
Act V	Scene 1	A church yard
	Scene 2	Hall in the Castle
	Scene 3	Room in the Castle
	Notes	

[Electronic Transcriber's Note](#)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CLAUDIUS (<i>King of Denmark</i>)		MR. RYDER.	
HAMLET (<i>son to the former and nephew to the present King</i>)		MR. CHARLES KEAN.	
POLONIUS (<i>Lord Chamberlain</i>)		MR. MEADOWS.	
HORATIO (<i>friend To Hamlet</i>)		MR. GRAHAM.	
LAERTES (<i>son To Polonius</i>)		MR. J. F. CATHCART.	
ROSENCRANTZ	} (<i>Courtiers</i>)	} MR. BRAZIER.	
GUILDENSTERN			MR. G. EVERETT.
OSRICK			MR. DAVID FISHER.
PRIEST		MR. TERRY.	
MARCELLUS		MR. PAULO.	
BERNARDO		MR. DALY.	
FRANCISCO		MR. COLLETT.	
GHOST OF HAMLET'S FATHER		MR. WALTER LACY.	
FIRST GRAVEDIGGER		MR. FRANK MATTHEWS.	
SECOND GRAVEDIGGER		MR. H. SAKER.	
FIRST PLAYER		MR. F. COOKE.	
SECOND PLAYER		MR. ROLLESTON.	
GERTRUDE (<i>Queen of Denmark, and mother of Hamlet</i>)		MRS. CHARLES KEAN.	
OPHELIA (<i>daughter of Polonius</i>)		MISS HEATH.	
ACTRESS		MISS DALY.	

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.

PREFACE.

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,—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.

HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—EL SINORE. 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 majestic,
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.

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[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?

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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 Polonius?

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?

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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 veiled 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 perséver 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!

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.]

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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-à-pé,
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.

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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 address⁶¹
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 down⁶² 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 tenable⁶⁴ 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, 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. 21
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

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.

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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 impórtun'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,

23

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?

24

[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 removèd 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

25

[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.

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.

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.]

31

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

Act I

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

[I.2](#) *unfold*] Announce, make known.

[I.3](#) *Long live the King.*] The watch-word.

[I.4](#) *The rivals of my watch,*] *Rivals*, for partners or associates.

[I.5](#) *And liegemen to the Dane.*] *i.e.*, owing allegiance to Denmark.

[I.6](#) *A piece of him.*] Probably a cant expression.

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

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

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

[I.10](#) *It harrows me with fear and wonder.*] *i.e.*, it confounds and overwhelms me.

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

[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.

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

[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.

[I.15](#) *Gross and scope*] Upon the whole, and in a general view.

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

[I.17](#) *Palmy state*] Outspread, flourishing. Palm branches were the emblem of victory.

[I.18](#) *Sound, or use of voice,*] Articulation.

[I.19](#)

*Upboarded 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."

[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.

[I.21](#) *Lofty*] High and loud.

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

[I.23](#) Laertes is unknown in the original story, being an introduction of Shakespeare's.

[I.24](#) *Green;*] Fresh.

[I.25](#) *Wisest sorrow*] Sober grief, passion discreetly reined.

[I.26](#) *With a defeated joy,*] *i.e.*, with joy baffled; with joy interrupted by grief.

[I.27](#) *Barr'd*] Excluded—acted without the concurrence of.

[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.

[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.

[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!

[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*.

[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*.

[I.33](#) *Nighted colour*] Black—night-like.

[I.34](#) *Vailed lids*] Cast down.

[I.35](#) *Which passeth show;*] *i.e.*, "external manners of lament."

[I.36](#) *Trappings*] *Trappings* are "furnishings."

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

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

[I.39](#) *But to perséver*] This word was anciently accented on the second syllable.

[I.40](#) *Obstinate condolement,*] Ceaseless and unremitting expression of grief.

[I.41](#) *Incorrect to Heaven.*] Contumacious towards Heaven.

