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SHAKESPEARE'S

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

WITH  
INTRODUCTION, AND NOTES EXPLANATORY AND CRITICAL.

*FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.*

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BY THE  
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# GENERAL PREFACE.

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## ENGLISH IN SCHOOLS.

WHY should English Literature be taught in our schools? and, What is the best way of teaching it? These are the questions which I propose to discuss.

As preliminary to such discussion, it will, I think, be rightly in place to consider, briefly, what our people are aiming to prepare their children for, and what sort of an education it is the proper business of the school to give; that is to say, what form of mind and character, and what disposition of the faculties, it is meant to impress.

Now I take it that a vast majority of the pupils in our schools are not to pass their life as students or as authors. Their main business in this world is to gain an honest living for themselves and for those dependent on them. And no plan of education is just that leaves this prime consideration behind, in quest of any alleged higher aims: for there really are no higher aims; and all pretence of such is a delusion and a snare. Some men, it is true, do more than gain an honest living; but this is the *best* thing that any man does; as, on the other hand, shining intellectually is the poorest thing that any man does, or can possibly learn to do. Then too most of the pupils in our schools, ninety-nine hundredths of them at the least, are to get their living by hand-work, not by head-work; and what they need is, to have their heads

so armed and furnished as to guard their hand-work against error and loss, and to guide it to the most productive means and methods. And, for gaining an honest living by hand-work, the largest and best part of their education is not to be had in school; it must be got somewhere else, or not at all. The right place, the only right place, for learning the trade of a farmer or a mechanic is on the farm or in the shop. For instance, Mr. Edward Burnett's "Deerfoot Farm," in Southborough, Massachusetts, is, I undertake to say, a better school for learning agriculture than any "agricultural college" is likely to be. There is no practicable, nay, no possible way of acquiring the use of tools but by actually handling them, and working with them. And this rule holds equally true in all the walks of life, — holds as true of the lawyer, the physician, the merchant, as of the shoemaker, the bricklayer, the machinist, the blacksmith.

On this point, our people generally, at least a very large portion of them, have their notions all wrong side up: their ideas and expectations in the matter are literally preposterous. How the thing came to be so, it were bootless to inquire; but so it clearly is. Parents, with us, are manifestly supposing that it is the business of the school to give their children all the education needful for gaining an honest living; that their boys and girls ought to come from the school-teachers' hands fully armed and equipped for engaging, intelligently and successfully, in all sorts of work, whether of head or of hand. And they are evermore complaining and finding fault because this is not done; that their children, after all, have only learnt how to use books, if indeed they have learnt that, and know no more how to use tools, are no better fitted to make or procure food and clothes, than if they had spent so much time in stark idleness or in sleep.



But the fault is in themselves, not in the school ; their expectations on this head being altogether unreasonable, and such as the school cannot possibly answer. That, say what you please, is the plain English of the matter ; and it may as well be spoken.

I repeat that, with very few exceptions, and those mostly applicable to girls, the most and the best that the school can do, or can reasonably be expected to do, is to educate the mind and the heart : as for the education of their children's hands, parents must, yes, *must* look for this elsewhere : probably their best way is to take it into their own immediate care, and hold themselves religiously bound to attend to it. Possibly, withal, some parents, as also some who drive the trade of idealizing about education, may need to be taught, or warned, that unless the school have something ready made to its hand, unless the pupil bring to it something inside his skull, it cannot educate his mind : brains it cannot furnish ; though it is often blamed for not doing this too. And, good as vocal intelligence may be, yet, for all the practical ends, and even the dignities, of life, manual intelligence is vastly better : this it is that makes both the artist and the artisan ; and without this the former, however it may prattle and glitter, can neither plough the field nor reap the corn, neither tan the leather nor make the shoe, neither shape the brick nor build the wall, neither grind the flour nor bake the bread.

But I suspect our American parents have become somewhat absurdly, and not very innocently, ambitious of having their boys and girls all educated to be gentlemen and ladies ; which is, I take it, the same in effect as having them educated to be good for nothing ; too proud or too lazy to live by hand-work, while they are nowise qualified to live by

head-work, nor could get any to do, if they were. And so they insist on having their children taught how to do something, perhaps several things, without ever soiling their fingers by actually doing any thing. If they would, in all meekness and simplicity of heart, endeavour to educate their children to be good for something, they would be infinitely more likely to overtake the aim of their sinful and stupid ambition. The man who has been well and rightly educated to earn, and does earn, a fair living by true and solid service, he is a gentleman in the only sense in which it is not both a sin and a shame to be called by that title. Any form of honest service, however plain and humble, has manliness in it, and is therefore a higher style of gentility, and a sounder basis of self-respect, than any, even the proudest, form of mere social ornamentation. The dull boy, who cannot prate science, but can drive a cart as a cart ought to be driven, or the dull girl who cannot finger a piano, but can rightly broil a beef-steak, is, in the eye of all true taste, a far more sightly and attractive object than the most learned and accomplished good-for-nothing in the world. I have seen men calling themselves doctors, who, week after week, month after month, year after year, were going about making sham calis on bogus patients, that so they might either get themselves a practice or make men believe they had got one ; and have thought that the poorest drudge, who honestly ate his bread, or what little he could get, in the sweat of his face, was a prince in comparison with them. An aristocratic idler or trifle or spendthrift or clothes-frame, however strong he may smell of the school and the college, of books and of lingual culture, is no better than a vulgar illiterate loafer ; nor can his smart clothes and his perfumes and his lily hands and his fashionable airs shield him from the just contempt of thoughtful men and sensible women.

Now so long as people proceed upon the notion that their children's main business in this world is to shine, and not to work, and that the school has it in special charge to fit them out at all points for a self-supporting and reputable career in life ; just so long they will continue to expect and demand of the school that which the school cannot give ; to grumble and find fault because it fails to do what they wish ; and to insist on having its methods changed till their preposterous demands are satisfied. On the other hand, the school could do its proper work much better, if people would but come down, or rather come up, to a just conception of what that work is. But it must needs fail, in a greater or less degree, to do that part of education which falls within its legitimate province, while struggling and beating about in a vain endeavour to combine this with that part which fairly lies outside of its province. For, in straining to hit the impossible, we are pretty sure to miss the possible. And all experienced teachers know right well that those parents who faithfully do their own part in the education of their children are most apt to be satisfied with what the school is doing.

It is, then, desirable that children should learn to think, but it is indispensable that they should learn to work ; and I believe it is possible for a large, perhaps the larger, portion of them to be so educated as to find pleasure in both. But the great question is, how to render the desirable thing and the indispensable thing mutually helpful and supplementary. For, surely, the two parts of education, the education of the mind and the education of the hand, though quite distinct in idea, and separate in act, are not, or need not be, at all antagonistic. On the contrary, the school can, and should, so do its part as to coöperate with and further that part which lies beyond its province. And it is both the

office and the aim of a wise benevolence in teachers so to deal with the boys under their care as to make them, if possible, intelligent, thoughtful, sober-minded men, with hearts set and tuned to such services and such pleasures as reason and religion approve ; also, to make them prudent, upright, patriotic citizens, with heads so stocked and tempered as not to be “ cajoled and driven about in herds ” by greedy, ambitious, unprincipled demagogues, and the political gamblers of the day. And here it is to be noted, withal, that any man who gains an honest living for himself, whether lettered or unlettered, is a good citizen in the right sense of the term ; and that human slugs and do-nothings, however book-learned they may be, are not good citizens.

As for the women, let it suffice that their rights and interests in this matter are coördinate with those of the men ; just that, and no more. Their main business, also, is to get an honest living. And the education that unprepares them or leaves them unprepared for this is the height of folly and of wrong. And I hope the most of them are not going to turn students or authors by profession, nor to aim at eating their bread in the sweat of the brain. For things have already come to that pass with us, that any fool can write a book : the great difficulty is in finding people who know enough and have strength enough not to attempt it.

And here let me say that the greatest institution in the world is the family ; worth all the others put together, and the foundation of them all. So, again, the greatest art known among men is housekeeping, which is the life of the family. For what are we poor mortals good for, in head, heart, hand, or any thing else, without healthy, eupeptic stomachs ? and how are we to have such stomachs without good cooking ? So that I reckon housekeeping to be just

the last thing that any *lady* can afford to be ignorant of. The finest accomplishment too that woman was ever beautified with. This part of woman's education, also, is to be gained at home ; it cannot be gained anywhere else. As for those young ladies who are above going into the kitchen, and learning this great art by actually working at it, my advice is, that they forthwith migrate to a world where the home and the family have no place, and where babies are not to be born and nursed.

Our girls in school, then, should, first of all, be fashioned for intelligent, thoughtful, sober-minded women ; with souls attempered and attuned to the honest and ennobling delectations of the fireside ; their heads furnished and disposed to be prudent, skillful, dutiful wives and mothers and housekeepers ; home-loving and home-staying ; formed for steady loves, serene attachments, quiet virtues, and the whole flock of household pieties ; all suited to the office of

A creature not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food.

The love of home, and the art of making home lovely, must be mainly acquired in the works and enjoyments of home ; and the best thing that the school can do is to coöperate with the home to that end.

But the most important item in this account, and that which is the main subject of what I have to say, is yet to come.

We have reached a stage of civilization and general culture in which both the virtue and the happiness of people depend very much on their intellectual forming and furnishing. And as this holds true alike of both sexes, so both will be included alike in the scope of what I have in mind to

speak further. Books, of one sort or another, are now, on every hand, a common resort for entertainment and pleasure, and are likely to become more and more so. Wealth has greatly accumulated ; machinery has come to do a large part of our work ; and all sorts of people have more or less of leisure on their hands. This leisure ought not to be spent in idleness, neither will it be. In the vacancy of their hands people's thoughts will needs be busy either for the better or for the worse : if their minds are not dressed for the abode of the Deity, they will be workshops of the Devil. And reading does in fact bear a large part in filling up such vacant time.

Now the world is getting full of devils, very potent ones too, in the shape of foolish and bad books. And I am apt to think the foolish devils in that shape even worse than the wicked : for they only begin the work of evil somewhat further off, so as to come at it the more surely ; and a slow creeping infection is more dangerous than a frank assault. Nothing so bad here as that which eludes or seduces the moral sentinels of the heart. I am not exactly a believer in the old doctrine of total depravity ; but I fear it must be confessed that the greater number of people take much more readily to that which is false and bad than to that which is good and true. Certainly what intoxicates and lowers stands a better chance with them than what sobers and elevates. Virtue and wisdom are an up-hill road, where they do not advance without some effort ; folly and vice a down-hill path, where it requires some effort not to advance. And this is quite as true in intellectual matters as in moral. Here, to most people, delight in what is false and bad comes spontaneously ; delight in what is true and good is the slow result of discipline and care, and grows by postponement of impulse to law.

I suspect it has been taken for granted much too generally, that if people know how to read they will be apt enough to make good use of that knowledge without further concern. A very great mistake ! This faculty is quite as liable to abuse as any other : probably there is none other more sadly abused at this very time ; none that needs to be more carefully fenced about with the safeguards of judgment and taste. Through this faculty crowds of our young people are let into the society of such things as can only degrade and corrupt, and, to a great extent, are positively drawn away from the fellowship of such as would elevate and correct. Most, probably not less than seven-eighths, of the books now read are simply a discipline of debasement ; ministering fierce stimulants and provocatives to the lower propensities, and habituating the thoughts to the mud and slime of literary cesspools and slop-cooks.

I have indeed no faith in the policy or the efficacy of attempting to squelch these springs of evil by forcible sequestration, or to keep people from eating this poor devil-soup by muzzling them. If they will take to it, probably the best way is to let them have it ; perhaps it is best to act somewhat on the plan of glutting them with it, in the hope that so they may outgrow it : but something might well be essayed so to fit and prepare them as that they may not take to it, and may even turn away from it with disgust when it comes to them. Surely, at all events, the education that delivers people over to such feeding is a very doubtful good.

In view of all which, it is clearly of the highest consequence, that from their early youth people should have their minds so bent and disposed as to find pleasure in such books as are adapted to purify and raise. I say *pleasure*, because we cannot rely, neither ought we, on arguments of right in

this matter. Reading even good books without pleasure, and merely from a sense of duty, is of little benefit, and may even do hurt, by breeding insensibly an aversion to what is good, and by investing it with irksome associations. A genial delight in that which is good is what sets the colours of it in the mind : without this, the mind grows at odds with it. People cannot be droned or bored into virtue ; and if evil were made as tedious to them as good often is, I suspect their hearts would soon be weaned from ugliness, and won to a marriage with beauty. And the pith of my argument is, that it is what people take pleasure in that really shapes and determines their characters. So experience has taught me that the characters of students in college are influenced far more by their reading than by their studies. From the books they take to you may judge at once whither their spirits are tending, and what they are inwardly made of, because here they generally go by free choice and pleasure. In brief, they study what they must ; they read what they love ; and their souls are and will be in the keeping of their loves. Even the breath of excellence is apt to be lost, if it be not waited on by delight ; while, to love worthy objects, and in a worthy manner, is the top and crown of earthly good, ay, and of heavenly good also. Considering how clear and evident all this is, that so little is done, even in our highest seats of learning, to form the tastes and guide the reading of students, may well be matter of grief and astonishment. I have long wondered at it, and often sickened over it.

Now, to fence against the growing pestilence of foolish and bad books, I know of but one way ; and that is by endeavouring systematically so to familiarize the young with the best and purest mental preparations, and so to prepossess them with the culture of that which is wholesome and good,



that they may have an honest, hearty relish for it. The thing is, to plant the mind full of such loves, and so to set and form the intellectual tastes and habits, that the vicious and false will be spontaneously refused, and the healthy and true be freely preferred ; this too, not from any novelty in it, but for the experienced sweetness and beauty of it, and for the quiet joy that goes in company with it.

Let the efficacy of a very few good books be seasonably steeped into the mind, and then, in the matter of their reading, people will be apt to go right of their own accord ; and assuredly they will never be got to go right except of their own accord. You may thus hope to predispose and attune the faculties of choice to what is noble and sweet, before the springs of choice are vitiated by evil or ignorant conversations. If people have their tastes set betimes to such authors as Spenser and Shakespeare, Addison, Scott, Wordsworth, and Charles Lamb, is it likely that they will stomach such foul stuff as the literary slums and grog-shops of the day are teeming with? I hope it is not so, and I will not readily believe it can be so. Nor can I see any impracticability, any insuperable difficulty here. Instances of native dulness or perversity there will indeed be, such as no soul-music can penetrate : but that, as a general thing, young minds, yet undeflowered by the sensational flash and fury of vulgar book-makers, will be found proof against the might and sweetness of that which is intellectually beautiful and good, provided they be held in communication with it long enough for its virtue to penetrate them, is what I will not, must not, believe, without a fairer trial than has yet been made.

In reference to the foregoing points, a well-chosen and well-used course of study in the best English classics seems

the most eligible and most effective preparation. Whether to the ends of practical use or of rational pleasure, this cannot but be the right line of early mental culture. The direct aids and inspirations of religion excepted, what better nursery can there be of just thoughts and healthy tastes? what more apt to train and feed the mind for the common duties, interests, affections, and enjoyments of life? For the very process here stands in framing and disposing the mind for intercourse with the sayings of the wise, with the gathered treasures of light and joy, and with the meanings and beauties of Nature as seen by the eye, and interpreted by the pen, of genius and wisdom.

We are getting sadly estranged from right ideas as to the nature and scope of literary workmanship. For literature, in its proper character, is nowise a something standing outside of and apart from the practical service of life; a sort of moonshine world, where the working understanding sleeps for the idle fancy to dream. This is no doubt true in regard to most of the books now read; which are indeed no books, but mere devils and dunces in books' clothing; but it is not at all true of books that are books indeed. These draw right into the substance and pith of actual things; the matter of them is "labour'd and distill'd through all the needful uses of our lives"; the soul of their purpose is to arm and strengthen the head, and to inspire and direct the hand, for productive work. That an author brings us face to face with real men and things, and helps us to see them as they are; that he furnishes us with enablements for conversing rationally, and for wrestling effectively, with the problems of living, operative truth; that he ministers guidance and support for thinking nobly and working bravely in the services, through the perils, under the difficulties and adversities of our state,

— this is the test and measure of his worth ; this is the sole basis of his claim to rank as a classic. This, to be sure, is not always done directly, neither ought it to be ; for the helps that touch our uses more or less indirectly often serve us best, because they call for and naturally prompt our own mental and moral coöperation in turning them to practical account.

It is such literature that the poet has in view when he tells us, —

books, we know,  
Are a substantial world, both pure and good :  
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,  
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.

And books are yours,  
Within whose silent chambers treasure lies  
Preserved from age to age ; more precious far  
Than that accumulated store of gold  
And orient gems which, for a day of need,  
The Sultan hides deep in ancestral tombs :  
These hoards you can unlock at will.

Nor is it the least benefit of such authors that they reconcile and combine utility with pleasure, making each ministrative to the other ; so that the grace of pleasant thoughts becomes the sweeter for their usefulness, and the virtue of working thoughts the more telling for their pleasantness ; the two thus pulling and rejoicing together. For so the right order of mental action is where delight pays tribute to use, and use to delight ; and there is no worse corruption of literature in the long run than where these are divorced, and made to pull in different lines. Such pleasure is itself uplifting, because it goes hand in hand with duty. And as life, with its inevitable wants and cares and toils, is apt to be hard enough at the best with most of us, there is need of all the assuage-

ments and alleviations that can come from this harmonizing process. Pressed as we are with heavy laws, happy indeed is he

Who from the well-spring of his own clear breast  
Can draw, and sing his griefs to rest.

Next to a good conscience and the aids of Christian faith, there is no stronger support under the burdens of our lot than the companionship of such refreshing and soul-lifting thoughts as spring up by the wayside of duty, from our being at home with the approved interpreters of Nature and truth. This is indeed to carry with us in our working hours a power

That beautifies the fairest shore,  
And mitigates the harshest clime.

Now I do not like to hear it said that our school-education can do nothing towards this result. I believe, nay, I am sure, it can do much; though I have to admit that it has done and is doing far less than it might. I fear it may even be said that our course is rather operating as a hindrance than as a help in this respect. What sort of reading are our schools planting an appetite for? Are they really doing anything to instruct and form the mental taste, so that the pupils on leaving them may be safely left to choose their reading for themselves? It is clear in evidence that they are far from educating the young to take pleasure in what is intellectually noble and sweet. The statistics of our public libraries show that some cause is working mightily to prepare them only for delight in what is both morally and intellectually mean and foul. It would not indeed be fair to charge our public schools with positively giving this preparation; but it is their business to forestall and prevent such a result. If, along with the faculty of reading, they cannot also impart some safe-

guards of taste and habit against such a result, will the system prove a success?

As things now go, English literature is postponed to almost every thing else in our public schools : much as ever it can gain admission at all ; and the most that can be got for it is merely such fag-ends of time as may possibly be spared from other studies. We think it a fine thing to have our children studying Demosthenes and Cicero ; but do not mind having them left almost totally ignorant of Burke and Webster. Yet, in the matter of practical learning, ay, and of liberal learning too, for deep and comprehensive eloquence, for instruction in statesmanship, and in the principles of civil order and social well-being, Burke alone is worth more than all the oratory of Greece and Rome put together ; albeit I am far from meaning to disrepute the latter. And a few of Webster's speeches, besides their treasure of noble English, — “a manly style fitted to manly ears,” — have in them more that would come home to the business and bosoms of our best American intelligence, more that is suited to the ends of a well-instructed patriotism, than all that we have inherited from the lips of ancient orators.

So, again, we spare no cost to have our children delving in the suburbs and outskirts of Homer and Virgil ; for not one in fifty of them ever gets beyond these ; yet we take no pains to have them living in the heart of Shakespeare and Wordsworth : while there is in Shakespeare a richer fund of “sweetness and light,” more and better food for the intellectual soul, a larger provision of such thoughts as should dwell together with the spirit of a man, and be twisted about his heart for ever, than in the collective poetry of the whole ancient heathen world.

It may indeed be said that these treasures are in a language

already known, and so are accessible to people without any special preparation ; and that the school is meant to furnish the keys to such wealth as would else be locked up from them. But our public schools leave the pupils without any taste for those native treasures, or any aptitude to enjoy them : the course there pursued does almost nothing to fit and dispose the pupils for communing with the wisdom and beauty enshrined in our mother-tongue ; while hardly any so master the Greek and Latin as to hold communion with the intellectual virtue which they enshrine. Few, very few, after all, can be trained to love Homer ; while there are, I must think, comparatively few who cannot be trained to love Shakespeare ; and the main thing is to plant that love. The point, then, is just here : Our schools are neither giving the pupils the key to the wisdom of Homer, nor disposing them to use the key to the wisdom of Shakespeare. And so the result is that, instead of bathing in the deep, clear streams of thought, ancient or modern, they have no taste but for waddling or wallowing in the shallow, turbid puddles of the time ; —

Best pleased with what is aptliest framed  
To enervate and defile.

It is a notorious fact that among our highly-educated people, the graduates of our colleges, really good English scholars are extremely rare. I suspect it is not too much to say that among our instructors there are at least twenty competent to teach Greek and Latin, where there is one competent to teach English literature. Very few indeed of them are really at home in the great masters of our native tongue, so as to make them matter of fruitful exercise in the class-room. They know not how to come at them, or to shape their course in teaching them. Their minds are so engrossed

with the verbal part of learning, that, unless they have a husk of words to stick in, as in studying a foreign tongue, they can hardly find where to stick at all.

This habit, I suppose, comes mainly as a tradition from a former age ; a habit which, though begun upon good causes, has been kept up long after those causes were done away. The prevailing ideas herein got fixed at a time when there was no well-formed English literature in being ; when the language itself was raw and rude ; and when the world's whole stock of intellectual wealth was enshrined in other tongues. The custom thus settled from necessity is continued to this day, when the English tongue, besides its own vast fund of original treasure, has had the blood of all the best human thought transfused into its veins, and when its walks have grown rich and delectable with the spoils of every earlier fruitage of genius and learning.

Three centuries ago Chaucer was the only really good English author ; he was then two hundred years old ; and the language had changed so much since his time, that reading him was almost like studying a foreign tongue. So much was this the case, that Bacon thought the English was going to bankrupt all books entrusted to its keeping : he therefore took care to have most of his own works translated into Latin ; and now our greatest regret touching him is, that we have not all those works in his own noble English. Before his time, the language changed more in fifty years than it has done in all the three hundred years since. This is no doubt because the mighty workmen of that age, himself among them, did so much to "bolt off change," by the vast treasures of thought and wisdom which they found or made the language capable of expressing. The work then so gloriously begun has been going on ever since, though not always with

the same grand results ; until now the English is commonly held to be one of the richest and noblest tongues ever spoken, and the English literature is, in compass and variety of intellectual wealth, unsurpassed by any in the world.

How strange it is, then, that, with such immense riches at hand in our vernacular, we should so much postpone them to the springs that were resorted to before those riches grew into being ! Because Homer and Sophocles had to be studied before Shakespeare wrote, why should Shakespeare still be ignored in our liberal education, when his mighty works have dwarfed Homer and Sophocles into infants ? There might indeed be some reason in this, if he had been in any sort the offspring of those Greek masters : but he was blessedly ignorant of them ; which may partly account for his having so much surpassed them. He did not conceive himself bound to think and write as they did ; and this seems to have been one cause why he thought and wrote better than they did. I really can see no reason for insisting on learning from them rather than from him, except that learning from him is vastly easier.

Nevertheless I am far from thinking that the Greek and Latin ought to be disused or made little of in our course of *liberal* learning. On the contrary, I would, of the two, have them studied in college even more thoroughly than they commonly are ; and this, not only because of their unequalled use in mental training and discipline, and as a preparation for solid merit and success in the learned professions, but also because a knowledge of them is so largely fundamental to a practical mastery of our own tongue. And here I am moved to note what seems to me a change for the worse within the last forty years. Forty years ago, besides that the Greek and Latin were made more of in college, at least



relatively, than they are now, the students had both more time for English studies, and also more of judicious prompting and guidance in their reading. But, of late, there has been so much crowding-in of modern languages and recent branches of science, that students have a good deal less time than formerly for cultivating English literature by themselves. In short, our colleges, it seems to me, did much more, forty years ago, towards setting and forming right literary and intellectual tastes than they are doing now. I believe they are now turning out fewer English scholars, and that these are not so well grounded and cultured in the riches of our native tongue. The fashion indeed has been growing upon us of educating the mouth much more than the mind ; which seems to be one cause why we are having so many more talkers and writers than thinkers. An unappeasable itch of popularity is eating out the old love of solid learning, and the old relish for the haunts of the Muses.

It may have been observed, that in this argument I distinguish somewhat broadly between a liberal and a practical education. Our colleges ought to give, and, I suppose, aim at giving the former ; while the latter is all that our public schools can justly be expected to give. And a large majority of the pupils, as I said before, are to gain their living by hand-work, not by head-work. But then we want them made capable of solid profit and of honest delight in the conversation of books ; for this, as things now are, is essential both to their moral health and also to their highest success in work ; to say nothing of their duties and interests as citizens of a republican State. And, to this end, what can be more practical, in the just sense of the term, than planting and nursing in them right intellectual tastes, so that their reading shall take to such books as are really wholesome and improving ?

On the general subject, however, I have to remark further, that our education, as it seems to me, is greatly overworking the study of language, especially in the modern languages. From the way our young people are hurried into French and German, one would suppose there were no English authors worth knowing, nor any thought in the English tongue worth learning. So we cram them with words, and educate them into ignorance of things, and then exult in their being able to “speak no sense in several languages.” Surely a portion of the time might be as innocently spent in learning something worth speaking in plain mother-English. When we add that, with all this wear and tear of brain, the pupils, ten to one, stick in the crust of words, and never get through into the marrow of thought, so as to be at home in it, our course can hardly be deemed the perfection of wisdom.

Our custom herein seems to involve some flagrant defect or error in our philosophy of education. The true process of education is to set and keep the mind in living intercourse with things: the works and ways of God in Nature are our true educators. And the right office of language is to serve as the medium of such intercourse. And so the secret of a good style in writing is, that words be used purely in their representative character, and not at all for their own sake. This is well illustrated in Shakespeare, who in his earlier plays used language partly for its own sake; but in his later plays all traces of such use disappear: here he uses it purely in its representative character. This it is, in great part, that makes his style so much at once the delight and the despair of those who now undertake to write the English tongue. And in other writers excellence of style is measured by approximation to this standard. This it is that so highly distinguishes Webster’s style,—the best yet written on this

continent. His language is so transparent, that in reading him one seldom thinks of it, and can hardly see it. In fact, the proper character of his style is perfect, consummate manliness ; in which quality I make bold to affirm that he has no superior in the whole range of English authorship. And in his *Autobiography* the great man touches the secret as to how this came about. "While in college," says he, "I delivered two or three occasional addresses, which were published. I trust they are forgotten : they were in very bad taste. I had not then learned that all true power in writing is in the idea, not in the style ; an error into which the *Ars rhetorica*, as it is usually taught, may easily lead stronger heads than mine."

Hence it follows that language should be used and studied mainly in its representative character ; that is, as a medium for conversing with things ; and that studying it merely or even mainly for its own sake is a plain inversion of the right order. For words are of no use but as they bring us acquainted with the facts, objects, and relations of Nature in the world about us. The actual things and ideas which they stand for, or are the signs of, are what we ought to know and have commerce with. In our vernacular, words are, for the most part, naturally and unconsciously used in this way ; except where a perverse system has got us into a habit of using them for their own sake ; which is indeed the common bane of American authorship, making our style so intensely self-conscious, that an instructed taste soon tires of it. But, in studying a foreign tongue, the language itself is and has to be the *object* of thought. Probably not one in fifty of our college graduates learns to use the Greek and Latin freely as a medium of converse with things. Their whole mental force is spent on the words themselves ; or, if

they go beyond these to the things signified, it is to help their understanding of the words.

I freely admit that language, even our own, ought to be, to some extent, an object of study; but only to the end of perfecting our use and mastery of it as a medium. So that the true end of mental action is missed, where language is advanced into an ultimate object of study; which is practically making the end subordinate to the means. Here, however, I am anxious not to be misunderstood, and lest I may seem to strain the point too far; for I know full well that in such a cause nothing is to be gained by breaches of fairness and candour. It is a question of relative measure and proportion. And I mean that our education treats language quite too much as an object of thought, and quite too little as a medium. Our students, it seems to me, are altogether too much brought up in "the alms-basket of words"; and of too many of them it may not unfairly be said, "They have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps."

I have said that our custom in this matter stands partly as a tradition from a long-past age when there was no English literature in being. But this does not wholly explain it. The thing proceeds in great part from a perverse vanity of going abroad and sporting foreign gear, unmindful of the good that lies nearer home. Hence boys and girls, especially the latter, are hurried into studying foreign languages before they have learnt to spell correctly or to read intelligibly in their own. I say girls especially, because, since the women set out to equal, perhaps to eclipse, the men in brain-power, a mighty ambition has invaded them to be flourishing their lingual intellectuality in our faces. Besides, the fashion now is to educate young women for any place rather than for

home. Most of them hope some time to spend six months travelling in Europe ; and they think far more of preparing for that holiday than for all the working-day honours and services of life. And I fear it must be said withal, that we are the most apish people on the planet. I wish we may not prove “the *seruum pecus* of a Gallic breed.” Be that as it may, parents among us apparently hold it a much grander thing to have their children chopping Racine and Voltaire than conversing with the treasures of wisdom and beauty in our own tongue ; as if smattering French words were better than understanding English and American things.

