

H A M L E T

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THE TRAGEDIE OF

HAMLET, PRINCE *of* DENMARKE

A STUDY WITH THE TEXT

OF

THE FOLIO OF 1623

BY

GEORGE MAC DONALD

What would you gracious figure?

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TO
MY HONOURED RELATIVE
ALEXANDER STEWART MACCOLL

A LITTLE *LESS* THAN KIN, AND *MORE* THAN KIND

TO WHOM I OWE IN ESPECIAL THE TRUE UNDERSTANDING OF
THE GREAT SOLILOQUY

I DEDICATE

WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE

THIS EFFORT TO GIVE HAMLET AND SHAKSPERE THEIR DUE

GEORGE MAC DONALD

BORDIGHERA

Christmas, 1884

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P R E F A C E

BY this edition of HAMLET I hope to help the student of Shakspeare to understand the play—and first of all Hamlet himself, whose spiritual and moral nature are the real material of the tragedy, to which every other interest of the play is subservient. But while mainly attempting, from the words and behaviour Shakspeare has given him, to explain the man, I have cast what light I could upon everything in the play, including the perplexities arising from extreme condensation of meaning, figure, and expression.

As it is more than desirable that the student should know when he is reading the most approximate presentation accessible of what Shakspeare uttered, and when that which modern editors have, with reason good or bad, often not without presumption, substituted for that which they received, I have given the text, letter for letter, point for point, of the First Folio, with the variations of the Second Quarto in the margin and at the foot of the page.

Of HAMLET there are but two editions of authority, those called the Second Quarto and the First Folio; but there is another which requires remark.

In the year 1603 came out the edition known as the First Quarto—clearly without the poet's permission, and doubtless as much to his displeasure: the following year he

sent out an edition very different, and larger in the proportion of one hundred pages to sixty-four. Concerning the former my theory is—though it is not my business to enter into the question here—that it was printed from Shakspeare's sketch for the play, written with matter crowding upon him too fast for expansion or development, and intended only for a continuous memorandum of things he would take up and work out afterwards. It seems almost at times as if he but marked certain bales of thought so as to find them again, and for the present threw them aside—knowing that by the marks he could recal the thoughts they stood for, but not intending thereby to convey them to any reader. I cannot, with evidence before me, incredible but through the eyes themselves, of the illimitable scope of printers' blundering, believe *all* the confusion, unintelligibility, neglect of grammar, construction, continuity, sense, attributable to them. In parts it is more like a series of notes printed with the interlineations horribly jumbled; while in other parts it looks as if it had been taken down from the stage by an ear without a brain, and then yet more incorrectly printed; parts, nevertheless, in which it most differs from the authorized editions, are yet indubitably from the hand of Shakspeare. I greatly doubt if any ready-writer would have dared publish some of its chaotic passages as taken down from the stage; nor do I believe the play was ever presented in anything like such an unfinished state. I rather think some fellow about the theatre, whether more rogue or fool we will pay him the thankful tribute not to enquire, chancing upon the crude embryonic mass in the poet's hand, traitorously pounced upon it, and betrayed it to the printers—therein serving the poet such an evil turn as if a sculptor's workman took a mould of the clay figure on which his master had been but a few days employed,

and published casts of it as the sculptor's work.¹ To us not the less is the *corpus delicti* precious—and that unspeakably—for it enables us to see something of the creational development of the drama, besides serving occasionally to cast light upon portions of it, yielding hints of the original intention where the after work has less plainly presented it.

The Second Quarto bears on its title-page, compelled to a recognition of the former,—‘Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie’; and it is in truth a harmonious world of which the former issue was but the chaos. It is the drama itself, the concluded work of the master's hand, though yet to be once more subjected to a little pruning, a little touching, a little rectifying. But the author would seem to have been as trusting over the work of the printers, as they were careless of his, and the result is sometimes pitiable. The blunders are appalling. Both in it and in the Folio the marginal note again and again suggests itself: ‘Here the compositor was drunk, the press-reader asleep, the devil only aware.’ But though the blunders elbow one another in tumultuous fashion, not therefore all words and phrases supposed to be such are blunders. The old superstition of plenary inspiration may, by its reverence for the very word, have saved many a meaning from the obliteration of a misunderstanding scribe: in all critical work it seems to me well to cling to the *word* until one sinks not merely baffled, but exhausted.

I come now to the relation between the Second Quarto and the Folio.

My theory is—that Shakspeare worked upon his own

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copy of the Second Quarto, cancelling and adding, and that, after his death, this copy came, along with original manuscripts, into the hands of his friends the editors of the Folio, who proceeded to print according to his alterations.

These friends and editors in their preface profess thus: 'It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to haue bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liu'd to haue set forth, and ouerseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to haue collected & publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of iniurious impostors, that expos'd them: euen those, are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceiued thē. Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he vttered with that easinesse, that wee haue scarce receiued from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our prouince, who onely gather his works, and giue them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him.'

These are hardly the words of men who would take liberties, and liberties enormous, after ideas of their own, with the text of a friend thus honoured. But although they printed with intent altogether faithful, they did so certainly without any adequate jealousy of the printers—apparently without a suspicion of how they could blunder. Of blunders therefore in the Folio also there are many, some through mere following of blundered print, some in fresh corruption of the same, some through mistaking of the manuscript corrections, and some probably from the misprinting of

mistakes, so that the corrections themselves are at times anything but correctly recorded. I assume also that the printers were not altogether above the mean passion, common to the day-labourers of Art, from Chaucer's Adam Scrivener down to the present carvers of marble, for modifying and improving the work of the master. The vain incapacity of a self-constituted critic will make him regard his poorest fancy as an emendation; seldom has he the insight of Touchstone to recognize, or his modesty to acknowledge, that although his own, it is none the less an ill-favoured thing.

Not such, however, was the spirit of the editors; and all the changes of importance from the text of the Quarto I receive as Shakspeare's own. With this belief there can be no presumption in saying that they seem to me not only to trim the parts immediately affected, but to render the play more harmonious and consistent. It is no presumption to take the Poet for superior to his work and capable of thinking he could better it—neither, so believing, to imagine one can see that he has been successful.

A main argument for the acceptance of the Folio edition as the Poet's last presentment of his work, lies in the fact that there are passages in it which are not in the Quarto, and are very plainly from his hand. If we accept these, what right have we to regard the omission from the Folio of passages in the Quarto as not proceeding from the same hand? Had there been omissions only, we might well have doubted; but the insertions greatly tend to remove the doubt. I cannot even imagine the arguments which would prevail upon me to accept the latter and refuse the former. Omission itself shows for a master-hand: see the magnificent passage omitted, and rightly, by Milton from the opening of his *Comus*.

'But when a man has published two forms of a thing, may

we not judge between him and himself, and take the reading we like better?' Assuredly. Take either the Quarto or the Folio; both are Shakspeare's. Take any reading from either, and defend it. But do not mix up the two, retaining what he omits along with what he inserts, and print them so. This is what the editors do—and the thing is not Shakspeare's. With homage like this, no artist could be other than indignant. It is well to show every difference, even to one of spelling where it might indicate possibly a different word, but there ought to be no mingling of differences. If I prefer the reading of the Quarto to that of the Folio, as may sometimes well happen where blunders so abound, I say I *prefer*—I do not dare to substitute. My student shall owe nothing of his text to any but the editors of the Folio, John Heminge and Henrie Condell.

I desire to take him with me. I intend a continuous, but ever-varying, while one-ended lesson. We shall follow the play step by step, avoiding almost nothing that suggests difficulty, and noting everything that seems to throw light on the character of a person of the drama. The pointing I consider a matter to be dealt with as any one pleases—for the sake of sense, of more sense, of better sense, as much as if the text were a Greek manuscript without any division of words. This position I need not argue with anyone who has given but a cursory glance to the original page, or knows anything of printers' pointing. I hold hard by the word, for that is, or may be, grain: the pointing as we have it is merest chaff, and more likely to be wrong than right. Here also, however, I change nothing in the text, only suggest in the notes. Nor do I remark on any of the pointing where all that is required is the attention of the student.

Doubtless many will consider not a few of the notes un-

necessary. But what may be unnecessary to one, may be welcome to another, and it is impossible to tell what a student may or may not know. At the same time those form a large class who imagine they know a thing when they do not understand it enough to see there is a difficulty in it : to such, an attempt at explanation must of course seem foolish.

A *number* in the margin refers to a passage of the play or in the notes, and is the number of the page where the passage is to be found. If the student finds, for instance, against a certain line upon page 8, the number 12, and turns to page 12, he will there find the number 8 against a certain line : the two lines or passages are to be compared, and will be found in some way parallel, or mutually explanatory.

Wherever I refer to the Quarto, I intend the 2nd Quarto—that is Shakspeare's own authorized edition, published in his life-time. Where occasionally I refer to the surreptitious edition, the mere inchoation of the drama, I call it, as it is, the *1st Quarto*.

Any word or phrase or stage-direction in the 2nd Quarto differing from that in the Folio, is placed on the margin in a line with the other : choice between them I generally leave to my student. Omissions are mainly given as footnotes. Each edition does something to correct the errors of the other.

I beg my companion on this journey to let Hamlet reveal himself in the play, to observe him as he assumes individuality by the concretion of characteristics. I warn him that any popular notion concerning him which he may bring with him, will be only obstructive to a perception of the true idea of the grandest of all Shakspeare's presentations.

It will amuse this and that man to remark how often I speak of Hamlet as if he were a real man and not the inven-

tion of Shakspeare—for indeed the Hamlet of the old story is no more that of Shakspeare than a lump of coal is a diamond ; but I imagine, if he tried the thing himself, he would find it hardly possible to avoid so speaking, and at the same time say what he had to say.

I give hearty thanks to the press-reader, a gentleman whose name I do not know, not only for keen watchfulness over the printing-difficulties of the book, but for saving me from several blunders in derivation.

BORDIGHERA : *December, 1884.*

THE TRAGEDIE
OF
H A M L E T
PRINCE OF DENMARKE.

ACTUS PRIMUS.

*Enter Barnardo and Francisco two Centinels*¹.

Barnardo. Who's there ?

*Fran.*² Nay answer me : Stand and vnfold your selfe.

Bar. Long liue the King.³

Fran. *Barnardo* ?

Bar. He.

Fran. You come most carefully vpon your houre.

Bar. 'Tis now strook twelue, get thee to bed
Francisco.

Fran. For this releefe much thanks : 'Tis
42 bitter cold,
And I am sicke at heart.⁴

Barn. Haue you had quiet Guard ?⁵

Fran. Not a Mouse stirring.

Barn. Well, goodnight. If you do meet *Horatio*
and

Marcellus, the Riuals⁶ of my Watch, bid them
make hast.

Enter Horatio and Marcellus.

Fran. I thinke I heare them. Stand : who's
there ? Stand ho, who
is there ?

Hor. Friends to this ground.

Mar. And Leige-men to the Dane.

Fran. Giue you good night.

Mar. O farwel honest Soldier, who hath relieu'd
you ? souldiers,

NOTES.

¹ —meeting. Almost dark.

² —on the post, and with the right of challenge.

³ The watchword.

⁴ The key-note to the play—as in *Macbeth*: ‘Fair is foul and foul is fair.’ The whole nation is troubled by late events at court.

⁵ —thinking of the apparition.

⁶ *Companions*

Fra. Barnardo ha's my place : giue you good-^{hath}
night. *Exit Fran.*

Mar. Holla *Barnardo*.

Bar. Say, what is *Horatio* there ?

Hor. A peece of him.

Bar. Welcome *Horatio*, welcome good *Mar-*
cellus.

Mar. What, ha's this thing appear'd againe to ^{*Hora.*}
night.

Bar. I haue scene nothing.

Mar. *Horatio* saies, 'tis but our Fantasie,
And will not let beleefe take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight, twice scene of vs,
Therefore I haue intreated him along
With vs, to watch the minutes of this Night,
That if againe this Apparition come,

6 He may approue our eyes, and speake to it.²

Hor. Tush, tush, 'twill not appeare.

Bar. Sit downe a-while,

And let vs once againe assaile your eares,
That are so fortified against our Story,
What we two Nights haue scene.

Hor. Well, sit we downe,

And let vs heare *Barnardo* speake of this.

Barn. Last night of all,

When yond same Starre that's Westward from the
Pole

Had made his course t'illuminate that part of Heauen
Where now it burnes, *Marcellus* and my selfe,
The Bell then beating one.³

Mar. Peace, breake thee of : *Enter the Ghost.*
Looke where it comes againe.

Barn. In the same figure, like the King that's
dead.

have two nig
seen.

Enter Ghos

¹ Better, I think; for the tone is scoffing, and Horatio is the incredulous one who has not seen it.

² —being a scholar, and able to address it as an apparition ought to be addressed—Marcellus thinking, perhaps, with others, that a ghost required Latin.

³ 1st Q. 'tawling one.

4 *Mar.* Thou art a Scholler ; speake to it
Horatio.

Barn. Lookes it not like the King ? Marke it Lookes a no
Horatio.

Hora. Most like : It harrowes me with fear harrowes¹
and wonder.

Barn. It would be spoke too.²

Mar. Question it *Horatio.* Speake to it
Horatio

Hor. What art thou that vsurp'st this time of
night,³

Together with that Faire and Warlike forme⁴

In which the Maiesty of buried Denmarke

Did sometimes⁵ march : By Heauen I charge thee
speake.

Mar. It is offended.⁶

Barn. See, it stalkes away.

Hor. Stay : speake ; speake : I Charge thee,
speake. *Exit the Ghost.* Exit Ghost.

Mar. 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

Barn. How now *Horatio*? You tremble and
look pale :

Is not this something more then Fantasie ?

What thinke you on't ?

Hor. Before my God, I might not this beleuee
Without the sensible and true auouch
Of mine owne eyes.

Mar. Is it not like the King ?

Hor. As thou art to thy selfe,
Such was the very Armour he had on,
When th'Ambitious Norway combatted : When he the
ambitious
So frown'd he once, when in an angry parle
He smot the sledded Pollax on the Ice.⁸ sledded?
'Tis strange.

274 *Mar.* Thus twice before, and iust at this dead and jump at
this
houre,

¹ *1st Q.* 'horrors mee'

² A ghost could not speak, it was believed, until it was spoken to.

³ It was intruding upon the realm of the embodied.

⁴ None of them took it as certainly the late king : it was only clear to them that it was like him. Hence they say, 'usurp'st the forme.'

⁵ *formerly*

⁶ —at the word *usurp'st*.

⁷ Also *1st Q.*

⁸ The usual interpretation is 'the sledged Poles'; but not to mention that in a parley such action would have been treacherous, there is another far more picturesque, and more befitting the *angry parle*, at the same time more characteristic and forcible : the king in his anger smote his loaded pole-axe on the ice. There is some uncertainty about the word *sledged* or *sleaded* (which latter suggests *lead*), but we have the word *sledge* and *sledge-hammer*, the smith's heaviest, and the phrase, 'a sledging blow.' The quarrel on the occasion referred to rather seems with the Norwegians (See Schmidt's *Shakespeare-Lexicon: Sledged.*) than with the Poles; and there would be no doubt as to the latter interpretation being the right one, were it not that *the Polacke*, for the Pole, or nation of the Poles, does occur in the play. That is, however, no reason why the Dane should not have carried a pole-axe, or caught one from the hand of an attendant. In both our authorities, and in the *1st Q.* also, the word is *pollax*—as in Chaucer's *Knights Tale*: 'No maner schot, ne pollax, ne schort knyf,'—in the *Folio* alone with a capital; whereas not once in the play is the similar word that stands for the Poles used in the plural. In the *2nd Quarto* there is *Pollacke* three times, *Pollack* once, *Pole* once; in the *1st Quarto*, *Polacke* twice; in the *Folio*, *Poleak* twice, *Polake* once. The Poet seems to have avoided the plural form.

With Martiall stalke,¹ hath he gone by our
Watch.

Hor. In what particular thought to work, I
know not :

But in the grosse and scope of my Opinion, mine
This boades some strange eruption to our State.

Mar. Good now sit downe, and tell me he that
knowes

16 Why this same strict and most obseruant Watch,²
So nightly toyles the subiect of the Land,
And why such dayly Cast of Brazon Cannon And with such
dayly cost
And Forraigne Mart for Implements of warre :
Why such impresse of Ship-wrights, whose sore
Taske

Do's not diuide the Sunday from the weeke,
What might be toward, that this sweaty last³
Doth make the Night ioynt-Labourer with the
day :

Who is't that can informe me ?

Hor. That can I,

At least the whisper goes so : Our last King,
Whose Image euen but now appear'd to vs,
Was (as you know) by *Fortinbras* of Norway,
(There to prick'd on by a most emulate Pride)⁴
Dar'd to the Combate. In which, our Valiant

Hamlet,

(For so this side of our knowne world esteem'd
him)⁵

6 Did slay this *Fortinbras* : who by a Seal'd Compact,
Well ratified by Law, and Heraldrie, heraldy
Did forfeite (with his life) all those his Lands these
Which he stood seiz'd on,⁶ to the Conqueror : seaz'd of,
Against the which, a Moity⁷ competent
Was gaged by our King : which had return'd had returne (l)
To the Inheritance of *Fortinbras,* T

¹ 1st Q. 'Marshall stalke'

² Here is set up a frame of external relations, to inclose with fitting contrast, harmony, and suggestion, the coming show of things. 273

³ 1st Q. 'sweaty march

⁴ Pride that leads to emulate : the ambition to excel—not oneself, but another.

⁵ the whole western hemisphere

⁶ stood possessed of

⁷ Used by Shakspeare for a part.

Had he bin Vanquisher, as by the same Cou'nant
 And carriage of the Article designe,¹
 His fell to *Hamlet*. Now sir, young *Fortinbras*,
 Of vnimproued² Mettle, hot and full,
 Hath in the skirts of Norway, heere and there,
 Shark'd³ vp a List of Landlesse Resolutes,
 For Foode and Diet, to some Enterprize
 That hath a stomacke in't⁴: which is no other
 (And it doth well appeare vnto our State)
 But to recouer of vs by strong hand
 And termes Compulsatiue, those foresaid Lands
 So by his Father lost: and this (I take it)
 Is the maine Motiue of our Preparations,
 The Sourse of this our Watch, and the cheefe
 head
 Of this post-hast, and Romage⁵ in the Land.

the same
comart
desseigne,

of lawlesse

As it

compulsatory,

*

Enter Ghost againe.

But soft, behold: Loe, where it comes againe:

* *Here in the Quarto:—*

Bar. I thinke it be no other, but enso;
 Well may it sort¹ that this portentous figure
 Comes armed through our watch so like the King
 That was and is the question of these warres.

Hora. A moth it is to trouble the mindes eye:
 In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
 A little ere the mightiest *Iulius* fell
 The graues stood tennatlesse, and the sheeted dead
 Did squeake and gibber in the Roman streets²
 As starres with traines of fier, and dewes of blood
 Disasters in the sunne; and the moist starre,
 Vpon whose influence *Neptunes* Empier stands
 Was sicke almost to doomesday with eclipse.
 And euen the like precurse of feare euent
 As harbingers preceeding still the fates
 And prologue to the *Omen* comming on
 Hauē heauen and earth together demonstrated
 Vnto our Climates and countrymen.³

Enter Ghost.

¹ French *désigné*.

² *not proved or tried.* *Improvement*, as we use the word, is the result of proof or trial: *upon-proof-ment*.

³ Is *shark'd* related to the German *scharren*? *Zusammen scharren*—to scrape together. The Anglo-Saxon *searwian* is to prepare, entrap, take.

⁴ Some enterprise of acquisition; one for the sake of getting something.

⁵ In Scotch, *remish*—the noise of confused and varied movements; a row; a *rampage*.—Associated with French *remuage*?

¹ *suit*: so used in Scotland still, I think.

² *Julius Cæsar*, act i. sc. 3, and act ii. sc. 2.

³ The only suggestion I dare make for the rectifying of the confusion of this speech is, that, if the eleventh line were inserted between the fifth and sixth, there would be sense, and very nearly grammar.

and the sheeted dead
Did squeake and gibber in the Roman streets,
As harbindgers preceeding still the fates;
As starres with traines of fier, and dewes of blood

(Here understand *precede*)

Disasters in the sunne;

The tenth will close with the twelfth line well enough.

But no one, any more than myself, will be *satisfied* with the suggestion. The probability is, of course, that a line has dropped out between the fifth and sixth. Anything like this would restore the connection:

The labouring heavens themselves teemed dire portent
As starres &c.

Ile crosse it, though it blast me.¹ Stay Illusion :² *It* spreads his armes.*
 If thou hast any sound, or vse of Voyce,³
 Speake 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 priuy to thy Countries Fate
 (Which happily foreknowing may auoyd) Oh
 speake.

Or, if thou hast vp-hoarded in thy life
 Extorted Treasure in the wombe of Earth,
 (For which, they say, you Spirits oft walke in *your*
 death) *The cocke crows.*

Speake of it. Stay, and speake. Stop it *Marcellus.*

Mar. Shall I strike at it with my Partizan? *strike it with*

Hor. Do, if it will not stand.

Barn. 'Tis heere.

Hor. 'Tis heere.

Mar. 'Tis gone. *Exit Ghost.*⁵

We do it wrong, being so Maiestically⁶
 To offer it the shew of Violence,
 For it is as the Ayre, invulnerable,
 And our vaine blowes, malicious Mockery.

Barn. It was about to speake, when the Cocke
 crew.

Hor. And then it started, like a guilty thing
 Vpon a fearfull Summons. I haue heard,
 The Cocke that is the Trumpet to the day, *to the morne,*
 Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding Throat⁷
 Awake the God of Day : and at his warning,
 Whether in Sea, or Fire, in Earth, or Ayre,
 Th'extrauagant,⁸ and erring⁹ Spirit, hyes
 To his Confine. And of the truth heerein,
 This present Obiect made probation.¹⁰

Mar. It faded on the crowing of the Cocke.¹¹

¹ There are various tales of the blasting power of evil ghosts.

² Plain doubt, and strong.

³ 'sound of voice, or use of voice : ' physical or mental faculty of speech.

⁴ I judge this *It* a mistake for *H.*, standing for *Horatio* : he would stop it.

⁵ *Not in Q.*

⁶ 'As we cannot hurt it, our blows are a mockery ; and it is wrong to mock anything so majestic : ' *For* belongs to *show* ; 'We do it wrong, being so majestic, to offer it what is but a *show* of violence, for it is, &c.'

⁷ *1st Q.* 'his earely and shrill crowing throate.'

⁸ straying beyond bounds

⁹ wandering

¹⁰ 'gave proof.'

¹¹ This line said thoughtfully—as the text of the observation following it. From the *eerie* discomfort of their position, Marcellus takes refuge in the thought of the Saviour's birth into the haunted world, bringing sweet law, restraint, and health.

Some sayes, that euer 'gainst that Season comes say
 Wherein our Sauours Birth is celebrated,
 The Bird of Dawning singeth all night long : This bird
 And then (they say) no Spirit can walke abroad, spirit dare
 The nights are wholsome, then no Planets strike, sturre
 No Faiery talkes, nor Witch hath power to fairy takes,¹
 Charme :

So hallow'd, and so gracious is the time. is that time.

Hor. So haue I heard, and do in part beleue
 it.

But looke, the Morne in Russet mantle clad,
 Walkes o're the dew of yon high Easterne Hill, Eastward²
 Breake we our Watch vp, and by my aduice advise
 Let vs impart what we haue seene to night
 Vnto yong *Hamlet*. For vpon my life,
 This Spirit dumbe to vs, will speake to him :
 Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
 As needfull in our Loues, fitting our Duty ?

³⁰ *Mar.* Let do't I pray, and I this morning know
 Where we shall finde him most conueniently. conuenient.

Exeunt.

SCENA SECUNDA.³

*Enter Claudius King of Denmarke, Gertrude the
 Queene, Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes, and his Sister
 Ophelia, Lords Attendant.*⁴

*Florish. Enter
 Claudius,
 King of
 Denmarke,
 Gertraud the
 Queene, Coun-
 saile : as Polo-
 nius, and his
 sonne Laertes,
 Hamlet Cum
 Alijs.*

King. Though yet of *Hamlet* our deere Brothers Claud.
 death

The memory be greene : and that it vs befitted
 To beare our hearts in greefe, and our whole
 Kingdome

To be contracted in one brow of woe :
 Yet so farre hath Discretion fought with Nature,
 That we with wisest sorrow thinke on him,

¹ Does it mean—*carries off any child, leaving a changeling?* or does it mean—*affect with evil*, as a disease might infect or take?

² 1st Q. 'hie mountaine top,'

³ *In neither Q.*

⁴ The first court after the marriage.

Together with remembrance of our selues.
 Therefore our sometimes Sister, now our Queen,
 Th'Imperiall Ioyntresse of this warlike State,
 Haue we, as 'twere, with a defeated ioy,
 With one Auspicious, and one Dropping eye,
 With mirth in Funerall, and with Dirge in Marriage,
 In equall Scale weighing Delight and Dole¹
 Taken to Wife ; nor haue we heerein barr'd²
 Your better Wisedomes, which haue freely gone
 With this affaure along, for all our Thankes.

to this

an auspicious
and a

- 8 Now followes, that you know young *Fortinbras*,³
 Holding a weake supposall of our worth ;
 Or thinking by our late deere Brothers death,
 Our State to be disioynt, and out of Frame,
 Colleagued with the dreame of his Aduantage ;⁴
 He hath not fayl'd to pester vs with Message,
 Importing the surrender of those Lands
 Lost by his Father : with all Bonds of Law
 To our most valiant Brother. So much for him.

this dreame

bands

*Enter Voltemand and Cornelius.*⁵

Now for our selfe, and for this time of meeting
 Thus much the businesse is. We haue heere writ
 To Norway, Vncle of young *Fortinbras*,
 Who Impotent and Bedrid, scarsely heares
 Of this his Nephewes purpose, to suppress
 His further gate⁶ heerein. In that the Leuies,
 The Lists, and full proportions are all made
 Out of his subiect : and we heere dispatch
 You good *Cornelius*, and you *Voltemand*,
 For bearing of this greeting to old Norway,
 Giuing to you no further personall power
 To businesse with the King, more then the scope
 Of these dilated Articles allow :⁷
 Farewell and let your hast commend your duty.⁹

bearers

delated⁸

¹ weighing out an equal quantity of each

² Like *crossed*.

⁴ Now follows—that (*which*) you know—'young Fortinbras :—'

⁴ *Colleagued* agrees with *supposall*. The preceding two lines may be regarded as somewhat parenthetical. *Dream of advantage*—hope of gain.

⁵ *Not in Q.*

⁶ *going; advance.*

Note in Norway also, as well as in Denmark, the succession of the brother.

⁷ (*giving them papers*)

⁸ Which of these is right, I cannot tell. *Dilated* means *expanded*, and would refer to *the scope*; *delated* means *committed*—to them, to limit them.

⁹ idea of duty

Volt. In that, and all things, will we shew our duty.

King. We doubt it nothing, heartily farewell.

74 *1 Exit Voltemand and Cornelius.*

And now *Laertes*, what's the newes with you?
You told vs of some suite. What is't *Laertes*?
You cannot speake of Reason to the Dane,
And loose your voyce. What would'st thou beg
Laertes,

That shall not be my Offer, not thy Asking? ²
The Head is not more Natiue to the Heart,
The Hand more Instrumentall to the Mouth,
Then is the Throne of Denmarke to thy Father. ³
What would'st thou haue *Laertes*?

Laer. Dread my Lord,

My dread

Your leaue and fauour to returne to France,
From whence, though willingly I came to Den-
marke

To shew my duty in your Coronation,
Yet now I must confesse, that duty done,

22 My thoughts and wishes bend againe towards ^{toward}
France, ⁴

And bow them to your gracious leaue and pardon.

King. Haue you your Fathers leaue?

What sayes *Pollonius*?

^{*}*Pol.* He hath my Lord:

I do beseech you giue him leaue to go.

King. Take thy faire houre *Laertes*, time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will:
But now my Cosin *Hamlet*, and my Sonne?

* *In the Quarto*:—

Pol. Hath ¹ my Lord wrong from me my slowe leaue
By laboursome petition, and at last
Vpon his will I seald my hard consent, ²
I doe beseech you giue him leaue to goe.

¹ *Not in Q.*

² ' Before they call, I will answer ; and while they are yet speaking, will hear.'—*Isaiah*, lxxv. 24.

³ The villain king courts his courtiers.

⁴ He had been educated there. Compare 23. But it would seem rather to the court than the university he desired to return. See his father's instructions, 38

⁵ *H'ath*—a contraction for *He hath*.

⁶ A play upon the act of sealing a will with wax.

Ham. A little more then kin, and lesse then kinde.¹

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

Ham. Not so my Lord, I am too much i'th'Sun.² so much my | in the sonne.

Queen. Good *Hamlet* cast thy nightly colour off,⁴ nighted³

And let thine eye looke like a Friend on Denmarke.

Do not for euer with thy veyled⁵ lids veiled

Seeke for thy Noble Father in the dust ;

Thou know'st 'tis common, all that liues must dye,

Passing through Nature, to Eternity.

Ham. I Madam, it is common.⁶

Queen. If it be ;

Why seemes it so particular with thee.

Ham. Seemes Madam? Nay, it is : I know not Seemes :⁷

'Tis not alone my Inky Cloake (good Mother) cloake could mother⁸

Nor Customary suites of solemne Blacke,

Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,

No, nor the fruitfull Riuer in the Eye,

Nor the delected hauiour of the Visage,

Together with all Formes, Moods, shewes of Griefe, moodes, chapes of deuote

That can denote me truly. These indeed Seeme,⁹

For they are actions that a man might¹⁰ play :

But I haue that Within, which passeth show ; passes

These, but the Trappings, and the Suites of woe.

King. 'Tis sweet and commendable

In your Nature *Hamlet*,

To giue these mourning duties to your Father :¹¹

But you must know, your Father lost a Father,

That Father lost, lost his, and the Suruiuer bound

In filiall Obligation, for some terme

To do obsequious¹² Sorrow. But to perseuer

In obstinate Condolement, is a course

¹ An *aside*. Hamlet's first utterance is of dislike to his uncle. He is more than *kin* through his unwelcome marriage—less than *kind* by the difference in their natures. To be *kind* is to behave as one *kinned* or related. But the word here is the noun, and means *nature*, or sort by birth.

² A word-play may be here intended between *sun* and *son*: *a little more than kin—too much i' th' Son*. So George Herbert :

For when he sees my ways, I die ;
But I have got his *Son*, and he hath none;

and Dr. Donne :

at my death thy Son
Shall shine, as he shines now and heretofore.

³ 'Wintred garments'—*As You Like It*, iii. 2.

⁴ He is the only one who has not for the wedding put off his mourning.

⁵ *lowered*, or cast down : *Fr. avaler*, to lower.

⁶ 'Plainly you treat it as a common matter—a thing of no significance !' is constantly used for *ay, yes*.

⁷ He pounces on the word *seems*.

⁸ Not unfrequently the type would appear to have been set up from imitation.

⁹ They are things of the outside, and must *seem*, for they are capable of being imitated ; they are the natural *shows* of grief. But he has that in him which cannot *show* or *seem*, because nothing can represent it. These are 'the Trappings and the Suites of *woe* ;' they fitly represent *woe*, but they cannot shadow forth that which is within him—a something different from *woe*, far beyond it and worse, passing all reach of embodiment and manifestation. What this something is, comes out the moment he is left by himself.

¹⁰ The emphasis is on *might*.

¹¹ Both his uncle and his mother decline to understand him. They will have it he mourns the death of his father, though they must at least suspect another cause for his grief. Note the intellectual mastery of the hypocrite—which accounts for his success.

¹² belonging to *obsequies*

Of impious stubbornnesse. 'Tis vnmanly greefe,
 It shewes a will most incorrect to Heauen,
 A Heart vnfortified, a Minde impatient, or minde
 An Vnderstanding simple, and vnschool'd :
 For, what we know must be, and is as common
 As any the most vulgar thing to sence,
 Why should we in our peeuish Opposition
 Take it to heart? Fye, 'tis a fault to Heauen,
 A fault against the Dead, a fault to Nature,
 To Reason most absurd, whose common Theame
 Is death of Fathers, and who still hath cried,
 From the first Coarse,¹ till he that dyed to day, course
 This must be so. We pray you throw to earth
 This vnpreuayling woe, and thinke of vs
 As of a Father ; For let the world take note,
 You are the most immediate to our Throne,²
 And with no lesse Nobility of Loue,
 Then that which deerest Father beares his Sonne,
 Do I impart towards you. For your intent toward
 18 In going backe to Schoole in Wittenberg,³
 It is most retrograde to our desire : retrogard
 And we beseech you, bend you to remaine
 Heere in the cheere and comfort of our eye,
 Our cheefest Courtier Cosin, and our Sonne.

Qu. Let not thy Mother lose her Prayers loose

Hamlet :

I prythee stay with vs, go not to Wittenberg. pray thee

Ham. I shall in all my best

Obey you Madam.⁴

King. Why 'tis a louing, and a faire Reply,
 Be as our selfe in Denmarke. Madam come,
 This gentle and vnforc'd accord of *Hamlet*⁵
 Sits smiling to my heart ; in grace whereof,
 No iocond health that Denmarke drinks to day,
 44 But the great Cannon to the Clowds shall tell,

¹ *Corpse*

² —seeking to propitiate him with the hope that his succession had been but postponed by his uncle's election.

³ Note that Hamlet was educated in Germany—at Wittenberg, the university where in 1508 Luther was appointed professor of Philosophy. Compare 19. There was love of study as well as disgust with home in his desire to return to *Schoole* : this from what we know of him afterwards.

⁴ Emphasis on *obey*. A light on the character of Hamlet.

⁵ He takes it, or pretends to take it, for far more than it was. He desires friendly relations with Hamlet.

And the Kings Rounce,¹ the Heauens shall bruite
 againe,
 Respeaking earthly Thunder. Come away.

Exeunt *Florish.*
Exeunt all
but Hamlet.

Manet Hamlet.

² *Ham.* Oh that this too too solid Flesh, would
 melt,

Thaw, and resolute it selfe into a Dew :

^{125, 247,}
²⁶⁰
^{121 bis}

Or that the Euerlasting had not fixt
 His Cannon 'gainst Selfe-slaughter. O God, O
 God!

sallied flesh³
 seale slaughter,
 & God, God,

How weary, stale, flat, and vnprofitable

wary

Seemes to me all the vses of this world?

seeme

Fie on't? Oh fie, fie, 'tis an vnweeded Garden

ah fie,

That growes to Seed : Things rank, and grosse in
 Nature

Possesse it meereley. That it should come to this :
 But two months dead⁴ : Nay, not so much ; not
 two,

meereley that
 should come
 thus

So excellent a King, that was to this

Hiperion to a Satyre : so louing to my Mother,

That he might not beteene the windes of heauen

beteeme⁵

Visit her face too roughly. Heauen and Earth

Must I remember : why she would hang on him,

should

As if encrease of Appetite had growne

By what it fed on ; and yet within a month?

Let me not thinke on't : Frailty, thy name is
 woman.⁶

A little Month, or ere those shooes were old,

With which she followed my poore Fathers body

Like *Niobe*, all teares. Why she, euen she.⁷

(O Heauen! A beast that wants discourse⁸ of O God,
 Reason

Would haue mourn'd longer) married with mine my
 Vnkle,

¹ German *Rausch*, *drunkenness*. 44, 68

² A soliloquy is as the drawing called a section of a thing : it shows the inside of the man. Soliloquy is only rare, not unnatural, and in art serves to reveal more of nature. In the drama it is the lifting of a veil through which dialogue passes. The scene is for the moment shifted into the lonely spiritual world, and here we begin to know Hamlet. Such is his wretchedness, both in mind and circumstance, that he could well wish to vanish from the world. The suggestion of suicide, however, he dismisses at once—with a momentary regret, it is true—but he dismisses it—as against the will of God to whom he appeals in his misery. The cause of his misery is now made plain to us—his trouble that passes show, deprives life of its interest, and renders the world a disgust to him. There is no lamentation over his father's death, so dwelt upon by the king ; for loving grief does not crush. Far less could his uncle's sharp practice, in scheming for his own election during Hamlet's absence, have wrought in a philosopher like him such an effect. The one makes him sorrowful, the other might well annoy him, but neither could render him unhappy : his misery lies at his mother's door ; it is her conduct that has put out the light of her son's life. She who had been to him the type of all excellence, she whom his father had idolized, has within a month of his death married his uncle, and is living in habitual incest—for as such, a marriage of the kind was then unanimously regarded. To Hamlet's condition and behaviour, his mother, her past and her present, is the only and sufficing key. His very idea of unity had been rent in twain.

³ 1st *Q.* 'too much grieu'd and sallied flesh.' *Sallied*, sullied : compare *sallets*, 67, 103. I have a strong suspicion that *sallied* and not *solid* is the true word. It comes nearer the depth of Hamlet's mood.

⁴ Two months at the present moment.

⁵ This is the word all the editors take : which is right, I do not know ; I doubt if either is. The word in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, act i. sc. I—

Belike for want of rain ; which I could well
Beteem them from the tempest of mine eyes—

I cannot believe the same word. The latter means *produce for*, as from the place of origin. The word, in the sense necessary to this passage, is not, so far as I know, to be found anywhere else. I have no suggestion to make.

⁶ From his mother he generalizes to *woman*. After having believed in such a mother, it may well be hard for a man to believe in any woman.

⁷ *Q.* omits 'euen she.'

⁸ the going abroad among things.

My Fathers Brother : but no more like my Father,
 Then I to *Hercules*. Within a Moneth ?
 Ere yet the salt of most vnrighteous Teares
 Had left the flushing of her gauled eyes,
 She married. O most wicked speed, to post ¹
 With such dexterity to Incestuous sheets :
 It is not, nor it cannot come to good.
 But breake my heart, for I must hold my tongue.²

in her

Enter Horatio, Barnard, and Marcellus.

*Marcellus, and
Bernardo.*

Hor. Haile to your Lordship.³

Ham. I am glad to see you well :

Horatio, or I do forget my selfe.

Hor. The same my Lord,
 And your poore Seruant euer.

134 *Ham.* ⁴ Sir my good friend,

Ile change that name with you : ⁵

And what make you from Wittenberg *Horatio* ? ⁶

*Marcellus.*⁷

Mar. My good Lord.

Ham. I am very glad to see you : good euen
 Sir.⁸

But what in faith make you from *Wittemberge* ?

Hor. A truant disposition, good my Lord.⁹

Ham. I would not haue your Enemy say so ; ¹⁰ not heare
 Nor shall you doe mine eare that violence,¹¹ my eare

134 To make it truster of your owne report
 Against your selfe. I know you are no Truant :
 But what is your affaire in *Elsenour* ?

Wee'l teach you to drinke deepe, ere you depart.¹² you for to
 drinke ere

Hor. My Lord, I came to see your Fathers
 Funerall.

Ham. I pray thee doe not mock me (fellow pre thee
 Student)

I thinke it was to see my Mothers Wedding. was to my

¹ I suggest the pointing :

speed! To post . . . sheets!

² Fit moment for the entrance of his father's messengers.

³ They do not seem to have been intimate before, though we know from Hamlet's speech (134) that he had had the greatest respect for Horatio. The small degree of doubt in Hamlet's recognition of his friend is due to the darkness, and the unexpectedness of his appearance.

⁴ *1st Q.* 'O my good friend, I change, &c.' This would leave it doubtful whether he wished to exchange *servant* or *friend*; but 'Sir, my *good friend*,' correcting Horatio, makes his intent plain.

⁵ Emphasis on *that*: 'I will exchange the name of *friend* with you.'

⁶ 'What are you doing from—out of, *away from*—Wittenberg?'

⁷ In recognition: the word belongs to Hamlet's speech.

⁸ *Point thus*: 'you.—Good even, sir.'—to *Barnardo*, whom he does not know.

⁹ An ungrammatical reply. He does not wish to give the real, painful answer, and so replies confusedly, as if he had been asked, 'What makes you?' instead of, 'What do you make?'

¹⁰ '—I should know how to answer him.'

¹¹ Emphasis on *you*.

¹² Said with contempt for his surroundings.

Hor. Indeed my Lord, it followed hard vpon.

Ham. Thrift, thrift *Horatio*: the Funerall
Bakt-meats

Did coldly furnish forth the Marriage Tables ;

Would I had met my dearest foe in heauen,¹

Ere I had euer seene that day *Horatio*.²

Or ever I had

My father, me thinkes I see my father.

Hor. Oh where my Lord ?

Where my

Ham. In my minds eye (*Horatio*)³

Hor. I saw him once ; he was a goodly King.

once, a was

Ham. He was a man, take him for all in all :

A was a man

I shall not look vpon his like againe.

Hor. My Lord, I thinke I saw him yesternight.

Ham. Saw ? Who ?⁴

Hor. My Lord, the King your Father.

Ham. The King my Father ?⁵

Hor. Season⁶ your admiration for a while

With an attent care ;⁷ till I may deliuer

Vpon the witsse of these Gentlemen,

This maruell to you.

Ham. For Heauens loue let me heare.

God's love

Hor. Two nights together, had these Gentlemen
(*Marcellus* and *Barnardo*) on their Watch

In the dead wast and middle of the night⁸

Beene thus encountred. A figure like your Father,⁹

Arm'd at all points exactly, *Cap a Pe*,¹⁰

Armed at
poynt

Appeares before them, and with sollemne march

Goes slow and stately : By them thrice he walkt,

stately by
them ; thrice

By their opprest and feare-surprized eyes,

Within his Truncheons length ; whilst they bestil'd

they distil'd¹¹

Almost to Jelly with the Act of feare,¹²

Stand dumbe and speake not to him. This to me

In dreadfull¹³ secrecie impart they did,

And I with them the third Night kept the Watch,

Whereas¹⁴ they had deliuer'd both in time,

¹ *Dear* is not unfrequently used as an intensive ; but 'my dearest foe' is not 'the man who hates me most,' but 'the man whom most I regard as my foe.'

² Note Hamlet's trouble: the marriage, not the death, nor the supplantation.

³ —with a little surprise at Horatio's question.

⁴ Said as if he must have misheard. Astonishment comes only with the next speech.

⁵ *1st Q.* 'Ha, ha, the King my father ke you.'

⁶ Qualify

⁷ *1st Q.* 'an attentive eare,'

⁸ Possibly, *dead vast*, as in *1st Q.* ; but *waste* as good, leaving also room to suppose a play in the word.

⁹ Note the careful uncertainty.

¹⁰ *1st Q.* 'Capapea'

¹¹ Either word would do: the *distilling* off of the animal spirits would leave the man a jelly ; the cold of fear would *bestil* them and him to a jelly. *1st Q. distilled.* But I judge *bestil'd* the better, as the truer to the operation of fear. Compare *The Winter's Tale*, act v. sc. 3 :—

There's magic in thy majesty, which has

From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,
Standing like stone with thee.

¹² Act : present influence.

¹³ a secrecy more than solemn

¹⁴ 'Where, as'

Forme of the thing ; each word made true and
good,

The Apparition comes. I knew your Father :
These hands are not more like.

Ham. But where was this ?

Mar. My Lord, vpon the platforme where we
watcht.

watch

Ham. Did you not speake to it ?

Hor. My Lord, I did ;

But answere made it none : yet once me thought
It lifted vp it head, and did addresse
It selfe to motion, like as it would speake :
But euen then, the Morning Cocke crew lowd ;
And at the sound it shrunke in hast away,
And vanisht from our sight.

Ham. Tis very strange.

Hor. As I doe liue my honourd Lord 'tis
true ;

14 And we did thinke it writ downe in our duty
To let you know of it.

32, 52 *Ham.* Indeed, indeed Sirs ; but this troubles Indeede Sirs
but
me.

Hold you the watch to Night ?

Both. We doe my Lord. All.

Ham. Arm'd, say you ?

Both. Arm'd, my Lord. All.

Ham. From top to toe ?

Both. My Lord, from head to foote. All.

Ham. Then saw you not his face ?

Hor. O yes, my Lord, he wore his Beauer vp.

Ham. What, lookt he frowningly ?

54, 174 *Hor.* A countenance more in sorrow then in
anger.¹

120 *Ham.* Pale, or red ?

Hor. Nay very pale.

¹ The mood of the Ghost thus represented, remains the same towards his wife throughout the play.

Ham. And fixt his eyes vpon you ?

Hor. Most constantly.

Ham. I would .I had beene there.

Hor. It would haue much amaz'd you.

Ham. Very like, very like : staid it long ?

Very like,
stayd

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

hundreth

All. Longer, longer.

Both.

Hor. Not when I saw't.

Ham. His Beard was grisly ?¹ no.

grissl'd

Hor. It was, as I haue seene it in his life,

138 A Sable² Siluer'd.

Ham. Ile watch to Night ; perchance 'twill
wake againe.

walke againe.

Hor. I warrant you it will.

warn't it

44 *Ham.* If it assume my noble Fathers person,³

Ile speake to it, though Hell it selfe should gape

And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,

If you haue hitherto conceald this sight ;

Let it bee treble⁵ in your silence still :

be tenable in⁴

And whatsoever els shall hap to night,

what someuer
els

Giue it an vnderstanding but no tongue ;

I will requite your loues ; so, fare ye well :

farre you

Vpon the Platforme twixt eleuen and twelue,

a leauen and
twelue

Ile visit you.

All. Our duty to your Honour. *Exeunt.*

Ham. Your loue, as mine to you : farewell.

loves,

My Fathers Spirit in Armes ?⁶ All is not well :

30, 52 I doubt some foule play : would the Night were
come ;

Till then sit still my soule ; foule deeds will rise,

fonde deedes

Though all the earth orewhelm them to mens eies.

Exit.

¹ *grisly*—gray ; *grisled*—turned gray ;—mixed with white.

² The colour of sable-fur, I think.

³ Hamlet does not *accept* the Appearance as his father ; he thinks it may be he, but seems to take a usurpation of his form for very possible.

⁴ *1st Q.* 'tenible'

⁵ If *treble* be the right word, the actor in uttering it must point to each of the three, with distinct yet rapid motion. The phrase would be a strange one, but not unlike Shakspeare. Compare *Cymbeline*, act v. sc. 5 : 'And your three motives to the battle,' meaning 'the motives of you three.' Perhaps, however, it is only the adjective for the adverb : '*having concealed it hitherto, conceal it trebly now.*' But *tenible* may be the word : 'let it be a thing to be kept in your silence still.'

⁶ Alone, he does not dispute *the idea* of its being his father.

SCENA TERTIA.¹*Enter Laertes and Ophelia.**Ophelia his Sister.*

Laer. My necessaries are imbarck't ; Farewell :
 And Sister, as the Winds giue Benefit,
 And Conuoy is assistant ; doe not sleepe,
 But let me heare from you.

inbarck't,

conuay, in
assistant doe*Ophel.* Doe you doubt that ?

Laer. For *Hamlet*, and the trifling of his
 fauours,

favour,

Hold it a fashion and a toy in Bloud ;
 A Violet in the youth of Primy Nature ;
 Froward,² not permanent ; sweet not lasting
 The suppliance of a minute ? No more.³

The perfume
and suppliance*Ophel.* No more but so.⁴*Laer.* Thinke it no more.

For nature cressant does not grow alone,
 172 In thewes⁵ and Bulke : but as his Temple waxes,⁶
 The inward seruice of the Minde and Soule
 Growes wide withall. Perhaps he loues you now,⁷
 And now no soyle nor cautell⁸ doth besmerch
 The vertue of his feare : but you must feare
 His greatnesse weigh'd, his will is not his owne ;⁹
 For hee himselfe is subiect to his Birth :¹⁰
 Hee may not, as vnuallued persons doe,
 Carue for himselfe ; for, on his choyce depends
 The sanctity and health of the weole State.
 And therefore must his choyce be circumscrib'd¹¹
 Vnto the voyce and yeelding¹² of that Body,
 Whereof he is the Head. Then if he sayes he
 loues you,

bulkes, but as
this

of his will, but

wayd

The safty and
| this whole

It fits your wisedome so farre to beleeeue it ;
 As he in his peculiar Sect and force¹³
 May giue his saying deed : which is no further,

his particuler
act and place

¹ *Not in Quarto.*

² Same as *forward*.

³ 'No more' makes a new line in the *Quarto*

⁴ I think this speech should end with a point of interrogation.

⁵ muscles

⁶ The body is the temple, in which the mind and soul are the worshippers: their service grows with the temple—wide, changing and increasing its objects. The degraded use of the grand image is after the character of him who makes it.

⁷ The studied contrast between Laertes and Hamlet begins already to appear: the dishonest man, honestly judging after his own dishonesty, warns his sister against the honest man.

⁸ deceit

⁹ 'You have cause to fear when you consider his greatness: his will &c.' 'You must fear, his greatness being weighed; for because of that greatness, his will is not his own.'

¹⁰ *This line not in Quarto.*

¹¹ limited

¹² allowance

¹³ This change from the *Quarto* seems to me to bear the mark of Shakspeare's hand. The meaning is the same, but the words are more individual and choice: the *sect*, the *head* in relation to the body, is more pregnant than *place*; and *force*, that is *power*, is a fuller word than *act*, or even *action*, for which it plainly appears to stand.

Then the maine voyce of *Denmarke* goes withall.
 Then weigh what losse your Honour may sustaine,
 If with too credent eare you list his Songs ;
 Or lose your Heart ; or your chast Treasure open Or loose
 To his vnmastred ¹ importunity.

Feare it *Ophelia*, feare it my deare Sister,
 And keepe within the reare of your Affection ; ² keepe you in
the
 Out of the shot and danger of Desire.

The chariest Maid is Prodigall enough, “ The “
 If she vnmaske her beauty to the Moone : ³

Vertue it selfe scapes not calumnious stroakes, “ Vertue “
 The Canker Galls, the Infants of the Spring “ The canker
gaules the “
 Too oft before the buttons ⁵ be disclos'd, their buttons

And in the Morne and liquid dew of Youth,
 Contagious blastments are most imminent.

Be wary then, best safety lies in feare ;

Youth to it selfe rebels, though none else neere. ⁶

Ophe. I shall th'effect of this good Lesson
 keepe,

As watchmen to my heart : but good my Brother watchman
 Doe not as some vngracious Pastors doe,
 Shew me the steepe and thorny way to Heauen ;
 Whilst like a puft and recklesse Libertine
 Himselfe, the Primrose path of dalliance treads,
 And reaks not his owne reade. ^{7,8} ⁹

Laer. Oh, feare me not. ¹⁰

Enter Polonius.

I stay too long ; but here my Father comes :
 A double blessing is a double grace ;
 Occasion smiles vpon a second leaue. ¹¹

Polon. ¹² Yet heere *Laertes* ? Aboord, aboard
 for shame,

The winde sits in the shoulder of your saile,
 And you are staid for there : my blessing with you ; for, there my |
with thee

¹ Without a master ; lawless.

² Do not go so far as inclination would lead you. Keep behind your liking. Do not go to the front with your impulse.

³ —*but* to the moon—which can show it so little.

⁴ Opened but not closed quotations in the *Quarto*.

⁵ The French *bouton* is also both *button* and *bud*.

⁶ ‘Inclination is enough to have to deal with, let alone added temptation.’ Like his father, Laertes is wise for another—a man of maxims, not behaviour. His morality is in his intellect and for self-ends, not in his will, and for the sake of truth and righteousness.

⁷ *1st Q.* But my deere brother, do not you
Like to a cunning Sophister,
Teach me the path and ready way to heauen,
While you forgetting what is said to me,
Your selfe, like to a carelesse libertine
Doth giue his heart, his appetite at full,
And little reckes how that his honour dies.

‘The primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.’—*Macbeth*, ii. 3.

‘The flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire.’
All's Well, iv. 5.

⁸ ‘heeds not his own counsel.’

⁹ Here in *Quarto*, *Enter Polonius*.

¹⁰ With the fitting arrogance and impertinence of a libertine brother, he has read his sister a lecture on propriety of behaviour ; but when she gently suggests that what is good for her is good for him too,—‘Oh, fear me not !—I stay too long.’

¹¹ ‘A second leave-taking is a happy chance’ : the chance, or occasion, because it is happy, smiles. It does not mean that occasion smiles upon a second leave, but that, upon a second leave, occasion smiles. There should be a comma after *smiles*.

¹² As many of Polonius’ aphorismic utterances as are given in the *1st Quarto* have there inverted commas ; but whether intended as gleanings from books or as fruits of experience, the light they throw on the character of him who speaks them is the same : they show it altogether selfish. He is a man of the world, wise in his generation, his principles the best of their bad sort. Of these his son is a fit recipient and retailer, passing on to his sister their father’s grand doctrine of self-protection. But, wise in maxim, Polonius is foolish in practice—not from senility, but from vanity.

And these few Precepts in thy memory,¹
 See thou Character.² Giue thy thoughts no tongue, Looke thou
 Nor any vnproportion'd³ thought his Act :
 Be thou familiar ; but by no meanes vulgar :⁴
 The friends thou hast, and their adoption tride,⁵ Those friends
 Grapple them to thy Soule, with hoopes of Steele : unto
 But doe not dull thy palme, with entertainment
 Of each vnatch't, vnfledg'd Comrade.⁶ Beware each new
 Of entrance to a quarrell : but being in hatcht vn-
 Bear't that th'opposed may beware of thee. fledgd courage,
 Giue euery man thine care ; but few thy voyce : thy eare,
 Take each mans censure⁷ ; but reserue thy iudge-
 ment :
 Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy ;
 But not exprest in fancie ; rich, not gawdie :
 For the Apparell oft proclaimes the man.
 And they in France of the best ranck and station,
 Are of a most select and generous⁸ cheff in that.¹⁰ Or of a | gener-
 Neither a borrower, nor a lender be ; ous, chiefe⁹
 For lone oft loses both it selfe and friend : lender boy,
 And borrowing duls the edge of Husbandry.¹¹ loue
 This aboue all ; to thine owne selfe be true :
 And it must follow, as the Night the Day,
 Thou canst not then be false to any man.¹²
 Farewell : my Blessing season¹³ this in thee.

Laer. Most humbly doe I take my leaue, my
 Lord.

Polon. The time inuities you, goe, your seruants time inuests
 tend.

Laer. Farewell *Ophelia*, and remember well
 What I haue said to you.¹⁴

Ophe. Tis in my memory lockt,
 And you your selfe shall keepe the key of it.

Laer. Farewell. *Exit Laer.*

Polon. What ist *Ophelia* he hath said to you ?

¹ He hurries him to go, yet immediately begins to prose.

² Engrave.

³ Not settled into its true shape (?) or, out of proportion with its occasions (?)—I cannot say which.

⁴ ‘Cultivate close relations, but do not lie open to common access.’ ‘Have choice intimacies, but do not be *hail, fellow! well met!* with everybody.’ What follows is an expansion of the lesson.