[I.42](#) *Unprevailing*] Fruitless, unprofitable.

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

[I.44](#) *In grace whereof,*] *i.e.*, respectful regard or honour of which.

[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.

[I.46](#) *Resolve itself*] *To resolve* is an old word signifying *to dissolve*.

[I.47](#) *His canon*] *i.e.*, his rule or law.

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

[I.49](#) *Merely.*] Wholly—entirely.

[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. Our great poet is here guilty of a false quantity, by calling Hypērion, Hypērion, a mistake not unusual among our English poets.

[I.51](#) *Might not beteem*] *i.e.*, might not allow, permit.

[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.

[I.53](#) *In faith.*] Faithfully, in pure and simple verity.

[I.54](#) *But what make you*] What is your object? What are you doing?

[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.

[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.

[I.57](#) *Goodly king.*] *i.e.*, a good king.

[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.

[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.

[I.60](#) *With the act of fear,*] *i.e.*, by the influence or power of fear.

[I.61](#) *Address*] *i.e.*, make ready.

[I.62](#) *Writ down*] Prescribed by our own duty.

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

[I.64](#) *Tenable*] *i.e.*, strictly maintained.

[I.65](#) *Benefit,*] Favourable means.

[I.66](#) *Trifling of his favour,*] Gay and thoughtless intimation.

[I.67](#) *Pérfume and suppliance of a minute.*] *i.e.*, an amusement to fill up a vacant moment, and render it agreeable.

[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.]

[I.69](#) *The chariest maid*] Chary is cautious.

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

[I.71](#) *Recks not his own read.*] *i.e.*, heeds not his own lessons or counsel.

[I.72](#) *Shoulder of your sail,*] A common sea phrase.

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

[I.74](#) *Unproportion'd thought*] Irregular, disorderly thought.

[I.75](#) *Each man's censure,*] Sentiment, opinion.

[I.76](#) *i.e.*, chiefly in that.

[I.77](#) *Husbandry*] *i.e.*, thrift, economical prudence.

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

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

[I.80](#) *Given private time to you;*] Spent his time in private visits to you.

[I.81](#) *As so 'tis put on me,*] Suggested to, impressed on me.

[I.82](#) *Is between*] *i.e.*, what has passed—what intercourse had.

[I.83](#)

*Green girl,
Unsifted*]

i.e., inexperienced girl. Unsifted means one who has not nicely *canvassed* and examined the peril of her situation.

[I.84](#) *Woodcocks.*] Witless things.

