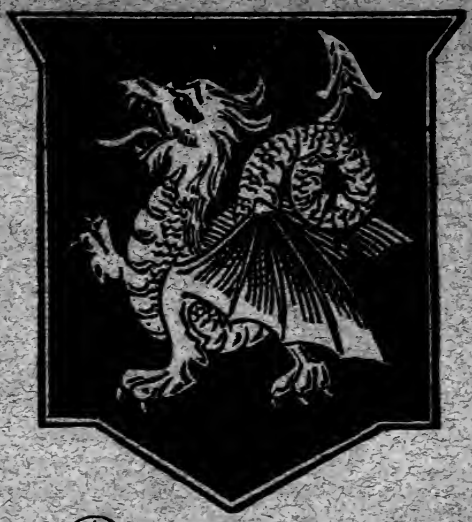

Edwin Booth's Prompt-Book of KING LEAR

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Edited by

William Winter.

The Prompt-Book.

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William Winter.

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In uniform volumes:

Hamlet. King Lear.

Richard II. Richard III.

Richelieu.

&c. &c.

As presented by

Edwin Booth.

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Lee & Shepard, 41 Franklin St., Boston, Mass.

Charles T. Dillingham, 678 Broadway, New-York.

The Prompt-Book.

Edited by William Winter.

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Shakespeare's Tragedy

Of

King Lear

As Presented by

Edwin Booth.

✠

"Our present business is general woe."

"The poor, distressèd Lear is i' the town."

"A father, and a gracious, agèd man."

"As full of grief as age; wretchèd in both,"

"Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in,
And thy dear judgment out."

"I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead."

"Break, heart, I prithee break."

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Preface.

*THE propriety of an effort to aid in restoring Shakespeare's "King Lear" to practical use upon the stage is not likely to be questioned. Persons who have thoughtfully studied the subject must, indeed, marvel that such an effort, long ago begun, was not long ago crowned with bounteous public acceptance. The distortion of Shakespeare's colossal tragedy, blandly perpetrated by Nahum Tate nearly two centuries ago, and, with some modifications, current in the theatre ever since, instantly discloses itself, upon a comparison of it with the original, as emasculate, squalid and commonplace —in contrast with the stalwart fibre, massive proportions, and stupendous altitude of Shakespeare's own work. Tate's version was published, in quarto, in 1681,—seventy-five years after the first performance of "King Lear," and in those frivolous days of British literature when Shakespeare's genius was in eclipse. The dedication of it, to "Tho. Boteler, Esq.," contains these words: "I found that the new-modelling of this story would force me sometimes on the difficult task of making the chiefest persons speak something like their character, or matter whereof I had no ground in my author. * * * I found the whole to answer your account of it, a heap of jewels unstrung and unpolished, yet so dazzling in their disorder that I soon perceived I had seized a treasure."*

The complacent Tate then felicitates himself that he has "had the good fortune to light on one expedient to rectify what was wanting in the regularity and probability of the tale,"—by which he means the omission of the Fool! It was easy for him, after that, to fabricate an under-plot respecting the loves of Edgar and Cordelia, and to save Cordelia and Lear alive at the end of the play, with a rainbow prospect of happiness and comfort. Nothing respecting this subject could be more remarkable than the mental attitude thus revealed; except it be the after-glow of prosperity which has so long attended this petty and finical display of a creation entirely gigantic. The best critical judgment long since protested against it. "King Lear," said Addison [Spectator, Number 40], "is an admirable tragedy, as Shakespeare wrote it; but as it is re-formed, according to the chimerical notions of poetical justice, it has lost half its beauty." "Tate put his hook in the nostrils of this leviathan," said Charles Lamb, "for Garrick and his followers, the showmen of the scene, to draw the mighty beast about more easily." Steevens and Johnson alone, of all the old critics, were content with what Charles Knight, with felicitous contempt, denominates the Tatefication of Shakespeare. All the same, the piece, thus garbled, kept its place. Tate was acted by Garrick, the great Lear of the last century, and Tate was acted by Forrest, the great Lear of the generation that has just ended. Several improvements, it should be said, have, from time to time, been grafted upon this basis. George Colman made an alteration of Tate's alteration, which was acted a few times, at Covent Garden, London, and was published in 1768; and John Philip Kemble made another, which was also acted at Covent Garden, and which was published in 1808. The latter, in one form or another, has served the art needs