Thus our school education is growing to be very much a positive dispreparation for the proper cares, duties, interests, and delectations of life. The further a thing draws from any useful service or common occasion, the more pride there is in studying it. Whatever will serve best to prank up the mind for flaunting out its life away from home, that seems to be our first concern. To this end, we prefer something out of the common way ; something that can be turned to no account, save to beguile a frivolous and fashionable leisure, or to mark people off from ordinary humanity, and wrap them up in the poor conceit of an aristocratic style. In short, we look upon the honest study of our honest mother-English as a vulgar thing ; and it pleases us to forget that this squeamish turning-up of the nose at what is near and common is just the vulgarest thing in the world. Surely we cannot too soon wake up to the plain truth, that real honour and elevation, as well as solid profit, are to grow by conversing with the things that live and work about us, and by giving our studious hours to those masters of English thought from whom we may learn to read, soberly, modestly, and with clear intelligence, a few pages in the book of life.

The chief argument in support of the prevailing custom is, that the study of languages, especially the Greek and Latin, is highly serviceable as a mental gymnastic. No doubt it is so. But the study, as it is managed with us, may be not unfairly charged with inverting the true relative importance of mental gymnastic and mental diet. Formerly the Greek and Latin were held to be enough ; but now, by adding three or four modern languages, we are making the linguistic element altogether too prominent. We thus give the mind little time for feeding, little matter to feed upon ; and so keep it exercising when it ought to be feeding : for so the study of words has much exercise and little food. Now such an excess of activity is not favourable to healthy growth. Substituting stimulants for nourishment is as bad for the mind as for the body. Supply the mind with wholesome natural food ; do all you can to tempt and awaken the appetite ; and then trust somewhat to nature. True, some minds, do your best, will not eat ; but, if they do not eat, then they ought not to act. For dulness, let me tell you, is not so bad as disease ; and, from straining so hard to stimulate and force the mind into action without eating, nothing but disease can result. Depend upon it, there is something wrong with us here : food and exercise are not rightly proportioned in our method. In keeping the young mind so much on a stretch of activity, as if the mere exercise of its powers were to be sought for its own sake, we are at war with nature. And a feverish, restless, mischievous activity of mind is the natural consequence of such a course ; unless, which is sometimes the case, the mental forces get dried into stiffness from mere heat of gymnastic stress.

We are now having quite too much of this diseased mental activity. Perhaps our greatest danger lies in a want of

mental repose. The chronic nervous intensity thus generated is eating the life out of us, and crushing the nobler energies of duty and virtue, ay, and of sound intelligence too. For, while we are thus overworking the mind, the muscular and nutritive systems of course suffer ; so that, first we know, the mind itself gives out ; and people go foolish or crazy from having been educated all into nerves. Composure is the right pulse of mental health, as it is also of moral ; and " a heart that watches and receives " will gather more of wisdom than a head perpetually on the jump. We need " the harvest of a quiet eye," that feeds on the proportions of truth as she beams from the works of Nature and from the pages of Nature's high-priests. But now we must be in a giddy whirl of brain-excitement, else we are miserable, and think our mental faculties are in peril of stagnation. Of intellectual athletes we have more than enough ; men, and women too, who think to renovate the world, and to immortalize themselves, by being in a continual rapture and tumult of brain-exercise ; minds hopelessly disordered from the calmness of reason, and held in a fever of activity from sheer lack of strength to sit still. It was such minds that Bacon had in view when he described man in a certain state as being " a busy, mischievous, wretched thing, no better than a kind of vermin." To be intellectual, to write books, to do wonders in mental pyrotechny, is not the chief end of man, nor can we make it so. This is indeed what we seem to be aiming at, but we shall fail ; Nature will prove too strong for us here : and, if we persist, she will just smash us up, and replace us with a people not so tormentedly smart. It is to the meek, not the brilliant, that the possession of the Earth is promised.

My conclusion from the whole is, that, next to the elementary branches, and some parts of science, such as geography,

astronomy, and what is called natural philosophy, standard authors in English literature ought to have a place in our school education. Nor am I sure but that, instead of thus postponing the latter to science, it were still better to put them on an equal footing with it. For they draw quite as much into the practical currents of our American life as any studies properly scientific do ; and, which is of yet higher regard, they have it in them to be much more effective in shaping the character. For they are the right school of harmonious culture as distinguished from mere formal knowledge ; that is, they are a discipline of humanity : and to have the soul rightly alive to the difference between the noble and the base is better than understanding the laws of chemical affinity.

As to the best way of teaching English literature, I may speak the more briefly on this, inasmuch as a good deal to the point has been, I hope not obscurely, implied in the remarks already made.

In the first place, I am clear that only a few of the very best and fittest authors should be used ; and that these should be used long enough, and in large enough portions, for the pupils to get really at home with them, and for the grace and efficacy of them to become thoroughly steeped into the mind. Bacon tells us that " some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." Of course it is only the latter that I deem worthy to be used in school. And I lay special stress on the pupil's coming at an author in such a way, and staying with him so long, as to study him with honest love and delight. This is what sets and fixes the taste. And this is a thing that cannot be extemporized : the process necessarily takes considerable time.



For wise men's thoughts are a presence to live in, to feed upon, and to grow into the likeness of. And the benefit of a right good book all depends upon this, that its virtue just *soak* into the mind, and there become a living, generative force.

Do you say that this shuts off from pupils the spur and charm of novelty? Yes, that it does, else I would not urge it. What I want first of all is to shut off the flashy, fugitive charm of novelty, so as to secure the solid, enduring charm of truth and beauty; for these are what it does the soul good to be charmed with, and to tie up in the society of, — the charm of a “concord that elevates and stills”; while the charm of novelty is but as “the crackling of thorns under a pot,” — not the right music for soul-sweetening. “A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.” And they know nothing of the genesis of the human affections, who have not learned that these thrive best in the society of old familiar faces. To be running and rambling over a great many books, tasting a little here, a little there, and tying up with none, is good for nothing in school; nay, worse than nothing. Such a process of “unceasing change” is also a discipline of “perpetual emptiness.” It is as if a man should turn free-lover, and take to himself a new wife every week; in which case I suppose he would soon become indifferent to them all, and conclude one woman to be just about as good as another. The household affections do not grow in that way. And the right method in the culture of the mind is to take a few choice books, and weave about them

the fix'd delights of house and home,  
Friendships that will not break, and love that cannot roam.

Again: In teaching English literature, I think it is not best

to proceed much, if at all, by recitations, but by what may be called exercises ; the pupils reading the author under the direction, correction, and explanation of the teacher. The thing is to have the pupils, with the teacher's help and guidance, commune with the author while in class, and quietly drink in the sense and spirit of his workmanship. Such communing together of teacher and pupils with the mind of a good book cannot but be highly fruitful to them both : an interplay of fine sympathies and inspirations will soon spring up between them, and pleasant surprises of truth and good will be stealing over them. The process indeed can hardly fail to become a real sacrament of the heart between them ; for they will here find how "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

Nor would I attempt to work into these exercises any thing of grammar or rhetoric or philology, any further than this may be clearly needful or conducive to a full and fair understanding of the matter read. To use a standard author mainly as a theme or text for carrying on studies in philology, is in my account just putting the cart before the horse. Here the end is or should be to make the pupils understand and relish what the author delivers ; and whatever of philological exercise comes in should be held strictly subordinate to this.

With my classes in Shakespeare and Wordsworth, as also in Burke and Webster, I am never at all satisfied, unless I see the pupils freely taking pleasure in the workmanship. For such delight in a good book is to me a sure token and proof that its virtue is striking in and going to the spot. Rather say, it is a pledge, nay, it is the very pulsation, of sympathy and vital magnetism between the mind within and the object without. And without this blessed infection

beaming in the face and sparkling in the eyes, even the honest striving of duty on the pupil's part rather discourages me. So, unless I can get the pupils to be happy in such communion, I am unhappy myself; and this, I suppose, because it is naturally unpleasant to see people standing in the presence and repeating the words of that which is good, and tasting no sweetness therein. For "what is noble should be sweet"; and ought, if possible, to be bound up with none but pleasant associations; that so delight and love may hold the mind in perpetual communion with the springs of health and joy. And if I can plant in young minds a genuine relish for the authors I have named, then I feel tolerably confident that the devils now swarming about us in the shape of bad books will stand little chance with them; for I know right well that those authors have kept legions of such devils off from me.

From all which it follows, next, that, in teaching English literature, I would have nothing to do with any works in formal rhetoric, or with any general outlines, or any rapid and wide surveys, or any of the school reading-books now in use, which are made up of mere chips from a multitude of authors, and so can have little effect but to generate a rambling and desultory habit of mind. To illustrate my meaning, it may not be amiss to observe, that some years ago I knew of a program being set forth officially, which embraced little bits from a whole rabble of American authors, most of them still living; but not a single sentence from Daniel Webster; who, it seems to me, is perhaps the only American author that ought to have been included in the list. This program was drawn up for a course in English literature to be used in the public schools. Instead of such a miscellaneous collection of splinters, my thought was then, and

is now, Give us a good large block of Webster ; enough for at least two exercises a week through half a year. This would afford a fair chance of making the pupils really at home with one tall and genuine roll of intellectual manhood ; which done, they would then have something to guide and prompt them into the society of other kindred rolls : whereas, with the plan proposed, there is no chance of getting them at home with any intellectual manhood at all ; nay, rather, it is just the way to keep them without any intellectual home, — a nomadic tribe of literary puddle-sippers.

As for the matter of rhetoric, all that can be of much use in this is, I think, best learned in the concrete, and by familiarizing the mind with standard models of excellence. For the right use of speech goes by habit, not by rule. And if people should happen to use their vernacular clearly and handsomely without knowing why, where is the harm of it? Is not that enough? What more do you want? If you would learn to speak and write the English tongue correctly, tastefully, persuasively, leave the rhetorics behind, and give your days and nights to the masters of English style. This will tend to keep you from all affectation of "fine writing," than which literature has nothing more empty and vapid. Besides, it is only *after* the mind has grown largely and closely conversant with standard authors, that studying rhetorical rules and forms can be of much practical use, however it may do for showing off in recitation. And I am in doubt whether it were not better omitted even then : for such study, in so far as it is trusted in for forming a good style, can hardly work any thing but damage in that respect ; and this because it naturally sets one to imitating other men's verbal felicities ; which is simply a pestilent vice of style. Therewithal the study is but too apt to possess the student,

perhaps unconsciously, with the notion that men are to “laugh by præcept only, and shed tears by rule”; a sort of laughter and tears from which I shall beg to be excused. On this point, my first, second, and third counsel is, —

the live current quaff,  
 And let the groveller sip his stagnant pool,  
 In fear that else, when Critics grave and cool  
 Have killed him, Scorn should write his epitaph.

Against the course I have been marking out, the objection is sometimes urged that it would cut pupils off from contemporary authors. It would do so indeed, and I like it the better for that. I have already implied that no literary workmanship, short of the best there is to be had, ought to be drawn upon for use in school. For the natural alliance of taste and morals is much closer than most people suppose. In fact, taste is, in my account, a kind of intellectual conscience: downright, perfect honesty is the first principal of it; solidity is its prime law; and all sorts of pretence, affectation, and sham are its aversion: so that it amounts to about the same thing as the perfect manliness which I find in Webster's style. — Now, for the due approval of excellence in literary art, a longer time than the individual life is commonly required. Of the popular writers now living, probably not one in five hundred will be heard of thirty years hence. I have myself outlived two generations of just such immortal writers, — whole regiments of them. Of course there are fashions in literature, as in other things. These are apt to be bad enough at the best, — bad enough anywhere; but the school is just the last place, except the church, where they ought to be encouraged. Be assured that, in the long run, it will not pay to have our children in school making acquaintance with the fashionable writers of the day. For,

long before the pupils now in school reach maturity, another set of writers will be in popular vogue ; their tenure to be equally transient in turn.

Unquestionably the right way in this matter is, to start the young with such authors as have been tested and approved by a large collective judgment. For it is not what pleases at first, but what pleases permanently, that the human mind cares to keep alive. What has thus withstood the wear of time carries solid proof of having strength and virtue in it. For example, poetry that has no holiness in it may be, for it often has been, vastly popular in its day ; but it has and can have no lasting hold on the heart of man. True, there may be good books written in our day ; I think there are : but there needs a longer trial than one generation to certify us of the fact, so as to warrant us in adopting an author for standard use. And that a new book seems to us good, may be in virtue of some superficial prepossession which a larger trial will utterly explode. We need better assurance than that.

It is indeed sometimes urged that, if the young be thus trained up with old authors, they will be in danger of falling behind the age. But it is not so. The surest way of coming at such a result is by pre-engaging them with the literary freaks and fashions and popularities of the day. To hold them aloof from such flitting popularities, to steep their minds in the efficacy of such books as have always been, and are likely to be, above the fashion of the day,—this is the true course for setting them *in advance* of the time : and, unless they be set in advance of it, they will certainly fail to keep abreast with it. For the wisdom that has had the long and strong approval of the past, is most likely to be the wisdom of the future ; and the way to keep pace with the age is by

dwelling with its wisdom, not with its folly. In fact, a taste for the shifting literary fashions and popularities of the hour springs from shallowness and leads to shallowness. And to knit your pupils up close with old standards, is the best thing you can do for them, both mentally and morally.

And I confess I like to see the young growing enthusiastic over the treasured wisdom and eloquence of their forefathers. This is a natural and wholesome inspiration, and such as the soul can hardly drink-in or catch without being lifted and expanded by it. Worth much for the knowledge it furthers, it is worth far more for the manhood it quickens. And I think none the worse of it, that it may do somewhat towards chastising down the miserable conceit now so rife amongst us, that light never really dawned on the world till about that glorious time when our eyes were first opened, and we began to shed our wisdom abroad. To be sure, the atmosphere of the past now stands impeached as being a very dull and sleepy atmosphere : nevertheless I rather like it, and think I have often found much health and comfort in breathing it. Some old writer tells us that "no man having drunk old wine straightway desireth the new ; for he saith the old is better." I am much of the same opinion. In short, old wine, old books, old friends, old songs, "the precious music of the heart," are the wine, the books, the friends, the songs for me !

Besides, we have quite enough of the present outside of the school ; and one of our greatest needs at this very time is more of inspiration from the past. Living too much in the present is not good either for the mind or for the heart : its tendency is to steep the soul in the transient popularities of the hour, and to vulgarize the whole man. Not that the present age is worse than former ages ; it may even be better

as a whole : but what is bad or worthless in an age generally dies with the age : so that only the great and good of the past touches us ; while of the present we are most touched by that which is little and mean. The shriekings and jabberings of an age's folly almost always drown, for the time being, the eloquence of its wisdom : but the eloquence lives and speaks after the jabberings have gone silent, God's air refusing to propagate them. So let our youth now and then breathe and listen an hour or two in the old intellectual fatherland, where all the foul noises have long since died away, leaving the pure music to sound up full and clear.



## INTRODUCTION.

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### Date of the Composition.

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM was registered at the Stationers' October 8, 1600, and two quarto editions of it were published in the course of that year. The play is not known to have been printed again till it reappeared in the folio of 1623, where the repetition of certain misprints shows it to have been printed from one of the quarto copies. In all three of these copies, however, the printing is remarkably clear and correct for the time, inso-much that modern editors have little difficulty about the text. Probably none of the Poet's dramas has reached us in a more satisfactory state.

The play is first heard of in the list given by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, 1598. But it was undoubtedly written several years before that time; and I am not aware that any editor places the writing at a later date than 1594. This brings it into the same period with *King John*, *King Richard the Second*, and the finished *Romeo and Juliet*; and the internal marks of style naturally sort it into that company. Verplanck, however, thinks there are some passages which relish strongly of an earlier time; while again there are others that with the prevailing sweetness of the whole have such an intertwisting of nerve and vigour, and such an energetic compactness of thought and imagery,

mingled occasionally with the deeper tonings of "years that bring the philosophic mind," as to argue that they were wrought into the structure of the play not long before it came from the press. The part of the Athenian lovers certainly has a good deal that, viewed by itself, would scarce do credit even to such a boyhood as Shakespeare's must have been. On the other hand, there is a large philosophy in Theseus's discourse of "the lunatic, the lover, and the poet," a manly judgment in his reasons for preferring the "tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe," and a bracing freshness in the short dialogue of the chase, all in the best style of the author's second period. Perhaps, however, what seem the defects of the former, the fanciful quirks and far-fetched conceits, were wisely designed, in order to invest the part with such an air of dreaminess and unreality as would better sort with the scope and spirit of the piece, and preclude a disproportionate resentment of some naughty acts into which those love-bewildered frailties are betrayed.

There is at least a rather curious coincidence, which used to be regarded as proving that the play was not written till after the Summer of 1594. I refer to Titania's superb description, in ii. 1, of the strange misbehaviour of the weather, which she ascribes to the fairy bickerings. I can quote but a part of it :

The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts  
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;  
 And on old Heims' thin and icy crown  
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds  
 Is, as in mockery, set: the Spring, the Summer,  
 The chiding Autumn, angry Winter, change  
 Their wonted liveries; and the mazèd world,  
 By their increase, now knows not which is which:  
 And this same progeny of evils comes  
 From our debate, from our dissension.

For the other part of the coincidence, Strype in his *Annals* gives the following passage from a discourse by the Rev. Dr. King: "And see whether the Lord doth not threaten us much more, by sending such unseasonable weather and storms of rain among us; which if we will observe, and compare it with what is past, we may say that the course of Nature is very much inverted. Our years are turned upside down: our Summers are no Summers; our harvests are no harvests; our seed-times are no seed-times. For a great space of time scant any day hath been seen that it hath not rained." Dyce indeed scouts the supposal that Shakespeare had any allusion to this eccentric conduct of the elements in the Summer of 1594, pronouncing it "ridiculous"; but I do not quite see it so; albeit I am apt enough to believe that most of the play was written before that date. And surely, the truth of the allusion being granted, all must admit that passing events have seldom been turned to better account in the service of poetry.

### Hardly suited to the Stage.

I can hardly imagine this play ever to have been very successful on the stage; and I am sure it could not be made to succeed there now. Still we are not without contemporary evidence that it had at least a fair amount of fame. And we have authentic information that it was performed at the house of Dr. John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, on Sunday, the 27th of September, 1631. The actor of Bottom's part was on that occasion sentenced by a Puritan tribunal to sit twelve hours in the porter's room of the Bishop's palace, wearing the ass's head. This Dr. Williams was the very able but far from faultless man who was treated so harshly by Laud, and gave the King such crooked counsel

in the case of Strafford, and spent his last years in mute sorrow at the death of his royal master, and had his life written by the wise, witty, good Bishop Hacket.

### Sources of the Plot.

The Poet has been commonly supposed to have taken the ground-work of this play from *The Knight's Tale* of Chaucer. But the play has hardly any notes of connection with the *Tale* except the mere names of Theseus, Hippolyta, and Philostrate, the latter of which is the name assumed by Arcite in the *Tale*. *The Life of Theseus*, in North's translation of Plutarch doubtless furnished something towards the parts of the hero and his "bouncing Amazon"; while Golding's translation of Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe probably supplied hints towards the interlude. So much as relates to Bottom and his fellows evidently came fresh from Nature as she had passed under the Poet's eye. The linking of these clowns with the ancient tragic tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, so as to draw the latter within the region of modern farce, is not less original than droll. How far it may have expressed the Poet's judgment touching the theatrical doings of the time, were perhaps a question more curious than profitable. The names of Oberon, Titania, and Robin Goodfellow were made familiar by the surviving relics of Gothic and Druidical mythology; as were also many particulars in their habits, mode of life, and influence in human affairs. Hints and allusions scattered through many preceding writers might be produced, showing that the old superstition had been grafted into the body of Christianity, where it had shaped itself into a regular system, so as to mingle in the lore of the nursery, and hold an influential

place in the popular belief. Some reports of this ancient Fairydom are choicely translated into poetry by Chaucer in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*.

### General Characteristics.

But, though Chaucer and others had spoken about the fairy nation, it was for Shakespeare to let them speak for themselves: until he clothed their life in apt forms, their thoughts in fitting words, they but floated unseen and unheard in the mental atmosphere of his fatherland. So that on this point there need be no scruple about receiving Hallam's statement of the matter: "*A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is, I believe, altogether original in one of the most beautiful conceptions that ever visited the mind of a Poet, — the fairy machinery. A few before him had dealt in a vulgar and clumsy manner with popular superstitions; but the sportive, beneficent, invisible population of the air and earth, long since established in the creed of childhood, and of those simple as children, had never for a moment been blended with 'human mortals' among the personages of the drama." How much Shakespeare did as the friend and saviour of those sweet airy frolickers of the past from the relentless mowings of Time, has been charmingly set forth in our day in Hood's *Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*.

What, then, are the leading qualities which the Poet ascribes to these ideal or fanciful beings? Coleridge says he is "convinced that Shakespeare availed himself of the title of this play in his own mind, and worked upon it as a dream throughout." This remark no doubt rightly hits the true genius of the piece; and on no other ground can its merits be duly estimated. The whole play is indeed a sort of ideal

dream ; and it is from the fairy personages that its character as such mainly proceeds. All the materials of the piece are ordered and assimilated to that central and governing idea. This it is that explains and justifies the distinctive features of the work, such as the constant preponderance of the lyrical over the dramatic, and the free playing of the action unchecked by the conditions of outward fact and reality. Accordingly a sort of lawlessness is, as it ought to be, the very law of the performance. King Oberon is the sovereign who presides over the world of dreams ; Puck is his prime minister ; and all the other denizens of Fairydom are his subjects and the agents of his will in this capacity. Titania's natural functions are precisely the same which Mercutio assigns to Queen Mab, whom he aptly describes as having for her office deliver sleeping men's fancies of their dreams, those "chimeras of an idle brain." In keeping with this central dream-idea, the actual order of things everywhere gives place to the spontaneous issues and capricious turnings of the dreaming mind ; the lofty and the low, the beautiful and the grotesque, the world of fancy and of fact, all the strange diversities that enter into "such stuff as dreams are made of," running and frisking together, and interchanging their functions and properties ; so that the whole seems confused, flitting, shadowy, and indistinct, as fading away in the remoteness and fascination of moonlight. The very scene is laid in a veritable dream-land, called Athens indeed, but only because Athens was the greatest beehive of beautiful visions then known ; or rather it is laid in an ideal forest near an ideal Athens, — a forest peopled with sportive elves and sprites and fairies feeding on moonlight and music and fragrance ; a place where Nature herself is preternatural ; where every thing is idealized, even to the sunbeams and the

soil; where the vegetation proceeds by enchantment, and there is magic in the germination of the seed and secretion of the sap.

### The Fairy People.

The characteristic attributes of the fairy people are, perhaps, most availably represented in Puck; who is apt to remind one of Ariel, though the two have little in common, save that both are preternatural, and therefore live no longer in the faith of reason. Puck is no such sweet-languored, tender-hearted, music-breathing spirit, as Prospero's delicate prime-minister; there are no such fine interweavings of a sensitive moral soul in his nature, he has not that soft touches of compassion and pious awe of goodness, as link the dainty Ariel in so smoothly with our best sympathies. Though Goodfellow by name, his powers and aptitudes for mischief are quite unchecked by any gentle relentings of fellow-feeling: in whatever distresses he finds or occasions he sees much to laugh at, nothing to pity: to tease and vex poor human sufferers, and then to think "what fools these mortals be," is pure fun to him. Yet, notwithstanding his mad pranks, we cannot choose but love the little sinner, and let our fancy frolic with him, his sense of the ludicrous is so exquisite, he is so fond of sport, and so quaint and merry in his mischief; while at the same time such is the strange web of his nature as to keep him morally innocent. In all which I think he answers perfectly to the best idea we can frame of what a little dream-god should be.

In further explication of this peculiar people, it is to be noted that there is nothing of reflection or conscience or even of a spiritualized intelligence in their proper life: they have all the attributes of the merely natural and sensitive soul,

but no attributes of the properly rational and moral soul. They worship the clean, the neat, the pretty, and the pleasant, whatever goes to make up the idea of purely sensuous beauty : this is a sort of religion with them ; whatever of conscience they have adheres to this : so that herein they not unfitly represent the wholesome old notion which places cleanliness next to godliness. Every thing that is trim, dainty, elegant, graceful, agreeable, and sweet to the senses, they delight in : flowers, fragrances, dewdrops, and moonbeams, honey-bees, butterflies, and nightingales, dancing, play, and song, — these are their joy ; out of these they weave their highest delectation ; amid these they “fleet the time carelessly,” without memory or forecast, and with no thought or aim beyond the passing pleasure of the moment. On the other hand, they have an instinctive repugnance to whatever is foul, ugly, sluttish, awkward, ungainly, or misshapen : they wage unrelenting war against bats, spiders, hedgehogs, spotted snakes, blindworms, long-legg'd spinners, beetles, and all such disagreeable creatures : to “kill cankers in the musk-rosebuds,” and to “keep back the clamorous owl,” are regular parts of their business. Their intense dislike of what is ugly and misshapen is the reason why they so much practise “the legerdemain of changelings,” stealing away finished, handsome babies, and leaving blemished and defective ones in their stead. For the same cause they love to pester and persecute and play shrewd tricks upon decrepit old age, wise aunts, and toothless, chattering gossips, and especially such awkward “hempen home-spuns” as Bottom and his fellow-actors in the Interlude.

Thus these beings embody the ideal of the mere natural soul, or rather the purely sensuous fancy which shapes and governs the pleasing or the vexing delusions of sleep. They



lead a merry, luxurious life, given up entirely to the pleasures of happy sensation, — a happiness that has no moral element, nothing of reason or conscience in it. They are indeed a sort of personified dreams ; and so the Poet places them in a kindly or at least harmless relation to mortals as the bringers of dreams. Their very kingdom is located in the aromatic, flower-scented Indies, a land where mortals are supposed to live in a half-dreamy state. From thence they come, “ following darkness,” just as dreams naturally do ; or, as Oberon words it, “ tripping after the night’s shade, swifter than the wandering Moon.” It is their nature to shun the daylight, though they do not fear it, and to prefer the dark, as this is their appropriate worktime ; but most of all they love the dusk and the twilight, because this is the best dreaming-time, whether the dreamer be asleep or awake. And all the shifting, ever-changing jugglery of dreams, all the sweet soothing witchery, all the teasing and tantalizing imagery of dreamland, all belong to their province.

It is a very noteworthy point that all their power or influence over the hearts and actions of mortals works through the medium of dreams, or of such fancies as are most allied to dreams. So that their whole inner character is fashioned in harmony with their external function. Nor is it without rare felicity that the Poet assigns to them the dominion over the workings of sensuous and superficial love, this being but as one of the Courts of the dream-land kingdom ; a region ordered, as it were, quite apart from the proper regards of duty and law, and where the natural soul of man moves free of moral thought and responsibility. Accordingly we have the King of this Fairydom endowed with the rights and powers both of the classical god of love and the classical goddess of chastity. Oberon commands alike the secret

virtues of "Dian's bud" and of "Cupid's flower"; and he seems to use them both unchecked by any other law than his innate love of what is handsome and fair, and his native aversion to what is ugly and foul; that is, he owns no restraint but as he is inwardly held to apply either or both of them in such a way as to avoid all distortion or perversion from what is naturally graceful and pleasant. For everybody, I take it, knows that in the intoxications of a life of sensuous love reason and conscience have as little force as they have in a life of dreams. And so the Poet fitly ascribes to Oberon and his ministers both Cupid's delight in frivolous breaches of faith and Jove's laughter at lovers' perjuries; and this on the ground, apparently, that the doings of those in Cupid's power are as harmless and unaccountable as the freaks of a dream.

In pursuance of this idea he depicts the fairies as beings without any proper moral sense in what they do, but having a very keen sense of what is ludicrous and absurd in the doings of men. They are careless and unscrupulous in their dealings in this behalf. The wayward follies and the teasing perplexities of the fancy-smitten persons are pure sport to them. If by their wanton mistakes they can bewilder and provoke the lovers into larger outcomes of the laughable, so much the higher runs their mirth. And as they have no fellow-feeling with the pains of those who thus feed their love of fun, so the effect of their roguish tricks makes no impression upon them: they have a feeling of simple delight and wonder at the harmless frettings and fumings which their merry mischief has a hand in bringing to pass: but then it is to be observed also, that they find just as much sport in tricking the poor lover out of his vexations as in tricking him into them; in fact, they never rest satisfied with the fun of the former so long as there is any chance of enjoying that of the latter also.

### Supposed Allusions.

All readers of Shakespeare are of course familiar with the splendid passage in ii. 1, where Oberon describes to Puck how, on a certain occasion,

I heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,  
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,  
That the rude sea grew civil at her song.