- [L.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.
- [L.86](#) *An eager air.*] *Eager* here means *sharp*, from *aigre*, French.
- [L.87](#) *Doth wake to-night,*] *i.e.*, holds a late revel.
- [L.88](#) *Takes his rouse,*] *Rouse* means drinking bout, carousal.
- [L.89](#) *Questionable shape,*] To *question*, in our author's time, signified to *converse*. Questionable, therefore, means *capable of being conversed with*.
- [L.90](#) *Hearsed in death,*] Deposited with the accustomed funeral rites.
- [L.91](#) *Cerements;*] Those precautions usually adopted in preparing dead bodies for sepulture.
- [L.92](#) *Fools of nature*] *i.e.*, making sport for nature.
- [L.93](#) *Disposition*] Frame of mind and body.
- [L.94](#) *Removèd ground;*] *Removed* for *remote*.
- [L.95](#) *At a pin's fee;*] *i.e.*, the value of a pin.
- [L.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.
- [L.97](#) *Beetles o'er his base into the sea,*] *i.e.*, projects darkly over the sea.
- [L.98](#) *Némean 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.
- [L.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.
- [L.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.* "
- [L.101](#) *Harrow up thy soul;*] Agitate and convulse.
- [L.102](#) *Hair to stand on end,*] A common image of that day. "*Standing* as frightened with *erected* *haire.*"
- [L.103](#) *The fretful porcupine;*] This animal being considered irascible and timid.
- [L.104](#) *Eternal blazon*] *i.e.*, publication or divulcation of things eternal.
- [L.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.
- [L.106](#) *Orchard,*] Garden.
- [L.107](#) *Forged process*] *i.e.*, false report of proceedings.
- [L.108](#) *Decline upon a wretch.*] Stoop with degradation to.
- [L.109](#) *Secure*] Unguarded.
- [L.110](#) *Hebenon*] Hebenon is described by Nares in his Glossary, as the juice of ebony, supposed to be a deadly poison.
- [L.111](#) *Despatch'd;*] Despoiled—bereft.
- [L.112](#) *Unhouse'd, disappointed, unanel'd;*] To *house* 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.
- [L.113](#) *Luxury*] Lasciviousness.
- [L.114](#) *Pale his uneffectual fire;*] *i.e.*, not seen by the light of day; or it may mean, shining without heat.
- [L.115](#) *In this distracted globe.*] *i.e.*, his head distracted with thought.
- [L.116](#) *Pressures past,*] Impressions heretofore made.
- [L.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.
- [L.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."
- [L.119](#) *Whirling words,*] Random words thrown out with no specific aim.
- [L.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.
- [L.121](#) *O'er-master it*] Get the better of it.
- [L.122](#) *Give it welcome.*] Receive it courteously, as you would a stranger when introduced.
- [L.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.
- [L.124](#) *Arms encumber'd thus,*] *i.e.*, folded.

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 ecstasy 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 rest⁶ 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 heron-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, pastoral-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 Æneas' 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.*

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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 sword⁶¹
The unnerved father falls.
But, as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack⁶² 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.*

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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'th' 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.

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[Exit, R.H.]

END OF ACT SECOND.

Notes

Act II

[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.

[II.2](#) *His bulk,*] Frame.

[II.3](#) *Ecstasy of love;*] *i.e.*, madness of love. In this sense the word is now obsolete.

[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.

[II.5](#) *The understanding of himself,*] *i.e.*, the just estimate of himself.

[II.6](#) *Vouchsafe your rest*] Please to reside.

[II.7](#) *Of us,*] *i.e.*, over us.

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

[II.9](#) *The trail of policy*] The *trail* is the *course* of an animal pursued by the scent.

[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.

[II.11](#) *Perpend.*] *i.e.*, reflect, consider attentively.

[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.

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

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

[II.15](#) *I am ill at these numbers;*] No talent for these rhymes.

[II.16](#) *O most best,*] An ancient mode of expression.

[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."

[II.18](#) *And more above,*] *i.e.*, moreover, besides.

[II.19](#) *His solicitings,*] *i.e.*, his love-making, his tender expressions.

[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*.

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

[II.22](#) *With idle sight;*] *i.e.*, with indifference.

[II.23](#) *Round to work,*] *i.e.*, roundly, without reserve.

[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.

[II.25](#) *I'll board him presently.*] Accost, address him.

[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.

[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.

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

[II.29](#) *How pregnant his replies*] Big with meaning.

[II.30](#) *Beaten way of friendship,*] Plain track, open and unceremonious course.

[II.31](#) *Rights of our fellowship and constancy of our youth,*] Habits of familiar intercourse and correspondent years.

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

[II.33](#) *Even*] Without inclination any way.

[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.

[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.

[II.36](#) *Express*] According to pattern, justly and perfectly modelled.

[II.37](#) *Paragon*] Model of perfection.

[II.38](#) *Lenten entertainment*] *i.e.*, sparing, like the entertainments given in Lent.

[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.

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

[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.

[II.42](#) *Travel?*] Become strollers.

[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.

[II.44](#) *Make mouths at him*] *i.e.*, deride him by antic gestures and mockery.

[II.45](#) *In little.*] In miniature.

[II.46](#) *I know a hawk from a hernshaw.*] 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*.

[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.