⁵ ‘The friends thou hast—and the choice of them justified by trial—’ *equal to*: ‘provided their choice be justified &c.’

⁶ ‘Do not make the palm hard, and dull its touch of discrimination, by shaking hands in welcome with every one that turns up.’

⁷ judgment, opinion.

⁸ *Generosus*, of good breed, a gentleman.

⁹ 1st Q. ‘generall chiefe.’

¹⁰ No doubt the omission of *of a* gives the right number of syllables to the verse, and makes room for the interpretation which a dash between *generous* and *chief* renders clearer: ‘Are most select and generous—chief in that,’—‘are most choice and well-bred—chief, indeed—at the head or top, in the matter of dress.’ But without *necessity or authority*—one of the two, I would not throw away a word; and suggest therefore that Shakspeare had here the French idiom *de son chef* in his mind, and qualifies the noun in it with adjectives of his own. The Academy Dictionary gives *de son propre mouvement* as one interpretation of the phrase. The meaning would be, ‘they are of a most choice and developed instinct in dress.’ *Cheff* or *chief* suggests the upper third of the heraldic shield, but I cannot persuade the suggestion to further development. The hypercatalectic syllables of *a*, swiftly spoken, matter little to the verse, especially as it is *dramatic*.

¹¹ Those that borrow, having to pay, lose heart for saving.

‘There’s husbandry in heaven;
Their candles are all out.’—*Macbeth*, ii. 1.

¹² Certainly a man cannot be true to himself without being true to others; neither can he be true to others without being true to himself; but if a man make himself the centre for the birth of action, it will follow, ‘*as the night the day*,’ that he will be true neither to himself nor to any other man. In this regard note the history of Laertes, developed in the play.

¹³ —as salt, to make the counsel keep.

¹⁴ See note ⁹, page 37.

Ophe. So please you, somthing touching the L.
Hamlet.

Polon. Marry, well bethought :
Tis told me he hath very oft of late
Giuen priuate time to you ; and you your selfe
Haue of your audience beene most free and boun-
teous.¹

If it be so, as so tis put on me ;²
And that in way of caution : I must tell you,
You doe not vnderstand your selfe so cleerely,
As it behoues my Daughter, and your Honour
What is betweene you, giue me vp the truth ?

Ophe. He hath my Lord of late, made many
tenders
Of his affection to me.

Polon. Affection, puh. You speake like a
greene Girle,
Vnsifted in such perillous Circumstance.
Doe you beleeeue his tenders, as you call them ?

Ophe. I do not know, my Lord, what I should
thinke.

Polon. Marry Ile teach you ; thinke your selfe I will
a Baby,
That you haue tane his tenders for true pay, tane these
Which are not starling. Tender your selfe more sterling
dearly ;

Or not to crack the winde of the poore Phrase, (not . . . &c.
Roaming it³ thus, you'l tender me a foole.⁴ Wrong it thus)

Ophe. My Lord, he hath importun'd me with
loue,
In honourable fashion.

Polon. I, fashion you may call it, go too, go too.

Ophe. And hath giuen countenance to his
speech,
My Lord, with all the vowes of Heauen.

¹ There had then been a good deal of intercourse between Hamlet and Ophelia : she had heartily encouraged him.

² 'as so I am informed, and that by way of caution,'

³ —making it, 'the poor phrase' *tenders*, gallop wildly about—as one might *roam* a horse; *larking it*.

⁴ 'you will in your own person present me a fool.'

Polon. I, Springs to catch Woodcocks.¹ I doe springs
know

When the Bloud burnes, how Prodigall the Soule²
Giues the tongue vowes : these blazes, Daughter, Lends the
Giuing more light then heate ; extinct in both,³
Euen in their promise, as it is a making ;
You must not take for fire. For this time Daughter,⁴ fire, from this
Be somewhat scanter of your Maiden presence ; something
Set your entreatments⁵ at a higher rate,
Then a command to parley. For Lord *Hamlet*, parle ;
Beleeue so much in him, that he is young,
And with a larger tether may he walke, tider
Then may be giuen you. In few,⁶ *Ophelia*,
Doe not beleeue his vowes ; for they are Broakers,
Not of the eye,⁷ which their Inuestments show : of that die
But meere implorators of vnholy Sutes, imploratotors
Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds,
The better to beguile. This is for all :⁸ beguide
I would not, in plaine tearmes, from this time forth,
Haue you so slander any moment leisure,⁹
70, 82 As to giue words or talke with the Lord *Hamlet* :¹⁰
Looke too't, I charge you ; come your wayes.

Ophe. I shall obey my Lord.¹¹ *Exeunt.*

Enter Hamlet, Horatio, Marcellus. and Marcellus

2 *Ham.* ¹² The Ayre bites shrewdly : is it very
cold ?¹³

Hor. It is a nipping and an eager ayre.

Ham. What hower now ?

Hor. I thinke it lacks of twelue.

Mar. No, it is strooke.

Hor. Indeed I heard it not : then it drawes it then
neere the season,

Wherein the Spirit held his wont to walke.

What does this meane my Lord ?¹⁴

*A flourish of
trumpets and
peeces goes of.*¹⁴

¹ Woodcocks were understood to have no brains.

² 1st *Q.* 'How prodigall the tongue lends the heart vowes.' I was inclined to take *Prodigall* for a noun, a proper name or epithet given to the soul, as in a moral play: *Prodigall, the soul*; but I conclude it only an adjective used as an adverb, and the capital P a blunder.

³ —in both light and heat.

⁴ The *Quarto* has not 'Daughter.'

⁵ *To be entreated* is *to yield*: 'he would nowise be entreated: ' *entreatments, yieldings*: 'you are not to see him just because he chooses to command a parley.'

⁶ 'In few words'; in brief

⁷ I suspect a misprint in the *Folio* here—that an *e* has got in for a *d*, and that the change from the *Quarto* should be *Not of the dye*. Then the line would mean, using the antecedent word *brokers* in the bad sense, 'Not themselves of the same colour as their garments (*investments*); his vows are clothed in innocence, but are not innocent; they are mere panders.' The passage is rendered yet more obscure to the modern sense by the accidental propinquity of *bonds, brokers, and investments*—which have nothing to do with *stocks*.

⁸ 'This means in sum:'

⁹ 'so slander any moment with the name of leisure as to': to call it leisure, if leisure stood for talk with Hamlet, would be to slander the time. We might say, 'so slander any man friend as to expect him to do this or that unworthy thing for you.'

¹⁰ 1st *Q.* *Ofelia*, receiue none of his letters,

"For louers lines are snares to intrap the heart;

82 "Refuse his tokens, both of them are keyes

To vnlocke Chastitie vnto Desire;

Come in *Ofelia*; such men often proue;

"Great in their wordes, but little in their loue.

'*men often prove such—great &c.*'—Compare *Twelfth Night*, act ii. sc. 4, lines 120, 121, *Globe ed.*

¹¹ Fresh trouble for Hamlet.

¹² 1st *Q.* The ayre bites shrewd; it is an eager and
An nipping winde, what houre i'tst?

¹³ Again the cold.

¹⁴ The stage-direction of the *Q.* is necessary here.

22, 25 *Ham.* The King doth wake to night, and takes
his rouse,

Keepes wassels and the swaggering vpspring reeles,¹
And as he dreines his draughts of Renish downe,
The kettle Drum and Trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his Pledge.

Horat. Is it a custome?

Ham. I marry ist ;
And to my mind, though I am natie heere,
And to the manner borne : It is a Custome
More honour'd in the breach, then the obseruance.

wassell |
up-spring

But to

*

Enter Ghost.

Hor. Looke my Lord, it comes.

172 *Ham.* Angels and Ministers of Grace defend vs :
32 Be thou a Spirit of health, or Goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee ayres from Heauen, or blasts from
Hell,²

* *Here in the Quarto :—*

This heauy headed reueale east and west¹
Makes vs tradust, and taxed of other nations,
They clip² vs drunkards, and with Swinish phrase
Soyle our addition,³ and indeede it takes
From our atchieuements, though perform'd at height⁴
The pith and marrow of our attribute,
So oft it chaunces in particuler men,⁵
That for some vicious mole⁶ of nature in them
As in their birth wherein they are not guilty,⁷
(Since nature cannot choose his origin)
By their ore-grow'th of some complexion⁸
Oft breaking downe the pales and forts of reason
Or by⁹ some habit, that too much ore-leauens
The forme of plausiue¹⁰ manners, that¹¹ these men
Carrying I say the stamp of one defect
Being Natures liuery, or Fortunes starre,¹²
His¹³ vertues els¹⁴ be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may vndergoe,¹⁵
Shall in the generall censure¹⁶ take corruption
From that particuler fault :¹⁷ the dram of eale¹⁸
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt¹⁹
To his²⁰ owne scandle.

¹ Does Hamlet here call his uncle an *upspring*, an *upstart*? or is the *upspring* a dance, the English equivalent of 'the high *lavolt*' of *Troil. and Cress.* iv. 4, and governed by *reels*—'keeps wassels, and reels the swaggering *upspring*'—a dance that needed all the steadiness as well as agility available, if, as I suspect, it was that in which each gentleman lifted the lady high, and kissed her before setting her down? I cannot answer, I can only put the question. The word *swaggering* makes me lean to the former interpretation.

² Observe again Hamlet's uncertainty. He does not take it for granted that it is *his father's* spirit, though it is plainly his form.

¹ The Quarto surely came too early for this passage to have been suggested by the shameful habits which invaded the court through the example of Anne of Denmark! Perhaps Shakspeare cancelled it both because he would not have it supposed he had meant to reflect on the queen, and because he came to think it too diffuse.

² clepe, *call*.

³ Same as *attribute*, two lines lower—the thing imputed to, or added to us—our reputation, our title or epithet.

⁴ performed to perfection

⁵ individuals

⁶ A mole on the body, according to the place where it appeared, was regarded as significant of character: in that relation, a *vicious mole* would be one that indicated some special vice; but here the allusion is to a live mole of constitutional fault, burrowing within, whose presence the mole-*heap* on the skin indicates.

⁷ The order here would be: 'for some vicious mole of nature in them, as by their o'ergrowth, in their birth—wherein they are not guilty, since nature cannot choose his origin (or parentage)—their o'ergrowth of (their being overgrown or possessed by) some complexion, &c.'

⁸ *Complexion*, as the exponent of the *temperament*, or masterful tendency of the nature, stands here for *temperament*—'oft breaking down &c.' Both words have in them the element of *mingling*—a mingling to certain results.

⁹ The connection is:

That for some vicious mole—
As by their o'ergrowth—
Or by some habit, &c.

¹⁰ pleasing

¹¹ Repeat from above '—so oft it chaunces,' before 'that these men.'

¹² 'whether the thing come by Nature or by Destiny,' *Fortune's star*: the mark set on a man by Fortune to prove her share in him. 83

¹³ A change to the singular.

¹⁴ 'be his virtues besides as pure &c.'

¹⁵ *walk under*; *carry*.

¹⁶ the judgment of the many

¹⁷ 'Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.' *Eccles.* x. 1.

¹⁸ Compare Quarto reading, page 112:

The spirit that I haue seene

May be a deale, and the deale hath power &c.

If *deale* here stand for *devil*, then *eale* may in the same edition be taken to stand for *evil*. It is hardly necessary to suspect a Scotch printer; *evil* is often used as a monosyllable, and *eale* may have been a pronunciation of it half-way towards *ill*, which is its contraction.

¹⁹ I do not believe there is any corruption in the rest of the passage. 'Doth it of a doubt?' *affects it with a doubt*, brings it into doubt. The following from *Measure for Measure*, is like, though not the same.

I have on Angelo imposed the office,
Who may, in the ambush of my name, strike home
And yet my nature never in the fight
To do in slander.

'To do my nature in slander': to affect it with slander; to bring it into slander. 'Angelo may punish in my name, but, not being present, I shall not be accused of cruelty, which would be to slander my nature.'

²⁰ *his*—the man's; see note 13 above.

112 Be thy euentz wicked or charitable, thy intent
 Thou com'st in such a questionable shape¹
 That I will speake to thee. Ile call thee *Hamlet*,²
 King, Father, Royall Dane: Oh, oh, answer Dane, ô
answere
 me,

Let me not burst in Ignorance ; but tell
 Why thy Canoniz'd bones Hearsed in death,³
 Haue burst their cerments ; why the Sepulcher
 Wherein we saw thee quietly enurn'd,⁴ quietly in-
terr'd⁵
 Hath op'd his ponderous and Marble iawes,
 To cast thee vp againe? What may this meane?
 That thou dead Coarse againe in compleat steele,
 Reuisits thus the glimpses of the Moone,
 Making Night hidious? And we fooles of Nature,⁶
 So horridly to shake our disposition,⁷ the reaches
 With thoughts beyond thee; reaches of our
 Soules,⁸

Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we doe?⁹

Ghost beckens Hamlet.

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

Mar. Looke with what courteous action
 It wafts you to a more remoued ground: waues
 But doe not goe with it.

Hor. No, by no meanes.

Ham. It will not speake: then will I follow it. I will

Hor. Doe not my Lord.

Ham. Why, what should be the feare?
 I doe not set my life at a pins fee;
 And for my Soule, what can it doe to that?
 Being a thing immortall as it selfe:¹⁰
 It waues me forth againe; Ile follow it.

Hor. What if it tempt you toward the Floud
 my Lord?¹¹

¹ —that of his father, so moving him to question it. *Questionable* does not mean *doubtful*, but *fit to be questioned*.

² 'I'll *call thee*'—for the nonce.

³ I think *hearse* was originally the bier—French *herse*, a harrow—but came to be applied to the coffin: *hearsed* in death—*confined* in death.

⁴ There is no impropriety in the use of the word *inurned*. It is a figure—a word once-removed in its application: the sepulchre is the urn, the body the ashes. *Interred* Shakspeare had concluded incorrect, for the body was not laid in the earth.

⁵ So in 1st *Q.*

⁶ 'fooles of Nature'—fools in the presence of her knowledge—to us no knowledge—of her action, to us inexplicable. *A fact* that looks unreasonable makes one feel like a fool. See Psalm lxxiii. 22: 'So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee.' As some men are our fools, we are all Nature's fools; we are so far from knowing anything as it is.

⁷ Even if Shakspeare cared more about grammar than he does, a man in Hamlet's perturbation he might well present as making a breach in it; but we are not reduced even to justification. *Toschaken* (to as German *zu* intensive) is a recognized English word; it means *to shake to pieces*. The construction of the passage is, 'What may this mean, that thou revisitest thus the glimpses of the moon, and that we so horribly to-shake our disposition?' So in *The Merry Wives*,

And fairy-like to-pinch the unclean knight.

'our disposition': our *cosmic structure*.

⁸ 'with thoughts that are too much for them, and as an earthquake to them.'

⁹ Like all true souls, Hamlet wants to know what he is *to do*. He looks out for the action required of him.

¹⁰ Note here Hamlet's mood—dominated by his faith. His life in this world his mother has ruined; he does not care for it a pin: he is not the less confident of a nature that is immortal. In virtue of this belief in life, he is indifferent to the form of it. When, later in the play, he seems to fear death, it is death the consequence of an action of whose rightness he is not convinced.

¹¹ *The Quarto has dropped out* 'Lord.'

Or to the dreadfull Sonnet of the Cliffe, sonnet
 That beetles ¹ o're his base into the Sea, beetles
 112 And there assumes some other horrible forme,² assume
 Which might deprive your Soueraignty ³ of Reason
 And draw you into madnesse thinke of it ?

* *Ham.* It wafts me still ; goe on, Ile follow thee waues

Mar. You shall not goe my Lord.

Ham. Hold off your hand. hands.

Hor. Be rul'd, you shall not goe.

Ham. My fate cries out,
 And makes each petty Artire ⁴ in this body, arture ⁴
 As hardy as the Nemian Lions nerue :
 Still am I cal'd ? Vnhand me Gentlemen :
 By Heau'n, Ile make a Ghost of him that lets me :
 I say away, goe on, Ile follow thee.

Exeunt Ghost & Hamlet.

Hor. He waxes desperate with imagination.⁵ imagination.

Mar. Let's follow ; 'tis not fit thus to obey him.

Hor. Haue after, to what issue will this come ?

Mar. Something is rotten in the State of Den-
 marke.

Hor. Heauen will direct it.

Mar. Nay, let's follow him. *Exeunt.*

Enter Ghost and Hamlet.

Ham. Where wilt thou lead me ? speak ; Ile Whether
 go no further.

Gho. Marke me

Ham. I will.

* *Here in the Quarto :—*

The very place puts toyes of desperation
 Without more motiue, into euery braine
 That lookes so many fadoms to the sea
 And heares it rore beneath.

¹ 1st Q. 'beckles'—perhaps for *buckles*—*bcuds*.

² Note the unbelief in the Ghost.

³ sovereignty—*soul* : so in *Romeo and Juliet*, act v. sc. 1, l. 3 :—

My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne.

⁴ The word *artery*, invariably substituted by the editors, is without authority. In the first Quarto, the word is *Artiue* ; in the second (see margin) *arture*. This latter I take to be the right one—corrupted into *Artire* in the Folio. It seems to have troubled the printers, and possibly the editors. The third Q. has followed the second ; the fourth has *artyre* ; the fifth Q. and the fourth F. have *attire* ; the second and third Folios follow the first. Not until the sixth Q. does *artery* appear. See *Cambridge Shakespeare*. *Arture* was to all concerned, and to the language itself, a new word. That *artery* was not Shakspeare's intention might be concluded from its unfitness : what propriety could there be in *making an artery hardy* ? The sole, imperfect justification I was able to think of for such use of the word arose from the fact that, before the discovery of the circulation of the blood (published in 1628), it was believed that the arteries (found empty after death) served for the movements of the animal spirits : this might vaguely *associate* the arteries with *courage*. But the sight of the word *arture* in the second Quarto at once relieved me.

I do not know if a list has ever been gathered of the words *made* by Shakspeare : here is one of them—*arture*, from the same root as *artus*, a *joint*—*arcere*, to hold together, adjective *arctus*, *tight*. *Arture*, then, stands for *junction*. This perfectly fits. In terror the weakest parts are the joints, for their *artures* are not *hardy*. 'And you, my sinews, . . . bear me stiffly up.' 55, 56

Since writing as above, a friend informs me that *arture* is the exact equivalent of the ἀφή of Colossians ii. 19, as interpreted by Bishop Lightfoot—'the relation between contiguous limbs, not the parts of the limbs themselves in the neighbourhood of contact,'—for which relation 'there is no word in our language in common use.'

⁵ 'with the things he imagines.'

Gho. My hower is almost come,¹
When I to sulphurous and tormenting Flames
Must render vp my selfe.

Ham. Alas poore Ghost.

Gho. Pitty me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall vnfold.

Ham. Speake, I am bound to heare.

Gho. So art thou to reuenge, when thou shalt
heare.

Ham. What ?

Gho. I am thy Fathers Spirit,
Doom'd for a certaine terme to walke the night ;²
And for the day confin'd to fast in Fiers,³
Till the foule crimes done in my dayes 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 vnfold, whose lightest word⁴
Would harrow vp thy soule, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like Starres, start from their
Spheres,

Thy knotty and combined locks to part, knotted
And each particular haire to stand an end,⁵
Like Quilles vpon the fretfull⁶ Porpentine : fearefull*
But this eternall blason⁷ must not be
To eares of flesh and bloud ; list *Hamlet*, oh list, blood, list, list
o list :
If thou didst euer thy deare Father loue.

Ham. Oh Heauen !⁸ God

Gho. Reuenge his foule and most vnnaturall
Murther.⁹

Ham. Murther ?

Ghost. Murther most foule, as in the best it is ;
But this most foule, strange, and vnnaturall.

Ham. Hast, hast me to know it, Hast me to
know't,
That I
That with wings as swift

¹ The night is the Ghost's day.

² To walk the night, and see how things go, without being able to put a finger to them, is part of his cleansing.

³ More horror yet for Hamlet.

⁴ He would have him think of life and its doings as of awful import. He gives his son what warning he may.

⁵ *An end* is like *agape*, an *hungred*. 71, 175

⁶ The word in the Q. suggests *fretfull* a misprint for *frightful*. It is *fretfull* in the 1st Q. as well.

⁷ To *blason* is to read off in proper heraldic terms the arms blasoned upon a shield. *A blason* is such a reading, but is here used for a picture in words of other objects.

⁸ —in appeal to God whether he had not loved his father.

⁹ The horror still accumulates. The knowledge of evil—not evil in the abstract, but evil alive, and all about him—comes darkening down upon Hamlet's being. Not only is his father an inhabitant of the nether fires, but he is there by murder.

As meditation, or the thoughts of Loue,
May sweepe to my Reuenge.¹

Ghost. I finde thee apt,

194 And duller should'st thou be then the fat weede ²
That rots it selfe in ease, on Lethe Wharfe,⁴ rootes³
Would'st thou not stirre in this. Now *Hamlet*
heare :

It's giuen out, that sleeping in mine Orchard, 'Tis
A Serpent stung me : so the whole care of Den-
marke,

Is by a forged processe of my death
Rankly abus'd : But know thou Noble youth,
The Serpent that did sting thy Fathers life,
Now weares his Crowne.

30, 32 *Ham.* O my Propheticke soule : mine Vncle ? ⁵ my

Ghost. I that incestuous, that adulterate Beast ⁶
With witchcraft of his wits, hath Traitorous guifts. wits, with
Oh wicked Wit, and Gifts, that haue the power
So to seduce? Won to to this shamefull Lust wonne to his
The will of my most seeming vertuous Queene :
Oh *Hamlet*, what a falling off was there, what falling
From me, whose loue was of that dignity,
That it went hand in hand, euen with ⁷ the Vow
I made to her in Marriage ; and to decline
Vpon a wretch, whose Naturall gifts were poore
To those of mine. But Vertue, as it neuer wil be
moued,

Though Lewdnesse court it in a shape of Heauen :
So Lust, though to a radiant Angell link'd, So but though
Will sate it selfe in ⁸ a Celestiall bed, and prey on Will sort it
selfe
Garbage.⁹

But soft, me thinkes I sent the Mornings Ayre ; morning ayre,
Briefe let me be : Sleeping within mine Orchard, my
My custome alwayes in the afternoone ; of the
Vpon my secure hower thy Vncle stole

¹ Now, *for the moment*, he has no doubt, and vengeance is his first thought.

² Hamlet may be supposed to recall this, if we suppose him afterwards to accuse himself so bitterly and so unfairly as in the *Quarto*, 194.

³ Also *1st Q.*

⁴ landing-place on the bank of Lethe, the hell-river of oblivion

⁵ This does not mean that he had suspected his uncle, but that his dislike to him was prophetic.

⁶ How can it be doubted that in this speech the Ghost accuses his wife and brother of adultery? Their marriage was not adultery. See how the ghastly revelation grows on Hamlet—his father in hell—murdered by his brother—dishonoured by his wife!

⁷ *parallel with; correspondent to*

⁸ *1st Q.* 'fate itself from a'

⁹ This passage, from 'Oh *Hamlet*,' most indubitably asserts the adultery of Gertrude.

With iuyce of cursed Hebenon¹ in a Violl, Hebona
 And in the Porches of mine eares did poure my
 The leaperous Distilment; ² whose effect
 Holds such an enmity with bloud of Man,
 That swift as Quick-siluer, it courses³ through
 The naturall Gates and Allies of the Body;
 And with a sodaine vigour it doth posset doth possesse
 And curd, like Aygre droppings into Milke, eager⁴
 The thin and wholsome blood: so did it mine;
 And a most instant Tetter bak'd about, barckt about⁵
 Most Lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
 All my smooth Body.

Thus was I, sleeping, by a Brothers hand,
 Of Life, of Crowne, and Queene at once dispatch; of Queene
 164 Cut off euen in the Blossomes of my Sinne,
 Vnhouzzled, disappointed, vnnaneld,⁶ Vnhuzled, | vn-
anueld,
 262 No reckoning made, but sent to my account
 With all my imperfections on my head;
 Oh horrible, Oh horrible, most horrible:
 If thou hast nature in thee beare it not;
 Let not the Royall Bed of Denmarke be
 A Couch for Luxury and damned Incest.⁷
 But howsoever thou pursuest this Act, howsomeuer
thou pursues
 .30,174 Taint not thy mind; nor let thy Soule contriue
 140 Against thy Mother ought; leaue her to heauen,
 And to those Thornes that in her bosome lodge,
 To pricke and sting her. Fare thee well at once;
 The Glow-worme shoves the Matine to be neere,
 And gins to pale his vneffectuall Fire:
 Adué, adue, *Hamlet*: remember me. *Exit.* Adieu, adieu,
adieu, remem-
ber me.⁸
Ham Oh all you host of Heauen! Oh Earth:
 what els?
 And shall I couple Hell?⁹ Oh fie¹⁰: hold my hold, hold my
 heart;
 And you my sinnewes, grow not instant Old;

¹ Ebony

² *producing leprosy*—as described in result below.

³ 1st Q. 'posteth'

⁴ So also 1st Q.

⁵ This *barckt*—meaning *cased as a bark cases its tree*—is used in 1st Q. also: 'And all my smoothe body, barked, and tettered ouer.' The word is so used in Scotland still.

⁶ *Husel* (*Anglo-Saxon*) is an offering, the sacrament. *Disappointed, not appointed*: Dr. Johnson. *Unaneled, unoled, without the extreme unction.*

⁷ It is on public grounds, as a king and a Dane, rather than as a husband and a murdered man, that he urges on his son the execution of justice. Note the tenderness towards his wife that follows—more marked, 174; here it is mingled with predominating regard to his son to whose filial nature he dreads injury.

⁸ Q. omits *Exit*.

⁹ He must: his father is there!

¹⁰ The interjection is addressed to *heart* and *sinews*, which forget their duty.

But beare me stiffely vp : Remember thee ?¹ swiftly vp
 I, thou poore Ghost, while memory holds a seate whiles
 In this distracted Globe² : Remember thee ?
 Yea, from the Table of my Memory,³
 Ile wipe away all triuiall fond Records,
 All sawes⁴ of Bookes, all formes, all presures past,
 That youth and obseruation coppied there ;
 And thy Commandment all alone shall liue
 Within the Booke and Volume of my Braine,
 Vnmixt with baser matter ; yes, yes, by Heauen : matter, yes by
 168 Oh most pernicious woman !⁵
 Oh Villaine, Villaine, smiling damned Villaine !
 My Tables, my Tables ; meet it is I set it downe,⁶ My tables,
meet
 That one may smile, and smile and be a Villaine ;
 At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmarke ; I am
 So Vnckle there you are : now to my word ;⁷
 It is ; Aduē, Aduē, Remember me :⁸ I haue sworn't.
Hor. and Mar. within. My Lord, my Lord. *Enter Horatio,
and Marcellus.*
Hora. My

Enter Horatio and Marcellus.

Mar. Lord Hamlet.

Hor. Heauen secure him. Heauens

Mar. So be it.

Hor. Illo, ho, ho, my Lord.

Ham. Hillo, ho, ho, boy ; come bird, come.⁹

boy come, and
come.

Mar. How ist't my Noble Lord ?

Hor. What newes, my Lord ?

Ham. Oh wonderfull !¹⁰

Hor. Good my Lord tell it.

Ham. No you'l reueale it. you will

Hor. Not I, my Lord, by Heauen.

Mar. Nor I, my Lord.

Ham. How say you then, would heart of man
once think it ?

But you'l be secret ?

¹ For the moment he has no doubt that he has seen and spoken with the ghost of his father.

² his head

³ The whole speech is that of a student, accustomed to books, to take notes, and to fix things in his memory. 'Table,' *tablet*.

⁴ *wise sayings*

⁵ The Ghost has revealed her adultery : Hamlet suspects her of complicity in the murder, 168.

⁶ It may well seem odd that Hamlet should be represented as, at such a moment, making a note in his tablets ; but without further allusion to the student-habit, I would remark that, in cases where strongest passion is roused, the intellect has yet sometimes an automatic trick of working independently. For instance from Shakspeare, see Constance in *King John*—how, in her agony over the loss of her son, both her fancy, playing with words, and her imagination, playing with forms, are busy.

Note the glimpse of Hamlet's character here given : he had been something of an optimist ; at least had known villainy only from books ; at thirty years of age it is to him a discovery that a man may smile and be a villain ! Then think of the shock of such discoveries as are here forced upon him ! Villainy is no longer a mere idea, but a fact ! and of all villainous deeds those of his own mother and uncle are the worst ! But note also his honesty, his justice to humanity, his philosophic temperament, in the qualification he sets to the memorandum, '—at least in Denmark !'

⁷ 'my word,'—the word he has to keep in mind ; his cue.

⁸ Should not the actor here make a pause, with hand uplifted, as taking a solemn though silent oath ?

⁹ —as if calling to a hawk.

¹⁰ Here comes the test of the actor's *possible* : here Hamlet himself begins to act, and will at once assume a *rôle*, ere yet he well knows what it must be. One thing only is clear to him—that the communication of the Ghost is not a thing to be shared—that he must keep it with all his power of secrecy : the honour both of father and of mother is at stake. In order to do so, he must begin by putting on himself a cloak of darkness, and hiding his feelings—first of all the present agitation which threatens to overpower him. His immediate impulse or instinctive motion is to force an air, and throw a veil of grimmest humour over the occurrence. The agitation of the horror at his heart, ever working and constantly repressed, shows through the veil, and gives an excited uncertainty to his words, and a wild vacillation to his manner and behaviour.

Both. I, by Heau'n, my Lord.¹

Ham. There's nere a villaine dwelling in all
Denmarke

But hee's an arrant knaue.

Hor. There needs no Ghost my Lord, come
from the
Graue, to tell vs this.

Ham. Why right, you are i'th'right ; n the
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands, and part :
You, as your busines and desires shall point you : desire
For euery man ha's businesse and desire,² hath
Such as it is : and for mine owne poore part, my
Looke you, Ile goe pray.⁴ I will goe
pray.³

Hor. These are but wild and hurling words, whurling⁵
my Lord.

Ham. I'm sorry they offend you heartily : I am
Yes faith, heartily.

Hor. There's no offence my Lord.

Ham. Yes, by Saint *Patricke*, but there is my there is
Horatio.
Lord,⁶

And much offence too, touching this Vision heere :⁷

136 It is an honest Ghost, that let me tell you :⁸
For your desire to know what is betweene vs,
O'remaster't as you may. And now good friends,
As you are Friends, Schollers and Soldiers,
Giue me one poore request.

Hor. What is't my Lord ? we will.

Ham. Neuer make known what you haue seen
to night.⁹

Both. My Lord, we will not.

Ham. Nay, but swear't.

Hor. Infaith my Lord, not I.¹⁰

Mar. Nor I my Lord : in faith.

Ham. Vpon my sword.¹¹

¹ *Q.* has not 'my Lord.'

² Here shows the philosopher.

³ *Q.* has not 'Looke you.'

⁴ '—nothing else is left me.' This seems to me one of the finest touches in the revelation of Hamlet.

⁵ 1st *Q.* 'wherling'

⁶ I take the change from the *Quarto* here to be no blunder.

⁷ *Point thus*: 'too!—Touching'

⁸ The struggle to command himself is plain throughout.

⁹ He could not endure the thought of the resulting gossip;—which besides would interfere with, possibly frustrate, the carrying out of his part.

¹⁰ This is not a refusal to swear; it is the oath itself: '*In faith I will not.*'

¹¹ He would have them swear on the cross-hilt of his sword.

Marcell. We haue sworne my Lord already.¹

Ham. Indeed, vpon my sword, Indeed.

Gho. Swear.² *Ghost cries vnder the Stage.*³

Ham. Ah ha boy, sayest thou so. Art thou Ha, ha,
there truepenny? ⁴ Come one you here this fellow Come on, you
in the selleredge heare
Consent to swear.

Hor. Propose the Oath my Lord.⁵

Ham. Neuer to speake of this that you haue
sene.

Swear by my sword.

Gho. Swear.

Ham. *Hic & vbique?* Then wee'l shift for shift our
grownd,

Come hither Gentlemen,

And lay your hands againe vpon my sword,

Neuer to speake of this that you haue heard : ⁶

Swear by my Sword.

Gho. Swear.⁷

Ham. Well said old Mole, can'st worke i'th'
ground so fast? it'h earth

A worthy Pioner, once more remoue good friends.

Hor. Oh day and night : but this is wondrous
strange.

Ham. And therefore as a stranger giue it
welcome.

There are more things in Heauen and Earth,

Horatio,

Then are dream't of in our Philosophy But come, in your

Here as before, neuer so helpe you mercy,

How strange or odde so ere I beare my selfe ; (How | so mere

(As I perchance heereafter shall thinke meet As

^{136, 156,}
¹⁷⁸ To put an Anticke disposition on :) ⁸ on

That you at such time seeing me, neuer shall times

With Armes encombred thus, or thus, head shake ; or this head

¹ He feels his honour touched.

² The Ghost's interference heightens Hamlet's agitation. If he does not talk, laugh, jest, it will overcome him. Also he must not show that he believes it his father's ghost : that must be kept to himself—for the present at least. He shows it therefore no respect—treats the whole thing humorously, so avoiding, or at least parrying question. It is all he can do to keep the mastery of himself, dodging horror with half-forced, half-hysterical laughter. Yet is he all the time intellectually on the alert. See how, instantly active, he makes use of the voice from beneath to enforce his requisition of silence. Very speedily too he grows quiet : a glimmer of light as to the course of action necessary to him has begun to break upon him : it breaks from his own wild and disjointed behaviour in the attempt to hide the conflict of his feelings—which suggests to him the idea of shrouding himself, as did David at the court of the Philistines, in the cloak of madness : thereby protected from the full force of what suspicion any absorption of manner or outburst of feeling must occasion, he may win time to lay his plans. Note how, in the midst of his horror, he is yet able to think, plan, resolve.

³ *Ist Q.* ' *The Gost vnder the stage.*'

⁴ While Hamlet seems to take it so coolly, the others have fled in terror from the spot. He goes to them. Their fear must be what, on the two occasions after, makes him shift to another place when the Ghost speaks.

⁵ Now at once he consents.

⁶ In the *Quarto* this and the next line are transposed.

⁷ What idea is involved as the cause of the Ghost's thus interfering ?—That he too sees what difficulties must encompass the carrying out of his behest, and what absolute secrecy is thereto essential.

⁸ This idea, hardly yet a resolve, he afterwards carries out so well, that he deceives not only king and queen and court, but the most of his critics ever since : to this day they believe him mad. Such must have studied in the play a phantom of their own misconception, and can never have seen the Hamlet of Shakspeare. Thus prejudiced, they mistake also the effects of moral and spiritual perturbation and misery for further sign of intellectual disorder—even for proof of moral weakness, placing them in the same category with the symptoms of the insanity which he simulates, and by which they are deluded.

Or by pronouncing of some doubtfull Phrase ;
 As well, we know, or we could and if we would, As well, well,
 we
 Or if we list to speake ; or there be and if there if they might.
 might,

Or such ambiguous giuing out to note, note)
 That you know ought of me ; this not to doe : me, this doe
 sweare,
 So grace and mercy at your most neede helpe you :
 Sweare.¹

Ghost. Sweare.²

Ham. Rest, rest perturbed Spirit³ : so Gentle-
 men,

With all my loue I doe commend me to you ;
 And what so poore a man as *Hamlet* is,
 May doe t'expresse his loue and friending to you,
 God willing shall not lacke : let vs goe in together,
 And still your fingers on your lippes I pray,
 The time is out of ioynt : Oh cursed spight,⁴

126 That euer I was borne to set it right.

Nay, come let's goe together. *Exeunt.*⁵

SUMMARY OF ACT I.

This much of Hamlet we have now learned : he is a thoughtful man, a genuine student, little acquainted with the world save through books, and a lover of his kind. His university life at Wittenberg is suddenly interrupted by a call to the funeral of his father, whom he dearly loves and honours. Ere he reaches Denmark, his uncle Claudius has contrived, in an election (202, 250, 272) probably hastened and secretly influenced, to gain the voice of the representatives at least of the people, and ascend the throne. Hence his position must have been an irksome one from the first ; but, within a month of his father's death, his mother's marriage with his uncle—a relation universally regarded as incestuous—plunges him in the deepest misery. The play introduces him at the first court held after the wedding. He is attired in the mourning of his father's funeral, which he had not laid aside for the wedding. His aspect is of absolute dejection, and he appears in a company for which he is so unfit only for the sake of desiring permission to leave the court, and go back to his studies at Wittenberg.* Left to himself, he breaks out in agonized and indignant

* Roger Ascham, in his *Scholemaster*, if I mistake not, sets the age, up to which a man should be under tutors, at twenty-nine.

¹ 'Swear' *not in Quarto.*

² They do not this time shift their ground, but swear--in dumb show.

³ —for now they had obeyed his command and sworn secrecy.

⁴ 'cursed spight'—not merely that he had been born to do hangman's work, but that he should have been born at all—of a mother whose crime against his father had brought upon him the wretched necessity which must proclaim her ignominy. Let the student do his best to realize the condition of Hamlet's heart and mind in relation to his mother.

⁵ This first act occupies part of a night, a day, and part of the next night.

lamentation over his mother's conduct, dwelling mainly on her disregard of his father's memory. Her conduct and his partial discovery of her character, is the sole cause of his misery. In such his mood, Horatio, a fellow-student, brings him word that his father's spirit walks at night. He watches for the Ghost, and receives from him a frightful report of his present condition, into which, he tells him, he was cast by the murderous hand of his brother, with whom his wife had been guilty of adultery. He enjoins him to put a stop to the crime in which they are now living, by taking vengeance on his uncle. Uncertain at the moment how to act, and dreading the consequences of rousing suspicion by the perturbation which he could not but betray, he grasps at the sudden idea of affecting madness.

We have learned also Hamlet's relation to Ophelia, the daughter of the selfish, prating, busy Polonius, who, with his son Laertes, is destined to work out the earthly fate of Hamlet. Of Laertes, as yet, we only know that he prates like his father, is self-confident, and was educated at Paris, whither he has returned. Of Ophelia we know nothing but that she is gentle, and that she is fond of Hamlet, whose attentions she has encouraged, but with whom, upon her father's severe remonstrance, she is ready, outwardly at least, to break.

ACTUS SECUNDUS.¹*Enter Polonius, and Reynoldo.**Enter old
Polonius, with
his man or
two.**Polon.* Giue him his money, and these notes this money*Reynoldo.*²*Reynol.* I will my Lord.*Polon.* You shall doe maruels wisely: good meruiles*Reynoldo,*

Before you visite him you make inquiry

him, to make
inquireOf his behaiour.³*Reynol.* My Lord, I did intend it.*Polon.* Marry, well said ;

Very well said. Looke you Sir,

Enquire me first what Danskers are in Paris ;

And how, and who ; what meanes ; and where

they keepe :

What company, at what expence : and finding

By this encompassment and drift of question,

That they doe know my sonne: Come you more

neerer ⁴

Then your particular demands will touch it,

Take you as 'twere some distant knowledge of him,

And thus I know his father and his friends,

As thusAnd in part him. Doe you marke this *Reynoldo* ?*Reynol.* I, very well my Lord.*Polon.* And in part him, but you may say not

well ;

But if't be hee I meane, hees very wilde ;

Addicted so and so ; and there put on him

What forgeries you please : marry, none so ranke,

As may dishonour him ; take heed of that :

But Sir, such wanton, wild, and vsuall slips,

As are Companions noted and most knowne

To youth and liberty.

¹ *Not in Quarto.*

Between this act and the former, sufficient time has passed to allow the ambassadors to go to Norway and return: 74. See 138, and what Hamlet says of the time since his father's death, 24, by which together the interval *seems* indicated as about two months, though surely so much time was not necessary.

Cause and effect *must* be truly presented; time and space are mere accidents, and of small consequence in the drama, whose very idea is compression for the sake of presentation. All that is necessary in regard to time is, that, either by the act-pause, or the intervention of a fresh scene, the passing of it should be indicated.

This second act occupies the forenoon of one day.

² *1st Q. Montano*, here, these letters to my sonne,
And this same mony with my blessing to him,
And bid him ply his learning good *Montano*.

³ The father has no confidence in the son, and rightly, for both are unworthy: he turns on him the cunning of the courtier, and sends a spy on his behaviour. The looseness of his own principles comes out very clear in his anxieties about his son; and, having learned the ideas of the father as to what becomes a gentleman, we are not surprised to find the son such as he afterwards shows himself. Till the end approaches, we hear no more of Laertes, nor is more necessary; but without this scene we should have been unprepared for his vileness.

⁴ *Point thus*: 'son, come you more nearer; then &c.' The *then* here does not stand for *than*, and to change it to *than* makes at once a contradiction. The sense is: 'Having put your general questions first, and been answered to your purpose, then your particular demands will come in, and be of service; they will reach to the point—*will touch it*.' The *it* is impersonal. After it should come a period.

Reynol. As gaming my Lord.

Polon. I, or drinking, fencing, swearing,
Quarelling, drabbing. You may goe so farre.

Reynol. My Lord that would dishonour him.

Polon. Faith no, as you may season it in the charge;¹ Fayth as you

You must not put another scandall on him,
That hee is open to Incontinencie;²
That's not my meaning: but breath his faults so
quaintly,

That they may seeme the taints of liberty;
The flash and out-breake of a fiery minde,
A sauagenes in vnreclaim'd³ bloud of generall
assault.⁴

Reynol. But my good Lord.⁵

Polon. Wherefore should you doe this?⁶

Reynol. I my Lord, I would know that.

Polon. Marry Sir, heere's my drift,

And I belieue it is a fetch of warrant:⁷ of wit,
You laying these slight sulleyes⁸ on my Sonne, sallies *
As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i'th'working: soiled with
Marke you your party in conuerse; him you would working,
sound,

Hauing euer scene. In the prenominate crimes, scene in the
The youth you breath of guilty, be assur'd
He closes with you in this consequence:
Good sir, or so, or friend, or Gentleman.
According to the Phrase and the Addition,⁹ phrase or the
Of man and Country.

Reynol. Very good my Lord.

Polon. And then Sir does he this?

He does: what was I about to say? does a this, a
I was about to say something: where did I leaue? doos, what
was I

Reynol. At closes in the consequence:
At friend, or so, and Gentleman.¹⁰

¹ 1st *Q.* I faith not a whit, no not a whit,

As you may bridle it not disparte him a iote.

² This may well seem prating inconsistency, but I suppose means that he must not be represented as without moderation in his wickedness.

³ *Untamed*, as a hawk.

⁴ The lines are properly arranged in *Q.*

A sauagenes in vnreclaimed blood,
Of generall assault.

—that is, ‘which assails all.’

⁵ Here a hesitating pause.

⁶ —with the expression of, ‘Is that what you would say?’

⁷ ‘a fetch with warrant for it’—a justifiable trick.

⁸ Compare *sallied*, 25, both Quartos; *sallets* 67, 103; and see *soi'd*, next line.

⁹ ‘Addition,’ epithet of courtesy in address.

¹⁰ *Q.* has not this line

Polon. At closes in the consequence, I marry,
 He closes with you thus. I know the Gentleman, He closes thus,
 I saw him yesterday, or tother day; th'other
 Or then or then, with such and such; and as you say, or such,
 25 There was he gaming, there o'retooke in's Rouse, was a gaming
 There falling out at Tennis; or perchance, there, or tooke
 I saw him enter such a house of saile; sale,
Videlicet, a Brothell, or so forth. See you now;
 Your bait of falshood, takes this Cape of truth; take this carpe
 And thus doe we of wisdom and of reach¹
 With windlasses,² and with assaies of Bias,
 By indirections finde directions out:
 So by my former Lecture and aduice
 Shall you my Sonne; you haue me, haue you not?

Reynol. My Lord I haue.

Polon. God buy you; fare you well. ye | ye

Reynol. Good my Lord.

Polon. Obserue his inclination in your selfe.³

Reynol. I shall my Lord.

Polon. And let him⁴ plye his Musicke.

Reynol. Well, my Lord. *Exit.*

Enter Ophelia.

Polon. Farewell:

How now *Ophelia*, what's the matter?

Ophe. Alas my Lord, I haue beene so affrighted. O my Lord,
 my Lord,

Polon. With what, in the name of Heauen? i'th name of
 God?

Ophe. My Lord, as I was sowing in my
 Chamber,

closset,

Lord *Hamlet* with his doublet all vnbrac'd,⁵
 No hat vpon his head, his stockings foul'd,
 Vngartred, and downe giued⁶ to his Anckle,
 Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
 And with a looke so pitious in purport,
 As if he had been loosed out of hell,

¹ of far reaching mind

² The word *windlaces* is explained in the dictionaries as *shifts, subtleties*—but apparently on the sole authority of this passage. There must be a figure in *windlesses*, as well as in *assaies of Bias*, which is a phrase plain enough to bowlers: the trying of other directions than that of the *jack*, in the endeavour to come at one with the law of the bowl's bias. I find *wanlass* a term in hunting: it had to do with driving game to a given point—whether in part by getting to windward of it, I cannot tell. The word may come of the verb *wind*, from its meaning 'to manage by shifts or expedients': *Barclay*. As he has spoken of fishing, could the *windlesses* refer to any little instrument such as now used upon a fishing-rod? I do not think it. And how do the words *windlesses* and *indirections* come together? Was a windless some contrivance for determining how the wind blew? I bethink me that a thin withered straw is in Scotland called a *windlestrae*: perhaps such straws were thrown up to find out 'by indirection' the direction of the wind.

The press-reader sends me two valuable quotations, through Latham's edition of Johnson's Dictionary, from Dr. H. Hammond (1605-1660), in which *windlass* is used as a verb:—

'A skilful woodsman, by windlassing, presently gets a shoot, which, without taking a compass, and thereby a commodious stand, he could never have obtained.'

'She is not so much at leasure as to windlace, or use craft, to satisfy them.'

To windlace seems then to mean 'to steal along to leeward.' Would it be absurd to suggest that, so-doing, the hunter *laces the wind*? Shakspeare, with many another, I fancy, speaks of *threading the night* or *the darkness*.

Johnson explains the word in the text as 'A handle by which anything is turned.'

³ 'in your selfe,' may mean either 'through the insight afforded by your own feelings'; or 'in respect of yourself,' 'toward yourself.' I do not know which is intended.

⁴ *1st Q.* 'And bid him'

⁵ loose; *undone*.

⁶ His stockings, slipped down in wrinkles round his ankles, suggested the rings of *gyves* or fetters. The verb *gyve*, of which the passive participle is here used, is rarer.

To speake of horrors: he comes before me.

Polon. Mad for thy Loue?

Ophe. My Lord, I doe not know: but truly I
do feare it.¹

Polon. What said he?

*Ophe.*² He tooke me by the wrist, and held me
hard;

Then goes he to the length of all his arme;

And with his other hand thus o're his brow,

He fals to such perusall of my face,

As he would draw it. Long staid he so,

As a

At last, a little shaking of mine Arme:

And thrice his head thus wauing vp and downe;

He rais'd a sigh, so pittious and profound,

That it did seeme to shatter all his bulke,

As it

And end his being. That done, he lets me goe,

And with his head ouer his shoulders turn'd,

shoulder

He seem'd to finde his way without his eyes,

For out adores³ he went without their helpe;

helps,

And to the last, bended their light on me.

Polon. Goe with me, I will goe seeke the King,
This is the very extasie of Loue,

Come, goe

Whose violent property foredoes⁴ it selfe,

And leads the will to desperate Vndertakings,

As oft as any passion vnder Heauen,

passions

That does afflict our Natures. I am sorrie,

What haue you giuen him any hard words of late?

Ophe. No my good Lord: but as you did com-

42, 82 I did repell his Letters, and deny'de [mand,
His accesse to me.⁵

Pol. That hath made him mad.

I am sorrie that with better speed and iudgement

better heede

83 I had not quoted⁶ him. I feare he did but trifle,

coted⁶ | fear'd

And meant to wracke thee: but beshrew my
icalousie:

¹ She would be glad her father should think so.

³ *a doors, like an end.* 51, 175

⁴ *undoes, frustrates, destroys*

⁵ See quotation from *1st Quarto*, 43.

⁶ *Quoted or coted: observed; Fr. coter, to mark the number.* Compare 95.

² The detailed description of Hamlet and his behaviour that follows, must be introduced in order that the side mirror of narrative may aid the front mirror of drama, and between them be given a true notion of his condition both mental and bodily. Although weeks have passed since his interview with the Ghost, he is still haunted with the memory of it, still broods over its horrible revelation. That he had, probably soon, begun to feel far from certain of the truth of the apparition, could not make the thoughts and questions it had awaked, cease tormenting his whole being. The stifling smoke of his mother's conduct had in his mind burst into loathsome flame, and through her he has all but lost his faith in humanity. To know his uncle a villain, was to know his uncle a villain; to know his mother false, was to doubt women, doubt the whole world.

In the meantime Ophelia, in obedience to her father, and evidently without reason assigned, has broken off communication with him: he reads her behaviour by the lurid light of his mother's. She too is false! she too is heartless! he can look to her for no help! She has turned against him to curry favour with his mother and his uncle!

Can she be such as his mother! Why should she not be? His mother had seemed as good! He would give his life to know her honest and pure. Might he but believe her what he had believed her, he would yet have a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest! If he could but know the truth! Alone with her once more but for a moment, he would read her very soul by the might of his! He must see her! He would see her! In the agony of a doubt upon which seemed to hang the bliss or bale of his being, yet not altogether unintimidated by a sense of his intrusion, he walks into the house of Polonius, and into the chamber of Ophelia.

Ever since the night of the apparition, the court, from the behaviour assumed by Hamlet, has believed his mind affected; and when he enters her room, Ophelia, though such is the insight of love that she is able to read in the face of the son the father's purgatorial sufferings, the picture of one 'loosed out of hell, to speak of horrors,' attributes all the strangeness of his appearance and demeanour, such as she describes them to her father, to that supposed fact. But there is, in truth, as little of affected as of actual madness in his behaviour in her presence. When he comes before her pale and trembling, speechless and with staring eyes, it is with no simulated insanity, but in the agonized hope, scarce distinguishable from despair, of finding, in the testimony of her visible presence, an assurance that the doubts ever tearing his spirit and sickening his brain, are but the offspring of his phantasy. There she sits!—and there he stands, vainly endeavouring through her eyes to read her soul! for, alas,

there's no art

To find the mind's construction in the face!

—until at length, finding himself utterly baffled, but unable, save by the

It seemes it is as proper to our Age,
 To cast beyond our selues¹ in our Opinions,
 As it is common for the yonger sort
 To lacke discretion.² Come, go we to the King,
 This must be knowne, which being kept close
 might moue
 More greefe to hide, then hate to vtter loue.³

By heauen it is

Exeunt.

Come.

SCENA SECUNDA.⁴

*Enter King, Queene, Rosincrane, and Guildensterne
 Cum alijs.*

*Florish: Enter
 King and
 Queene,
 Rosencraus
 and Guylden-
 sterne.⁵*

King. Welcome deere *Rosincrance* and *Guilden-
 sterne.*

Moreouer,⁶ that we much did long to see you,
 The neede we haue to vse you, did prouoke

92 Our hastie sending.⁷ Something haue you heard

Of *Hamlets* transformation: so I call it,

so call

Since not th'exterior, nor the inward man

Sith nor

Resembles that it was. What it should bee

More then his Fathers death, that thus hath put him

So much from th'vnderstanding of himselfe,

I cannot deeme of.⁸ I intreat you both,

dreame

That being of so young dayes⁹ brought vp with
 him:

And since so Neighbour'd to¹⁰ his youth, and humour,

And sith |
and hauior,

That you vouchsafe your rest heere in our Court

Some little time: so by your Companies

To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather

116 So much as from Occasions you may gleane,

occasion

That open'd lies within our remedie.¹¹

* *Here in the Quarto:—*

Whether ought to vs vnknowne afflicts him thus,

removal of his person, to take his eyes from her face, he retires speechless as he came. Such is the man whom we are now to see wandering about the halls and corridors of the great castle-palace.

He may by this time have begun to doubt even the reality of the sight he had seen. The moment the pressure of a marvellous presence is removed, it is in the nature of man the same moment to begin to doubt; and instead of having any reason to wish the apparition a true one, he had every reason to desire to believe it an illusion or a lying spirit. Great were his excuse even if he forced likelihoods, and suborned witnesses in the court of his own judgment. To conclude it false was to think his father in heaven, and his mother not an adulteress, not a murderess! At once to kill his uncle would be to seal these horrible things irrevocable, indisputable facts. Strongest reasons he had for not taking immediate action in vengeance; but no smallest incapacity for action had share in his delay. The Poet takes recurrent pains, as if he foresaw hasty conclusions, to show his hero a man of promptitude, with this truest fitness for action, that he would not make unlawful haste. Without sufficing assurance, he would have no part in the fate either of the uncle he disliked or the mother he loved.

¹ 'to be overwise—to overreach ourselves'

'ambition, which o'erleaps itself,'—*Macbeth*, act i. sc. 7.

² Polonius is a man of faculty. His courtier-life, his self-seeking, his vanity, have made and make him the fool he is.

³ He hopes now to get his daughter married to the prince.

We have here a curious instance of Shakspeare's not unfrequently excessive condensation. Expanded, the clause would be like this: 'which, being kept close, might move more grief by the hiding of love, than to utter love might move hate:' the grief in the one case might be greater than the hate in the other would be. It verges on confusion, and may not be as Shakspeare wrote it, though it is like his way.

1st Q. Lets to the king, this madnesse may prooue,
Though wilde a while, yet more true to thy loue.

⁴ *Not in Quarto.*

⁵ *Q.* has not *Cum alijs.*

⁶ 'Moreover that &c.': *moreover* is here used as a preposition, with the rest of the clause for its objective.

⁷ Rosinrance and Guildensterne are, from the first and throughout, the creatures of the king.

⁸ The king's conscience makes him suspicious of Hamlet's suspicion.

⁹ 'from such an early age'

¹⁰ 'since then so familiar with'

¹¹ 'to gather as much as you may glean from opportunities, of that which, when disclosed to us, will lie within our remedial power.' If the line of the *Quarto* be included, it makes plainer construction. The line beginning with '*So much*;' then becomes parenthetical, and *to gather* will not immediately govern that line, but the rest of the sentence.

Qu. Good Gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of
you,

And sure I am, two men there are not liuing, there is not
To whom he more adheres. If it will please
you

To shew vs so much Gentic,¹ and good will,
As to expend your time with vs a-while,
For the supply and profit of our Hope,²
Your Visitation shall receiue such thankes
As fits a Kings remembrance.

Rosin. Both your Maiesties
Might by the Soueraigne power you haue of vs,
Put your dread pleasures, more into Command
Then to Entreatie.