of most of Kemble's successors. Dramatic custom of late years has exhibited a tendency towards the restoration of Shakespeare. Macready and Charles Kean acted Shakespeare's Lear, and more recently, Shakespeare's Lear has been acted by Barrett and McCullough. Macready's opinion of Tate's piece was expressed in the vigourous statement that it is a "miserable debilitation and disfigurement of Shakespeare's sublime tragedy." The present version,—which follows the plan and contains the stage directions of Edwin Booth,—if not literally the original, is a faithful condensation of it. Omissions and transpositions will be observed; but, to re-arrange, for a stage that is furnished with abundant scenes, a play which was written for a stage that had no scenes at all,—not to urge the expedient due of a public taste which craves directness, and is intolerant of even the semblance of prolixity,—is surely not to use it with unwarrantable freedom. The text of this version is entirely Shakespeare; the Fool occupies his rightful place in the action,—to which he supplies a most strange, wistful element of lamentable mirth; and the story is unmarred by change. "King Lear" was first acted, December 26th, 1606, at Whitehall, in London. The dramatic company of the Globe Theatre, Southwark, presented it, and King James I. was its predominant auditor. There can never come a time when it will cease to irradiate the imagination and melt the heart of the world.

W. W.

New-York, March 25th, 1878.

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"Once again the fierce dispute
Betwixt hell torment and impassioned clay
Must I burn through."—KEATS.

"The finest of Shakespeare's imaginary characters are essentially typical. While they embody truths the most subtle, delicate and refining in the life and organization of men, those truths are so assorted as to combine with the elements which humanity has most in common."—BULWER.

"But who forgets that white, discrownèd head,
Those bursts of reason's half-extinguished glare,
Those tears upon Cordelia's bosom shed,
In doubt more touching than despair!"—CAMPBELL.

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*"My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing. * * I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind. I am like a broken vessel. * * * Horror hath overwhelmed me. * * * * I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.*—THE PSALMS OF DAVID.

"Crowned with wild flowers and with heather,
Like weak, despised old Lear—
A king! a king!"—LONGFELLOW.

"Let the doubly pointed wreath of his fire be hurled at me, and ether be torn piecemeal by thunder and spasm of savage blasts; and let the wind rock earth from her base, roots and all, and, with stormy surge, mingle in rough tide the billow of the deep and the paths of the stars, and fling my body into black Tartarus!"—ÆSCHYLUS.

"Grief and care
Stalked forth upon the theatre of his heart
In many a gloomy and misshapen guise;
Till of the glories of his earlier self,
The world, his base and hollow auditory,
Left but a ghastly phantom."—MOTHERWELL.

"All free from the knot
Glide the thread of the skein,
And rest to the labour,
And peace to the pain!"—BULWER.

"Quieter is his breath, his breast more cold,
Than daisies in the mould.
Pray for him, gentle souls, whoe'er you be."—LANDOR.

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"'T is the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.

"The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash."

"Old fools are babes again, and must be used
With checks as flatteries."

"Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confine."

"The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
That it had its head bit off by its young."

"O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!
Keep me in temper; I would not be mad."

"O, heavens,
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
Allow obedience, if yourselves are old,
Make it your cause; send down and take my part."

"The night comes on, and the bleak winds
Do sorely ruffle; for many miles about
There's scarce a bush."

"Since I was man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
Remember to have heard."

"The sea, with such a storm as his bare head,
In hell-black night endured, would have buoyed up
And quenched the stellar fires."

"I am a very foolish, fond old man,
Fourscore and upward; not an hour more nor less:
And, to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind."

"Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies."

"Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither.
Ripeness is all."

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Persons Represented.

LEAR, KING OF BRITAIN.

KING OF FRANCE.

DUKE OF BURGUNDY.

DUKE OF CORNWALL.

DUKE OF ALBANY.

EARL OF KENT.

EARL OF GLOSTER.