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

[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 *Menœchme*, in 1595.

[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*.

[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.

[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.

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

[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.

[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*.

[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.

[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*.

[II.58](#) *Quality;*] Qualifications, faculty.

[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.

[II.60](#) *As much modesty as cunning.*] As much propriety and decorum as skill.

[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.

[II.62](#) *The rack*] The clouds or congregated vapour.

[II.63](#) *The mobled queen?*] Mobled is veiled, muffled, disguised.

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

[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.

[II.66](#) *The cue*] The point—the direction.

[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.

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

[II.69](#) *Defeat was made.*] Overthrow.

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

[II.71](#) *Kindless*] Unnatural.

[II.72](#) *About, my brains!*] Wits to work.

[II.73](#) *I'll tent him to the quick;*] *i.e.*, probe him—search his wounds.

[II.74](#) *Blench,*] Shrink, start aside.

[II.75](#) *More relative than this;*] Directly applicable.

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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.

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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?

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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?

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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!

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[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.]

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 lief⁴² 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 fellow⁴⁴ 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 unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of which one⁵⁰ 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.

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[Crosses to R.]

1st Play. (L.) I hope we have reformed that indifferently⁵³ 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 spectators⁵⁵ to laugh too; though, in the mean time, some necessary question⁵⁶ 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

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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 soul⁵⁹ 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 judgment⁶⁰ 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 soul⁶¹
Observe my uncle: if his occulted guilt⁶²
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

59

[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 Cæsar: 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 Phœbus' 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 murder⁸³ 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 withers⁸⁵ are unprung.

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 weeds⁸⁹ collected,
With Hecat's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magick and dire property,
On wholesome life usurp⁹⁰ 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 stricken deer go weep,⁹¹

The hart ungalled 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!

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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

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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

66

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? 67

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.

[Exit]

SCENE II.—A ROOM IN THE SAME.

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. 68

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.]

SCENE III.—THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER.

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. 69

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!

70

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;

71

Hypérion'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

Act III

[III.1](#) *Forward*] Disposed, inclinable.

[III.2](#) *Assay him to*] Try his disposition towards.

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

[III.4](#) *Have closely sent*] *i.e.*, privately sent.

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

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

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

[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.

[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.

[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.

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

[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.

[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.

[III.14](#) *Contumely,*] Contemptuousness, rudeness.

[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.

[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 Cæsar was slain with *bodkins*.

[III.17](#) *Who would fardels bear,*] *Fardel* is a burden. *Fardellus*, low Latin.

[III.18](#) *From whose bourn*] *i.e.*, boundary.

[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.

[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."

[III.21](#) *Of great pith and moment,*] *i.e.*, of great vigour and importance.

[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.

[III.23](#) *Soft you now!*] A gentler pace! have done with lofty march!

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

[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.

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

[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.

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

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

[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.

[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.

[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.

[III.33](#) *Make your wantonness your ignorance.*] You mistake by *wanton* affectation, and pretend to mistake by *ignorance*.

[III.34](#) *All but one shall live;*] *One* is the king.

[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.

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

[III.37](#) *Glass of fashion*] *Speculum consuetudinis*.—CICERO.

[III.38](#) *The mould of form,*] The cast, in which is shaped the only perfect form.

[III.39](#) *Musick vows,*] Musical, mellifluous.

[III.40](#) *Be round with him;*] *i.e.*, plain with him—without reserve.

[III.41](#) *If she find him not,*] Make him not out.

[III.42](#) *As lief*] As willingly.

[III.43](#) *Thus;*] *i.e.*, thrown out thus.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[III.49](#) *Come tardy off*] Without spirit or animation; heavily, sleepily done.

[III.50](#) *The censure of which one*] *i.e.*, the censure of one of which.

[III.51](#) *Your allowance,*] In your approbation.

[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.

[III.53](#) *Indifferently*] In a reasonable degree.

[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.