Guil. We both³ obey, But we
And here giue vp our selues, in the full bent,⁴
To lay our Seruices freely at your feete, seruice
To be commanded.

King. Thankes *Rosincrance*, and gentle *Guilden-
sterne*.

Qu. Thankes *Guildensterne* and gentle *Rosin-
crance*.⁵

And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changed Sonne.

Go some of ye, you
And bring the Gentlemen where *Hamlet* is. bring these

Guil. Heauens make our presence and our
practises
Pleasant and helpfull to him. *Exit*.⁶

Queene. Amen.

I Amen. Ex-
eunt *Ros.*
and *Guyld.*

Enter Polonius.

18 *Pol.* Th'Ambassadors from Norway, my good
Lord,
Are ioyfully return'd.

¹ gentleness, grace, favour

² Their hope in Hamlet, as their son and heir.

³ both majesties.

⁴ If we put a comma after *bent*, the phrase will mean 'in the full *purpose* or *design* to lay our services &c.' Without the comma, the content of the phrase would be general:—'in the devoted force of our faculty.' The latter is more like Shakspeare.

⁵ Is there not tact intended in the queen's reversal of her husband's arrangement of the two names—that each might have precedence, and neither take offence?

⁶ *Not in Quarto.*

King. Thou still hast bin the Father of good
Newes.

Pol. Haue I, my Lord? ¹ Assure you, my good I assure my
Liege,

I hold my dutie, as I hold my Soule,
Both to my God, one to my gracious King: ² God, and to ²
And I do thinke, or else this braine of mine
Hunts not the traile of Policie, so sure
As I haue vs'd to do: that I haue found it hath vsd
The very cause of *Hamlets* Lunacie.

King. Oh speake of that, that I do long to doe I long
heare.

Pol. Giue first admittance to th'Ambassadors,
My Newes shall be the Newes to that great Feast. the fruite to
that

King. Thy selfe do grace to them, and bring
them in.

He tels me my sweet Queene, that he hath found my deere
The head ³ and sourse of all your Sonnes distemper. Gertrard he

Qu. I doubt it is no other, but the maine,
His Fathers death, and our o're-hasty Marriage. ⁴ our hastie

Enter Polonius, Voltumand, and Cornelius. *Enter*
Embassadors.

King. Well, we shall sift him. Welcome good my good
Frends:

Say *Voltumand*, what from our Brother Norway?

Volt. Most faire returne of Greetings, and De-
sires.

Vpon our first, ⁵ he sent out to supresse
His Nephewes Leuies, which to him appear'd
To be a preparation 'gainst the Poleak: Pollacke,
But better look'd into, he truly found
It was against your Highnesse, whereat greeued,
That so his Sicknesse, Age, and Impotence
Was falsely borne in hand, ⁶ sends ⁷ out Arrests
On *Fortinbras*, which he (in breefe) obeyes,

¹ To be spoken triumphantly, but in the peculiar tone of one thinking, 'You little know what better news I have behind!'

² I cannot tell which is the right reading; if the *Q*'s, it means, 'I hold my duty precious as my soul, whether to my God or my king'; if the *F*'s, it is a little confused by the attempt of Polonius to make a fine euphuistic speech:—'I hold my duty as I hold my soul—both at the command of my God, one at the command of my king.'

³ the spring; the river-head

'The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood'

Macbeth, act ii. sc. 3.

⁴ She goes a step farther than the king in accounting for Hamlet's misery—knows there is more cause of it yet, but hopes he does not know so much cause for misery as he might know.

⁵ Either 'first' stands for *first desire*, or it is a noun, and the meaning of the phrase is, 'The instant we mentioned the matter'.

⁶ 'borne in hand'—played with, taken advantage of.

'How you were borne in hand, how cross'd,'

Macbeth, act iii. sc. i.

⁷ The nominative pronoun was not *quite* indispensable to the verb in Shakspeare's time.

Receives rebuke from Norway : and in fine,
 Makes Vow before his Vnkle, neuer more
 To giue th'assay of Armes against your Maiestie.
 Whereon old Norway, ouercome with ioy,
 Giues him three thousand Crownes in Annuall Fee, threescore
thousand
 And his Commission to imploy those Soldiers
 So leuied as before, against the Poleak : Pollacke,
 With an intreaty heerein further shewne,
 190 That it might please you to giue quiet passe
 Through your Dominions, for his Enterprize, for this
 On such regards of safety and allowance,
 As therein are set downe.

King. It likes vs well :

And at our more consider'd¹ time wee'l read,
 Answer, and thinke vpon this Businesse.
 Meane time we thanke you, for your well-tooke
 Labour.

Go to your rest, at night wee'l Feast together.²

Most welcome home.

Exit Ambass. Exeunt
Ambassadors.
is well

Pol. This businesse is very well ended.³

My Liege, and Madam, to expostulate⁴

What Maiestie should be, what Dutie is,⁵

Why day is day ; night, night ; and time is time,

Were nothing but to waste Night, Day and Time.

Therefore, since Breuitie is the Soule of Wit,

And tediousnesse, the limbes and outward flour-
 ishes,⁶

Therefore
breuitie

I will be breefe. Your Noble Sonne is mad :

Mad call I it ; for to define true Madnesse,

What is't, but to be nothing else but mad.⁷

But let that go.

Qu. More matter, with lesse Art.⁸

Pol. Madam, I sweare I vse no Art at all :

That he is mad, 'tis true : 'Tis true 'tis pittie,

And pittie it is true : A foolish figure,⁹

hee's mad

pitty tis tis
true,

¹ time given up to, or filled with consideration; *or, perhaps*, time chosen for a purpose.

² He is always feasting.

³ Now for *his* turn! He sets to work at once with his rhetoric.

⁴ to lay down beforehand as postulates

⁵ We may suppose a dash and pause after '*Dutie is*'. The meaning is plain enough, though logical form is wanting.

⁶ As there is no imagination in Polonius, we cannot look for great aptitude in figure.

⁷ The nature of madness also is a postulate.

⁸ She is impatient, but wraps her rebuke in a compliment. Art, so-called, in speech, was much favoured in the time of Elizabeth. And as a compliment Polonius takes the form in which she expresses her dislike of his tediousness, and her anxiety after his news: pretending to wave it off, he yet, in his gratification, coming on the top of his excitement with the importance of his fancied discovery, plunges immediately into a very slough of *art*, and becomes absolutely silly.

⁹ It is no figure at all. It is hardly even a play with the words.

But farewell it : for I will vse no Art.
 Mad let vs grant him then : and now remaines
 That we finde out the cause of this effect,
 Or rather say, the cause of this defect ;
 For this effect defectiue, comes by cause,
 Thus it remaines, and the remainder thus. Perpend,
 I haue a daughter : haue, whil'st she is mine, while
 Who in her Dutie and Obedience, marke,
 Hath giuen me this : now gather, and surmise.

*The Letter.*¹

*To the Celestiall, and my Soules Idoll, the most
 beautified Ophelia.*

That's an ill Phrase, a vilde Phrase, beautified
 is a vilde Phrase : but you shall heare these in her thus in her
 excellent white bosome, these.² these, &c.

Qu. Came this from *Hamlet* to her.

Pol. Good Madam stay awhile, I will be faithfull.

Doubt thou, the Starres are fire, *Letter.*

Doubt, that the Sunne doth moue ;

Doubt Truth to be a Lier,

*But neuer Doubt, I loue.*³

*O deere Ophelia, I am ill at these Numbers : I
 haue not Art to reckon my grones ; but that I loue
 thee best, oh most Best beleue it. Adieu.*

*Thine euermore most deere Lady, whilst this
 Machine is to him, Hamlet.*

This in Obedience hath my daughter shew'd me : *Pol.* This |
 shewne |
 more about |
 solicitings
 And more about hath his solliciting,
 As they fell out by Time, by Meanes, and Place,
 All giuen to mine eare.

King. But how hath she receiu'd his Loue ?

Pol. What do you thinke of me ?

King. As of a man, faithfull and Honourable.

Pol. I wold faine proue so. But what might
 you think ?

¹ *Not in Quarto.*

² *Point thus* : ‘but you shall heare. *These, in her excellent white bosom, these* :’

Ladies, we are informed, wore a small pocket in front of the bodice ;—but to accept the fact as an explanation of this passage, is to cast the passage away. Hamlet *addresses* his letter, not to Ophelia’s pocket, but to Ophelia herself, at her house—that is, in the palace of her bosom, excellent in whiteness. In like manner, signing himself, he makes mention of his body as a machine of which he has the use for a time. So earnest is Hamlet that when he makes love, he is the more a philosopher. But he is more than a philosopher : he is a man of the Universe, not a man of this world only.

We must not allow the fashion of the time in which the play was written, to cause doubt as to the genuine heartiness of Hamlet’s love-making.

³ *1st Q.* Doubt that in earth is fire,
 Doubt that the starres doe moue,
 Doubt trueth to be a liar,
 But doe not doubt I loue.

When I had seene this hot loue on the wing,
 As I perceiued it, I must tell you that
 Before my Daughter told me, what might you
 Or my deere Maiestie your Queene heere, think,
 If I had playd the Deske or Table-booke,¹
 Or giuen my heart a winking, mute and dumbe, working
 Or look'd vpon this Loue, with idle sight,²
 What might you thinke? No, I went round to
 worke,

And (my yong Mistris) thus I did bespeake³
 Lord *Hamlet* is a Prince out of thy Starre,⁴
 This must not be :⁵ and then, I Precepts gaue I prescripts
 her,

42⁶, 43, 70 That she should locke her selfe from his Resort, from her
 Admit no Messengers, receiue no Tokens :
 Which done, she tooke the Fruites of my Aduice,⁷
 And he repulsed. A short Tale to make, repell'd, a
 Fell into a Sadnesse, then into a Fast,⁸
 Thence to a Watch, thence into a Weaknesse, to a wath,
 Thence to a Lightnesse, and by this declension to lightnes
 Into the Madnesse whereon now he raues, wherein
 And all we waile for.⁹ mourne for.

King. Do you thinke 'tis this ?¹⁰ thinke this?

Qu. It may be very likely. like

Pol. Hath there bene such a time, I'de fain I would
 know that,

That I haue possitiuely said, 'tis so,
 When it prou'd otherwise ?

King. Not that I know.

Pol. Take this from this¹¹ ; if this be other-
 wise,

If Circumstances leade me, I will finde
 Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeede
 Within the Center.

King. How may we try it further ?

¹ —behaved like a piece of furniture

² The love of talk makes a man use many idle words, foolish expressions, and useless repetitions.

³ Notwithstanding the parenthesis, I take 'Mistris' to be the objective to 'bespeake'—that is, *address*.

⁴ *Star*, mark of sort or quality ; brand (45). The 1st *Q.* goes on—

And one that is vnequall for your loue :

But it may mean, as suggested by my *Reader*, 'outside thy destiny,'—as ruled by the star of nativity—and I think it does.

⁵ Here is a change from the impression conveyed in the first act : he attributes his interference to his care for what befitted royalty ; whereas, talking to Ophelia (40, 72), he attributes it entirely to his care for her ;—so partly in the speech correspondent to the present in 1st *Q.* :—

Now since which time, seeing his loue thus cross'd,
Which I tooke to be idle, and but sport,
He straitway grew into a melancholy,

⁶ See also passage in note from 1st *Q.*

⁷ She obeyed him. The 'fruits' of his advice were her conformed actions.

⁸ When the appetite goes, and the sleep follows, doubtless the man is on the steep slope of madness. But as to Hamlet, and how matters were with him, what Polonius says is worth nothing.

⁹ 'wherein now he raves, and wherefor all we wail.'

¹⁰ *To the queen.*

¹¹ head from shoulders

Pol. You know sometimes
He walkes foure houres together, heere¹
In the Lobby.

Qu. So he ha's indeed.

he dooes
indeede.

118 *Pol.* At such a time Ile loose my Daughter to
him,

Be you and I behinde an Arras then,
Marke the encounter : If he loue her not,
And be not from his reason false thereon ;
Let me be no Assistant for a State,
And keepe a Farme and Carters.

But keepe

King. We will try it.

*Enter Hamlet reading on a Booke.*²

Qu. But looke where sadly the poore wretch
Comes reading.³

Pol. Away I do beseech you, both away,
Ile boord⁴ him presently. *Exit King & Queen.*⁵
Oh giue me leaue.⁶ How does my good Lord

Hamlet?

Ham. Well, God-a-mercy.

Pol. Do you know me, my Lord?

180 *Ham.* Excellent, excellent well : y'are a Fish-
monger.⁷

Excellent well,
you are

Pol. Not I my Lord.

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

Pol. Honest, my Lord?

Ham. I sir, to be honest as this world goes, is
to bee one man pick'd out of two thousand.

tenne
thousand.⁸

Pol. That's very true, my Lord.

*Ham.*⁹ For if the Sun breed Magots in a dead
dogge, being a good kissing Carrion——¹⁰
Haue you a daughter?¹¹

carrion. Have

Pol. I haue my Lord.

- ¹ *1st Q.* The Princes walke is here in the galery,
There let *Ofelia*, walke vntill hee comes :
Your selfe and I will stand close in the study,

² *Not in Quarto.*

³ *1st Q.—King.* see where hee comes poring vppon a booke.

⁴ The same as *accost*, both meaning originally *go to the side of*.

⁵ *A line back in the Quarto.*

⁶ ‘Please you to go away.’ 89, 203. Here should come the preceding stage-direction.

⁷ Now first the Play shows us Hamlet in his affected madness. He has a great dislike to the selfish, time-serving courtier, who, like his mother, has forsaken the memory of his father—and a great distrust of him as well. The two men are moral antipodes. Each is given to moralizing—but compare their reflections: those of Polonius reveal a lover of himself, those of Hamlet a lover of his kind; Polonius is interested in success; Hamlet in humanity.

⁸ So also in *1st Q.*

⁹ —reading, or pretending to read, the words from the book he carries.

¹⁰ When the passion for emendation takes possession of a man, his opportunities are endless—so many seeming emendations offer themselves which are in themselves not bad, letters and words affording as much play as the keys of a piano. ‘Being a god kissing carrion,’ is in itself good enough; but Shakspeare meant what stands in both *Quarto* and *Folio*: *the dead dog being a carrion good at kissing*. The arbitrary changes of the editors are amazing.

¹¹ He cannot help his mind constantly turning upon women; and if his thoughts of them are often cruelly false, it is not Hamlet but his mother who is to blame: her conduct has hurled him from the peak of optimism into the bottomless pool of pessimistic doubt, above the foul waters of which he keeps struggling to lift his head.

Ham. Let her not walke i'th'Sunne: Conception¹ is a blessing, but not as your daughter may conceiue. Friend looke too't. but as your

100 *Pol.*² How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter: yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a Fishmonger: he is farre gone, farre gone: and truly in my youth, I suffred much extremitie for loue: very neere this. Ile speake to him againe. a sayd I
Fishmonger, a
is farre gone,
and truly

What do you read my Lord?

Ham. Words, words, words.

Pol. What is the matter, my Lord?

Ham. Betweene who?³

Pol. I meane the matter you meane, my Lord. matter that you
reade my

Ham. Slanders Sir: for the Satyricall slaue saies here, that old men haue gray Beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes purging thicke Amber, or Plum-Tree Gumme: and that they haue a plentifull locke of Wit, together with weake Hammes. All which Sir, though I most powerfully, and potently beleeeue; yet I holde it not Honestie⁴ to haue it thus set downe: For you your selfe Sir, should be old as I am, if like a Crab you could go backward. satericall rogue
sayes
Amber, and
lacke | with
most weake
for your selfe
sir shall growe
old as I am:

*Pol.*⁵ Though this be madnesse,
Yet there is Method in't: will you walke
Out of the ayre⁶ my Lord?

Ham. Into my Graue?

Pol. Indeed that is out o'th' Ayre: that's out of
the ayre;
How pregnant (sometimes) his Replies are?
A happinesse,
That often Madnesse hits on,
Which Reason and Sanitie could not
So prosperously be deliuer'd of. sanctity

¹ One of the meanings of the word, and more in use then than now, is *understanding*.

² (*aside*)

³ —pretending to take him to mean by *matter*, the *point of quarrel*.

⁴ Propriety

⁵ (*aside*)

⁶ the draught

* I will leaue him,

And sodainely contriue the meanes of meeting
Betweene him,¹ and my daughter.

My Honourable Lord, I will most humbly
Take my leaue of you.

Ham. You cannot Sir take from² me any thing,
that I will more willingly part withall, except my
life, my life.³

will not more |
my life, except
my

*Enter
Gyldersterne,
and Rosen-
crans.*

Polon. Fare you well my Lord.

Ham. These tedious old fooles.

Polon. You goe to seeke my Lord *Hamlet*; the Lord
there hee is.

*Enter Rosincran and Guildensterne.*⁴

Rosin. God saue you Sir.

Guild. Mine honour'd Lord?

Rosin. My most deare Lord?

Ham. My excellent good friends? How do'st
thou *Guildensterne*? Oh, *Rosincrane*; good Lads:
How doe ye both?

My extent
good
A Rosencraus,
you

Rosin. As the indifferent Children of the earth.

Guild. Happy, in that we are not ouer-happy:
on Fortunes Cap, we are not the very Button.

euer happy on
Fortunes
lap,

Ham. Nor the Soales of her Shoo?

Rosin. Neither my Lord.

Ham. Then you liue about her waste, or in the
middle of her fauour?

fauours.

Guil. Faith, her priuates, we.

Ham. In the secret parts of Fortune? Oh,
most true: she is a Strumpet.⁵ What's the newes?

What newes?

Rosin. None my Lord; but that the World's
growne honest.

but the

Ham. Then is Doomesday neere: But your

* *In the Quarto, the speech ends thus:—*

I will leaue him and my daughter.¹ My Lord, I will take my leaue
of you.

¹ From 'And sodainely' to 'betweene him,' *not in Quarto.*

² It is well here to recall the modes of the word *leave*: 'Give me *leave*,' Polonius says with proper politeness to the king and queen when he wants *them* to go—that is, 'Grant me your *departure*'; but he would, going himself, *take* his leave, his departure, *of* or *from* them—by their permission to go. Hamlet means, 'You cannot take from me anything I will more willingly part with than your leave, or, my permission to you to go.' 85, 203. See the play on the two meanings of the word in *Twelfth Night*, act ii. sc. 4:

Duke. Give me now leave to leave thee;

though I suspect it ought to be—

Duke. Give me now leave.

Clown. To leave thee!—Now, the melancholy &c.

³ It is a relief to him to speak the truth under the cloak of madness—ravingly. He has no one to whom to open his heart: what lies there he feels too terrible for even the eye of Horatio. He has not apparently told him as yet more than the tale of his father's murder.

⁴ *Above, in Quarto.*

⁵ In this and all like utterances of Hamlet, we see what worm it is that lies gnawing at his heart.

¹ This is a slip in the *Quarto*—rectified in the *Folio*: his daughter was not present.

newes is not true.¹ | ² Let me question more in particular : what haue you my good friends, deserued at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to Prison hither ?

Guil. Prison, my Lord ?

Ham. Denmark's a Prison.

Rosin. Then is the World one.

Ham. A goodly one, in which there are many Confines, Wards, and Dungeons ; *Denmarke* being one o'th'worst.

Rosin. We thinke not so my Lord.

Ham. Why then 'tis none to you ; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so³ : to me it is a prison.

Rosin. Why then your Ambition makes it one : 'tis too narrow for your minde.⁴

Ham. O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count my selfe a King of infinite space ; were it not that I haue bad dreames.

Guil. Which dreames indeed are Ambition : for the very substance⁵ of the Ambitious, is meerely the shadow of a Dreame.

Ham. A dreame it selfe is but a shadow.

Rosin. Truly, and I hold Ambition of so ayry and light a quality, that it is but a shadowes shadow.

Ham. Then are our Beggers bodies ; and our Monarchs and out-stretcht Heroes the Beggers Shadowes : shall wee to th'Court : for, by my fey⁶ I cannot reason ?⁷

Both. Wee'l wait vpon you.

Ham. No such matter.⁸ I will not sort you with the rest of my seruants : for to speake to you like an honest man : I am most dreadfully attended ;⁹ | but in the beaten way of friendship,¹⁰ But in What make you at *Elsonower* ?

¹ 'it is not true that the world is grown honest': he doubts themselves. His eye is sharper because his heart is sorer since he left Wittenberg. He proceeds to examine them.

² This passage, beginning with 'Let me question,' and ending with 'dreadfully attended,' is not in the *Quarto*.

Who inserted in the Folio this and other passages? Was it or was it not Shakspeare? Beyond a doubt they are Shakspeare's all. Then who omitted those omitted? Was Shakspeare incapable of refusing any of his own work? Or would these editors, who profess to have all opportunity, and who, belonging to the theatre, must have had the best of opportunities, have desired or dared to omit what far more painstaking editors have since presumed, though out of reverence, to restore?

³ 'but it is thinking that makes it so:'

⁴ —feeling after the cause of Hamlet's strangeness, and following the readiest suggestion, that of chagrin at missing the succession.

⁵ objects and aims.

⁶ *foi*.

⁷ Does he choose beggars as the representatives of substance because they lack ambition—that being shadow? Or does he take them as the shadows of humanity, that, following Rosinrance, he may get their shadows, the shadows therefore of shadows, to parallel *monarchs* and *heroes*? But he is not satisfied with his own analogue—therefore will to the court, where good logic is not wanted—where indeed he knows a hellish lack of reason.

⁸ 'On no account.'

⁹ 'I have very bad servants.' Perhaps he judges his servants spies upon him. Or might he mean that he was *haunted with bad thoughts*? Or again, is it a stroke of his pretence of madness—suggesting imaginary followers?

¹⁰ 'to speak plainly, as old friends,'

Rosin. To visit you my Lord, no other occasion.

Ham. Begger that I am, I am euen poore in
 72 thanks ; but I thanke you : and sure deare friends
 my thanks are too deare a halfe peny¹ ; were you
 not sent for ? Is it your owne inclining ? Is it a
 free visitation ?² Come, deale iustly with me :
 come, come ; nay speake.

Guil. What should we say my Lord ?³

Ham. Why any thing. But to the purpose ;
 you were sent for ; and there is a kinde confession
 in your lookes ; which your modesties haue not
 craft enough to color, I know the good King and
 72 Queene haue sent for you.

Rosin. To what end my Lord ?

Ham. That you must teach me : but let mee
 coniure⁴ you by the rights of our fellowship, by
 the consonancy of our youth,⁵ by the Obligation
 of our euer-preserued loue, and by what more
 deare, a better proposer could charge you withall ;
 be euen and direct with me, whether you were sent
 for or no.

Rosin. What say you ?⁶

Ham. Nay then I haue an eye of you⁷ : if you
 loue me hold not off.⁸

72 *Guil.* My Lord, we were sent for.

Ham. I will tell you why ; so shall my antici-
 pation preuent your discouery of your secrie to
 the King and Queene :⁹ moult no feather, I haue
 116 of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my
 mirth, forgone all custome of exercise ; and indeed,
 it goes so heauenly with my disposition ; that this
 goodly frame the Earth, seemes to me a sterrill
 Promontory ; this most excellent Canopy the Ayre,
 look you, this braue ore-hanging, this Maiesticall
 Roofe, fretted with golden fire : why, it appeares no

am ever poore

come, come,

Any thing but
to th purpose :
kinde of con-
fession

can

discouery, and
your secrie to
the King and
Queene moult
no feather,¹⁰

exercises :

heauily

orehanging
firmament,

appeareth

¹ —because they were by no means hearty thanks.

² He wants to know whether they are in his uncle's employment and favour ; whether they pay court to himself for his uncle's ends.

³ He has no answer ready.

⁴ He will not cast them from him without trying a direct appeal to their old friendship for plain dealing. This must be remembered in relation to his treatment of them afterwards. He affords them every chance of acting truly—conjuring them to honesty—giving them a push towards repentance.

⁵ Either, 'the harmony of our young days,' or, 'the sympathies of our present youth.'

⁶ —to *Guildestern*

⁷ (*aside*) 'I will keep an eye upon you ;'

⁸ 'do not hold back.'

⁹ The *Quarto* seems here to have the right reading.

¹⁰ 'your promise of secrecy remain intact ;'

other thing to mee, then a foule and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of worke is a man! how Noble in Reason? how infinite in faculty? in forme and mouing how expresse and admirable? in Action, how like an Angel? in apprehension, how like a God? the beauty of the world, the Parragon of Animals; and yet to me, what is this Quintessence of Dust? Man delights not me; ¹ no, nor Woman neither; though by your smiling you seeme to say so. ²

nothing to me
but a
What peece

faculties,

not me, nor
women

Rosin. My Lord, there was no such stufte in my thoughts.

Ham. Why did you laugh, when I said, Man delights not me? <sup>yee laugh then,
when</sup>

Rosin. To thinke, my Lord, if you delight not in Man, what Lenton entertainment the Players shall receiue from you: ³ wee coated them ⁴ on the way, and hither are they comming to offer you Seruice.

Ham. ⁵ He that playes the King shall be welcome; his Maiesty shall haue Tribute of mee: ^{on me,} the aduenturous Knight shal vse his Foyle and Target: the Louer shall not sigh *gratis*, the humorous man ⁶ shall end his part in peace: ⁷ the Clowne shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickled a'th' sere: ⁸ and the Lady shall say her minde freely; or the blanke Verse shall halt for't ⁹: ^{black verse} what Players are they?

Rosin. Euen those you were wont to take delight in the Tragedians of the City. <sup>take such
delight</sup>

Ham. How chanches it they trauaile? their residence both in reputation and profit was better both wayes.

Rosin. I thinke their Inhibition comes by the meanes of the late Innouation? ¹⁰

¹ A genuine description, so far as it goes, of the state of Hamlet's mind. But he does not reveal the operating cause—his loss of faith in women, which has taken the whole poetic element out of heaven, earth, and humanity: he would have his uncle's spies attribute his condition to mere melancholy.

² —said angrily, I think.

³ —a ready-witted subterfuge.

⁴ came alongside of them; got up with them; apparently rather from Fr. *côté* than *coter*; like *accost*. Compare 71. But I suspect it only means *noted, observed*, and is from *coter*.

⁵ —with humorous imitation, perhaps, of each of the characters

⁶ —the man with a whim

⁷ This part of the speech—from ⁷ to ⁸, is not in the *Quarto*.

⁸ Halliwell gives a quotation in which the touch-hole of a pistol is called the *sere*: the *sere*, then, of the lungs would mean the opening of the lungs—the part with which we laugh; those 'whose lungs are tickled a' th' sere,' are such as are ready to laugh on the least provocation: *tickled—irritable, ticklish*—ready to laugh, as another might be to cough. 'Tickled o' the sere' was a common phrase, signifying, thus, *propense*.

1st Q. The clowne shall make them laugh
That are tickled in the lungs,

⁹ Does this refer to the pause that expresses the unutterable? or to the ruin of the measure of the verse by an incompetent heroine?

¹⁰ Does this mean, 'I think their prohibition comes through the late innovation,'—of the children's acting; or, 'I think they are prevented from staying at home by the late new measures,'—such, namely, as came of the puritan opposition to stage-plays? This had grown so strong, that, in 1600, the Privy Council issued an order restricting the number of theatres in London to two: by such an *innovation* a number of players might well be driven to the country.

Ham. Doe they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the City? Are they so follow'd?

Rosin. No indeed, they are not.

are they not.

¹*Ham* How comes it? doe they grow rusty?

Rosin. Nay, their indeauour keeps in the wonted pace; But there is Sir an ayrie of Children,² little Yases,³ that crye out⁴ on the top of question;⁵ and are most tyrannically clap't for't: these are now the fashion, and so be-ratled the common Stages⁶ (so they call them) that many wearing Rapiers,⁷ are affraide of Goose-quils, and dare scarce come thither.⁸

Ham. What are they Children? Who maintains 'em? How are they escoted?⁹ Will they pursue the Quality¹⁰ no longer then they can sing?¹¹ Will they not say afterwards if they should grow themselves to common Players (as it is like most¹² if their meanes are no better) their Writers¹³ do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their owne Succession.¹⁴

Rosin. Faith there ha's bene much to do on both sides: and the Nation holds it no sinne, to tarre them¹⁵ to Controuersie. There was for a while, no mony bid for argument, vnlesse the Poet and the Player went to Cuffes in the Question.¹⁶

Ham. Is't possible?

Guild. Oh there ha's bene much throwing about of Braines.

Ham. Do the Boyes carry it away?¹⁷

Rosin. I that they do my Lord, *Hercules* and his load too.¹⁸

Ham. It is not strange: for mine Vnckle is King of Denmarke, and those that would make mowes at him while my Father liued; giue twenty,

not very
strange, | my

make mouths

¹ The whole of the following passage, beginning with 'How comes it, and ending with 'Hercules and his load too,' belongs to the *Folio* alone—is not in the *Quarto*.

In the 1st *Quarto* we find the germ of the passage—unrepresented in the 2nd, developed in the *Folio*.

Ham. Players, what Players be they?

Ross. My Lord, the Tragedians of the Citty,
Those that you tooke delight to see so often.

Ham. How comes it that they trauell? Do
they grow restie?

Gil. No my Lord, their reputation holds as it was wont.

Ham. How then?

Gil. Yfaith my Lord, noueltie carries it away,
For the principall publike audience that
Came to them, are turned to priuate playes,*
And to the humour † of children.

Ham. I doe not greatly wonder of it,
For those that would make mops and moes
At my vnclē, when my father liued, &c.

² *a nest of children.* The acting of the children of two or three of the chief choirs had become the rage. ³ *Eyases*—unfledged hawks.

⁴ Children *cry out* rather than *speak* on the stage.

⁵ 'cry out beyond dispute'—*unquestionably*; 'cry out and no mistake.' 'He does not top his part.' *The Rehearsal*, iii. 1.—'He is not up to it.' But perhaps here is intended *above reason*: 'they cry out excessively, excruciatingly.' 103

This said, in top of rage the lines she rents,—*A Lover's Complaint*.

⁶ I presume it should be the present tense, *berattle*—except the *are* of the preceding member be understood: 'and so berattled *are* the common stages.' If the *present*, then the children 'so abuse the grown players,'—in the pieces they acted, particularly in the new *arguments*, written for them—whence the reference to *goose-quills*.

⁷ —of the play-going public

⁸ —for dread of sharing in the ridicule.

⁹ *paid*—from the French *escot*, a shot or reckoning: *Dr. Johnson*.

¹⁰ —the quality of players; the profession of the stage

¹¹ 'Will they cease playing when their voices change?'

¹² Either *will* should follow here, or *like* and *most* must change places.

¹³ 'those that write for them'

¹⁴ —what they had had to come to themselves.

¹⁵ 'to incite the children and the grown players to controversy': *to tarre them on like dogs*: see *King John*, iv. 1.

¹⁶ 'No stage-manager would buy a new argument, or prologue, to a play, unless the dramatist and one of the actors were therein represented as falling out on the question of the relative claims of the children and adult actors.'

¹⁷ 'Have the boys the best of it?'

¹⁸ 'That they have, out and away.' Steevens suggests that allusion is here made to the sign of the Globe Theatre—Hercules bearing the world for Atlas.

* amateur-plays

† whimsical fashion

forty, an hundred Ducates a peece, for his picture¹ in Little.² There is something in this more then Naturall, if Philosophie could finde it out.

fortie, fifty, a hundred little, s'bloud there is

*Flourish for the Players.*³

A Florish.

Guil There are the Players.

Ham. Gentlemen, you are welcom to *Elsonower*: your hands, come: The appurtenance of Welcome, is Fashion and Ceremony. Let me
260 comply with you in the Garbe,⁴ lest my extent⁵ to the Players (which I tell you must shew fairely outward) should more appeare like entertainment⁶ then yours.⁷ You are welcome: but my Vnckle Father, and Aunt Mother are deceiu'd.

come then, th'

in this garb: let me extent

outwards,

Guil. In what my deere Lord?

Ham. I am but mad North, North-West: when the Winde is Southerly, I know a Hawke from a Handsaw.⁸

Enter Polonius.

Pol. Well⁹ be with you Gentlemen.

Ham. Hearke you *Guildensterne*, and you too: at each eare a hearer: that great Baby you see there, is not yet out of his swathing clouts.

swadling clouts.

Rosin. Happily he's the second time come to them: for they say, an old man is twice a childe.

he is

Ham. I will Prophesie. Hee comes to tell me of the Players. Mark it, you say right Sir: for a Monday morning 'twas so indeed.¹⁰

sir, a Monday t'was then indeede.

Pol. My Lord, I haue Newes to tell you.

Ham. My Lord, I haue Newes to tell you. When *Rossius* an Actor in Rome——¹¹

Rossius was an

Pol. The Actors are come hither my Lord.

Ham. Buzze, buzze.¹²

Pol. Vpon mine Honor.¹³

my

Ham. Then can each Actor on his Asse——

came each

¹ If there be any logical link here, except that, after the instance adduced, no change in social fashion—nothing at all indeed, is to be wondered at, I fail to see it. Perhaps the speech is intended to belong to the simulation. The last sentence of it appears meant to convey the impression that he suspects nothing—is only bewildered by the course of things.

² his miniature

³ —to indicate their approach.

⁴ *com'ply*—accent on first syllable—‘pass compliments with you’ (260)—*in the garb*, either ‘in appearance,’ or ‘in the fashion of the hour.’

⁵ ‘the amount of courteous reception I extend’—‘my advances to the players’

⁶ reception, welcome

⁷ He seems to desire that they shall no more be on the footing of fellow-students, and thus to rid himself of the old relation. Perhaps he hints that they are players too. From any further show of friendliness he takes refuge in convention—and professed convention—supplying a reason in order to escape a dangerous interpretation of his sudden formality—‘lest you should suppose me more cordial to the players than to you.’ The speech is full of inwoven irony, doubtful, and refusing to be unravelled out. With what merely half-shown, yet scathing satire it should be spoken and accompanied!

⁸ A proverb of the time comically corrupted—*handsaw for heronshaw*—a heron, the quarry of the hawk. He denies his madness as madmen do—and in terms themselves not unbecoming madness—so making it seem the more genuine. Yet every now and then, urged by the commotion of his being, he treads perilously on the border of self-betrayal.

⁹ used as a noun.

¹⁰ *Point thus*: ‘Mark it.—You say right, sir; &c.’ He takes up a speech that means nothing, and might mean anything, to turn aside the suspicion their whispering might suggest to Polonius that they had been talking about him—so better to lay his trap for him.

¹¹ He mentions the *actor* to lead Polonius so that his prophecy of him shall come true.

¹² An interjection of mockery: he had made a fool of him.

¹³ Polonius thinks he is refusing to believe him.

Polon. The best Actors in the world, either for Tragedie, Comedie, Historie, Pastorall: Pastorall-Comicall-Historicall-Pastorall: | 'Tragicall-Historicall: Tragicall - Comicall - Historicall - Pastorall¹: | Scene indiuible,² or Poem vnlimited.³ *Seneca* cannot be too heauy, nor *Plautus* too light, for the law of Writ, and the Liberty. These are the onely men.⁴

Pastorall
Comicall,

scene indiuible,²

Ham. O *Iephtha* Iudge of Israel, what a Treasure had'st thou?

Pol. What a Treasure had he, my Lord? ⁵

Ham. Why one faire Daughter, and no more,⁶
The which he loued passing well.⁶

86 *Pol.* Still on my Daughter.

Ham. Am I not i'th'right old *Iephtha*?

Polon. If you call me *Iephtha* my Lord, I haue a daughter that I loue passing well.

Ham. Nay that followes not.⁷

Polon. What followes then, my Lord?

Ha. Why, As by lot, God wot:⁶ and then you know, It came to passe, as most like it was:⁶ The first rowe of the *Pons*⁸ *Chanson* will shew you more. For looke where my Abridgements⁹ come.

pious chanson

abridgment⁹
comes.

Enter foure or fve Players.

*Enter the
Players.*

Y'are welcome Masters, welcome all. I am glad to see thee well: Welcome good Friends. O my olde Friend? Thy face is valiant¹⁰ since I saw thee last: Com'st thou to beard me in Denmarke? What, my yong Lady and Mistris?¹¹ Byrlady your Ladiship is neerer Heauen then when I saw you last, by the altitude of a Choppine.¹² Pray God your voice like a peece of vncurrant Gold be not crack'd within the ring.¹³ Masters, you are all welcome: wee'l e'ne to't like French Faulconers,¹⁴ flie at any thing we see: wee'l haue a Speech

You are

oh old friend,
why thy face
is valiant¹⁰

by lady

nerer to

like friendly
Fankner

¹ From ¹ to ¹ is not in the *Quarto*.

² Does this phrase mean *all in one scene*?

³ A poem to be recited only—one not *limited*, or *divided* into speeches.

⁴ *Point thus*: 'too light. For the law of Writ, and the Liberty, these are the onely men':—*either for written plays, that is, or for those in which the players extemporized their speeches.*

1st *Q.* 'For the law hath writ those are the onely men.'

⁵ Polonius would lead him on to talk of his daughter.

⁶ These are lines of the first stanza of an old ballad still in existence. Does Hamlet suggest that as Jephthah so Polonius had sacrificed his daughter? Or is he only desirous of making him talk about her?

⁷ 'That is not as the ballad goes'

⁸ That this is a corruption of the *pious* in the *Quarto*, s made clearer from the 1st *Quarto*: 'the first verse of the godly Ballet wil tel you all.

⁹ *abridgment*—that which *abridges*, or cuts short. His 'Abridgements' were the Players.

¹⁰ 1st *Q.* 'Vallanced'—*with a beard*, that is. Both readings may be correct.

¹¹ A boy of course: no women had yet appeared on the stage.

¹² a Venetian boot, stilted, sometimes very high.

¹³ —because then it would be unfit for a woman-part. A piece of gold so worn that it had a crack reaching within the inner circle was no longer current. 1st *Q.* 'in the ring:'—was a pun intended?

¹⁴ —like French sportsmen of the present day too.

straight. Come giue vs a tast of your quality :
come, a passionate speech.

1. *Play*. What speech, my Lord?

my good Lord?

Ham. I heard thee speak me a speech once, but
it was neuer Acted : or if it was, not aboue once,
for the Play I remember pleas'd not the Million,
'twas *Cauiarie* to the Generall¹ : but it was (as I
receiu'd it, and others, whose iudgement in such
matters, cried in the top of mine)² an excellent
Play ; well digested in the Scœnes, set downe with
as much modestie, as cunning.³ I remember one
said there was no Sallets⁴ in the lines, to make the
matter sauoury ; nor no matter in the phrase,⁵ that
might indite the Author of affectation, but cal'd it
an honest method *. One cheefe Speech in it, I
cheefely lou'd, 'twas *Aeneas* Tale to *Dido*, and
thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of
*Priams*⁶ slaughter. If it liue in your memory,
begin at this Line, let me see, let me see : The
rugged *Pyrrhus* like th'*Hyrceanian* Beast.⁷ It is
not so : it begins⁸ with *Pyrrhus*⁹.

were

affection,

: one speech
in't I

Aeneas talke to

when

tis not

¹⁰ The rugged *Pyrrhus*, he whose Sable Armes¹¹
Blacke as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the Ominous¹² Horse,
Hath now this dread and blacke Complexion
smear'd

With Heraldry more dismall : Head to foote
Now is he to take Geulles,¹³ horridly Trick'd

is he totall
Gules¹³

With blood of Fathers, Mothers, Daughters, Sonnes,
¹⁴ Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets,
That lend a tyrannous, and damned light

and a damned

* *Here in the Quarto:—*

, as wholesome as sweete, and by very much, more handsome then
fine :

¹ The salted roe of the sturgeon is a delicacy disliked by most people.

² 'were superior to mine'

The *1st Quarto* has,

'Cried in the toppe of their iudgements, an excellent play,'—
that is, *pronounced it, to the best of their judgments, an excellent play.*

Note the difference between 'the top of *my* judgment', and 'the top of *their* judgments'. 97

³ skill

⁴ coarse jests. 25, 67

⁵ *style*

⁶ *1st Q.* 'Princes slaughter;'

⁷ *1st Q.* 'th'arganian beast : ' 'the Hyrcan tiger,' *Macbeth*, iii. 4.

⁸ 'it *begins*': emphasis on *begins*.

⁹ A pause ; then having recollected, he starts afresh.

¹⁰ These passages are Shakspeare's own, not quotations : the *Quartos* differ. But when he wrote them he had in his mind a phantom of Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. I find Steevens has made a similar conjecture, and quotes from Marlowe two of the passages I had marked as being like passages here.

¹¹ The poetry is admirable in its kind—intentionally *charged*, to raise it to the second stage-level, above the blank verse, that is, of the drama in which it is set, as that blank verse is raised above the ordinary level of speech. 143

The correspondent passage in *1st Q.* runs nearly parallel for a few lines.

¹² —like *portentous*.

¹³ 'all red'. *1st Q.* 'totall guise,'

¹⁴ Here the *1st Quarto* has :—

Back't and imparched in calagulate gore,
Rifted in earth and fire, olde grandsire *Pryam* seekes :
So goe on.

To their vilde Murthers, roasted in wrath and fire, their Lords
murther,
 And thus o're-sized with coagulate gore,
 VVith eyes like Carbuncles, the hellish *Pyrrhus*
 Old Grandsire *Priam* seeks.¹

seekes ; so pro-
ceede you.²

Pol. Fore God, my Lord, well spoken, with
 good accent, and good discretion.³

1. *Player.* Anon he findes him, Play.
 Striking too short at Greekes.⁴ His anticke Sword,
 Rebellious to his Arme, lyes where it falles
 Repugnant to command⁴ : vnequall match, matcht,
Pyrrhus at *Priam* driues, in Rage strikes wide :
 But with the whiffe and winde of his fell Sword,
 Th'vnnerved Father fals.⁵ Then senselesse Illium,⁶
 Seeming to feele his blow, with flaming top seele⁷ this
blowe,
 Stoopest to his Bace, and with a hideous crash
 Takes Prisoner *Pyrrhus* eare. For loe, his Sword
 Which was declining on the Milkie head
 Of Reuerend *Priam*, seem'd i'th'Ayre to sticke :
 So as a painted Tyrant *Pyrrhus* stood,⁸
 And like a Newtrall to his will and matter,⁹ did
 nothing.¹⁰

stood
Like

¹¹ But as we often see against some storme,
 A silence in the Heauens, the Racke stand still,
 The bold windes speechlesse, and the Orbe below
 As hush as death : Anon the dreadful Thunder
 110 Doth rend the Region.¹¹ So after *Pyrrhus* pause,
 Arowsed Vengeance sets him new a-worke,
 And neuer did the Cyclops hammers fall
 On Mars his Armours, forg'd for prooffe Eterne, Marses
Armor
 With lesse remorse then *Pyrrhus* bleeding sword
 Now falles on *Priam*.

¹² Out, out, thou Strumpet-Fortune, all you Gods,
 In generall Synod take away her power :
 Breake all the Spokes and Fallies from her wheele, follies

¹ This, though horrid enough, is in degree below the description in *Dido*.

² He is directing the player to take up the speech there where he leaves it. See last quotation from *1st Q.*

³ *judgment*

⁴ —with an old man's under-reaching blows—till his arm is so jarred by a missed blow, that he cannot raise his sword again.

⁵ Whereat he lifted up his bedrid limbs,
And would have grappled with Achilles' son,

Which he, disdainig, whisk'd his sword about,
And with the wound * thereof the king fell down.

Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*.

⁶ The *Quarto* has omitted 'Then senselesse Illium,' or something else.

⁷ Printed with the long f.

⁸ —motionless as a tyrant in a picture.

⁹ 'standing between his will and its object as if he had no relation to either,'

¹⁰ And then in triumph ran into the streets,
Through which he could not pass for slaughtered men ;
So, leaning on his sword, he stood stone still,
Viewing the fire wherewith rich Ilion burnt.

Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*.

¹¹ Who does not feel this passage, down to 'Region,' thoroughly Shakspearean !

¹² Is not the rest of this speech very plainly Shakspeare's ?

* *wind*, I think it should be.

And boule the round Naue downe the hill of
Heauen,

As low as to the Fiends.

Pol. This is too long.

Ham. It shall to'th Barbar, with your beard. to the
Prythee say on: He's for a Iigge, or a tale of
Baudry, or hee sleepes. Say on; come to *Hecuba*.

1. *Play.* But who, O who, had seen the inobled¹
Queen. But who, a
woe, had
mobled¹

Ham. The inobled¹ Queene? mobled

Pol. That's good: Inobled¹ Queene is good.²

1. *Play.* Run bare-foot vp and downe,
Threatning the flame flames
With Bisson Rheume:³ A clout about that head, clout vppon
Where late the Diadem stood, and for a Robe
About her lanke and all ore-teamed Loines,⁴
A blanket in th'Alarum of feare caught vp. the alarme
Who this had seene, with tongue in Venome steep'd,
'Gainst Fortunes State, would Treason haue pro-
nounc'd?⁵

But if the Gods themselues did see her then,
When she saw *Pyrrhus* make malicious sport
In mincing with his Sword her Husbands limbes,⁶ husband
The instant Burst of Clamour that she made
(Vnlesse things mortall moue them not at all)
Would haue made milche⁷ the Burning eyes of
Heauen,

And passion in the Gods.⁸

Pol. Looke where⁹ he ha's not turn'd his colour,
and ha's teares in's eyes. Pray you no more. prethee

Ham. 'Tis well, Ile haue thee speake out the
rest, soone. Good my Lord, will you see the rest of this
Players wel bestow'd. Do ye heare, let them be you
well vs'd: for they are the Abstracts and breefe abstract
Chronicles of the time. After your death, you

¹ 'mobled'—also in 1st *Q.*—may be the word : *muffled* seems a corruption of it : compare *mob-cap*, and

'The moon does mobble up herself'
—*Shirley*, quoted by *Farmer* ;

but I incline to 'inobled,' thrice in the *Folio*—once with a capital: I take it to stand for 'ignobled,' *degraded*.

² 'Inobled Queene is good.' *not in Quarto*.

³ —threatening to put the flames out with blind tears : ' *bisen*,' *blind*
—Ang. Sax.

⁴ —she had had so many children.

⁵ There should of course be no point of interrogation here.

⁶ This butcher, whilst his hands were yet held up,
Treading upon his breast, struck off his hands.

Marlowe's *Dido*, *Queen of Carthage*.

⁷ ' *milche*'—capable of giving milk : here *capable of tears*, which the burning eyes of the gods were not before.

⁸ 'And would have made passion in the Gods.'

⁹ 'whether'

were better haue a bad Epitaph, then their ill report while you liued.¹

live.

Pol. My Lord, I will vse them according to their desart.

Ham. Gods bodykins man, better. Vse euerie man after his desart, and who should scape whipping: vse them after your own Honor and Dignity. The lesse they deserue, the more merit is in your bountie. Take them in.

bodkin man,
much better,
shall

Pol. Come sirs.

*Exit Polon.*²

Ham. Follow him Friends: wee'l heare a play to morrow.³ Dost thou heare me old Friend, can you play the murther of *Gonzago*?

Play. I my Lord.

Ham. Wee'l ha't to morrow night. You could for a need⁴ study⁵ a speech of some dosen or sixteene lines, which I would set downe, and insert in't? Could ye not?⁶

for neede |
dosen lines, or

you

Play. I my Lord.

Ham. Very well. Follow that Lord, and looke you mock him not.⁷ My good Friends, Ile leaue you til night you are welcome to *Elsonower*?

Rosin. Good my Lord.

Exeunt.

*Exeunt Pol.
and Players.*

*Manet Hamlet.*⁸

Ham. I so, God buy'ye⁹: Now I am alone. Oh what a Rogue and Pesant slaue am I?¹⁰ Is it not monstrous that this Player heere,¹¹ But in a Fixion, in a dreame of Passion, Could force his soule so to his whole conceit,¹² That from her working, all his visage warm'd; Teares in his eyes, distraction in's Aspect, A broken voyce, and his whole Function suiting With Formes, to his Conceit?¹³ And all for nothing?

buy to you,⁹his owne
conceit
all the visage
wand,
in his

an his

¹ Why do the editors choose the present tense of the *Quarto*? Hamlet does not mean, 'It is worse to have the ill report of the Players while you live, than a bad epitaph after your death.' The order of the sentence has provided against that meaning. What he means is, that their ill report in life will be more against your reputation after death than a bad epitaph.

² *Not in Quarto.*

³ He detains their leader.

⁴ 'for a special reason'

⁵ *Study* is still the Player's word for *commit to memory*.

⁶ Note Hamlet's quick resolve, made clearer towards the end of the following soliloquy.

⁷ Polonius is waiting at the door : this is intended for his hearing.

⁸ *Not in Q.*

⁹ Note the varying forms of *God be with you*.

¹⁰ *1st Q.* Why what a dunghill idiote slaue am I?

Why these Players here draw water from eyes :

For Hecuba, why what is Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba ?

¹¹ Everything rings on the one hard, fixed idea that possesses him ; but this one idea has many sides. Of late he has been thinking more upon the woman-side of it ; but the Player with his speech has brought his father to his memory, and he feels he has been forgetting him : the rage of the actor recalls his own 'cue for passion.' Always more ready to blame than justify himself, he feels as if he ought to have done more, and so falls to abusing himself.

¹² *imagination*

¹³ 'his whole operative nature providing fit forms for the embodiment of his imagined idea'—of which forms he has already mentioned his *warm'd visage*, his *tears*, his *distracted look*, his *broken voice*.

In this passage we have the true idea of the operation of the genuine *acting* faculty. Actor as well as dramatist, the Poet gives us here his own notion of his second calling.

For *Hecuba* ?

What's *Hecuba* to him, or he to *Hecuba*,¹ or he to her,
 That he should weepe for her? What would he doe,
 Had he the Motiue and the Cue² for passion , and that for
 That I haue? He would drowne the Stage with
 teares,

And cleaue the generall care with horrid speech :
 Make mad the guilty, and apale³ the free,⁴
 Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed,
 The very faculty of Eyes and Eares. Yet I, faculties
 A dull and muddy-metled⁵ Rascall, peake
 Like Iohn a-dreames, vnpregnant of my cause,⁶
 And can say nothing : No, not for a King,
 Vpon whose property,⁷ and most deere life,
 A damn'd defeate⁸ was made. Am I a Coward?⁹
 Who calles me Villaine? breakes my pate a-crosse?
 Pluckes off my Beard, and blowes it in my face?
 Tweakes me by'th'Nose?¹⁰ giues me the Lye i'th'
 Throate, by the

As deepe as to the Lungs? Who does me this?
 Ha? Why I should take it : for it cannot be, Hah, s'wounds
 But I am Pigeon-Liuer'd, and lacke Gall¹¹ I
 To make Oppression bitter, or ere this,

104 I should haue fatted all the Region Kites should a fatted
 With this Slaues Offall, bloody : a Bawdy villaine, bloody, bawdy
 Remorselesse,¹² Treacherous, Letcherous, kindles¹³
 villaine !

Oh Vengeance!¹⁴

Who? What an Asse am I? I sure, this is most Why what an
 braue, Assc am I, this

That I, the Sonne of the Deere murdered, a deere
 Prompted to my Reuenge by Heauen, and Hell,
 Must (like a Whore) vnpacke my heart with words,
 And fall a Cursing like a very Drab,¹⁵

A Scullion? Fye vpon't : Foh. About my Braine.¹⁶ a stallyon, |
braines; hum,

¹ Here follows in *1st Q.*

What would he do and if he had my losse?
 His father muredred, and a Crowne bereft him,
 174 He would turne all his teares to droppes of blood,
 Amaze the standers by with his laments,
 &c. &c.

² Speaking of the Player, he uses the player-word.

³ *make pale*—appal

⁴ *the innocent*

⁵ *Mettle* is spirit—rather in the sense of *animal-spirit*: *mettlesome*—spirited, *as a horse*.

⁶ ‘*unpossessed by my cause*’

⁷ *personality, proper person*

⁸ *undoing, destruction*—from French *défaire*.

⁹ In this mood he no more understands, and altogether doubts himself, as he has previously come to doubt the world.

¹⁰ *1st Q.* ‘or twites my nose,’

¹¹ It was supposed that pigeons had no gall—I presume from their livers not tasting bitter like those of perhaps most birds.

¹² *pitiless*

¹³ *unnatural*

¹⁴ This line is not in the *Quarto*.

¹⁵ Here in *Q.* the line runs on to include *Foh*. The next line ends with *heard*,

¹⁶ *Point thus*: ‘About! my brain.’ He apostrophizes his brain, telling it to set to work.

I haue heard, that guilty Creatures sitting at a Play,
 Haue by the very cunning of the Scène,¹
 Bene strooke so to the soule, that presently
 They haue proclaim'd their Malefactions.

For Murther, though it haue no tongue, will speake
 With most myraculous Organ.² Ile haue these
 Players,

Play something like the murder of my Father,
 Before mine Vnkle. Ile obserue his lookes,

137 Ile tent him to the quicke : If he but blench³

if a doe blench

I know my course. The Spirit that I haue seene

48 May⁴ be the Diuell, and the Diuel hath power

May be a
 deale, and the
 deale

T'assume a pleasing shape, yea and perhaps
 Out of my Weaknesse, and my Melancholly,⁵

As he is very potent with such Spirits,⁶

46 Abuses me to damne me.⁷ Ile haue grounds

More Relatiue then this : The Play's the thing,

Wherein Ile catch the Conscience of the King.

Exit.

SUMMARY.

The division between the second and third acts is by common consent placed here. The third act occupies the afternoon, evening, and night of the same day with the second.

This soliloquy is Hamlet's first, and perhaps we may find it correct to say *only* outbreak of self-accusation. He charges himself with lack of feeling, spirit, and courage, in that he has not yet taken vengeance on his uncle. But unless we are prepared to accept and justify to the full his own hardest words against himself, and grant him a muddy-mettled, pigeon-livered rascal, we must examine and understand him, so as to account for his conduct better than he could himself. If we allow that perhaps he accuses himself too much, we may find on reflection that he accuses himself altogether wrongfully. If a man is content to think the worst of Hamlet, I care to hold no argument with that man.

We must not look for *expressed* logical sequence in a soliloquy, which is a vocal mind. The mind is seldom conscious of the links or transitions of a yet perfectly logical process developed in it. This remark, however, is more necessary in regard to the famous soliloquy to follow.

In Hamlet, misery has partly choked even vengeance ; and although sure in his heart that his uncle is guilty, in his brain he is not sure. Bitterly accusing himself in an access of wretchedness and rage and

¹ Here follows in *1st Q.*

confest a murder
Committed long before.
This spirit that I haue seene may be the Diuell,
And out of my weakenesse and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such men,
Doth seeke to damne me, I will haue sounder proofes,
The play's the thing, &c.

² 'Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak;' &c.
Macbeth, iii. 4.