EDGAR, *legitimate son to Gloster.*

EDMUND, *illegitimate son to Gloster.*

CURAN.

OLD MAN.

PHYSICIAN.

FOOL.

OSWALD, *steward to Goneril.*

HERALD.

GONERIL.
REGAN. } *Daughters to King Lear.*
CORDELIA.

KNIGHTS, *attending on King Lear;* LORDS, OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, MESSENGERS, *and* ATTENDANTS.

SCENE.—*Ancient Britain; the southern part of the country, ranging through the counties from Somerset to Kent.*

PERIOD.—*Anno Mundi, 3105; or about 900 years B. C.*

TIME OF ACTION.—*About six weeks.*—See Appendix.

KING LEAR.

Act First.

Scene First. A Room of state in King Lear's Palace. Throne c. Kent l., Gloster c. and Edmund r. c., discovered.

Kent. [L.

I thought the king had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

Glos. [C.

It did always seem so to us: but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most; for qualities are so weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.

Kent.

Is not this your son, my lord?

Glos.

His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to it. Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

Edm. [R.

No, my lord.

Glos.

My lord of Kent: remember him hereafter as my honourable friend.

Edm. [*To Kent.*

My services to your lordship.

Kent.

I must love you, and sue to know you better.

Edm.

Sir, I shall study deserving.

Glos.

He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again.
[*Music : A March.*

The king is coming.
[*Enter Lear, Cornwall, Albany, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and attendants.*

Lear.

Gloster, attend the lords of France and Burgundy.

Glos.

I shall, my liege.
[*Exeunt Gloster and Edmund* R. U. E.

Lear.

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.
Give me the map there. — Know that we have divided,
In three, our kingdom: and 't is our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburdened crawl toward death.—Our son of Cornwall,
And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
We have this hour a constant will to publish
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
May be prevented now. The princes, France and Burgundy,
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
And here are to be answered.—Tell me my daughters,—
Since now we will divest us, both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state,—

Which of you, shall we say, doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge.—Goneril,
Our eldest-born, speak first.

Gon. [*Rises* R.

Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter,
Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty;
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour:
As much as child e'er loved, or father found.
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

Cord. [*Aside* C.

What shall Cordelia speak? Love and be silent.

Lear. [*Pointing to map.*

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,
With shadowy forests, and with champaigns riched,
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
We make thee lady: to thine and Albany's issues,
Be this perpetual.—What says our second daughter—
Our dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall? Speak.

Regan. [L.

I am made of that self metal as my sister,
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love;
Only she comes too short,—that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys,
Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
And find, I am alone felicitate
In your dear highness' love.

Cord. [*Aside.*

Then poor Cordelia!
And yet not so, since, I am sure, my love 's
More richer than my tongue.

Lear. [*To Regan.*

To thee and thine, hereditary ever,
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom;
No less in space, validity, and pleasure,
Than that conferred on Goneril.— Now, our joy,
[*Cordelia rises and goes* R.
Although the last, not least; to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interessèd; what can you say, to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters?
Speak!

Cord.

Nothing, my lord.
[*All start and look at Cordelia.*

Lear.

Nothing?

Cord.

Nothing.

Lear.

Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

Cord.

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty
According to my bond; nor more, nor less.

Lear.

How? How, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little,
Lest you may mar your fortunes.

Cord.

Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,

That lord, whose hand must take my plight, shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care, and duty.
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.

Lear.

But goes thy heart with this?

Cord.

Ay, my good lord.

Lear.

So young and so untender?

Cord.

So young, my lord, and true.

Lear.

Truth, then, be thy dower;
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate and the night;
By all the operation of the orbs,
From whom we do exist, and cease to be,
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this forever. The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighboured, pitied, and relieved,
As thou, my sometime daughter.

Kent. [L.

Good my liege,——

Lear.