And all are no doubt aware that the subsequent lines, referring to "a fair vestal thronèd by the West," are commonly understood to have been meant as a piece of delicate flattery to Queen Elizabeth. Mr. Halpin has recently given to this famous passage a new interpretation or application, which is at least curious enough to justify a brief statement of it. In his view, "Cupid all arm'd" refers to Leicester's wooing of Elizabeth, and his grand entertainment of her at Kenilworth in 1575. From authentic descriptions of that entertainment we learn, that among the spectacles and fireworks witnessed on the occasion was one of a singing mermaid on a dolphin's back gliding over smooth water amid shooting stars. The "love-shaft" which was aimed at the "fair vestal," that is, the Priestess of Diana, whose bud has such prevailing might over "Cupid's flower," glanced off; so that "the imperial votaress passèd on, in maiden meditation, fancy-free."

Thus far, all is clear enough. But Halpin further interprets that the "little western flower" upon whom "the bolt of Cupid fell" refers to Lettice, Countess of Essex, with whom Leicester carried on a secret intrigue while her husband was absent in Ireland. The Earl of Essex, on being apprised of the intrigue, set out to return the next year, but died, of poison, as was thought, before he reached home. So

Halpin understands the "western flower, before milk-white," that is, innocent, but "now purple with love's wound," as referring to the lady's fall, or to the deeper blush of her husband's murder. And the flower is called "love-in-idleness," to signify her listlessness of heart during the Earl's absence; as the Poet elsewhere uses similar terms of the pansy, as denoting the love that renders men pensive, dreamy, indolent, instead of toning up the soul with healthy and noble aspirations. The words of Oberon to Puck, "that very time I saw — but thou couldst not," are construed as referring to the strict mystery in which the affair was wrapped, and to the Poet's own knowledge of it, because a few years later the execution of Edward Arden, his maternal relative, was closely connected with it, and because the unfortunate Earl of Essex, so well known as for some time the Queen's favourite, and then the victim of her resentment, was the son of that Lettice, and was also the Poet's early friend and patron.

Such is, in substance, Halpin's view of the matter; which I give for what it may be worth; and freely acknowledge it to be ingenious and plausible enough. Gervinus regards it as "an interpretation full of spirit," and as "giving the most definite relation to the innermost sense of the whole piece." And I am very willing to believe that Shakespeare often took hints, perhaps something more than hints, for his poetry from the facts and doings of the time: nevertheless I rather fail to see how any real good is to be gained towards understanding the Poet from such interpretations of his scenes, or from tracing out such "definite relations" between his workmanship and the persons and particulars that may have come to his knowledge. For my own part, I doubt whether "the innermost sense" of the play is any the clearer to me for this ingenious piece of explanation.

Besides, I have yet to learn what proofs there are that the ill-fated Essex was an early patron and friend of Shakespeare. That great honour belongs to the Earls of Southampton and Pembroke. It was Lord Bacon, not Shakespeare, who enjoyed so richly the friendship and patronage of the generous Essex; and how he requited the same is known much too well for his credit. I am not unmindful that this may yield some comfort to those who would persuade us that Shakespeare's plays were written by Lord Bacon. Upon this point I have just four things to say: First, Bacon's requital of the Earl's bounty was such a piece of ingratitude as I can hardly conceive the author of *King Lear* to have been guilty of: Second, the author of Shakespeare's plays, whoever he may have been, certainly was not a scholar; he had indeed something vastly better than learning, but he had not that: Third, Shakespeare never philosophizes, Bacon never does any thing else: Fourth, Bacon's mind, great as it was, might have been cut out of Shakespeare's without being missed.

### The Human Mortals.

Any very firm or strong delineation of character, any deep passion, earnest purpose, or working of powerful motives, would clearly go at odds with the spirit of such a performance as I have described this play to be. It has room but for love and beauty and delight, for whatever is most poetical in nature and fancy, and for such tranquil stirrings of thought and feeling as may flow out in musical expression. Any such tuggings of mind or heart as would ruffle and discompose the smoothness of lyrical division would be quite out of keeping in a course of dream-life. The characters here, accordingly,

are drawn with light, delicate, vanishing touches ; some of them being dreamy and sentimental, some gay and frolicsome, and others replete with amusing absurdities, while all are alike dipped in fancy or sprinkled with humour. And for the same reason the tender distresses of unrequited or forsaken love here touch not our moral sense at all, but only at the most our human sympathies ; love itself being represented as but the effect of some visual enchantment, which the King of Fairydom can inspire, suspend, or reverse at pleasure. Even the heroic personages are fitly shown in an unheroic aspect : we see them but in their unbendings, when they have daffed their martial robes aside, to lead the train of day-dreamers, and have a nuptial jubilee. In their case, great care and art were required, to make the play what it has been blamed for being ; that is, to keep the dramatic sufficiently under, and lest the law of a part should override the law of the whole.

### Interplay of the Comic and the Poetical.

So, likewise, in the transformation of Bottom and the dotage of Titania, all the resources of fancy were needed, to prevent the unpoetical from getting the upper hand, and thus swamping the genius of the piece. As it is, what words can fitly express the effect with which the extremes of the grotesque and the beautiful are here brought together ? What an inward quiet laughter springs up and lubricates the fancy at Bottom's droll confusion of his two natures, when he talks, now as an ass, now as a man, and anon as a mixture of both ; his thoughts running at the same time on honey-bags and thistles, the charms of music and of good dry oats ! Who but Shakespeare or Nature could have so interfused the lyri-

cal spirit, not only with, but into and through a series or cluster of the most irregular and fantastic drolleries? But indeed this embracing and kissing of the most ludicrous and the most poetical, the enchantment under which they meet, and the airy, dream-like grace that hovers over their union, are altogether inimitable and indescribable. In this singular wedlock, the very diversity of the elements seems to link them the closer, while this linking in turn heightens that diversity; Titania being thereby drawn on to finer issues of soul, and Bottom to larger expressions of stomach. The union is so very improbable as to seem quite natural: we cannot conceive how any thing but a dream could possibly have married things so contrary; and that they could not have come together save in a dream, is a sort of proof that they *were* dreamed together.

And so, throughout, the execution is in strict accordance with the plan. The play, from beginning to end, is a perfect festival of whatever dainties and delicacies poetry may command,—a continued revelry and jollification of soul, where the understanding is lulled asleep, that the fancy may run riot in unrestrained enjoyment. The bringing together of four parts so dissimilar as those of the Duke and his warrior Bride, of the Athenian ladies and their lovers, of the amateur players and their woodland rehearsal, and of the fairy bickerings and overreaching; and the carrying of them severally to a point where they all meet and blend in lyrical response; all this is done in the same freedom from the laws that govern the drama of character and life. Each group of persons is made to parody itself into concert with the others; while the frequent intershootings of fairy influence lift the whole into the softest regions of fancy. At last the Interlude comes in as an amusing burlesque on all that

has gone before ; as in our troubled dreams we sometimes end with a dream that we have been dreaming, and our perturbations sink to rest in the sweet assurance that they were but the phantoms and unrealities of a busy sleep.

### The Delineation of Theseus.

Though, as I have already implied, the characterization is here quite secondary and subordinate, yet the play probably has as much of character as were compatible with so much of poetry. Theseus has been well described as a classic personage with romantic features and expression. The name is Greek, but the nature and spirit are essentially Gothic. Nor does the abundance of classical allusion and imagery in the story call for any qualification here ; because whatsoever is taken is thoroughly steeped in the efficacy of the taker. This sort of anachronism, common to all modern writers before and during the age of Shakespeare, seems to have arisen in part from a comparative dearth of classical learning, which left men to contemplate the heroes of antiquity under the forms into which their own mind and manners had been cast. Thus their delineations became informed with the genius of romance ; the condensed grace of ancient character giving way to the enlargement of chivalrous magnanimity and honour, with its "high-erected thoughts seated in the heart of courtesy." Such in Shakespeare's case appears to have been the no less beautiful than natural result of the small learning, so often smiled and sometimes barked at, by those more skilled in the ancient languages than in the mother-tongue of nature.



### The Lovers.

In the two pairs of lovers there are hardly any lines deep and firm enough to be rightly called characteristic. Their doings, even more than those of the other human persons, are marked by the dream-like freakishness and whimsicality which distinguish the piece. Perhaps the two ladies are slightly discriminated as individuals, in that Hermia, besides her brevity of person, is the more tart in temper, and the more pert and shrewish of speech, while Helena is of a rather milder and softer disposition, with less of confidence in herself. So too in the case of Demetrius and Lysander the lines of individuality are exceedingly faint; the former being perhaps a shade the more caustic and spiteful, and the latter somewhat the more open and candid. But there is really nothing of heart or soul in what any of them do: as we see them, they are not actuated by principle at all, or even by any thing striking so deep as motive: their conduct issues from the more superficial springs of capricious impulse and fancy, the "jugglery of the senses during the sleep of reason"; the higher forces of a mental and moral bearing having no hand in shaping their action. For the fairy influences do not reach so far as to the proper seat of motive and principle: they have but the skin-depth of amorous caprice; all the elements of character and all the vital springs of faith and loyalty and honour lying quite beyond their sphere. Even here the judgment or the genius of the Poet is very perceptible; the lovers being represented from the start as acting from no forces or inspirations too deep or strong for the powers of Fairydom to overcome. Thus the pre-condition of the two pairs in their whim-bewilderment is duly attempered to the purposed dream-play of

the general action. Nor is the seeming stanchness of Her-  
mia and Demetrius in the outset any exception to this view ;  
for nothing is more wilful and obstinate than amorous caprice  
or skin-deep love during its brief tenure of the fancy.

### Bottom the Weaver.

Of all the characters in this play, Bottom descends by far  
the most into the realities of common experience, and is  
therefore much the most accessible to the grasp of prosaic  
and critical fingers. It has been thought that the Poet  
meant him as a satire on the envies and jealousies of the  
greenroom, as they had fallen under his keen yet kindly eye.  
But, surely, the qualities uppermost in Bottom the Weaver  
had forced themselves on his notice long before he entered  
the greenroom. It is indeed curious to observe the solici-  
tude of this protean actor and critic, that all the parts of the  
forthcoming play may have the benefit of his execution ;  
how great is his concern lest, if he be tied to one, the others  
may be "overdone or come tardy of" ; and how he would  
fain engross them all to himself, to the end of course that all  
may succeed, to the honour of the stage and the pleasure of  
the spectators. But Bottom's metamorphosis is the most  
potent drawer-out of his genius. The sense of his new  
head-dress stirs up all the manhood within him, and lifts  
his character into ludicrous greatness at once. Hitherto the  
seeming to be a man has made him content to be little  
better than an ass ; but no sooner is he conscious of seem-  
ing an ass than he tries his best to be a man ; while all his  
efforts that way only go to approve the fitness of his present  
seeming to his former being.

Schlegel happily remarks, that "the droll wonder of Bot-

tom's metamorphosis is merely the translation of a metaphor in its literal sense." The turning of a figure of speech thus into visible form is a thing only to be thought of or imagined; so that probably no attempt to paint or represent it to the senses can ever succeed. We can bear — at least we often have to bear — that a man should seem an ass to the mind's eye; but that he should seem such to the eye of the body is rather too much, save as it is done in those fable-pictures which have long been among the playthings of the nursery. So a child, for instance, takes great pleasure in fancying the stick he is riding to be a horse, when he would be frightened out of his wits, were the stick to quicken and expand into an actual horse. In like manner we often delight in indulging fancies and giving names, when we should be shocked were our fancies to harden into facts: we enjoy visions in our sleep, that would only disgust or terrify us, should we awake and find them solidified into things. The effect of Bottom's transformation can hardly be much otherwise, if set forth in visible, animated shape. Delightful to think of, it is scarce tolerable to look upon: exquisitely true in idea, it has no truth, or even verisimilitude, when reduced to fact; so that, however gladly imagination receives it, sense and understanding revolt at it.

### Concluding Remarks.

Partly for reasons already stated, and partly for others that I scarce know how to state, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is a most effectual poser to criticism. Besides that its very essence is irregularity, so that it cannot be fairly brought to the test of rules, the play forms properly a class by itself: literature has nothing else really like it; nothing

therefore with which it may be compared, and its merits adjusted. For so the Poet has here exercised powers apparently differing even in kind, not only from those of any other writer, but from those displayed in any other of his own writings. Elsewhere, if his characters are penetrated with the ideal, their whereabouts lies in the actual, and the work may in some measure be judged by that life which it claims to represent: here the whereabouts is as ideal as the characters; all is in the land of dreams, — a place for dreamers, not for critics. For who can tell what a dream ought or ought not to be, or when the natural conditions of dream-life are or are not rightly observed? How can the laws of time and space, as involved in the transpiration of human character, — how can these be applied in a place where the mind is thus absolved from their proper jurisdiction? Besides, the whole thing swarms with enchantment: all the sweet witchery of Shakespeare's sweet genius is concentrated in it, yet disposed with so subtle and cunning a hand, that we can as little grasp it as get away from it: its charms, like those of a summer evening, are such as we may see and feel, but cannot locate or define; cannot say they are here, or they are there: the moment we yield ourselves up to them, they seem to be everywhere; the moment we go to master them, they seem to be nowhere.

# A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

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## PERSONS REPRESENTED.

THESEUS, Duke of Athens.	OBERON, King of the Fairies.
EGEUS, Father to Hermia.	TITANIA, Queen of the Fairies.
LYSANDER, } in love with Hermia.	PUCK, or ROBIN-GOODFELLOW, a Fairy.
DEMETRIUS, }	PEAS-BLOSSOM, } Fairies.
PHILOSTRATE, Master of the Revels to Theseus.	COBWEB, }
QUINCE, a Carpenter.	MOTH, }
SNUG, a Joiner.	MUSTARD-SEED, }
BOTTOM, a Weaver.	
FLUTE, a Bellows-mender.	PYRAMUS, } Characters in the Interlude.
SNOUT, a Tinker.	THISBE, }
STARVELING, a Tailor.	WALL, }
	MOONSHINE, }
HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons.	LION, }
HERMIA, in love with Lysander.	
HELENA, in love with Demetrius.	

Other Fairies attending their King and Queen. Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

SCENE. — *Athens, and a Wood near it.*

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## ACT I.

SCENE I. — *Athens. A Room in the Palace of THESEUS.*

*Enter* THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, *and* Attendants.

*The.* Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour  
 Draws on apace ; four happy days bring in  
 Another Moon : but, O, methinks, how slow

This old Moon wanes ! she lingers my desires,  
 Like to a step-dame, or a dowager,<sup>1</sup>  
 Long withering out a young man's révenue.

*Hip.* Four days will quickly steep themselves in nights ;  
 Four nights will quickly dream away the time ;  
 And then the Moon, like to a silver bow  
 New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night  
 Of our solemnities.

*The.* Go, Philostrate,  
 Stir up th' Athenian youth to merriments ;  
 Awake the pert<sup>2</sup> and nimble spirit of mirth :  
 Turn melancholy forth to funerals, —  
 The pale companion is not for our pomp.—[*Exit* PHILOSTRATE.  
 Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,  
 And won thy love, doing thee injuries ;  
 But I will wed thee in another key,  
 With pomp, with triumph,<sup>3</sup> and with revelling.

*Enter* EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS.

*Ege.* Happy be Theseus, our renownèd Duke !<sup>4</sup>

*The.* Thanks, good Egeus : what's the news with thee ?

*Ege.* Full of vexation come I, with complaint

<sup>1</sup> A *dowager* is a widow with rights of dower, that is, with a portion of her husband's property secured to her by law. Of course, so long as she lives, a part of the inheritance is withheld from the children, whose revenue is said to be *withered out*, because their youth gets withered while they are waiting for it.

<sup>2</sup> *Pert* had not always the ill meaning now attached to it. Skinner derives it from the Latin *peritus*, which means *expert, skilful, prompt*.

<sup>3</sup> *Triumph* was used in a much more inclusive sense than it now bears ; for various kinds of festive or public *display* or *pageantry*.

<sup>4</sup> The application of *duke* to the heroes of antiquity was quite common ; the word being from the Latin *dux*, which means a chief or leader of any sort. Thus in 1 *Chronicles*, i. 51, we have a list of "the *dukes* of Edom."

Against my child, my daughter Hermia. —  
Stand forth, Demetrius. — My noble lord,  
This man hath my consent to marry her. —  
Stand forth, Lysander : — and, my gracious Duke,  
This man hath witch'd the bosom of my child : —  
Then, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,  
And interchanged love-tokens with my child :  
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,  
With feigning voice, verses of feigning love ;<sup>5</sup>  
And stol'n th' impression of her fantasy  
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits,  
Knacks, trifles, nose-gays, sweetmeats, — messengers  
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth :  
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart ;  
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,  
To stubborn harshness : — and, my gracious Duke,  
Be't so she will not here before your Grace  
Consent to marry with Demetrius,  
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens, —  
As she is mine, I may dispose of her :  
Which shall be either to this gentleman  
Or to her death, according to our law  
Immediately provided in that case.

*The.* What say you, Hermia? be advised,<sup>6</sup> fair maid :  
To you your father should be as a god ;  
One that composed your beauties ; yea, and one  
To whom you are but as a form in wax,

<sup>5</sup> According to present usage, this should be "verses of *feigned* love." Probably it is but an instance of the indifferent use of the active and passive forms so common in the Poet's time. So we have *discontenting* for *discontented*, and *all-obeying* for *all-obeyed*.

<sup>6</sup> *Be advised* is old language for *bethink yourself*; that is, *deliberate* or *consider*. Very often so in Shakespeare.

By him imprinted, and within his power  
To leave the figure, or disfigure it.<sup>7</sup>

Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

*Her.* So is Lysander.

*The.* In himself he is ;

But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,  
The other must be held the worthier.

*Her.* I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

*The.* Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

*Her.* I do entreat your Grace to pardon me.

I know not by what power I am made bold,  
Nor how it may concern my modesty,  
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts ;  
But I beseech your Grace that I may know  
The worst that may befall me in this case,  
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

*The.* Either to die the death, or to abjure  
For ever the society of men.  
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires ;  
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,<sup>8</sup>  
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,  
You can endure the livery of a nun ;  
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,<sup>9</sup>  
To live a barren sister all your life,  
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless Moon.  
Thrice-blessèd they that master so their blood,

<sup>7</sup> The language is something odd and obscure ; but the meaning appears to be, " It is in his power either to let the form remain as it is, that is, to leave it undefaced, or to destroy it altogether." In the Poet's earlier period, such jingles as *figure* and *disfigure* were too much affected by him.

<sup>8</sup> *Blood* was continually put for *passions, impulses, and affections*.

<sup>9</sup> To *mew* was a term in falconry ; a *mew* being a *cage* or *coop* in which hawks were confined during the season of moulting.



To undergo such maiden pilgrimage ;  
 But earthlier-happy <sup>10</sup> is the rose distill'd  
 Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,  
 Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

*Her.* So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,  
 Ere I will yield my virgin patent up  
 Unto his lordship, whose unwishèd yoke  
 My soul consents not to give sovereignty.<sup>11</sup>

*The.* Take time to pause ; and, by the next new Moon, —  
 The sealing-day betwixt my love and me,  
 For everlasting bond of fellowship, —  
 Upon that day either prepare to die  
 For disobedience to your father's will,  
 Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would ;  
 Or on Diana's altar to protest  
 For aye austerity and single life.

*Dem.* Relent, sweet Hermia : — and, Lysander, yield  
 Thy crazèd title to my certain right.

*Lys.* You have her father's love, Demetrius ;  
 Let me have Hermia's : do you marry him.

*Ege.* Scornful Lysander ! true, he hath my love,  
 And what is mine my love shall render him ;  
 And she is mine, and all my right of her  
 I do estate unto Demetrius.

*Lys.* I am, my lord, as well derived as he,  
 As well possess'd ; my love is more than his ;  
 My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd —  
 If not with vantage — as Demetrius' ;

<sup>10</sup> The meaning probably is, "happy in a more earthly and perishable kind of happiness."

<sup>11</sup> *Lordship* here means *dominion* or *government* ; and *give* is used with two accusatives, *yoke* and *sovereignty*.

And, which is more than all these boasts can be,  
 I am beloved of beauteous Hermia :  
 Why should not I, then, prosecute my right?  
 Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,  
 Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,  
 And won her soul ; and she, sweet lady, dotes,  
 Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,  
 Upon this spotted<sup>12</sup> and inconstant man.

*The.* I must confess that I have heard so much,  
 And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof ;  
 But, being over-full of self-affairs,  
 My mind did lose it. — But, Demetrius, come ;  
 And come, Egeus ; you shall go with me,  
 I have some private schooling for you both. —  
 For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself  
 To fit your fancies to your father's will ;  
 Or else the law of Athens yields you up —  
 Which by no means we may extenuate —  
 To death, or to a vow of single life. —  
 Come, my Hippolyta : what cheer, my love? —  
 Demetrius, and Egeus, go along :  
 I must employ you in some business<sup>13</sup>  
 Against our nuptial ; and confer with you  
 Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

*Ege.* With duty and desire we follow you.

[*Exeunt* THES., HIP., EGE., DEM., and *Train.*

*Lys.* How now, my love ! why is your cheek so pale?  
 How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

*Her.* Belike for want of rain, which I could well

<sup>12</sup> *Spotted* for *twicked* or *false*, the opposite of *spotless*. So in Cavendish's *Metrical Visions* : " *Spotted* with pride, viciousness, an I cruelty."

<sup>13</sup> Here, as in many other places, *business* is a trisyllable.

Beteem<sup>14</sup> them from the tempest of mine eyes.

*Lys.* Ah me ! for aught that ever I could read,  
 Could ever hear by tale or history,  
 The course of true love never did run smooth ;  
 But, either it was different in blood, —

*Her.* O cross ! too high to be enthrall'd to low !

*Lys.* Or else misgraff'ed in respect of years, —

*Her.* O spite ! too old to be engaged to young !

*Lys.* Or else it stood upon the choice of friends, —

*Her.* O Hell ! to choose love by another's eyes !

*Lys.* Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,  
 War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,  
 Making it momentary<sup>15</sup> as a sound,  
 Swift as a shadow, short as any dream ;  
 Brief as the lightning in the collied<sup>16</sup> night,  
 That, in a spleen,<sup>17</sup> unfolds both heaven and earth,  
 And, ere a man hath power to say, *Behold !*  
 The jaws of darkness do devour it up :  
 So quick bright things come to confusion.

*Her.* If, then, true lovers have been ever cross'd,  
 It stands as an edict in destiny :

<sup>14</sup> *Beteem* here clearly has the sense of *allow* or *permit* ; as in *Hamlet*, i. 2 : " So loving to my mother, that he might not *beteem* the winds of heaven visit her face too roughly."

<sup>15</sup> *Momentary* is an old form of *momentary*.

<sup>16</sup> *Smutted* or *black* ; a word derived from the collieries.

<sup>17</sup> *Spleen* for a *fit of passion* or *violence*, because the spleen was supposed to be the special seat of eruptive or explosive emotions. So in *King John*, ii. 1 :

This union shall do more than battery can  
 To our fast-closed gates : for, at this match,  
 With swifter *spleen* than powder can enforce,  
 The mouth of passage shall we fling wide ope,  
 And give you entrance.

Then let us teach our trial patience,<sup>18</sup>  
 Because it is a customary cross,  
 As due to love as thoughts, and dreams, and sighs,  
 Wishes, and tears, poor fancy's<sup>19</sup> followers.

*Lys.* A good persuasion ; therefore, hear me, Hermia.  
 I have a widow aunt, a dowager  
 Of great revenue,<sup>20</sup> and she hath no child ;  
 And she respects<sup>21</sup> me as her only son.  
 From Athens is her house remote seven leagues :  
 There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee ;  
 And to that place the sharp Athenian law  
 Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me, then,  
 Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night ;  
 And in the wood, a league without the town,  
 Where I did meet thee once with Helena,  
 To do observance to a morn of May,<sup>22</sup>  
 There will I stay for thee.

<sup>18</sup> The old poets very often make two syllables where modern usage allows but one. So, here, *patience* is properly a trisyllable. Various other words ending in *-ience* are sometimes used thus by Shakespeare ; as also many words ending in *-ion*, *-ian*, and *-ious*. So it is with *confusion*, third line above.

<sup>19</sup> The Poet often uses *fancy* for *love*. So, afterwards, in this play : "Fair Helena in *fancy* following me." And in the celebrated passage applied to Queen Elizabeth : "In maiden meditation *fancy*-free."

<sup>20</sup> This word has occurred once before, but with the accent on the first syllable : here the accent is on the second syllable, as it ought to be. Shakespeare has it repeatedly in both ways : all the other English poets, I think, used it as in this place ; at least so I have marked it in Spenser, Daniel, Dryden, Young, and Thomson. I have not met with the word in Milton's poetry, or in Wordsworth's.

<sup>21</sup> To *respect* in the sense of *to regard* ; the two words being formerly used as equivalent expressions.

<sup>22</sup> This refers to the old English custom of observing May-day, as it was called, with a frolic in the fields and woods. Stowe, the chronicler, tells us how our ancestors were wont to go out into "the sweet meadows and green

*Her.*

My good Lysander !

I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow ;  
 By his best arrow with the golden head, —  
 By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves ;  
 By the simplicity of Venus' doves ;  
 And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,  
 When the false Trojan under sail was seen ;  
 By all the vows that ever men have broke,  
 In number more than ever women spoke ; —  
 In that same place thou hast appointed me,  
 To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

*Lys.* Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.*Enter HELENA.**Her.* God speed fair Helena ! whither away ?*Hel.* Call you me fair ? that *fair* again unsay.Demetrius loves your fair : O happy fair !<sup>23</sup>

Your eyes are lode-stars ;<sup>24</sup> and your tongue's sweet air  
 More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,

woods, there to rejoice their spirits with the beauty and savour of sweet flowers, and with the harmony of birds praising God in their kind." The celebration of May-day in this manner was a favourite theme with the old poets from Chaucer downwards. Wordsworth sings it charmingly in his two *Odes to May* ; one stanza of which I must add :

Time was, blest Power! when youths and maids  
 At peep of dawn would rise  
 And wander forth, in forest glades  
 Thy birth to solemnize.  
 Though mute the song, — to grace the rite  
 Untouch'd the hawthorn bough,  
 Thy Spirit triumphs o'er the slight ;  
 Man changes, but not thou.

<sup>23</sup> *Fair* for *fairness* or *beauty* ; a common usage of the time.<sup>24</sup> The *lode-star* is the *leading* or *guiding* star ; that is, the *polar star*. The magnet is for the same reason called the *lode-stone*.

When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.  
 Sickness is catching : O, were favour<sup>25</sup> so,  
 Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go ;  
 My hair should catch your hair, my eye your eye,  
 My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.  
 Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,  
 The rest I'd give, to be to you translated.  
 O, teach me how you look ; and with what art  
 You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart !

*Her.* I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

*Hel.* O, that your frowns would teach my smiles such  
 skill !

*Her.* I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

*Hel.* O, that my prayers could such affection move !

*Her.* The more I hate, the more he follows me.

*Hel.* The more I love, the more he hateth me.

*Her.* His folly, Helen, is no fault of mine.

*Hel.* None but your beauty's : would that fault were mine !

*Her.* Take comfort : he no more shall see my face ;

Lysander and myself will fly this place.

Before the time I did Lysander see,

Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me :

O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,

That he hath turned a heaven into a hell !

*Lys.* Helen, to you our minds we will unfold :

To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold

Her silver visage in the watery glass,

Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass, —

A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal, —

Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

<sup>25</sup> *Favour* here has reference to the general aspect, and means about the same as *looks* or *personal appearance*. Repeatedly so.

*Her.* And in the wood, where often you and I  
 Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,  
 Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,  
 There my Lysander and myself shall meet ;  
 And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,  
 To seek new friends and stranger companies.<sup>26</sup>  
 Farewell, sweet playfellow : pray thou for us ;  
 And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius !—  
 Keep word, Lysander : we must starve our sight  
 From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

*Lys.* I will, my Hermia. —

[*Exit* HERM.]

Helena, adieu :

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you !

[*Exit.*

*Hel.* How happy some o'er other-some can be !  
 Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.  
 But what of that ? Demetrius thinks not so ;  
 He will not know what all but he do know :  
 And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,  
 So I, admiring of his qualities.  
 Things base and vile, holding no quantity,<sup>27</sup>  
 Love can transpose to form and dignity :  
 Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind ;  
 And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind :  
 Nor hath love's mind of any judgment taste ;  
 Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste :  
 And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
 Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.

<sup>26</sup> *Companies* for *companions*. So in *King Henry V.*, i. 1. : "His *companies* unletter'd, rude, and shallow."

<sup>27</sup> Here *quantity* appears to have the sense of *strength*, *virtue*, or *efficacy*. A like use of the word occurs in *Hamlet*, iii. 4. : "Sense to ecstacy was ne'er so thrall'd, but it reserved some *quantity* of choice, to serve in such a difference."

As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,  
 So the boy Love is perjured everywhere :  
 For, ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,<sup>28</sup>  
 He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine ;  
 And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,  
 So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.  
 I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight :  
 Then to the wood will he to-morrow night  
 Pursue her ; and for this intelligence  
 If I have thanks, it is a dear expense :<sup>29</sup>  
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain,  
 To have his sight thither and back again.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *The Same.* A Room in QUINCE'S House.

*Enter* QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

*Quin.* Is all our company here ?

*Bot.* You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.<sup>1</sup>

*Quin.* Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the Duke and the Duchess on his wedding-day at night.