³ In the *1st Q.* Hamlet, speaking to Horatio (137), says,
And if he doe not bleach, and change at that,—
Bleach is radically the same word as *bleach*:—to bleach, to blanch, to
bleach—to grow white.

⁴ Emphasis on *May*, as resuming previous doubtful thought and suspicion.

⁵ —caused from the first by his mother's behaviour, not constitutional.

⁶ —'such conditions of the spirits'

⁷ Here is one element in the very existence of the preceding act : doubt as to the facts of the case has been throughout operating to restrain him ; and here first he reveals, perhaps first recognizes its influence. Subject to change of feeling with the wavering of conviction, he now for a moment regards his uncertainty as involving unnatural distrust of a being in whose presence he cannot help *feeling* him his father. He was familiar with the lore of the supernatural, and knew the doubt he expresses to be not without support.—His companions as well had all been in suspense as to the identity of the apparition with the late king.

credence, he forgets the doubt that has restrained him, with all besides which he might so well urge in righteous defence, not excuse, of his delay. But ungenerous criticism has, by all but universal consent, accepted his own verdict against himself. So in common life there are thousands on thousands who, upon the sad confession of a man immeasurably greater than themselves, and showing his greatness in the humility whose absence makes admission impossible to them, immediately pounce upon him with vituperation, as if he were one of the vile, and they infinitely better. Such should be indignant with St. Paul and say— if he was the chief of sinners, what insolence to lecture *them* ! and certainly the more justified publican would never by them have been allowed to touch the robe of the less justified Pharisee. Such critics surely take little or no pains to understand the object of their contempt : because Hamlet is troubled and blames himself, they without hesitation condemn him—and there where he is most commendable. It is the righteous man who is most ready to accuse himself ; the unrighteous is least ready. Who is able when in deep trouble, rightly to analyze his feelings ? Delay in action is not necessarily abandonment of duty ; in Hamlet's case it is a due recognition of duty, which condemns precipitancy—and action in the face of doubt, so long as it is nowise compelled, is precipitancy. [The first thing is *to be sure* : Hamlet has never been sure ; he spies at length a chance of making himself sure ; he seizes upon it ; and

while his sudden resolve to make use of the players, like the equally sudden resolve to shroud himself in pretended madness, manifests him fertile in expedient, the carrying out of both manifests him right capable and diligent in execution—a man of action in every true sense of the word.

The self-accusation of Hamlet has its ground in the lapse of weeks during which nothing has been done towards punishing the king. Suddenly roused to a keen sense of the fact, he feels as if surely he might have done something. The first act ends with a burning vow of righteous vengeance; the second shows him wandering about the palace in profoundest melancholy—such as makes it more than easy for him to assume the forms of madness the moment he marks any curious eye bent upon him. Let him who has never loved and revered a mother, call such melancholy weakness. He has indeed done nothing towards the fulfilment of his vow; but the way in which he made the vow, the terms in which he exacted from his companions their promise of silence, and his scheme for eluding suspicion, combine to show that from the first he perceived its fulfilment would be hard, saw the obstacles in his way, and knew it would require both time and caution. That even in the first rush of his wrath he should thus be aware of difficulty, indicates moral symmetry; but the full weight of what lay in his path could appear to him only upon reflection. Partly in the light of passages yet to come, I will imagine the further course of his thoughts, which the closing couplet of the first act shows as having already begun to apale ‘the native hue of resolution.’

‘But how shall I take vengeance on my uncle? Shall I publicly accuse him, or slay him at once? In the one case what answer can I make to his denial? in the other, what justification can I offer? If I say the spirit of my father accuses him, what proof can I bring? My companions only saw the apparition—heard no word from him; and my uncle’s party will assert, with absolute likelihood to the minds of those who do not know me—and who here knows me but my mother!—that charge is a mere coinage of jealous disappointment, working upon the melancholy I have not cared to hide. (174-6.) When I act, it must be to kill him, and to what misconstruction shall I not expose myself! (272) If the thing must so be, I must brave all; but I could never present myself thereafter as successor to the crown of one whom I had first slain and then vilified on the accusation of an apparition whom no one heard but myself! I must find *proof*—such proof as will satisfy others as well as myself. My immediate duty is *evidence*, not vengeance.’

We have seen besides, that, when informed of the haunting presence of the Ghost, he expected the apparition with not a little doubt as to its authenticity—a doubt which, even when he saw it, did not immediately vanish: is it any wonder that when the apparition was gone, the doubt should return? Return it did, in accordance with the reaction which waits upon all high-strung experience. If he did not believe in the person who performed it, would any man long believe in any miracle? Hamlet soon begins to question whether he can with confidence accept the appearance for that which it appeared and asserted itself to be. He steps over to the stand-point of his judges, and doubts the only testimony he has to produce. Far more:—was he not bound in common humanity, not to say *filianness*, to doubt it? To doubt the Ghost, was to doubt a testimony which to accept was to believe his father in horrible suffering,

his uncle a murderer, his mother at least an adulteress; to kill his uncle was to set his seal to the whole, and, besides, to bring his mother into frightful suspicion of complicity in his father's murder. Ought not the faintest shadow of a doubt, assuaging ever so little the glare of the hell-sun of such crime, to be welcome to the tortured heart? Wretched wife and woman as his mother had shown herself, the Ghost would have him think her far worse—perhaps even accessory to her husband's murder! For action he *must* have proof!

At the same time, what every one knew of his mother, coupled now with the mere idea of the Ghost's accusation, wrought in him such misery, roused in him so many torturing and unanswerable questions, so blotted the face of the universe and withered the heart of hope, that he could not but doubt whether, in such a world of rogues and false women, it was worth his while to slay one villain out of the swarm.

Ophelia's behaviour to him, in obedience to her father, of which she gives him no explanation, has added 'the pangs of disprized love,' and increased his doubts of woman-kind. 120

But when his imagination, presenting afresh the awful interview, brings him more immediately under the influence of the apparition and its behest, he is for the moment delivered both from the stunning effect of its communication and his doubt of its truth; forgetting then the considerations that have wrought in him, he accuses himself of remissness, blames himself grievously for his delay. Soon, however, his senses resume their influence, and he doubts again. So goes the mill-round of his thoughts, with the revolving of many wheels.

His whole conscious nature is frightfully shaken: he would be the poor creature most of his critics would make of him, were it otherwise; it is because of his greatness that he suffers so terribly, and doubts so much. A mother's crime is far more paralyzing than a father's murder is stimulating; and either he has not set himself in thorough earnest to find the proof he needs, or he has as yet been unable to think of any serviceable means to the end, when the half real, half simulated emotion of the Player yet again rouses in him the sense of remissness, leads him to accuse himself of forgotten obligation and heartlessness, and simultaneously suggests a device for putting the Ghost and his words to the test. Instantly he seizes the chance: when a thing has to be done, and can be done, Hamlet is *never* wanting—shows himself the very promptest of men.

In the last passage of this act I do not take it that he is expressing an idea then first occurring to him: that the whole thing may be a snare of the devil is a doubt with which during weeks he has been familiar.

The delay through which, in utter failure to comprehend his character, he has been so miserably misjudged, falls really between the first and second acts, although it seems in the regard of most readers to underlie and protract the whole play. Its duration is measured by the journey of the ambassadors to and from the neighbouring kingdom of Norway.

It is notably odd, by the way, that those who accuse Hamlet of inaction, are mostly the same who believe his madness a reality! In truth, however, his affected madness is one of the strongest signs of his activity, and his delay one of the strongest proofs of his sanity.

This second act, the third act, and a part always given to the fourth, but which really belongs to the third, occupy in all only one day.

*Enter King, Queene, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosinrance,
Guildestern, and Lords.*¹

*Guyldensterne,
Lords.*

72 *King.* And can you by no drift of circumstance
Get from him why he puts on² this Confusion :
Grating so harshly all his dayes of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous Lunacy.

An can | of
conference

Rosin. He does confesse he feeles himselfe dis-
tracted,

92 But from what cause he will by no meanes speake. a will

Guil. Nor do we finde him forward to be
sounded,

But with a crafty Madnesse³ keepes aloofe :
When we would bring him on to some Confession
Of his true state.

Qu. Did he receiue you well ?

Rosin. Most like a Gentleman.

Guild. But with much forcing of his disposition.⁴

Rosin. Niggard of question, but of our demands
Most free in his reply.⁵

Qu. Did you assay him to any pastime ?

Rosin. Madam, it so fell out, that certaine
Players

We ore-wrought on the way: of these we told him, ore-raught⁶
And there did seeme in him a kinde of ioy
To heare of it: They are about the Court, are heere about
And (as I thinke) they haue already order
This night to play before him.

Pol. 'Tis most true :

And he beseech'd me to intreate your Maiesties
To heare, and see the matter.

King. With all my heart, and it doth much
content me

To heare him so inclin'd. Good Gentlemen,

¹ This may be regarded as the commencement of the Third Act.

² The phrase seems to imply a doubt of the genuineness of the lunacy.

³ *Nominative pronoun omitted here.*

⁴ He has noted, without understanding them, the signs of Hamlet's suspicion of themselves.

⁵ Compare the seemingly opposite statements of the two: Hamlet had bewildered them.

⁶ *over-reached*—came up with, caught up, overtook

Giue him a further edge,¹ and driue his purpose on
To these delights. purpose into
these

Rosin. We shall my Lord.

Exeunt. *Exeunt Ros.
& Gyl.
Gertrard |
two*

King. Sweet *Gertrude* leaue vs too,

For we haue closely sent for *Hamlet* hither,

84 That he, as 'twere by accident, may there heere
Affront² *Ophelia*. Her Father, and my selfe
³(lawful espials)⁴

Will so bestow our selues, that seeing vnscene

We may of their encounter frankely iudge,

And gather by him, as he is behaued,

If't be th'affliction of his loue, or no.

That thus he suffers for.

Qu. I shall obey you,

And for your part *Ophelia*,⁵ I do wish

That your good Beauties be the happy cause

Of *Hamlets* wildenesse : so shall I hope your Vertues

240 Will bring him to his wonted way againe,

To both your Honors.⁶

Ophe. Madam, I wish it may.

Pol. *Ophelia*, walke you heere. Gracious so
please ye⁷ you,

We will bestow our selues: Reade on this booke,⁸

That shew of such an exercise may colour

Your lonelinesse.⁹ We are oft too blame in this,¹⁰ lowlines :

'Tis too much prou'd, that with Deuotions visage,

And pious Action, we do surge o're sugar

The diuell himselfe.

161 *King.* Oh 'tis true :

tis too true

How smart a lash that speech doth giue my Con-
science ?

The Harlots Cheeke beautied with plaist'ring Art

Is not more vgly to the thing that helps it,¹¹

Then is my deede, to my most painted word.¹²

Oh heaue burthen !¹³

¹ 'edge him on'—somehow corrupted into *egg*.

² *confront*

³ *Clause in parenthesis not in Q.*

⁴ —apologetic to the queen.

⁵ —*going up to Ophelia*—I would say, who stands at a little distance, and has not heard what has been passing between them.

⁶ The queen encourages Ophelia in hoping to marry Hamlet, and may so have a share in causing a certain turn her madness takes.

⁷ —*aside to the king*

⁸ —*to Ophelia*: her prayer-book. 122

⁹ *1st Q.* And here *Ophelia*, reade you on this booke,
And walke aloofe, the King shal be vnseene.

¹⁰ —*aside to the king*. I insert these *asides*, and suggest the queen's going up to Ophelia, to show how we may easily hold Ophelia ignorant of their plot. Poor creature as she was, I would believe Shakspeare did not mean her to lie to Hamlet. This may be why he omitted that part of her father's speech in the *1st Q.* given in the note immediately above, telling her the king is going to hide. Still, it would be excuse enough for *her*, that she thought his madness justified the deception.

¹¹ —ugly to the paint that helps by hiding it—to which it lies so close, and from which it has no secrets. Or, 'ugly to' may mean, 'ugly compared with.'

¹² 'most painted'—*very much painted*. His painted word is the paint to the deed. *Painted* may be taken for *full of paint*.

¹³ This speech of the king is the first *assurance* we have of his guilt.

Pol. I heare him comming, let's withdraw my
 Lord. *Exeunt.*¹

*Enter Hamlet.*²

Ham. To be, or not to be, that is the Question :
 Whether 'tis Nobler in the minde to suffer
 The Slings and Arrowes of outragious Fortune,
 200,250 Or to take Armes against a Sea of troubles,³
 And by opposing end them :⁴ to dye, to sleepe
 No more ; and by a sleepe, to say we end
 The Heart-ake, and the thousand Naturall shockes
 That Flesh is heyre too ? 'Tis a consummation
 Deuoutly to be wish'd.⁵ To dye to sleepe,
 To sleepe, perchance to Dreame ;⁶ I, there's the rub,
 For in that sleepe of death, what⁷ dreames may
 come,⁸
 When we haue shuffel'd off this mortall coile,
 186 Must giue vs pawse.⁹ There's the respect
 That makes Calamity of so long life :¹⁰
 For who would beare the Whips and Scornes of time,
 The Oppressors wrong, the poore mans Contumely, proude mans
 114 The pangs of dispriz'd Loue,¹¹ the Lawes delay, despiz'd
 The insolence of Office, and the Spurnes
 That patient merit of the vnworthy takes, th'
 When he himselfe might his *Quietus* make
 194,252-3 With a bare Bodkin ?¹² Who would these Fardles¹³ would fardels
 beare
 To grunt and sweat vnder a weary life,
 194 But that the dread of something after death,¹⁴
 The vndiscover'd Countrey, from whose Borne
 No Traueller returnes,¹⁵ Puzels the will,
 And makes vs rather beare those illes we haue,
 Then flye to others that we know not of.
 Thus Conscience does make Cowards of vs all,¹⁶
 30 And thus the Natiue hew of Resolution¹⁷
 Is sicklied o're, with the pale cast of Thought,¹⁸ sickled

¹ *Not in Q.*—They go behind the tapestry, where it hangs over the recess of the doorway. Ophelia thinks they have left the room.

² *In Q. before last speech.*

³ Perhaps to a Danish or Dutch critic, or one from the eastern coast of England, this simile would not seem so unfit as it does to some.

⁴ To print this so as I would have it read, I would complete this line from here with points, and commence the next with points. At the other breaks of the soliloquy, as indicated below, I would do the same—thus :

And by opposing end them
 To die—to sleep,

⁵ *Break*

⁶ *Break*

⁷ Emphasis on *what*.

⁸ Such dreams as the poor Ghost's.

⁹ *Break.*—‘*pause*’ is the noun, and from its use at page 186, we may judge it means here ‘pause for reflection.’

¹⁰ ‘makes calamity so long-lived.’

¹¹ —not necessarily disprized by *the lady*; the disprizer in Hamlet's case was the worldly and suspicious father—and that in part, and seemingly to Hamlet altogether, for the king's sake.

¹² *small sword.* If there be here any allusion to suicide, it is on the general question, and with no special application to himself. 24. But it is the king and the bare bodkin his thought associates. How could he even glance at the things he has just mentioned, as each a reason for suicide? It were a cowardly country indeed where the question might be asked, ‘Who would not commit suicide because of any one of these things, except on account of what may follow after death?’! One might well, however, be tempted to destroy an oppressor, *and risk his life in that.*

¹³ *Fardel*, burden: the old French for *fardeau*, I am informed.

¹⁴ —a dread caused by conscience.

¹⁵ The Ghost could not be imagined as having *returned*.

¹⁶ ‘of us all’ *not in Q.*

It is not the fear of evil that makes us cowards, but the fear of *deserved* evil. The Poet may intend that conscience alone is the cause of fear in man. ‘*Coward*’ does not here involve contempt: it should be spoken with a grim smile. But Hamlet would hardly call turning from *suicide* cowardice in any sense. 24

¹⁷ —such as was his when he vowed vengeance

¹⁸ —such as immediately followed on that

The *native* hue of resolution—that which is natural to man till interruption comes—is ruddy; the hue of thought is pale. I suspect the ‘*pale cast*’ of an allusion to whitening with *rough-cast*.

And enterprizes of great pith and moment,¹ pitch¹
 With this regard their Currants turne away, awry
 And loose the name of Action.² Soft you now,

119 The faire *Ophelia*? Nimph, in thy Orizons³
 Be all my sinnes remembred.⁴

Ophe. Good my Lord,

How does your Honor for this many a day?

Ham. I humbly thanke you: well, well, well.⁵

Ophe. My Lord, I haue Remembrances of yours,
 That I haue longed long to re-deliuier.

I pray you now, receiue them.

Ham. No, no, I neuer gaue you ought.⁶

No, not I,
 I never
 you know

Ophe. My honor'd Lord, I know right well
 you did,

And with them words of so sweet breath compos'd,
 As made the things more rich, then perfume left:
 Take these againe, for to the Noble minde
 Rich gifts wax poore, when giuers proue vnkinde.
 There my Lord.⁸

these things I
 their perfume
 lost⁷

Ham. Ha, ha: Are you honest?⁹

Ophe. My Lord.

Ham. Are you faire?

Ophe. What meanes your Lordship?

Ham. That if you be honest and faire, your
 Honesty¹⁰ should admit no discourse to your Beautie.

faire, you
 should admit

Ophe. Could Beautie my Lord, haue better
 Comerce¹¹ then your Honestie?¹²

Then with
 honestie?¹¹

Ham. I trulie: for the power of Beautie, will
 sooner transforme Honestie from what it is, to a
 Bawd, then the force of Honestie can translate
 Beautie into his likenesse. This was sometime a
 Paradox, but now the time giues it prooffe. I did
 loue you once.¹³

Ophe. Indeed my Lord, you made me belecue
 so.

¹ How could *suicide* be styled *an enterprise of great pitch*? Yet less could it be called *of great pitch*.

² I allow this to be a general reflection, but surely it serves to show that *conscience* must at least be one of Hamlet's restraints.

³ —by way of intercession

⁴ For note see foot of page.

⁵ One 'well' only in *Q*.

⁶ He does not want to take them back, and so sever even that weak bond between them. He has not given her up.

⁷ The *Q*. reading seems best. The perfume of his gifts was the sweet words with which they were given; those words having lost their savour, the mere gifts were worth nothing.

⁸ Released from the commands her father had laid upon her, and emboldened by the queen's approval of more than the old relation between them, she would timidly draw Hamlet back to the past—to love and a sound mind.

⁹ I do not here suppose a noise or movement of the arras, or think that the talk from this point bears the mark of the madness he would have assumed on the least suspicion of espial. His distrust of Ophelia comes from a far deeper source—suspicion of all women, grown doubtful to him through his mother. Hopeless for her, he would give his life to know that Ophelia was not like her. Hence the cruel things he says to her here and elsewhere; they are the brood of a heart haunted with horrible, alas! too excusable phantoms of distrust. A man wretched as Hamlet must be forgiven for being rude; it is love suppressed, love that can neither breathe nor burn, that makes him rude. His horrid insinuations are a hungry challenge to indignant rejection. He would sting Ophelia to defence of herself and her sex. But, either from her love, or from gentleness to his supposed madness, as afterwards in the play-scene, or from the poverty and weakness of a nature so fathered and so brothered, she hears, and says nothing. 139

¹⁰ Honesty is here figured as a porter,—just after, as a porter that may be corrupted.

¹¹ If the *Folio* reading is right, *commerce* means *companionship*; if the *Quarto* reading, then it means *intercourse*. Note *then* constantly for our *than*.

¹² I imagine Ophelia here giving Hamlet a loving look—which hardens him. But I do not think she lays emphasis on *your*; the word is here, I take it, used (as so often then) impersonally.

¹³ '—proof in you and me: I loved *you* once, but my honesty did not translate your beauty into its likeness.'

⁴ Note the entire change of mood from that of the last soliloquy.

The right understanding of this soliloquy is indispensable to the right understanding of Hamlet. But we are terribly trammelled and hindered, as in the understanding of Hamlet throughout, so here in the understanding of his meditation, by traditional assumption. I was roused to think in the right direction concerning it, by the honoured friend and

relative to whom I have feebly acknowledged my obligation by dedicating to him this book. I could not at first see it as he saw it: 'Think about it, and you will,' he said. I did think, and by degrees—not very quickly—my prejudices thinned, faded, and almost vanished. I trust I see it now as a whole, and in its true relations, internal and external—its relations to itself, to the play, and to the Hamlet of Shakspeare.

Neither in its first verse, then, nor in it anywhere else, do I find even an allusion to suicide. What Hamlet is referring to in the said first verse, it is not possible with certainty to determine, for it is but the vanishing ripple of a preceding ocean of thought, from which he is just stepping out upon the shore of the articulate. He may have been plunged in some profound depth of the metaphysics of existence, or he may have been occupied with the one practical question, that of the slaying of his uncle, which has, now in one form, now in another, haunted his spirit for weeks. Perhaps, from the message he has just received, he expects to meet the king, and conscience, confronting temptation, has been urging the necessity of proof; perhaps a righteous consideration of consequences, which sometimes have share in the primary duty, has been making him shrink afresh from the shedding of blood, for every thoughtful mind recoils from the irrevocable, and that is an awful form of the irrevocable. But whatever thought, general or special, this first verse may be dismissing, we come at once thereafter into the light of a definite question: 'Which is nobler—to endure evil fortune, or to oppose it *à outrance*; to bear in passivity, or to resist where resistance is hopeless—resist to the last—to the death which is its unavoidable end?'

Then comes a pause, during which he is thinking—we will not say 'too precisely on the event,' but taking his account with consequences: the result appears in the uttered conviction that the extreme possible consequence, death, is a good and not an evil. Throughout, observe, how here, as always, he generalizes, himself being to himself but the type of his race.

Then follows another pause, during which he seems prosecuting the thought, for he has already commenced further remark in similar strain, when suddenly a new and awful element introduces itself:

. To die—to sleep.—
—To *sleep*! perchance to *dream*!

He had been thinking of death only as the passing away of the present with its troubles; here comes the recollection that death has its own troubles—its own thoughts, its own consciousness: if it be a sleep, it has its dreams. '*What dreams may come*' means, 'the sort of dreams that may come'; the emphasis is on the *what*, not on the *may*; there is no question whether dreams will come, but there is question of the character of the dreams. This consideration is what makes calamity so long-lived! 'For who would bear the multifiform ills of life'—he alludes to his own wrongs, but mingles, in his generalizing way, others of those most common to humanity, and refers to the special cure for some of his own which was close to his hand—'who would bear these things if he could, as I can, make his quietus with a bare bodkin'—that is, by slaying his enemy—'who would then bear them, but that he fears the future, and the

divine judgment upon his life and actions—that conscience makes a coward of him !’ *

To run, not the risk of death, but the risks that attend upon and follow death, Hamlet must be certain of what he is about ; he must be sure it is a right thing he does, or he will leave it undone. Compare his speech, 250, ‘ Does it not, &c.’ :—by the time he speaks this speech, he has had perfect proof, and asserts the righteousness of taking vengeance in almost an agony of appeal to Horatio.

The more continuous and the more formally logical a soliloquy, the less natural it is. The logic should be all there, but latent ; the bones of it should not show : they do not show here.

* That the Great Judgment was here in Shakspeare’s thought, will be plain to those who take light from the corresponding passage in the *1st Quarto*. As it makes an excellent specimen of that issue in the character I am most inclined to attribute to it—that of original sketch and continuous line of notes, with more or less finished passages in place among the notes—I will here quote it, recommending it to my student’s attention. If it be what I suggest, it is clear that Shakspeare had not at first altogether determined how he would carry the soliloquy—what line he was going to follow in it : here hope and fear contend for the place of motive to patience. The changes from it in the text are well worth noting ; the religion is lessened ; the hope disappears : were they too much of pearls to cast before ‘ barren spectators ’ ? The manuscript could never have been meant for any eye but his own, seeing it was possible to print from it such a chaos—over which yet broods the presence of the formative spirit of the Poet.

Ham. To be, or not to be, I there’s the point,
To Die, to sleepe, is that all? I all :
No, to sleepe, to dreame, I mary there it goes,
For in that dreame of death, when wee awake,
24, 247, 260 And borne before an euerlasting Iudge,
From whence no passenger euer retur’nd,
The vndiscovered country, at whose sight
The happy smile, and the accursed damn’d.
But for this, the ioyfull hope of this,
Whol’d beare the scornes and flattery of the world,
Scorned by the right rich, the rich curssed of the poore?
The widow being oppressed, the orphan wrong’d,
The taste of hunger, or a tirants raigne,
And thousand more calamities besides,
To grunt and sweate vnder this weary life,
When that he may his full *Quietus* make,
With a bare bodkin, who would this indure,
But for a hope of something after death?
Which pusles the braine, and doth confound the sence,
Which makes vs rather beare those euilles we haue,
Than flie to others that we know not of.
I that, O this conscience makes cowardes of vs all,
Lady in thy orizons, be all my sinnes remembred.

Ham. You should not haue beleecued me. For vertue cannot so innoculate¹ our old stocke,² but we shall rellish of it.³ I loued you not.⁴

Ophe. I was the more deceiued.

Ham. Get thee to a Nunnerie. Why would'st thee a thou be a breeder of Sinners? I am my selfe indifferent⁵ honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things,⁶ that it were better my Mother had not borne me.⁷ I am very proud, reuengefull, Ambitious, with more offences at my becke, then I haue thoughts to put them in imagination, to giue them shape, or time to acte them in. What should such Fellowes as I do, crawling betweene Heauen earth and heauen, and Earth.⁸ We are arrant Knaues all¹⁰, beleecue none of vs.⁹ Goe thy wayes to a Nunnery. Where's your Father? ¹¹

Ophe. At home, my Lord.¹²

Ham. Let the doores be shut vpon him, that he may play the Foole no way, but in's owne house.¹³ no where but Farewell.¹⁴

Ophe. O helpe him, you sweet Heauens.

*Ham.*¹⁵ If thou doest Marry, Ile giue thee this Plague for thy Dowrie. Be thou as chaste as Ice, as pure as Snow, thou shalt not escape Calumny.¹⁶ Get thee to a Nunnery. Go,¹⁷ Farewell.¹⁸ Or if thou wilt needs Marry, marry a fool: for Wise men know well enough, what monsters¹⁹ you make of them. To a Nunnery go, and quickly too. Farewell.²⁰

Ophe. O²¹ heauenly Powers, restore him.

*Ham.*²² I haue heard of your pratlings²³ too well enough. God has giuen you one pace,²³ and you make your selfe another: you gidge, you amble, and you lispe, and nickname Gods creatures, and make your Wantonnesse, your²⁴ Ignorance.²⁵ Go your paintings well hath | one face, selves | you gig and amble, and you list you nickname

¹ 'inoculate'—*bud*, in the horticultural use

² *trunk* or *stem* of the family tree

³ Emphasis on *relish*—'keep something of the old flavour of the stock.'

⁴ He tries her now with denying his love—perhaps moved in part by a feeling, taught by his mother's, of how imperfect it was.

⁵ tolerably

⁶ He turns from baiting woman in her to condemn himself. Is it not the case with every noble nature, that the knowledge of wrong in another arouses in it the consciousness of its own faults and sins, of its own evil possibilities? Hurling from the heights of ideal humanity, Hamlet not only recognizes in himself every evil tendency of his race, but almost feels himself individually guilty of every transgression. 'God, God, forgive us all!' exclaims the doctor who has just witnessed the misery of Lady Macbeth, unveiling her guilt.

This whole speech of Hamlet is profoundly sane—looking therefore altogether insane to the shallow mind, on which the impression of its insanity is deepened by its coming from him so freely. The common nature disappointed rails at humanity; Hamlet, his earthly ideal destroyed, would tear his individual human self to pieces.

⁷ This we may suppose uttered with an expression as startling to Ophelia as impenetrable.

⁸ He is disgusted with himself, with his own nature and consciousness—

⁹ —and this reacts on his kind.

¹⁰ 'all' *not in Q.*

¹¹ Here, perhaps, he grows suspicious—asks himself why he is allowed this prolonged *tête à tête*.

¹² I am willing to believe she thinks so.

¹³ Whether he trusts Ophelia or not, he does not take her statement for correct, and says this in the hope that Polonius is not too far off to hear it. The speech is for him, not for Ophelia, and will seem to her to come only from his madness.

¹⁴ *Exit.*

¹⁵ (*re-entering*)

¹⁶ 'So many are bad, that your virtue will not be believed in.'

¹⁷ 'Go' *not in Q.*

¹⁸ *Exit, and re-enter.*

¹⁹ *Cornuti.*

²⁰ *Exit.*

²¹ 'O' *not in Q.*

²² (*re-entering*)

²³ I suspect *prattlings* to be a corruption, not of the printed *paintings*, but of some word substituted for it by the Poet, perhaps *prancings*, and *pace* to be correct.

²⁴ 'your' *not in Q.*

²⁵ As the present type to him of womankind, he assails her with such charges of lightness as are commonly brought against women. He does not go farther: she is not his mother, and he hopes she is innocent. But he cannot make her speak!

too, Ile no more on't, it hath made me mad. I say,
 we will haue no more Marriages.¹ Those that are
 married already,² all but one shall liue, the rest
 shall keep as they are. To a Nunnery, go.

Exit Hamlet. *Exit.*

³ *Ophe.* O what a Noble minde is heere o're-
 throwne?

The Courtiers, Soldiers, Schollers: Eye, tongue,
 sword,

Th'expectansie and Rose⁴ of the faire State,
 The glasse of Fashion,⁵ and the mould of Forme,⁶
 Th'obseru'd of all Obseruers, quite, quite downe.

Haue I of Ladies most deiect and wretched,
 That suck'd the Honie of his Musicke Vowes:
 Now see that Noble, and most Soueraigne Reason,
 Like sweet Bels iangled out of tune, and harsh,⁷
 That vnmatch'd Forme and Feature of blowne
 youth,⁸

Blasted with extasie,⁹ Oh woe is me,
 Th'haue seene what I haue seene: see what I see.¹⁰ *Exit.*

Enter King, and Polonius.

King. Loue? His affections do not that way
 tend,

Nor what he spake, though it lack'd Forme a little,
 Was not like Madnesse.¹¹ There's something in his
 soule?

O're which his Melancholly sits on brood,
 And I do doubt the hatch, and the disclose¹²
 Will be some danger,¹¹ which to preuent
 I haue in quicke determination

158, 180 Thus set it downe. He shall with speed to England
 For the demand of our neglected Tribute:
 Haply the Seas and Countries different

¹ 'The thing must be put a stop to! the world must cease! it is not fit to go on.'

² 'already—(*aside*) all but one—shall live,'

³ *1st Q.*

Ofe. Great God of heauen, what a quicke change is this?

The Courtier, Scholler, Souldier, all in him,

All dasht and splinterd thence, O woe is me,

To a seene what I haue seene, see what I see. *exit.*

To his cruel words Ophelia is impenetrable—from the conviction that not he but his madness speaks.

The moment he leaves her, she breaks out in such phrase as a young girl would hardly have used had she known that the king and her father were listening. I grant, however, the speech may be taken as a soliloquy audible to the spectators only, who to the persons of a play are *but* the spiritual presences.

⁴ 'The hope and flower'—The *rose* is not unfrequently used in English literature as the type of perfection.

⁵ 'he by whom Fashion dressed herself'—*he who set the fashion.* His great and small virtues taken together, Hamlet makes us think of sir Philip Sidney—ten years older than Shakspeare, and dead sixteen years before *Hamlet* was written.

⁶ 'he after whose ways, or modes of behaviour, men shaped theirs'—therefore the mould in which their forms were cast;—*the object of universal imitation.*

⁷ I do not know whether this means—the peal rung without regard to tune or time—or—the single bell so handled that the tongue checks and jars the vibration. In some country places, I understand, they go about ringing a set of hand-bells.

⁸ youth in full blossom

⁹ madness 177

¹⁰ 'to see now such a change from what I saw then.'

¹¹ The king's conscience makes him keen. He is, all through, doubtful of the madness.

¹² —of the fact- or fancy-egg on which his melancholy sits brooding

With variable Obiects, shall expell
 This something setled matter¹ in his heart
 Whereon his Braines still beating, puts him thus
 From² fashion of himselfe. What thinke you on't?

Pol. It shall do well. But yet do I beleue
 The Origin and Commencement of this greefe his greefe,
 Sprung from neglected loue.³ How now *Ophelia*?
 You neede not tell vs, what Lord *Hamlet* saide,
 We heard it all.⁴ My Lord, do as you please,
 But if you hold it fit after the Play,
 Let his Queene Mother all alone intreat him
 To shew his Greefes: let her be round with him, griefe,
 And Ile be plac'd so, please you in the eare
 Of all their Conference. If she finde him not,⁵
 To England send him: Or confine him where
 Your wisdome best shall thinke.

King. It shall be so:
 Madnesse in great Ones, must not vnwatch'd go.⁶ unmatcht
Exeunt.

Enter Hamlet, and two or three of the Players. and three

*Ham.*⁷ Speake the Speech I pray you, as I
 pronounc'd it to you trippingly⁸ on the Tongue:
 But if you mouth it, as many of your Players do, of our Players
 I had as liue⁹ the Town-Cryer had spoke my cryer spoke
 Lines:¹⁰ Nor do not saw the Ayre too much your much with
 hand thus, but vse all gently; for in the verie
 Torrent, Tempest, and (as I may say) the Whirle- say, whirlwind
 winde of Passion, you must acquire and beget a of your
 Temperance that may giue it Smoothnesse.¹¹ O it
 offends mee to the Soule, to see a robustious Pery- to heare a
 wig-pated Fellow, teare a Passion to tatters, to totters,
 verie ragges, to split the eares of the Groundlings:¹² spleet
 who (for the most part) are capeable¹³ of nothing,
 but inexplicable dumbe shewes,¹⁴ and noise:¹⁵ I
 could haue such a Fellow whipt for o're-doing would

¹ 'something of settled matter'—*idée fixe*.

² 'away from his own true likeness'; 'makes him so unlike himself.'

³ Polonius is crestfallen, but positive.

⁴ This supports the notion of Ophelia's ignorance of the espial. Polonius thinks she is about to disclose what has passed, and *informs* her of its needlessness. But it *might* well enough be taken as only an assurance of the success of their listening—that they had heard without difficulty.

⁵ 'If she do not find him out': a comparable phrase, common at the time, was, *Take me with you*, meaning, *Let me understand you*.

Polonius, for his daughter's sake, and his own in her, begs for him another chance.

⁶ 'in the insignificant, madness may roam the country, but in the great it must be watched.' The *unmatcht* of the *Quarto* might bear the meaning of *countermatched*.

⁷ I should suggest this exhortation to the Players introduced with the express purpose of showing how absolutely sane Hamlet was, could I believe that Shakspeare saw the least danger of Hamlet's pretence being mistaken for reality.

⁸ He would have neither blundering nor emphasis such as might rouse too soon the king's suspicion, or turn it into certainty.

⁹ 'liue'—*lief*.

¹⁰ *Ist Q.* :— I'de rather heare a towne bull bellow,
Then such a fellow speake my lines.

Lines is a player-word still.

¹¹ —smoothness such as belongs to the domain of Art, and will both save from absurdity, and allow the relations with surroundings to manifest themselves;—harmoniousness, which is the possibility of co-existence.

¹² those on the ground—that is, in the pit; there was no gallery then.

¹³ *receptive*

¹⁴ —gestures extravagant and unintelligible as those of a dumb show that could not by the beholder be interpreted; gestures incorrespondent to the words.

A *dumb show* was a stage-action without words.

¹⁵ Speech that is little but rant, and scarce related to the sense, is hardly better than a noise; it might, for the purposes of art, as well be a sound inarticulate.

Termagant¹: it out-*Herod's Herod*.² Pray you auoid it.

Player. I warrant your Honor.

Ham. Be not too tame neyther: but let your owne Discretion be your Tutor. Sute the Action to the Word, the Word to the Action, with this speciall obseruance: That you ore-stop not the modestie of Nature; for any thing so ouer-done, is frō³ the purpose of Playing, whose end both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twer the Mirroure vp to Nature; to shew Vertue her owne Feature, Scorne⁴ her owne Image, and the verie Age and Bodie of the Time, his forme and pressure.⁵ Now, this ouer-done, or come tardie off,⁶ though it make the vnskillfull laugh, cannot but make the Iudicious greeue; The censure of the which One,⁷ must in your allowance⁸ o're-way a whole Theater of Others. Oh, there bee Players that I haue seene Play, and heard others praise, and that highly (not to speake it prophanely) that neyther hauing the accent of Christians, nor the gate of Christian, Pagan, or Norman, haue so strutted and bellowed, that I haue thought some of Natures Iouerney-men had made men, and not made them well, they imitated Humanity so abhominably.⁹

126 *Play*. I hope we haue reform'd that indifferently¹⁰ with vs, Sir.¹¹

Ham. O reforme it altogether. And let those that play your Clownes, speake no more then is set downe for them.¹² For there be of them, that will themselues laugh, to set on some quantitie of barren Spectators to laugh too, though in the meane time, some necessary Question of the Play be then to be considered:¹² that's Villanous, and shewes a most pittifull Ambition in the Fool that vses it.¹³ Go make you readie. *Exit Players*

¹ 'An imaginary God of the Mahometans, represented as a most violent character in the old Miracle-plays and Moralities.'—*Sh. Lex.*

² 'represented as a swaggering tyrant in the old dramatic performances.'—*Sh. Lex.*

³ *away* from : inconsistent with

⁴ —that which is deserving of scorn

⁵ *impression*, as on wax. Some would persuade us that Shakspeare's own plays do not do this ; but such critics take the *accidents* or circumstances of a time for the *body* of it—the clothes for the person. *Human* nature is 'Nature,' however *dressed*.

There should be a comma after 'Age.'

⁶ 'laggingly represented'—A word belonging to *time* is substituted for a word belonging to *space* :—'this over-done, or inadequately effected'; 'this over-done, or under-done,'

⁷ 'and the judgment of such a one.' 'the which' seems equivalent to *and—such*.

⁸ 'must, you will grant,'

⁹ Shakspeare may here be playing with a false derivation, as I was myself when the true was pointed out to me—fancying *abominable* derived from *ab* and *homo*. If so, then he means by the phrase : 'they imitated humanity so *from* the nature of man, so *inhumanly*.'

¹⁰ tolerably

¹¹ 'Sir' *not in Q.*

¹² Shakspeare must have himself suffered from such clowns : Coleridge thinks some of their *gag* has crept into his print.

¹³ Here follow in the 1st *Q.* several specimens of such a clown's foolish jests and behaviour.

*Enter Polonius, Rosincrance, and Guildensterne.*¹

*Guyldensterne,
& Rosencraus.*

How now my Lord,

Will the King heare this peece of Worke?

Pol. And the Queene too, and that presently.²

Ham. Bid the Players make hast.

*Exit Polonius.*³

Will you two helpe to hasten them? ⁴

Both. We will my Lord.

Exeunt. *Ros.* I my
Lord.
*Exeunt they
two.*

*Enter Horatio.*⁵

Ham. What hoa, *Horatio*?

What howe,

Hora. Heere sweet Lord, at your Seruice.

26 *Ham.*⁷ *Horatio*, thou art eene as iust a man

As ere my Conuersation coap'd withall.

Hora. O my deere Lord.⁶

*Ham.*⁷ Nay do not thinke I flatter :

For what aduancement may I hope from thee,⁸

That no Reuennew hast, but thy good spirits

To feed and cloath thee. Why shold the poor be

flatter'd?

No, let the Candied⁹ tongue, like absurd pompe, *licke*

And crooke the pregnant Hindges of the knee,¹⁰

Where thrift may follow faining? Dost thou heare, *fauning ;*

Since my deere Soule was Mistris of my choyse,¹¹ *her choice,*

And could of men distinguish, her election

Hath seal'd thee for her selfe. For thou hast bene *S'hath seal'd*

272 As one in suffering all, that suffers nothing.

A man that Fortunes buffets, and Rewards

Hath 'tane with equall Thanks. And blest are *Hast*

those,

Whose Blood and Iudgement are so well co-mingled, *comedled,¹²*

26 That they are not a Pipe for Fortunes finger,

To sound what stop she please.¹³ Giue me that man,

That is not Passions Slaue,¹⁴ and I will weare him

In my hearts Core : I, in my Heart of heart,¹⁵

As I do thee. Something too much of this.¹⁶

¹ *In Q. at end of speech.*

² He humours Hamlet as if he were a child.

³ *Not in Q.*

⁴ He has sent for Horatio, and is expecting him.

⁵ *In Q. after next speech.*

⁶ —repudiating the praise

⁷ To know a man, there is scarce a readier way than to hear him talk of his friend—why he loves, admires, chooses him. The Poet here gives us a wide window into Hamlet. So genuine is his respect for *being*, so indifferent is he to *having*, that he does not shrink, in argument for his own truth, from reminding his friend to his face that, being a poor man, nothing is to be gained from him—nay, from telling him that it is through his poverty he has learned to admire him, as a man of courage, temper, contentment, and independence, with nothing but his good spirits for an income—a man whose manhood is dominant both over his senses and over his fortune—a true Stoic. He describes an ideal man, then clasps the ideal to his bosom as his own, in the person of his friend. Only a great man could so worship another, choosing him for such qualities; and hereby Shakspeare shows us his Hamlet—a brave, noble, wise, pure man, beset by circumstances the most adverse conceivable.

That Hamlet had not misapprehended Horatio becomes evident in the last scene of all. 272

⁸ The mother of flattery is self-advantage.

⁹ *sugared*

1st Q. Let flattery sit on those time-pleasing tongues,
To glose with them that loues to heare their praise,
And not with such as thou *Horatio*.
There is a play to night, &c.

¹⁰ A pregnant figure and phrase, requiring thought.

¹¹ ‘since my real self asserted its dominion, and began to rule my choice,’ making it pure, and withdrawing it from the tyranny of impulse and liking.

¹² The old word *medle* is synonymous with *mingle*.

¹³ To Hamlet, the lordship of man over himself, despite of circumstance, is a truth, and therefore a duty.

¹⁴ The man who has chosen his friend thus, is hardly himself one to act without sufficing reason, or take vengeance without certain proof of guilt.

¹⁵ He justifies the phrase, repeating it.

¹⁶ —apologetic for having praised him to his face.

There is a Play to night before the King,
One Scène of it comes neere the Circum-
stance

Which I haue told thee, of my Fathers death.

I prythee, when thou see'st that Acte a-foot,¹

Euen with the verie Comment of my ² Soule

thy ² soule

Obserue mine Vnkle : If his occulted guilt,

my Vnkle,

Do not it selfe vnkennell in one speech,

58 It is a damned Ghost that we haue seene :³

And my Imaginations are as foule

As Vulcans Stythe.⁴ Giue him needfull note,

stithy ; |
heedfull

For I mine eyes will riuet to his Face :

And after we will both our iudgements ioyne,⁵

To censure of his seeming.⁶

In censure

Hora. Well my Lord.

If he steale ought the whil'st this Play is Play-
ing,

If a

And scape detecting, I will pay the Theft.¹

detected,

Enter King, Queene, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosinrance,

*Enter Trum-
pets and
Kettle
Drummes,
King, Queene,
Polonius,
Ophelia.*

Guildensterne, and other Lords attendant with

his Guard carrying Torches. Danish March.

Sound a Flourish.

60,156,
178 *Ham.* They are comming to the Play : I must
be idle.⁷ Get you a place.

King. How fares our Cosin *Hamlet*?

Ham. Excellent Ifaith, of the Camelions dish :

154 I eate the Ayre promise-cramm'd,⁸ you cannot feed
Capons so.⁹

King. I haue nothing with this answer *Hamlet*,
these words are not mine.¹⁰

Ham. No, nor mine. Now ¹¹ my Lord, you
plaid once i'th'Vniuersity, you say?

Polon. That I did my Lord, and was accounted did I
a good Actor.

¹ Here follows in 1st Q.

Marke thou the King, doe but obserue his lookes,
For I mine eies will riuet to his face :

112 And if he doe not bleach, and change at that,
It is a damned ghost that we haue seene.

Horatio, haue a care, obserue him well.

Hor. My lord, mine eies shall still be on his face,
And not the smallest alteration
That shall appeare in him, but I shall note it.

² I take 'my' to be right : 'watch my uncle with the comment—the discriminating judgment, that is—of *my* soul, more intent than thine.'

³ He has then, ere this, taken Horatio into his confidence—so far at least as the Ghost's communication concerning the murder.

⁴ a dissyllable : *stithy, anvil* ; Scotch, *studdy*.

Hamlet's doubt is here very evident : he hopes he may find it a false ghost : what good man, what good son would not ? He has clear cause and reason—it is his duty to delay. That the cause and reason and duty are not invariably clear to Hamlet himself—not clear in every mood, is another thing. Wavering conviction, doubt of evidence, the corollaries of assurance, the oppression of misery, a sense of the worthlessness of the world's whole economy—each demanding delay, might yet well, all together, affect the man's feeling as mere causes of rather than reasons for hesitation.

The conscientiousness of Hamlet stands out the clearer that, throughout, his dislike to his uncle, predisposing him to believe any ill of him, is more than evident. By his incompetent or prejudiced judges, Hamlet's accusations and justifications of himself are equally placed to the *discredit* of his account. They seem to think a man could never accuse himself except he were in the wrong ; therefore if ever he excuses himself, he is the more certainly in the wrong : whatever point may tell on the other side, it is to be disregarded.

⁵ 'bring our two judgments together for comparison'

⁶ 'in order to judge of the significance of his looks and behaviour.'

⁷ Does he mean *foolish*, that is, *lunatic*? or *insouciant*, and *unpre-occupied*?

⁸ The king asks Hamlet how he *fares*—that is, how he gets on ; Hamlet pretends to think he has asked him about his diet. His talk has at once become wild ; ere the king enters he has donned his cloak of madness. Here he confesses to ambition—will favour any notion concerning himself rather than give ground for suspecting the real state of his mind and feeling.

In the 1st Q. 'the Camelions dish' almost appears to mean the play, not the king's promises.

⁹ In some places they push food down the throats of the poultry they want to fatten, which is technically, I believe, called *cramming* them.

¹⁰ 'You have not taken me with you ; I have not laid hold of your meaning ; I have nothing by your answer.' 'Your words have not become my property ; they have not given themselves to me in their meaning.'

¹¹ *Point thus* : 'No, nor mine now.—My Lord,' &c. '—not mine, now I have uttered them, for so I have given them away.' Or does he mean to disclaim their purport ?

Ham. And¹ what did you enact ?

Pol. I did enact *Iulius Cæsar*, I was kill'd
i'th'Capitol : *Brutus* kill'd me.

Ham. It was a bruite part of him, to kill so
Capitall a Calfe there.² Be the Players ready ?

Rosin. I my Lord, they stay vpon your pa-
tience.

Qu. Come hither my good *Hamlet*, sit by me. my deere

Ha. No good Mother, here's Mettle more attract-
iue.³

Pol. Oh ho, do you marke that ?⁴

Ham. Ladie, shall I lye in your Lap ?

Ophe. No my Lord.

Ham. I meane, my Head vpon your Lap ?⁵

Ophe. I my Lord.⁶

Ham. Do you thinke I meant Country⁷ matters ?

Ophe. I thinke nothing, my Lord.

Ham. That's a faire thought to ly between
Maids legs

Ophe. What is my Lord ?

Ham. Nothing.

Ophe. You are merrie, my Lord ?

Ham. Who I ?

Ophe. I my Lord.⁸

Ham. Oh God, your onely ligge-maker⁹ : what
should a man do, but be merrie. For looke you
how cheerefully my Mother lookes, and my Father
dyed within's two Houres.

65 *Ophe.* Nay, 'tis twice two moneths, my Lord.¹⁰

Ham. So long ? Nay then let the Diuel weare
32 blacke, for Ile haue a suite of Sables.¹¹ Oh
Heauens ! dye two moneths ago, and not forgotten
yet ?¹² Then there's hope, a great mans Memorie,
may out-liue his life halfe a yeare : But byrlady ber Lady a
he must builde Churches then : or else shall he shall a

¹ 'And' *not in Q.*

² Emphasis on *there*. 'There' is not in 1st *Q.* Hamlet means it was a desecration of the Capitol.

³ He cannot be familiar with his mother, so avoids her—will not sit by her, cannot, indeed, bear to be near her. But he loves and hopes in Ophelia still.

⁴ '— Did I not tell you so?'

⁵ This speech and the next are not in the *Q.*, but are shadowed in the 1st *Q.*

⁶ —*consenting*

⁷ In 1st *Quarto*, 'contrary.'

Hamlet hints, probing her character—hoping her unable to understand. It is the festering soreness of his feeling concerning his mother, making him doubt with the haunting agony of a loathed possibility, that prompts, urges, forces from him his ugly speeches—nowise to be justified, only to be largely excused in his sickening consciousness of his mother's presence. Such pain as Hamlet's, the ferment of subverted love and reverence, may lightly bear the blame of hideous manners, seeing they spring from no wantonness, but from the writhing of tortured and helpless Purity. Good manners may be as impossible as out of place in the presence of shameless evil.

⁸ Ophelia bears with him for his own and his madness' sake, and is less uneasy because of the presence of his mother. To account *satisfactorily* for Hamlet's speeches to her, is not easy. The freer custom of the age, freer to an extent hardly credible in this, will not *satisfy* the lovers of Hamlet, although it must have *some* weight. The necessity for talking madly, because he is in the presence of his uncle, and perhaps, to that end, for uttering whatever comes to him, without pause for choice, might give us another hair's-weight. Also he may be supposed confident that Ophelia would not understand him, while his uncle would naturally set such worse than improprieties down to wildest madness. But I suspect that here as before (123), Shakspeare would show Hamlet's soul full of bitterest, passionate loathing; his mother has compelled him to think of horrors and women together, so turning their preciousness into a disgust; and this feeling, his assumed madness allows him to indulge and partly relieve by utterance. Could he have provoked Ophelia to rebuke him with the severity he courted, such rebuke would have been joy to him. Perhaps yet a small addition of weight to the scale of his excuse may be found in his excitement about his play, and the necessity for keeping down that excitement. Suggestion is easier than judgment.

⁹ 'here's for the jig-maker! he's the right man!' Or perhaps he is claiming the part as his own: 'I am your only jig-maker!'

¹⁰ This needs not be taken for the exact time. The statement notwithstanding suggests something like two months between the first and second acts, for in the first, Hamlet says his father has not been dead two months. 24. We are not bound to take it for more than a rough approximation; Ophelia would make the best of things for the queen, who is very kind to her.

¹¹ the fur of the sable

¹² 1st *Q.*

nay then there's some

Likelyhood, a gentlemans death may outlieue memorie,
But by my faith &c.

suffer not thinking on, with the Hoby-horsse,
whose Epitaph is, For o, For o, the Hoby-horse
is forgot.

Hoboyes play. The dumbe shew enters.

*The Trumpets
sounds. Dumbe
shew follows.*

*Enter a King and Queene, very louingly; tho Queene
embracing him. She kneeles, and makes shew of
Protestation vnto him. He takes her vp, and
declines his head vpon her neck. Lays him downe
vpon a Banke of Flowers. She seeing him
a-sleepe, leaues him. Anon comes in a Fellow,
takes off his Crowne, kisses it, and powres poyson
in the Kings eares, and Exits. The Queene re-
turnes, findes the King dead, and makes passion-
ate Action. The Poysoner, with some two or
three Mutes comes in againe, seeming to lament
with her. The dead body is carried away: The
Poysoner Wooes the Queene with Gifts, she
54 seemes loath and vnwilling awhile, but in the end,
accepts his loue.¹*

*and a Queene,
the Queene
embracing
him, and he
her, he takes
her up, and
necke, he lyes*

*: anon come in
an other man,
it, pours*

*the sleepers
eares, and
leaues him:
dead, makes*

*some three or
foure come in
againe, seeme
to condole*

with her, the

*seemes harsh
awhile,*

Exeunt² accepts loue.

Ophe. What meanes this, my Lord?

Ham. Marry this is Miching *Malicho*,³ that
meanes Mischeefe.

*this munching
Mallico, 1*

Ophe. Belike this shew imports the Argument
of the Play?

Ham. We shall know by these Fellowes:
the Players cannot keepe counsell, they'l tell
all.⁴

*this fellow,
Enter
Prologue.
keepe, they'le*

Ophe. Will they tell vs what this shew meant?

Will a tell

Ham. I, or shew that you'l shew him. Bee
not you asham'd to shew, hee'l not shame to tell
you what it meanes.

you will

Ophe. You are naught,⁵ you are naught, Ile
marke the Play.

¹ The king, not the queen, is aimed at. Hamlet does not forget the injunction of the Ghost to spare his mother. 54

The king should be represented throughout as struggling not to betray himself.

² *Not in Q.*

³ *skulking mischief*: the latter word is Spanish. To *mich* is to play truant.

How tenderly her tender hands betweenē
In yvorie cage she did the micher bind.

The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, page 84.

My *Reader* tells me the word is still in use among printers, with the pronunciation *mike*, and the meaning to *skulk* or *idle*.

⁴ —their part being speech, that of the others only dumb show.

⁵ *naughty*: persons who do not behave well are treated as if they were not—are made nought of—are set at nought; hence our word naughty.

‘Be naught awhile’ (*As You Like it*, i. 1)—‘take yourself away;’ ‘be nobody;’ ‘put yourself in the corner.’

Enter¹ Prologue.

For vs, and for our Tragedie,

Heere stooping to your Clemencie :

We begge your hearing Patientlie.

Ham. Is this a Prologue, or the Poesie² of a posie
Ring?

Ophe. 'Tis³ briefe my Lord.

Ham. As Womans loue.

⁴ *Enter King and his Queene.*

and Queene.

234 *King.* Full thirtie times⁵ hath Phœbus Cart gon
round,

Neptunes salt Wash, and *Tellus* Orbed ground : orb'd the

And thirtie dozen Moones with borrowed sheene,

About the World haue times twelue thirties beene,

Since loue our hearts, and *Hymen* did our hands

Vnite comutually, in most sacred Bands.⁶

Bap. So many iournies may the Sunne and *Quee.*
Moone

Make vs againe count o're, ere loue be done.

But woe is me, you are so sicke of late,

So farre from cheere, and from your forme state,

from our
former state,

That I distrust you : yet though I distrust,

Discomfort you (my Lord) it nothing must :

^{*} For womens Feare and Loue, holds quantitie,

And womens |
hold

In neither ought, or in extremity :⁷

Eyther none,
in neither

Now what my loue is, prooffe hath made you know,

my Lord is
prooffe

And as my Loue is siz'd, my Feare is so.

ciz'd,

**

* *Here in the Quarto :—*

For women feare too much, euen as they loue,

** *Here in the Quarto :—*

Where loue is great, the litlest doubts are feare,

Where little feares grow great, great loue growes there.

¹ *Enter* not in *Q.*

² Commonly *posy*: a little sentence engraved inside a ring—perhaps originally a tiny couplet, therefore *poesy*. *1st Q.*, ‘a poesie for a ring?’