Peace, Kent!
Come not between the dragon and his wrath:
I loved her most, and thought to set my rest

On her kind nursery.— Hence and avoid my sight!
[*To Cordelia.*
So be my grave my peace, as here I give
Her father's heart from her! Call France!
Who stirs? Call Burgundy!
[*Exit a knight.*
Cornwall and Albany,
With my two daughters' dowers digest this third;
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.
I do invest you jointly with my power,
Pre-eminence, and all the large effects
That troop with majesty.— Ourself, by monthly course,
With reservation of an hundred knights,
By you to be sustained, shall our abode
Make with you by due turns. Only, we shall retain
The name and all the additions to a king.
The sway, revènue, execution of the rest,
Beloved sons, be yours; which to confirm,
This coronet part between you.
[*Page, with crown, advances. Lear takes the crown and holds it above the heads of Goneril, Regan, Albany and Cornwall, who kneel in front of throne* C.

Kent.

Royal Lear,
Whom I have ever honoured as my king,
Loved as my father, as my master followed,
As my great patron thought on in my prayers,——

Lear.

The bow is bent and drawn, make from the shaft.

Kent.

Let it fall rather, though the fork invade
The region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly,
When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?
Reverse thy doom;
And in thy best consideration check
This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,

Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
Nor are those empty hearted, whose low sounds
Reverb no hollowness.

Lear.

Kent, on thy life, no more!

Kent.

My life I never held but as a pawn
To wage against thine enemies; nor fear to lose it,
Thy safety being the motive.

Lear.

Out of my sight!

Kent.

See better, Lear, and let me still remain
The true blank of thine eye.

Lear.

Now, by Apollo!

Kent.

Now, by Apollo, king,
Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

Lear.

O, vassal! Miscreant!

[*Laying his hand on his sword.*

Alb. and Corn. [*To Lear.*

Dear sir, forbear!

Kent.

Do:
Kill thy physician, and thy fee bestow
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift;
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
I 'll tell thee, thou dost evil.

Lear.

Hear me, recreant!
On thy allegiance hear me.

[*Kent kneels.*

Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow,—
Which we durst never yet,—and, with strained pride,
To come betwixt our sentence and our power,—
Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,—
Our potency made good, take thy reward.
Five days do we allot thee for provision
To shield thee from diseases of the world,
And on the sixth to turn thy hated back
Upon our kingdom: if on the tenth day following
Thy banished trunk be found in our dominions,
The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter,
This shall not be revoked!

[*Kent rises; Goneril, Regan, Albany, and Cornwall go to Lear* C.

Kent.

Fare thee well, king; since thus thou wilt appear,
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.

[*Crosses* R. *to Cordelia.*

The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
That justly thinks, and hast most rightly said.
And your large speeches may your deeds approve,

[*To Regan and Goneril.*

That good effects may spring from words of love.
Thus Kent, O, princes, bids you all adieu;

[*To all.*

He'll shape his old course in a country new.

[*Exit Kent* L. *Re-enter Gloster, with France, Burgundy and a knight* R. U. E. *Gloster and France on the* R. *of throne. Burgundy comes down* L.

Glos. [R. *to Lear.*

Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

Lear.

My lord of Burgundy,
We first address toward you, who with this king
Hath rivalled for our daughter: what in the least,
Will you require in present dower with her,
Or cease your quest of love?

Bur. [L.

Most royal majesty,
I crave no more than hath your highness offered,
Nor will you tender less.

Lear.

Right noble Burgundy,
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so;
But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands;
Dowered with our curse, and strangered with our oath.
Take her, or leave her.

Bur.

Pardon me, royal sir;
Election makes not up on such conditions.

Lear.

Then leave her, sir; for by the power that made me,
I tell you all her wealth: for you, great king,
[*To France.*
I would not from your love make such a stray,
To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you
To avert your liking a more worthier way,
Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed
Almost to acknowledge hers.

France. [R.

This is most strange:
Sure her offence
Must be of such unnatural degree,
That monsters it;
Which to believe of her,
Must be a faith that reason, without miracle,
Should never plant in me.

Cord. [*To Lear.*

I yet beseech your majesty, that you make known
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
No unchaste action, or dishonoured step,
That hath deprived me of your grace and favour;
But even for want of that for which I am richer,—
A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue
That I am glad I have not, though not to have it,
Hath lost me in your liking.

Lear.

Better thou
Hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better.

France. [R.