*Bot.* First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on ; then read the names of the actors ; and so grow to a point.

<sup>28</sup> *Eyne*, for *eye* or *eyes*, was often used by the poets whenever that sound was wanted for the rhyme.

<sup>29</sup> The force and fitness of *expense*, here, are partly shown by *pain* in the next line. Staunton aptly notes that, as, to gratify Demetrius with this intelligence, "she makes a most painful sacrifice of her feelings, his thanks, even if obtained, are dearly bought."

<sup>1</sup> *Scrip*, from *scriptum*, is *writing* ; the *scroll* mentioned just below.



*Quin.* Marry, our play is *The most lamentable Comedy and most cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe.*<sup>2</sup>

*Bot.* A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. — Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. — Masters, spread yourselves.

*Quin.* Answer as I call you. — Nick Bottom the weaver.

*Bot.* Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

*Quin.* You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

*Bot.* What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

*Quin.* A lover, that kills himself most gallantly for love.

*Bot.* That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole in some measure. To the rest. — Yet my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play *Ercles* rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.<sup>3</sup>

*The raging rocks  
And shivering shocks  
Shall break the locks  
Of prison-gates;  
And Phibbus' car  
Shall shine from far,  
And make and mar  
The foolish Fates.*

<sup>2</sup> Probably a burlesque upon the titles of some of the old dramas.

<sup>3</sup> *Ercles* is Bottom's version of *Hercules*. Hercules was one of the ranters and roarers of the old moral-plays; and his Twelve Labours formed a popular subject of entertainment. In Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*, 1592, a player tells how he had "terribly thundered" the Twelve Labours of Hercules. In *Histiomastix*, 1610, some soldiers drag in a company of players; and the captain says to one of them, "Sirrah, this is you that would rend and tear a cat upon the stage." And in *The Roaring Girl*, 1611, one of the persons is called *Tear-cat*. The phrase *to make all split* is met with repeatedly. So in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Scornful Lady*, ii. 3: "Two roaring boys of Rome, that made all split." Also in *The Widow's*

This was lofty!—Now name the rest of the players.—This is Eracles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover's is more condoling.

*Quin.* Francis Flute the bellows-mender.

*Flu.* Here, Peter Quince.

*Quin.* You must take Thisbe on you.

*Flu.* What is Thisbe? a wandering knight?

*Quin.* It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

*Flu.* Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a beard coming.

*Quin.* That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.<sup>4</sup>

*Bot.* An I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too: I'll speak in a monstrous little voice:—*Thisbe, Thisbe,—Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisbe dear, and lady dear!*

*Quin.* No, no; you must play Pyramus:—and, Flute, you Thisbe.

*Bot.* Well, proceed.

*Quin.* Robin Starveling the tailor.

*Star.* Here, Peter Quince.

*Quin.* Robin Starveling, you must play Thisbe's mother.—Tom Snout the tinker.

*Snout.* Here, Peter Quince.

*Quin.* You, Pyramus' father; myself, Thisbe's father;—Snug the joiner, you, the lion's part:—and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

*Snug.* Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

*Tears*, by Chapman, i. 4: "Her wit I must employ upon this business to prepare my next encounter, but in such a fashion as shall *make all split*."

<sup>4</sup> In *The Merry Wives*, i. 1, Slender says of Anne Page, "She has brown hair, and *speaks small* like a woman." This speech of Peter Quince's shows, what is known from other sources, that the parts of women were used to be played by boys, or, if these could not be had, by men in masks.

*Quin.* You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

*Bot.* Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the Duke say, *Let him roar again, let him roar again.*

*Quin.* An<sup>5</sup> you should do it too terribly, you would fright the Duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

*All.* That would hang us, every mother's son.

*Bot.* I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

*Quin.* You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper<sup>6</sup> man as one shall see in a Summer's day; a most lovely, gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

*Bot.* Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

*Quin.* Why, what you will.

*Bot.* I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow.<sup>7</sup>

*Quin.* Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced.<sup>8</sup>—But, masters, here are

<sup>5</sup> *An* is an old colloquial equivalent for *if*. So the Poet uses, indifferently, *an*, or *if*, or both together, *an if*. And so in the common phrase, "without any *ifs* or *ans*."

<sup>6</sup> *Proper* is *handsome* or *fine-looking*. Commonly so in Shakespeare.

<sup>7</sup> It seems to have been a custom to stain or dye the beard. So Ben Jonson in *The Alchemist*: "He has dyed his beard and all."

<sup>8</sup> An allusion to the baldness attendant upon a particular stage of what was then termed the *French* disease.

your parts : and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night ; and meet me in the palace-wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight : there will we rehearse ; for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogg'd with company, and our devices known. In the mean time I will draw a bill of properties,<sup>9</sup> such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

*Bot.* We will meet ; and there we may rehearse more obscenely and courageously.

*Quin.* Take pains ; be perfect : adieu. At the Duke's oak we meet.

*Bot.* Enough ; hold, or cut bow-strings.<sup>10</sup> [*Exeunt.*

## ACT II.

### SCENE I. — *A Wood near Athens.*

*Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy, and PUCK.*

*Puck.* How now, spirit ! whither wander you ?

*Fai.* Over hill, over dale,  
Thorough bush, thorough brier,  
Over park, over pale,  
Thorough flood, thorough fire,  
I do wander everywhere,

<sup>9</sup> The *properties* were the furnishings of the stage, and the keeper of them is, I think, still called the *property-man*.

<sup>10</sup> This saying is no doubt rightly explained by Capell : "When a party was made at butts, assurance of meeting was given in the words of that phrase ; the sense of the person using them being, that he would *hold*, or keep, his promise, or they might '*cut his bowstrings*,' demolish him for an archer."

Swifter than the moony sphere ;<sup>1</sup>  
 And I serve the Fairy Queen,  
 To dew her orbs<sup>2</sup> upon the green.  
 The cowslips tall her pensioners be :<sup>3</sup>  
 In their gold coats spots you see :  
 Those be rubies, fairy favours,  
 In those freckles live their savours :

I must go seek some dewdrops here,  
 And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.  
 Farewell, thou lob of spirits ;<sup>4</sup> I'll be gone :

<sup>1</sup> Collier informs us that "Coleridge, in his lectures in 1818, was very emphatic in his praise of the beauty of these lines: 'the measure,' he said, 'had been invented and employed by Shakespeare for the sake of its appropriateness to the rapid and airy motion of the Fairy by whom the passage is delivered.'" And in his *Literary Remains*, after analyzing the measure, he speaks of the "delightful effect on the ear," caused by "the sweet transition" from the amphimacers of the first four lines to the trochaic of the next two.

<sup>2</sup> These *orbs* were the verdant circles which the old superstition here delineated called fairy-rings, supposing them to be made by the night-tripping fairies dancing their merry roundels. As the ground became parched under the feet of the moonlight dancers, Puck's office was to refresh it with sprinklings of dew, thus making it greener than ever.

<sup>3</sup> The allusion is to Elizabeth's band of Gentleman *Pensioners*, who were chosen from among the handsomest and tallest young men of family and fortune; they were dressed in habits richly garnished with *gold lace*.

<sup>4</sup> It would seem that Puck, though he could "put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes," was heavy and sluggish in comparison with the other fairies: he was the *lubbar* of the spirit tribe. Shakespeare's "*lob of spirits*" is the same as Milton's "*lubbar fiend*," in *L'Allegro*:

And he, by friar's lantern led,  
 Tells how the drudging goblin swet  
 To earn his cream-bowl duly set,  
 When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
 His shadowy flail hath thresh'd the corn,  
 That ten day-labourers could not end:  
 Then lies him down the lubbar fiend,  
 And, stretch'd out all the chimney's length,  
 Basks at the fire his hairy strength,

Our Queen and all her elves come here anon.

*Puck.* The King doth keep his revels here to-night :  
 Take heed the Queen come not within his sight ;  
 For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,  
 Because that she, as her attendant, hath  
 A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king ;  
 She never had so sweet a changeling : <sup>5</sup>  
 And jealous Oberon would have the child  
 Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild ;  
 But she perforce withholds the lovèd boy,  
 Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy :  
 And now they<sup>3</sup> never meet in grove or green,  
 By fountain clear or spangled starlight sheen,  
 But they do square,<sup>6</sup> that all their elves, for fear,  
 Creep into acorn-cups, and hide them there.

<sup>5</sup> A *changeling* was a child taken or given in *exchange*; it being a roguish custom of the fairies, if a child of great promise were born, to steal it away, and leave an ugly, or foolish, or ill-conditioned one in its stead. So in *The Faerie Queene*, i. 10, 65 :

From thence a Faery thee unweeing reft,  
 There, as thou slepst in tender swadling band,  
 And her base Elfin brood there for thee left:  
 Such, men do *chaungelings* call, so chaung'd by Faeries theft.

How much comfort this old belief sometimes gave to parents, may be seen from Drayton's *Nymphidia* :

And when a child haps to be got,  
 Which after proves an idiot,  
 When folk perceive it thriveth not,  
 The fault therein to smother,  
 Some silly, doating, brainless calf,  
 That understands things by the half,  
 Says that the fairy left this aulf,  
 And took away the other.

<sup>6</sup> The Poet repeatedly uses to *square* for to *quarrel*; *squarer* for *quarreller*. This use of the word probably grew from the posture or attitude men take when they stand to a fight.

*Fai.* Either I mistake your shape and making quite,  
 Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite  
 Call'd Robin Goodfellow : are you not he  
 That frights the maidens of the villagery ;  
 Skims milk, and sometime labours in the quern,<sup>7</sup>  
 And bootless makes the breathless housewife churn ;  
 And sometime makes the drink to bear no barm ;<sup>8</sup>  
 Misleads night-wanderers, laughing at their harm ?  
 Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,  
 You do their work, and they shall have good luck :  
 Are not you he ?<sup>9</sup>

*Puck.* Fairy, thou speak'st aright ;  
 I am that merry wanderer of the night.  
 I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,

<sup>7</sup> *Sometime* and *sometimes* were used indiscriminately. — A *quern* was a *hand-mill* for grinding corn.

<sup>8</sup> *Barm* is *yeast*. So in Holland's Pliny : " Now the froth or *barm*, that riseth from these ales or beers, have a property to keep the skin fair and clear in women's faces."

<sup>9</sup> This account of Puck was gathered from the popular notions of the time. So in Harsnet's *Declaration of Popish Impostures* : " And if that the bowl of curds and cream were not duly set out for Robin Goodfellow, the friar, and Sisse the dairy-maid, why, then either the pottage was burnt next day in the pot, or the cheeses would not curdle, or the butter would not come, or the ale in the fat never would have good head." Likewise, in Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* : " Your grandames' maids were wont to set a bowl of milk for him, for his pains in grinding malt and mustard, and sweeping the house at midnight ; — this white bread and milk was his standing fee." And in Drayton's *Nymphidia* :

This Puck seems but a dreaming dolt,  
 Still walking like a ragged colt,  
 And oft out of a bush doth bolt,  
     Of purpose to deceive us ;  
 And, leading us, makes us to stray  
 Long winter nights out of the way,  
 And when we stick in mire and clay,  
     He doth with laughter leave us.

When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,  
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal :<sup>10</sup>  
 And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,  
 In very likeness of a roasted crab ;<sup>11</sup>  
 And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob,  
 And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.  
 The wisest aunt,<sup>12</sup> telling the saddest tale,  
 Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me ;  
 Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,  
 And *tailor* cries,<sup>13</sup> and falls into a cough ;  
 And then the whole quire hold their hips and loff,  
 And waxen in their mirth,<sup>14</sup> and neeze, and swear  
 A merrier hour was never wasted there.  
 But room now, fairy ! here comes Oberon.

*Fai.* And here my mistress. Would that he were gone !

*Enter, from one side, OBERON, with his Train ; from the other, TITANIA, with hers.*

*Obe.* Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

*Tita.* What, jealous Oberon ? — Fairies, skip hence :  
 I have forsworn his bed and company.

*Obe.* Tarry, rash wanton : am not I thy lord ?

*Tita.* Then I must be thy lady : but I know  
 When thou hast stol'n away from Fairy-land,

<sup>10</sup> *Filly-foal* is a female colt, or a young mare. Neighing *like*, or *in the manner of*, a filly foal, is the meaning.

<sup>11</sup> It is the apple crab, not the animal crab, that is meant.

<sup>12</sup> *Aunt* and *uncle* were common titles of address to aged people ; as they still are, or were of late, to aged servants in the Southern States.

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Johnson thought he remembered to have heard this ludicrous exclamation upon a person's seat slipping from under him. He that slips from his chair falls as a *tailor* squats upon his board.

<sup>14</sup> *Waxen* is an old plural form of the verb to *wax*. Of course it means "increase in their mirth."



And in the shape of Corin sat all day,  
Playing on pipes of corn,<sup>15</sup> and versing love  
To amorous Phyllida. Why art thou here,  
Come from the farthest steep of India,  
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,  
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,  
To Theseus must be wedded? and you come  
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

*Obe.* How canst thou thus, for shame, Titania,  
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,  
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?  
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night  
From Perigenia, whom he ravishéd?  
And make him with fair Æglè break his faith,  
With Ariadne and Antiopa?

*Titia.* These are the forgeries of jealousy :  
And never, since the middle Summer's spring,<sup>16</sup>  
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,  
By pavèd fountain or by rushy brook,  
Or on the beachèd margent of the sea,  
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,  
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.  
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,  
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea  
Contagious fogs ; which falling in the land

<sup>15</sup> A *pipe of corn* is an ancient musical instrument, made of the straw of wheat, oats, or rye : straws of different size being selected, and cut of different lengths, and then fastened together in a small frame or holder. Such was the shepherd's pipe, though sometimes made of reeds, so much celebrated in classic poetry.

<sup>16</sup> *Spring* is here used in the sense of *beginning*. The Poet has elsewhere "*spring of day*" in the same sense. So in Job xxxviii. 12 : "Hast 't caused the day-*spring* to know his place?"

Have every pelting<sup>17</sup> river made so proud,  
 That they have overborne their continents :<sup>18</sup>  
 The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,  
 The ploughman lost his sweat ; and the green corn  
 Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard :  
 The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,  
 And crows are fatted with the murrain flock ;  
 The nine-men's-morris<sup>19</sup> is fill'd up with mud ;  
 And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,  
 For lack of tread, are undistinguishable :  
 The human mortals want<sup>20</sup> their minstrelsy, —  
 No night is now with hymn or carol blest :  
 Therefore the Moon, the governess of floods,  
 Pale in her anger, washes all the air ;  
 And thorough this distemperature we see

<sup>17</sup> *Pelting* was often used for *petty* or *paltry*.

<sup>18</sup> *Continent* was formerly used of that which *contains* any thing ; as a river is contained within its banks.

<sup>19</sup> This was a plat of green turf cut into a sort of chess board, for the rustic youth to exercise their skill upon. The game was called nine-men's-morris, because the players had each nine men, which they moved along the lines cut in the ground, until one side had taken or penned up all those on the other. "The quaint mazes in the wanton green" were where the youths and maidens led their happy dances in the open air.

<sup>20</sup> To *want* was not unfrequently used in the sense of to *lack*, or to *be without*. — All through this speech the Poet probably had in mind the Summer of 1594, which was much celebrated for the strange misbehaviour of the weather. So in Dr. Forman's *Diary* : "This monethes of June and July were very wet and wonderful cold, likè winter, that the 10 dae of Julii many did syt by the fyer, yt was so cold ; and soe was it in Maye and June ; and scarse too fair dais all that tyme, but it rayned every day more or lesse." Also in Churchyard's poem, *Charitie*, published in 1595 :

A colder time in world was never seen ;  
 The skies do lour, the sun and moon wax dim ;  
 Summer scarce known, but that the leaves are green :  
 The winter's waste drives water o'er the brim ; &c.

That rheumatic diseases do abound :  
 The seasons alter ; hoary-headed frosts  
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose ;  
 And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown  
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds  
 Is, as in mockery, set : the Spring, the Summer,  
 The childing<sup>21</sup> Autumn, angry Winter, change  
 Their wonted liveries ; and the mazèd world,  
 By their increase, now knows not which is which.  
 And this same progeny of evils comes  
 From our debate, from our dissension ;  
 We are their parents and original.

*Obe.* Do you amend it, then ; it lies in you :  
 Why should Titania cross her Oberon ?  
 I do but beg a little changeling boy,  
 To be my henchman.<sup>22</sup>

*Tita.* Set your heart at rest :  
 The Fairy-land buys not the child of me.  
 His mother was a votaress of my order :  
 And, in the spicèd Indian air, by night,  
 Full often hath she gossip'd by my side ;  
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,  
 Marking th' embarkèd traders on the flood.  
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die ;  
 And for her sake I do rear up her boy ;

<sup>21</sup> *Childing*, here, is *teeming* or *fruitful*. In the second line below, *their increase* = *produce* of the several seasons, which is supposed to have become so mixed and confounded, that mankind are *bewildered*, or *in a maze*. This use of *childing* and *increase* is well illustrated in the Poet's 97th Sonnet: "The *teeming* Autumn, big with rich *increase*, bearing the wanton burden of the prime," &c.

<sup>22</sup> *Henchman* is an *attendant* or *page* ; probably from the Saxon *hengst*, a *groom*.

And for her sake I will not part with him.

*Obe.* How long within this wood intend you stay?

*Tita.* Perchance till after 'Theseus' wedding-day.

If you will patiently dance in our round,  
And see our moonlight revels, go with us ;

If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

*Obe.* Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

*Tita.* Not for thy Fairy kingdom. — Fairies, away !  
We shall chide downright; if I longer stay.

[*Exit TITANIA with her train.*]

*Obe.* Well, go thy way : thou shalt not from this grove  
Till I torment thee for this injury. —

My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou remember'st

Since<sup>23</sup> once I sat upon a promontory,

And heard a mermaid,<sup>24</sup> on a dolphin's back,

Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,

That the rude sea grew civil at her song,

And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,

To hear<sup>25</sup> the sea-maid's music.

*Puck.* I remember.

*Obe.* That very time I saw — but thou couldst not —

Flying between the cold Moon and the Earth,

Cupid all arm'd : a certain aim he took

At a fair vestal thronèd by the West,

<sup>23</sup> *Since* was sometimes used for *when*; and such is clearly the sense of it here. So in *2 Henry IV.*, iii. 2: "Do you remember *since* we lay all night in the windmill in Saint George's fields?"

<sup>24</sup> In Shakespeare's time, *mermaid* appears to have been sometimes used for *siren*.

<sup>25</sup> *To hear* is an instance of what is called the gerundial infinitive, and so is equivalent to *at hearing*; the hearing of the seamaid's music being assigned, not as the *purpose*, but as the *cause* of the stars shooting madly from their spheres. See *Julius Cæsar*, page 137, note 2.

And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,  
 As it should pierce a hundred-thousand hearts :  
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft  
 Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery Moon,  
 And the imperial votaress passèd on,  
 In maiden meditation, fancy-free.<sup>26</sup>

Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell :  
 It fell upon a little western flower,  
 Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,  
 And maidens call it love-in-idleness.<sup>27</sup>  
 Fetch me that flower ; the herb I show'd thee once :  
 The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid  
 Will make or man or woman madly dote  
 Upon the next live creature that it sees.  
 Fetch me this herb ; and be thou here again  
 Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

*Puck.* I'd put a girdle round about the Earth  
 In forty minutes.

[*Exit.*

*Obe.* Having once this juice,  
 I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,  
 And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.  
 The next thing then she waking looks upon, —  
 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,  
 On meddling monkey or on busy ape, —  
 She shall pursue it with the soul of love :  
 And, ere I take this charm off from her sight, —  
 As I can take it with another herb, —

<sup>26</sup> This delectable passage is universally understood as a compliment to Queen Elizabeth.

<sup>27</sup> The tri-coloured violet, commonly called pansies, or hearts-ease, is here meant : one or two of its petals are of a purple colour. It has other fanciful and expressive names, such as Cuddle-me-to-you, Three-faces-under-a-hood, Herb-trinity, &c.

I'll make her render up her page to me.  
 But who comes here? I am invisible;  
 And I will overhear their conference.

*Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him.*

*Dem.* I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.  
 Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?  
 The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.  
 Thou told'st me they were stol'n into this wood;  
 And here am I, and wood<sup>28</sup> within this wood,  
 Because I cannot meet my Hermia.  
 Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

*Hel.* You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant;<sup>29</sup>  
 But yet you draw not iron, for my heart  
 Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,  
 And I shall have no power to follow you.

*Dem.* Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?  
 Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth  
 Tell you I do not nor I cannot love you?

*Hel.* And even for that do I love you the more.  
 I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,  
 The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:  
 Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,  
 Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,  
 Unworthy as I am, to follow you.  
 What worser place can I beg in your love, ---  
 And yet a place of high respect with me, ---

<sup>28</sup> *Wood* is an old word for *frantic* or *mad*.

<sup>29</sup> "There is now a dayes a kind of *adamant* which draweth unto it fleshe, and the same so strongly, that it hath power to knit and tie together two mouthes of contrary persons, and drawe the heart of a man out of his bodie without offending any part of him." — *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature*, by Edward Fenton, 1569.

Than to be usèd as you use your dog?

*Dem.* Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit ;  
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

*Hel.* And I am sick when I look not on you.

*Dem.* You do impeach your modesty too much,  
To leave the city, and commit yourself  
Into the hands of one that loves you not ;  
To trust the opportunity of night,  
And the ill counsel of a desert place,  
With the rich worth of your virginity.

*Hel.* Your virtue is my privilege for that.  
It is not night when I do see your face,  
Therefore I think I am not in the night ;  
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,  
For you in my respect are all the world :  
Then how can it be said I am alone,  
When all the world is here to look on me ?

*Dem.* I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,  
And leave thee to the mercy of wild-beasts.

*Hel.* The wildest hath not such a heart as you.  
Run when you will, the story shall be changed, —  
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase ;  
The dove pursues the griffin ; the mild hind  
Makes speed to catch the tiger, — bootless speed,  
When cowardice pursues, and valour flies !

*Dem.* I will not stay thy question ;<sup>30</sup> let me go :  
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe  
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

*Hel.* Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,  
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius !

<sup>30</sup> Here, as often, *question is talk or conversation.*

Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex :  
 We cannot fight for love, as men may do ;  
 We should be woo'd, and were not made to woo.  
 I'll follow thee, and make a Heaven of Hell,  
 To die upon the hand I love so well.

[*Exeunt* DEM. and HEL.

*Obe.* Fare thee well, nymph : ere he do leave this grove,  
 Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love. —

*Re-enter* PUCK.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

*Puck.* Ay, here it is.

*Obe.* I pray thee, give it me.  
 I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,  
 Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows ;  
 Quite over-canopied with lush<sup>31</sup> woodbine,  
 With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine ;  
 And where the snake throws her enamell'd skin,  
 Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in :  
 There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,  
 Lull'd in this bower with dances and delight ;  
 And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,  
 And make her full of hateful fantasies.  
 Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove :  
 A sweet Athenian lady is in love  
 With a disdainful youth : anoint his eyes ;  
 But do it when the next thing he espies  
 May be the lady : thou shalt know the man  
 By the Athenian garments he hath on.  
 Effect it with some care, that he may prove

<sup>31</sup> *Lush* is *luscious* or *luxuriant*. So in *The Tempest*, ii, 1: "How lush and lusty the grass looks! how green!"



More fond on her than she upon her love :  
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

*Puck.* Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. — *Another Part of the Wood.*

*Enter* TITANIA, *with her Train.*

*Titā.* Come, now a roundel<sup>1</sup> and a fairy song ;  
Then, 'fore the third part of a minute, hence ;  
Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds ;  
Some, war with rere-mice<sup>2</sup> for their leathern wings,  
To make my small elves coats ; and some, keep back  
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots and wonders  
At our quaint<sup>3</sup> spirits. Sing me now asleep ;  
Then to your offices, and let me rest.

SONG.

1 Fairy. *You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen ;  
Newts and blind-worms,<sup>4</sup> do no wrong,  
Come not near our fairy Queen.*

Chorus. *Philomel, with melody  
Sing in our sweet lullaby ;  
Lulla, lulla, lullaby : lulla, lulla, lullaby :  
Never harm, nor spell nor charm,  
Come our lovely lady nigh ;  
So, good night, with lullaby.*

<sup>1</sup> *Roundel* was the name of a *dance* in which the parties joined hands and formed a ring ; sometimes called a *roundelay*.

<sup>2</sup> *Rere-mice* is an old name for *bats*.

<sup>3</sup> *Quaint* is *ingenious, adroit, cunning*.

<sup>4</sup> The *blind-worm* is what is now called the *slow-worm*. It is, I believe, quite harmless, but did not use to be thought so.

2 Fairy. *Weaving spiders, come not here ;  
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence !  
Beetles black, approach not near ;  
Worm nor snail, do no offence.*

Chorus. *Philomel, with melody, &c.*

1 Fairy. Hence, away ! now all is well :  
One aloof stand sentinel.

[*Exeunt* Fairies. TITANIA *sleeps.*

*Enter* OBERON.

Obe. What thou see'st when thou dost wake,  
[*Squeezes the flower on* TITANIA'S *eyelids.*

Do it for thy true-love take ;  
Love and languish for his sake :  
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,  
Pard,<sup>5</sup> or boar with bristled hair,  
In thy eye that shall appear  
When thou wakest, it is thy dear :  
Wake when some vile thing is near.

[*Exit.*

*Enter* LYSANDER and HERMIA.

Lys. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood ;  
And, to speak troth, I have forgot our way :  
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,  
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Her. Be't so, Lysander : find you out a bed ;  
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

Lys. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both ;  
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

Her. Nay, good Lysander ; for my sake, my dear,

<sup>5</sup> *Pard* is an old name for *leopard*.

Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

*Lys.* O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence !<sup>6</sup>

Love takes the meaning in love's conference.

I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit,

So that but one heart we can make of it :

Two bosoms interchainèd with an oath ;

So then two bosoms and a single troth.

Then by your side no bed-room me deny ;

For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

*Her.* Lysander riddles very prettily :

Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,

If Hermia meant to say, Lysander lied.

But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy

Lie further off ; in human modesty,

Such separation as may well be said

Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,

So far be distant ; and, good night, sweet friend :

Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end !

*Lys.* Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I ;

And then end life when I end loyalty !

Here is my bed : sleep give thee all his rest !

*Her.* With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd !

[*They sleep.*]

*Enter Puck.*

*Puck.* Through the forest have I gone,

But Athenian found I none,

On whose eyes I might approve

This flower's force in stirring love.

Night and silence ! who is here ?

Weeds of Athens he doth wear :

<sup>6</sup> That is, " understand the meaning of my innocence," or " my innocent meaning."

This is he my master said  
 Despisèd the Athenian maid ;  
 And here the maiden, sleeping sound,  
 On the dank and dirty ground :  
 Pretty soul ! she durst not lie  
 Nearer this lack-love, this kill-courtesy. —  
 Churl, upon thy eyes I throw  
 All the power this charm doth owe.<sup>7</sup>

[*Squeezes the flower on* LYSANDER'S *eyclids.*

When thou wakest, let love forbid  
 Sleep his seat on thy eyelid :  
 So awake when I am gone ;  
 For I must now to Oberon.

*Enter* DEMETRIUS *and* HELENA, *running.*

*Hel.* Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

*Dem.* I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

*Hel.* O, wilt thou darkling leave me ?<sup>8</sup> do not so.

*Dem.* Stay, on thy peril : I alone will go. [*Exit.*

*Hel.* O, I am out of breath in this fond chase !

The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies ;

For she hath blessèd and attractive eyes.

How came her eyes so bright ? Not with salt tears :

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear ;

For beasts that meet me run away for fear :

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

<sup>7</sup> *Owe* is continually used by the old poets for *own* or *possess*.

<sup>8</sup> An old phrase, meaning, "wilt thou leave me *in the dark* ?" So in *King Lear*, i. 4 : "So, out went the candle, and we were left *darkling*."

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine  
Made me compare with Hermia's spherish eyne?  
But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!  
Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.—  
Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

*Lys.* [*Starting up.*] And run through fire I will for thy  
sweet sake.

Transparent Helen, Nature shows her art,  
That through thy bosom makes me see my heart.  
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word  
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

*Hel.* Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.  
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?  
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

*Lys.* Content with Hermia! No; I do repent  
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.  
Not Hermia, but Helen now I love:  
Who will not change a raven for a dove?  
The will of man is by his reason sway'd;  
And reason says you are the worthier maid.  
Things growing are not ripe until their season:  
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;  
And, touching now the point of human skill,  
Reason becomes the marshal to my will,  
And leads me to your eyes; where I o'erlook  
Love-stories, written in Love's richest book.

*Hel.* Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?  
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?  
Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,  
That I did never, no, nor never can,  
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,  
But you must flout my insufficiency?

Good troth, you do me wrong, — good sooth, you do, —  
In such disdainful manner me to woo.

But fare you well : perforce I must confess  
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.

O, that a lady, of one man refused,  
Should of another therefore be abused !

[*Exit.*

*Lys.* She sees not Hermia. — Hermia, sleep thou there :  
And never mayst thou come Lysander near !  
For, as a surfeit of the sweetest things  
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings ;  
Or, as the heresies that men do leave  
Are hated most of those they did deceive ;  
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,  
Of all be hated, but the most of me !  
And, all my powers, address your love and might  
To honour Helen, and to be her knight !