³ Emphasis on ‘*Tis.*’

⁴ Very little blank verse of any kind was written before Shakspeare’s; the usual form of dramatic verse was long, irregular, rimed lines: the Poet here uses the heroic couplet, which gives a resemblance to the older plays by its rimes, while also by its stately and monotonous movement the play-play is differenced from the play into which it is introduced, and caused to *look* intrinsically like a play in relation to the rest of the play of which it is part. In other words, it stands off from the surrounding play, slightly elevated both by form and formality. 103

⁵ *1st Q. Duke.* Full fortie yeares are past, their date is gone,
 Since happy time ioyn’d both our hearts as one:
 And now the blood that fill’d my youthfull veines,
 Ruunes weakely in their pipes, and all the straines
 Of musicke, which whilome please mine eare,
 Is now a burthen that Age cannot beare:
 And therefore sweete Nature must pay his due,
 To heauen must I, and leaue the earth with you.

⁶ Here Hamlet gives the time his father and mother had been married, and Shakspeare points at Hamlet’s age. 234. The Poet takes pains to show his hero’s years.

⁷ This line, whose form in the *Quarto* is very careless, seems but a careless correction, leaving the sense as well as the construction obscure: ‘Women’s fear and love keep the scales level; in *neither* is there ought, or in *both* there is fulness;’ or: ‘there is no moderation in their fear and their love; either they have *none* of either, or they have *excess* of both.’ Perhaps he tried to express both ideas at once. But compression is always in danger of confusion.

King. Faith I must leaue thee Loue, and
shortly too :

My operant Powers my Functions leaue to do : their functions
And thou shalt liue in this faire world behinde,
Honour'd, belou'd, and haply, one as kinde.
For Husband shalt thou——

Bap. Oh confound the rest : *Quee.*

Such Loue, must needs be Treason in my brest :
In second Husband, let me be accurst,
None wed the second, but who kill'd the first.¹

Ham. Wormwood, Wormwood. *Ham.* That's
wormwood²

Bapt. The instances³ that second Marriage moue,
Are base respects of Thrift,⁴ but none of Loue.
A second time, I kill my Husband dead,
When second Husband kisses me in Bed.

King. I do beleeuue you. Think what now you
speak :

But what we do determine, oft we breake :
Purpose is but the slaue to Memorie,⁵
Of violent Birth, but poore validitie :⁶
Which now like Fruite vnripe stickes on the Tree, now the fruite
But fall vnshaken, when they mellow bee.⁷
Most necessary⁸ 'tis, that we forget
To pay our selues, what to our selues is debt :
What to our selues in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of other Greefe or Ioy, eyther,
Their owne enactors with themselues destroy : ennactures
Where Ioy most Reuels, Greefe doth most lament ;
Greefe ioyes, Ioy greeues on slender accident.⁹ Greefe ioy
ioy griefes
This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange
That euen our Loues should with our Fortunes
change.

For 'tis a question left vs yet to proue,
Whether Loue lead Fortune, or else Fortune Loue.

¹ Is this to be supposed in the original play, or inserted by Hamlet, embodying an unuttered and yet more fearful doubt with regard to his mother?

² This speech is on the margin in the *Quarto*, and the Queene's speech runs on without break.

³ the urgencies; the motives

⁴ worldly advantage

⁵ 'Purpose holds but while Memory holds,'

⁶ 'Purpose is born in haste, but is of poor strength to live.'

⁷ Here again there is carelessness of construction, as if the Poet had not thought it worth his while to correct this subsidiary portion of the drama. I do not see how to lay the blame on the printer.—'Purpose is a mere fruit, which holds on or falls only as it must. The element of persistency is not in it.'

⁸ unavoidable—coming of necessity

⁹ 'Grief turns into joy, and joy into grief, on a slight chance.'

The great man downe, you marke his fauourites fauourite
flies,

The poore aduanc'd, makes Friends of Enemies :
And hitherto doth Loue on Fortune tend,
For who not needs, shall neuer lacke a Friend :
And who in want a hollow Friend doth try,
Directly seasons him his Enemy.¹

But orderly to end, where I begun,
Our Willes and Fates do so contrary run,
That our Deuices still are ouerthrowne,
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our owne.²
246 So thinke thou wilt no second Husband wed.
But die thy thoughts, when thy first Lord is dead.

Bap. Nor Earth to giue me food, nor Heauen *Quee.*
light,

Sport and repose locke from me day and night :³

* Each opposite that blankes the face of ioy,
Meet what I would haue well, and it destroy :
Both heere, and hence, pursue me lasting strife,⁴
If once a Widdow, euer I be Wife.⁵

once I be a
be a wife.

Ham. If she should breake it now.⁶

King. 'Tis deeply sworne :

Sweet, leaue me heere a while,
My spirits grow dull, and faine I would beguile
The tedious day with sleepe.

Qu. Sleepe rocke thy Braine, *Sleepes*⁷
And neuer come mischance betweene vs twaine.

Exit Exsunt.

Ham. Madam, how like you this Play ?

Qu. The Lady protests to much me thinkes. doth protest

Ham. Oh but shee'l keepe her word.

* Here in the Quarto :—

To desperation turne my trust and hope,¹
And Anchors² cheere in prison be my scope

¹ All that is wanted to make a real enemy of an unreal friend is the seasoning of a requested favour.

² 'Our thoughts are ours, but what will come of them we cannot tell.'

³ 'May Day and Night lock from me sport and repose.'

⁴ 'May strife pursue me in the world and out of it,'

⁵ In all this, there is nothing to reflect on his mother beyond what everybody knew.

⁶ *This speech is in the margin of the Quarto.*

⁷ *Not in Q.*

¹ 'May my trust and hope turn to despair,'

² an anchoret's

King. Haue you heard the Argument, is there no Offence in't? ¹

Ham. No, no, they do but iest, poyson in iest, no Offence i'th'world.²

King. What do you call the Play?

Ham. The Mouse-trap: Marry how? Tropically: ³ This Play is the Image of a murder done in *Vienna: Gonzago* is the Dukes name, his wife *Baptista*: you shall see anon: 'tis a knauish peece of worke: But what o'that? Your Maiestie, and wee that haue free soules, it touches vs not: let the gall'd iade winch: our withers are vnrunge.⁴ of that?

*Enter Lucianus.*⁵

This is one *Lucianus* nephew to the King.

Ophe. You are a good Chorus, my Lord. are as good as a Chorus

Ham. I could interpret betweene you and your loue: if I could see the Puppets dallying.⁶

Ophe. You are keene my Lord, you are keene.

Ham. It would cost you a groaning, to take off my edge. mine

Ophe. Still better and worse.

Ham. So you mistake Husbands.⁷ mistake your
Begin Murderer. Pox, leaue thy damnable Faces, murtherer,
and begin. Come, the croaking Rauens doth bellow leave
for Reuenge.⁸

Lucian. Thoughts blacke, hands apt,
Drugges fit, and Time agreeing:
Confederate season, else, no Creature seeing: ⁹ Considerat
Thou mixture ranke, of Midnight Weeds collected,
With Hecats Ban, thrice blasted, thrice infected, inveced
Thy naturall Magicke, and dire propertie,
On wholsome life, vsurpe immediately. vsurps

*Powres the poyson in his eares.*¹⁰

Ham. He poysons him i'th Garden for's estate: A poysons | for his

¹ —said, perhaps, to Polonius. Is there a lapse here in the king's self-possession? or is this speech only an outcome of its completeness—a pretence of fearing the play may glance at the queen for marrying him?

² 'It is but jest; don't be afraid: there is no reality in it'—as one might say to a child seeing a play.

³ Figuratively: from *trope*. In the 1st *Q.* the passage stands thus:

Ham. Mouse-trap: mary how trapically: this play is
The image of a murder done in *guyana*,

⁴ Here Hamlet endangers himself to force the king to self-betrayal.

⁵ *In Q. after next line.*

⁶ In a puppet-play, if she and her love were the puppets, he could supply the speeches.

⁷ Is this a misprint for 'so you *must take* husbands'—for better and worse, namely? or is it a thrust at his mother—'So you mis-take husbands, going from the better to a worse'? In 1st *Q.*: 'So you must take your husband, begin.'

⁸ Probably a mocking parody or burlesque of some well-known exaggeration—such as not a few of Marlowe's lines.

⁹ 'none beholding save the accomplice hour:'

¹⁰ *Not in Q.*

His name's *Gonzago*: the Story is extant and writ and written
 in choyce Italian. You shall see anon how the in very choice
 Murtherer gets the loue of *Gonzago's* wife.

Ophe. The King rises.¹

Ham. What, frighted with false fire.²

Qu. How fares my Lord?

Pol. Giue o're the Play.

King. Giue me some Light. Away.³

All. Lights, Lights, Lights.

Exeunt *Pol.* | *Exeunt*
all but Ham.
 & *Horatio.*

Manet Hamlet & Horatio.

*Ham.*⁴ Why let the strucken Deere go weepe,
 The Hart vngalled play:
 For some must watch, while some must sleepe;
 So runnes the world away.

Would not this⁵ Sir, and a Forrest of Feathers, if
 the rest of my Fortunes turne Turke with me; with
 two Prouinciall Roses⁶ on my rac'd⁷ Shooes, get me
 a Fellowship⁸ in a crie⁹ of Players sir.

with prouin-
 ciall | raz'd
 Players?

Hor. Halfe a share.

Ham. A whole one I,¹⁰

¹¹ For thou dost know: Oh *Damon* deere,
 This Realme dismantled was of Ioue himselfe,
 And now reignes heere.
 A verie verie Paiocke.¹²

Hora. You might haue Rim'd.¹³

Ham. Oh good *Horatio*, Ile take the Ghosts
 word for a thousand pound. Did'st perceiue?

Hora. Verie well my Lord.

Ham. Vpon the talke of the poysoning?

Hora. I did verie well note him.

*Enter Rosinrance and Guildensterne.*¹⁴

Ham. Oh, ha? Come some Musick.¹⁵ Come the Ah ha,
 Recorders:

¹ — in ill suppressed agitation.

² *This speech is not in the Quarto.*—Is the ‘false fire’ what we now call *stage-fire*?—‘What! frightened at a mere play?’

³ The stage—the stage-stage, that is—alone is lighted.

Does the king stagger out blindly, madly, shaking them from him? I think not—but as if he were taken suddenly ill.

⁴ —*singing*—that he may hide his agitation, restrain himself, and be regarded as careless-mad, until all are safely gone.

⁵ —his success with the play,

⁶ ‘Roses of Provins,’ we are told—probably artificial.

⁷ The meaning is very doubtful. But for the *raz’d* of the *Quarto*, I should suggest *lac’d*. Could it mean *cut low*?

⁸ *a share*, as immediately below.

⁹ A *cry* of hounds is a pack. So in *King Lear*, act v. sc. 3, ‘packs and sects of great ones.’

¹⁰ *I* for *ay*—that is, *yes*!—He insists on a whole share.

¹¹ Again he takes refuge in singing.

¹² The lines are properly measured in the *Quarto*:

For thou doost know oh Damon deere
This Realme dismantled was
Of *Ioue* himselfe, and now raignes heere
A very very paiock.

By *Jove*, he of course intends *his father*. 170

What ‘*Paiocke*’ means, whether *pagan*, or *peacock*, or *bajocco*, matters nothing, since it is intended for nonsense.

¹³ To rime with *was*, Horatio naturally expected *ass* to follow as the end of the last line: in the wanton humour of his excitement, Hamlet disappointed him.

¹⁴ *In Q. after next speech.*

¹⁵ He hears Rosinrance and Guildensterne coming, and changes his behaviour—calling for music to end the play with. Either he wants, under its cover, to finish his talk with Horatio in what is for the moment the safest place, or he would mask himself before his two false friends. Since the departure of the king—I would suggest—he has borne himself with evident apprehension, every now and then glancing about him, as fearful of what may follow his uncle’s recognition of the intent of the play. Three times he has burst out singing.

Or might not his whole carriage, with the call for music, be the outcome of a grimly merry satisfaction at the success of his scheme?

For if the King like not the Comedie,
Why then belike he likes it not perdie.¹

Come some Musicke.

Guild. Good my Lord, vouchsafe me a word
with you.

Ham. Sir, a whole History.

Guild. The King, sir.

Ham. I sir, what of him?

Guild. Is in his retyrement, maruellous dis-
temper'd.

Ham. With drinke Sir?

Guild. No my Lord, rather with choller.² Lord, with

Ham. Your wisdome should shew it selfe more
richer, to signifie this to his Doctor: for for me to the Doctor,
put him to his Purgation, would perhaps plunge
him into farre more Choller.² into more

Guild. Good my Lord put your discourse into
some frame,³ and start not so wildely from my stare
affayre.

Ham. I am tame Sir, pronounce.

Guild. The Queene your Mother, in most great
affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.

Ham. You are welcome.⁴

Guild. Nay, good my Lord, this courtesie is
not of the right breed. If it shall please you to
make me a wholesome answer, I will doe your
Mothers command'ment: if not, your pardon, and
my returne shall bee the end of my Businesse. of busines.

Ham. Sir, I cannot.

Guild. What, my Lord?

Ham. Make you a wholesome answer: my wits
diseas'd. But sir, such answers as I can make, you answere
shal command: or rather you say, my Mother: rather as you
therefore no more but to the matter. My Mother
you say.

¹ These two lines he may be supposed to sing.

Choler means *bile*, and thence *anger*. Hamlet in his answer plays on the two meanings :—‘to give him the kind of medicine I think fit for him, would perhaps much increase his displeasure.’

³ some logical consistency

⁴ —*with an exaggeration of courtesy*

Rosin. Then thus she sayes: your behaiour hath stroke her into amazement, and admiration.¹

Ham. Oh wonderfull Sonne, that can so astonish a Mother. But is there no sequell at the heeles of this Mothers admiration? stonish
admiration,
impart.

Rosin. She desires to speake with you in her Closset, ere you go to bed.

Ham. We shall obey, were she ten times our Mother. Haue you any further Trade with vs?

Rosin. My Lord, you once did loue me.

Ham. So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.² And doe still

Rosin. Good my Lord, what is your cause of distemper? You do freely barre the doore of your owne Libertie, if you deny your greefes to your Friend. surely barre
the doore vpon
your

Ham. Sir I lacke Aduancement.

Rosin. How can that be, when you haue the
136 voyce of the King himselfe, for your Succession in Denmarke?

Ham. I, but while the grasse growes,³ the Prouerbe is something musty. I sir,

Enter one with a Recorder.⁵

O the Recorder. Let me see, to withdraw with you,⁶ why do you go about to recouer the winde of mee,⁷ as if you would driue me into a toyle?⁸ , ô the Record-
ers, let mee
see one, to

Guild. O my Lord, if my Dutie be too bold, my loue is too vnmanly.⁹

Ham. I do not well vnderstand that.¹⁰ Will you play vpon this Pipe?

Guild. My Lord, I cannot.

Ham. I pray you.

Guild. Beleeue me, I cannot.

Ham. I do beseech you.

¹ wonder, astonishment.

² He swears an oath that will not hold, being by the hand of a thief.

In the Catechism : ' Keep my hands from picking and stealing.'

³ Here in *Quarto*, *Enter the Players with Recorders.*

⁴ ' . . . the colt starves.'

⁵ *Not in Q.* The stage-direction of the *Folio* seems doubtful. Hamlet has called for the orchestra : we may either suppose one to precede the others, or that the rest are already scattered ; but the *Quarto* direction and reading seem better.

⁶ —*taking Guildensterne aside*

⁷ ' to get to windward of me,'

⁸ ' Why do you seek to get the advantage of me, as if you would drive me to betray myself?'—Hunters, by sending on the wind their scent to the game, drive it into their toils.

⁹ Guildensterne tries euphuism, but hardly succeeds. He intends to plead that any fault in his approach must be laid to the charge of his love. *Duty* here means *homage*—so used still by the common people.

¹⁰ —said with a smile of gentle contempt.

Guild. I know no touch of it, my Lord.

Ham. 'Tis as easie as lying: gouerne these
Ventiges with your finger and thumb, giue it
breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most
excellent Musicke. Looke you, these are the
stoppes.

It is
fingers, & the
umber, giue
most eloquent

Guild. But these cannot I command to any
vtterance of hermony, I haue not the skill.

Ham. Why looke you now, how vnworthy a
thing you make of me: you would play vpon mee;
you would seeme to know my stopes: you would
pluck out the heart of my Mysterie; you would
sound mee from my lowest Note, to the top of my
Compass: and there is much Musicke, excellent
Voice, in this little Organe, yet cannot you make
it. Why do you thinke, that I am easier to be
plaid on, then a Pipe? Call me what Instrument
you will, though you can fret¹ me, you cannot
play vpon me. God blesse you Sir.²

note to my
compasse

it speak,
s'hould do you
think I

you fret me
not,

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Enter Polonius.

Polon. My Lord; the Queene would speak
with you, and presently.

Ham. Do you see that Clowd? that's almost in
shape like a Camell.

yonder clowd

shape of a

Polon. By'th'Misse, and it's like a Camell
indeed.

masse and tis,

Ham. Me thinkes it is like a Weazell.

Polon. It is back'd like a Weazell.

Ham. Or like a Whale?³

Polon. Verie like a Whale.⁴

Ham. Then will I come to my Mother, by and
by:

I will

60, 136, They foole me to the top of my bent.⁵

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I will come by and by.

¹ —with allusion to the *frets* or *stop-marks* of a stringed instrument.

² —to *Polonius*.

³ There is nothing insanelly arbitrary in these suggestions of likeness ; a cloud might very well be like every one of the three ; the camel has a hump, the weasel humps himself, and the whale is a hump.

⁴ He humours him in everything, as he would a madman.

⁵ Hamlet's cleverness in simulating madness is dwelt upon in the old story. See '*Hystorie of Hamblet, prince of Denmarke.*'

*Polon.*¹ I will say so. *Exit.*¹

*Ham.*¹ By and by, is easily said. Leauē me
Friends :

'Tis now the verie witching time of night,
When Churchyards yawne, and Hell it selfe breaths breakes²
out

Contagion to this world.³ Now could I drink hot
blood,

And do such bitter businesse as the day such busines
as the bitter
day
Would quake to looke on.⁴ Soft now, to my
Mother :

Oh Heart, loose not thy Nature ;⁵ let not euer
The Soule of *Nero*,⁶ enter this firme bosome :
Let me be cruell, not vnnaturall.

172 I will speake Daggers⁷ to her, but vse none : dagger
My Tongue and Soule in this be Hypocrites.⁸
How in my words someuer she be shent,⁹
To giue them Seales,¹⁰ neuer my Soule consent.⁴ *Exit.*

Enter King, Rosincrance, and Guildensterne.

King. I like him not, nor stands it safe with vs,
To let his madnesse range.¹¹ Therefore prepare
you,

167 I your Commission will forthwith dispatch,¹²
128, 180 And he to England shall along with you :
The termes of our estate, may not endure¹³
Hazard so dangerous as doth hourelly grow so neer's as
his browes.
Out of his Lunacies.

Guild. We will our selues prouide :
Most holie and Religious feare it is¹⁴
To keepe those many many bodies safe
That liue and feede vpon your Maiestie.¹⁵

Rosin. The single
And peculiar¹⁶ life is bound
With all the strength and Armour of the minde,

¹ The *Quarto*, not having *Polon.*, *Exit*, or *Ham.*, and arranging differently, reads thus :—

They foole me to the top of my bent, I will come by and by,
 Leau me friends.
 I will, say so. By and by is easily said,
 Tis now the very &c.

² *belches*.

³ —thinking of what the Ghost had told him, perhaps : it was the time when awful secrets wander about the world. Compare *Macbeth*, act ii. sc. 1 ; also act iii. sc. 2.

⁴ The assurance of his uncle's guilt, gained through the effect of the play upon him, and the corroboration of his mother's guilt by this partial confirmation of the Ghost's assertion, have once more stirred in Hamlet the fierceness of vengeance. But here afresh comes out the balanced nature of the man—say rather, the supremacy in him of reason and will. His dear soul, having once become mistress of his choice, remains mistress for ever. He *could* drink hot blood, he *could* do bitter business, but he will carry himself as a son, and the son of his father, *ought* to carry himself towards a guilty mother—*mother* although guilty.

⁵ Thus he girds himself for the harrowing interview. Aware of the danger he is in of forgetting his duty to his mother, he strengthens himself in filial righteousness, dreading to what word or deed a burst of indignation might drive him. One of his troubles now is the way he feels towards his mother.

⁶ —who killed his mother

⁷ His words should be as daggers.

⁸ *Pretenders*

⁹ *reproached* or *rebuked*—though oftener *scolded*

¹⁰ 'to seal them with actions'—Actions are the seals to words, and make them irrevocable.

¹¹ *walk at liberty*

¹² *get ready*

¹³ He had, it would appear, taken them into his confidence in the business ; they knew what was to be in their commission, and were thorough traitors to Hamlet.

¹⁴ —holy and religious precaution for the sake of the many depending on him

¹⁵ Is there not unconscious irony of their own parasitism here intended ?

¹⁶ *private individual*

To keepe it selfe from noyance :¹ but much more,
 That Spirit, vpon whose spirit depends and rests whose weale
depends
cesse
 The liues of many, the cease of Maiestie
 Dies not alone ;² but like a Gulfe doth draw
 What's neere it, with it. It is a massie wheele with it, or it is
 Fixt on the Somnet of the highest Mount,
 To whose huge Spoakes, ten thousand lesser things hough spokes
 Are mortiz'd and adioyn'd : which when it falles,
 Each small annexment, pettie consequence
 Attends the boystrous Ruine. Neuer alone raine,
 Did the King sighe, but with a generall grone. but a³

*King.*⁴ Arme you,⁵ I pray you to this speedie
 Voyage ; viage,
 For we will Fetters put vpon this feare,⁶ put about this
 Which now goes too free-footed.

Both. We will haste vs. *Exeunt Gent*

Enter Polonius.

Pol. My Lord, he's going to his Mothers
 Closset :
 Behinde the Arras Ile conuey my selfe
 To heare the Processe. Ile warrant shee'l tax him
 home,
 And as you said, and wisely was it said,
 'Tis meete that some more audience then a Mother,
 Since Nature makes them partiall, should o're-heare
 The speech of vantage.⁷ Fare you well my Liege,
 Ile call vpon you ere you go to bed,
 And tell you what I know. Exit.

King. Thankes deere my Lord.
 Oh my offence is ranke, it smels to heauen,
 It hath the primall eldest curse vpon't,
 A Brothers murther.⁸ Pray can I not,
 Though inclination be as sharpe as will :
 My stronger guilt,⁹ defeats my strong intent,

¹ The philosophy of which self is the centre. The speeches of both justify the king in proceeding to extremes against Hamlet.

² The same as to say: 'The passing, ceasing, or ending of majesty dies not—is not finished or accomplished, without that of others;' 'the dying ends or ceases not,' &c.

³ The *but* of the *Quarto* is better, only the line halts. It is the preposition, meaning *without*.

⁴ *heedless of their flattery*. It is hardly applicable enough to interest him.

⁵ 'Provide yourselves'

⁶ fear active; cause of fear; thing to be afraid of; the noun of the verb *fear*, to *frighten*:

Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

A Midsummer Night's Dream, act v. sc. 1.

⁷ Schmidt (*Sh. Lex.*) says *of vantage* means *to boot*. I do not think he is right. Perhaps Polonius means 'from a position of advantage.' Or perhaps 'The speech of vantage' is to be understood as implying that Hamlet, finding himself in a position of vantage, that is, alone with his mother, will probably utter himself with little restraint.

⁸ This is the first proof positive of his guilt accorded even to the spectator of the play: here Claudius confesses not merely guilt (118), but the very deed. Thoughtless critics are so ready to judge another as if he knew all they know, that it is desirable here to remind the student that only he, not Hamlet, hears this soliloquy. The falseness of half the judgments in the world comes from our not taking care and pains first to know accurately the actions, and then to understand the mental and moral condition, of those we judge.

⁹ —his present guilty indulgence—stronger than his strong intent to pray.

And like a man to double businesse bound,¹
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
 And both² neglect ; what if this cursed hand
 Were thicker then it selfe with Brothers blood,
 Is there not Raine enough in the sweet Heauens
 To wash it white as Snow? Whereto serues
 mercy,

But to confront the visage of Offence?
 And what's in Prayer, but this two-fold force,
 To be fore-stalled ere we come to fall,
 Or pardon'd being downe? Then Ile looke vp, pardon
 My fault is past. But oh, what forme of Prayer
 Can serue my turne? Forgiue me my foule
 Murther :

That cannot be, since I am still possest
 Of those effects for which I did the Murther.³
 My Crowne, mine owne Ambition, and my Queene :

May one be pardon'd, and retaine th'offence?
 In the corrupted currants of this world,
 Offences gilded hand may shoue by Iustice showe
 And oft 'tis seene, the wicked prize it selfe
 Buyes out the Law ; but 'tis not so aboue,
 There is no shuffling, there the Action lyes
 In his true Nature, and we our selues compell'd
 Euen to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
 To giue in euidence. What then? What rests?
 Try what Repentance can. What can it not?
 Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?⁴
 Oh wretched state ! Oh bosome, blacke as death !
 Oh limed⁵ soule, that struggling to be free,
 Art more ingag'd⁶ : Helpe Angels, make assay :⁷
 Bow stubborne knees, and heart with strings of
 Steele,

Be soft as sinewes of the new-borne Babe,
 All may be well.

¹ Referring to his double guilt—the one crime past, the other in continuance.

Here is the corresponding passage in the 1st Q., with the adultery plainly confessed :—

Enter the King.

King. O that this wet that fallies vpon my face
 Would wash the crime cleere from my conscience !
 When I looke vp to heauen, I see my trespasse,
 The earth doth still crie out vpon my fact,
 Pay me the murder of a brother and a king,
 And the adulterous fault I haue committed :
 O these are sinnes that are vnpardonable :
 Why say thy sinnes were blacker then is ieat,
 Yet may contrition make them as white as snowe :
 I but still to perseuer in a sinne,
 It is an act gainst the vniuersall power,
 Most wretched uan, stoope, bend thee to thy prayer,
 Aske grace of heauen to keepe thee from despaire.

² both crimes

³ He could repent of and pray forgiveness for the murder, if he could repent of the adultery and incest, and give up the queen. It is not the sins they have done, but the sins they will not leave, that damn men. ‘ This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.’ The murder deeply troubled him ; the adultery not so much ; the incest and usurpation mainly as interfering with the forgiveness of the murder.

⁴ Even hatred of crime committed is not repentance ; repentance is the turning away from wrong doing : ‘ Cease to do evil ; learn to do well.’

⁵ — caught and held by crime, as a bird by bird-lime

⁶ entangled

⁷ *said to his knees.* Point thus :—‘ Helpe Angels ! Make assay—bow, stubborne knees !’

Enter Hamlet.

*Ham.*¹ Now might I do it pat, now he is praying,
 And now Ile doo't, and so he goes to Heauen,
 And so am I reueng'd: that would be scann'd,
 A Villaine killes my Father, and for that
 I his foule Sonne, do this same Villaine send
 To heauen. Oh this is hyre and Sallery, not Re-
 uenge.

doe it, but now
 a is a praying,
 so a goes

reuengde,

sole sonne

To heauen,
 Why, this is
 base and silly,
 not

A tooke

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He tooke my Father grossely, full of bread,
 With all his Crimes broad blowne, as fresh as May,
 And how his Audit stands, who knowes, saue
 Heauen: ²

as flush as

But in our circumstance and course of thought
 'Tis heaue with him: and am I then reueng'd,
 To take him in the purging of his Soule,
 When he is fit and season'd for his passage? No.
 Vp Sword, and know thou a more horrid hent ³
 When he is drunke asleepe: or in his Rage,
 Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed,
 At gaming, swearing, or about some acte
 That ha's no rellish of Saluation in't,
 Then trip him,⁴ that his heeles may kicke at
 Heauen,

At game a
 swearing,

And that his Soule may be as damn'd and blacke
 As Hell, whereto it goes.⁵ My Mother stayes,⁶
 This Physicke but prolongs thy sickly dayes.⁷

Exit.

King. My words flye vp, my thoughts remain
 below,
 Words without thoughts, neuer to Heauen go.⁸

Exit.

Enter Queene and Polonius.

*Enter Ger-
 trard and*

Pol. He will come straight:
 Looke you lay home to him

A will

¹ In the 1st *Q.* this speech commences with, 'I so, come forth and worke thy last,' evidently addressed to his sword; afterwards, having changed his purpose, he says, 'no, get thee vp agen.'

² This indicates doubt of the Ghost still. He is unwilling to believe in him.

³ *grasp.* This is the only instance I know of *hent* as a noun. The verb *to hent, to lay hold of,* is not so rare. 'Wait till thou be aware of a grasp with a more horrid purpose in it.'

⁴ —still addressed to his sword

⁵ Are we to take Hamlet's own presentment of his reasons as exhaustive? Doubtless to kill him at his prayers, whereupon, after the notions of the time, he would go to heaven, would be anything but justice—the murdered man in hell—the murderer in heaven! But it is easy to suppose Hamlet finding it impossible to slay a man on his knees—and that from behind: thus in the unseen Presence, he was in sanctuary, and the avenger might well seek reason or excuse for not *then,* not *there* executing the decree.

⁶ 'waits for me'

⁸ 1st *Q.* *King* My wordes fly vp, my sinnes remaine below.

No King on earth is safe, if Gods his foe. *exit King.*

So he goes to make himself safe by more crime! His repentance is mainly fear.

⁷ He seems now to have made up his mind, and to await only fit time and opportunity; but he is yet to receive confirmation strong as holy writ.

This is the first chance Hamlet has had—within the play—of killing the king, and any imputation of faulty irresolution therein is simply silly. It shows the soundness of Hamlet's reason, and the steadiness of his will, that he refuses to be carried away by passion, or the temptation of opportunity. The sight of the man on his knees might well start fresh doubt of his guilt, or even wake the thought of sparing a repentant sinner. He knows also that in taking vengeance on her husband he could not avoid compromising his mother. Besides, a man like Hamlet could not fail to perceive how the killing of his uncle, and in such an attitude, would look to others.

It may be judged, however, that the reason he gives to himself for not slaying the king, was only an excuse, that his soul revolted from the idea of assassination, and was calmed in a measure by the doubt whether a man could thus pray—in supposed privacy, we must remember—and be a murderer. Not even yet had he proof *positive,* absolute, conclusive: the king might well take offence at the play, even were he innocent; and in any case Hamlet would desire *presentable* proof: he had positively none to show the people in justification of vengeance.

As in excitement a man's moods may be opalescent in their changes, and as the most contrary feelings may coexist in varying degrees, all might be in a mind, which I have suggested as present in that of Hamlet.

To have been capable of the kind of action most of his critics would demand of a man, Hamlet must have been the weakling they imagine him. When at length, after a righteous delay, partly willed, partly in-

Tell him his pranks haue been too broad to beare
with,

And that your Grace hath scree'nd, and stoo'd
betweene

Much heate, and him. Ile silence me e'enc heere : euen heere,

Pray you be round ¹ with him.²

Ham. within. Mother, mother, mother.³

Enter Hamlet.

Qu. Ile warrant you, feare me not.

Ger. Ile wait
you,

Withdraw, I heare him comming.

*Enter Hamlet.*⁴

*Ham.*⁵ Now Mother, what's the matter?

Qu. Hamlet, thou hast thy Father much Ger.
offended.

Ham. Mother, you haue my Father much
offended.

Qu. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue. Ger.

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

Qu. Why how now *Hamlet*? ⁶ Ger.

Ham. Whats the matter now?

Qu. Haue you forgot me? ⁷ Ger.

Ham. No by the Rood, not so :

You are the Queene, your Husbands Brothers wife,
But would you were not so. You are my Mother.⁸

And would it
were

Qu. Nay, then Ile set those to you that can Ger.
speake.⁹

Ham. Come, come, and sit you downe, you
shall not boudge :

You go not till I set you vp a glasse,

Where you may see the inmost part of you?

the most part

Qu. What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murther Ger.
me? ¹⁰ Helpe, helpe, hoa. Helpe how.

Pol. What hoa, helpe, helpe, helpe.

What how
helpe.

Ham. How now, a Rat? dead for a Ducate,
dead.¹¹

evitable, he holds documents in the king's handwriting as proofs of his treachery—*proofs which can be shown*—giving him both right and power over the life of the traitor, then, and only then, is he in cool blood absolutely satisfied as to his duty—which conviction, working with opportunity, and that opportunity plainly the last, brings the end; the righteous deed is done, and done righteously, the doer blameless in the doing of it. The Poet is not careful of what is called poetic justice in his play, though therein is no failure; what he is careful of is personal rightness in the hero of it.

¹ *The Quarto has not 'with him.'*

² *He goes behind the arras.*

³ *The Quarto has not this speech.*

⁴ *Not in Quarto.*

⁵ 1st Q. *Ham.* Mother, mother, O are you here?

How 'st with you mother?

Queene How 'st with you?

Ham, I'll tell you, but first weele make all safe.

Here, evidently, he bolts the doors.

⁶ 1st Q. *Queene* How now boy?

Ham. How now mother! come here, sit downe, for you shall heare me speake.

⁷ —'that you speak to me in such fashion?'

⁸ *Point thus:* 'so: you?'—'would you were not so, for you are my mother?'—*with emphasis on 'my.'* The whole is spoken sadly.

⁹ —'speak so that you must mind them.'

¹⁰ The apprehension comes from the combined action of her conscience and the notion of his madness.

¹¹ There is no precipitancy here—only instant resolve and execution. It is another outcome and embodiment of Hamlet's rare faculty for action, showing his delay the more admirable. There is here neither time nor call for delay. Whoever the man behind the arras might be, he had, by spying upon him in the privacy of his mother's room, forfeited to Hamlet his right to live; he had heard what he had said to his mother, and his death was necessary; for, if he left the room, Hamlet's last chance of fulfilling his vow to the Ghost was gone: if the play had not sealed, what he had now spoken must seal his doom. But the decree had in fact already gone forth against his life. 158

Pol. Oh I am slaine. ¹ *Killes Polonius.*²

Qu. Oh me, what hast thou done? *Ger.*

Ham. Nay I know not, is it the King? ³

Qu. Oh what a rash, and bloody deed is this? *Ger.*

Ham. A bloody deed, almost as bad good
Mother,

56 As kill a King,⁴ and marrie with his Brother.

Qu. As kill a King? *Ger.*

Ham. I Lady, 'twas my word.⁵ *it was*

Thou wretched, rash, intruding foole farewell,
I tooke thee for thy Betters,³ take thy Fortune, *better,*
Thou find'st to be too busie, is some danger.
Leaue wringing of your hands, peace, sit you
downe,

And let me wring your heart, for so I shall
If it be made of penetrable stuffe ;
If damned Custome haue not braz'd it so,
That it is prooffe and bulwarke against Sense. *it be*

Qu. What haue I done, that thou dar'st wag *Ger.*
thy tong,

In noise so rude against me? ⁶

Ham. Such an Act

That blurres the grace and blush of Modestie,⁷
Cals Vertue Hypocrite, takes off the Rose
From the faire forehead of an innocent loue,
And makes a blister there.⁸ Makes marriage vowes *And sets a*
As false as Dicers Oathes. Oh such a deed,
As from the body of Contraction ⁹ pluckes
The very soule, and sweete Religion makes
A rapsidie of words. Heauens face doth glow, *dooes*
Yea this solidity and compound masse, *Ore this*
With tristfull visage as against the doome, *With heated*
Is thought-sicke at the act.¹⁰ *visage,*
thought sick

Qu. Aye me ; what act,¹¹ that roares so lowd,¹²
and thunders in the Index.¹³

¹ *Not in Q.*

² —*through the arras.*

³ Hamlet takes him for, hopes it is the king, and thinks here to conclude: he is not praying now! and there is not a moment to be lost, for he has betrayed his presence and called for help. As often as immediate action is demanded of Hamlet, he is immediate with his response—never hesitates, never blunders. There is no blunder here: being where he was, the death of Polonius was necessary now to the death of the king. Hamlet's resolve is instant, and the act simultaneous with the resolve. The weak man is sure to be found wanting when immediate action is necessary; Hamlet never is. Doubtless those who blame him as dilatory, here blame him as precipitate, for they judge according to appearance and consequence.

All his delay after this is plainly compelled, although I grant he was not sorry to have to await such *more presentable* evidence as at last he procured, so long as he did not lose the final possibility of vengeance.

⁴ This is the sole reference in the interview to the murder. I take it for tentative, and that Hamlet is satisfied by his mother's utterance, carriage, and expression, that she is innocent of any knowledge of that crime. Neither does he allude to the adultery: there is enough in what she cannot deny, and that only which can be remedied needs be taken up; while to break with the king would open the door of repentance for all that had preceded. ⁵ He says nothing of the Ghost to his mother.

⁶ She still holds up and holds out.

⁷ 'makes Modesty itself suspected'

⁸ 'makes Innocence ashamed of the love it cherishes'

⁹ 'plucks the spirit out of all forms of contracting or agreeing.' We have lost the social and kept only the physical meaning of the noun.

¹⁰ I cannot help thinking the *Quarto* reading of this passage the more intelligible, as well as much the more powerful. We may imagine a red aurora, by no means a very unusual phenomenon, over the expanse of the sky:—

Heaven's face doth glow (*blush*)

O'er this solidity and compound mass,

(*the earth, solid, material, composite, a corporeal mass in confrontment with the spirit-like ethereal, simple, uncompounded heaven leaning over it*)

With tristful (*or heated, as the reader may choose*)

visage: as against the doom,

(*as in the presence, or in anticipation of the revealing judgment*)

Is thought sick at the act.

(*thought is sick at the act of the queen*)

My difficulties as to the *Folio* reading are—why the earth should be so described without immediate contrast with the sky; and—how the earth could be showing a tristful visage, and the sickness of its thought. I think, if the Poet indeed made the alterations and they are not mere blunders, he must have made them hurriedly, and without due attention. I would not forget, however, that there may be something present but too good for me to find, which would make the passage plain as it stands.

Compare *As you like it*, act i. sc. 3.

For, by this heaven, now at our sorrows pale,

Say what thou canst, I'll go along with thee.

¹¹ In *Q.* the rest of this speech is Hamlet's; his long speech begins here, taking up the queen's word.

¹² She still stands out.

¹³ 'thunders in the very indication or mention of it.' But by 'the

Ham. Looke heere vpon this Picture, and on
this,

The counterfet presentment of two Brothers :¹

See what a grace was seated on his Brow, on this

151 *Hyperions* curls, the front of Ioue himselfe, threaten and

An eye like Mars, to threaten or command
A Station, like the Herald Mercurie on a heauen, a
kissing

New lighted on a heauen kissing hill :

A Combination, and a forme indeed,

Where eury God did seeme to set his Scale,

To giue the world assurance of a man.²

This was your Husband. Looke you now what
followes.

Heere is your Husband, like a Mildew'd eare

Blasting his wholsom breath. Haue you eyes? wholsome
brother,

Could you on this faire Mountaine leaue to feed,

And batten on this Moore? ³ Ha? Haue you eyes?

You cannot call it Loue : For at your age,

The hey-day ⁴ in the blood is tame, it's humble,

And waites vpon the Iudgement : and what Iudge-
ment

Would step from this, to this? * What diuell was't,

That thus hath cousend you at hoodman-blinde? ⁵ hodman

^{**} O Shame ! where is thy Blush? Rebellious Hell,

If thou canst mutine in a Matrons bones,

* *Here in the Quarto :—*

, sence sure youe haue

Els could you not haue motion, but sure that sence
Is appoplext, for madnesse would not erre
Nor sence to extacie ¹ was nere so thral'd
But it reseru'd some quantity of choise ²
To serue in such ³ a difference,

** *Here in the Quarto :—*

Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight.
Eares without hands, or eyes, smelling sance ⁴ all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sence
Could not so mope : ⁵

Index' may be intended the *index* or *table of contents* of a book, at the beginning of it.

¹ He points to the portraits of the two brothers, side by side on the wall.

² See *Julius Cæsar*, act v. sc. 5,—speech of *Antony* at the end.

³ —perhaps an allusion as well to the complexion of *Claudius*, both moral and physical.

⁴ —perhaps allied to the German *heida*, and possibly the English *hoyden* and *hoity-toity*. Or is it merely *high-day—noontide*?

⁵ 'played tricks with you while hooded in the game of *blind-man's-buff*?' The omitted passage of the *Quarto* enlarges the figure.
1st Q. 'hob-man blinde'

¹ madness

² Attributing soul to sense, he calls its distinguishment *choice*.

³ —emphasis on *such*

⁴ This spelling seems to show how the English word *sans* should be pronounced.

—'be so dull'

To flaming youth, let Vertue be as waxe,
 And melt in her owne fire. Proclaime no shame,
 When the compulsiue Ardure giues the charge,
 Since Frost it selfe,¹ as actiue doth burne,
 As Reason panders Will.

Qu. O *Hamlet*, speake no more.²

Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soule,
 And there I see such blacke and grained³ spots,
 As will not leaue their Tinct.⁴

Ham. Nay, but to liue⁵

In the ranke sweat of an enseamed bed,
 Stew'd in Corruption ; honying and making loue

34 Ouer the nasty Sty.⁶

Qu. Oh speake to me, no more,

158 These words like Daggers enter in mine eares.
 No more sweet *Hamlet*.

Ham. A Murderer, and a Villaine :

A Slaue, that is not twentieth part the tythe
 Of your precedent Lord. A vice⁷ of Kings,
 A Cutpurse of the Empire and the Rule.
 That from a shelve, the precious Diadem stole,
 And put it in his Pocket.

Qu. No more.⁸

*Enter Ghost.*⁹

Ham. A King of shreds and patches.

44 Saue me ; and houer o're me with your wings¹⁰

You heauenly Guards. What would you gracious
 figure ? your gracious

Qu. Alas he's mad.¹¹

Ham. Do you not come your tardy Sonne to
 chide,

That laps't in Time and Passion, lets go by¹²

Th'important acting of your dread command ? Oh
 say.¹³

And reason
 pardons will.
Ger.

my very eyes
 into my soule,
 greued spots

will leaue
 there their

inseemed

Ger.

my

part the kyth

Ger.

Ger.

¹ —his mother's matronly age ² She gives way at last.

³ —spots whose blackness has sunk into the grain, or final particles of the substance

⁴ —transition form of *tint* :—'will never give up their colour;' 'will never be cleansed.'

⁵ He persists.

⁶ —Claudius himself—his body no 'temple of the Holy Ghost,' but a pig-sty. 3

⁷ The clown of the old Moral Play.

⁸ She seems neither surprised nor indignant at any point in the accusation: her consciousness of her own guilt has overwhelmed her.

⁹ The 1st *Q.* has *Enter the ghost in his night gowne.* It was then from the first intended that he should not at this point appear in armour—in which, indeed, the epithet *gracious figure* could hardly be applied to him, though it might well enough in one of the costumes in which Hamlet was accustomed to see him—as this dressing-gown of the 1st *Q.* A ghost would appear in the costume in which he naturally imagined himself, and in his wife's room would not show himself clothed as when walking among the fortifications of the castle. But by the words lower down (174)—

'My Father in his habite, as he liued,'

the Poet indicates, not his dressing-gown, but his usual habit, *i.e.* attire.

¹⁰ —almost the same invocation as when first he saw the apparition.

¹¹ The queen cannot see the Ghost. Her conduct has built such a wall between her and her husband that I doubt whether, were she a ghost also, she could see him. Her heart had left him, so they are no more together in the sphere of mutual vision. Neither does the Ghost wish to show himself to her. As his presence is not corporeal, a ghost may be present to but one of a company.

¹² 1. 'Who, lapsed (*fallen, guilty*), lets action slip in delay and suffering.' 2. 'Who, lapsed in (*fallen in, overwhelmed by*) delay and suffering, omits' &c. 3. 'lapsed in respect of time, and because of passion'—the meaning of the preposition *in*, common to both, reacted upon by the word it governs. 4. 'faulty both in delaying, and in yielding to suffering, when action is required.' 5. 'lapsed through having too much time and great suffering.' 6. 'allowing himself to be swept along by time and grief.'

Surely there is not another writer whose words would so often admit of such multiform and varied interpretation—each form good, and true, and suitable to the context! He seems to see at once all the relations of a thing, and to try to convey them at once, in an utterance single as the thing itself. He would condense the infinite soul of the meaning into the trembling, overtaxed body of the phrase!

¹³ In the renewed presence of the Ghost, all its former influence and all the former conviction of its truth, return upon him. He knows also how his behaviour must appear to the Ghost, and sees himself as the Ghost sees him. Confronted with the gracious figure, how should he think of self-justification! So far from being able to explain things, he even forgets the doubt that had held him back—it has vanished from the noble presence! He is now in the world of belief; the world of doubt is nowhere!—Note the masterly opposition of moods.

Ghost. Do not forget : this Visitation
 Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.¹
 But looke, Amazement on thy Mother sits ;²
 30, 54 O step betweene her, and her fighting Soule,³
 198 Conceit⁴ in weakest bodies, strongest workes.
 Speake to her *Hamlet*.⁵

Ham. How is it with you Lady ?⁶

Qu. Alas, how is't with you ?
 That you bend your eye on vacancie,
 And with their corporall ayre do hold discourse.
 Forth at your eyes, your spirits wildely peepe,
 And as the sleeping Soldiours in th'Alarme,
 Your bedded haire, like life in excrements,⁷
 Start vp, and stand an end.⁸ Oh gentle Sonne,
 Vpon the heate and flame of thy distemper
 Sprinkle coole patience. Whereon do you looke ?⁹

Ger.

you do bend
 with th'incor-
 porall ayre

Ham. On him, on him : look you how pale he
 glares,
 His forme and cause conioyn'd, preaching to stones,
 Would make them capeable.¹⁰ Do not looke vpon
 me,¹¹

Least with this pitteous action you conuert
 My sterne effects : then what I haue to do,¹²

111 Will want true colour ; teares perchance for blood.¹³

Qu. To who do you speake this ?

Ger. To whom

Ham. Do you see nothing there ?

Qu. Nothing at all, yet all that is I see.¹⁴

Ger.

Ham. Nor did you nothing heare ?

Qu. No, nothing but our selues.

Ger.

Ham. Why look you there : looke how it steals
 away :

173 My Father in his habite, as he liued,
 Looke where he goes euen now out at the Portall.

Exit. *Exit Ghost.*

114 *Qu.* This is the very coynage of your Braine, *Ger.*

¹ The Ghost here judges, as alone is possible to him, from what he knows—from the fact that his brother Claudius has not yet made his appearance in the ghost-world. Not understanding Hamlet's difficulties, he mistakes Hamlet himself.

² He mistakes also, through his tenderness, the condition of his wife—imagining, it would seem, that she feels his presence, though she cannot see him, or recognize the source of the influence which he supposes to be moving her conscience: she is only perturbed by Hamlet's behaviour.

³ —fighting within itself, as the sea in a storm may be said to fight.

He is careful as ever over the wife he had loved and loves still; careful no less of the behaviour of the son to his mother.

In the 1st Q. we have:—

But I perceiue by thy distracted lookes,
Thy mother's fearefull, and she stands amaze:
Speake to her Hamlet, for her sex is weake,
Comfort thy mother, Hamlet, thinke on me.

⁴ —not used here for bare *imagination*, but imagination with its concomitant feeling:—*conception*. 198

⁵ His last word ere he vanishes utterly, concerns his queen; he is tender and gracious still to her who sent him to hell. This attitude of the Ghost towards his faithless wife, is one of the profoundest things in the play. All the time she is not thinking of him any more than seeing him—for 'is he not dead!'—is looking straight at where he stands, but is all unaware of him.

⁶ I understand him to speak this with a kind of lost, mechanical obedience. The description his mother gives of him makes it seem as if the Ghost were drawing his ghost out to himself, and turning his body thereby half dead.

⁷ 'as if there were life in excrements.' The nails and hair were 'excrements'—things *growing out*.

⁸ Note the form *an end*—not *on end*. 51, 71

⁹ —all spoken coaxingly, as to one in a mad fit. She regards his perturbation as a sudden assault of his ever present malady.

One who sees what others cannot see they are always ready to count mad.

¹⁰ able to *take*, that is, to *understand*

¹¹ —to the Ghost.

¹² 'what is in my power to do'

¹³ Note antithesis here: 'your piteous action;' 'my stern effects'—'the things,' that is, 'which I have to effect.' 'Lest your piteous show convert—change—my stern doing; then what I do will lack true colour; the result may be tears instead of blood; I shall weep instead of striking.'

¹⁴ It is one of the constantly recurring delusions of humanity that we see all there is.

114 This bodilesse Creation extasie¹ is very cunning
in.²

Ham. Extasie?³

My Pulse as yours doth temperately keepe time,
And makes as healthfull Musicke.⁴ It is not mad-
nesse

That I haue vttered ; bring me to the Test
And I the matter will re-word : which madnesse And the
Would gamboll from. Mother, for loue of Grace,
Lay not a flattering Vnction to your soule, not that
That not your trespasse, but my madnesse speakes : flattering

182 It will but skin and filme the Vlcerous place,
Whil'st ranke Corruption mining all within, Whiles
Infects vnseene. Confesse your selfe to Heauen,
Repent what's past, auoyd what is to come,
And do not spred the Compost or the Weedes, compost on the
To make them ranke. Forgiue me this my Vertue, ranker,
For in the fatnesse of this pursie⁵ times, these
Vertue it selfe, of Vice must pardon begge,
Yea courb,⁶ and woe, for leaue to do him good. curbe and

Qu. Oh *Hamlet*,

Thou hast cleft my heart in twaine. Ger.

Ham. O throw away the worser part of it,
And liue the purer with the other halfe. And leaue the
Good night, but go not to mine Vnkles bed, my
Assume a Vertue, if you haue it not,⁷* refraine to Assune¹ to re-
night, fraine night,
And that shall lend a kinde of easinesse

* *Here in the Quarto :—*

¹ That monster custome, who all sence doth eate
Of habits deuill,² is angell yet in this
That to the vse of actions faire and good,
He likewise giues a frock or Liury
That aptly is put on

¹ madness 129

² Here is the correspondent speech in the 1st Q. I give it because of the queen's denial of complicity in the murder.

Queene Alas, it is the weakenesse of thy braine,
Which makes thy tongue to blazon thy hearts griefe :
But as I haue a soule, I sweare by heauen,
I neuer knew of this most horride murder :
But Hamlet, this is onely fantasie,
And for my loue forget these idle fits.

Ham. Idle, no mother, my pulse doth beate like yours,
It is not madnesse that possesseth Hamlet.

³ *Not in Q.*

⁴ —*time* being a great part of music. Shakspeare more than once or twice employs *music* as a symbol with reference to corporeal condition : see, for instance, *As you like it*, act i. sc. 2, 'But is there any else longs to see this broken music in his sides? is there yet another dotes upon rib-breaking?' where the *broken music* may be regarded as the antithesis of the *healthful music* here.

⁵ *swoln, pampered* : an allusion to the *purse* itself, whether intended or not, is suggested.

⁶ *bend, bow*

⁷ *To assume* is to take to one : by *assume a virtue*, Hamlet does not mean *pretend*—but the very opposite : *to pretend* is *to hold forth, to show* ; what he means is, 'Adopt a virtue'—that of *abstinence*—'and act upon it, order your behaviour by it, although you may not *feel* it. Choose the virtue—take it, make it yours.'

¹ This omitted passage is obscure with the special Shakspearean obscurity that comes of over-condensation. He omitted it, I think, because of its obscurity. Its general meaning is plain enough—that custom helps the man who tries to assume a virtue, as well as renders it more and more difficult for him who indulges in vice to leave it. I will paraphrase : 'That monster, Custom, who eats away all sense, the devil of habits, is angel yet in this, that, for the exercise of fair and good actions, he also provides a habit, a suitable frock or livery, that is easily put on.' The play with the two senses of the word *habit* is more easily seen than set forth. To paraphrase more freely : 'That devil of habits, Custom, who eats away all sense of wrong-doing, has yet an angel-side to him, in that he gives a man a mental dress, a habit, helpful to the doing of the right thing.' The idea of hypocrisy does not come in at all. The advice of Hamlet is : 'Be virtuous in your actions, even if you cannot in your feelings ; do not do the wrong thing you would like to do, and custom will render the abstinence easy.'

² I suspect it should be '*Of habits evil*'—the antithesis to *angel* being *monster*.

To the next abstinence. * Once more goodnight,
 And when you are desirous to be blest,
 Ile blessing begge of you.¹ For this same Lord,
 I do repent : but heauen hath pleas'd it so,²
 To punish me with this, and this with me,
 That I must be their³ Scourge and Minister.
 I will bestow him,⁴ and will answer well
 The death I gaue him :⁵ so againe, good night.
 I must be cruell, onely to be kinde ;⁶
 Thus bad begins,⁷ and worse remains behinde.⁸

This bad

**
Qu. What shall I do ?

Ger.

Ham. Not this by no meanes that I bid you do :

Let the blunt King tempt you againe to bed,
 Pinch Wanton on your cheek, call you his Mouse,
 And let him for a paire of reechie⁹ kisses,
 Or padding in your necke with his damn'd Fingers,
 Make you to rauell all this matter out,
 That I essentially am not in madnesse.

the blowt King

rouell

60,136,
156

But made in craft.¹⁰ 'Twere good you let him know,
 For who that's but a Queene, faire, sober, wise,
 Would from a Paddocke,¹¹ from a Bat, a Gibbe,¹²
 Such deere concernings hide, Who would do so,
 No in despite of Sense and Secrecie,
 Vnpegge the Basket on the houses top :
 Let the Birds flye, and like the famous Ape
 To try Conclusions¹³ in the Basket, creepe
 And breake your owne necke downe.¹⁴

mad

Qu. Be thou assur'd, if words be made of breath, *Ger.*

* *Here in the Quarto* :—

, the next more easie :¹
 For vse almost can change the stamp of nature,
 And either² the deuill, or throwe him out
 With wonderous potency :

** *Here in the Quarto* :—

One word more good Lady.³

¹ In bidding his mother good night, he would naturally, after the custom of the time, have sought her blessing : it would be a farce now : when she seeks the blessing of God, he will beg hers ; now, a plain *good night* must serve.

² Note the curious inverted use of *pleased*. It is here a transitive, not an impersonal verb. The construction of the sentence is, 'pleased it so, *in order to* punish us, that I must' &c.

³ The noun to which *their* is the pronoun is *heaven*—as if he had written *the gods*.

⁴ 'take him to a place fit for him to lie in'

⁵ 'hold my face to it, and justify it'

⁶ —omitting or refusing to embrace her

⁷ —looking at Polonius

⁸ Does this mean for himself to do, or for Polonius to endure?