[III.55](#) *Barren spectators*] *i.e.*, dull, unapprehensive spectators.

[III.56](#) *Question*] Point, topic.

[III.57](#) *Cop'd withal.*] Encountered with.

[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.

[III.59](#) *Since my dear soul*] *Dear* is out of which arises the liveliest interest.

[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.

[III.61](#) *The very comment of thy soul*] The most intense direction of every faculty.

[III.62](#) *Occulted guilt do not itself unkenne*] Stifled, secret guilt, do not develop itself.

[III.63](#) *As Vulcan's stithy.*] A stithy is the smith's shop, as stith is the anvil.

[III.64](#) *In censure of his seeming.*] In making our estimate of the appearance he shall put on.

[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.

[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."

[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.

[III.68](#) *I did enact Julius Cæsar;*] A Latin play on the subject of Cæsar's death, was performed at Christ-church, Oxford, in 1582.

[III.69](#) *They stay upon your patience.*] *Patience* is here used for *leisure*.

[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.

[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*.

[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 fures*), it is ordained, that none under the degree of an *Earl* may use *sables*.

[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.

[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.

[III.75](#) *The posy of a ring?*] Such poetry as you may find engraven on a ring.

[III.76](#) *Phœbus' cart*] A chariot was anciently called a cart.

[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.

[III.78](#) *My operant powers their functions leave to do:*] *i.e.*, my active energies cease to perform their offices.

[III.79](#) *What we do determine, oft we break.*] Unsettle our most fixed resolves.

[III.80](#) *The argument?*] The subject matter.

[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.

[III.82](#) *Tropically.*] *i.e.*, figuratively.

[III.83](#) *The image of a murder,*] *i.e.*, the lively portraiture, the correct and faithful representation of a murder, &c.

[III.84](#) *Let the galled jade wince,*] A proverbial saying.

[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*.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.*"

[III.90](#) *Usurp*] Encroach upon.

[III.91](#) *Let the stricken 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."

[III.92](#) *Marvellous distempered.*] *i.e.*, discomposed.

[III.93](#) *Admiration.*] *i.e.*, wonder.

[III.94](#) *Trade with us?*] *i.e.* Occasion of intercourse.

[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*.

[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.

[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.

[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.*"

[III.99](#) *Recorder.*] *i.e.* A kind of flute, or pipe.

[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*.

[III.101](#) *Into a toil?*] *i.e.*, net or snare.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[III.106](#) *Bitter business*] *i.e.*, shocking, horrid business.

[III.107](#) *Stands it safe with us*] Is it *consistent* with our security.

[III.108](#) *This fear*] Bugbear.

[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.

[III.110](#) *To hear the process*] The course of the conversation.

[III.111](#) *The speech of vantage*] *i.e.*, opportunity or advantage of secret observations.

[III.112](#) *Lay home to him*] Pointedly and closely charge him.

[III.113](#) *Pranks too broad*] Open and bold.

[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."

[III.115](#) *By the rood*] *i.e.*, the cross or crucifix.

[III.116](#) *How now! a rat?*] This is an expression borrowed from the History of Hamlet.

[III.117](#) *Have not braz'd it so*] *i.e.*, soldered with brass.

[III.118](#) *Proof and bulwark against sense*] Against all feeling.

[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.

[III.120](#) *As from the body of contraction plucks The very soul*] Annihilates the very principle of contracts. Contraction for marriage contract.

[III.121](#) *The counterfeit presentment*] *i.e.*, picture or mimic representation.

[III.122](#) *Hypérion's curls*] Hyperion is used by Spenser with the same error in quantity.

[III.123](#) *A station like the herald Mercury*] Station is attitude—act of standing.

[III.124](#)

*Like a mildew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother.*]

This alludes to Pharaoh's dream, in the 41st chapter of Genesis.

[III.125](#) *Batten on this moor?*] Batten is to feed rankly.

[III.126](#) *Hey-day in the blood*] This expression is occasionally used by old authors.