[*Exit.*

*Her.* [*Awaking.*] Help me, Lysander, help me ! do thy best  
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast !  
Ah me, for pity ! what a dream was here !  
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear :  
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,  
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey. —  
Lysander ! — what, removed ? — Lysander ! lord ! —  
What, out of hearing ? gone ? no sound, no word ?  
Alack, where are you ? speak, an if you hear ;  
Speak, of all loves !<sup>9</sup> I swoon almost with fear.  
No ? then I well perceive you are not nigh :  
Either death or you I'll find immediately.

[*Exit.*

<sup>9</sup> A petty adjuration of the time, equivalent to *by all means*.

## ACT III.

SCENE I. — *The Wood.* TITANIA *lying asleep.*

*Enter* QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, *and* STARVELING.

*Bot.* Are we all met?

*Quin.* Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our 'tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the Duke.

*Bot.* Peter Quince, —

*Quin.* What say'st thou, bully Bottom?

*Bot.* There are things in this comedy of *Pyramus and Thisbe* that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?

*Snout.* By'r lakin, a parlous fear.<sup>1</sup>

*Star.* I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

*Bot.* Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not kill'd indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that: Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the Weaver: this will put them out of fear.

*Quin.* Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *By'r lakin* is a diminutive of *by'r Lady*, which, again, is a contraction of *by our Lady*, an old oath of frequent occurrence in these plays; *Lady* meaning the Virgin Mary. *Parlous* is a corruption of *perilous*.

<sup>2</sup> In alternate verses of eight and six syllables.

*Bot.* No, make it two more ; let it be written in eight and eight.

*Snout.* Will not the ladies be afraid of the lion?

*Star.* I fear it, I promise you.

*Bot.* Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves : to bring in — God shield us ! — a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing ; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living ; and we ought to look to it.

*Snout.* Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

*Bot.* Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck ; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect, — *Ladies,* — or, *Fair ladies,* — *I would wish you,* — or, *I would request you,* — or, *I would entreat you,* — *not to fear, not to tremble : my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life : no, I am no such thing ; I am a man as other men are :* — and there, indeed, let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.<sup>3</sup>

*Quin.* Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things, — that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber ; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

*Snug.* Doth the Moon shine that night we play our play ?

*Bot.* A calendar, a calendar ! look in the almanac ; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare may here allude to an incident said to have occurred in his time, which is recorded in a collection entitled *Merry Passages and Feats* : "There was a spectacle presented to Queen Elizabeth upon the water, and among others Harry Goldingham was to represent Arion upon the Dolphin's backe ; but finding his voice to be verye hoarse and unpleasant when he came to perform it, he tears off his disguise, and swears he was none of Arion, not he, but even honest Harry Goldenham ; which blunt discoverie pleased the queen better than if he had gone through in the right way : — yet he could order his voice to an instrument exceeding well."



*Quin.* Yes, it doth shine that night.

*Bot.* Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber-window, where we play, open, and the Moon may shine in at the casement.

*Quin.* Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of moonshine. Then there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

*Snug.* You can never bring in a wall.—What say you, Bottom?

*Bot.* Some man or other must present wall: and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.

*Quin.* If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake;—and so every one according to his cue.

*Enter PUCK behind.*

*Puck.* What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,

So near the cradle of the fairy Queen?

What, a play toward!<sup>4</sup> I'll be an auditor;

An actor too perhaps, if I see cause.

*Quin.* Speak, Pyramus.—Thisbe, stand forth.

*Pyr.* *Thisbe, the flowers of odious savour sweet,*—

*Quin.* *Odours, odours.*

<sup>4</sup> *Toward*, here, is *at hand*, *in hand*, or *forthcoming*. Very often used so by the Poet. Nor is the usage altogether out of date now.

Pyr. — *odours savour sweet:*

*So doth thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.*

*But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,*

*And by-and-by I will to thee appear.*

[*Exit.*

Puck. [*Aside.*] A stranger Pyramus than e'er play'd here.

[*Exit.*

*This.* Must I speak now?

*Quin.* Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

*This.* *Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,*

*Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,*

*Most brisky juvenal,<sup>5</sup> and eke most lovely Jew,*

*As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire,*

*I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.*

*Quin.* *Ninus' tomb*, man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, cues<sup>6</sup> and all. — Pyramus, enter: your cue is past; it is, *never tire*.

*This.* O, — *As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.*

*Re-enter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head.*

Pyr. *An if I were, fair Thisbe, I were only thine: —*

*Quin.* O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. — Pray, masters! fly, masters! — Help!

[*Exit with SNUG, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.*

*Puck.* I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,  
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:  
Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,

<sup>5</sup> *Juvenal* is *youth*; so used several times by Shakespeare.

<sup>6</sup> The *cues* were the last words of the preceding speech, which served as a hint to him who was to speak next.

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire ;  
 And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,  
 Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.<sup>7</sup> [Exit.

*Bot.* Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afraid.

*Re-enter* SNOUT.

*Snout.* O Bottom, thou art changed ! what do I see on thee !

*Bot.* What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? [Exit SNOUT.

*Re-enter* QUINCE.

*Quin.* Bless thee, Bottom ! bless thee ! thou art translated. [Exit.

*Bot.* I see their knavery : this is to make an ass of me ; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can : I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.

[Sings.] *The ousel-cock so black of hue,  
 With orange-tawny bill,*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The Protean versatility of Puck is celebrated in whatsoever has come down to us respecting him. Thus in an old tract entitled *Robin Goodfellow, his Mad Pranks and Merry Jest* :

Thou hast the power to change thy shape  
 To horse, to hog, to dog, to ape.

<sup>8</sup> In the opinion of some commentators, the Poet or Bottom is a little out here in his ornithology. This opinion has probably arisen from a change in the use of the name since Shakespeare's day; *ousel* being then used to denote the *blackbird*. Bottom's *orange-tawny* bill accords with what Yarrel says of the blackbird : " The beak and the edges of the eyelids in the adult male are *gamboge yellow*." The *whistling* of the blackbird is thus noted in Spenser's *Epithalamion* :

The merry Larke hir mattins sings aloft;  
 The Thrush replies; the Mavis descant playes;  
 The *Ouzell shrills*; the Ruddock warbles soft.

*The throstle with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill; —*

*Tita.* [*Awaking.*] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

*Bot.* [*Sings.*]

*The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
The plain-song cuckoo<sup>9</sup> gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
And dares not answer nay; —*

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie,<sup>10</sup> though he cry *cuckoo* never so?

*Tita.* I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again :  
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note ;  
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape ;  
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me,  
On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.

*Bot.* Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that : and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days ; — the more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek<sup>11</sup> upon occasion.

*Tita.* Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

<sup>9</sup> The cuckoo is called *plain-song*, as having no variety of note, but singing in a monotone, after the manner of the ancient simple *chant*.

<sup>10</sup> "Set his wit to a bird" is *contradict, argue with, or match himself against* a bird. In *Troilus and Cressida*, ii. 1, Achilles says to Ajax, "Will you set your wit to a fool's?" and Thersites replies, "No, I warrant you; for a fool's will shame it."

<sup>11</sup> Bottom is chuckling over the wit he has just vented. *Gleek* is from the Anglo-Saxon *glig*, and means *catch, entrap, play upon, scoff at*. So says Richardson. *Glee* is from the same original.

*Bot.* Not so, neither : but if I had wit<sup>12</sup> enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

*Tita.* Out of this wood do not desire to go :  
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.  
I am a spirit of no common rate, —  
The Summer still doth tend upon my state ;  
And I do love thee : therefore go with me ;  
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee ;  
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,  
And sing, while thou on pressèd flowers dost sleep :  
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,  
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go. —  
Peas-blossom ! Cobweb ! Moth ! and Mustard-seed !

*Enter* PEAS-BLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, *and* MUSTARD-SEED.

*Peas.* Ready.

*Cob.* And I.

*Moth.* And I.

*Mus.* And I.

*All Four.* Where shall we go ?

*Tita.* Be kind and courteous to this gentleman, —  
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes ;  
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,  
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries ;  
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,<sup>13</sup>  
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,  
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,  
To have my love to bed and to arise ;  
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies

<sup>12</sup> This is one instance out of many in these plays, showing that *wit* and *wisdom* were used as equivalents.

<sup>13</sup> What we call *bumble-bees* ; so called from their loud *humming*.

To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes :  
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

*Peas.* Hail, mortal !

*Cob.* Hail !

*Moth.* Hail !

*Mus.* Hail !

*Bot.* I cry your Worships mercy<sup>14</sup> heartily. — I beseech your Worship's name.

*Cob.* Cobweb.

*Bot.* I shall desire you of more acquaintance,<sup>15</sup> good Master Cobweb : if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you. — Your name, honest gentleman ?

*Peas.* Peas-blossom.

*Bot.* I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash,<sup>16</sup> your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peas-blossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. — Your name, I beseech you, sir ?

*Mus.* Mustard-seed.

*Bot.* Good Master Mustard-seed, I know your patience well :<sup>17</sup> that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentlemen of your House : I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Mustard-seed.

<sup>14</sup> "I cry you mercy" is an old phrase for "I ask your pardon."

<sup>15</sup> A common form of speech in the Poet's time. So in *The Merchant*, iv. 1: "I humbly do desire your *Grace of pardon*."

<sup>16</sup> *Squash* seems to have been originally used of such immature vegetables as were eaten in the state of immaturity. In Shakespeare's time, the word had got appropriated to an immature peascod. When or how it came to its present meaning I cannot say.

<sup>17</sup> Bottom here seems rather too deep for the editors. Does he mean "your patience" in suffering "that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef" to devour "many a gentleman of your House" ? It has been proposed to read "*passing well*"; but this might be a parlous defeature of Bottom's idiom.

his scene, and enter'd in a

When I did him at this advantage take,  
 An ass's nowl<sup>4</sup> I fixèd on his head :  
 Anon his Thisbe must be answerèd,  
 And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,  
 As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,  
 Or russet-pated choughs,<sup>5</sup> many in sort,  
 Rising and cawing at the gun's report,  
 Sever themselves, and madly sweep the sky ;  
 So, at his sight, away his fellows fly ;  
 And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls ;  
 He *murder* cries, and help from Athens calls.  
 Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,  
 Made senseless things begin to do them wrong ;  
 For briars and thorns at their apparel snatch ;  
 Some, sleeves, — some, hats ; — from yielders all things  
 catch.

I led them on in this distracted<sup>6</sup> fear,  
 And left sweet Pyramus translated there :  
 When, in that moment, — so it came to pass, —  
 Titania waked, and straightway loved an ass.

*Obe.* This falls out better than I could devise.  
 But hast thou yet latch'd<sup>7</sup> the Athenian's eyes

<sup>4</sup> *Nowl* is an old word for *head*. Perhaps it is but a special application of *knoll*; that use growing from the rounded shape of what we now mean by that word.

<sup>5</sup> Yarrell, in his *History of British Birds*, says that Shakespeare here "speaks of the russet-pated (grey-headed) Choughs; which term is applicable to the Jackdaw, but not the real Choughs."

<sup>6</sup> *Distracted* for *distracting*; the passive form with the active tense. See page 25, note 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Latch'd*, or *letch'd*, is *licked* or *smeared over*. From the French *lecher*.

... , read him to  
... ks with a watery eye ;  
... she weeps, weeps every little flower,  
Lamenting some enforced chastity.  
Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently. [Exeunt.

SCENE II. — *Another Part of the Wood.*

*Enter OBERON.*

*Obe.* I wonder if Titania be awaked ;  
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,  
Which she must dote on in extremity.  
Here comes my messenger. —

*Enter PUCK.*

How now, mad spirit !  
What night-rule<sup>1</sup> now about this haunted grove ?

*Puck.* My mistress with a monster is in love.  
Near to her close and consecrated bower,  
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,  
A crew of patches,<sup>2</sup> rude mechanicals,  
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,  
Were met together to rehearse a play,  
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.  
The shallowest thickskin of that barren sort,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Night-rule* is such rule as is apt to govern in the *night* ; *revelry*.

<sup>2</sup> This use of *patch* is said to have grown from the motley or *patch-work* dress worn by the "allowed Fool." At all events, it came to be used generally as a term of contempt for a simpleton or a clown. Shakespeare has it repeatedly in that sense.

<sup>3</sup> *Sort* here means *pack*, or *company* ; the same as *crew*, a little before. The Poet has several instances of such use ; as, "a *sort* of traitors," and "a *sort* of tinkers," and "a *sort* of vagabonds." "Many in a *sort*," a little after, is another instance.



With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

*Puck.* I took him sleeping, — that is finish'd too, —  
And the Athenian woman by his side ;  
That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

*Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS.*

*Obe.* Stand close : this is the same Athenian.

*Puck.* This is the woman, but not this the man.

*Dem.* O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?  
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

*Her.* Now I but chide ; but I should use thee worse,  
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.  
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,  
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in knee-deep,  
And kill me too.

The Sun was not so true unto the day  
As he to me : would he have stol'n away  
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon  
This whole Earth may be bored ; and that the Moon  
May through the centre creep, and so displease  
Her brother's noontide with th' Antipodes.  
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him ;  
So should a murderer look, — so dread, so grim.

*Dem.* So should the murder'd look ; and so should I,  
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty :  
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,  
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

*Her.* What's this to my Lysander? where is he?  
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

*Dem.* I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

*Her.* Out, dog ! out, cur ! thou drivest me past the bounds  
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?

Henceforth be never number'd among men !  
 O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake !  
 Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,  
 And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch !<sup>8</sup>  
 Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?  
 An adder did it ; for with doubler tongue  
 Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

*Dem.* You spend your passion on a misprised mood :<sup>9</sup>  
 I am not guilty of Lysander's blood ;  
 Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

*Her.* I pray thee, tell me, then, that he is well.

*Dem.* An if I could, what should I get therefor?

*Her.* A privilege, never to see me more.

And from thy hated presence part I so :  
 See me no more, whether he be dead or no. [*Exit.*

*Dem.* There is no following her in this fierce vein :  
 Here therefore for a while I will remain.  
 So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow  
 For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe ;  
 Which now in some slight measure it will pay,  
 If for his tender here I make some stay.

[*Lies down and sleeps.*

*Obe.* What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite,  
 And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight :  
 Of thy misprision must perforce ensue  
 Some true-love turn'd, and not a false turn'd true.

*Puck.* Then fate o'er-rules ; that, one man holding troth,

<sup>8</sup> A *touch* anciently signified a *trick* or *feat*. Ascham has "The shrewd *touches* of many curst boys." And, in the old story of *Howleglas*, "For at all times he did some mad *touch*."

<sup>9</sup> "On a misprised mood" probably means *in a mistaken manner*. *On* and *in* were sometimes used interchangeably; as also *mood* and *mode* appear to have been. To *misprise* is to *prise amiss*, or to *misapprehend*.

A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

*Obe.* About the wood go swifter than the wind,  
And Helena of Athens look thou find :  
All fancy-sick she is, and pale of cheer<sup>10</sup>  
With sighs of love, that cost the fresh blood dear :<sup>11</sup>  
By some illusion see thou bring her here :  
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

*Puck.* I go, I go ; look how I go, —  
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

[*Exit.*

*Obe.* Flower of this purple dye,  
Hit with Cupid's archery,  
Sink in apple of his eye !

[*Squeezes the flower on* DEMETRIUS'S *eyelids.*

When his love he doth espy,  
Let her shine as gloriously  
As the Venus of the sky. —  
When thou wakest, if she be by,  
Beg of her for remedy.

*Re-enter* PUCK.

*Puck.* Captain of our fairy band,  
Helena is here at hand ;  
And the youth, mistook by me,  
Pleading for a lover's fee.  
Shall we their fond pageant see ?  
Lord, what fools these mortals be !

<sup>10</sup> *Cheer* is from the old French *chère*, which Cotgrave thus explains : "The face, visage, countenance, favour, looks, aspect." Hence it naturally came to mean that which *affects* the face, or gives it expression. — Here, again, *fancy-sick* is *love-sick*. See page 30, note 19.

<sup>11</sup> According to the old notion, that every sigh consumed a drop of blood. So Shakespeare has the phrases, "blood-consuming sighs," "blood-drinking sighs," and blood-sucking sighs."

*Obe.* Stand aside : the noise they make  
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

*Puck.* Then will two at once woo one, —  
That must needs be sport alone ;<sup>12</sup>  
And those things do best please me  
That befall preposterously.

*Re-enter HELENA and LYSANDER.*

*Lys.* Why should you think that I should<sup>13</sup> woo in  
scorn?

Scorn and derision never come in tears :  
Look, when I vow, I weep : and vows so born,  
In their nativity all truth appears.

How can these things in me seem scorn to you,  
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true?

*Hel.* You do advance your cunning more and more.  
When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray !  
These vows are Hermia's : will you give her o'er?  
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh :  
Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,  
Will even weigh ; and both as light as tales.

*Lys.* I had no judgment when to her I swore.

*Hel.* Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

*Lys.* Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

*Dem.* [*Awaking.*] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, di-  
vine !

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?  
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show  
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow !

<sup>12</sup> *Rare* sport ; sport so good as to spoil all other.

<sup>13</sup> *Should* where present usage requires *would*. The auxiliaries *could*, *should*, and *would* were often used indiscriminately.

That pure congealèd white, high Taurus' snow,  
 Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow  
 When thou hold'st up thy hand : O, let me kiss  
 This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss !<sup>14</sup>

*Hel.* O spite ! O Hell ! I see you all are bent  
 To set against me for your merriment :  
 If you were civil and knew courtesy,  
 You would not do me thus much injury.  
 Can you not hate me, as I know you do,  
 But you must join in souls<sup>15</sup> to mock me too ?  
 If you were men, as men you are in show,  
 You would not use a gentle lady so ;  
 To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,  
 When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.  
 You both are rivals, and love Hermia ;  
 And now both rivals, to mock Helena :  
 A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,  
 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes  
 With your derision ! none of noble sort<sup>16</sup>  
 Would so offend a virgin, and extort  
 A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

*Lys.* You are unkind, Demetrius ; be not so ;  
 For you love Hermia : this you know I know :

<sup>14</sup> So in *Antony and Cleopatra*, iii. 13 : " My playfellow, your hand ; this kingly *seal*, and plighter of high hearts." *Princess* here plainly has the force of the surperlative ; the *paragon*, the *purest* of white. — This pretty piece of extravagance reminds me of Spenser's *Una* :

A lovely ladie rode him faire beside,  
 Upon a lowly ass more white than snow ;  
 Yet she much whiter.

<sup>15</sup> That is, join *heartily*, or *in earnest* ; be *of the same mind*.

<sup>16</sup> *Sort* here means *rank* or *quality* ; a common use of the word in Shakespeare's time. So in *Henry V.*, iv. 7 : " It may be his enemy is a gentleman of great *sort*."

And here, with all good will, with all my heart,  
 In Hermia's love I yield you up my part ;  
 And yours of Helena to me bequeath,  
 Whom I do love, and will do to my death.

*Hel.* Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

*Dem.* Lysander, keep thy Hermia ; I will none :  
 If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.  
 My heart with her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,  
 And now to Helen is it home return'd,  
 There to remain.

*Lys.* Helen, it is not so.

*Dem.* Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,  
 Lest, to thy peril, thou aby<sup>17</sup> it dear.  
 Look where thy love comes ; yonder is thy dear.

*Re-enter HERMIA.*

*Her.* Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,  
 The ear more quick of apprehension makes ;  
 Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,  
 It pays the hearing double recompense. —  
 Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found ;  
 Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.  
 But why unkindly didst thou leave me so ?

*Lys.* Why should I stay, whom love doth press to go ?

*Her.* What love could press Lysander from my side ?

*Lys.* Lysander's love, that would not let him bide, —  
 Fair Helena ; who more engilds the night

<sup>17</sup> *Aby* or *abie* means to *suffer for*. Skinner thinks it is formed, not from *abide* but from *buy*; though the two are often confounded. So in *The Faerie Queene*, ii. 8, 33: "That direfull stroke thou dearely shalt *aby*." And in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*: "Foolhardy knight, full soon thou shalt *aby* this fond reproach ; thy body will I bang."

Than all yon fiery O's and eyes of light.  
 Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,  
 The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

*Her.* You speak not as you think: it cannot be.

*Hcl.* Lo, she is one of this confederacy!  
 Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three  
 To fashion this false sport in spite of me. —  
 Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!  
 Have you conspired, have you with these contrived  
 To bait<sup>18</sup> me with this foul derision?  
 Is all the counsel that we two have shared,  
 The sister-vows, the hours that we have spent,  
 When we have chid the hasty-footed time  
 For parting us, — O, and is all forgot?  
 All school-day friendship, childhood innocence?  
 We, Hermia, like two artificial<sup>19</sup> gods,  
 Have with our needls<sup>20</sup> created both one flower,  
 Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,  
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key;  
 As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,  
 Had been incorporate.<sup>21</sup> So we grew together,

<sup>18</sup> To *bait* is to *worry*, to *bark at*, as bears used to be baited by dogs in the old bear-baiting times. So in *The Faerie Queene*, ii. 8, 42: "A salvage bull, whom two fierce mastives *bayt*."

<sup>19</sup> *Artificial* is here used for the *worker* in art, not the *work*; like its Latin original *artifex*, artist, or artificer.

<sup>20</sup> *Needl* was a common contraction of *needle*.

<sup>21</sup> Gibbon, in his account of the friendship between the great Cappadocian saints, Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, *Decline and Fall*, chap. xxvii., note 29, refers to this passage, and quotes a parallel passage from Gregory's Poem on his own Life. The historian adds, "Shakespeare had never read the poems of Gregory Nazianzen, he was ignorant of the Greek language; but his mother-tongue, the language of Nature, is the same in Cappadocia and in Britain."

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted ;  
But yet a union in partition,  
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem ;  
So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart ;  
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,  
Due but to one, and crownèd with one crest.<sup>22</sup>  
And will you rend our ancient love asunder,  
To join with men in scorning your poor friend ?  
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly :  
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for't,  
Though I alone do feel the injury.

*Her.* I am amazèd at your passionate words.  
I scorn you not : it seems that you scorn me.

*Hel.* Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,  
To follow me, and praise my eyes and face ?  
And made your other love, Demetrius —  
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot —  
To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,  
Precious, celestial ? Wherefore speaks he this  
To her he hates ? and wherefore doth Lysander  
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,  
And tender me, forsooth, affection,  
But by your setting on, by your consent ?  
What though I be not so in grace as you,  
So hung upon with love, so fortunate ;  
But miserable most, to love unloved ?  
This you should pity rather than despise.

*Her.* I understand not what you mean by this.

*Hel.* Ay, do, perséver, counterfeit sad looks ;

<sup>22</sup> Douce thus explains this passage: "We had *two of the first*, i.e., *bodies*, like the double coats in heraldry that belong to man and wife as *one person*, but which, like our *single heart*, have but *one crest*."



Make mouths upon me when I turn my back ;  
Wink each at other ; hold the sweet jest up :  
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.  
If you had any pity, grace, or manners,  
You would not make me such an argument.<sup>23</sup>  
But, fare ye well : 'tis partly mine own fault ;  
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

*Lys.* Stay, gentle Helena ; hear my excuse :  
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena !

*Hel.* O excellent !

*Her.* Sweet, do not scorn her so.

*Dem.* If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

*Lys.* Thou canst compel no more than she entreat :  
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers. —  
Helen, I love thee ; by my life, I do :  
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,  
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

*Dem.* I say I love thee more than he can do.

*Lys.* If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

*Dem.* Quick, come !

*Her.* Lysander, whereto tends all this ?

*Lys.* Away, you Ethiop !

*Dem.* No, no, sir : — do ;  
Seem to break loose, take on as you would follow,  
But yet come not : you are a tame man, go !

*Lys.* Hang off, thou cat, thou burr ! vile thing, let loose,  
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent !

*Her.* Why are you grown so rude ? what change is this,  
Sweet love ?

*Lys.* Thy love ! out, tawny Tartar, out !

<sup>23</sup> *Argument*, here, is *subject* or *theme of sport*.

Out, loathèd medicine ! hated potion, hence !

*Her.* Do you not jest ?

*Hel.* Yes, sooth ;<sup>24</sup> and so do you.

*Lys.* Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

*Dem.* I would I had your bond, for I perceive  
A weak bond holds you : I'll not trust your word.

*Lys.* What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead ?  
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

*Her.* What, can you do me greater harm than hate ?  
Hate me ! wherefóre ? O me ! what means my love ?  
Am not I Hermia ? are you not Lysander ?  
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.  
Since night you loved me ; yet since night you left me :  
Why, then you left me, — O, the gods forbid ! —  
In earnest, shall I say ?

*Lys.* Ay, by my life ;  
And never did desire to see thee more.  
Therefore be out of hope, of question, doubt ;  
Be certain, nothing truer ; 'tis no jest  
That I do hate thee, and love Helena.

*Her.* O me ! — you juggler ! you canker-blossom !<sup>25</sup>  
You thief of love ! what, have you come by night  
And stol'n my love's heart from him ?

*Hel.* Fine, i'faith !  
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,  
No touch of bashfulness ? What, will you tear

<sup>24</sup> *Sooth* is *truth* ; as in *soothsayer*, which originally meant *truth-speaker*.

<sup>25</sup> The *canker* is a worm that preys on the leaves or buds of flowers, always beginning in the middle. So before, in this play : "Some to kill *cankers* in the musk-rose buds." — The verse requires *juggler* here to be a trisyllable. It appears that divers similar words were sometimes so pronounced.

Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?

Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

*Her.* Puppet! why, so; ay, that way goes the game.

Now I perceive that she hath made compare

Between our statures; she hath urged her height;

And with her personage, her tall personage,

Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him. —

And are you grown so high in his esteem,

Because I am so dwarfish and so low?

How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;

How low am I? I am not yet so low

But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

*Hel.* I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,

Let her not hurt me: I was never curst;<sup>26</sup>

I have no gift at all in shrewishness;

I am a right maid for my cowardice:

Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,

Because she's something lower than myself,

That I can match her.

*Her.* Lower! hark, again.

*Hel.* Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.

I evermore did love you, Hermia,

Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;

Save that, in love unto Demetrius,

I told him of your stealth unto this wood.

He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;

But he hath chid me hence, and threaten'd me

To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:

And now, so you will let me quiet go,

To Athens will I bear my folly back,

<sup>26</sup> *Curst* is *shrewish, spiteful, scolding*; often so used.

And follow you no further : let me go :

You see how simple and how fond I am.

*Her.* Why, get you gone : who is't that hinders you?

*Hel.* A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

*Her.* What, with Lysander?

*Hel.* With Demetrius.

*Lys.* Be not afraid ; she shall not harm thee, Helen.

*Dem.* No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

*Hel.* O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd !

She was a vixen when she went to school ;

And, though she be but little, she is fierce.

*Her.* Little again ! nothing but low and little ! —

Why will you suffer her to flout me thus ?

Let me come to her.

*Lys.* Get you gone, you dwarf ;

You minimus, of hindering knot-grass<sup>27</sup> made ;

You bead, you acorn.

*Dem.* You are too officious

In her behalf that scorns your services.

Let her alone : speak not of Helena ;

Take not her part ; for, if thou dost intend<sup>28</sup>

Never so little show of love to her,

Thou shalt aby it.<sup>29</sup>

*Lys.* Now she holds me not ;

<sup>27</sup> *Knot-grass*, it seems, was anciently supposed to stop the growth of those to whom it was applied. So in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, ii. 2 : " The child's a fatherless child, and say they should put him into a strait pair of gaskins, 'twere worse than *knot-grass* ; he would *never grow* after it."

<sup>28</sup> *Intend* with the sense of *pretend* ; the Poet has it repeatedly so. In fact, the two words were used interchangeably, and we often have either in the sense of the other.

<sup>29</sup> *Suffer* or *pay dearly* for it ; *rue* it. See page 72, note 17.

Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,  
Of thine or mine,<sup>30</sup> is most in Helena.

*Dem.* Follow ! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jowl.<sup>31</sup>

[*Exeunt* LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS.

*Her.* You, mistress, all this coil is 'long<sup>32</sup> of you :  
Nay, go not back.

*Hel.* I will not trust you, I,  
Nor longer stay in your curst company.  
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray ;  
My legs are longer though, to run away.

[*Exit.*

*Her.* I am amazed, and know not what to say.

[*Exit.*

*Obe.* This is thy negligence : still thou mistakest,  
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.

*Puck.* Believe me, King of shadows, I mistook.  
Did you not tell me I should know the man  
By the Athenian garments he had on ?  
And so far blameless proves my enterprise,  
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes ;  
And so far am I glad it so did sort,<sup>33</sup>  
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

*Obe.* Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight :  
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night ;  
The starry welkin cover thou anon  
With drooping fog, as black as Acheron ;

<sup>30</sup> This is in accordance with old usage. We have another instance in *The Tempest*, ii. 1 : "Which, of he or Adrian, for a good wager, first begins to crow?"

<sup>31</sup> That is, *side by side*, or *with cheeks close together*. *Jowl* is, properly, *jaw*, or *jaw-bone*.