⁹ reeky, smoky, fummy

¹⁰ Hamlet considers his madness the same that he so deliberately assumed. But his idea of himself goes for nothing where the experts conclude him mad ! His absolute clarity where he has no occasion to act madness, goes for as little, for 'all madmen have their sane moments' !

¹¹ *a toad* ; in Scotland, *a frog*

¹² an old cat

¹³ *Experiments*, Steevens says : is it not rather *results* ?

¹⁴ I fancy the story, which so far as I know has not been traced, goes on to say that the basket was emptied from the house-top to send the pigeons flying, and so the ape got his neck broken. The phrase 'breake your owne necke *downe*' seems strange : it could hardly have been written *neck-bone* !

¹ This passage would fall in better with the preceding with which it is vitally one—for it would more evenly continue its form—if the preceding *devil* were, as I propose above, changed to *evil*. But, precious as is every word in them, both passages are well omitted.

² Plainly there is a word left out, if not lost here. There is no authority for the supplied *master*. I am inclined to propose a pause and a gesture, with perhaps an *inarticulation*

³ —interrogatively perhaps, Hamlet noting her about to speak ; but I would prefer it thus : 'One word more :—good lady—' Here he pauses so long that she speaks. Or we *might* read it thus :

Qu. One word more.

Ham. Good lady?

Qu. What shall I do?

And breath of life : I haue no life to breath
 What thou hast saide to me.¹

128, 158 *Ham.* I must to England, you know that ?²

Qu. Alacke I had forgot : 'Tis so concluded on. *Ger.*

Ham. * This man shall set me packing :³

Ile lugge the Guts into the Neighbor roome,⁴

Mother goodnight. Indeede this Counsellor

night indeed,
 this

Is now most still, most secret, and most graue,

84 Who was in life, a foolish prating Knaue.

a most foolish

Come sir, to draw toward an end with you.⁵

Good night Mother.

*Exit Hamlet tugging in Polonius.*⁶

Exit.

7

Enter King.

*Enter King,
 and Queene,
 with Rosen-
 craus and
 Gylldensterne.*

King. There's matters in these sighes.

These profound heaues

You must translate ; Tis fit we vnderstand them.

Where is your Sonne ?⁸

*Qu.*** Ah my good Lord, what haue I seene to
 night ?

Ger. | Ah mine
 owne Lord,

King. What *Gertrude* ? How do's *Hamlet* ?

Qu. Mad as the Seas, and winde, when both
 contend

Ger. | sea and

Which is the Mightier, in his lawlesse fit⁹.

* *Here in the Quarto :—*

¹ Ther's letters seald, and my two Schoolefellowes,
 Whom I will trust as I will Adders fang'd,
 They beare the mandat, they must sweep my way
 And marshall me to knauery² : let it worke,
 For tis the sport to haue the enginer
 Hoist³ with his owne petar,⁴ an't shall goe hard
 But I will delue one yard belowe their mines,
 And blowe them at the Moone : ô tis most sweete
 When in one line two crafts directly meete,

** *Here in the Quarto :—*

Bestow this place on vs a little while.⁵

- ¹ 1st Q. O mother, if euer you did my deare father loue,
 Forbeare the adulterous bed to night,
 And win your selfe by little as you may,
 In time it may be you wil lothe him quite :
 And mother, but assist mee in reuenge,
 And in his death your infamy shall die.

Queene Hamlet, I vow by that maiesty,
 That knowes our thoughts, and lookes into our hearts,
 I will conceale, consent, and doe my best,
 What stratagem soe're thou shalt devise.

² The king had spoken of it both before and after the play : Horatio might have heard of it and told Hamlet.

³ ' My banishment will be laid to this deed of mine.'

⁴ —to rid his mother of it

⁵ It may cross him, as he says this, dragging the body out by one end of it, and toward the end of its history, that he is himself drawing toward an end along with Polonius.

⁶ —and weeping. 182. See note 5, 183.

⁷ Here, according to the editors, comes 'Act IV.' For this there is no authority, and the point of division seems to me very objectionable. The scene remains the same, as noted from Capell in *Cam. Sh.*, and the entrance of the king follows immediately on the exit of Hamlet. He finds his wife greatly perturbed : she has not had time to compose herself.

From the beginning of Act II., on to where I would place the end of Act III., there is continuity.

⁸ I would have this speech uttered with pauses and growing urgency, mingled at length with displeasure.

⁹ She is faithful to her son, declaring him mad, and attributing the death of 'the unseen' Polonius to his madness.

¹ This passage, like the rest, I hold to be omitted by Shakspeare himself. It represents Hamlet as divining the plot with whose execution his false friends were entrusted. The Poet had at first intended Hamlet to go on board the vessel with a design formed upon this for the out-witting of his companions, and to work out that design. Afterwards, however, he alters his plan, and represents his escape as more plainly providential : probably he did not see how to manage it by any scheme of Hamlet so well as by the attack of a pirate ; possibly he wished to write the passage (246) in which Hamlet, so consistently with his character, attributes his return to the divine shaping of the end rough-hewn by himself. He had designs—'dear plots'—but they were other than fell out—a rough-hewing that was shaped to a different end. The discomfiture of his enemies was not such as he had designed : it was brought about by no previous plot, but through a discovery. At the same time his deliverance was not effected by the fingering of the packet, but by the attack of the pirate : even the re-writing of the commission did nothing towards his deliverance, resulted only in the punishment of his traitorous companions. In revising the Quarto, the Poet sees that the passage before us, in which is expressed the strongest suspicion of his companions, with a determination to outwit and punish them, is inconsistent with the representation Hamlet gives afterwards of a restlessness and suspicion newly come upon him, which he attributes to the Divinity.

Neither was it likely he would say so much to his mother while so little sure of her as to warn her, on the ground of danger to herself, against revealing his sanity to the king. As to this, however, the portion omitted might, I grant, be regarded as an *aside*.

² —to be done to him

³ *Hoised*, from verb *hoise*—still used in Scotland.

⁴ a kind of explosive shell, which was fixed to the object meant to be destroyed. Note once more Hamlet's delight in action.

⁵ —said to *Ros. and Guild.* : in plain speech, 'Leave us a little while.'

Behinde the Arras, hearing something stirre,
 He whips his Rapier out, and cries a Rat, a Rat,
 And in his brainish apprehension killes
 The vnseene good old man.

Whyps out his
 Rapier, cryes a
 in this

King. Oh heauy deed :

It had bin so with vs ¹ had we beene there :

His Liberty is full of threats to all,²

To you your selfe, to vs, to euery one.

Alas, how shall this bloody deede be answered ?

It will be laide to vs, whose prouidence

Should haue kept short, restrain'd, and out of haunt,

This mad yong man.² But so much was our loue,

We would not vnderstand what was most fit,

But like the Owner of a foule disease,

176 To keepe it from divulging, let's it feede

let it

Euen on the pith of life. Where is he gone ?

Qu. To draw apart the body he hath kild,

Ger.

O're whom his very madnesse ³ like some Oare

Among a Minerall of Mettels base

181 Shewes it selfe pure.⁴ He weepes for what is done.⁵ pure, a weepes

King. Oh *Gertrude*, come away :

The Sun no sooner shall the Mountaines touch,

But we will ship him hence, and this vilde deed,

We must with all our Maiesty and Skill

200 Both countenance, and excuse.⁶ *Enter Ros. & Guild.*⁷

Ho *Guildenstern* :

Friends both go ioyned you with some further ayde :

Hamlet in madnesse hath *Polonius* slaine,

And from his Mother Clossets hath he drag'd him. closet | drag'd

Go seeke him out, speake faire, and bring the body

Into the Chappell. I pray you hast in this.

*Exit Gent.*⁸

Come *Gertrude*, wee'l call vp our wisest friends,

To let them know both what we meane to do,

And let

¹ —the royal plural

² He knows the thrust was meant for him, but he would not have it so understood ; he too lays it to his madness, though he too knows better.

³ ‘he, although mad’ ; ‘his nature, in spite of his madness’

⁴ —by his weeping, in the midst of much to give a different impression.’

⁵ We have no reason to think the queen inventing here ; what could she gain by it? the point indeed was rather against Hamlet, as showing it was not Polonius he had thought to kill. He was more than ever annoyed with the contemptible old man, who had by his meddlesomeness brought his death to his door ; but he was very sorry nevertheless over Ophelia’s father : those rough words in his last speech are spoken with the tears running down his face. We have seen the strange, almost discordant mingling in him of horror and humour, after the first appearance of the Ghost, 58, 60 : something of the same may be supposed when he finds he has killed Polonius : in the highstrung nervous condition that must have followed such a talk with his mother, it would be nowise strange that he should weep heartily even in the midst of contemptuous anger. Or perhaps a sudden breakdown from attempted show of indifference, would not be amiss in the representation.

⁶ ‘both countenance with all our majesty, and excuse with all our skill.’

⁷ In the *Quarto* a line back.

⁸ *Not in Q.*

And what's vntimely¹ done. * Oh come away, doone,
My soule is full of discord and dismay. *Exeunt.*

Enter Hamlet.

Ham. Safely stowed.²

Gentlemen within. *Hamlet, Lord Hamlet.*³

Ham. What noise? Who cal's on *Hamlet*?

Oh heere they come.

*Enter Ros. and Guildensterne.*⁴

Ro. What haue you done my Lord with the
dead body?

Ham. Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis Compound it
Kinne.⁵

Rosin. Tell vs where 'tis, that we may take it
thence,

And beare it to the Chappell.

Ham. Do not beleuee it.⁶

Rosin. Beleuee what?

Ham. That I can keepe your counsell, and not
156 mine owne. Besides, to be demanded of a Spundge,
what replication should be made by the Sonne of
a King.⁷

Rosin. Take you me for a Spundge, my Lord?

Ham. I sir, that sokes vp the Kings Counten-
ance, his Rewards, his Authorities (but such Officers
do the King best seruice in the end. He keeps
them like an Ape in the corner of his iaw,⁸ first like an apple
in
mouth'd to be last swallowed, when he needes what
you haue glean'd, it is but squeezing you, and
Spundge you shall be dry againe.

Rosin. I vnderstand you not my Lord.

* *Here in the Quarto:—*

Whose whisper ore the worlds dyiameter,¹
206 As leuell as the Cannon to his blanck,²
Transports his poysned shot. may misse³ our Name,
And hit the woundlesse ayre.

¹ unhappily

² He has hid the body—to make the whole look the work of a mad fit.

³ This line is not in the *Quarto*.

⁴ *Not in Q. See margin above.*

⁵ He has put it in a place which, little visited, is very dusty.

⁶ He is mad to them—sane only to his mother and Horatio.

⁷ *euphuistic* : ‘asked a question by a sponge, what answer should a prince make?’

⁸ *1st Q.* : For hee doth keep you as an Ape doth nuttes,
In the corner of his Iaw, first mouthes you,
Then swallows you :

¹ Here most modern editors insert, ‘*so, haply, slander*’. But, although I think the Poet left out this obscure passage merely from dissatisfaction with it, I believe it renders a worthy sense as it stands. The antecedent to *whose* is *friends* : *cannon* is nominative to *transports* ; and the only difficulty is the epithet *poysned* applied to *shot*, which seems transposed from the idea of an *unfriendly* whisper. Perhaps Shakspeare wrote *poysed shot*. But taking this as it stands, the passage might be paraphrased thus : ‘Whose (favourable) whisper over the world’s diameter (*from one side of the world to the other*), as level (*as truly aimed*) as the cannon (of an evil whisper) transports its poisoned shot to his blank (*the white centre of the target*), may shoot past our name (so keeping us clear), and hit only the invulnerable air.’ (*the intrenchant air* : *Macbeth*, act v. sc. 8). This interpretation rests on the idea of over-condensation with its tendency to seeming confusion—the only fault I know in the Poet—a grand fault, peculiarly his own, born of the beating of his wings against the impossible. It is much as if, able to think two thoughts at once, he would compel his phrase to utter them at once.

²
for the harlot king
Is quite beyond mine arm, out of the blank
And level of my brain, plot-proof ;
The Winter’s Tale, act ii. sc. 3.
My life stands in the level of your dreams,
Ibid. act iii. sc. 2.

³ two *ff* for two long *ff*

Ham. I am glad of it: a knauish speech sleepes in a foolish care.

Rosin. My Lord, you must tell vs where the body is, and go with vs to the King.

Ham. The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body.¹ The King, is a thing ——

Guild. A thing my Lord?

Ham. Of nothing²: bring me to him, hide Fox, and all after.³ *Exeunt*⁴

Enter King.

King, and two or three.

King. I haue sent to seeke him, and to find the bodie :

How dangerous is it that this man goes loose :⁵

Yet must not we put the strong Law on him :

212 Hee's loued of the distracted multitude,⁶

Who like not in their iudgement, but their eyes :

And where 'tis so, th'Offenders scourge is weigh'd

But neerer the offence: to beare all smooth, and neuer the euen,

This sodaine sending him away, must seeme

120 Deliberate pause,⁷ diseases desperate growne,

By desperate appliance are releued,

Or not at all.

Enter Rosincrane.

Rosencrans and all the rest.

How now? What hath befallne?

Rosin. Where the dead body is bestow'd my Lord,

We cannot get from him.

King. But where is he?⁸

Rosin. Without my Lord, guarded⁹ to know your pleasure.

King. Bring him before vs.

Rosin. Hoa, *Guildensterne*? Bring in my Lord.

Ros. How, bring in the Lord. They enter.

*Enter Hamlet and Guildensterne.*¹⁰

King. Now *Hamlet*, where's *Polonius*?

¹ 'The body is in the king's house, therefore with the king ; but the king knows not where, therefore the king is not with the body.'

² 'A thing of nothing' seems to have been a common phrase.

³ The *Quarto* has not 'hide Fox, and all after.'

⁴ Hamlet darts out, with the others after him, as in a hunt. Possibly there was a game called *Hide fox, and all after*.

⁵ He is a hypocrite even to himself.

⁶ This had all along helped to Hamlet's safety.

⁷ 'must be made to look the result of deliberate reflection.' Claudius fears the people may imagine Hamlet treacherously used, driven to self-defence, and hurried out of sight to be disposed of.

⁸ Emphasis on *he* ; the point of importance with the king, is *where he is*, not where the body is.

⁹ Henceforward he is guarded, or at least closely watched, according to the *Folio*—left much to himself according to the *Quarto*. 192

¹⁰ *Not in Quarto*.

Ham. At Supper.

King. At Supper? Where?

Ham. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten, where a is
a certaine conuocation of wormes are e'ne at him. of politique
Your worm is your onely Emperor for diet. We wormes¹
fat all creatures else to fat vs, and we fat our selfe ourselues
for Magots. Your fat King, and your leane
Begger is but variable seruice to dishes, but to one , two dishes
Table that's the end.

**King.* What dost thou meane by this?²

Ham. Nothing but to shew you how a King
may go a Progresse³ through the guts of a Begger.⁴

King. Where is *Polonius*.

Ham. In heauen, send thither to see. If your
Messenger finde him not there, seeke him i'th other
place your selfe: but indeed, if you finde him not
this moneth, you shall nose him as you go vp the
staires into the Lobby. but if indeed
you find him
not within this

King. Go seeke him there.

Ham. He will stay till ye come.

K. Hamlet, this deed of thine, for thine especial
safety A will stay till
you
this deede for
thine especiall

Which we do tender, as we deerely greeue
For that which thou hast done,⁵ must send thee
hence
With fierie Quicknesse.⁶ Therefore prepare thy
selfe,
The Barke is readie, and the winde at helpe,⁷
Th'Associates tend,⁸ and euery thing at bent
For England. is bent

* Here in the Quarto:—

King. Alas, alas.¹

Ham. A man may fish with the worme that hath eate of a King, and
eate of the fish that hath fedde of that worme.

¹ —such as Rosincrance and Guildensterne !

² I suspect this and the following speech ought by the printers to have been omitted also : without the preceding two speeches of the Quarto they are not accounted for.

³ a royal progress

⁴ Hamlet's philosophy deals much now with the worthlessness of all human distinctions and affairs.

⁵ 'and we care for your safety as much as we grieve for the death of Polonius,'

⁶ 'With fierie Quicknesse.' *not in Quarto.*

⁷ fair—ready to help

⁸ attend, wait

¹ —pretending despair over his madness

Ham. For England?

King. I *Hamlet*.

Ham. Good.

King. So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

Ham. I see a Cherube that see's him: but sees them,
come, for England. Farewell deere Mother.

King. Thy louing Father *Hamlet*.

Hamlet. My Mother: Father and Mother is
man and wife: man and wife is one flesh, and so flesh, so my
my mother.¹ Come, for England. *Exit*

195 *King.* Follow him at foote,²

Tempt him with speed aboard:

Delay it not, Ile haue him hence to night.

Away, for euery thing is Seal'd and done

That else leanes on³ th'Affaire pray you make
hast.

And England, if my loue thou holdst at ought,

As my great power thereof may giue thee sense,

Since yet thy Cicatrice lookes raw and red⁴

After the Danish Sword, and thy free awe

Payes homage to vs⁵; thou maist not coldly set⁶

Our Soueraigne Processe,⁷ which imports at full

By Letters coniuring to that effect

congruing

The present death of *Hamlet*. Do it England,

For like the Hecticke⁸ in my blood he rages,

And thou must cure me: Till I know 'tis done,

How ere my happes,⁹ my ioyes were ne're begun.¹⁰ ioyes will nere
begin.¹⁰

*Exit*¹¹

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¹² *Enter Fortinbras with an Armie.*

with his Army
ouer the stage.

For. Go Captaine, from me greet the Danish
King,

Tell him that by his license, *Fortinbras*

78 Claimes the conueyance¹³ of a promis'd March

Craucs the

Ouer his Kingdome. You know the Rendeuous:¹⁴

¹ He will not touch the hand of his father's murderer.

² 'at his heels'

³ 'belongs to'

⁴ 'as my great power may give thee feeling of its value, seeing the scar of my vengeance has hardly yet had time to heal,'

⁵ 'and thy fear uncompelled by our presence, pays homage to us ;'

⁶ 'set down to cool'; 'set in the cold'

⁷ *mandate* : 'Where's Fulvia's process?' *Ant. and Cl.*, act i. sc. 1. *Shakespeare Lexicon.*

⁸ *hectic fever—habitual* or constant fever

⁹ 'whatever my fortunes,'

¹⁰ The original, the *Quarto* reading—'my ioyes will nere begin' seems to me in itself better, and the cause of the change to be as follows :—

In the *Quarto* the next scene stands as in our modern editions, ending with the rime,

ô from this time forth,

My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth.

Exit.

This was the act-pause, the natural end of act iii.

But when the author struck out all but the commencement of the scene, leaving only the three little speeches of Fortinbras and his captain, then plainly the act-pause must fall at the end of the preceding scene. He therefore altered the end of the last verse to make it rime with the foregoing, in accordance with his frequent way of using a rime before an important pause.

It perplexes us to think how on his way to the vessel, Hamlet could fall in with the Norwegian captain. This may have been one of Shakspeare's reasons for striking the whole scene out—but he had other and more pregnant reasons.

¹¹ Here is now the proper close of the *Third Act*.

¹² *Commencement of the Fourth Act.*

Between the third and the fourth passes the time Hamlet is away ; for the latter, in which he returns, and whose scenes are *contiguous*, needs no more than one day.

¹³ 'claims a convoy in fulfilment of the king's promise to allow him to march over his kingdom.' The meaning is made plainer by the correspondent passage in the *1st Quarto* :

Tell him that *Fortenbrasse* nephew to old *Norway*,

Craues a free passe and conduct ouer his land,

According to the Articles agreed on :

¹⁴ 'where to rejoin us'

If that his Maiesty would ought with vs,
 We shall expresse our dutie in his eye,¹
 And let² him know so.

Cap. I will doo't, my Lord.

For. Go safely³ on.

Exit. softly

*

⁴ *Enter Queene and Horatio.*

*Enter Horatio,
 Gertrard, and
 a Gentleman.*

Qu. I will not speake with her.

*Hor.*⁵ She is importunate, indeed distract, her *Gent.*
 moode will needs be pittied.

Qu. What would she haue ?

Hor. She speakes much of her Father ; saies *Gent.*
 she heares

* *Here in the Quarto :—*

Enter Hamlet, Rosencraus, &c.

Ham. Good sir whose powers are these ?

Cap. They are of *Norway* sir.

Ham. How purposd sir I pray you ?

Cap. Against some part of *Poland.*

Ham. Who commaunds them sir ?

Cap. The Nephew to old *Norway, Fortenbrasse.*

Ham. Goes it against the maine of *Poland* sir,
 Or for some frontire ?

Cap. Truly to speake, and with no addition,¹

We goe to gaine a little patch of ground²

That hath in it no profit but the name

To pay five duckets, fiew I would not farme it ;

Nor wili it yeeld to *Norway* or the *Pole*

A rancker rate, should it be sold in fee.

Ham. Why then the Pollacke neuer will defend it.

Cap. Yes, it is already garisond.

* *Ham.* Two thousand soules, and twenty thousand
 duckets

VVill not debate the question of this straw

This is th'Impostume of much wealth and peace,

That inward breakes, and showes no cause without

Why the man dies.³ I humbly thanke you sir.

Cap. God buy you sir.

Ros. Wil't please you goe my Lord ?

Ham. Ile be with you straight, goe a little before.⁴

⁵ How all occasions⁶ doe informe against me,

¹ 'we shall pay our respects, waiting upon his person,'

² 'let,' *imperative mood.*

³ 'with proper precaution,' *said to his attendant officers.*

⁴ This was originally intended, I repeat, for the commencement of the act. But when the greater part of the foregoing scene was omitted, and the third act made to end with the scene before that, then the small part left of the all-but-cancelled scene must open the fourth act.

⁵ Hamlet absent, we find his friend looking after Ophelia. Gertrude seems less friendly towards her.

¹ exaggeration

² —probably a small outlying island or coast-fortress, *not far off*, else why should Norway care about it at all? If the word *frontier* has the meaning, as the *Shakespeare Lexicon* says, of 'an outwork in fortification,' its use two lines back would, taken figuratively, tend to support this.

³ The meaning may be as in the following paraphrase: 'This quarrelling about nothing is (the breaking of) the abscess caused by wealth and peace—which breaking inward (in general corruption), would show no outward sore in sign of why death came.' Or it might be *forced* thus:—

This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace.

That (which) inward breaks, and shows no cause without—

Why, the man dies!

But it may mean:—'The war is an imposthume, which will break within, and cause much affliction to the people that make the war.' On the other hand, Hamlet seems to regard it as a process for, almost a sign of health.

⁴ Note his freedom.

⁵ See 'examples grosse as earth' *below.*

⁶ While every word that Shakspeare wrote we may well take pains to grasp thoroughly, my endeavour to cast light on this passage is made with the distinct understanding in my own mind that the author himself disapproved of and omitted it, and that good reason is not wanting why he should have done so. At the same time, if my student, for this book is for those who would have help and will take pains to the true understanding of the play, would yet retain the passage, I protest against the acceptance of Hamlet's judgment of himself, except as revealing the simplicity and humility of his nature and character. That as often as a vivid memory of either interview with the Ghost came back upon him, he should feel rebuked and ashamed, and vexed with himself, is, in the morally, intellectually, and emotionally troubled state of his mind, nowise the less natural that he had the best of reasons for the delay because of which he *here* so unmercifully abuses himself. A man of self-satisfied temperament would never in similar circumstances have done so. But Hamlet was, by nature and education, far from such self-satisfaction; and there is in him besides such a strife and turmoil of opposing passions and feelings and apparent duties, as can but rarely rise in a human soul. With which he ought to side, his conscience is not sure—sides therefore now with one, now with another. At the same time it is by no means the long delay the critics imagine of which he is accusing himself—it is only that the thing *is not done.*

In certain moods the action a man dislikes will *therefore* look to him the more like a duty; and this helps to prevent Hamlet from knowing always how great a part conscience bears in the omission because of which he condemns and even contemns himself. The conscience does not naturally examine itself—is not necessarily self-conscious. In any soliloquy, a man must speak from his present mood: we who are not suffering, and who have many of his moods before us, ought to understand Hamlet better than he understands himself. To himself, sitting in judgment on himself, it would hardly appear a decent cause of, not to say reason for, a moment's delay in punishing his uncle, that he was so weighed down with misery because of his mother and Ophelia, that it seemed of no use to kill one villain out of the villainous world; it would seem but 'bestial oblivion'; and, although his reputation as a prince was deeply concerned, *any* reflection on the consequences to himself would at times appear but a 'craven scruple'; while at times even the whispers of conscience might seem a 'thinking too precisely on the event.' A conscientious man of changeful mood will be very ready in either mood to condemn the other. The best and rightest men will sometimes accuse themselves in a manner that seems to those who know them best, unfounded, unreasonable, almost absurd. We must not, I say, take the hero's judgment of himself as the author's judgment of him. The two judgments, that of a man upon himself from within, and that of his beholder upon him from without, are not congeneric. They are different in origin and in kind, and cannot be adopted either of them into the source of the other without most serious and dangerous mistake. So adopted, each becomes another thing altogether. It is to me probable that, although it involves other unfitnesses, the Poet omitted the passage

There's trickes i'th'world, and hems, and beats her
heart,

Spurnes enuiously at Strawes,¹ speakes things in
doubt,²

That carry but halfe sense : Her speech is nothing,³
Yet the vnshaped vse of it⁴ doth moue

The hearers to Collection⁵ ; they ayme⁶ at it,

they yawne at

And botch the words⁷ vp fit to their owne thoughts

And spur my dull reuenge. ¹ What is a man
If his chiefe good and market of his time
Be but to sleepe and feede, a beast, no more :
Sure he that made vs with such large discourse ²
Looking before and after, gaue vs not
That capabilitie and god-like reason
To fust in vs vnvsd,¹ now whether it be
52, 120 Bestiall obliuion,³ or some crauen scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th'euent,⁴
A thought which quartered hath but one part wisdom,
And euer three parts coward, I doe not know
Why yet I liue to say this thing's to doe,
Sith I haue cause, and will, and strength, and meanes
To doo't;⁵ examples grosse as earth exhort me,
Witnes this Army of such masse and charge,
235 Led by a delicate and tender Prince,
Whose spirit with diuine ambition pufte,
Makes mouthes at the invisible euent,
120 Exposing what is mortall, and vn Timer,
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,⁶
Euen for an Egge-shell. Rightly to be great,
Is not to stirre without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrell in a straw
When honour's at the stake, how stand I then
That haue a father kild, a mother staine,
Excytements of my reason, and my blood,
And let all sleepe,⁷ while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That for a fantasie and tricke⁸ of fame
Goe to their graues like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,⁹
Which is not tombe enough and continent¹⁰
To hide the slaine,¹¹ ô from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth.¹²

Exit.

- 1 trifles 2 doubtfully 3 'there is nothing in her speech'
 4 'the formless mode of it'
 5 'to gathering things and putting them together' 6 guess
 7 Ophelia's words

chiefly from coming to see the danger of its giving occasion, or at least support, to an altogether mistaken and unjust idea of his Hamlet.

¹ I am in doubt whether this passage from 'What is a man' down to 'unused,' does not refer to the king, and whether Hamlet is not persuading himself that it can be no such objectionable thing to kill one hardly above a beast. At all events it is far more applicable to the king: it was not one of Hamlet's faults, in any case, to fail of using his reason. But he may just as well accuse himself of that too! At the same time the worst neglect of reason lies in not carrying out its conclusions, and if we cannot justify Hamlet in his delay, the passage is of good application to him. 'Bestial oblivion' does seem to connect himself with the reflection; but how thoroughly is the thing intended by such a phrase alien from the character of Hamlet!

² —the mental faculty of running hither and thither: 'We look before and after.' *Shelley: To a Skylark.*

³ —the forgetfulness of such a beast as he has just mentioned.

⁴ —the consequences. The scruples that come of thinking of the event, Hamlet certainly had: that they were *craven* scruples, that his thinking was too precise, I deny to the face of the noble self-accuser. Is that a craven scruple which, seeing no good to result from the horrid deed, shrinks from its irretrievableness, and demands at least absolute assurance of guilt? or that 'a thinking too precisely on the event,' to desire, as the prince of his people, to leave an unwounded name behind him?

⁵ This passage is the strongest there is on the side of the ordinary misconception of the character of Hamlet. It comes from himself; and it is as ungenerous as it is common and unfair to use such a weapon against a man. Does any but St. Paul himself say he was the chief of sinners? Consider Hamlet's condition, tormented on all sides, within and without, and think whether this outbreak against himself be not as unfair as it is natural. Lest it should be accepted against him, Shakspeare did well to leave it out. In bitter disappointment, both because of what is and what is not, both because of what he has done and what he has failed to do, having for the time lost all chance, with the last vision of the Ghost still haunting his eyes, his last reproachful words yet ringing in his ears, are we bound to take his judgment of himself because it is against himself? Are we *bound* to take any man's judgment because it is against himself? I answer, 'No more than if it were for himself.' A good man's judgment, where he is at all perplexed, especially if his motive comes within his own question, is ready to be against himself, as a bad man's is sure to be for himself. Or because he is a philosopher, does it follow that throughout he understands himself? Were such a man in cool, untroubled conditions, we might feel compelled to take his judgment, but surely not here! A philosopher in such state as Hamlet's would understand the quality of his spiritual operations with no more certainty than another man. In his present mood, Hamlet forgets the cogency of the reasons that swayed him in the other; forgets that his uppermost feeling then was doubt, as horror, indignation, and conviction are uppermost now. Things were never so clear to Hamlet as to us.

But how can he say he has strength and means—in the position in which he now finds himself? I am glad to be able to believe, let my defence of Hamlet against himself be right or wrong, that Shakspeare intended the omission of the passage. I lay nothing on the great lack of logic throughout the speech, for that would not make it unfit for Hamlet in such mood, while it makes its omission from the play of less consequence to my general argument.

⁶ *threaten.* This supports my argument as to the great soliloquy—that it was death as the result of his slaying the king, or attempting to do so, not death by suicide, he was thinking of: he expected to die himself in the punishing of his uncle.

⁷ He had had no chance but that when the king was on his knees.

⁸ 'a fancy and illusion'

⁹ 'which is too small for those engaged to find room to fight on it,'

¹⁰ 'continent,' *containing space*

¹¹ This soliloquy is antithetic to the other. Here is no thought of the 'something after death.'

¹² If, with this speech in his mouth, Hamlet goes coolly on board the vessel, *not being compelled thereto* (190, 192, 216), and possessing means to his vengeance, as here he says, and goes merely in order to hoist Rosinrance and Guildensterne with their own petard—that is, if we must keep the omitted passages, then the author exposes his hero to a more deprecatory judgment than any from which I would justify him, and a conception of his character entirely inconsistent with the rest of the play. He did not observe the risk at the time he wrote the passage, but discovering it afterwards, rectified the oversight—to the dissatisfaction of his critics, who have agreed in restoring what he cancelled.

Which as her winkes, and nods, and gestures yeeld¹
 them,

Indeed would make one thinke there would² be there might²
 be
 thought,

Though nothing sure, yet much vnhappily.

Qu. 'Twere good she were spoken with,³ *Hora.*

For she may strew dangerous coniectures

In ill breeding minds.⁴ Let her come in. *Enter
 Ophelia.*

To my sicke soule (as sinnes true Nature is) *Quee.* 'To my⁵

Each toy seemes Prologue, to some great amisse, 'Each

So full of Artlesse ieaalousie is guilt, 'So

It spill's it selfe, in fearing to be spilt.⁶ 'It

Enter Ophelia distracted.⁷

Ophe. Where is the beauteous Maiesty of
 Denmark.

Qu. How now *Ophelia*? *shee sings.*

Ophe. How should I your true loue know from
 another one?

By his Cockle hat and staffe, and his Sandal shoone.

Qu. Alas sweet Lady: what imports this
 Song?

Ophe. Say you? Nay pray you marke.

*He is dead and gone Lady, he is dead and gone,
 At his head a grasse-greene Turfe, at his heeles a
 stone.*

O ho.

Enter King.

Qu. Nay but *Ophelia.*

Ophe. Pray you marke.

White his Shrow'd as the Mountaine Snow. *Enter King.*

Qu. Alas looke heere my Lord.

246 *Ophe.* Larded⁸ with sweet flowers : Larded all with
 ground | Song.
*Which bewept to the graue did not go,
 With true-loue showres.*

¹ 'present them,'—her words, that is—giving significance or interpretation to them.

² If this *would*, and not the *might* of the *Quarto*, be the correct reading, it means that Ophelia would have something thought so and so.

³ —changing her mind on Horatio's representation. At first she would not speak with her.

⁴ 'minds that breed evil.'

⁵ —as a quotation.

⁶ Instance, the history of Macbeth.

⁷ *1st Q. Enter Ophelia playing on a Lute, and her haire downe singing.*

Hamlet's apparent madness would seem to pass into real madness in Ophelia. King Lear's growing perturbation becomes insanity the moment he sees the pretended madman Edgar.

The forms of Ophelia's madness show it was not her father's death that drove her mad, but his death by the hand of Hamlet, which, with Hamlet's banishment, destroyed all the hope the queen had been fostering in her of marrying him some day.

⁸ This expression is, as Dr. Johnson says, taken from cookery; but it is so used elsewhere by Shakspeare that we cannot regard it here as a scintillation of Ophelia's insanity.

King. How do ye, pretty Lady? you

Ophe. Well, God dil'd you.¹ They say the good dild you,¹
Owle was a Bakers daughter.² Lord, wee know
what we are, but know not what we may be. God
be at your Table.

174 *King.* Conceit³ vpon her Father.

Ophe. Pray you let's haue no words of this: Pray lets
but when they aske you what it meanes, say you
this:

⁴ *To morrow is S. Valentines day, all in the morning
betime,*

*And I a Maid at your Window to be your Valentine.
Then vp he rose, and don'd⁵ his clothes, and dupt⁵ the
chamber dore,*

*Let in the Maid, that out a Maid, neuer departed
more.*

King. Pretty *Ophelia.*

Ophe. Indeed la? without an oath Ile make an Indeede
without
end ont.⁶

By gis, and by S. Charity,

Alacke, and fie for shame:

Yong men wil doo't, if they come too't,

By Cocke they are too blame.

Quoth she before you tumbled me,

You promis'd me to Wed:

So would I ha done by yonder Sunne, (He answers.)
So would

And thou hadst not come to my bed.

King. How long hath she bin this? beene thus?

Ophe. I hope all will be well. We must bee
patient, but I cannot choose but weepe, to thinke
they should lay him i'th'cold ground: My brother they would
lay
shall knowe of it, and so I thanke you for your
good counsell. Come, my Coach: Goodnight
Ladies: Goodnight sweet Ladies: Goodnight,
goodnight. *Exit.*⁷

¹ 1st Q. 'God yeeld you,' that is, *reward you*. Here we have a blunder for the contraction, 'God 'ild you'—perhaps a common blunder.

² For the silly legend, see Douce's note in *Johnson and Steevens*.

³ imaginative brooding

⁴ We dare no judgment on madness in life : we need not in art.

⁵ Preterites of *don* and *dup*, contracted from *do on* and *do up*.

⁶ —disclaiming false modesty.

⁷ *Not in Q.*

King. Follow her close,

Giue her good watch I pray you :

Oh this is the poyson of deepe greefe, it springs

All from her Fathers death. Oh *Gertrude*, *Gertrude*,

death, and now
behold, & *Gertrude*,
Gertrude,

When sorrowes comes, they come not single spies,¹

sorrowes come

But in Battaliaes. First, her Father slaine,

battalians :

Next your Sonne gone, and he most violent
Author

Of his owne iust remoue : the people muddied,²

Thicke and vnwholsome in their thoughts, and
whispers in thoughts

For³ good *Polonius* death ; and we haue done but
greenly

182 In hugger mugger⁴ to interre him. Poore *Ophelia*

Diuided from her selfe,⁵ and her faire Iudgement,

Without the which we are Pictures, or meere Beasts.

Last, and as much containing as all these,

Her Brother is in secret come from France,
Keepes on his wonder,⁶ keepes himselfe in clouds,

Feeds on this⁶

And wants not Buzzers to infect his eare

care

With pestilent Speeches of his Fathers death,

Where in necessitie of matter Beggard,

Wherein
necessity

Will nothing sticke our persons to Arraigne

person

In eare and eare.⁷ O my deere *Gertrude*, this,

Like to a murdering Peece⁸ in many places,

Giues me superfluous death. *A Noise within.*

Enter a Messenger.

Qu. Alacke, what noyse is this ?⁹

King. Where are my *Switzers* ?¹⁰

King. Attend,
where is my
Swissers,

Let them guard the doore. What is the matter ?

Mes. Saue your selfe, my Lord.

120 The Ocean (ouer-peering of his List¹¹)

Eates not the Flats with more impittious¹² haste

¹ —each alone, like scouts,

² stirred up like pools—with similar result

³ because of

⁴ The king wished to avoid giving the people any pretext or cause for interfering : he dreaded whatever might lead to enquiry—to the queen of course pretending it was to avoid exposing Hamlet to the popular indignation. *Hugger mugger—secretly* : *Steevens and Malone*.

⁵ The phrase has the same *visual* root as *beside herself*—both signifying ‘*not at one* with herself.’

⁶ If the *Quarto* reading is right, ‘this wonder’ means the hurried and suspicious funeral of his father. But the *Folio* reading is quite Shakspearean : ‘He keeps on (as a garment) the wonder of the people at him’ ; *keeps his behaviour such that the people go on wondering about him* : the phrase is explained by the next clause. Compare :

By being seldom seen, I could not stir
But, like a comet, I was wondered at.

K. Henry IV. P. I. act iii. sc. 1.

⁷ ‘wherein Necessity, beggared of material, will not scruple to whisper invented accusations against us.’

⁸ —the name given to a certain small cannon—perhaps charged with various missiles, hence the better figuring the number and variety of ‘sorrows’ he has just recounted.

⁹ *This line not in Q.*

¹⁰ Note that the king is well guarded, and Hamlet had to lay his account with great risk in the act of killing him.

¹¹ *border, as of cloth* : the mounds thrown up to keep the sea out. The figure here specially fits a Dane.

¹² I do not know whether this word means *pitiless*, or stands for *impetuous*. The *Quarto* has one *t*.

Then young *Laertes*, in a Riotous head,¹
 Ore-bears your Officers, the rabble call him
 Lord,

And as the world were now but to begin,
 Antiquity forgot, Custome not knowne,
 The Ratifiers and props of euery word,²

62 They cry choose we? *Laertes* shall be King,³ The cry
 Caps, hands, and tongues, applaud it to the clouds,
Laertes shall be King, *Laertes* King.

Qu. How cheerefully on the false Traile they *A noise within.*
 cry,

Oh this is Counter you false Danish Dogges.⁴

*Noise within. Enter Laertes.*⁵ *Laertes with others.*

King. The doores are broke.

Laer. Where is the King, sirs? Stand you all this King? sirs
stand
 without.

All. No, let's come in.

Laer. I pray you giue me leaue.⁶

Al. We will, we will.

Laer. I thanke you: Keepe the doore.

Oh thou vilde King, giue me my Father.

Qu. Calmely good *Laertes*.

Laer. That drop of blood, that calmes ⁷ thats calme

Proclaimes me Bastard:

Cries Cuckold to my Father, brands the Harlot
 Euen heere betweene the chaste vnsmirched brow
 Of my true Mother.⁸

Kin. What is the cause *Laertes*,
 That thy Rebellion lookes so Gyant-like?
 Let him go *Gertrude*: Do not feare⁹ our per-
 son:

There's such Diuinity doth hedge a King,¹⁰
 That Treason can but peepe to what it would,
 Acts little of his will.¹¹ Tell me *Laertes*,

¹ *Head* is a rising or gathering of people—generally rebellious, I think.

² Antiquity and Custom.

³ This refers to the election of Claudius—evidently not a popular election, but effected by intrigue with the aristocracy and the army : ‘They cry, Let us choose : Laertes shall be king !’

We may suppose the attempt of Claudius to have been favoured by the lingering influence of the old Norse custom of succession, by which not the son but the brother inherited. 16, *bis*.

⁴ To hunt counter is to ‘hunt the game by the heel or track.’ The queen therefore accuses them of not using their scent or judgment, but following appearances.

⁵ Now at length re-appears Laertes, who has during the interim been ripening in Paris for villainy. He is wanted for the catastrophe, and requires but the last process of a few hours in the hell-oven of a king’s instigation.

⁶ The customary and polite way of saying *leave me* : ‘grant me your absence.’ 85, 89

⁷ grows calm

⁸ In taking vengeance Hamlet must acknowledge his mother such as Laertes says inaction on his part would proclaim his mother.

The actress should here let a shadow cross the queen’s face : though too weak to break with the king, she has begun to repent.

⁹ fear *for*

¹⁰ The consummate hypocrite claims the protection of the sacred hedge through which he had himself broken—or crept rather, like a snake, to kill. He can act innocence the better that his conscience is clear as to Polonius.

¹¹ ‘can only peep through the hedge to its desire—acts little of its will.’

Why thou art thus Incenst? Let him go *Gertrude*.
Speake man.

Laer. Where's my Father? is my

King. Dead.

Qu. But not by him.

King. Let him demand his fill.

Laer. How came he dead? Ile not be Iuggel'd
with.

To hell Allegiance : Vowes, to the blackest diuell.
Conscience and Grace, to the profoundest Pit.
I dare Damnation : to this point I stand,
That both the worlds I giue to negligence,
Let come what comes : onely Ile be reueng'd
Most throughly for my Father.

King. Who shall stay you? ¹

Laer. My Will, not all the world, worlds :
And for my meanes, Ile husband them so well,
They shall go farre with little.

King. Good *Laertes* :

If you desire to know the certaintie
Of your deere Fathers death, if writ in your re- Father, i'st
writ
uenge,

That Soop-stake ² you will draw both Friend and
Foe,

Winner and Looser. ³

Laer. None but his Enemies.

King. Will you know them then.

La. To his good Friends, thus wide Ile open my Armes :
And like the kinde Life-rend'ring Politician, ⁴ life-rendring
Pelican,
Repast them with my blood. ⁵

King. Why now you speake
Like a good Childe, ⁶ and a true Gentleman.
That I am guiltlesse of your Fathers death,
And am most sensible in greefe for it, ⁷ sensibly

¹ 'Who shall *prevent* you?'

'My own will only—not all the world,'

or,

'Who will *support* you?'

'My will. Not all the world shall prevent me,'—

so playing on the two meanings of the word *stay*.

Or it *might* mean: 'Not all the world shall stay my will.'

² swoop-stake—*sweepstakes*

³ 'and be loser as well as winner——' If the *Folio's* is the right reading, then the sentence is unfinished, and should have a dash, not a period.

⁴ A curious misprint: may we not suspect a somewhat dull joker among the compositors? ⁶ 'a true son to your father,'

⁷ 'feel much grief for it,'

⁵ Laertes is a ranter—false everywhere.

Plainly he is introduced as the foil from which Hamlet 'shall stick fiery off.' In this speech he shows his moral condition directly the opposite of Hamlet's: he has no principle but revenge. His conduct ought to be quite satisfactory to Hamlet's critics; there is action enough in it of the very kind they would have of Hamlet; and doubtless it would be satisfactory to them but for the treachery that follows. The one, dearly loving a father who deserves immeasurably better of him than Polonius of Laertes, will not for the sake of revenge disregard either conscience, justice, or grace; the other will not delay even to inquire into the facts of his father's fate, but will act at once on hearsay, rushing to a blind satisfaction that cannot even be called retaliation, caring for neither right nor wrong, cursing conscience and the will of God, and daring damnation. He slights assurance as to the hand by which his father fell, dismisses all reflection that might interfere with a stupid revenge. To make up one's mind at once, and act without ground, is weakness, not strength: this Laertes does—and is therefore just the man to be the villainous, not the innocent, tool of villainy. He who has sufficing ground and refuses to act is weak; but the ground that will satisfy the populace, of which the commonplace critic is the fair type, will not satisfy either the man of conscience or of wisdom. The mass of world-bepraised action owes its existence to the pressure of circumstance, not to the will and conscience of the man. Hamlet waits for light, even with his heart accusing him; Laertes rushes into the dark, dagger in hand, like a mad Malay: so he kill, he cares not whom. Such a man is easily tempted to the vilest treachery, for the light that is in him is darkness; he is not a true man; he is false in himself. This is what comes of his father's maxim:

To thine own self be true;

And it must follow, *as the night the day* (!)

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

Like the aphorism 'Honesty is the best policy,' it reveals the difference between a fact and a truth. Both sayings are correct as facts, but as guides of conduct devilishly false, leading to dishonesty and treachery. To be true to the divine self in us, is indeed to be true to all; but it is only by being true to all, against the ever present and urging false self,

184 It shall as leuell to your Iudgement pierce peare¹
 As day do's to your eye.¹

A noise within. ² *Let her come in.*

*Enter Ophelia.*³

Laer. How now? what noise is that? ⁴ *Laer.* Let her
come in.
How now,
 Oh heate drie vp my Braines, teares seuen times
 salt,

Burne out the Sence and Vertue of mine eye.

By Heauen, thy madnesse shall be payed by waight, with weight

Till our Scale turnes the beame. Oh Rose of May, turne

Deere Maid, kinde Sister, sweet *Ophelia* :

Oh Heauens, is't possible, a yong Maids wits,
 Should be as mortall as an old mans life? ⁵ a poore mans

Nature is fine ⁶ in Loue, and where 'tis fine,

It sends some precious instance of it selfe

After the thing it loues.⁷

Ophe. *They bore him bare fac'd on the Beer,* *Song.*
bare-faste
*Hey non nony, nony, hey nony :*⁸

And on his graue raines many a teare, And in his
graue rain'd
Fare you well my Doue.

Laer. Had'st thou thy wits, and did'st perswade
 Reuenge, it could not moue thus.

Ophe. You must sing downe a-downe, and sing a downe a
downe, And
 you call him ⁹ a-downe-a. Oh, how the wheele ¹⁰
 becomes it? It is the false Steward that stole his
 masters daughter.¹¹

Laer. This nothings more then matter.¹²

Ophe. There's Rosemary,¹³ that's for Remem-
 braunce. Pray loue remember: and there is , pray you loue
 Paconcies, that's for Thoughts. Pancies¹⁴

Laer. A document ¹⁵ in madnesse, thoughts and
 remembrance fitted.

Ophe. There's Fennell ¹⁶ for you, and Colum-
 bines ¹⁶: ther's Rew ¹⁷ for you, and heere's some for

that at length we shall see the divine self rise above the chaotic waters of our selfishness, and know it so as to be true to it.

Of Laertes we must note also that it is not all for love of his father that he is ready to cast allegiance to hell, and kill the king: he has the voice of the people to succeed him.

¹ 'pierce as *directly* to your judgment'

But the simile of the *day* seems to favour the reading of the *Q.*—'peare,' for *appear*. In the word *level* would then be indicated the *rising* sun.

² *Not in Q.*

³ *1st Q.* 'Enter *Ophelia* as before.'

⁴ To render it credible that Laertes could entertain the vile proposal the king is about to make, it is needful that all possible influences should be represented as combining to swell the commotion of his spirit, and overwhelm what poor judgment and yet poorer conscience he had. Altogether unprepared, he learns Ophelia's pitiful condition by the sudden sight of the harrowing change in her—and not till after that hears *who* killed his father and brought madness on his sister.

⁵ *1st Q.*

I'st possible a yong maides life,
Should be as mortall as an olde mans sawe ?

⁶ delicate, exquisite

⁷ 'where 'tis fine': I suggest that the *it* here may be impersonal: 'where *things*, where *all* is fine,' that is, 'in a fine soul'; then the meaning would be, 'Nature is fine always in love, and where the soul also is fine, she sends from it' &c. But the *where* may be equal, perhaps, to *whereas*. I can hardly think the phrase means merely 'and where it is in love.' It might intend—'and where Love is fine, it sends' &c. The 'precious instance of itself,' that is, 'something that is a part and specimen of itself,' is here the 'young maid's wits': they are sent after the 'old man's life.'—These three lines are not in the *Quarto*. It is not disputed that they are from Shakspeare's hand: if the insertion of these be his, why should the omission of others not be his also?

⁸ *This line is not in Q.*

⁹ 'if you call him': I think this is not a part of the song, but is spoken of her father.

¹⁰ *the burden of the song*: Steevens.

¹¹ The subject of the ballad.

¹² 'more than sense'—in incitation to revenge.

¹³—an evergreen, and carried at funerals: *Johnson*.

For you there's rosemary and rue; these keep

Seeming and savour all the winter long:

Grace and remembrance be to you both,

The Winter's Tale, act iv. sc. 3.

¹⁴ *pensées*

¹⁵ *a teaching, a lesson*—the fitting of thoughts and remembrance, namely—which he applies to his intent of revenge. Or may it not rather be meant that the putting of these two flowers together was a happy hit of her madness, presenting the fantastic emblem of a document or writing—the very idea of which is the keeping of thoughts in remembrance?

¹⁶—said to mean *flattery* and *thanklessness*—perhaps given to the king.

¹⁷ *Repentance*—given to the queen. Another name of the plant was *Herb-Grace*, as below, in allusion, doubtless, to its common name—*rue* or *repentance* being both the gift of God, and an act of grace.

me. Wee may call it Herbe-Grace a Sundaies : herbe of Grace
a Sondaies, you
may weare
Oh you must weare your Rew with a difference.¹
There's a Daysie,² I would giue you some Violets,³
but they wither'd all when my Father dyed : They
say, he made a good end ; say a made

For bonny sweet Robin is all my ioy.

Laer. Thought, and Affliction, Passion, Hell it afflictions,
selfe :

She turnes to Fauour, and to prettinesse.

Ophe. *And will he not come againe,* Song.
will a not

And will he not come againe : will a not

No, no, he is dead, go to thy Death-bed,

He neuer wil come againe.

His Beard as white as Snow, beard was as

All⁴ Flaxen was his Pole :

He is gone, he is gone, and we cast away mone,

Gramercy⁵ on his Soule. God a mercy
on
Christians
soules,
you.

And of all Christian Soules, I pray God.⁶

God buy ye.⁷

*Exeunt Ophelia*⁸

Laer. Do you see this, you Gods ? Doe you this
ô God.
commune

King. *Laertes,* I must common⁹ with your
greefe,

Or you deny me right : go but apart,

Make choice of whom your wisest Friends you will,

And they shall heare and iudge 'twixt you and me ;

If by direct or by Colaterall hand

They finde vs touch'd,¹⁰ we will our Kingdome giue,

Our Crowne, our Life, and all that we call Ours

To you in satisfaction. But if not,

Be you content to lend your patience to vs,¹¹

And we shall ioyntly labour with your soule

To giue it due content.

Laer. Let this be so :¹²

His meanes of death,¹³ his obscure buriall ; funerall,

No Trophee, Sword, nor Hatchment o're his bones,¹⁴

¹ —perhaps the heraldic term. The Poet, not Ophelia, intends the special fitness of the speech. Ophelia means only that the rue of the matron must differ from the rue of the girl.

² ‘the dissembling daisy’: *Greene*—quoted by *Henley*.

³ —standing for *faithfulness*: *Malone*, from an old song.

⁴ ‘*All*’ not in *Q*.

⁵ Wherever else Shakspeare uses the word, it is in the sense of *grand merci*—*great thanks* (*Skeat's Etym. Dict.*); here it is surely a corruption, whether Ophelia's or the printer's, of the *Quarto* reading, ‘*God a mercy*,’ which, spoken quickly, sounds very near *gramercy*. The 1st *Quarto* also has ‘*God a mercy*.’

⁶ ‘*I pray God*.’ not in *Q*.

⁷ ‘*God b' wi' ye*’: *good bye*.

⁸ Not in *Q*.

⁹ ‘*I must have a share in your grief*.’ The word does mean *commune*, but here is more pregnant, as evidenced in the next phrase, ‘*Or you deny me right* :’—‘*do not give me justice*.’

¹⁰ ‘*touched with the guilt of the deed, either as having done it with our own hand, or caused it to be done by the hand of one at our side*,’

¹¹ We may paraphrase thus: ‘*Be pleased to grant us a loan of your patience*,’ that is, *be patient for a while at our request*, ‘*and we will work along with your soul to gain for it (your soul) just satisfaction*.’

¹² He consents—but immediately *re-sums* the grounds of his wrathful suspicion.

¹³ —the way in which he met his death

¹⁴ —customary honours to the noble dead. *A trophy* was an arrangement of the armour and arms of the dead in a set decoration. The origin of the word *hatchment* shows its intent: it is a corruption of *achievement*.

No Noble rite, nor formall ostentation,¹
 Cry to be heard, as 'twere from Heauen to Earth,
 That I must call in question.² call't in

King. So you shall :

And where th'offence is, let the great Axe fall.
 I pray you go with me.³ *Exeunt*

Enter Horatio, with an Attendant. *Horatio and others.*

Hora. What are they that would speake with me?

Ser. Saylor's sir, they say they haue Letters for you. *Gent. Sea-faring men sir,*

Hor. Let them come in,⁴

I do not know from what part of the world
 I should be greeted, if not from Lord *Hamlet*.

Enter Saylor. *Saylor's.*

Say. God blesse you Sir.

Hor. Let him blesse thee too.

Say. Hee shall Sir, and't⁵ please him. There's
 a Letter for you Sir: It comes from th'Ambas-
 sadours that was bound for England, if your name
 be *Horatio*, as I am let to know⁶ it is. *A shall sir and please
it came frō th'
Embassador*

*Reads the Letter.*⁷

Horatio, When thou shalt haue ouerlook'd this, giue these Fellowes some meanes to the King: They haue Letters for him. Ere we were two dayes⁸ old at Sea, a Pyrate of very Warlicke appointment gaue vs Chace. Finding our selues too slow of Saile, we put on a compelled Valour. In the Grapple, I boarded them: On the instant they got cleare of our Shippe, so I alone became their Prisoner.⁹ They haue dealt with mee, like Theeues of Mercy, but they knew what they did. I am to doe a good turne for them. Let the King haue the Letters I haue sent, and repaire thou to me with as much hast as thou wouldest flye death.¹⁰ I haue words to speake in your eare, will *Hor. Horatio when
valour, and in the
a turne
much speede as
in thine eare*

¹ 'formal ostentation'—show or publication of honour according to form or rule

² 'so that I must call-in question'—institute inquiry ; or '—*that* (thesē things) I must call in question.'

³ Note such a half line frequently after the not uncommon closing couplet—as if to take off the formality of the couplet, and lead back, through the more speech-like, to greater verisimilitude.

⁴ Here the servant goes, and the rest of the speech Horatio speaks *solus*. He had expected to hear from Hamlet.

⁵ 'and it please'—*if it please*. *An* for *if* is merely *and*.