[III.127](#) *Thou canst mutine*] *i.e.*, rebel.

[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."

[III.129](#) *An enseamed bed*] *i.e.*, greasy bed of grossly fed indulgence.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[III.134](#) *Cool patience*] *i.e.*, moderation.

[III.135](#) *Make them capable*] Make them intelligent—capable of conceiving.

[III.136](#) *My stem effects*] *i.e.*, change the nature of my purposes, or what I mean to effect.

[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.

[III.138](#) *My father, in his habit as he lived!*] In the habit he was accustomed to wear when living.

[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.

[III.140](#) *Gambol from.*] Start away from.

[III.141](#) *Skin and film,*] Cover with a thin skin.

[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.

75

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.]

76

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.]

77

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 set⁶
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*.

78

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:*

79

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.

80

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 grief²¹ 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?

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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.

85

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

Act IV

[IV.1](#) *Translate:]* Interpret.

[IV.2](#) *In this brainish apprehension,]* Distempered, brainsick mood.

[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.

[IV.4](#) *Politick worms]* *i.e.*, artful, cunning worms.

[IV.5](#) *The wind at help,]* *i.e.*, ready.

[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*."

[IV.7](#) *Our sovereign process:]* *i.e.*, our royal design.

[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.

[IV.9](#) *Howe'er my haps,]* Chances of fortune.

[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.

[IV.11](#) *Larded with sweet flowers;]* *i.e.*, Garnished with sweet flowers.

[IV.12](#) *Heaven 'ield you.]* Requite; yield you recompence.

[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.

[IV.14](#) *Conceit upon her father.]* Fancies respecting her father.

[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.

[IV.16](#) *In a riotous head,]* The tide, strongly flowing, is said to pour in with a great *head*.

[IV.17](#) *The chaste unsmirched brow of my true mother.]* *Unsmirched* is unstained, not defiled.

[IV.18](#) *Doth hedge a king,]* The word *hedge* is used by the gravest writers upon the highest subjects.

[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.

[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.

[IV.21](#) *Sensible in grief*] Poignantly affected with.

[IV.22](#) *You must sing Down-a-down,*] This was the burthen of an old song, well known in Shakespeare's time.

[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.

[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.

[IV.25](#) *There is pansies,*] *i.e.*, a little flower called *heart's-ease*. Pansies in French signifies *thoughts*.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[IV.29](#) *There's a daisy:*] A daisy signified a warning to young women, not to trust the fair promises of their lovers.

[IV.30](#) *I would give you some violets,*] Violets signified faithfulness.

[IV.31](#) *For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy,—*] Part of an old song.

[IV.32](#) *Thought and affliction,*] Thought here, as in many other places, means melancholy.

[IV.33](#) *I must commune with your grief,*] *i.e.*, confer, discuss, or argue with.

[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.

[IV.35](#) *Cry to be heard,*] All these multiplied incitements are things which cry, &c.

[IV.36](#) *Let the great axe fall.*] *i.e.*, the axe that is to be laid to the root.

[IV.37](#) *Naked on your kingdom,*] *i.e.*, unprovided and defenceless.

[IV.38](#) *'Tis Hamlet's character,*] Peculiar mode of shaping his letters.

[IV.39](#) *Made confession of*] Acknowledged.

[IV.40](#) *In your defence,*] *i.e.*, "in your art and science of defence."

[IV.41](#) *He, being remiss,*] *i.e.*, unsuspecting, not cautious.

[IV.42](#) *Peruse the foils;*] Closely inspect them.

[IV.43](#) *A sword unbated,*] Not blunted, as foils are by a button fixed to the end.

[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.

[IV.45](#) *No cataplasm,*] *i.e.*, poultice—a healing application.

[IV.46](#) *Collected from all simples,*] *i.e.*, from all ingredients in medicine.

[IV.47](#) *On your cunnings,*] *i.e.*, on your dexterity.