<sup>32</sup> *Along of* is an old phrase exactly equivalent to *because of*; so used by all writers in Shakespeare's time, and occasionally used still. — *Coil* is *stir*, *bustle*, *turmoil*. See *The Tempest*, page 60, note 56.

<sup>33</sup> *Sort*, here, is *fall out*, *happen*, or *come to pass*. So in *Much Ado*, v. 4 : "I am glad that all things *sort* so well." The usage was common.

And lead these testy rivals so astray,  
 As one come not within another's way.  
 Like to Lysander sometime <sup>34</sup> frame thy tongue,  
 Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong ;  
 And sometime rail thou like Demetrius ;  
 And from each other look thou lead them thus,  
 Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep  
 With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep :  
 Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye ;  
 Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,  
 To take from thence all error with his <sup>35</sup> might,  
 And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.  
 When they next wake, all this derision  
 Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision ;  
 And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,  
 With league whose date till death shall never end.  
 Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,  
 I'll to my Queen and beg her Indian boy ;  
 And then I will her charmed eye release  
 From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

*Puck.* My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,  
 For Night's swift dragons <sup>36</sup> cut the clouds full fast,  
 And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger ;

<sup>34</sup> *Sometime* for *sometimes*. See page 41, note 7.

<sup>35</sup> *His* for *its*, referring to *liquor* ; *its* not being then an accepted word. See *Hamlet*, page 47, note 8.

<sup>36</sup> The chariot of Madam Night was anciently drawn by a team of dragons, that is, serpents, who were thought to be always awake, because they slept with their eyes open ; and therefore were selected for this purpose. So in *Cymbeline*, ii. 2 : " Swift, swift, ye *dragons* of the night." And in Milton's *Il Penseroso* :

Smoothing the rugged brow of night,  
 While Cynthia checks her *dragon* yoke.

At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,  
Troop home to churchyards : damnèd spirits all,  
That in crossways and floods have burial,<sup>37</sup>  
Already to their wormy beds are gone ;  
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,  
They wilfully themselves exile from light,  
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

*Obe.* But we are spirits of another sort :  
I with the Morning's love<sup>38</sup> have oft made sport ;  
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,  
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,  
Opening on Neptune, with fair-blessèd beams  
Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams.  
But, notwithstanding, haste ; make no delay :  
We may effect this business yet ere day.

[*Exit.*

*Puck.* Up and down, up and down,  
I will lead them up and down :  
I am fear'd in field and town :  
Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one.

*Re-enter* LYSANDER.

*Lys.* Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.

*Puck.* Here, villain ; drawn and ready. Where art thou?

<sup>37</sup> The ghosts of self-murderers, who were buried in crossroads ; and of those who being drowned were condemned (according to the opinion of the ancients) to wander for a hundred years, as the rites of sepulture had never been regularly bestowed on their bodies. See the passage in *Hamlet*, act i, sc. 1 : " I have heard, the cock that is the trumpet to the morn," &c.

<sup>38</sup> The allusion is, probably, to Cephalus, who was a mighty hunter. Aurora became enamoured of him, and took him for her *love*. So in *The Phoenix Nest*, 1593 : " Aurora now began to rise againe from watrie couch and from old Tithon's side, in hope to *kisse* upon Acteian plaine yong *Cephalus*."

*Lys.* I will be with thee straight.

*Puck.* Follow me, then,  
To plainer ground. [*Exit* LYSANDER, *as following the voice.*]

*Re-enter* DEMETRIUS.

*Dem.* Lysander ! speak again :  
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled ?  
Speak ! in some bush ? where dost thou hide thy head ?

*Puck.* Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,  
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,  
And wilt not come ? Come, recreant ; come, thou child ;  
I'll whip thee with a rod : he is defiled  
That draws a sword on thee.

*Dem.* Yea, art thou there ?

*Puck.* Follow my voice : we'll try no manhood here.

[*Exeunt.*]

*Re-enter* LYSANDER.

*Lys.* He goes before me and still dares me on :  
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.  
The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I :  
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly ;  
That fall'n am I in dark uneven way,  
And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] — Come, thou gentle  
day !

For, if but once thou show me thy gray light,  
I'll find Demetrius, and revenge this spite. [*Sleeps.*]

*Re-enter* PUCK and DEMETRIUS.

*Puck.* Ho, ho, ho, ho !<sup>39</sup> Coward, why comest thou not ?

<sup>39</sup> A strong dash of malignant, or mischievous sportiveness belongs to this character. There was an old local proverb, "To laugh like Robin Goodfellow"; which probably meant, to laugh in mockery or scorn. In



*Dem.* Abide me, if thou darest ; for well I wot  
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,  
And darest not stand, nor look me in the face.  
Where art thou now ?

*Puck.* Come hither : I am here.

*Dem.* Nay, then thou mock'st me. Thou shalt 'by<sup>40</sup>  
this dear,  
If ever I thy face by daylight see :  
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me  
To measure out my length on this cold bed.  
By day's approach look to be visited. [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

*Re-enter HELENA.*

*Hel.* O weary night, O long and tedious night,  
Abate thy hours ! Shine comforts from the East,  
That I may back to Athens by daylight,  
From these that my poor company detest :  
And sleep, that sometime shuts up sorrow's eye,  
Steal me awhile from mine own company.

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

*Puck.* Yet but three ? Come one more ;  
Two of both kinds makes up four.  
Here she comes, curst and sad :  
Cupid is a knavish lad,  
Thus to make poor females mad.

*Re-enter HERMIA.*

*Her.* Never so weary, never so in woe ;

the old Moral-plays, as also in the older Miracle-plays, the Devil was generally one of the leading characters, and his laughter of fiendish mirth was always expressed as in the text. So in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*: "But, Diccon, Diccon, did not the Devil cry *ho, ho, ho* ?"

<sup>40</sup> 'By for *aby*, as before explained ; page 78, note 29.

Bedabbled with the dew, and torn with briers ;  
 I can no further crawl, no further go ;  
 My legs can keep no pace with my desires.  
 Here will I rest me till the break of day.  
 Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray !

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

*Puck.* On the ground sleep sound :  
 I'll apply to your eye,  
 Gentle lover, remedy.

[*Squeezing the herb on LYSANDER'S eyelids.*]

When thou wakest, thou takest  
 True delight in the sight  
 Of thy former lady's eye :  
 And the country proverb known,  
 That every man should take his own,  
 In your waking shall be shown :  
 Jack shall have Jill ;<sup>41</sup>  
 Nought shall go ill ;

The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.

[*Exit.*]

<sup>41</sup> This proverb is quoted repeatedly in old plays ; and its meaning is much the same as that of the other proverbial sayings here clustered with it. So in *Love's Labours Lost*, v. 2 : " Our wooing doth not end like an old play ; *Jack hath not Jill.*" And in Heywood, 1598 : " Come chat at home, *all is well, Jack shall have Jill.*"

## ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *The Wood.* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,  
and HERMIA, *lying asleep.*

*Enter* TITANIA and BOTTOM ; PEAS-BLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH,  
MUSTARD-SEED, and other Fairies attending ; OBERON be-  
*hind unseen.*

*Tita.* Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,  
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,<sup>1</sup>  
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

*Bot.* Where's Peas-blossom?

*Peas.* Ready.

*Bot.* Scratch my head, Peas-blossom. — Where's Monsieur  
Cobweb?

*Cob.* Ready.

*Bot.* Monsieur Cobweb, good monsieur, get your weapons  
in your hand, and kill me a red-hipp'd humble-bee on the  
top of a thistle ; and, good monsieur, bring me the honey-  
bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, monsieur ;  
and, good monsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not ; I  
would be loth to have you overflown with a honey-bag, sig-  
nior. — Where's Monsieur Mustard-seed?

*Mus.* Ready.

*Bot.* Give me your neif,<sup>2</sup> Monsieur Mustard-seed. Pray  
you, leave your courtesy, good monsieur.

<sup>1</sup> To *coy* is to *stroke* with the hand, to *fondle*, or *caress*.

<sup>2</sup> *Neif* is an old word for *fst*. So in *2 Henry IV*, ii. 4: "Sweet knight,  
I kiss thy *neif*."

*Mus.* What's your will?

*Bot.* Nothing, good monsieur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb<sup>3</sup> to scratch. I must to the barber's, monsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

*Tita.* What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

*Bot.* I have a reasonable good ear in music: let us have the tongs and the bones. [*Rough music.*]

*Tita.* Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

*Bot.* Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle<sup>4</sup> of hay: good hay, sweet hay hath no fellow.

*Tita.* I have a venturous fairy that shall seek  
The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee thence new nuts.

*Bot.* I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me: I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

*Tita.* Fairies, be gone, and be awhile away. —

[*Exeunt Fairies.*]

Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms:  
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
Gently entwist; <sup>5</sup> the female ivy so

<sup>3</sup> Bottom is here in a strange predicament, and has not had time to perfect himself in the nomenclature of his fairy attendants; and so he gets the names somewhat mixed. Probably he is here addressing Cavalery Peasblossom, but gives him the wrong name.

<sup>4</sup> *Bottle* is an old word for *bundle*, from the French *boteau*. Richardson says, "It is still common in the northern parts of England to call a truss or bundle of hay a *bottle*."

<sup>5</sup> Odd work has sometimes been made with this passage by explaining *woodbine* and *honeysuckle* as meaning the same thing; and Singer's explanation still proceeds upon an identity of the two plants. In Jonson's *Vision of Delight* we have the following: "Behold, how the blue *bindweed* doth itself infold with *honeysuckle*." Upon this passage Gifford notes as follows:

Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.

O, how I love thee ! how I dote on thee ! [ *They sleep.*

*Enter Puck.*

*Obe.* [ *Advancing.* ] Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight ?

Her dotage now I do begin to pity :  
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,  
Seeking sweet favours <sup>6</sup> for this hateful fool,  
I did upbraid her, and fall out with her ;  
For she his hairy temples then had rounded  
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers ;  
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds  
Was wont to swell, like round and orient pearls,  
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes,  
Like tears, that did their own disgrace bewail.  
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,  
And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,  
I then did ask of her her changeling child ;  
Which straight she gave me, and her fairies sent,  
To bear him to my bower in Fairy-land.  
And, now I have the boy, I will undo  
This hateful imperfection of her eyes :  
And, gentle Puck, take this transformèd scalp  
From off the head of this Athenian swain ;  
That he, awaking when the other do,  
May all to Athens back again repair,

"The woodbine of Shakespeare is the blue bindweed of Jonson : in many of our counties woodbine is still the name for the great convolvulus."

<sup>6</sup> So in Greene's *Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, quoted by Dyce : "These with syren-like allurements so entised these quaint squires, that they bestowed all their *flowers* upon them for *favours*."

And think no more of this night's accidents,  
 But as the fierce vexation of a dream.  
 But first I will release the fairy Queen.

Be as thou wast wont to be ;

[*Touching her eyes with an herb.*]

See as thou wast wont to see :

Dian's bud<sup>7</sup> o'er Cupid's flower

Hath such force and blessèd power.

Now, my Titania ; wake you, my sweet Queen.

*Tita.* My Oberon ! what visions have I seen !

Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

*Obe.* There lies your love.

*Tita.* How came these things to pass ?

O, how mine eyes do loath his visage now !

*Obe.* Silence awhile. — Robin, take off this head. —

Titania, music call ; and strike more dead

Than common sleep, of all these five the sense.

*Tita.* Music, ho ! music, such as charmeth sleep !

*Puck.* Now, when thou wakest, with thine own fool's eyes  
 peep.

*Obe.* Sound, music ! [*Still music.*] — Come, my Queen,  
 take hands with me,

And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

Now thou and I are new in amity,

And will to-morrow midnight solemnly

Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,

And bless it to all fair posterity :

There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be

<sup>7</sup> *Dian's Bud* is the bud of the *Agnus Castus*, or *Chaste Tree*. "The vertue of this hearbe is, that he will kepe man and woman *chaste*." *Macer's Herbal*, by Lynacre. Cupid's flower is the *Viola tricolour*, or *Love-in-Idleness*.

Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

*Puck.* Fairy King, attend, and mark :  
I do hear the morning lark.

*Obe.* Then, my Queen, in silence sad,<sup>8</sup>  
Trip we after the night's shade :  
We the globe can compass soon,  
Swifter than the wandering Moon.

*Tita.* Come, my lord ; and in our flight  
Tell me how it came this night  
That I sleeping here was found  
With these mortals on the ground.

[*Exeunt.*

[*Horns winded within.*

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and Train.*

*The.* Go, one of you, find out the forester ;  
For now our observation<sup>9</sup> is perform'd ;  
And, since we have the vaward<sup>10</sup> of the day,  
My love shall hear the music of my hounds :  
Uncouple in the western valley ; let them go ; —  
Dispatch, I say, and find the forester. — [*Exit an Attend.*  
We will, fair Queen, up to the mountain's top,  
And mark the musical confusion  
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

*Hip.* I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,  
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the boar  
With hounds of Sparta : never did I hear  
Such gallant chiding ;<sup>11</sup> for, besides the groves,

<sup>8</sup> *Sad* here signifies only *grave, serious*. Often so.

<sup>9</sup> The honours due to the morning of *May*. So in a former scene : " To do *observance* to a morn of *May*."

<sup>10</sup> The early part, the *vanward*, of the day.

<sup>11</sup> *Chiding* means here the *cry of hounds*. To *chide* is used sometimes for to *sound*, or *make a noise*, without any reference to scolding. So in *Henry VIII.* : " As doth a rock against the *chiding* flood."

The skies, the fountains, every region near  
Seem'd all one mutual cry : I never heard  
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

*The.* My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,  
So flew'd, so sanded ;<sup>12</sup> and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew ;  
Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls ;  
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,  
Each under each.<sup>13</sup> A cry more tuneable  
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,  
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly :  
Judge when you hear. — But, soft ! what nymphs are these ?

*Ege.* My lord, this is my daughter here asleep ; .  
And this, Lysander ; this Demetrius is ;  
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena :  
I wonder of their being here together.

*The.* No doubt they rose up early to observe  
The rite of May ; and, hearing our intent,  
Came here in grace of our solemnity. —  
But speak, Egeus ; is not this the day  
That Hermia should give answer of her choice ?

<sup>12</sup> The *flew's* are the large chops of a deep-mouthed hound. — *Sanded* means of a *sandy colour*, which is one of the true denotements of a blood-hound.

<sup>13</sup> "Match'd in mouth like bells" is with their several barking-tones so pitched as to harmonize with each other, like a chime of bells. This is shown by *The Edinburgh Review* for October, 1872. "It was a ruling consideration," says the writer, "in the formation of a pack, that it should possess the musical fulness and strength of a perfect canine quire. And hounds of good voice were selected and arranged in the hunting chorus on the same general principles that govern the formation of a cathedral or any other more articulate choir." And this is fully justified by extracts from a writer contemporary with the Poet ; which, however, are too long for quotation here.



*Ege.* It is, my lord.

*The.* Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns. —

[*Exit an Attendant. Horns and shout within.* LYS.,

DEM., HEL., and HER., awake and start up.

Good morrow, friends. — Saint Valentine is past :  
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now ?

*Lys.* Pardon, my lord. [*He and the rest kneel to THESEUS.*

*The.* I pray you all, stand up.

I know you two are rival enemies :  
How comes this gentle concord in the world,  
That hatred is so far from jealousy,  
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity ?

*Lys.* My lord, I shall reply amazedly,  
Half sleep, half waking : but as yet, I swear,  
I cannot truly say how I came here ;  
But, as I think, — for truly would I speak,  
And now I do bethink me, so it is, —  
I came with Hermia hither : our intent  
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,  
Without<sup>14</sup> the peril of th' Athenian law, —

*Ege.* Enough, enough, my lord ; you have enough :  
I beg the law, the law, upon his head. —  
They would have stol'n away ; they would, Demetrius,  
Thereby to have defeated you and me,  
You of your wife, and me of my consent, —  
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

*Dem.* My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,  
Of this their purpose hither to this wood ;  
And I in fury hither follow'd them,  
Fair Helena in fancy following me.  
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power, —

<sup>14</sup> *Without* is here equivalent to *beyond*. The Poet has it repeatedly so.

But by some power it is, — my love to Hermia,  
 Melted as melts the snow, seems to me now  
 As the remembrance of an idle gaud,  
 Which in my childhood I did dote upon ;  
 And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,  
 The object, and the pleasure of mine eye,  
 Is only Helena. To her, my lord,  
 Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia :  
 But, like <sup>15</sup> in sickness, did I loathe this food ;  
 But, as in health, come to my natural taste,  
 Now do I wish it, love it, long for it,  
 And will for evermore be true to it.

*The.* Fair lovers, you are fortunately met :  
 Of this discourse we more will hear anon. —  
 Egeus, I will overbear your will ;  
 For in the temple, by-and-by, with us,  
 These couples shall eternally be knit :  
 And, for <sup>16</sup> the morning now is something worn,  
 Our purposed hunting shall be set aside. —  
 Away with us to Athens ! three and three,  
 We'll hold a feast in great solemnity. —  
 Come, my Hippolyta. [*Exeunt THE., HIP., EGE., and train.*]

*Dem.* These things seem small and undistinguishable,  
 Like far-off mountains turnèd into clouds.

*Her.* Methinks I see these things with parted eye,<sup>17</sup>  
 When every thing seems double.

*Hel.*

So methinks :

<sup>15</sup> *Like* was sometimes used with the force of the conjunction *as*. The usage still holds in some parts of the United States.

<sup>16</sup> Here, as often, *for* is equivalent to *because*, *inasmuch as*, or *since*.

<sup>17</sup> "With *parted eye*" means, apparently, with the *two eyes* acting *separately* or independently, and not together or *as one*.

And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,  
Mine own, and not mine own.<sup>18</sup>

*Dem.*

But are you sure

That we are well awake? It seems to me

That yet we sleep, we dream. — Do you not think  
The Duke was here, and bid us follow him !

*Her.* Yea ; and my father.

*Hel.*

And Hippolyta.

*Lys.* And he did bid us follow to the temple.

*Dem.* Why, then we are awake : let's follow him ;  
And, by the way, let us recount our dreams. [*Exeunt.*]

*Bot.* [*Awaking.*] When my cue comes, call me, and I  
will answer : my next is, *Most fair Pyramus*. — Heigh-ho !  
— Peter Quince ! Flute the bellows-mender ! Snout the tink-  
er ! Starveling ! — God's my life, stolen hence, and left me  
asleep ! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream,  
— past the wit of man to say what dream it was : man is but  
an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I  
was — there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,  
and methought I had, — but man is but a patch'd fool,<sup>19</sup> if  
he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man  
hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is  
not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to re-

<sup>18</sup> "As the jewel which one finds is his own and not his own ; his own, unless the loser claims it." Not a very satisfactory explanation, perhaps ; but the best that is forthcoming. How Demetrius has been Helen's own and not her own, and thus like a double man, is plain enough ; but the simile of the jewel is not so clear.

<sup>19</sup> I have once before noted the Poet's frequent use of *patch* for *fool*. In illustration of the matter, Staunton tells of his having seen a Flemish picture of the sixteenth century, "which represents a procession of masquers and mummers, led by a Fool or jester, whose dress is covered with many-coloured coarse patches from head to heel." See page 65, note 2.

port, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called *Bottom's Dream*, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of our play before the Duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it after death.<sup>20</sup> [Exit.

SCENE II. — *Athens. A Room in QUINCE'S House.*

*Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOOT, and STARVELING.*

*Quin.* Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

*Star.* He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.<sup>1</sup>

*Flu.* If he come not, then the play is marr'd: it goes not forward, doth it?

*Quin.* It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

*Flu.* No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

*Quin.* Yea, and the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

*Flu.* You must say paragon: a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught. *Enter SNUG.*

*Snug.* Masters, the Duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married: if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Of course Bottom means the make-believe death which is to form the catastrophe of "our play."

<sup>1</sup> Starveling's *transported* means the same as Snout's *translated*, used before; that is, *transformed* or *metamorphosed*.

<sup>2</sup> To *make a man* is an old phrase for making a man *rich* or *setting him up*; making his *fortune*.

*Flu.* O sweet bully Bottom ! Thus hath he lost sixpence a-day during his life ; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a-day : an the Duke had not given him sixpence a-day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hang'd ; he would have deserved it : sixpence a-day in Pyramus, or nothing.

*Enter* BOTTOM.

*Bot.* Where are these lads ? where are these hearts ?

*Quin.* Bottom !—O most courageous day ! O most happy hour !

*Bot.* Masters, I am to discourse wonders : but ask me not what ; for, if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out.

*Quin.* Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

*Bot.* Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the Duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps ; meet presently at the palace ; every man look o'er his part ; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred.<sup>3</sup> In any case, let Thisbe have clean linen ; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath ; and I do not doubt but to hear them say it is a sweet comedy. No more words : away ! go ; away !

[*Exeunt.*

<sup>3</sup> *Preferred* is here used in a way somewhat peculiar, meaning, not that the play is chosen in preference to others, but that it is put forward to a chance of favour ; that is, *recommended*.

## ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Athens. An Apartment in the Palace of THESEUS.*

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, Lords, and Attendants.*

*Hip.* 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

*The.* More strange than true : I never may believe

These antique fables nor these fairy toys.

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,<sup>1</sup>

Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend

More than cool reason ever comprehends.

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet

Are of imagination all compact :<sup>2</sup>

One sees more devils than vast Hell can hold, —

That is the madman : the lover, all as frantic,

Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt :

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,

Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;

And, as imagination bodies forth

The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen

Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing

A local habitation and a name.

Such tricks hath strong imagination,

That, if it would but apprehend some joy,

<sup>1</sup> To *seethe* is to *boil*; and the notion of the brains boiling in such cases was very common. So in *The Tempest*, *v.* 1: "The brains, now useless, *boil'd* within the skull." And in *The Winter's Tale*, *iii.* 3: "Would any but these *boil'd* brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty hunt this weather?"

<sup>2</sup> That is, *altogether composed* or *made up* of imagination. Spenser often uses *all* for *altogether*, and Shakespeare has both *all* and *compact* repeatedly in these senses.

It comprehends some bringer of that joy ;  
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,<sup>3</sup>  
 How easy is a bush supposed a bear !

*Hip.* But all the story of the night told over,  
 And all their minds transfigured so together,  
 More witnesseth than fancy's images,  
 And grows to something of great constancy ;<sup>4</sup>  
 But, howsoever, strange and admirable.<sup>5</sup>

*The.* Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth. —

*Enter* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, *and* HELENA.

Joy, gentle friends ! joy and fresh days of love  
 Accompany your hearts !

*Lys.* More than to us  
 Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed !

*The.* Come now ; what masques, what dances shall we  
 have,

To wear away this long age of three hours  
 Between our after-supper and bed-time ?  
 Where is our usual manager of mirth ?  
 What revels are in hand ? Is there no play,  
 To ease the anguish of a torturing hour ?  
 Call Philostrate.

*Phil.* Here, mighty Theseus.

*The.* Say, what abridgement<sup>6</sup> have you for this evening ?

<sup>3</sup> *Fear* for *danger*, or the *thing feared* ; a frequent usage.

<sup>4</sup> *Constancy* for *consistency* or *congruity* ; such as makes a story credible. One of the Latin senses of the word.

<sup>5</sup> *Howsoever* in the old sense of *at all events* ; and *admirable* in its proper Latin sense of *wonderful*.

<sup>6</sup> *Abridgment* probably means something that *abridges*, or *shortens*, the time ; a *pastime*. Or it may mean a dramatic performance, that crowds the events of a long period into a brief space of time.

What masque? what music? How shall we beguile  
The lazy time, if not with some delight?

*Phil.* There is a brief how many sports are ripe :  
Make choice of which your Highness will see first.

[*Giving a paper.*

*The.* [Reads.] *The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung  
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.*

We'll none of that : that have I told my love,  
In glory of my kinsman Hercules. —

[Reads.] *The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,  
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.*

That is an old device ; and it was play'd  
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror. —

[Reads.] *The thrice-thrice Muses mourning for the death  
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary.*

That is some satire, keen and critical,<sup>7</sup>  
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony. —

[Reads.] *A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus  
And his love Thisbe ; very tragical mirth.*

Merry and tragical ! tedious and brief !  
That is, hot ice and wondrous swarthy snow.  
How shall we find the concord of this discord ?

*Phil.* A play it is, my lord, some ten words long,  
Which is as brief as I have known a play ;  
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,  
Which makes it tedious ; for in all the play  
There is not one word apt, one player fitted :  
And tragical, my noble lord, it is ;  
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.

<sup>7</sup> *Critical* was sometimes used in the sense of *cynical* or *censorious*. So in Iago's well-known saying, *Othello*, ii. 1: "For I am nothing, if not *critical*."



Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,  
Made mine eyes water ; but more merry tears  
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

*The.* What are they that do play it?

*Phil.* Hard-handed men, that work in Athens here,  
Which never labour'd in their minds till now ;  
And now have toil'd their unbreathed<sup>8</sup> memories  
With this same play, against your nuptial.

*The.* And we will hear it.

*Phil.* No, my noble lord ;  
It is not for you : I have heard it over,  
And it is nothing, nothing in the world,  
(Unless you can find sport in their intents,)  
Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain,  
To do you service.

*The.* I will hear that play ;  
For never any thing can be amiss,  
When simpleness and duty tender it.  
Go, bring them in : — and take your places, ladies.

[*Exit PHILOSTRATE.*]

*Hip.* I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged,  
And duty in his service perishing.

*The.* Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

*Hip.* He says they can do nothing in this kind.

*The.* The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.  
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake :  
And what poor willing duty cannot do,  
Noble respect takes it in might, not merit.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Unbreathed* is *unpractised* or *unexercised*. The Poet has to *breathe* repeatedly in the opposite sense. So in *Timon of Athens*, i. 1 : "A man *breathed*, as it were, to an untirable and continue goodness."

<sup>9</sup> According to the ability of the doer, not according to the worth of the

Where I have come, great clerks have purposéd  
 To greet me with premeditated welcomes ;  
 When I have seen them shiver and look pale,  
 Make periods in the midst of sentences,  
 Throttle their practised accent in their fears,  
 And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off,  
 Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,  
 Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome ;  
 And in the modesty of fearful duty  
 I read as much as from the rattling tongue  
 Of saucy and audacious eloquence.  
 Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity,  
 In least speak most, to my capacity.

*Re-enter PHILOSTRATE.*

*Phil.* So please your Grace, the Prologue is address'd.<sup>10</sup>

*The.* Let him approach. [*Flourish of Trumpets.*]

*Enter the Prologue.*

*Pro.* *If we offend, it is with our good-will.  
 That you should think, we come not to offend,  
 But with good-will. To show our simple skill,  
 That is the true beginning of our end.  
 Consider, then, we come but in despite.  
 We do not come as minding to content you,  
 Our true intent is. All for your delight,  
 We are not here. That you should here repent you,  
 The actors are at hand ; and, by their show,*

thing done. Here, as often, *respect* is *consideration* or *regard*. — *Clerks*, in the next line, is *learned men*, or *scholars*; the old meaning of the word.

<sup>10</sup> *Address'd* is *ready, prepared*; a common use of the word. So in *Love's Labours Lost*, ii, 1: "And he and his competitors in oath were all *address'd* to meet you, gentle lady, before I came."

*You shall know all that you are like to know.*<sup>11</sup> [Exit.

*The.* This fellow doth not stand upon points.

*Lys.* He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.

*Hip.* Indeed he hath play'd on his prologue like a child on a recorder; <sup>12</sup> a sound, but not in government.

*The.* His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

*Enter the Presenter, with PYRAMUS and THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE, and LION, as in dumb-show.*

*Pres.* *Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;*  
*But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.*

*This man is Pyramus, if you would know;*

*This beauteous lady, Thisbe is certain.*

*This man, with beam and rough-cast, doth present*

*Wall, that vile wall which did these lovers sunder;*

*And through wall's chink, poor souls, they are content*

*To whisper; at the which let no man wonder.*

<sup>11</sup> Had "this fellow" stood "upon points," his speech would have read nearly as follows:

If we offend, it is with our good-will  
That you should think we come not to offend;  
But with good-will to show our simple skill:  
That is the true beginning. Of our end  
Consider then: we come; but in despite  
We do not come: as minding to content you,  
Our true intent is all for your delight.  
We are not here, that you should here repent you.  
The actors are at hand: and, by their show,  
You shall know all that you are like to know.

<sup>12</sup> *Recorder* was the name of a soft-toned instrument, something like the flute. So in *Paradise Lost*, i. 550: "Anon they move in perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood of flutes and soft recorders."

*This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,  
 Presenteth Moonshine ; for, if you will know,  
 By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn  
 To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.  
 This grisly beast, which Lion hight<sup>13</sup> by name,  
 The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,  
 Did scare away, or rather did affright ;  
 And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,  
 Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.  
 Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,  
 And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain :  
 Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,  
 He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast ;  
 And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,  
 His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,  
 Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain,  
 At large discourse, while here they do remain.*

[*Exeunt* Presenter, PYRAMUS, THISBE,  
 LION, and MOONSHINE.]

*The.* I wonder if the lion be to speak.

*Dem.* No wonder, my lord : one lion may, when many asses do.