Is it but this?
Fairest Cordelia, that thou art most rich, being poor,
Most choice, forsaken, and most loved, despised,
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon.
Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,
[*To Lear.*
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France;
Not all the dukes of wat'rish Burgundy
Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.

Lear.

Thou hast her, France; let her be thine, for we
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
That face of hers again;—therefore, begone
Without our grace, our love, our benison.

[*March. Exeunt Lear, Burgundy, Cornwall, Albany, and attendants* L. *Scene closes as they go out. France and Cordelia remain, looking after Lear.*

Scene Second. { STONE HALL IN GLOSTER'S CASTLE. [FIRST GROOVES.]

[*Enter Edmund with a letter* R. I. E.

Edm.

Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base,
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue?
Well then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land;
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund,
As to the legitimate. Fine word, legitimate.
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top the legitimate. I grow, I prosper:—
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

[*Enter Gloster* L. I. E.

Glos.

Kent banished thus! and France in choler parted!
And the king gone to-night! Subscribed his power!
Confined to exhibition! All this done
Upon the gad!—Edmund, how now! What news?

Edm. [*Hiding the letter.*

So please your lordship, none.

Glos.

What paper were you reading?

Edm.

Nothing, my lord.

Glos.

No! What needed, then, that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself.

Edm.

I beseech you, sir, pardon me; it is a letter from my brother, that I have not all o'er-read; and for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your o'erlooking.

Glos.

Give me the letter, sir.

Edm.

I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

Glos.

Let 's see, let 's see! [*Gloster takes letter.*

Edm.

I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an assay or taste of my virtue.

Glos. [*Reads.*

"This policy and reverence of age make the world bitter to the best of our times; keep our fortunes from us, till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways not as it hath power, but as it is suffered. Come to me that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother, Edgar."

Humph! Conspiracy! "Sleep till I waked him,—you should enjoy half his revenue."—My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? A heart and brain to breed it in?—When came this to you? Who brought it?

Edm.

It was not brought me, my lord; there 's the cunning of it—I found it, thrown in at the casement of my closet.

Glos.

You know the character to be your brother's?

Edm.

It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents.

Glos.

O, villain! villain! abhorrèd villain! unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse than brutish!—Go, sirrah, seek him; I'll apprehend him—abominable villain!

Edm.

I dare pawn down my life for him, that he hath writ this to feel my affection to your honour, and to no other pretence of danger.

Glos.

Think you so?

Edm.

If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer, this very evening.

Glos.

He cannot be such a monster.

Edm.

Nor is not, sure.

Glos.

To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; and the bond cracked between son [*crosses* R.] and father. Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing.

[*Exit Gloster* R. I. E.

Edm.

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,— often the surfeit of our own behaviour,— we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains by necessity; fools, by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical predominance. An admirable evasion of virtuous man, to lay his devilish disposition to the charge of a star. Tut! I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my birth. Edgar ——

[*Enter Edgar* L. 1. E.

Edm.

When saw you my father last?

Edgar.

The night gone by.

Edm.

Spake you with him?

Edgar.

Ay, two hours together.

Edm.

Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him, by word or countenance?

Edgar.

None at all.

Edm.

Bethink yourself, wherein you may have offended him: and at my entreaty forbear his presence, till some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure, which at this instant so rageth in him, that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.

Edgar.

Some villain hath done me wrong.

Edm.

That 's my fear. I pray you, have a continent forbearance, till the speed of his rage goes slower; pray you go; if you do stir abroad, go armed.

Edgar.

Armed, brother?

Edm.

Brother, I advise you to the best; I am no honest man, if there be any good meaning towards you; pray you, away.

Edgar.

Shall I hear from you anon?

Edm.

I do serve you in this business.

[*Exit Edgar* L. I. E.

A credulous father, and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy! I see the business.—
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit;
All with me 's meet that I can fashion fit.

[*Exit* R. I. E.

Scene Third. { BEFORE THE DUKE OF ALBANY'S CASTLE. ARCH C. ENTRANCE TO CASTLE FACING AUDIENCE R. STONE WALL L. RUDE STONE SEAT C.

[*Enter Goneril, two ladies, Oswald, and two lords* C.

Gon.

Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool?

Osw.

Ay, madam.