[IV.48](#) *In your motion*] Exercise, rapid evolutions.

[IV.49](#) *For the nonce;*] *i.e.*, present purpose or design.

[IV.50](#) *Venom'd stuck,*] Thrust. Stuck was a term of the fencing school.

[IV.51](#) *Long purples,*] One of the names for a species of orchis, a common English flower.

[IV.52](#) *Our trick:*] Our course, or habit; a property that clings to, or makes a part of, us.

[IV.53](#)

*When these are gone,
The woman will be out.*

When these tears are shed, this womanish passion will be over.

[IV.54](#) *But that this folly drowns it.*] *i.e.*, my rage had flamed, if this flood of tears had not extinguished it.

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 wilfully 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.

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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

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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?

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Hor. It might, my lord.

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 quilllets, 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?

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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.

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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 favour²⁶ 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 Cæsar,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.

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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 splenetic 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.

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[*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

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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

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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 imposed, 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.

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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.*]

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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?

Os. 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.

Ham. One.

[*They play.*]

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.

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[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,
Absent 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.

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[*Dies, C., OSRIC on his R., and HORATIO on his L.*]

Dead March afar off.

Curtain slowly descends.

THE END.

Notes

Act V

[V.1](#) *Enter two Clowns,*] These characters are not in the original story, but are introduced by Shakespeare.

[V.2](#) *Make her grave straight:*] *i.e.*, straightways, forthwith.

[V.3](#) *The crowner*] A corruption of coroner.

[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.

[V.5](#) *To act, to do, and to perform:*] Warburton says, this is ridicule on scholastic divisions without distinction, and of distinctions without difference.

[V.6](#) *Argal,*] A corruption of the Latin word, *ergo, therefore*.

[V.7](#) *Delver:*] *i.e.*, a digger, one that opens the ground with a spade.

[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.

[V.9](#) *Crowner's-quest law.*] Crowner's-quest is a vulgar corruption of coroner's inquest.

[V.10](#) *Why, there thou say'st*] Say'st something, speak'st to the purpose.

[V.11](#) *More than their even christian.*] An old English expression for fellow-christian.

[V.12](#) *Was he a gentleman?*] Mr. Douce says this is intended as a ridicule upon heraldry.

[V.13](#) *Confess thyself—*] Admit, or by acknowledgment pass sentence upon thyself, as a simpleton? "Confess, and be hanged," was a proverbial sentence.

[V.14](#) *Tell me that, and unyoke.*] Unravel this, and your day's work is done, your team may then unharness.

[V.15](#) *Cudgel thy brains no more about it;*] *i.e.*, beat about thy brains no more.

[V.16](#) *A stoup of liquor.*] A stoup is a jug.

[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*.

[V.18](#) *The hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.*] *i.e.*, its "palm less dulled or staled."

[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.

[V.20](#) *For and a shrouding sheet.*] For and is an ancient expression, answering to *and eke, and likewise*.

[V.21](#) *Where be his quiddits now, his quillets.*] Quiddits are subtilties; quillets are nice and frivolous distinctions.

[V.22](#) *Knock him about the sconce*] *i.e.*, head.

[V.23](#) *How absolute the knave is!*] Peremptory, strictly and tyrannously precise.

[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.

[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.

[V.26](#) *Favour*] Feature, countenance, or complexion.

[V.27](#) *'Twere to consider too curiously.*] Be pressing the argument with too much critical nicety, to dwell upon mere possibilities.

[V.28](#) *Imperial Cæsar.*] In some edition it is *imperious* Cæsar. Imperious was a more ancient term, signifying the same as imperial.

[V.29](#) *The winter's flaw!*] *i.e.*, winter's blast.

[V.30](#) *Maimèd rites?*] Curtailed, imperfect.

[V.31](#) *Fordo its own life.*] Destroy.

[V.32](#) *'Twas of some estate.*] *i.e.*, of rank or station.