*Wall.* *In this same interlude it doth befall  
 That I, one Snout by name, present a wall ;  
 And such a wall, as I would have you think,  
 That had in it a crannied hole or chink,  
 Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,  
 Did whisper often very secretly.  
 This loam, this rough-cast, and this stone, doth show*

<sup>13</sup> *Hight* is an old word for *is called*. So in *Love's Labours Lost*, i. i : "This child of fancy, that Armado *hight*, for interim to our studies, shall relate," &c.

*That I am that same wall; the truth is so:  
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,  
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.*

*The.* Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

*Dem.* It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse,<sup>14</sup> my lord.

*The.* Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

*Enter PYRAMUS.*

*Pyr.* *O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!  
O night, which ever art when day is not!  
O night, O night! alack, alack, alack,  
I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot! —  
And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,  
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine!  
Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,  
Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne!*

[WALL holds up his fingers.]

*Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!  
But what see I? No Thisbe do I see.  
O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!  
Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!*

*The.* The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

*Pyr.* No, in truth, sir, he should not. *Deceiving me* is Thisbe's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

<sup>14</sup> An equivoque or pun was no doubt intended here; one sense of *partition* being that of *dividing* a theme of discourse into heads or topics. See Critical Notes.

*Enter THISBE.*

*This. O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,  
For parting my fair Pyramus and me!*

*My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,  
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.*

*Pyr. I see a voice: now will I to the chink,  
To spy an I can hear my Thisbe's face. —  
Thisbe!*

*This. My love! thou art my love, I think.*

*Pyr. Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's Grace;  
And, like Limander,<sup>15</sup> am I trusty still.*

*This. And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.*

*Pyr. Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.*

*This. As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.*

*Pyr. O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!*

*This. I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.*

*Pyr. Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?*

*This. 'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.*

[EXEUNT PYRAMUS and THISBE.]

*Wall. Thus have I, wall, my part discharged so;*

*And, being done, thus wall away doth go. [Exit.*

*The. Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.*

*Dem. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to  
hear without warning.<sup>16</sup>*

*Hip. This is the silliest stuff that e'er I heard.*

<sup>15</sup> *Limander* and *Helen*, blunderingly, for *Leander* and *Hero*; as, a little after, *Shafalus* and *Procrus* for *Cephalus* and *Procris*. *Procris*, or *Procne* was the wife of *Cephalus*; and when *Aurora* fell in love with him, and tried to win his heart, he stuck to his *Procne*. See page 81, note 38.

<sup>16</sup> Alluding to the old proverb, "Walls have ears"; which probably grew from the aptness of walls or partitions to transmit sound.

*The.* The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

*Hip.* It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

*The.* If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a moon and a lion.

*Enter LION and MOONSHINE.*

*Lion.* *You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear  
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,  
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,  
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.  
Then know that I one Snug the joiner am,  
No lion fell, nor else no lion's dam;  
For, if I should as lion come in strife  
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.*

*The.* A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

*Dem.* The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

*Lys.* This lion is a very fox for his valour.

*The.* True; and a goose for his discretion.

*Dem.* Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry his discretion; and the fox carries the goose.

*The.* His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour; for the goose carries not the fox. It is well: leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the Moon.

*Moon.* *This lantern doth the hornèd Moon present;—*

*Dem.* He should have worn the horns on his head.

*The.* He is not crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

*Moon.* *This lantern doth the hornèd Moon present;  
Myself the Man-i'-the-Moon do seem to be.*

*The.* This is the greatest error of all the rest: the man

should be put into the lantern. How is it else the Man-i'-the-Moon?

*Dem.* He dares not come there for the candle; for, you see, it is already in snuff.<sup>17</sup>

*Hip.* I am a-weary of this Moon: would he would change!

*The.* It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

*Lys.* Proceed, Moon.

*Moon.* All that I have to say is, to tell you that the lantern is the Moon; I, the Man-in-the-Moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.<sup>18</sup>

*Dem.* Why, all these should be in the lantern; for all these are in the Moon. But, silence! here comes Thisbe.

*Enter THISBE.*

*This.* *This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?*

<sup>17</sup> A quibble between *snuff* as meaning the cinder of a candle and as meaning sudden anger. Shakespeare has it repeatedly.

<sup>18</sup> The legend of the Man-in-the-Moon is very ancient, and is often alluded to by the old Poets. Perhaps it took its origin from the rude and faint resemblance to a man's face which the full Moon presents. At all events, the notion was common in the days of my boyhood: the man was talked of by everybody, and I often saw him. And it appears that he was sometimes introduced upon the English stage. Ben Jonson, in his masque entitled "News from the New World discovered in the Moon," 1620, makes some of the persons tell how Poetry, "the mistress of all discovery," has sent one of her servants to the Moon "in search of truth," and he has just returned; whereupon we have the following:

*Fact.* Where? which is he? I must see his dog at his girdle, and the bush of thorns at his back, ere I believe it.

*1 Herald.* Do not trouble your faith then; for, if the bush of thorns should prove a goodly grove of oaks, in what case were you and your expectation?

*2 Herald.* These are stale ensigns of the *stage's Man in the Moon*, delivered down to you by musty antiquity, and are of as doubtful credit as the makers.



Lion. [Roaring.] O——

[THISBE runs off.]

Dem. Well roar'd, lion.

The. Well run, Thisbe.

Hip. Well shone, Moon. — Truly, the Moon shines with a good grace. [Lion tears THISBE'S mantle, and exit.]

The. Well moused,<sup>19</sup> lion.

Lys. And so the lion vanished.

Dem. And then came Pyramus.

*Enter PYRAMUS.*

Pyr. *Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams ;  
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright ;  
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,  
I trust to taste of truest Thisbe's sight.*

*But stay, — O spite ! — but mark, poor knight,*

*What dreadful dole is here !*

*Eyes, do you see ? how can it be ?*

*O dainty duck ! O dear !*

*Thy mantle good, what, stain'd with blood ?*

*Approach, ye Furies fell !*

*O Fates, come, come, cut thread and thrum ;*

*Quail, crush, conclude, and quell !*

The. This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.

Hip. Beshrew my heart but I pity the man.

Pyr. *O, wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame ?  
Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear :*

<sup>19</sup> To *mouse* is to *tear in pieces*, as a cat tears a mouse. So in *King John*, ii. 1 :

O, now doth Death line his dead chops with steel ;  
The swords of soldiers are his teeth, his fangs ;  
And now he feasts, *mousing* the flesh of men.

*Which is — no, no — which was the fairest dame  
That lived, that loved, that liked, that look'd with cheer.*

*Come, tears, confound; out, sword and wound  
The pap of Pyramus, —  
Ay, that left pap, where heart doth hop:  
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus. [Stabs himself.  
Now am I dead, now am I fled;  
My soul is in the sky:  
Tongue, lose thy light! Moon, take thy flight!  
[EXIT MOONSHINE.  
Now die, die, die, die, die.*

*Dem.* No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.

*Lys.* Less than an ace, man; for he is dead; he is nothing.

*The.* With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover,  
and prove an ass.

*Hip.* How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe  
comes back and finds her lover?

*The.* She will find him by starlight. Here she comes;  
and her passion ends the play.

*Re-enter THISBE.*

*Hip.* Methinks she should not use a long one for such a  
Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.

*Dem.* A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus,  
which Thisbe, is the better; he for a man, God warrant us,  
— she for a woman, God bless us.

*Lys.* She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

*Dem.* And thus she moans, *videlicet*:

*This.* *Asleep, my love? what, dead, my dove?*

*O Pyramus, arise!*

*Speak, speak. Quite dumb? Dead, dead? A tomb  
Must cover thy sweet eyes.*

*These lily lips, this cherry nose,  
 These yellow cowslip cheeks,  
 Are gone, are gone : lovers, make moan :  
 His eyes were green as leeks.  
 O Sisters Three, come, come to me,  
 With hands as pale as milk ;  
 Lay them in gore, since you have shore  
 With shears his thread of silk.  
 Tongue, not a word : come, trusty sword ;  
 Come, blade, my breast imbrue : [Stabs herself.  
 And, farewell, friends, — thus Thisbe ends, —  
 Adieu, adieu, adieu. [Dies.*

*The.* Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

*Dem.* Ay, and Wall too.

*Bot.* No, I assure you ; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance<sup>20</sup> between two of our company ?

*The.* No epilogue, I pray you ; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse ; for, when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had play'd Pyramus and hang'd himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy : and so it is, truly ; and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask : let your epilogue alone. — [A dance by two of the Clowns.

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve : —

Lovers, to bed ; 'tis almost fairy-time.

I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn,

<sup>20</sup> A rustic dance framed in imitation of the people of *Bergamasco*, (a province in the state of Venice,) who are ridiculed as being more clownish in their manners and dialect than any other people of Italy. The *lingua rustica* of the buffoons, in the old Italian comedies, is an imitation of their jargon.

As much as we this night have overwatch'd.  
 This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled  
 The heavy gait of night. — Sweet friends, to bed. —  
 A fortnight hold we this solemnity  
 In nightly revels and new jollity.

[*Exeunt.*]

*Enter PUCK, with a broom.*

*Puck.* Now the hungry lion roars,<sup>21</sup>  
 And the wolf behowls the Moon ;  
 Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,  
 All with weary task fordone.  
 Now the wasted brands do glow,  
 Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,  
 Puts the wretch that lies in woe  
 In remembrance of a shroud.  
 Now it is the time of night,  
 That the graves, all gaping wide,  
 Every one lets forth his sprite,  
 In the church-way paths to glide :  
 And we fairies, that do run  
 By the triple Hecate's team  
 From the presence of the Sun,  
 Following darkness like a dream,  
 Now are frolic : not a mouse  
 Shall disturb this hallow'd house :  
 I am sent, with broom, before,

<sup>21</sup> Upon this passage Coleridge thus remarks in his *Literary Remains* :  
 "Very Anacreon in perfectness, proportion, grace, and spontaneity! So far  
 it is Greek; — but then add, what wealth, what wild ranging, and yet what  
 compression and condensation, of English fancy! In truth, there is nothing  
 in Anacreon more perfect than these lines, or half so rich and imaginative.  
 They form a speckless diamond."

To sweep the dust behind the door.<sup>22</sup>

*Enter OBERON and TITANIA, with their Train.*

*Obe.* Through the house give glimmering light,  
By<sup>23</sup> the dead and drowsy fire ;  
Every elf and fairy sprite  
Hop as light as bird from brier ;  
And this ditty, after me,  
Sing, and dance it trippingly.

*Tita.* First, rehearse your song by rote,  
To each word a warbling note :  
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,  
Will we sing, and bless this place.

SONG, AND DANCE.

*Obe.* Now, until the break of day,  
Through this house each fairy stray.

<sup>22</sup> That is, "To sweep the dust *from* behind the door." Collier informs us that on the title-page of the tract, *Robin Goodfellow, his Mad Pranks and Merry Jests*, Puck is represented in a wood-cut with a broom over his shoulder. The whole fairy nation, for which he served as prime minister, were great sticklers for cleanliness. In the old ballad entitled *The Merry Pranks of Robin Goodfellow*, and generally ascribed to Ben Jonson, we have the following :

When house or hearth doth sluttish lie,  
I pinch the maidens black and blue ;  
The bed-clothes from the bed pull I,  
And lay them naked all to view :  
'Twixt sleep and wake I do them take,  
And on the key-cold floor them throw :  
If out they cry, then forth I fly,  
And loudly laugh out, ho, ho, ho !

<sup>23</sup> *By* seems here to have the force of *by means of*,—no uncommon use of the word. — Milton was probably thinking of this passage in his *Il Penseroso* :

Where glowing embers through the room  
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom.

To the best bride-bed will we,  
 Which by us shall blessèd be.<sup>24</sup>  
 So shall all the couples three  
 Ever true in loving be ;  
 And the blots of Nature's hand  
 Shall not in their issue stand ;  
 Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,  
 Nor mark prodigious,<sup>25</sup> such as are  
 Despisèd in nativity,  
 Shall upon their children be.  
 With this field-dew consecrate,  
 Every fairy take his gait ;<sup>26</sup>  
 And each several chamber bless,  
 Through this palace, with sweet peace :  
 And the owner of it, blest,  
 Ever shall in safety rest.  
 Trip away ; make no stay :  
 Meet me all by break of day.

[*Exeunt* OBERON, TITANIA, and *Train*.

*Puck*. If we shadows have offended,  
 Think but this, and all is mended, —  
 That you have but slumber'd here  
 While these visions did appear.  
 And this weak and idle theme,

<sup>24</sup> This ceremony was in old times used at all marriages. Douce has given the formula from the Manual for the use of Salisbury. In the French romance of Melusine, the Bishop who marries her to Raymondin blesses the nuptial bed. The ceremony is there represented in a very ancient cut. The good prelate is sprinkling the parties with holy water. Sometimes, during the benediction, the married couple only *sat* on the bed ; but they generally received a portion of the consecrated bread and wine.

<sup>25</sup> *Prodigious* in the Latin sense of *unnatural, portentous, or ill-fated*.

<sup>26</sup> That is, take his *way, pursue his course*.

No more yielding but a dream,  
 Gentles, do not reprehend :  
 If you pardon, we will mend.  
 And, as I'm an honest Puck,<sup>27</sup>  
 If we have unearnèd luck  
 Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,<sup>28</sup>  
 We will make amends ere long ;  
 Else the Puck a liar call :  
 So, good night unto you all.  
 Give me your hands,<sup>29</sup> if we be friends,  
 And Robin shall restore amends. [*Exit.*

<sup>27</sup> *Puck*, it seems, was a suspicious name, which makes that this merry, mischievous gentleman does well to assert his honesty. As for the name itself, it was no better than *fiend* or *devil*. In *Pierce Ploughman's Vision*, one personage is called *helle Pouke*. And the name thus occurs in Spenser's *Epithalamion* :

Ne let *the pouke*, nor other evill sprights,  
 Ne let mischievous witches with theyr charmes,  
 Ne let hobgoblins, names whose sence we see not,  
 Fray us with things that be not.

<sup>28</sup> Honest Puck, it seems, has a mortal dread of being *hissed*.

<sup>29</sup> Clap your hands, give us your applause.





## CRITICAL NOTES.

—◆—  
ACT I., SCENE I.

Page 24. *And then the moon, like to a silver bow*

*New-bent in heaven.*—Instead of *New-bent*, the old copies have *Now-bent*, which is inconsistent with what has been said a little before, —“How slow this *old* moon wanes!” Corrected by Rowe.

P. 25. *This man hath witch'd the bosom of my child.*—The quartos and first folio have “This man hath *bewitch'd*.” The second folio rectifies the metre by omitting *man*. Theobald reads as in the text.

P. 29. *O cross! too high to be enthrall'd to low!*—The old copies have *love* instead of *low*. Corrected by Theobald.

P. 30. *I have a widow aunt, a dowager  
Of great revenue, and she hath no child;  
And she respects me as her only son.*

*From Athens is her house remote seven leagues: &c.*—The old text has the last two of these lines transposed. This manifestly upsets the proper order and sequence of the thoughts. The correction is Keightley's. Such transpositions are uncommonly frequent in this play.

P. 31. *By his best arrow with the golden head, —*

*By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves;*

*By the simplicity of Venus' doves.*—The third of these lines

stands the second in the old copies. I concur with Singer in making the transposition; because, as he aptly notes, the passage clearly alludes to “the golden arrow of Cupid, that *knitted* souls, as opposed to the leaden one that makes loves unprosperous. The Poet doubtless had in mind Ovid, *Metam.*, i. 468–471:

Eque sagittiferâ prompsit duo tela pharetrâ

Diversorum operum: fugat hoc, facit illud amorem:

Quod facit, auratum est et cuspide fulget acutâ;

Quod fugat, obtusum est et habet sub arundine plumbum.

P. 32. *Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,  
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;  
My hair should catch your hair, my eye your eye,  
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.  
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,*

*The rest I'd give, to be to you translated.*—In the second of these lines, the old copies have *your words* instead of *yours would*. Corrected by Hanmer. In the last line, the old text reads “The rest *He* give.” Corrected by Lettson, who remarks how apt the old contractions *I'll* and *I'de* were to be confounded. Again, in the third line, the old copies read “My *ear* should catch your *voice*.” A strange reading indeed for the place. The reading in the text was proposed by Lettson. The reasons for it need not be better given than in his own words: “As the passage stands at present, Helena wishes her *ear* may resemble the *voice* of Hermia! I conceive that, in the first place, *heare*—*heare* [a common old spelling of *hair*] was transformed into *care*—*care* by a blundering transcriber. The verse was then operated upon by a sophisticator, who regarded nothing but the line before him, and was not aware of the true meaning of *my eye your eye*, but took *catch* in the ordinary sense, not in the peculiar sense of contracting disease, which it bears throughout the passage.”

P. 32. Her. *His folly, Helen, is no fault of mine.*

Hel. *None but your beauty's: would that fault were mine!*

—In the first of these lines, the old text has *Helena* instead of *Helen*, and, in the second, *beauty* instead of *beauty's*. The latter correction is Mr. P. A. Daniel's.

P. 33. *And thence from Athens turn away your eyes,*

*To seek new friends and stranger companies.*—So Theobald.

The old copies have *strange companions* instead of *stranger companies*. The need of a rhyme for *eyes* pointed out and justifies the change. Also, in the third line before, the old text has “their counsell *sweld*”; which Theobald happily corrected to “their counsel *sweet*.”

#### ACT I., SCENE 2.

P. 35. *To the rest.*—*Yet my chief humour is for a tyrant.*—

Staunton prints "To the rest yet, my chief humour," &c., and explains *yet by now*. Dyce has it the same. I cannot understand why.

P. 36. *This is Eracles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover's is more condoling.*—The old text has *lover* instead of *lover's*. Corrected by Mr. P. A. Daniel.

P. 38. Quin. *Take pains; be perfect: adieu.*—So Collier's second folio. The old text makes the words here quoted a part of Bottom's preceding speech.

## ACT II., SCENE I.

P. 39. *I do wander everywhere*

*Swifter than the moony sphere.*—The old copies have "the moons sphere." This has been changed to "the moones sphere" by several editors. As White remarks, "moony sphere" was a recognized poetical phrase in Shakespeare's time. And Steevens pointed out a passage in Sidney's *Arcadia* as supporting the reading in the text: "What mov'd me to invite your presence, sister dear, first to my *moony* sphere." Whether *moon*es or *moony* be the right word, I think it is plain that the Poet would not have allowed a breach in the metre here.

P. 41. *That frights the maidens of the villagery;*

*Skims milk, and sometime labours in the quern,*

*And bootless makes the,* &c.—Here the old copies have *frights*, as correct grammar requires, and then drop the corresponding forms in the following verbs, printing *Skim, labour, make,* &c. Surely they ought all to run in the same number.

P. 41. Fairy, *thou speak'st aright.* So Collier's second folio. The old copies lack *Fairy*. Other attempts have been made, to complete the verse, but this is the best.

P. 42. *But room now, fairy! here comes Oberon.*—So Dyce. The old copies have "But roome Fairy." The more common reading is "But *make* room, fairy."

P. 42. *What, jealous Oberon!*—Fairies, *skip hence*.—The old text has "*Fairy, skip hence*"; which supposes that Titania is here speaking to Oberon; whereas the words are evidently addressed to her train of fairies. Corrected by Theobald.

P. 44. *The human mortals want their minstrelsy,*—  
*No night is now with hymn or carol blest.*—The old editions read "*want their winter heere*." This cannot possibly be right: it gives a sense all out of harmony with the context, and is further convicted of error by the strained explanations resorted to in its defence. Theobald at one time conjectured "*want their winter cheer*"; but he afterwards withdrew the conjecture: nevertheless it has been adopted by several editors. Keightley proposes "*want their Summer here*"; but I cannot see that this really helps the matter. I think the next line naturally points out *minstrelsy* as the right correction.

P. 44. *Therefore the Moon, the governess of floods,*  
*Pale in her anger, washes all the air;*  
*And thorough this distemperature we see*  
*That rheumatic diseases do abound.*—The old text has the last two of these lines transposed; which quite untunes the logic of the passage. The correction is Johnson's.

P. 45. *And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown.*—The old copies have *chin* instead of *thin*. The correction is Tyrwhitt's, and is very happy. Dyce ridicules the old reading: "In most of the modern editions Hiems figures with a chaplet of summer buds *on his chin*."

P. 47. *I'd put a girdle round about the Earth*  
*In forty minutes.*—So Collier's second folio and Lettsom. The old copies have *Ile* instead of *I'd*. See note on "The rest I'd give," page 116.

P. 48. *The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.*—In the old copies, "The one *Ile stay*, the other *stayeth* me. The reading in the text is Thirlby's.

P. 48. *But yet you draw not iron, for my heart*

*Is true as steel.*—Lettsom suspects we ought to read *though* instead of *for*, and I suspect he is right, as he is apt to be. As *though* was often written *tho*, it might easily get misprinted *for*.

P. 49. *I will not stay thy question; let me go.*—In the old text, *questions* instead of *question*. Steevens conjectured the latter; Walker also. See foot-note 30.

P. 50. Puck. *Ay, here it is.*

Obe. *I pray thee give it me.*—The old copies read “*Ay, there it is*”; which, as Lettsom remarks, is inconsistent” with Oberon’s “*give it me.*”

P. 50. *I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,*

*Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows;*

*Quite over canopied with lush woodbine.*—Instead of *whereon* and *lush*, the old copies have *where* and *lushious*. It does not seem to me possible that Shakespeare could have tolerated such haltings in the verse here. Elsewhere he uses *lush* with the same sense. The correction was made by Theobald, and is also found in Collier’s second folio.

P. 50. *And where the snake throws her enamell’d skin,*

*Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in :*

*There sleeps Titania sometime of the night*

*Lull’d in this bower with dances and delight.*—The order of these two couplets is reversed in the old copies, which breaks the continuity of the thought, making two transitions to Titania where both logic and grammar require there should be but one. Moreover, with the old order it would naturally seem that Oberon was to streak the snake’s eyes instead of Titania’s. The originals also read “*And there the snake,*” &c. In the fourth line, the old copies read “*Lull’d in these flowers.*” Instead of *flowers*, Collier’s second folio has *bowers*, which White adopts. I do not well see why the plural of that word should be used there. Lettsom proposed *this bower*, with the remark, “*Probably bower was in the first instance miswritten flower; then succeeded the sophistication these flowers, an awkward attempt to pro-*

cure sense." The reading *this bower* is further approved in iii. 1, at the close, where Titania, after she has got smitten with Bottom, tells the attendant fairies to "lead him to *my bower*."

ACT II., SCENE 2.

P. 51. *Come, now a roundel and a fairy song:*

*Then, 'fore the third part of a minute, hence.* — So Theobald. Instead of *'fore*, the old copies have *for*, which, as it must mean *during*, does not at all accord with the business on which Titania orders the fairies to depart. Heath proposes to substitute *in*, and then explains, "That is, after your song and dance ended, vanish in the third part of a minute, and leave me to my rest." But *'fore* gives a sense quite as fitting, and infers an easier misprint; else I should prefer *ere*.

P. 54. *Pretty soul! she durst not lie*

*Nearer this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.* — The old copies have "*Neere* this lack-love," which Pope changed to "*Near to* this lack-love." The correction in the text is Walker's.

P. 55. *Transparent Helen! Nature shows her art,*

*That through thy bosom makes me see my heart.* — The old text has "*Transparent Helena*"; upon which Walker notes, "Read *Helen*, as in half-a-dozen other passages of this play." — Again, in "*shows her art*," the quartos omit *her* altogether; the first folio has "*her shewes art*"; the second, "*here shewes art*." Corrected by Malone. — In the second line also, the old copies have "*see thy heart*." Here, again, Walker says, "Read '*my heart*.' The old poetical commonplace; *e. g.*, *As You like It*, v. 4:

That thou mightst join her hand with his  
Whose heart within her bosom is."

P. 55. *And leads me to your eyes; where I o'erlook*

*Love-stories, written in Love's richest book.* — So Walker. The old copies, "*Loves stories*."

## ACT III., SCENE I.

P. 57. *There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never please.*—Walker thinks we ought to read “There are *three* things,” &c. Probably.

P. 59. *Let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus.*—The old copies have “*or let him hold.*” Probably, as Dyce notes, “a mistake occasioned by *or* occurring twice just before.” Corrected from Collier’s second folio.

P. 59. *Thisbe, the flowers of odious savour sweet:*

*So doth thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.*—Instead of *savour*, the old copies have *savours*, which is evidently used as a verb, and which is not in the style of the blunders that mark the interlude. The same is to be said of the second line, where the old text reads “*So hath thy breath,*” which Pope corrected to “*So doth thy breath.*”

P. 60. *An if I were, fair Thisbe, I were only thine.*—In the old copies, *An* is wanting at the beginning of this line, and what follows is printed “*were fair, Thisbe.*” This quite upsets the metre of the line, whereas the verse is remarkably regular throughout the interlude. The printing, “*If I were fair, Thisbe,*” is commonly retained upon the supposal of its being meant as a blunder of Bottom’s. But such a blunder, it seems to me, were rather too fine-drawn to be appreciated on the stage. Perhaps we ought to read “*If I were true, fair Thisbe,*” &c.; which is the meaning either way, as the words are spoken in reply to Thisbe’s “*As true as truest horse,*” &c.

P. 65. *Tie up my love’s tongue, bring him silent!y.*—The old copies have “*my lovers tongue*”; which both untunes the metre and gives a wrong sense, as Bottom is plainly Titania’s *love*, and not her *lover*. Corrected by Pope.

## ACT III., SCENE 2.

P. 67. *Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in knee-deep.*—The old text is “plunge in *the* deep.” Coleridge proposed *knee-deep*, and Walker approves the happy correction.

P. 67. *So should a murderer look, — so dread, so grim.*—So Pope. The old copies have *dead* instead of *dread*. What sense *dead* should have there, I fail to perceive. Johnson found *dread* written in the margin of his copy.

P. 68. *And from thy hated presence part I so:*

*See me no more, whether he be dead or no.*—So Pope. The old editions omit *so*.

P. 71. *This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!*—Instead of *princess*, Hanmer reads *pureness*, and Collier's second folio has *impress*. Lettsom proposes *purest*, which is exceedingly apt. See, however, foot-note 14.

P. 72. *My heart with her but as guest-wise sojourn'd.*—The old editions have *to* instead of *with*. Johnson's correction.

P. 72. *Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear.*

*Look, where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.*—This repetition of *dear* for a rhyme looks hardly right. Walker suggests “aby it *here*.”

P. 73. *Is all the counsel that we two have shared,  
The sister-vows, the hours that we have spent,  
When we have chid the hasty-footed time  
For parting us, — O, and is all forgot?  
All school-day friendship, childhood innocence?  
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,*

*Have with our needles created both one flower.*—Instead of *sister-vows*, the old text has *sister's vows*; also, *schooledaies* instead of *school-day*, and *needles* instead of *neelds*. Dyce says “there can be



little doubt that Shakespeare wrote *neelds*, — which was a very common contraction of *needles*." Of course the change is made for metre's sake. — In the fourth line, also, the earlier old copies read "O, is all forgot?" omitting *and*, which was supplied in the second folio. Spedding proposes "O, is *it* all forgot?" I should prefer "O, is all *this* forgot?" The other two corrections are Capell's.

P. 74. *Two lovely berries moulded on one stem.* — Collier's second folio changes *lovely* to *loving*. Dyce rejects the change, on the ground that *lovely* was "sometimes used as equivalent to *loving*." And he quotes from *The Taming of the Shrew*, iii. 2, "And seal the title with a *lovely* kiss"; also from Peele's *Arraignment of Paris*, "And I will give thee many a *lovely* kiss." Which seems, indeed, to make good his point: but is it certain that in the text *lovely* is to be taken in the active sense of *loving*?

P. 75. *If you had any pity, grace, or manners,  
You would not make me such an argument.* — So Collier's second folio; the old copies, "If you *have* any pity," &c.

P. 75. *Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.* — So Theobald. The old text reads "her weak *praise*." Hardly worth noting, perhaps.

P. 75. *No, no, sir: — do;*

*Seem to break loose, take on as you would follow,*

*But yet come not.* — A troublesome passage as it stands in the old copies. I give the folio reading, except that I supply the word *do*, which seems necessary to the sense. Dyce, at the suggestion of Lettson, supplies *you* instead of *do*; thus: "No, no, sir; *you* seem to break loose." Demetrius is taunting Lysander, as if the latter were making believe that he wants to break loose from Hermia, who is clinging to him, and go apart with Demetrius, and fight it out. This sense, it seems to me, is much better preserved by *do* than by *you*. We have a like use of *do* a little before: "Ay, *do*, persèver, counterfeit sad looks." Also in *King Lear*, i. 1: "*Do*; kill thy physician, and the fee bestow upon the foul disease."

P. 76. *Out, loathèd medicine! hated potion, hence!* — The first quarto has “*O hated potion,*” the others, “*O hated poison.*”

P. 76. *Hate me! wherefòre? O me! what means my love?* — So Collier's second folio. The old copies read “*what newes my love?*” I cannot find any sense in *newes* here.

P. 82. *Ho, ho, ho, ho! coward, why comest thou not?* — So Capell. The fourth *ho*, needful to complete the verse, is not in the old copies.