⁶ 'I am told'

⁷ *Not in Q.*

⁸ This gives an approximate clue to the time between the second and third acts : it needs not have been a week.

⁹ Note once more the unfailing readiness of Hamlet where there was no question as to the fitness of the action seemingly required. This is the man who by too much thinking, forsooth, has rendered himself incapable of action !—so far ahead of the foremost behind him, that, when the pirate, not liking such close quarters, 'on the instant got clear,' he is the only one on her deck ! There was no question here as to what ought to be done : the pirate grappled them ; he boarded her. Thereafter, with his prompt faculty for dealing with men, he soon comes to an understanding with his captors, and they agree, upon some certain condition, to put him on shore.

He writes in unusual spirits ; for he has now gained full, presentable, and indisputable proof of the treachery which before he scarcely doubted, but could not demonstrate. The present instance of it has to do with himself, not his father, but in itself would justify the slaying of his uncle, whose plausible way had possibly perplexed him so that he could not thoroughly believe him the villain he was : bad as he must be, could he actually have killed his own brother, and *such* a brother ? A better man than Laertes might have acted more promptly than Hamlet, and so happened to *do* right ; but he would not have *been* right, for the proof was *not* sufficient.

¹⁰ The value Hamlet sets on his discovery, evident in his joyous urgency to share it with his friend, is explicable only on the ground of the relief it is to his mind to be now at length quite certain of his duty.

make thee dumb, yet are they much too light for the
 bore of the Matter.¹ These good Fellowes will bring the bord of
 thee where I am. Rosinrance and Guildensterne,
 hold their course for England. Of them I haue
 much to tell thee, Farewell.

He that thou knowest thine, So that thou
knowest thine
Hamlet.
 Hamlet.

Come, I will giue you way for these your Letters, Hor. Come I
will you way
 And do't the speedier, that you may direct me
 To him from whom you brought them. *Exit.* Exeunt.

*Enter King and Laertes.*²

King. Now must your conscience my acquit-
 tance seal,

And you must put me in your heart for Friend,
 Sith you haue heard, and with a knowing eare,³
 That he which hath your Noble Father slaine,
 Pursued my life.⁴

Eaer. It well appeares. But tell me,
 Why you proceeded not against these feates,⁵ proceede
 So crimefull, and so Capitall in Nature,⁶ criminall
 As by your Safety, Wisedome, all things else, safetie, great-
nes, wisdome,
 You mainly⁷ were stirr'd vp?

King. O for two speciall Reasons,
 Which may to you (perhaps) seeme much vn-
 sinnowed,⁸

And yet to me they are strong. The Queen his But yet | tha'r
strong
 Mother,

Liues almost by his lookes: and for my selfe,
 My Vertue or my Plague, be it either which,⁹
 She's so coniunctiue to my life and soule;
 That as the Starre moues not but in his Sphere,¹⁰
 I could not but by her. The other Motiue,
 Why to a publike count I might not go,

She is so con-
cliue

185 Is the great loue the generall gender¹¹ beare him,
 Who dipping all his Faults in their affection,

¹ Note here also Hamlet's feeling of the importance of what has passed since he parted with his friend. 'The bullet of my words, though it will strike thee dumb, is much too small for the bore of the reality (the facts) whence it will issue.'

² While we have been present at the interview between Horatio and the sailors, the king has been persuading Laertes.

³ an ear of judgment,

⁴ 'thought then to have killed me.'

⁵ *faits*, deeds

⁶ 'deeds so deserving of death, not merely in the eye of the law, but in their own nature'

⁷ powerfully

⁸ 'unsinewed'

⁹ 'either-which'

¹⁰ 'moves not but in the moving of his sphere,'—The stars were popularly supposed to be fixed in a solid crystalline sphere, and moved in its motion only. The queen, Claudius implies, is his sphere; he could not move but by her.

¹¹ Here used in the sense of the Fr. '*genre*'—*sort*. It is not the only instance of the word so used by Shakspeare.

The king would rouse in Laertes jealousy of Hamlet.

Would like the Spring that turneth Wood to Stone, Worke like
 Conuert his Gyues to Graces.¹ So that my Arrowes
 Too slightly timbred for so loud a Winde, for so loued
 Arm'd,²
 Would haue reuerted to my Bow againe,
 And not where I had arm'd them.² But not | have
 aym'd them.

Laer. And so haue I a Noble Father lost,
 A Sister driuen into desperate tearmes,³
 Who was (if praises may go backe againe) Whose worth,
 if
 Stood Challenger on mount of all the Age
 For her perfections. But my reuenge will come.

King. Breake not your sleepes for that,
 You must not thinke
 That we are made of stufte, so flat, and dull,
 That we can let our Beard be shooke with danger,⁴
 And thinke it pastime. You shortly shall heare
 more,⁵

I lou'd your Father, and we loue our Selfe,
 And that I hope will teach you to imagine——⁶

Enter a Messenger. with letters.

How now? What Newes?

Mes. Letters my Lord from *Hamlet*.⁷ This to Messen. These
 to
 your Maiesty: this to the Queene.

King. From *Hamlet*? Who brought them?

Mes. Saylors my Lord they say, I saw them not:
 They were giuen me by *Claudio*, he receiu'd them.⁸ them
 Of him that
 brought them.

King. *Laertes* you shall heare them: ⁹

Leaue vs. *Exit Messenger*¹⁰

*High and Mighty, you shall know I am set
 naked on your Kingdome. To morrow shall I begge
 leaue to see your Kingly Eyes.¹¹ When I shall (first
 asking your Pardon thereunto) recount th'Occasions
 of my sodaine, and more strange returne.¹²* the occasion of
 my suddaine
 returne.

*Hamlet.*¹³

What should this meane? Are all the rest come King. What
 backe?

¹ 'would convert his fetters—if I imprisoned him—to graces, commending him yet more to their regard.'

² *arm'd* is certainly the right, and a true Shakspearean word :—it was no fault in the aim, but in the force of the flight—no matter of the eye, but of the arm, which could not give momentum enough to such slightly timbered arrows. The fault in the construction of the last line, I need not remark upon.

I think there is a hint of this the genuine meaning even in the blundered and partly unintelligible reading of the *Quarto*. If we leave out 'for so loued,' we have this : 'So that my arrows, too slightly timbered, would have reverted armed to my bow again, but not (*would not have gone*) where I have aimed them,'—implying that his arrows would have turned their armed heads against himself.

What the king says here is true, but far from *the* truth : he feared driving Hamlet, and giving him at the same time opportunity, to speak in his own defence and render his reasons.

³ *extremes?* or *conditions?*

⁴ 'With many a tempest hadde his berd ben schake.'—*Chaucer*, of the Shipman, in *The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*.

⁵ —hear of Hamlet's death in England, he means.

At this point in the 1st *Q.* comes a scene between Horatio and the queen, in which he informs her of a letter he had just received from Hamlet,

Whereas he writes how he escap't the danger,
And subtle treason that the king had plotted,
Being crossed by the contention of the windes,
He found the Packet &c.

Horatio does not mention the pirates, but speaks of Hamlet 'being set ashore,' and of *Gilderstone* and *Rossencraft* going on to their fate. The queen assures Horatio that she is but temporizing with the king, and shows herself anxious for the success of her son's design against his life. The Poet's intent was not yet clear to himself.

⁶ Here his crow cracks.

⁷ From 'How now' to 'Hamlet' is not in *Q.*

⁸ Horatio has given the sailors' letters to Claudio, he to another.

⁹ He wants to show him that he has nothing behind—that he is open with him : he will read without having pre-read.

¹⁰ Not in *Q.*

¹¹ He makes this request for an interview with the intent of killing him. The king takes care he does not have it.

¹² 'more strange than sudden'

¹³ Not in *Q.*

Or is it some abuse? ¹ Or no such thing? ² abuse, and no ³

Laer. Know you the hand? ³

Kin. 'Tis *Hamlets* Character, naked and in a
Postscript here he sayes alone: ⁴ Can you aduise deuise me?
me? ⁵

Laer. I'm lost in it my Lord; but let him come, I am
It warmes the very sicknesse in my heart,
That I shall liue and tell him to his teeth; That I liue
and
didst
Thus diddest thou.

Kin. If it be so *Laertes*, as how should it be so: ⁶
How otherwise will you be rul'd by me?

Laer. If so ⁷ you'l not o'rerule me to a peace. I my Lord, so
you will not

Kin. To thine owne peace: if he be now
return'd,

195 As checking ⁸ at his Voyage, and that he meanes As the King ⁸
at his
No more to vndertake it; I will worke him

To an exployt now ripe in my Deuice, deuise,
Vnder the which he shall not choose but fall;
And for his death no winde of blame shall breath,

221 But euen his Mother shall vncharge the practice, ⁹
And call it accident: * Some two Monthes hence ¹⁰ two months
since

Here was a Gentleman of *Normandy*,
I'ue seene my selfe, and seru'd against the French, I haue

* *Here in the Quarto* :—

Laer. My Lord I will be rul'd,
The rather if you could deuise it so
That I might be the organ.

King. It falls right,
You haue beene talkt of since your trauaile ¹ much,
And that in *Hamlets* hearing, for a qualitie
Wherein they say you shine, your summe of parts ²
Did not together plucke such enuie from him
As did that one, and that in my regard
Of the vnworthiest siedge. ³

Laer. What part is that my Lord?

King. A very ribaud ⁴ in the cap of youth,
Yet needfull to, for youth no lesse becomes ⁵
The light and carelesse liuery that it weares
Then settled age, his sables, and his weedes ⁶
Importing health ⁷ and grauenes;

¹ 'some trick played on me?' Compare *K. Lear*, act v. sc. 7: 'I am mightily abused.'

² I incline to the *Q.* reading here: 'or is it some trick, and no reality in it?'

³ —following the king's suggestion.

⁴ *Point thus*: 'Tis *Hamlets* Character. 'Naked'!—And, in a Post-script here, he sayes 'alone'! Can &c.

'*Alone*'—to allay suspicion of his having brought assistance with him.

⁵ Fine flattery—preparing the way for the instigation he is about to commence.

⁶ *Point thus*: '—as how should it be so? how otherwise?—will' &c. The king cannot tell what to think—either how it can be, or how it might be otherwise—for here is Hamlet's own hand!

⁷ provided

⁸ A hawk was said *to check* when it forsook its proper game for some other bird that crossed its flight. The blunder in the *Quarto* is odd, plainly from manuscript copy, and is not likely to have been set right by any but the author.

⁹ 'shall not give the *practice*'—*artifice, cunning attempt, chicane, or trick*—but a word not necessarily offensive—'the name it deserves, but call it *accident*:' 221

¹⁰ 'Some' *not in Q.*—Hence may be either *backwards* or *forwards*; now it is used only *forwards*.

¹ travels

² 'all your excellencies together'

³ seat, place, grade, position, merit

⁴ 'A very riband'—a mere trifling accomplishment: the *u* of the text can but be a misprint for *n*.

⁵ *youth* obj., *livery* nom. to *becomes*.

⁶ 'than his furs and his robes become settled age,'

⁷ Warburton thinks the word ought to be *wealth*, but I doubt it; *health*, in its sense of wholeness, general soundness, in affairs as well as person, I should prefer.

And they ran ¹ well on Horsebacke ; but this Gallant they can well ¹
 Had witchcraft in't ² ; he grew into his Seat, vnto his
 And to such wondrous doing brought his Horse,
 As had he beene encorps't and demy-Natur'd
 With the braue Beast,³ so farre he past my thought, he topt me
thought,⁴
 That I in forgery ⁵ of shapes and trickes,
 Come short of what he did.⁶

Laer. A Norman was't ?

Kin. A Norman.

Laer. Vpon my life *Lamound*. *Lamord.*

Kin. The very same.

Laer. I know him well, he is the Brooch indeed,
 And Iemme of all our Nation, all the Nation.

Kin. Hee mad confession of you,
 And gaue you such a Masterly report,
 For Art and exercise in your defence ;
 And for your Rapier most especially, especiall,
 That he cryed out, t'would be a sight indeed,⁷

220, 264 Did *Hamlet* so envenom with his Enuy,⁸ ; sir this

That he could nothing doe but wish and begge,
 Your sodaine comming ore to play with him ;⁹ with you
 Now out of this.¹⁰

Laer. Why out of this, my Lord ? What out

Kin. *Laertes* was your Father deare to you ?
 Or are you like the painting ¹¹ of a sorrow,
 A face without a heart ?

Laer. Why aske you this ?

Kin. Not that I thinke you did not loue your
 Father,

But that I know Loue is begun by Time ¹² :

* *Here in the Quarto* :—

; the Scrimures ¹ of their nation
 He swore had neither motion, guard nor eye,
 If you opposd them ;

¹ I think the *can* of the *Quarto* is the true word.

² —in his horsemanship

³ There is no mistake in the order 'had he beene'; the transposition is equivalent to *if*: 'as if he had been embodied with, and shared half the nature of the brave beast,'

These two lines, from *As* to *thought*, must be taken parenthetically; or else there must be supposed a dash after *Beast*, and a fresh start made.

'But he (as if Centaur-like he had been one piece with the horse) was no more moved than one with the going of his own legs.'

'it seemed, as he borrowed the horse's body, so he lent the horse his mind:—Sir Philip Sidney. *Arcadia*, B. ii. p. 115.

⁴ '—surpassed, I thought,'

⁵ 'in invention of'

⁶ Emphasis on *did*, as antithetic to *forgery*: 'my inventing came short of his doing.'

⁷ 'it would be a sight indeed to see you matched with an equal. The king would strengthen Laertes' confidence in his proficiency.

⁸ 'made him so spiteful by stirring up his habitual envy,'

⁹ All invention.

¹⁰ Here should be a dash: the king pauses. He is approaching dangerous ground—is about to propose a thing abominable, and therefore to the influence of flattered vanity and roused emulation, would add the fiercest heat of stimulated love and hatred—to which end he proceeds to cast doubt on the quality of Laertes' love for his father.

¹¹ the picture

¹² 'through habit'

¹ French *escrimeurs*: fencers

And that I see in passages of prooffe,¹
Time qualifies the sparke and fire of it :²

*
Hamlet comes backe : what would you vndertake,
To show your selfe your Fathers sonne indeed,
More then in words?

selfe indeede
your fathers
sonne

Laer. To cut his throat i'th'Church.³

Kin. No place indeed should murder Sancturize ;
Reuenge should haue no bounds : but good *Laertes*
Will you doe this, keepe close within your Chamber,
Hamlet return'd, shall know you are come home :
Wee'l put on those shall praise your excellence,
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gaue you, bring you in fine to-
gether,

And wager on your heads, he being remisse,⁴
218 Most generous, and free from all contriuing,
Will not peruse⁵ the Foiles? So that with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A Sword vnbaited,⁶ and in a passe of practice,⁷
Requit him for your Father.

ore your

pace of

Laer. I will doo't,

And for that purpose Ile annoint my Sword :⁸
I bought an Vnction of a Mountebanke
So mortall, I but dipt a knife in it,⁹
Where it drawes blood, no Cataplasme so rare,
Collected from all Simples that haue Vertue

for purpose,

mortall, that
but dippe a

* *Here in the Quarto* :—

There liues within the very flame of loue
A kind of weeke or snufe that will abate it,¹
And nothing is at a like goodnes still,²
For goodnes growing to a pluriſie,³
Dies in his owne too much, that we would doe
We should doe when we would : for this would change,⁴
And hath abatements and delayes as many,
As there are tongues, are hands, are accedents,
And then this should is like a spend thrifts sigh,
That hurts by easing ;⁵ but to the quick of th'vlcer,

¹ 'passages of prooffe,'—*trials*. 'I see when it is put to the test,'

² 'time modifies it.'

³ Contrast him here with Hamlet.

⁴ careless

⁵ *examine*—the word being of general application then.

⁶ *unblunted*. Some foils seem to have been made with a button that could be taken—probably *screwed* off.

⁷ Whether *practice* here means *exercise* or *cunning*, I cannot determine. Possibly the king uses the word as once before 216—to be taken as Laertes may please.

⁸ In the 1st *Q.* this proposal also is made by the king.

⁹ 'So mortal, yes, a knife being but dipt in it,' or,

'So mortal, did I but dip a knife in it,'

¹ To understand this figure, one must be familiar with the behaviour of the wick of a common lamp or tallow candle.

² 'nothing keeps always at the same degree of goodness,'

³ A *plurisie* is just a *too-muchness*, from *plus*, *pluris*—a *plethora*, not our word *pleurisy*, from *πλευρά*. See notes in *Johnson and Steevens*.

⁴ The sense here requires an *s*, and the space in the *Quarto* between the *e* and the comma gives the probability that a letter has dropt out.

⁵ Modern editors seem agreed to substitute the adjective *spendthrift*: our sole authority has *spendthrifts*, and by it I hold. The meaning seems this: 'the *would* changes, the thing is not done, and then the *should*, the mere acknowledgment of duty, is like the sigh of a spendthrift, who regrets consequences but does not change his way: it eases his conscience for a moment, and so injures him.' There would at the same time be allusion to what was believed concerning sighs: Dr. Johnson says, 'It is a notion very prevalent, that *sighs* impair the strength, and wear out the animal powers.'

Vnder the Moone, can saue the thing from death,
That is but scratcht withall : Ile touch my point,
With this contagion, that if I gall him slightly,¹
It may be death.

Kin Let's further thinke of this,
Weigh what conuenience² both of time and meanes
May fit vs to our shape,³ if this should faile ;
And that our drift looke through our bad perform-
ance,
'Twere better not assaid ; therefore this Proiect
Should haue a backe or second, that might hold,
If this should blast in prooffe :⁴ Soft, let me see⁵ did blast
Wee'l make a solemne wager on your commings,⁶ cunnings,⁸
I ha't : when in your motion you are hot and dry, hate, when
As⁷ make your bowts more violent to the end,⁸ to that end,
And that he calls for drinke ; Ile haue prepar'd him prefard him
268 A Challice for the nonce⁹ ; whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,¹⁰
Our purpose may¹¹ hold there ; how sweet Queene. there ; but
stay, what
noyse?

Enter Queene.

Queen. One woe doth tread vpon anothers heele,
So fast they'l follow¹² : your Sister's drown'd *Laertes.* they follow ;

Laer. Drown'd ! O where ?¹³

Queen. There is a Willow¹⁴ growes aslant a ascaunt the
Brooke, Brooke
That shewes his hore leaues in the glassie streame : horry leaues
There with fantasticke Garlands did she come,¹⁵ Therewith |
Of Crow-flowers,¹⁶ Nettles, Daysies, and long Purples, she make
That liberall Shepheards giue a grosser name ;
But our cold Maids doe Dead Mens Fingers call our cull-cold
them :

There on the pendant¹⁷ boughes, her Coronet weeds¹⁸
Clambring to hang ;¹⁹ an enuious sliuer broke,²⁰
When downe the weedy Trophies,¹⁹ and her selfe, her weedy

¹ 'that though I should gall him but slightly,'
or, 'that if I gall him ever so slightly,'

² proper arrangement

³ 'fit us exactly, like a garment cut to our shape,' or perhaps 'shape' is used for *intent, purpose*. *Point thus*: 'shape. If this should faile, And' &c

⁴ This seems to allude to the assay of a firearm, and to mean '*burst on the trial*.' Note 'assaid' two lines back.

⁵ There should be a pause here, and a longer pause after *commings*: the king is contriving. 'I ha't' should have a line to itself, with again a pause, but a shorter one.

⁶ *Veney, venue*, is a term of fencing: a bout, a thrust—from *venir, to come*—whence 'commings.' (259) But *cunnings*, meaning *skills*, may be the word.

⁷ 'As' is here equivalent to 'and so.'

⁸ —to the end of making Hamlet hot and dry

⁹ for the special occasion

¹⁰ thrust. *Twelfth Night*, act iii. sc. 4. 'he gives me the stuck in with such a mortal motion.' *Stocco* in Italian is a long rapier; and *stoccata* a thrust. *Rom. and Jul.*, act iii. sc. 1. See *Shakespeare-Lexicon*.

¹¹ 'may' does not here express *doubt*, but *intention*.

¹² If this be the right reading, it means, 'so fast they insist on following.'

¹³ He speaks it as about to rush to her.

¹⁴ —the choice of Ophelia's fantastic madness, as being the tree of lamenting lovers.

¹⁵ —always busy with flowers

¹⁶ *Ranunculus*: *Sh. Lex.*

¹⁷ —specially descriptive of the willow

¹⁸ her wild flowers made into a garland

¹⁹ The intention would seem, that she imagined herself decorating a monument to her father. Hence her *Coronet weeds* and the Poet's *weedy Trophies*.

²⁰ *Sliver*, I suspect, called so after the fact, because *slivered* or torn off. In *Macbeth* we have:

slips of yew

Slivered in the moon's eclipse.

But it may be that *sliver* was used for *a twig*, such as could be torn off.

Slip and *sliver* must be of the same root.

Fell in the weeping Brooke, her cloathes spred
wide,

And Mermaid-like, a while they bore her vp,
Which time she chaunted snatches of old tunes,¹ old laudes,¹

As one incapable of² her owne distresse,

Or like a creature Natiue, and indued³

Vnto that Element : but long it could not be,

Till that her garments, heauy with her drinke, theyr drinke

Pul'd the poore wretch from her melodious buy,⁴ melodious lay

To muddy death.⁵

Laer. Alas then, is she drown'd? she is

Queen. Drown'd, drown'd.

Laer. Too much of water hast thou poore

Ophelia,

And therefore I forbid my teares : but yet

It is our tricke,⁶ Nature her custome holds,

Let shame say what it will ; when these are gone

The woman will be out :⁷ Aduie my Lord,

I haue a speech of fire, that faine would blaze, speech a fire

But that this folly doubts⁸ it. *Exit.* drownes it.⁸

Kin. Let's follow, *Gertrude :*

How much I had to doe to calme his rage?

Now feare I this will giue it start againe ;

Therefore let's follow. *Exeunt.*⁹

¹⁰ *Enter two Clownes.*

Clown. Is she to bee buried in Christian buriall, buriall, when she wilfully
that wilfully seekes her owne saluation? ¹¹

Other. I tell thee she is, and therefore make her is, therefore
Graue straight,¹² the Crowner hath sate on her, and
finds it Christian buriall.

Clo. How can that be, vnlesse she drowned her
selfe in her owne defence?

Other. Why 'tis found so.¹³

Clo. It must be *Se offendendo*,¹⁴ it cannot bee else : be so offended,
it

¹ They were not lauds she was in the habit of singing, to judge by the snatches given.

² not able to take in, not understanding, not conscious of

³ clothed, endowed, fitted for. See *Sh. Lex.*

⁴ *Could* the word be for *buoy*—‘her clothes spread wide,’ on which she floated singing—therefore her melodious buoy or float?

⁵ How could the queen know all this, when there was no one near enough to rescue her? Does not the Poet intend the mode of her death given here for an invention of the queen, to hide the girl’s suicide, and by circumstance beguile the sorrow-rage of Laertes?

⁶ ‘I cannot help it’

⁷ ‘when these few tears are spent, all the woman will be out of me : I shall be a man again.’

⁸ *douts* : ‘this foolish water of tears puts it out.’ See *Q. reading.*

⁹ Here ends the Fourth Act, between which and the Fifth may intervene a day or two.

¹⁰ ACT V. This act *requires* only part of a day ; the funeral and the catastrophe might be on the same.

¹¹ Has this a confused connection with the fancy that salvation is getting to heaven?

¹² Whether this means *straightway*, or *not crooked*, I cannot tell.

¹³ ‘the coroner has settled it.’

¹⁴ The Clown’s blunder for *defendendo*.

for heere lies the point; If I drowne my selfe wittingly, it argues an Act: and an Act hath three branches. It is an Act to doe and to performe; argall¹ she drown'd her selfe wittingly.

it is to act, to doe, to performe, or all; she

Other. Nay but heere you Goodman Deluer.

good man deluer.

Clown. Giue me leaue; heere lies the water; good: heere stands the man; good: If the man goe to this water and drowne himsele; it is will he nill he, he goes; marke you that? But if the water come to him and drowne him; hee drownes not himselfe. Argall, hee that is not guilty of his owne death, shortens not his owne life.

Other. But is this law?

Clo. I marry is't, Crowners Quest Law.

Other. Will you ha the truth on't: if this had not beene a Gentlewoman, shee should haue beene buried out of² Christian Buriall.

truth an't,

out a

Clo. Why there thou say'st. And the more pittie that great folke should haue countenance in this world to drowne or hang themselues, more then their euen³ Christian. Come, my Spade; there is no ancient Gentlemen, but Gardiners, Ditchers and Graue-makers; they hold vp *Adams* Profession.

Other. Was he a Gentleman?

Clo. He was the first that euer bore Armes.

A was

⁴ *Other.* Why he had none.

Clo. What, ar't a Heathen? how dost thou vnderstand the Scripture? the Scripture sayes *Adam* dig'd; could hee digge without Armes?⁴ | Ile put another question to thee; if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confesse thy selfe —

Other. Go too.

Clo. What is he that builds stronger then either the Mason, the Shipwright, or the Carpenter?

Other. The Gallowes maker; for that Frame outliues a thousand Tenants.

that outliues

¹ *ergo*, therefore.

without. The pleasure the speeches of the Clown give us, lies partly in the undercurrent of sense, so disguised by stupidity in the utterance ; and partly in the wit which mainly succeeds in its end by the failure of its means.

³ *equal*, that is *fellow* Christian.

⁴ From 'Other' to 'Armes' not in Quarto.

Clo. I like thy wit well in good faith, the Gallowes does well ; but how does it well ? it does well to those that doe ill : now, thou dost ill to say the Gallowes is built stronger then the Church : Argall, the Gallowes may doe well to thee. Too't againe, Come.

Other. Who builds stronger then a Mason, a Shipwright, or a Carpenter ?

Clo. I, tell me that, and vnyoake.¹

Other. Marry, now I can tell.

Clo. Too't.

Other. Masse, I cannot tell.

*Enter Hamlet and Horatio a farre off.*²

Clo. Cudgell thy braines no more about it ; for your dull Asse will not mend his pace with beating, and when you are ask't this question next, say a Graue-maker : the Houses that he makes, lasts till Doomesday : go, get thee to *Yaughan*,³ fetch me a stoupe of Liquor.

houses hee
makes
thee in, and
fetch mee a
soope of

*Sings.*⁴

*In youth when I did loue, did loue,
me thought it was very sweete :*

Song.

*To contract O the time for a my behoue,
O me thought there was nothing meete.*⁵

there a was
nothing a meet.
*Enter Ham-
let & Horatio.*
busines ? a
sings in graue-
making.

Ham. Ha's this fellow no feeling of his busi-
nesse, that he sings at Graue-making ?⁶

Hor. Custome hath made it in him a property⁷
of easinesse.

Ham. 'Tis ee'n so ; the hand of little Employ-
ment hath the daintier sense.

*Clowne sings.*⁸

*But Age with his stealing steps
hath caught me in his clutch :*

Clow. Song.

hath clawed
me

¹ 'unyoke your team'—as having earned his rest

² *Not in Quarto.*

³ Whether this is the name of a place, or the name of an innkeeper, or is merely an inexplicable corruption—some take it for a stage-direction to yawn—I cannot tell. See *Q.* reading.

It is said to have been discovered that a foreigner named Johan sold ale next door to the Globe.

⁴ *Not in Quarto.*

⁵ A song ascribed to Lord Vaux is in this and the following stanzas made nonsense of.

⁶ Note Hamlet's mood throughout what follows. He has entered the shadow of death.

⁷ *Property* is what specially belongs to the individual; here it is his *peculiar work*, or *personal calling*: 'custom has made it with him an easy duty.'

⁸ *Not in Quarto.*

And hath shipped me intill the Land, into
as if I had neuer beene such.

Ham. That Scull had a tongue in it, and could
 sing once : how the knaue iowles it to th' grownd, the
 as if it were *Caines* Iaw-bone, that did the first twere
 murther : It might be the Pateof a Polititian which murder, this
 this Asse o're Offices : one that could circumuent might
 God, might it not ? asse now ore-
 that would

Hor. It might, my Lord.

Ham. Or of a Courtier, which could say, Good
 Morrow sweet Lord : how dost thou, good Lord ? thou sweet
 this might be my Lord such a one, that prais'd my lord ?
 Lord such a ones Horse, when he meant to begge when a went to
 it ; might it not ?¹

Hor. I, my Lord.

Ham. Why ee'n so : and now my Lady
 Wormes,² Chaplesse,³ and knockt about the Mazard⁴ Choples | the
 with a Sextons Spade ; heere's fine Reuolution, if massene with
 and we had
 wee had the tricke to see't. Did these bones cost
 no more the breeding, but to play at Loggets⁵ with
 'em ? mine ake to thinke on't. them

*Clowne sings.*⁶

A Pickhaxe and a Spade, a Spade, Clow. Song.
for and a shrowding-Sheete :
O a Pit of Clay for to be made,
for such a Guest is meete.

Ham. There's another : why might not that
 bee the Scull of of a Lawyer ? where be his skull of a
 Quiddits⁷ now ? his Quillets⁷ ? his Cases ? his quiddities
 Tenures, and his Tricks ? why doe's he suffer this
 rude knaue now to knocke him about the Sconce⁸ this madde
 knaue
 with a dirty Shouell, and will not tell him of his
 Action of Battery ? hum. This fellow might be
 in's time a great buyer of Land, with his
 Statutes, his Recognizances, his Fines, his double

¹ To feel the full force of this, we must call up the expression on the face of 'such a one' as he begged the horse—probably imitated by Hamlet—and contrast it with the look on the face of the skull.

² 'now the property of my Lady Worm,'

³ the lower jaw gone

⁴ *the upper jaw*, I think—not *the head*.

⁵ a game in which pins of wood, called loggats, nearly two feet long, were half thrown, half slid, towards a bowl. *Blount: Johnson and Steevens*.

⁶ *Not in Quarto*.

⁷ a lawyer's quirks and quibbles. See *Johnson and Steevens*.

1st Q. now where is your

Quirkes and quilletts now,

⁸ humorous, or slang word for *the head*. 'A fort—a head-piece—the head': *Webster's Dict.*

Vouchers, his Recoueries : |¹ Is this the fine ² of his
 | Fines, and the recouery ³ of his Recoueries, | to haue
 his fine ⁴ Pate full of fine ⁴ Dirt? will his Vouchers will vouchers
 vouch him no more of his Purchases, and double purchases &
 doubles then
 ones too, then the length and breadth of a paire of
 Indentures? the very Conueyances of his Lands
 will hardly lye in this Boxe ⁵; and must the In- scarcely lye |
 th'
 heritor himselfe haue no more? ⁶ ha?

Hor. Not a iot more, my Lord.

Ham. Is not Parchment made of Sheep-
 skinnes?

Hor. I my Lord, and of Calue-skinnes too. Calues-skinnes
 to

Ham. They are Sheepe and Calues that seek to
 which seek
 out assurance in that. I will speake to this fellow :
 whose Graue's this Sir? this sirra?

Clo. Mine Sir :

*O a Pit of Clay for to be made,
 for such a Guest is meete.⁷*

Clo. Mine
 sir, or a pit

Ham. I thinke it be thine indeed : for thou
 liest in't.

Clo. You lye out on't Sir, and therefore it is not tis
 yours : for my part, I doe not lye in't ; and yet it in't, yet
 is mine.

Ham. Thou dost lye in't, to be in't and say 'tis it is
 thine : 'tis for the dead, not for the quicke, there-
 fore thou lyeest.

Clo. 'Tis a quicke lye Sir, 'twill away againe
 from me to you.⁸

Ham. What man dost thou digge it for?

Clo. For no man Sir.

Ham. What woman then?

Clo. For none neither.

Ham. Who is to be buried in't?

Clo. One that was a woman Sir ; but rest her
 Soule, shce's dead.

¹ From 'Is' to 'Recoueries' not in Q.

² the end

³ the property regained by his Recoveries

⁴ third and fourth meanings of the word *fine*

⁵ the skull

⁶ 'must the heir have no more either?'

1st Q.

and must

The honor (*owner?*) lie there?

⁷ This line not in Q.

⁸ He *gives* the lie.

Ham. How absolute¹ the knaue is? wee must
 256 speake by the Carde,² or equiuocation will vndoe
 vs : by the Lord *Horatio*, these three yeares³ I haue this three
 taken note of it, the Age is growne so picked,⁴ tooke
 that the toe of the Pesant comes so neere the
 heeles of our Courtier, hee galls his Kibe.⁵ How the heele of
 long hast thou been a Graue-maker? the
been Graue-

Clo. Of all the dayes i'th'yeare, I came too't Of the dayes
 that day⁶ that our last King *Hamlet* o'recame ouercame
Fortinbras.

Ham. How long is that since?

Clo. Cannot you tell that? euery foole can tell
 143 that : It was the very day,⁶ that young *Hamlet* was was that very
 borne,⁸ hee that was mad, and sent into England. that is mad

Ham. I marry, why was he sent into England?

Clo. Why, because he was mad ; hee shall re- a was mad : a
 couer his wits there ; or if he do not, it's no great shall
 matter there. if a do | tis

Ham. Why?

Clo. 'Twill not be seene in him, there the men him there,
 are as mad as he. there

Ham. How came he mad?

Clo. Very strangely they say.

Ham. How strangely?⁷

Clo. Faith e'ene with loosing his wits.

Ham. Vpon what ground?

Clo. Why heere in Denmarke⁸ : I haue bin sixe- Sixten
 142-3 teene heere, man and Boy thirty yeares.⁹

Ham. How long will a man lie 'ith' earth ere he
 rot?

Clo. Ifaith, if he be not rotten before he die (as Fayth if a be
 we haue many pocky Coarses now adaies, that will not | a die
 scarce hold the laying in) he will last you some corsets, that
 eight yeare, or nine yeare. A Tanner will last you will
 nine year e. a will

¹ 'How the knave insists on precision!'

² chart: *Skeat's Etym. Dict.*

³ Can this indicate any point in the history of English society?

⁴ so fastidious; so given to *picking* and choosing; so choice

⁵ The word is to be found in any dictionary, but is not generally understood. Lord Byron, a very inaccurate writer, takes it to mean *heel*:

Devices quaint, and frolics ever new,
Tread on each others' kibes.

Childe Harold, Canto 1. St. 67.

It means a *chilblain*.

⁶ Then Fortinbras *could* have been but a few months younger than Hamlet, and may have been older. Hamlet then, in the Quarto passage, could not by *tender* mean *young*.

⁷ 'In what way strangely?'—*in what strange way?* Or the *How* may be *how much*, in retort to the *very*; but the intent would be the same—a request for further information.

⁸ Hamlet has asked on what ground or provocation, that is, from what cause, Hamlet lost his wits; the sexton chooses to take the word *ground* materially.

⁹ The Poet makes him say how long he had been sexton—but how naturally and informally—by a stupid joke!—in order a second time, and more certainly, to tell us Hamlet's age: he must have held it a point necessary to the understanding of Hamlet.

Note Hamlet's question immediately following. It looks as if he had first said to himself: 'Yes—I have been thirty years above ground!' and *then* said to the sexton, 'How long will a man lie i' th' earth ere he rot?' We might enquire even too curiously as to the connecting links.

Ham. Why he, more then another?

Clo. Why sir, his hide is so tan'd with his Trade, that he will keepe out water a great while. And your water, is a sore Decayer of your horson dead body. Heres a Scull now: this Scul, has laine in the earth three and twenty years.

a will

now hath lyen
you i'th earth
23. yeeres.

Ham. Whose was it?

Clo. A whoreson mad Fellowes it was ;
Whose doe you thinke it was?

Ham. Nay, I know not.

Clo. A pestlence on him for a mad Rogue, a pou'rd a Flaggon of Renish on my head once. This same Scull Sir, this same Scull sir, was *Yoricks* Scull, the Kings Iester.

once ; this
same skull sir,
was sir *Yoricks*

Ham. This?

Clo. E'ene that.

Ham. Let me see. Alas poore *Yorick*, I knew him *Horatio*, a fellow of infinite Iest ; of most excellent fancy, he hath borne me on his backe a thousand times : And how abhorred¹ my Imagination is, my gorge rises at it. Heere hung those lipps, that I haue kist I know not how oft. VVhere be your Iibes now? Your Gambals? Your Songs? Your flashes of Merriment that were wont to set the Table on a Rore? No one² now to mock your own Ieering? Quite chopfalne³? Now get you to my Ladies Chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thicke, to this fauour⁴ she must come. Make her laugh at that: prythee *Horatio* tell me one thing.

Ham. Alas.
poore

bore

and now how |
in my
it is :

not one

owne grinning,

Ladies table,

Hor. What's that my Lord?

Ham. Dost thou thinke *Alexander* lookt o'this fashion i'th' earth?

a this

Hor. E'ene so.

Ham. And smelt so? Puh.

¹ If this be the true reading, *abhorred* must mean *horrified*; but I incline to the *Quarto*.

² 'Not one jibe, not one flash of merriment now?'

³ —chop indeed quite fallen off!

⁴ *to this look*—that of the skull

Hor. E'ene so, my Lord.

Ham. To what base vses we may returne
Horatio. Why may not Imagination trace the
Noble dust of *Alexander*, till he¹ find it stopping a a find
bunghole.

Hor. 'Twere to consider: to curiously to con- consider too
sider so. curiously

Ham. No faith, not a iot. But to follow him
thether with modestie² enough, and likelielihood to
lead it; as thus. *Alexander* died: *Alexander* was lead it. Alex-
buried: *Alexander* returneth into dust; the dust is ander
earth; of earth we make Lome, and why of that to
Lome (whereto he was conuerted) might they not
stopp a Beere-barrell? ³

Imperiall *Cæsar*, dead and turn'd to clay, Imperious
Might stop a hole to keepe the winde away.
Oh, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a Wall, t'expell the winters flaw.⁴ waters flaw.
But soft, but soft, aside; heere comes the King. , but soft
awhile, here

Enter King, Queene, Laertes, and a Coffin, Enter K. Q.
Laertes and
the corse.
with Lords attendant.

The Queene, the Courtiers. Who is that they this they
follow,

And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken,
The Coarse they follow, did with disperate hand,
Fore do it owne life; 'twas some Estate.⁵ 'twas of some⁵
Couch⁶ we a while, and mark.

Laer. What Cerimony else?

Ham. That is *Laertes*, a very Noble youth:⁷
Marke.

Laer. What Cerimony else?⁸

Priest. Her Obsequies haue bin as farre inlarg'd, Doct.
As we haue warrantis,⁹ her death was doubtfull,¹⁰ warrantie,
And but that great Command, o're-swaies the order,¹¹

¹ Imagination personified

² moderation

³ 'Loam, Lome—grafting clay. Mortar made of Clay and Straw ; also a sort of Plaister used by Chymists to stop up their Vessels.'—*Bailey's Dict.*

⁴ a sudden puff or blast of wind

Hamlet here makes a solemn epigram. For the right understanding of the whole scene, the student must remember that Hamlet is philosophizing—following things out, curiously or otherwise—on the brink of a grave, concerning the tenant for which he has enquired—'what woman then?'—but received no answer.

⁵ 'the corpse was of some position.'

⁶ 'let us lie down'—behind a grave or stone

⁷ Hamlet was quite in the dark as to Laertes' character ; he had seen next to nothing of him.

⁸ The priest making no answer, Laertes repeats the question.

⁹ *warrantise*

¹⁰ This casts discredit on the queen's story, 222. The priest believes she died by suicide, only calls her death doubtful to excuse their granting her so many of the rites of burial.

¹¹ 'settled mode of proceeding.'—*Schmidt's Sh. Lex.*—But is it not rather *the order* of the church ?

She should in ground vnsanctified haue lodg'd,
Till the last Trumpet. For charitable praier,
Shardes,¹ Flints, and Peebles, should be thro wne
on her :

vnsanctified
been lodg'd
. prayers,

Yet heere she is allowed her Virgin² Rites,
Her Maiden strewments,³ and the bringing home
Of Bell and Buriall.⁴

virgin Crants,²

Laer. Must there no more be done ?

Priest. No more be done :⁵

Doct.

We should prophane the seruice of the dead,
To sing sage⁶ *Requiem*, and such rest to her
As to peace-parted Soules.

sing a
Requiem

Laer. Lay her i'th' earth,
And from her faire and vnpolluted flesh,
May Violets spring. I tell thee (churlish Priest)
A Ministring Angell shall my Sister be,
When thou liest howling ?

Ham. What, the faire *Ophelia* ?⁷

Queene. Sweets, to the sweet farewell.⁸

118 I hop'd thou should'st haue bin my *Hamlets* wife :
I thought thy Bride-bed to haue deckt (sweet
Maid)

And not t'haue strew'd thy Graue.

not haue

Laer. Oh terrible woer,⁹

O treble woe

Fall ten times trebble, on that cursed head
Whose wicked deed, thy most Ingenioussence
Depriu'd thee of. Hold off the earth a while,
Till I haue caught her once more in mine armes :

times double
on

*Leaps in the graue.*¹⁰

Now pile your dust, vpon the quicke, and dead,
Till of this flat a Mountaine you haue made,
To o're top old *Pelion*, or the skyish head
Of blew *Olympus*.¹¹

To'retop

*Ham.*¹² What is he, whose griefes
Beares such an Emphasis ? whose phrase of Sorrow

griefe

¹ 'Shardes' *not in Quarto*. It means *potsherds*.

² chaplet—*German krantz*, used even for virginity itself.

³ strewnments with *white* flowers (?)

⁴ the burial service

⁵ as an exclamation, I think.

⁶ Is the word *sage* used as representing the unfitness of a requiem to her state of mind? or is it only from its kindred with *solemn*? It was because she was not 'peace-parted' that they could not sing *rest* to her.

⁷ *Everything* here depends on the actor.

⁸ I am not sure the queen is not *apostrophizing* the flowers she is throwing into or upon the coffin: 'Sweets, be my farewell to the sweet.'

⁹ The Folio *may* be right here:—'Oh terrible wooer!—May ten times treble thy misfortunes fall' &c.

¹⁰ This stage-direction is not in the *Quarto*.

Here the *1st Quarto* has:—

Lear. Forbeare the earth a while: sister farewell:

Leartes leapes into the graue.

Now powre your earth on *Olympus* hie,
And make a hill to o're top olde *Pellon*:

Hamlet leapes in after Leartes

Whats he that coniuers so?

Ham. Beholde tis I, *Hamlet* the Dane.

¹¹ The whole speech is bravado—the frothy grief of a weak, excitable, effusive nature.

¹² He can remain apart no longer, and approaches the company.

Coniure the wandring Starres, and makes them stand
Coniures

Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane.¹

Laer. The deuill take thy soule.²

Ham. Thou prai'st not well,
 I prythee take thy fingers from my throat; ³
 Sir though I am not Spleenatiue, and rash,
 Yet haue I something in me dangerous,
 Which let thy wisenesse feare. Away thy hand.

For though |
 spleenatiue
 rash,
 in me some-
 thing
 wisedome
 feare; hold off
 thy

King. Pluck them asunder.

Qu. Hamlet, Hamlet.

Gen. Good my Lord be quiet.

All. Gentle-
 men.

Hora. Good

Ham. Why I will fight with him vppon this
 Theme,

Vntill my eielids will no longer wag.⁴

Qu. Oh my Sonne, what Theame?

Ham. I lou'd *Ophelia*⁵; fortie thousand Brothers
 Could not (with all there quantitie of Loue)
 Make vp my summe. What wilt thou do for her?⁶

King. Oh he is mad *Laertes*,⁷

Qu. For loue of God forbear him.

Ham. Come show me what thou'lt doe.

Woo't weepe? Woo't fight? Woo't teare thy
 selfe?

Ham S'wounds
 shew | th'owt
 fight, woo't
 fast, woo't
 teare

Woo't drinke vp *Esile*, eate a Crocodile?⁶

Ile doo't. Dost thou come heere to whine;

To outface me with leaping in her Graue?

Be⁸ buried quicke with her, and so will I.

And if thou prate of Mountaines; let them throw

Millions of Akers on vs; till our ground

Sindging his pate against the burning Zone,

Make *Ossa* like a wart. Nay, and thoul't mouth,

Ile rant as well as thou.⁹

doo't come
 here

¹ This fine speech is yet spoken in the character of madman, which Hamlet puts on once more the moment he has to appear before the king. Its poetry and dignity belong to Hamlet's feeling; its extravagance to his assumed insanity. It must be remembered that death is a small affair to Hamlet beside his mother's life, and that the death of Ophelia may even be some consolation to him.

In the *Folio*, a few lines back, Laertes leaps into the grave. There is no such direction in the *Q.* In neither is Hamlet said to leap into the grave; only the *1st Q.* so directs. It is a stage-business that must please the *common* actor of Hamlet; but there is nothing in the text any more than in the margin of *Folio* or *Quarto* to justify it, and it would but for the horror of it be ludicrous. The coffin is supposed to be in the grave: must Laertes jump down upon it, followed by Hamlet, and the two fight and trample over the body?

Yet I take the '*Leaps in the grave*' to be an action intended for Laertes by the Poet. His 'Hold off the earth a while,' does not necessarily imply that the body is already in the grave. He has before said, 'Lay her i'th' earth': then it was not in the grave. It is just about to be lowered, when, with that cry of 'Hold off the earth a while,' he jumps into the grave, and taking the corpse, on a bier at the side of it, in his arms, calls to the spectators to pile a mountain on them—in the wild speech that brings out Hamlet. The quiet dignity of Hamlet's speech does not comport with his jumping into the grave: Laertes comes out of the grave, and flies at Hamlet's throat. So, at least, I would have the thing acted.

There is, however, nothing in the text to show that Laertes comes out of the grave, and if the manager insist on the traditional mode, I would suggest that the grave be represented much larger. In Mr. Jewitt's book on Grave-Mounds, I read of a 'female skeleton in a grave six feet deep, ten feet long, and eight feet wide.' Such a grave would give room for both beside the body, and dismiss the hideousness of the common representation.

² —*springs out of the grave and flying at Hamlet*

³ Note the temper, self-knowledge, self-government, and self-distrust of Hamlet.

⁴ The eyelids last of all become incapable of motion.

⁵ That he loved her is the only thing to explain the harshness of his behaviour to her. Had he not loved her and not been miserable about her, he would have been as polite to her as well bred people would have him.

⁶ The gallants of Shakspeare's day would challenge each other to do more disagreeable things than these in honour of their mistresses.

'*Ésile*. s.m. Ancien nom du Vinaigre.' *Supplement to Academy Dict.*, 1847.—'Eisile, *vinegar*': Bosworth's *Anglo-Saxon Dict.*, from Somner's *Saxon Dict.*, 1659.—'Eisel (*Saxon*), *vinegar*; *verjuice*; *any acid*': Johnson's *Dict.*

1st Q. 'Wilt drinke vp vessels,' The word *up* very likely implies the steady emptying of a vessel specified—at a draught, and not by degrees.

⁷ —pretending care over Hamlet.

⁸ Emphasis on *Be*, which I take for the *imperative mood*.

⁹ The moment it is uttered, he recognizes and confesses to the rant, ashamed of it even under the cover of his madness. It did not belong

*Kin.*¹ This is meere Madnesse : *Quee.*¹
 And thus awhile the fit will worke on him : And this
 Anon as patient as the female Doue,
 When that her golden² Cuplet³ are disclos'd⁴ ; cuplets³
 His silence will sit drooping.⁵

Ham. Heare you Sir :⁶
 What is the reason that you vse me thus ?
 I loud' you euer ;⁷ but it is no matter :⁸
 Let *Hercules* himselfe doe what he may,
 The Cat will Mew, and Dogge will haue his day.⁹

Exit. *Exit Hamlet*
and Horatio.

Kin. I pray you good *Horatio* wait vpon
 him, pray thee
good

Strengthen you patience in our last nights speech, your
 254 Wee'l put the matter to the present push :¹⁰
 Good *Gertrude* set some watch ouer your Sonne,
 This Graue shall haue a liuing¹¹ Monument :¹²
 An hour of quiet shortly shall we see ;¹³ quiet thirtie
shall
 Till then, in patience our proceeding be. *Exeunt.*

altogether to the madness. Later he expresses to Horatio his regret in regard to this passage between him and Laertes, and afterwards apologizes to Laertes. 252, 262

Perhaps this is the speech in all the play of which it is most difficult to get into a sympathetic comprehension. The student must call to mind the elements at war in Hamlet's soul, and generating discords in his behaviour: to those comes now the shock of Ophelia's death; the last tie that bound him to life is gone—the one glimmer of hope left him for this world! The grave upon whose brink he has been bandying words with the sexton, is for *her*! Into such a consciousness comes the rant of Laertes. Only the forms of madness are free to him, while no form is too strong in which to repudiate indifference to Ophelia: for her sake, as well as to relieve his own heart, he casts the clear confession of his love into her grave. He is even jealous, over her dead body, of her brother's profession of love to her—as if any brother could love as he loved! This is foolish, no doubt, but human, and natural to a certain childishness in grief. 252.

Add to this, that Hamlet—see later in his speeches to Osricke—had a lively inclination to answer a fool according to his folly (256), to outherod Herod if Herod would rave, out-euphuize Euphues himself if he would be ridiculous:—the digestion of all these things in the retort of meditation will result, I would fain think, in an understanding and artistic justification of even this speech of Hamlet: the more I consider it the truer it seems. If proof be necessary that real feeling is mingled in the madness of the utterance, it may be found in the fact that he is immediately ashamed of its extravagance.

¹ I hardly know which to choose as the speaker of this speech. It would be a fine specimen of the king's hypocrisy; and perhaps indeed its poetry, lovely in itself, but at such a time sentimental, is fitter for him than the less guilty queen.

² 'covered with a yellow down' *Heath*.

³ The singular is better: 'the pigeon lays no more than *two* eggs.' *Steevens*. Only, *couplets* might be used like *twins*.

⁴ —*hatched*, the sporting term of the time.

⁵ 'The pigeon never quits her nest for three days after her two young ones are hatched, except for a few moments to get food.' *Steevens*.

⁶ Laertes stands eyeing him with evil looks.

⁷ I suppose here a pause: he waits in vain some response from Laertes.

⁸ Here he retreats into his madness.

⁹ '—but I cannot compel you to hear reason. Do what he will, Hercules himself cannot keep the cat from mewing, or the dog from following his inclination!'—said in a half humorous, half contemptuous despair.

¹⁰ 'into immediate train'—to *Laertes*.

¹¹ *life-like*, or *lasting*?

¹² —*again to Laertes*

¹³ —when Hamlet is dead

Enter Hamlet and Horatio.

Ham. So much for this Sir ; now let me see now shall you see
the other,¹

You doe remember all the Circumstance.²

Hor. Remember it my Lord ?³

Ham. Sir, in my heart there was a kinde of
fighting,

That would not let me sleepe ;⁴ me thought I my thought
lay

Worse then the mutines in the Bilboes,⁵ rashly, bilbo
(And praise be rashnesse for it)⁶ let vs know, praysd
Our indiscretion sometimes serues vs well, sometime
When our deare plots do paule,⁷ and that should deepe | should
learne vs
teach vs,

146, 181 There's a Diuinity that shapes our ends,⁸
Rough-hew them how we will.⁹

Hor. That is most certaine.

Ham. Vp from my Cabin

My sea-gowne scarft about me in the darke,
Grop'd I to finde out them ;¹⁰ had my desire,
Finger'd their Packet ¹¹, and in fine, withdrew
To mine owne roome againe, making so bold,
(My feares forgetting manners) to vnseale to vnfold
Their grand Commission, where I found *Horatio*,

Oh royall ¹² knauery : An exact command, A royall
196 Larded with many seuerall sorts of reason ; reasons,
Importing Denmarks health, and Englands too,
With hoo, such Bugges ¹³ and Goblins in my life, hoe
That on the superuize ¹⁴ no leasure bated,¹⁵
No not to stay the grinding of the Axe,
My head shoud be struck off.

Hor. Ist possible ?

Ham. Here's the Commission, read it at more
leysure :

¹ I would suggest that the one paper, which he has just shown, is a commission the king gave to himself; the other, which he is about to show, that given to Rosinrance and Guildensterne. He is setting forth his proof of the king's treachery.

² —of the king's words and behaviour, possibly, in giving him his papers, Horatio having been present; or it might mean, 'Have you got the things I have just told you clear in your mind?'

³ '—as if I could forget a single particular of it!'

⁴ *The Shaping Divinity* was moving him.

⁵ The fetters called *bilboes* fasten a couple of mutinous sailors together by the legs.

⁶ Does he not here check himself and begin afresh—remembering that the praise belongs to the Divinity?

⁷ *pall*—from the root of *pale*—'come to nothing.' He had had his plots from which he hoped much; the king's commission had rendered them futile. But he seems to have grown doubtful of his plans before, probably through the doubt of his companions which led him to seek acquaintance with their commission, and he may mean that his 'dear plots' had begun to pall *upon him*. Anyhow the sudden 'indiscretion' of searching for and unsealing the ambassadors' commission served him as nothing else could have served him.

⁸ —even by our indiscretion. Emphasis on *shapes*.

⁹ Here is another sign of Hamlet's religion. 24, 125, 260. We start to work out an idea, but the result does not correspond with the idea: another has been at work along with us. We rough-hew—block out our marble, say for a Mercury; the result is an Apollo. Hamlet had rough-hewn his ends—he had begun plans to certain ends, but had he been allowed to go on shaping them alone, the result, even had he carried out his plans and shaped his ends to his mind, would have been failure. Another mallet and chisel were busy shaping them otherwise from the first, and carrying them out to a true success. For *success* is not the success of plans, but the success of ends.

¹⁰ Emphasize *I* and *them*, as the rhythm requires, and the phrase becomes picturesque.

¹¹ 'got my fingers on their papers'

¹² Emphasize *royal*.

¹³ A *bug* is any object causing terror.

¹⁴ immediately on the reading

¹⁵ —no interval abated, taken off the immediacy of the order respite granted

But wilt thou heare me how I did proceed ?

heare now how

Hor. I beseech you.

Ham. Being thus benetted round with Villaines,¹

Ere I could make a Prologue to my braines,
They had begun the Play.² I sate me downe,
Deuis'd a new Commission,³ wrote it faire,
I once did hold it as our Statists⁴ doe,
A basenesse to write faire ; and laboured much
How to forget that learning : but Sir now,
It did me Yeomans⁵ seruice : wilt thou know
The effects⁶ of what I wrote ?

Or I could

yemans

Th'effect⁶

Hor. I, good my Lord.

Ham. An earnest Coniuration from the King,
As England was his faithfull Tributary,
As loue betweene them, as the Palme should
flourish,

them like the |
might flourish,

As Peace should still her wheaten Garland weare,
And stand a Comma 'twene their amities,⁷
And many such like Assis⁸ of great charge,
That on the view and know of these Contents,
Without debatement further, more or lesse,
He should the bearers put to sodaine death,
Not shriuing time allowed.

like, as sir of

knowing

those bearers

Hor. How was this seal'd ?