[V.33](#) *Command o'ersways the order.*] The course which ecclesiastical rules prescribe.

[V.34](#) *Shards.*] *i.e.*, broken pots or tiles.

[V.35](#) *Virgin crants.*] *i.e.*, virgin garlands. Nares, in his Glossary, says that *crants* is a German word, and probably Icelandic.

[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.

[V.37](#) *A requiem.*] A mass performed in Popish churches for the rest of the soul of a person deceased.

[V.38](#) *Churlish priest.*] Churlish is, figuratively, ill-humoured, ill-bred, uncourtly, "rustic and rude."

[V.39](#) *Ingenious sense*] Life and sense.

[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.

[V.41](#) *Outface me*] *i.e.*, brave me.

[V.42](#) *Our ground.*] The earth about us.

[V.43](#) *Ossa*] A celebrated mountain in Thessaly, connected with Pelion, and in the neighbourhood of Mount Olympus.

[V.44](#) *Her golden couplets are disclos'd.*] To disclose, was anciently used for to *hatch*. A pigeon never lays more than two eggs.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[V.48](#) *Image of my cause.*] Representation or character.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[V.53](#) *An absolute—a great showing.*] A finished gentleman, full of various accomplishments, of gentle manners, and very imposing appearance.

[V.54](#) *To speak feelingly of him.*] With insight and intelligence.

[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.

[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.

[V.57](#) *What imports the nomination, &c.*] What is the object of the introduction of this gentleman's name?

[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.

[V.59](#) *He has imposed.*] *i.e.*, to lay down as a stake or wager. Impono.

[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*.

[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.

[V.62](#) *More german*] More a-kin.

[V.63](#) *Vouchsafe the answer.*] Condescend to answer, or meet his wishes.

[V.64](#) *How if I answer, no?*] Reply.

[V.65](#) *I shall win at the odds.*] I shall succeed with the advantage that I am allowed.

[V.66](#) *Gain-giving.*] Misgiving.

[V.67](#) *If your mind, &c.*] If you have any presentiment of evil, yield to its suggestion.

[V.68](#) *Like a star i'the darkest night, stick fiery off*] Be made by the strongest relief to stand brightly prominent.

[V.69](#) *Better'd.*] He stands higher in estimation.

[V.70](#) *Stoups of wine*] Flagons of wine.

[V.71](#) *Quit in answer*] Make the wager *quit*, or so far drawn.

[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.

[V.73](#) *Kettle*] *i.e.*, kettle drum.

[V.74](#) *The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.*] *i.e.*, drinks to your success.

[V.75](#) *You make a wanton of me.*] *i.e.*, you trifle with me as if you were playing with a child.

[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.

[V.77](#) *Unbated, and envenom'd.*] *i.e.*, having a sharp point envenomed with poison.

[V.78](#) *The foul practice*] *i.e.*, the wicked trick which I have practised.

[V.79](#) *Fell sergeant, death.*] *i.e.*, cruel sergeant—sergeant being an officer of the law.

[V.80](#) *Live behind me!*] Survive me.

[V.81](#) *Quite o'ercrows my spirit.*] Overpowers, exults over; no doubt an image taken from the lofty carriage of a victorious cock.

Electronic Transcriber's Note:

This is a heavily edited version of *Hamlet*. It was used for Charles Kean's 1859 stage production.

Footnotes originally appeared at the bottom of each page. For this electronic version the footnotes are collected at the end of each act.

For the HTML version, a table of contents has been added.

In Act I, Scene 5, (pg. 28), the word Uumix'd has been changed to Unmix'd.

A closing bracket] was added to Act IV footnote 37 after *Naked on your kingdom.*,

A closing bracket] was added to Act IV footnote 50 after *Venom'd stuck.*,

The word o'er-crows appears in Act V, Scene 3, (pg. 104); in Act V footnote 81, o'ercrows appears without a hyphen. Both are as they appear in the book.

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