#### ACT IV., SCENE I.

P. 86. *Nothing, good monsieur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch.* — So the old copies. Gray says, “Without doubt, it should be *Cavalero Peas-blossom*: as for *Cavalero Cobweb*, he has just been dispatched upon a perilous adventure.” Accordingly Dyce prints *Peas-blossom* instead of *Cobweb*: but this is assuming the mistake to be the Poet's or printer's, and not Bottom's. I am not sure of that. See foot-note 3.

P. 86. *I have a venturous fairy that shall seek*

*The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee thence new nuts.* — In the old copies *thence* is lacking, a gap being left in the verse. Other insertions have been proposed, — “*fetch for thee new nuts,*” and “*fetch thee the new nuts.*” I concur with Dyce in preferring that in the text. Hammer's correction.

P. 86. *Fairies, be gone, and be awhile away.* —

*Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms:*

*So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle.* — In the old copies, what is here printed as the first line is thrust in between the other two. Lettsom suggested the transposition. — The old text also reads “*and be alwaies away.*” Theobald changed *alwaies* to *all ways*, which Dyce adopts. The reading in the text is Hammer's.

P. 87. *And her fairies sent*

*To bear him to my bower in Fairy-land.* — So Dyce. The old editions have “*her fairy sent,*” which does not harmonise with the occasion.

P. 89. *Uncouple in the western valley; let them go.*—So the old copies. Dyce omits the words *let them*, for no other purpose, I suppose, but to avoid a line of six feet. But this, it seems to me, is hardly reason enough for such a step; for the Poet often intersperses Alexandrines among his regular pentameters; though, to be sure, he does it very little in this play. Of course, “let them go” refers to the *uncoupling* of the hounds, which were commonly tied or coupled together, to hold them back from pursuit of the game, till it were time to *let them go*.

P. 89. *When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the boar.*—The old copies have *beare* instead of *boar*. Hanmer and Capell printed *boar*; and Walker remarks that “the story of Meleager would be sufficient to suggest it to Shakespeare.”

P. 90. *Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells.*—I have stated, in foot-note 13, the principle upon which hounds were selected, to make up what was called a cry. As the matter is rather curious, I here add a passage from a writer contemporary with Shakespeare, as quoted in *The Edinburgh Review*, October, 1872: “If you would have your kennell for sweetness of cry, then you must compound it of some large dogges, that have deepe solemne mouthes, and are swift in spending, which must, as it were, beare the base in the consort; then a double number of roaring and loud ringing mouthes, which must beare the counter tenor; then some hollow, plaine, sweete mouthes, which must beare the meane or middle part; and soe with these three parts of musicke you shall make your cry perfect.—If you would have your kennell for depth of mouth, then you shall compound it of the largest dogges, which have the greatest mouthes, the deepest flews; and to five or sixe couple of base mouthes you shall not adde above two couple of counter-tenors, as many meanes, and not above one couple of roarers, which, being heard but now and then, as at the opening or hitting of a sent, will give much sweetnesse to the solemnes and gravenesse of the crye; and the musick thereof will bee much more delightfull to the eares of every beholder.”

P. 92. *My love to Hermia,*

*Melted as melts the snow, seems to me now, &c.*—So Dyce. The old copies are without *melts*. Capell and Collier's second folio

read "Melted as *doth* the snow." Clearly there ought to be no breach in the metre here.

P. 92. *Come, my Hippolyta.* — So Steevens, approved by Walker. The old copies omit *my*.

P. 93. *But are you sure*

*That we are well awaked?* — This is not in the folio, and the words *But* and *well* are not in the quartos. Capell inserted them; and Lettsom says, "I had hit upon the same conjectures long before I became acquainted with Capell."

P. 94. *I will sing it in the latter end of our play before the Duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it after death.* — The old copies read "end of a play," and "sing it at her death." The former correction is Walker's, the latter Theobald's.

#### ACT V., SCENE I.

P. 96. *And, as imagination bodies forth*

*The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen*

*Turns them to shape.* — So Pope. The old copies have *shapes* instead of *shape*. One of the commonest misprints is that of singulars and plurals for each other.

P. 98. *That is, hot ice and wondrous swarthy snow.* — So Staunton conjectures. The old copies have "strange snow." Hanmer printed "scorching snow," and Collier's second folio has "seething snow."

P. 98. *A play it is, my lord, some ten words long.* — So Hanmer. The old copies, "A play there is"; Collier's second folio, "A play this is."

P. 99. *And what poor willing duty cannot do.* — So Theobald. The old text lacks *willing*.

P. 100. *When I have seen them shiver and look pale, &c.* — So Dyce. The old text has *Where* instead of *When*.

P. 101. *This man, with loam and rough-cast, doth present.* — The old copies here read “with *lime* and rough-cast.” But, in Wall’s speech, a little after, they have “This *loame*, this rough-cast,” &c. So, also, in iii. 1: “And let him have some plaster, or some *Lome*, or some rough-cast about him.”

P. 103. *It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse.* — Farmer would read “heard *in* discourse,” taking it as an allusion “to the many stupid *partitions* in the argumentative writings of the time.” I suspect Farmer is right.

P. 104. *Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.* — So Theobald. Instead of *mural*, the quartos have *Moon used*, the folio *morall*.

P. 105. *Here come two noble beasts in, a moon and a lion.* — Instead of *moon*, the old copies have *man*. Theobald’s correction.

P. 105. *Then know that I one Snug the joiner am,  
No lion fell, nor else no lion’s dam.* — So Rowe, and Walker also, without knowing that Rowe had anticipated him. The old copies read “A lion fell.”

P. 105. *He is not crescent.* — The old text has *no* instead of *not*. Corrected in Collier’s second folio.

P. 107. Lys. *And so the lion vanished.*  
Dem. *And then came Pyramus.* — The old copies invert the order of these two speeches. Spedding suggested the transposition.

P. 107. *For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams.* — The old copies, quartos and first folio, have *beames*, second folio, *streames*. Knight conjectured *gleams*, and Walker thinks “the alliteration requires” it.

P. 108. *And thus she moans.* — So Theobald. The old text has *meanes* instead of *moans*.

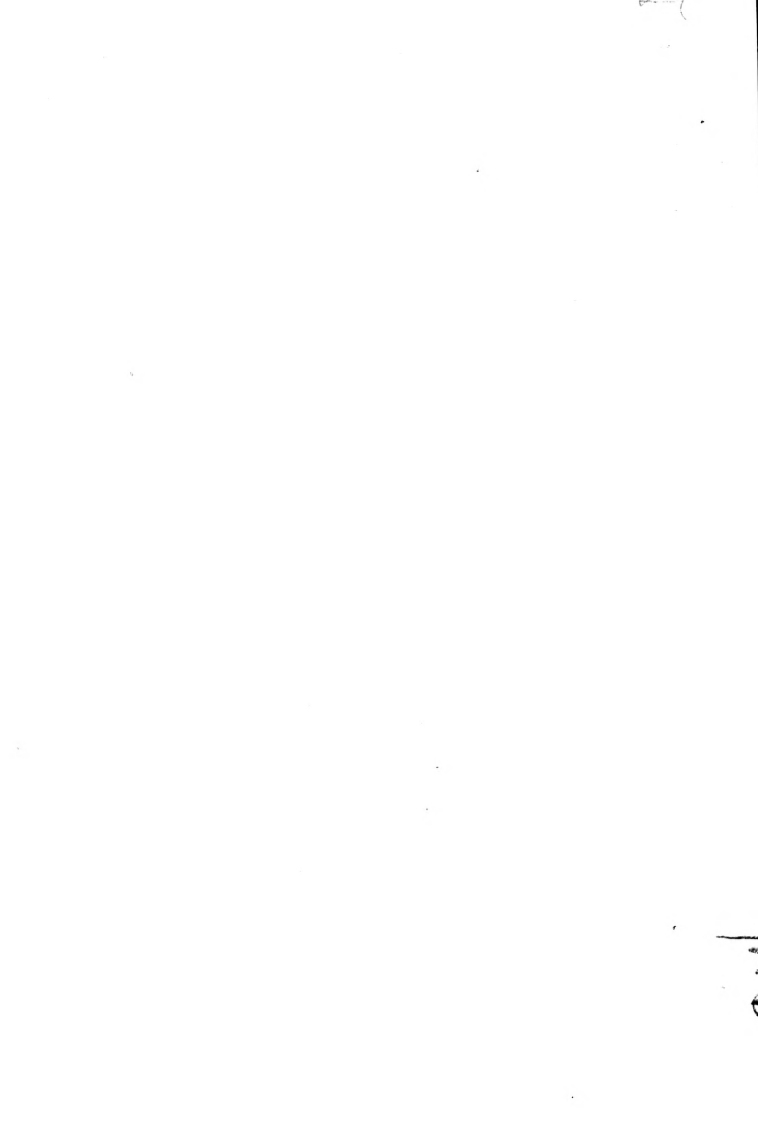
P. 110. *Now the hungry lion roars,  
And the wolf behowls the Moon.* — The old copies have “*beholds the Moon*”; an obvious erratum.

P. 111. *Through the house give glimmering light,  
By the dead and drowsy fire;  
Every elf and fairy sprite  
Hop as light as bird from brier.* — The first two of these lines have troubled editors a good deal. Dyce pronounces it “a most perplexing passage.” Johnson proposed “Through this house *in* glimmering light.” White changes *Through* to *Though*; but his reading, together with his explanation, seems rather to darken what is certainly none too light. Lettsom conjectures “Through *this hall go* glimmering light.” This is both ingenious and poetical in a high degree; but he probably would not himself venture on so bold a change. I suspect that *By* is simply to be taken as equivalent to *by means of*. Taking it so, I fail to perceive any thing very dark or perplexing in the passage.

P. 111. SONG, AND DANCE. — The stage-direction here is usually printed as if what follows were the fairies' song; which is clearly wrong, the following lines being *spoken* by Oberon, after the song and dance are ended. As for the fairies' song on this occasion, it has never, I believe, been heard of since.

P. 112. *And the owner of it, blest,  
Ever shall in safety rest.* — The old text inverts the order of these lines. The transposition is Staunton's. Various other changes have been proposed, such as “Ever shall *it* safely rest,” — “*E'er* shall *it* in safety rest,” — and “Ever *shall't* in safety rest”; but that in the text seems, on the whole, the most satisfactory.



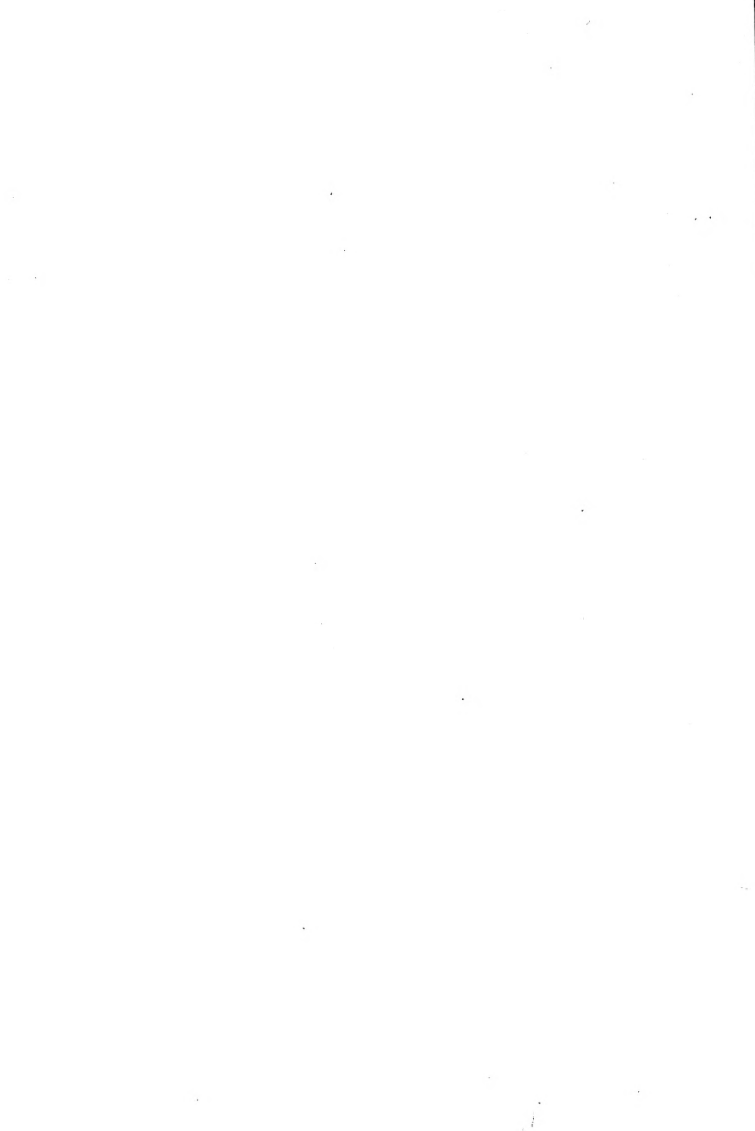






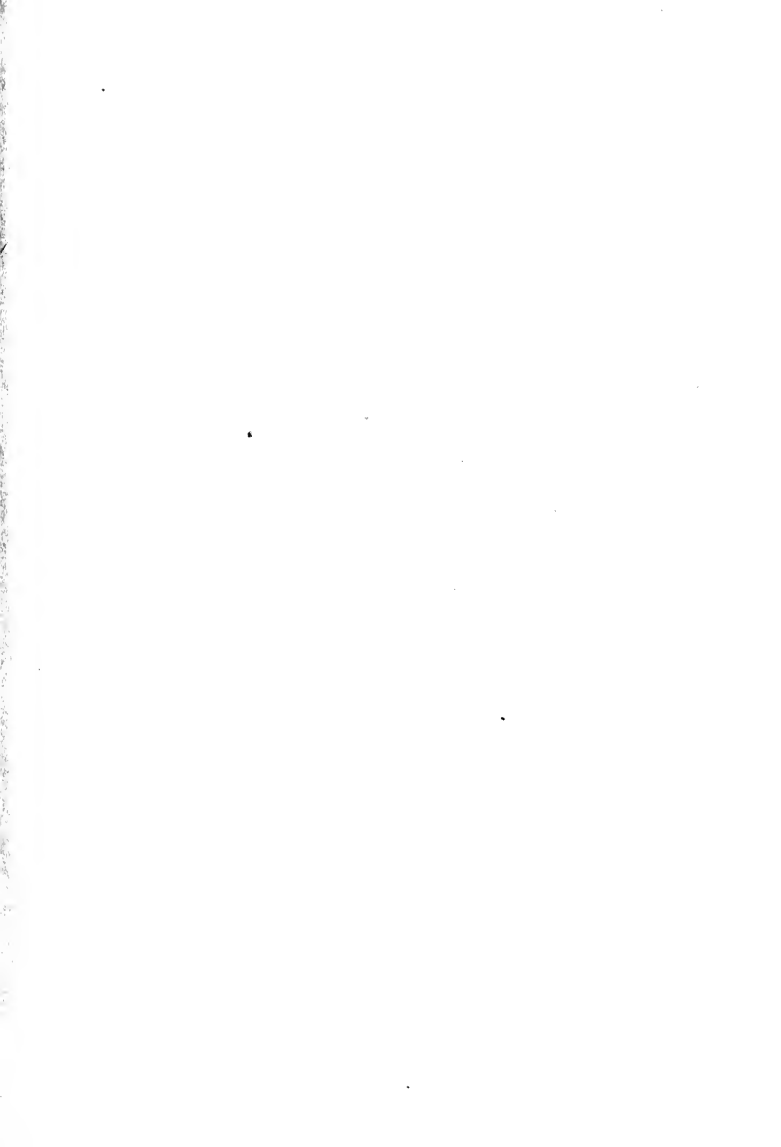


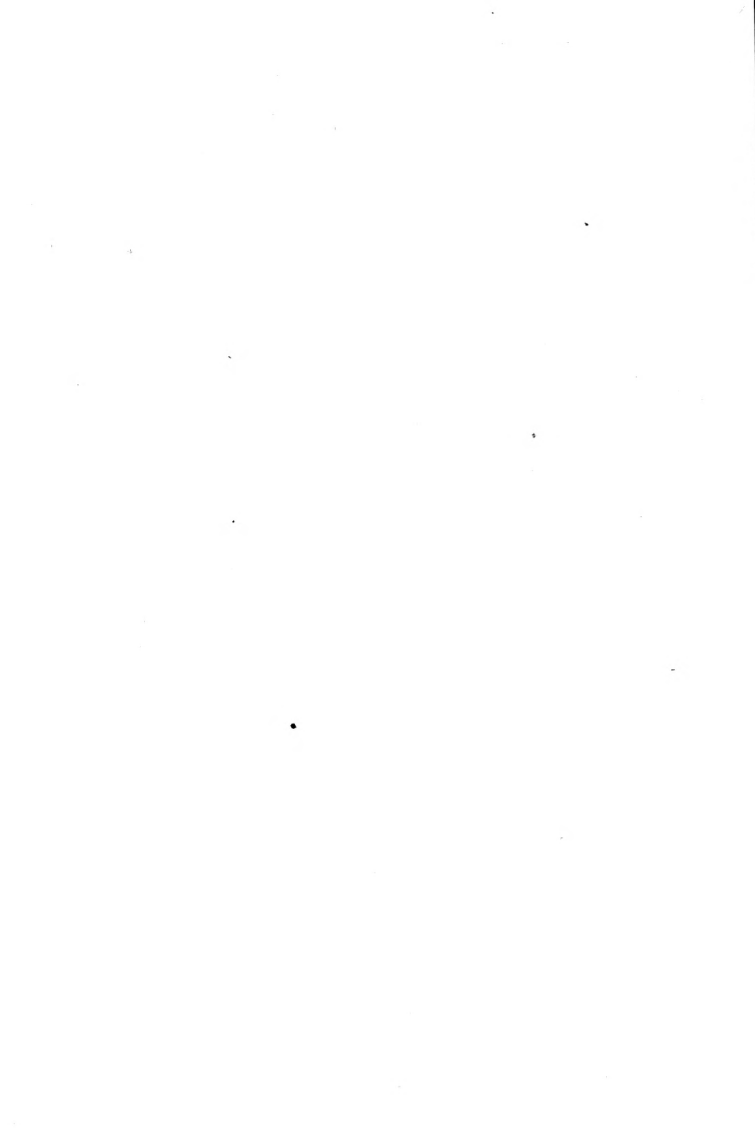




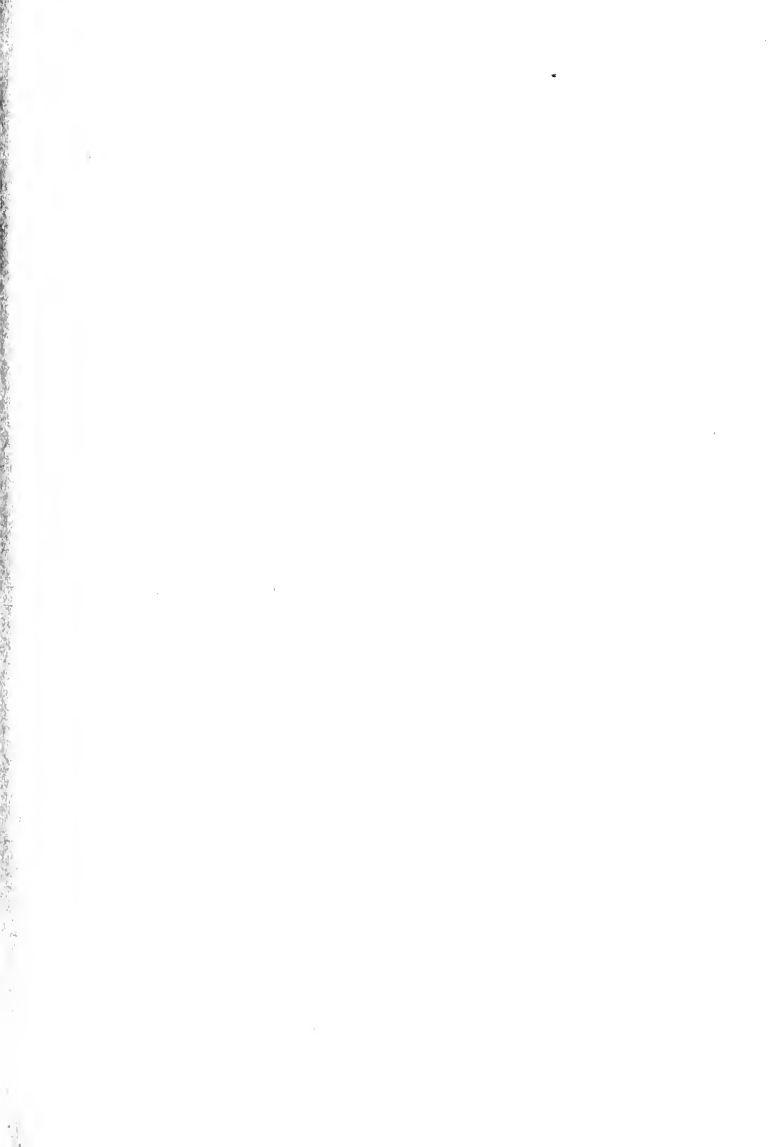










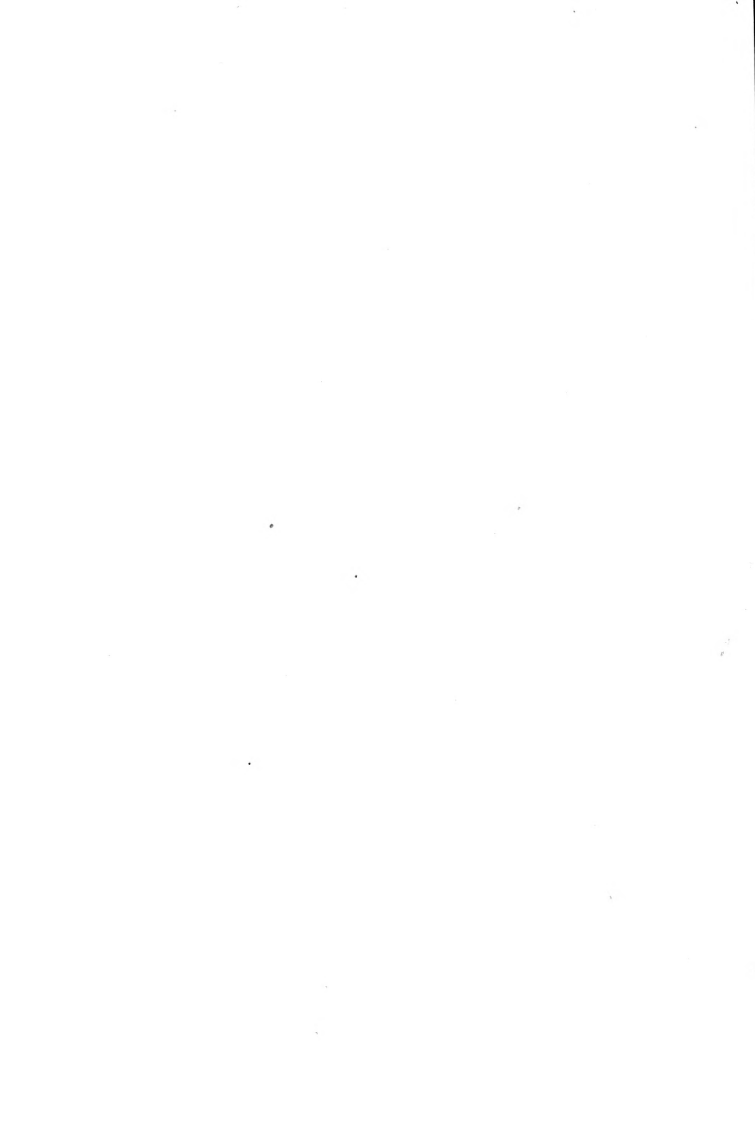


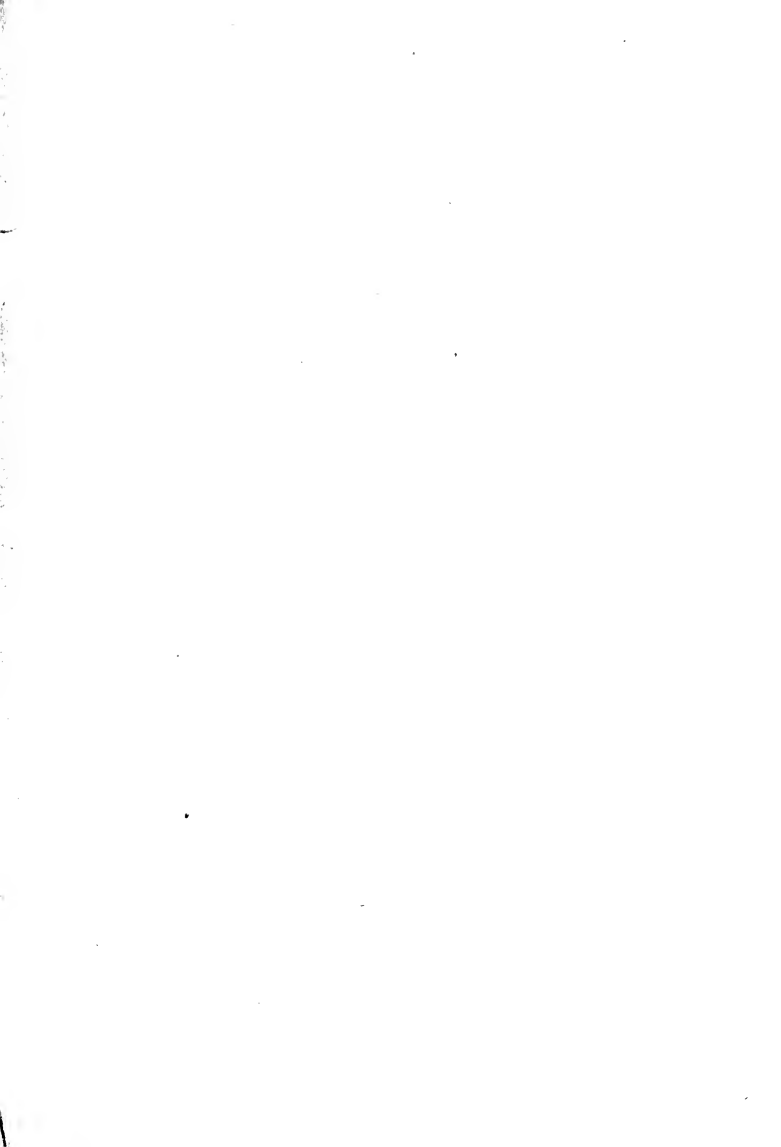










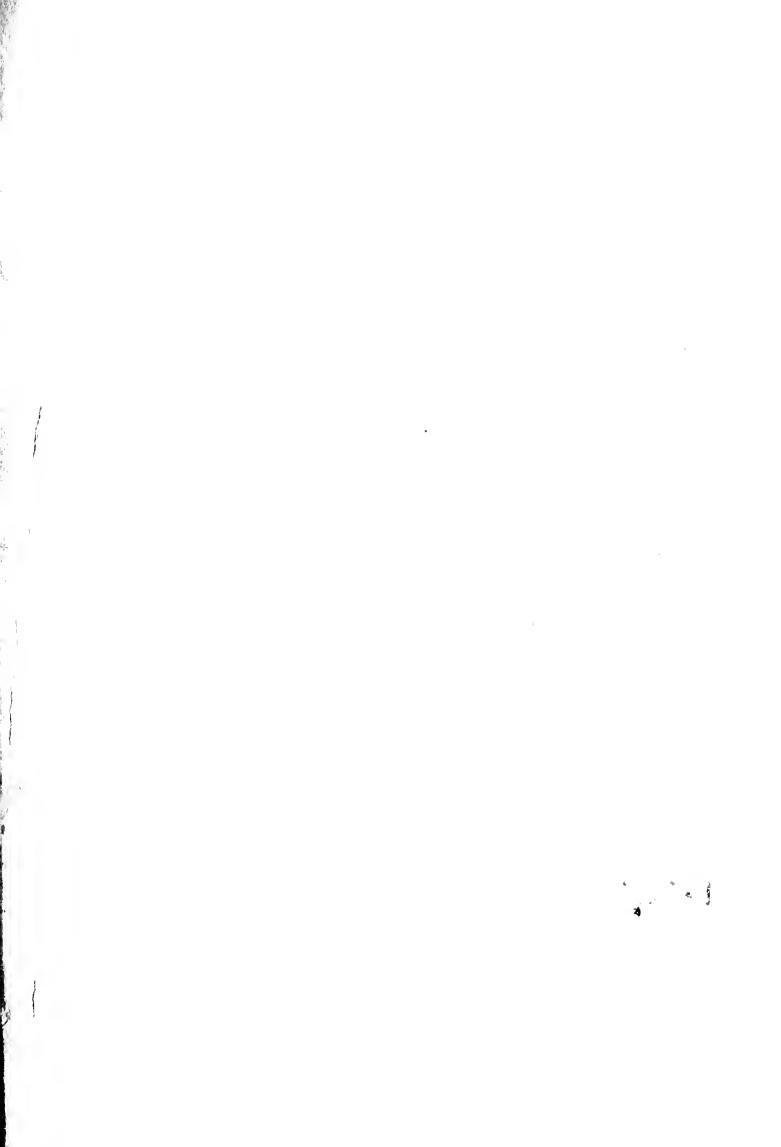








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