Ham. Why, euen in that was Heauen ordinate ;
I had my fathers Signet in my Purse,
Which was the Modell of that Danish Seale :
Folded the Writ vp in forme of the other,
Subscrib'd it, gau't th'impression, plac't it safely,
The changeling neuer knowne : Now, the next
day

ordinant,

in the forme of
th'

Subscribe it,

Was our Sea Fight, and what to this was sement,
Thou know'st already.⁹

was sequent

Hor. So *Guilddensterne* and *Rosincrance*, go too't.

¹ —the nearest, Rosincrance and Guildensterne : Hamlet was quite satisfied of their villainy.

² ‘I had no need to think : the thing came to me at once.’

³ Note Hamlet’s rapid practicality—not merely in devising, but in carrying out.

⁴ statesmen

⁵ ‘*Yeomen of the guard of the king’s body* were anciently two hundred and fifty men, of the best rank under gentry, and of larger stature than ordinary ; every one being required to be six feet high.’—*E. Chambers’ Cyclopaedia*. Hence ‘*yeoman’s service*’ must mean the very best of service.

⁶ Note our common phrase : ‘I wrote to this effect.’

⁷ ‘as he would have Peace stand between their friendships like a comma between two words.’ Every point has in it a conjunctive, as well as a disjunctive element : the former seems the one regarded here—only that some amities require more than a comma to separate them. The *comma* does not make much of a figure—is good enough for its position, however ; if indeed the fact be not, that, instead of standing for *Peace*, it does not even stand for itself, but for some other word. I do not for my part think so.

⁸ Dr. Johnson says there is a quibble here with *asses* as beasts of charge or burden. It is probable enough, seeing, as Malone tells us, that in Warwickshire, as did Dr. Johnson himself, they pronounce *as* hard. In Aberdeenshire the sound of the *s* varies with the intent of the word : ‘*az* he said’ ; ‘*ass* strong *az* a horse.’

⁹ To what purpose is this half-voyage to England made part of the play ? The action—except, as not a few would have it, the very action be delay—is nowise furthered by it ; Hamlet merely goes and returns.

To answer this question, let us find the real ground for Hamlet’s reflection, ‘There’s a Divinity that shapes our ends.’ Observe, he is set at liberty without being in the least indebted to the finding of the commission—by the attack, namely, of the pirate ; and this was not the shaping of his ends of which he was thinking when he made the reflection, for it had reference to the finding of the commission. What then was the ground of the reflection ? And what justifies the whole passage in relation to the Poet’s object, the character of Hamlet ?

This, it seems to me :—

Although Hamlet could not have had much doubt left with regard to his uncle’s guilt, yet a man with a fine, delicate—what most men would think, because so much more exacting than theirs—fastidious conscience, might well desire some proof more positive yet, before he did a deed so repugnant to his nature, and carrying in it such a loud condemnation of his mother. And more : he might well wish to have something to *show* : a man’s conviction is no proof, though it may work in others inclination to receive proof. Hamlet is sent to sea just to get such proof as will not only thoroughly satisfy himself, but be capable of being shown to others. He holds now in his hand—to lay before the people—the two contradictory commissions. By his voyage then he has gained both assurance of his duty, and provision against the consequence

Ham. Why man, they did make loue to this
 imployment ¹

They are not neere my Conscience ; their debate their defeat ²

Doth by their owne insinuation ³ grow : ⁴ Dooes

'Tis dangerous, when the baser nature comes

Betweene the passe, and fell incensed points

Of mighty opposites.⁵

Hor. Why, what a King is this ? ⁶

Ham. Does it not, thinkst thee,⁷ stand me now not thinke
thee⁷ stand
 vpon ⁸

120 He that hath kil'd my King,⁹ and whor'd my
 Mother,

62 Popt in betweene th'election and my hopes,

he mainly dreaded, that of leaving a wounded name behind him. 272 This is the shaping of his ends—so exactly to his needs, so different from his rough-hewn plans—which is the work of the Divinity. The man who desires to know his duty that he may *do* it, who will not shirk it when he does know it, will have time allowed him and the thing made plain to him; his perplexity will even strengthen and purify his will. The weak man is he who, certain of what is required of him, fails to meet it: so never once fails Hamlet. Note, in all that follows, that a load seems taken off him: after a gracious tardiness to believe up to the point of action, he is at length satisfied. Hesitation belongs to the noble nature, to Hamlet; precipitation to the poor nature, to Laertes, the son of Polonius. Compare Brutus in *Julius Cæsar*—a Hamlet in favourable circumstances, with Hamlet—a Brutus in the most unfavourable circumstances conceivable.

¹ *This verse not in Q.*

² destruction

³ 'Their destruction they have enticed on themselves by their own behaviour;' or, 'they have *crept into* their fate by their underhand dealings.' The *Sh. Lex.* explains *insinuation* as *meddling*.

⁴ With the concern of Horatio for the fate of Rosinrance and Guildensterne, Hamlet shows no sympathy. It has been objected to his character that there is nothing in the play to show them privy to the contents of their commission; to this it would be answer enough, that Hamlet is satisfied of their worthlessness, and that their whole behaviour in the play shows them merest parasites; but, at the same time, we must note that, in changing the commission, he had no intention, could have had no thought, of letting them go to England without him: that was a pure shaping of their ends by the Divinity. Possibly his own 'dear plots' had in them the notion of getting help against his uncle from the king of England, in which case he would willingly of course have continued his journey; but whatever they may be supposed to have been, they were laid in connection with the voyage, not founded on the chance of its interruption. It is easy to imagine a man like him, averse to the shedding of blood, intending interference for their lives: as heir apparent, he would certainly have been listened to. The tone of his reply to Horatio is that of one who has been made the unintended cause of a deserved fate: the thing having fallen out so, the Divinity having so shaped their ends, there was nothing in their character, any more than in that of Polonius, to make him regret their death, or the part he had had in it.

⁵ The 'mighty opposites' here are the king and Hamlet.

⁶ Perhaps, as Hamlet talked, he has been parenthetically glancing at the real commission. Anyhow conviction is growing stronger in Horatio, whom, for the occasion, we may regard as a type of the public.

⁷ 'thinkst thee,' in the fashion of the Friends, or 'thinke thee' in the sense of 'bethink thee.'

⁸ 'Does it not rest now on me?—is it not now my duty?—is it not *incumbent on me* (with *lie* for *stand*)—"is't not perfect conscience"?'

⁹ Note '*my king*,' not '*my father*': he had to avenge a crime against the state, the country, himself as a subject—not merely a private wrong.

Throwne out his Angle for my proper life,¹
 And with such coozenage ;² is't not perfect con-
 science,³

conscience ?

120 To quit him with this arme ?⁴ And is't not to be
 damn'd⁵

To let this Canker of our nature come
 In further euill.⁶

Hor. It must be shortly knowne to him from
 England

What is the issue of the busnesse there.⁷

Ham. It will be short,

262 The *interim's* mine,⁸ and a mans life's no more⁹

Then to say one :¹⁰ but I am very sorry good

Horatio,

245 That to *Laertes* I forgot my selfe ;

For by the image of my Cause, I see

262 The Portraiture of his ;¹¹ Ile count his fauours :¹²

¹ Here is the charge at length in full against the king—of quality and proof sufficient now, not merely to justify, but to compel action against him.

² He was such a *fine* hypocrite that Hamlet, although he hated and distrusted him, was perplexed as to the possibility of his guilt. His good acting was almost too much for Hamlet himself. This is his ‘coozenage.’

After ‘coozenage’ should come a dash, bringing ‘—is’t not perfect conscience’ (*is it not absolutely righteous*) into closest sequence, almost apposition, with ‘Does it not stand me now upon—’

³ Here comes in the *Quarto*, ‘*Enter a Courtier.*’ All from this point to ‘Peace, who comes heere?’ included, is in addition to the *Quarto* text—not in the *Q.*, that is.

⁴ I would here refer my student to the soliloquy—with its *sea of troubles*, and *the taking of arms against it.* 123, n. 4.

⁵ These three questions: ‘Does it not stand me now upon?’—‘Is’t not perfect conscience?’—‘Is’t not to be damned?’ reveal the whole relation between the inner and outer, the unseen and the seen, the thinking and the acting Hamlet. ‘Is not the thing right?—Is it not my duty?—Would not the neglect of it deserve damnation?’ He is satisfied.

⁶ ‘is it not a thing to be damned—to let &c.?’ or, ‘would it not be to be damned, (to be in a state of damnation, or, to bring damnation on oneself) to let this human cancer, the king, go on to further evil?’

⁷ ‘—so you have not much time.’

⁸ ‘True, it will be short, but till then is mine, and will be long enough for me.’ He is resolved.

⁹ Now that he is assured of what is right, the Shadow that waits him on the path to it, has no terror for him. He ceases to be anxious as to ‘what dreams may come,’ as to the ‘something after death,’ as to ‘the undiscovered country,’ the moment his conscience is satisfied. 120. It cannot now make a coward of him. It was never in regard to the past that Hamlet dreaded death, but in regard to the righteousness of the action which was about to occasion his death. Note that he expects death; at least he has long made up his mind to the great risk of it—the death referred to in the soliloquy—which, after all, was not that which did overtake him. There is nothing about suicide here, nor was there there.

¹⁰ ‘a man’s life must soon be over anyhow.’

¹¹ The approach of death causes him to think of and regret even the small wrongs he has done; he laments his late behaviour to Laertes, and makes excuse for him: the similarity of their condition, each having lost a father by violence, ought, he says, to have taught him gentleness with him. The 1st *Quarto* is worth comparing here:—

Enter Hamlet and Horatio

Ham. beleeue mee, it greeues mee much *Horatio*,

That to *Leartes* I forgot my selfe :

For by my selfe me thinkes I feele his grieffe,

Though there’s a difference in each others wrong.

¹² ‘I will not forget,’ or, ‘I will call to mind, what merits he has,’ or ‘what favours he has shown me.’ But I suspect the word ‘*count*’ ought

242, 262 | But sure the brauery¹ of his grieft did put me
 | Into a Towring passion.²

Hor. Peace, who comes heere?

*Enter young Osricke.*³

*Enter a
 Courtier.*

Osr. Your Lordship is right welcome back to
 Denmarke.

Cour.

Ham. I humbly thank you Sir, dost know this
 waterflie?⁴ humble thank

Hor. No my good Lord.

Ham. Thy state is the more gracious; for 'tis a
 vice to know him⁵: he hath much Land, and fertile;
 let a Beast be Lord of Beasts, and his Crib shall
 stand at the Kings Messe;⁶ 'tis a Chowgh⁷; but
 as I saw spacious in the possession of dirt.⁸

as I say,

Osr. Sweet Lord, if your friendship⁹ were at
 leysure, I should impart a thing to you from his
 Maiesty.

Cour. |
 Lordshippe³

Ham. I will receiue it with all diligence of
 spirit; put your Bonet to his right vse, 'tis for the
 head. it sir with
 spirit, your

Osr. I thanke your Lordship, 'tis very hot.¹⁰

Cour. | it is

Ham. No, beleeue mee 'tis very cold, the winde
 is Northerly.

Osr. It is indifferent cold¹¹ my Lord indeed.

Cour.

Ham. Mee thinks it is very soultry, and hot
 for my Complexion.¹²

But yet me |
 sully and hot,
 or my

Osr. Exceedingly, my Lord, it is very soultry,
 as 'twere I cannot tell how: but my Lord,¹³ his
 Maiesty bad me signifie to you, that he ha's laid a
 great wager on your head: Sir, this is the matter.¹⁴

Cour.

how: my Lord
 that a had

244

Ham. I beseech you remember.¹⁵

Osr. Nay, in good faith, for mine ease in good

Cour. Nay
 good my Lord
 for my ease

to be *court*.—He does court his favour when next they meet—in lovely fashion. He has no suspicion of his enmity.

¹ the great show ; bravado

² —with which fell in well the forms of his pretended madness. But that the passion was real, this reaction of repentance shows. It was not the first time his pretence had given him liberty to ease his heart with wild words. Jealous of the boastfulness of Laertes' affection, he began at once—in keeping with his assumed character of madman, but not the less in harmony with his feelings—to outrave him.

³ One of the sort that would gather to such a king—of the same kind as Rosinrance and Guildensterne.

In the 1st Q. 'Enter a Bragart Gentleman.'

⁴ —to *Horatio*

⁵ 'Thou art the more in a state of grace, for it is a vice to know him!'

⁶ 'his manger shall stand where the king is served.' Wealth is always received by Rank—Mammon nowhere better worshipped than in kings' courts.

⁷ 'a bird of the crow-family'—as a figure, 'always applied to rich and avaricious people.' A *chuff* is a surly clown. In Scotch a *coof* is 'a silly, dastardly fellow.'

⁸ land

⁹ 'friendship' is better than 'Lordshippe,' as euphuistic.

¹⁰ 'I thanke your Lordship ; (*puts on his hat*) 'tis very hot.'

¹¹ 'rather cold'

¹² 'and hot—for *my* temperament.'

¹³ Not able to go on, he plunges into his message.

⁴ —takes off his hat

¹⁵ —making a sign to him again to put on his hat

faith¹: Sir, * you are not ignorant of what excellence
Laertes ** is at his weapon.²

Laertes is.²

Ham. What's his weapon?³

Osr. Rapier and dagger.

Cour.

Ham. That's two of his weapons; but well.

Osr. The sir King ha's wag'd with him six
 Barbary Horses, against the which he impon'd⁴ as I
 take it, sixe French Rapiers and Poniards, with

Cour. The
 King sir hath
 wagerd
 hee has
 impaund

* *Here in the Quarto* :—

¹ here is newly com to Court *Laertes*, belieue me an absolute gentle-
 men, ful of most excellent differences,² of very soft society,³ and great
 234 showing⁴: indeede to speake sellingly⁵ of him, hee is the card or kalender⁶
 of gentry: for you shall find in him the continent of what part a Gentle-
 man would see.⁷

245 *Ham.*⁸ Sir, his definement suffers no perdition⁹ in you, though I
 know to deuide him inuentorially,¹⁰ would dosie¹¹ th'arithmaticke of
 memory, and yet but yaw¹² neither in respect of his quick saile, but in
 the veritie of extolment, I take him to be a soule of great article,¹³ &
 his infusion¹⁴ of such dearth¹⁵ and rarenesse, as to make true dixon of him,
 his semblable is his mirroure,¹⁶ & who els would trace him, his vm-
 brage, nothing more.¹⁷

Cour. Your Lordship speakes most infallibly of him.¹⁸

Ham. The concernancy¹⁹ sir, why doe we wrap the gentleman in our
 more rawer breath?²⁰

Cour. Sir.²¹

Hora. Ist not possible to vnderstand in another tongue,²² you will
 too't sir really.²³

Ham. What imports the nomination of this gentleman.

Cour. Of *Laertes*.²⁴

Hora. His purse is empty already, all's golden words are spent.

Ham. Of him sir.²⁵

Cour. I know you are not ignorant.²⁶

Ham. I would you did sir, yet in faith if you did, it would not
 much approue me,²⁷ well sir.

Cour.

** *Here in the Quarto* :—

Ham. I dare not confesse that, least I should compare with him in
 excellence, but to know a man wel, were to knowe himselfe.²⁸

Cour. I meane sir for this weapon, but in the imputation laide on
 him,²⁹ by them in his meed, hee's vnfellowed.³⁰

¹ 'in good faith, it is not for manners, but for my comfort I take it off.' Perhaps the hat was intended only to be carried, and would not really go on his head.

² The *Quarto* has not 'at his weapon,' which is inserted to take the place of the passage omitted, and connect the edges of the gap.

³ So far from having envied Laertes' reputation for fencing, as the king asserts, Hamlet seems not even to have known which was Laertes' weapon.

⁴ laid down—staked

¹ This and the following passages seem omitted for curtailment, and perhaps in part because they were less amusing when the fashion of euphuism had passed. The good of holding up the mirror to folly was gone when it was no more the 'form and pressure' of 'the very age and body of the time.'

² of great variety of excellence

³ gentle manners

⁴ fine presence

⁵ Is this a stupid attempt at wit on the part of Osricke—'to praise him as if you wanted to sell him'—stupid because it acknowledges exaggeration?

⁶ 'the chart or book of reference' 234

⁷ I think *part* here should be plural; then the passage would paraphrase thus:—'you shall find in him the sum of what parts (*endowments*) a gentleman would wish to see.'

⁸ Hamlet answers the fool according to his folly, but outdoes him, to his discomfiture.

⁹ 'his description suffers no loss in your mouth,'

¹⁰ 'to analyze him into all and each of his qualities,'

¹¹ dizzy

¹² 'and yet *would* but yaw neither' *Yaw*, 'the movement by which a ship deviates from the line of her course towards the right or left in steering,' Falconer's *Marine Dictionary*. The meaning seems to be that the inventorial description could not overtake his merits, because it would *yaw*—keep turning out of the direct line of their quick sail. But Hamlet is set on using far-fetched and absurd forms and phrases to the non-plussing of Osricke, nor cares much to be *correct*.

¹³ I take this use of the word *article* to be merely for the occasion; it was never surely in use for *substance*.

¹⁴ '—the infusion of his soul into his body,' 'his soul's embodiment' The *Sh. Lex.* explains *infusion* as 'endowments, qualities,' and it may be right.

¹⁵ scarcity

¹⁶ '—it alone can show his likeness,'

¹⁷ 'whoever would follow in his footsteps—copy him—is only his shadow.'

¹⁸ Here a pause, I think.

¹⁹ 'To the matter in hand!'—recalling the attention of Osricke to the purport of his visit.

²⁰ 'why do we presume to talk about him with our less refined breath?'

²¹ The Courtier is now thoroughly bewildered.

²² 'Can you only *speak* in another tongue? Is it not possible to *understand* in it as well?'

²³ 'It is your own fault; you *will* court your fate! you *will* go and be made a fool of!'

²⁴ He catches at the word he understands. The actor must here supply the meaning, with the baffled, disconcerted look of a fool who has failed in the attempt to seem knowing.

²⁵—answering the Courtier.

²⁶ He pauses, looking for some out-of-the-way mode wherein to continue. Hamlet takes him up.

²⁷ 'your witness to my knowledge would not be of much avail.'

²⁸ Paraphrase: 'for merely to know a man well, implies that you yourself *know*.' To know a man well, you must know his knowledge: a man, to judge his neighbour, must be at least his equal.

²⁹ faculty attributed to him

³⁰ *Point thus*: 'laide on him by them, in his meed hee's vnfellowed.'—'in his merit he is peerless.'

their assignes,¹ as Girdle, Hangers or so²: three of the Carriages infaith are very deare to fancy,³ very responsiue⁴ to the hilts, most delicate carriages and of very liberall conceit.⁵

Ham. What call you the Carriages?⁶

Osr. The Carriages Sir, are the hangers.

Cour. The carriage

Ham. The phrase would bee more Germaine⁷ to the matter: If we could carry Cannon by our sides; I would it might be Hangers till then; but on sixe Barbary Horses against sixe French Swords: their Assignes, and three liberall conceited Carriages,⁸ that's the French but against the Danish; why is this impon'd as you call it?⁹

carry a cannon

it be | then,
but on, six

French bet

this all you⁹

Osr. The King Sir, hath laid that in a dozen passes betweene you and him, hee shall not exceed you three hits;¹⁰ He hath one twelue for mine,¹¹ and that would come to imediate tryall, if your Lordship would vouchsafe the Answer.¹²

Cour. | layd

sir, that
your selfe and
him,

hath layd on
twelue for nine,
and it would

Ham. How if I answere no?¹³

Osr. I meane my Lord,¹⁴ the opposition of your person in tryall.

Cour.

Ham. Sir, I will walke heere in the Hall; if it please his Maiestie, 'tis the breathing time of day with me¹⁵; let the Foyles bee brought, the Gentleman willing, and the King hold his purpose; I will win for him if I can: if not, Ile gaine nothing but my shame, and the odde hits.¹⁶

it is

him and I |
I will

Osr. Shall I redeliuer you ee'n so?¹⁷

Cour. Shall I
deliuer you so?

Ham. To this effect Sir, after what flourish your nature will.

Osr. I commend my duty to your Lordship.

Cour.

Ham. Yours, yours¹⁸; hee does well to commend it himselfe, there are no tongues else for's tongue.

Ham. Yours
doo's well¹⁸

turne.

* *Here in the Quarto:—*

Hora. I knew you must be edified by the margent¹ ere you had done.

¹ accompaniments or belongings ; things *assigned to* them

² the thongs or chains attaching the sheath of a weapon to the girdle ; what the weapon *hangs* by. The '*or so*' seems to indicate that Osricke regrets having used the old-fashioned word, which he immediately changes for *carriages*.

³ imagination, taste, the artistic faculty

⁴ 'corresponding to—going well with the hilts,'—in shape, ornament, and colour.

⁵ bold invention

⁶ a new word, unknown to Hamlet ;—court-slang, to which he prefers the old-fashioned, homely word.

⁷ related ; 'akin to the matter'

⁸ He uses Osricke's words—with a touch of derision, I should say.

⁹ I do not take the *Quarto* reading for incorrect. Hamlet says : 'why is this all—you call it —? —?' as if he wanted to use the word (*imponed*) which Osricke had used, but did not remember it : he asks for it, saying '*you call it*' interrogatively.

¹⁰ 1st *Q*

that yong Leartes in twelue venies 223

At Rapier and Dagger do not get three oddes of you,

¹¹ In all printer's work errors are apt to come in clusters.

¹² the response, or acceptance of the challenge

¹³ Hamlet plays with the word, pretending to take it in its common meaning.

¹⁴ 'By *answer*, I mean, my lord, the opposition &c.'

¹⁵ 'my time for exercise : ' he treats the proposal as the trifle it seems—a casual affair to be settled at once—hoping perhaps that the king will come with like carelessness.

¹⁶ the *three*

¹⁷ To Osricke the answer seems too direct and unadorned for ears royal.

¹⁸ I cannot help here preferring the *Q*. If we take the *Folio* reading, we must take it thus : 'Yours ! yours !' spoken with contempt ;—'as if *you* knew anything of duty !'—for we see from what follows that he is playing with the word *duty*. Or we might read it, 'Yours commends yours,' with the same sense as the reading of the *Q*., which is, 'Yours,' that is, '*Your* lordship—does well to commend his duty himself—there is no one else to do it.' This former shape is simpler ; that of the *Folio* is burdened with ellipsis—loaded with lack. And surely *turne* is the true reading !—though we may take the other to mean, 'there are no tongues else on the side of his tongue.'

¹ —as of the Bible, for a second interpretative word or phrase.

Hor. This Lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.¹

98 *Ham.* He did Complie² with his Dugge before hee suck't it : thus had he and mine more of the same Beauy³ that I know the drossie age dotes on ; only got the tune⁴ of the time, and outward habite of encounter,⁵ a kinde of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fond and winnowed opinions ; and doe but blow them to their tryalls : the Bubbles are out.⁶

Ham. A did sir² with a suckt³ has he⁴ many more same breede and out of an habit of⁵ histy

prophane and trennowed opinions, their triall, the

^{*}*Hor.* You will lose this wager, my Lord.

loose my Lord.

Ham. I doe not thinke so, since he went into France, I haue beene in continuall practice ; I shall winne at the oddes :⁷ but thou wouldest not thinke how all heere about my heart :⁸ but it is no matter.⁹

ods ; thou how ill all's heere

Hor. Nay, good my Lord.

Ham. It is but foolery ; but it is such a kinde of gain-giuing¹⁰ as would perhaps trouble a woman.

gamgiuing,

Hor. If your minde dislike any thing, obey.¹¹ I will forestall¹² their repaire hither, and say you are not fit.

obay it.

Ham. Not a whit, we defie Augury¹³ ; there's a speciall Prouidence in the fall of a sparrow.¹⁴ If

there is speciall

^{24, 125,}
²⁴⁷ * Here in the Quarto :—

Enter a Lord.¹

Lord. My Lord, his Maiestie commended him to you by young Ostricke,² who brings backe to him that you attend him in the hall, he sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with *Laertes*, or that you will take longer time?³

Ham. I am constant to my purposes, they followe the Kings pleasure, if his fitnes speaks, mine is ready⁴ : now or whensoever, prouided I be so able as now.

Lord. The King, and Queene, and all are comming downe.

Ham. In happy time.⁵

Lord. The Queene desires you to vse some gentle entertainment⁶ *Laertes*, before you fall to play.

Ham. Shee well instructs me.

¹ 'Well, he *is* a young one !'

² 'Com'ply,' with accent on first syllable : *comply with* means *pay compliments to, compliment*. See *Q.* reading : 'A did sir with' :—*sir* here is a verb—*sir with* means *say sir to* : 'he *sirred, complied* with his nurse's breast before &c.' Hamlet speaks in mockery of the affected court-modes of speech and address, the fashion of euphuism—a mechanical attempt at the poetic.

³ *a flock of birds*—suggested by '*This Lapwing*.'

⁴ 'the mere mode'

⁵ 'and external custom of intercourse.' But here too I rather take the *Q.* to be right : 'They have only got the fashion of the time ; and, out of a habit of wordy conflict, (they have got) a collection of tricks of speech,—a yesty, frothy mass, with nothing in it, which carries them in triumph through the most foolish and fastidious (nice, choice, punctilious, whimsical) judgments.' *Yesty* I take to be right, and *prophane* (vulgar) to have been altered by the Poet to *fond* (foolish) ; of *trennowed* I can make nothing beyond a misprint.

⁶ Hamlet had just blown Osricke to his trial in his chosen kind, and the bubble had burst. The braggart gentleman had no faculty to generate after the dominant fashion, no invention to support his ambition—had but a yesty collection, which failing him the moment something unconventional was wanted, the fool had to look a discovered fool.

⁷ 'I shall win by the odds allowed me ; he will not exceed me three hits.'

⁸ He has a presentiment of what is coming.

⁹ Nothing in this world is of much consequence to him now. Also, he believes in 'a special Providence.'

¹⁰ 'a yielding, a sinking' at the heart? The *Sh. Lex.* says *misgiving*.

¹¹ 'obey the warning.'

¹² 'go to them before they come here'—'*prevent* their coming.'

¹³ The knowledge, even, of what is to come could never, any more than ordinary expediency, be the *law* of a man's conduct. St. Paul, informed by the prophet Agabus of the troubles that awaited him at Jerusalem, and entreated by his friends not to go thither, believed the prophet, and went on to Jerusalem to be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

¹⁴ One of Shakspeare's many allusions to sayings of the Lord.

¹ Osricke does not come back : he has begged off—but ventures later, under the wing of the king.

² May not this form of the name suggest that in it is intended the 'foolish' ostrich?

³ The king is making delay : he has to have his 'union' ready.

⁴ 'if he feels ready, I am.'

⁵ 'They are *well-come*.'

⁶ 'to be polite to Laertes.' The print shows where *to* has slipped out.

The queen is anxious ; she distrusts Laertes, and the king's influence over him.

it¹ be now, 'tis not to come : if it bee not to come, be, tis
 it will bee now : if it be not now ; yet it will come ; it well come,
 54, 164 the readinesse is all,² since no man ha's ought of man of ought
 252 what he leaues. What is't to leaue betimes ?³ he leaues,
 knows what
 ist to leaue
 betimes, let be.

Enter King, Queene, Laertes and Lords, with other Attendants with Foyles, and Gauntlets, a Table and Flagons of Wine on it. *A table prepared, Trum-pets, Drums and officers with cushion. King, Queene, and all the state, Foiles, Daggers, and Laertes.*

Kin. Come *Hamlet* come, and take this hand from me.

245 *Ham.*⁴ Giue me your pardon Sir, I'ue done you I haue
 wrong,⁵

But pardon't as you are a Gentleman.

This presence⁶ knowes,

And you must needs haue heard how I am punisht

With sore distraction ?⁷ What I haue done

With a sore

That might your nature honour, and exception

242, 252 Roughly awake,⁸ I heere proclaime was madnesse :⁹

Was't *Hamlet* wrong'd *Laertes*? Neuer *Hamlet*.

If *Hamlet* from himselfe be tane away :

fane away,

And when he's not himselfe, do's wrong *Laertes*,

Then *Hamlet* does it not, *Hamlet* denies it :¹⁰

Who does it then ? His Madnesse ? If't be so,

Hamlet is of the Faction that is wrong'd,

His madnesse is poore *Hamlets* Enemy.¹¹

Sir, in this Audience,¹²

Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd euill,¹³

Free me so farre¹⁴ in your most generous thoughts,

That I haue shot mine Arrow o're the house,

my

And hurt my Mother.¹⁵

brother.¹⁵

¹ 'it'—death, the end ² His father had been taken unready. 54

³ For note see foot of page.

⁴ Note in this apology the sweetness of Hamlet's nature. How few are alive enough, that is unselfish and true enough, to be capable of genuine apology! The low nature always feels, not the wrong, but the confession of it, degrading.

⁵ —the wrong of his rudeness at the funeral ⁶ all present

⁷ —true in a deeper sense than they would understand.

⁸ 'that might roughly awake your nature, honour, and exception,' :—consider the phrase—*to take exception at a thing*.

⁹ It was by cause of madness, not by cause of evil intent. For all purpose of excuse it was madness, if only pretended madness; it was there of another necessity, and excused offence like real madness. What he said was true, not merely expedient, to the end he meant it to serve. But all passion may be called madness, because therein the mind is absorbed with one idea; 'anger is a brief madness,' and he was in a 'towering passion': he proclaims it madness and so abjures it.

¹⁰ 'refuses the wrong altogether—will in his true self have nothing to do with it.' No evil thing comes of our true selves, and confession is the casting of it from us, the only true denial. He who will not confess a wrong, holds to the wrong.

¹¹ All here depends on the expression in the utterance.

¹² *This line not in Q.*

¹³ This is Hamlet's summing up of the whole—his explanation of the speech.

¹⁴ 'so far as this in your generous judgment—that you regard me as having shot &c.'

¹⁵ *Brother* is much easier to accept, though *Mother* might be in the simile.

To do justice to the speech we must remember that Hamlet has no quarrel whatever with Laertes, that he has expressed admiration of him, and that he is inclined to love him for Ophelia's sake. His apology has no reference to the fate of his father or his sister; Hamlet is not aware that Laertes associates him with either, and plainly the public did not know Hamlet killed Polonius; while Laertes could have no intention of alluding to the fact, seeing it would frustrate his scheme of treachery.

³ *Point*: 'all. Since'; 'leaves, what'—'Since no man has anything of what he has left, those who left it late are in the same position as those who left it early.' Compare the common saying, 'It will be all the same in a hundred years.' The *Q.* reading comes much to the same thing—'knows of ought he leaves'—'has any knowledge of it, anything to do with it, in any sense possesses it.'

We may find a deeper meaning in the passage, however—surely not too deep for Shakspeare!—'Since nothing can be truly said to be possessed as his own which a man must at one time or another yield; since that which is *own* can never be taken from the owner, but solely that which is lent him; since the nature of a thing that has to be left is not such that it *could* be possessed, why should a man mind parting with it early?'—There is far more in this than merely that at the end of the day it

Laer. I am satisfied in Nature,¹
 Whose motiue in this case should stirre me most
 To my Reuenge. But in my termes of Honor
 I stand aloofe, and will no reconcilment,
 Till by some elder Masters of knowne Honor,
 I haue a voyce, and president of peace
 To keepe my name vngorg'd.² But till that time, To my name
vngord: but
all that
 I do receiue your offer'd loue like loue,
 And wil not wrong it.

Ham. I do embrace it freely, I embrace
 And will this Brothers wager frankly play.
 Giue vs the Foyles: Come on.³

Laer. Come one for me.⁴

Ham. Ile be your foile⁵ *Laertes*, in mine ignor-
 ance,

218 Your Skill shall like a Starre i'th'darkest night,⁵
 Sticke fiery off indeede.

Laer. You mocke me Sir.

Ham. No by this hand.⁷

King. Giue them the Foyles yong *Osricke*,⁸ *Ostricke*,
 Cousen *Hamlet*, you know the wager.

Ham. Verie well my Lord,
 Your Grace hath laide the oddes a'th'weaker side. has

King. I do not feare it,
 I haue seene you both:⁹
 But since he is better'd, we haue therefore oddes.¹⁰ better, we

will be all the same. The thing that ever was really a man's own, God has given, and God will not, and man cannot, take away. Note the unity of religion and philosophy in Hamlet : he takes the one true position. Note also his courage : he has a strong presentiment of death, but will not turn a step from his way. If Death be coming, he will confront him. He does not believe in chance. He is ready—that is willing. All that is needful is, that he should not go as one who cannot help it, but as one who is for God's will, who chooses that will as his own.

There is so much behind in Shakspeare's characters—so much that can only be hinted at ! The dramatist has not the *word-scope* of the novelist ; his art gives him little *room* ; he must effect in a phrase what the other may take pages to. He needs good seconding by his actors as sorely as the composer needs good rendering of his music by the orchestra. It is a lesson in unity that the greatest art can least work alone ; that the greatest *finder* most needs the help of others to show his *findings*. The dramatist has live men and women for the very instruments of his art—who must not be mere instruments, but fellow-workers ; and upon them he is greatly dependent for final outcome.

Here the actor should show a marked calmness and elevation in Hamlet. He should have around him as it were a luminous cloud, the cloud of his coming end. A smile not all of this world should close the speech. He has given himself up, and is at peace.

¹ For note see foot of page.

² Perhaps *ungorg'd* might mean *unthrottled*.

³ 'Come on' is not in the *Q.*—I suspect this *Come on* but a misplaced shadow from the '*Come one*' immediately below, and better omitted. Hamlet could not say '*Come on*' before Laertes was ready, and '*Come one*,' after 'Give us the foils,' would be very awkward. But it may be said to the attendant courtiers.

⁴ He says this while Hamlet is still choosing, in order that a second bundle of foils, in which is the unbated and poisoned one, may be brought him. So 'generous and free from all contriving' is Hamlet, (220) that, even with the presentiment in his heart, he has no fear of treachery.

⁵ As persons of the drama, the Poet means Laertes to be foil to Hamlet.—With the play upon the word before us, we can hardly help thinking of the *third* signification of the word *foil*.

⁶ 'My ignorance will be the foil of darkest night to the burning star of your skill.' This is no flattery ; Hamlet believes Laertes, to whose praises he has listened (218)—though not with the envy his uncle attributes to him—the better fencer : he expects to win only 'at the odds.' 260

⁷ —not '*by these pickers and stealers*,' his oath to his false friends. 154

⁸ Plainly a favourite with the king.—He is *Ostricke* always in the *Q.*

⁹ 'seen you both play'—though not together.

¹⁰ *Point thus :*

I do not fear it—I have seen you both !

But since, he is bettered : we have therefore odds.

'Since'—'*since the time I saw him*'

¹ 'in my own feelings and person.' Laertes does not refer to his father or sister. He professes to be satisfied in his heart with Hamlet's apology

Laer. This is too heauy,
Let me see another.¹

Ham. This likes me well,
These Foyles haue all a length.² *Prepare to play.*³

Osricke. I my good Lord. *Ostr.*

King. Set me the Stopes of wine vpon that
Table :

If *Hamlet* giue the first, or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,⁴
Let all the Battlements their Ordinance fire,
268 The King shal drinke to *Hamlets* better breath,
And in the Cup an vnion⁵ shal he throw an Vnice
Richer then that,⁶ which foure successiue Kings
In Denmarkes Crowne haue worne.

Giue me the Cups,
And let the Kettle to the Trumpets speake, trumpet
The Trumpet to the Cannoneer without,
The Cannons to the Heauens, the Heauen to Earth,
Now the King drinkes to *Hamlet*. Come, begin, *Trumpets
the while.*
And you the Iudges⁷ beare a wary eye.

Ham. Come on sir.

Laer. Come on sir. *They play.*⁸ Come my
Lord.

Ham. One.

Laer. No.

Ham. Iudgement.⁹

Osr. A hit, a very palpable hit. *Ostrick.*

Laer. Well : againe. *Drum, trum-
pets and shot.*

King. Stay, giue me drinke. *Florish, a
peece goes off.*

Hamlet, this Pearle is thine,
Here's to thy health. Giue him the cup,¹⁰

*Trumpets sound, and shot goes off.*¹¹

Ham. Ile play this bout first, set by a-while.¹² set it by
Come : Another hit ; what say you ?

Laer. A touch, a touch, I do confesse.¹³ *Laer.* I doe
confest.

King. Our Sonne shall win.

for his behaviour at the funeral, but not to be sure whether in the opinion of others, and by the laws of honour, he can accept it as amends, and forbear to challenge him. But the words 'Whose motiue in this case should stirre me most to my Reuenge' may refer to his father and sister, and, if so taken, should be spoken aside. To accept apology for them and not for his honour would surely be too barefaced! The point concerning them has not been started.

But why not receive the apology as quite satisfactory? That he would not seem to show a lingering regard to *real* honour. A downright villain, like the king, would have pretended its *thorough* acceptance—especially as they were just going to fence like friends; but he, as regards his honour, will not accept it until justified in doing so by the opinion of 'some elder masters,' receiving from them 'a voice and precedent of peace'—counsel to, and justification, or example of peace. He keeps the door of quarrel open—will not profess to be *altogether* friends with him, though he does not hint at his real ground of offence: that mooted, the match of skill, with its immense advantages for villainy, would have been impossible. He means treachery all the time; careful of his honour, he can, like most apes of fashion, let his honesty go; still, so complex is human nature, he holds his speech declining thorough reconciliation as a shield to shelter his treachery from his own contempt: he has taken care not to profess absolute friendship, and so left room for absolute villainy! He has had regard to his word! Relieved perhaps by the demoniacal quibble, he follows it immediately with an utterance of full-blown perfidy.

¹ —to make it look as if he were choosing.

² —asked in an offhand way. The fencers must not measure weapons, because how then could the unbated point escape discovery? It is quite like Hamlet to take even Osricke's word for their equal length.

³ *Not in Q.*

⁴ 'or be quits with Laertes the third bout':—in any case, whatever the probabilities, even if Hamlet be wounded, the king, who has not perfect confidence in the 'unction,' will fall back on his second line of ambush—in which he has more trust: he will drink to Hamlet, when Hamlet will be bound to drink also.

⁵ The Latin *unio* was a large pearl. The king's *union* I take to be poison made up like a pearl.

⁶ —a well-known one in the crown

⁷ —of whom Osricke was one

⁸ *Not in Q.*

⁹ —appealing to the judges.

¹⁰ He throws in the *pearl*, and drinks—for it will take some moments to dissolve and make the wine poisonous—then sends the cup to Hamlet.

¹¹ *Not in Q.*

¹² He does not refuse to drink, but puts it by, neither showing nor entertaining suspicion, fearing only the effect of the draught on his play. He is bent on winning the wager—perhaps with further intent.

¹³ Laertes has little interest in the match, but much in his own play.

- 266 *Qu.* He's fat, and scant of breath.¹
 Heere's a Napkin, rub thy browes,
 The Queene Carowes to thy fortune, *Hamlet.*
Ham. Good Madam.²
King. *Gertrude*, do not drinke.
Qu. I will my Lord ;
 I pray you pardon me.³
- 222 *King.* It is the poyson'd Cup, it is too late.⁴
Ham. I dare not drinke yet Madam,
 By and by.⁵
Qu. Come, let me wipe thy face.⁶
Laer. My Lord, Ile hit him now.
King. I do not thinke't.
Laer. And yet 'tis almost 'gainst my conscience.⁷ it is | against
Ham. Come for the third.
Laertes, you but dally, you doe but
 I pray you passe with your best violence,
 I am affear'd you make a wanton of me.⁸ I am sure you
Laer. Say you so? Come on. *Play.*
Osr. Nothing neither way. *Ostr.*
Laer. Haue at you now.⁹
*In scuffling they change Rapiers.*¹⁰
King. Part them, they are incens'd.¹¹
Ham. Nay come, againe.¹²
Osr. Looke to the Queene there hoa. *Ostr.* | there
Hor. They bleed on both sides. How is't my is it
 Lord?
Osr. How is't *Laertes*? *Ostr.*
Laer. Why as a Woodcocke¹³
 To mine Sprindge, *Osricke*,
 I am iustly kill'd with mine owne Treacherie.¹⁴ mine owne
 sprindge
Ham. How does the Queene?
King. She sounds¹⁵ to see them bleede.
Qu. No, no, the drinke, the drinke¹⁶

¹ She is anxious about him. It may be that this speech, and that of the king before (266), were fitted to the person of the actor who first represented Hamlet.

² —a simple acknowledgment of her politeness: he can no more be familiarly loving with his mother.

³ She drinks, and offers the cup to Hamlet.

⁴ He is too much afraid of exposing his villainy to be prompt enough to prevent her.

⁵ This is not meant by the Poet to show suspicion: he does not mean Hamlet to die so.

⁶ The actor should not allow her: she approaches Hamlet; he recoils a little.

⁷ He has compunctions, but it needs failure to make them potent.

⁸ ‘treat me as an effeminate creature.’

⁹ He makes a sudden attack, without warning of the fourth bout.

¹⁰ *Not in Q.*

The 1st *Q.* directs:—*They catch one anothers Rapiers, and both are wounded, &c.*

The thing, as I understand it, goes thus: With the words ‘Have at you now!’ Laertes stabs Hamlet; Hamlet, apprised thus of his treachery, lays hold of his rapier, wrenches it from him, and stabs him with it in return.

¹¹ ‘they have lost their temper.’

¹² —said with indignation and scorn, but without suspicion of the worst.

¹³ —the proverbially foolish bird. The speech must be spoken with breaks. Its construction is broken.

¹⁴ His conscience starts up, awake and strong, at the approach of Death. As the show of the world withdraws, the realities assert themselves. He repents, and makes confession of his sin, seeing it now in its true nature, and calling it by its own name. It is a compensation of the weakness of some that they cannot be strong in wickedness. The king did not so repent, and with his strength was the more to blame.

¹⁵ *swounds, swoons*

¹⁶ She is true to her son. The maternal outlasts the adulterous.

Oh my deere *Hamlet*, the drinke, the drinke,
I am poyson'd.

Ham. Oh Villany! How? Let the doore be
lock'd.

Treacherie, seeke it out.¹

Laer. It is heere *Hamlet*.²

Hamlet,³ thou art slaine,

No Medicine in the world can do thee good.

In thee, there is not halfe an houre of life ;

houres life,
in my

The Treacherous Instrument is in thy hand,

Vnbated and envenom'd : the foule practise ⁴

Hath turn'd it selfe on me. Loe, heere I lye,

Neuer to rise againe : Thy Mothers poyson'd :

I can no more, the King, the King's too blame.⁵

Ham. The point envenom'd too,

Then venome to thy worke.⁶

Hurts the King.⁷

All. Treason, Treason.

King. O yet defend me Friends, I am but hurt.

Ham. Heere thou incestuous, murdrous,

Heare thou
incestious
damned Dane,

Damned Dane,

Drinke off this Potion : Is thy Vnion heere ?

Follow my Mother.⁸

King Dyes.⁹

of this | is the
Onixe heere ?

Laer. He is iustly seru'd.

It is a poyson temp'red by himselfe :

Exchange forgiuenesse with me, Noble *Hamlet* ;

Mine and my Fathers death come not vpon thee,

Nor thine on me.¹⁰

Dyes.¹¹

Ham. Heauen make thee free of it,¹² I follow
thee.

I am dead *Horatio*, wretched Queene adiew.

You that looke pale, and tremble at this chance,

That are but Mutes ¹³ or audience to this acte :

Had I but time (as this fell Sergeant death

Is strick'd in his Arrest) oh I could tell you.

strict

¹ The thing must be ended now. The door must be locked, to keep all in that are in, and all out that are out. Then he can do as he will.

² —laying his hand on his heart, I think.

³ In *Q. Hamlet* only once.

⁴ *scheme, artifice, deceitful contrivance* ; in modern slang, *dodge*

⁵ He turns on the prompter of his sin—crowning the justice of the king's capital punishment.

⁶ *Point*: 'too!'

1st Q. Then venome to thy venome, die damn'd villaine :

⁷ *Not in Quarto.*

The true moment, now only, has at last come. Hamlet has lived to do his duty with a clear conscience, and is thereupon permitted to go. The man who asks whether this be poetic justice or no, is unworthy of an answer. 'The Tragedie of Hamlet' is *The Drama of Moral Perplexity*.

⁸ A grim play on the word *Union*: 'follow my mother'. It suggests a terrible meeting below.

⁹ *Not in Quarto.*

¹⁰ His better nature triumphs. The moment he was wounded, knowing he must die, he began to change. Defeat is a mighty aid to repentance ; and processes grow rapid in the presence of Death : he forgives and desires forgiveness.

¹¹ *Not in Quarto.*

¹² Note how heartily Hamlet pardons the wrong done to himself—the only wrong of course which a man has to pardon.

¹³ *supernumeraries*. Note the other figures too—*audience, act*—all of the theatre.

But let it be : *Horatio*, I am dead,
 Thou liu'st, report me and my causes right cause a right
 To the vnsatisfied.¹

Hor. Neuer belecue it.

134 I am more an Antike Roman then a Dane :

135 Heere's yet some Liquor left.²

Ham. As th'art a man, giue me the Cup.

Let go, by Heauen Ile haue't. hate,

114, 251 Oh good *Horatio*, what a wounded name,³ O god
Horatio,
shall I leaue
behind me?
 (Things standing thus vnknowne) shall liue behind
 me.

If thou did'st euer hold me in thy heart,
 Absent thee from felicitie awhile,
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in paine,¹ A march a
farre off.
 To tell my Storie.⁴

*March afarre off, and shout within.*⁵

What warlike noyse is this ?

Enter Osricke.

Osr. Yong *Fortinbras*, with conquest come from
 Poland

To th'Ambassadors of England giues rhis warlike
 volly.⁶

Ham. O I dye *Horatio* :

The potent poyson quite ore-crowes my spirit,
 I cannot liue to heare the Newes from England,

62 But I do prophesie ⁷ th'election lights

276 On *Fortinbras*, he ha's my dying voyce,⁸

So tell him with the occurrents more and lesse,⁹ th'

Which haue solicited.¹⁰ The rest is silence. O, o, o, o.¹¹

*Dyes*¹²

Hora. Now cracke a Noble heart : cracks a

Goodnight sweet Prince,

And flights of Angels sing thee to thy rest,

Why do's the Drumme come hither ?

¹ His care over his reputation with the people is princely, and casts a true light on his delay. No good man can be willing to seem bad, except the *being good* necessitates it. A man must be willing to appear a villain if that is the consequence of being a true man, but he cannot be indifferent to that appearance. He cannot be indifferent to wearing the look of the thing he hates. Hamlet, that he may be understood by the nation, makes, with noble confidence in his friendship, the large demand on Horatio, to live and suffer for his sake.

² Here first we see plainly the love of Horatio for Hamlet ; here first is Hamlet's judgment of Horatio (134) justified.

³ —for having killed his uncle :—what, then, if he had slain him at once?

⁴ Horatio must be represented as here giving sign of assent.

1st Q. *Ham.* Vpon my loue I charge thee let it goe,
O fie *Horatio*, and if thou shouldst die,
What a scandale wouldst thou leaue behinde?
What tongue should tell the story of our deaths,
If not from thee?

⁵ *Not in Q.*

⁶ The frame is closing round the picture. 9

⁷ Shakspeare more than once or twice makes the dying prophesy.

⁸ His last thought is for his country ; his last effort at utterance goes to prevent a disputed succession.

⁹ 'greater and less'—as in the psalm,
'The Lord preserves all, more and less,
That bear to him a loving heart.'

¹⁰ led to the necessity.

¹¹ *These interjections are not in the Quarto.*

¹² *Not in Q.*

All Shakspeare's tragedies suggest that no action ever ends, only goes off the stage of the world on to another.

190 *Enter Fortinbras and English Ambassador, with Drumme, Colours, and Attendants.* *Enter Fortinbrasse, with the Embassadors.*

Fortin. Where is this sight ?

Hor. What is it ye would see ;
If ought of woe, or wonder, cease your search.¹ you

For. His quarry² cries on hauocke.³ Oh proud death, This quarry

What feast is toward⁴ in thine eternall Cell.

That thou so many Princes, at a shoote,
So bloodily hast strooke.⁵ shot

Amb. The sight is dismall,
And our affaires from England come too late,
The eares are senselesse that should giue vs hearing,⁶
To tell him his command'ment is fulfill'd,
That *Rosincrance* and *Guildensterne* are dead :
Where should we haue our thankes ?⁷

Hor. Not from his mouth,⁸
Had it⁹ th'abilitie of life to thanke you :
He neuer gaue command'ment for their death.
6 But since so iumpe¹⁰ vpon this bloodie question,¹¹
You from the Polake warres, and you from England
Are heere arriued. Giue order¹² that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view,
And let me speake to th'yet vnknowing world, , to yet
How these things came about. So shall you heare
Of carnall, bloudie, and vnnaturall acts,¹³
Of accidentall iudgements,¹⁴ casuall slaughters¹⁵
Of death's put on by cunning,¹⁶ and forc'd cause,¹⁷ deaths | and
for no cause
And in this vpshot, purposes mistooke,¹⁸
Falne on the Inuentors heads. All this can I th'
Truly deliuer.

For. Let vs hast to heare it,
And call the Noblest to the Audience.
For me, with sorrow, I embrace my Fortune,
I haue some Rites of memory¹⁹ in this Kingdome, rights of 19

¹ —for here it is.

² the heap of game after a hunt

³ 'Havoc's victims cry out against him.'

⁴ in preparation

⁵ All the real actors in the tragedy, except Horatio, are dead.

⁶ This line may be taken as a parenthesis ; then—'come too late' joins itself with 'to tell him.' Or we may connect 'hearing' with 'to tell him':—'the ears that should give us hearing in order that we might tell him' etc.

⁷ They thus inquire after the successor of Claudius.

⁸ —the mouth of Claudius

⁹ —even if it had

¹⁰ 'so exactly,' or 'immediately'—perhaps *opportunately—fittingly*

¹¹ dispute, strife

¹² —addressed to Fortinbras, I should say. The state is disrupt, the household in disorder ; there is no head ; Horatio turns therefore to Fortinbras, who, besides having a claim to the crown, and being favoured by Hamlet, alone has power at the moment—for his army is with him.

¹³ —those of Claudius

¹⁴ 'just judgments brought about by accident'—as in the case of all slain except the king, whose judgment was not accidental, and Hamlet, whose death was not a judgment.

¹⁵ —those of the queen, Polonius, and Ophelia

¹⁶ 'put on,' *indued*, 'brought on themselves'—those of Rosinrance, Guildensterne, and Laertes.

¹⁷ —those of the king and Polonius

¹⁸ 'and in this result'—*pointing to the bodies*—'purposes which have mistaken their way, and fallen on the inventors' heads.' *I am mistaken* or *mistook*, means *I have mistaken* ; 'purposes mistooke'—*purposes in themselves mistaken* :—that of Laertes, which came back on himself ; and that of the king in the matter of the poison, which, by falling on the queen, also came back on the inventor.

¹⁹ The *Quarto* is correct here, I think : 'rights of the past'—'claims of descent.' Or 'rights of memory' might mean—'rights yet remembered.'

Fortinbras is not one to miss a chance : even in this shadowy 'person,' character is recognizably maintained.

Which are to claime,¹ my vantage doth
Inuite me,

Which now to
claime

Hor. Of that I shall haue alwayes² cause to
speake,

haue also
cause³

And from his mouth

272 Whose voyce⁴ will draw on more :³

drawe no more,

But let this same be presently perform'd,

Euen whiles mens mindes are wilde,

while

Lest more mischance

On plots, and errors happen.⁴

For. Let foure Captaines

Bear *Hamlet* like a Soldier to the Stage,

For he was likely, had he beene put on⁵

To haue prou'd most royally :⁶

royall ;

And for his passage,⁷

The Souldiours Musicke, and the rites of Warre⁸

right of

Speake⁹ lowdly for him.

Take vp the body ; Such a sight as this

bodies,

Becomes the Field, but heere shewes much amis.

Go, bid the Souldiers shoote.¹⁰

*Exeunt Marching : after the which, a Peale Exeunt.
of Ordenance are shot off.*

¹ 'which must now be claimed'—except the *Quarto* be right here also.

² The *Quarto* surely is right here.

³ —Hamlet's mouth. The message he entrusted to Horatio for Fortinbras, giving his voice, or vote, for him, was sure to 'draw on more' voices.

⁴ 'lest more mischance happen in like manner, through plots and mistakes.'

⁵ 'had he been put forward'—*had occasion sent him out*

⁶ 'to have proved a most royal soldier : '—A soldier gives here his testimony to Hamlet's likelihood in the soldier's calling. Note the kind of regard in which the Poet would show him held.

⁷ —the passage of his spirit to its place

⁸ —military mourning or funeral rites

⁹ *imperative mood* : 'let the soldier's music and the rites of war speak loudly for him.' 'Go, bid the souldiers shoote,' with which the drama closes, is a more definite initiatory order to the same effect.

¹⁰ The end is a half-line after a riming couplet—as if there were more to come—as there must be after every tragedy. Mere poetic justice will not satisfy Shakspeare in a tragedy, for tragedy is *life* ; in a comedy it may do well enough, for that deals but with life-surfaces—and who then more careful of it ! but in tragedy something far higher ought to be aimed at. The end of this drama is reached when Hamlet, having attained the possibility of doing so, performs his work *in righteousness*. The common critical mind would have him left the fatherless, motherless, loverless, almost friendless king of a justifiably distrusting nation—with an eternal grief for his father weighing him down to the abyss ; with his mother's sin blackening for him all womankind, and blasting the face of both heaven and earth ; and with the knowledge in his heart that he had sent the woman he loved, with her father and her brother, out of the world—maniac, spy, and traitor. Instead of according him such 'poetic justice,' the Poet gives Hamlet the only true success of doing his duty to the end—for it was as much his duty not to act before, as it was his duty to act at last—then sends him after his Ophelia—into a world where true heart will find true way of setting right what is wrong, and of atoning for every ill, wittingly or unwittingly done or occasioned in this.

It seems to me most admirable that Hamlet, being so great, is yet outwardly so like other people : the Poet never obtrudes his greatness. And just because he is modest, confessing weakness and perplexity, small people take him for yet smaller than themselves who never confess anything, and seldom feel anything amiss with them. Such will adduce even Hamlet's disparagement of himself to Ophelia when overwhelmed with a sense of human worthlessness (126), as proof that he was no hero ! They call it weakness that he would not, foolishly and selfishly, make good his succession against the king, regardless of the law of election, and careless of the weal of the kingdom for which he shows himself so anxious even in the throes of death ! To my mind he is the grandest hero in fiction—absolutely human—so troubled, yet so true !

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