Gon.

By day and night he wrongs me; every hour
He flashes into one gross crime or other,
That sets us all at odds: I 'll not endure it.
His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,
I will not speak with him: say, I am sick;
If you come slack of former services,
You shall do well; the fault of it I 'll answer.

[*Horns heard within, pp.*

Osw.

He 's coming, madam, I hear him.

Gon.

Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows; I 'd have it come to question:
If he distaste it, let him to my sister,
Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
Not to be over-ruled.
Remember what I have said.

Osw.

Well, madam.

Gon.

And let his knights have colder looks among you.
What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so:
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,
That I may speak; I 'll write straight to my sister,
To hold my course.

[*Exeunt Goneril, Oswald, lords, and ladies into Castle* R. *Enter Kent, disguised,* C.

Kent.

If but as well I other accents borrow,
That can my speech diffuse, my good intent
May carry through itself to that full issue

For which I razed my likeness. Now banished Kent,
If thou canst serve, where thou dost stand condemned,
So may it come thy master, whom thou lov'st,
Shall find thee full of labours.

[*Horns within. Enter Lear, Curan, knights and attendants through arch* C.

Lear.

Let me not stay a jot for dinner: go, get it ready.
[*Exit an attendant* R. 3. E.
How now! what art thou? [*To Kent.*

Kent. [R.

A man, sir.

Lear.

What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

Kent.

I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust; to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise, and says little; to fear judgment; to fight when I cannot choose; and to eat no fish.

Lear.

What art thou?

Kent.

A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.

Lear.

If thou be as poor for a subject, as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

Kent.

Service.

Lear.

Whom wouldst thou serve?

Kent.

You.

Lear.

Dost thou know me, fellow?

Kent.

No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.

Lear.

What's that?

Kent.

Authority.

Lear.

What services canst thou do?

Kent.

I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in; and the best of me is diligence.

Lear.

How old art thou?

Kent.

Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing; nor so old to dote on her for anything. I have years on my back forty-eight.

Lear.

Follow me; thou shalt serve me: if I like thee no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet.—Dinner, ho! dinner! Where's my knave? my fool? Go you, and call my fool hither.

[*Exit knight* C. *Enter Oswald* R. *singing.*

You, you, sirrah, where's my daughter?

Osw.

So please you,——

[*Exit* L. I. E.

Lear.

What said the fellow? Call the clodpole back. Where's [*Exit Curan* L. 1. E.
my fool, ho? I think the world's asleep. How, now! where's that mongrel? [*Enter Curan.*

Curan.

He says, my lord, your daughter is not well.

Lear.

Why came not the slave back to me, when I called him?

Curan.

Sir, he answered me in the roundest manner, he would not. [*Exit Kent* L. 1. E.

Lear.

He would not!

Curan.

My lord, I know not what the matter is, but, to my judgment, your highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont.

Lear.

Ha! sayest thou so? Thou but rememberest me of mine own conception. I have perceived a most faint neglect of late; which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity, than as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness. I will look further into 't.—But where's my fool? I have not seen him this two days.

Curan.

Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the fool hath much pined away.

Lear.

No more of that; I have noted it well. Go you and tell my daughter I would speak with her. Go you, call

[*Exit Curan* R. 3. E.

hither my fool!

[*Exit a knight, arch* C. *Re-enter Oswald and Kent* L. 1. E. *Kent places Oswald* L. *of Lear.*

O! you, sir, come you hither. Who am I, sir?

Osw.

My lady's father.

Lear.

My lady's father! my lord's knave! you dog! you slave! you cur!

Osw.

I am none of these, my lord; I beseech your pardon.

Lear.

Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?

[*Lear strikes Oswald.*

Osw.

I'll not be struck, my lord.

Kent.

Nor tripped neither, you base foot-ball player.

[*Tripping Oswald, who falls.*

Lear. [*To Kent.*

I thank thee, fellow; thou servest me, and I'll love thee.

Kent. [*To Oswald.*

Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences: away, away! if you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry; but away! go to: have you wisdom? So!

[*Oswald, having risen, is pushed off, by Kent,* R. 3. E.

Lear.

Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee; there 's earnest of thy service.

[*Kent down* R.: *Lear gives him money: enter Fool, arch* C.

Fool. [*Crosses to Kent.*

Let me hire him too:—Here 's my coxcomb.

[*Offering Kent his cap.*

Lear.

How now, my pretty knave! how dost thou?

Fool. [*To Kent.*

Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

Kent.

Why, boy?

Fool.

Why? for taking one's part that 's out of favour. Nay, an' thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou 'lt catch cold shortly: there, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow has banished two on 's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will; if thou follow him thou must needs wear my coxcomb.—How now, nuncle? would I had two coxcombs, and two daughters.

Lear.

Why, my boy?

Fool.

If I gave them all my living, I 'd keep my coxcombs myself. There 's mine; beg another of thy daughters.

Lear.

Take heed, sirrah; the whip.

Fool.

Truth 's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out, when the Lady Brach may lie by the fire and sleep. Sirrah, I 'll teach thee a speech.

Lear.

Do.

Fool.

Mark it, nuncle:—

Have more than thou showest,
Speak less than thou knowest,
Lend less than thou owest,
Ride more than thou goest.
Learn more than thou trowest,
Set less than thou throwest;
And thou shalt have more
Than two tens to a score.

Lear.

This is nothing, fool.

Fool.

Then, 't is like the breath of an unfeed lawyer; you gave me nothing for it. Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?

Lear.

Why, no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.

Fool. [*To Kent.*

Pr'ythee, tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to: he will not believe a fool.

Lear.

A bitter fool!

Fool.

Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet one?

Lear.

No, lad, teach me.

Fool. [*Sings.*

That lord, that counselled thee
  To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me;
  Do thou for him stand:
The sweet and bitter fool
  Will presently appear;
The one in motley here,
  The other found out there.

[*Points at Lear.*

Lear.

Dost thou call me fool, boy?

Fool.

All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.

Kent.

This is not altogether fool, my lord.

Fool.

No, 'faith; lords and great men will not let me have all fool to myself; they 'll be snatching. Give me an egg, nuncle, and I 'll give thee two crowns.

[*Kent retires up.*

Lear.

What two crowns shall they be?

Fool.

Why, after I have cut the egg i' the middle, and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i' the middle, and gavest away both parts, thou borest thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt: thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown, when thou gav'st thy golden one away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipped that first finds it so.

[*Sings.*

Then they for sudden joy did weep,
And I for sorrow sung
That such a king should play bo-peep,
And go the fools among.

[*Fool goes down to* R. *corner.*

Lear.

When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?

Fool.

I have used it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mothers. Pr'ythee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie. I would fain learn to lie.

Lear.

An you lie, sirrah, we 'll have you whipped.

Fool.

I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are: they 'll have me whipped for speaking true, thou 'lt have me whipped for lying; and sometimes I am whipped for holding my peace. I had rather be any kind o' a thing than a fool; and yet would not be thee, nuncle; thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides, and left nothing i' the middle.

[*Enter Goneril, three ladies and three gentlemen from castle* R. 3. E.

Here comes one of the parings.

Lear.

How now, daughter! What makes that frontlet on?
Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown.

Gon. [R.

Not only, sir, this your all-licensed fool,
But other of your insolent retinue
Do hourly carp and quarrel; breaking forth
In rank, and not-to-be-endured riots. Sir,
I had thought, by making this well known unto you,

To have found a safe redress; but now grow fearful,
By what yourself too late have spoke and done,
That you protect this course, and put it on,
By your allowance.

Fool. [L.

For you know, nuncle, [*Sings.*
The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
That it had its head bit off by its young.

Lear.

Are you our daughter?

Gon.

I would you would make use of your good wisdom, and put aside these dispositions which transport you from what you rightly are.

Lear.

Does any here know me? Why, this is not Lear:
Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

Fool.

Lear's shadow!

Lear. [*To Goneril.*

Your name, fair gentlewoman?

Gon.

This admiration, sir, is much o' the savour
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you
To understand my purposes aright;
As you are old and reverend, should be wise.
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
Men so disordered, so debauched and bold,
That this our court, infected with their manners,
Shows like a riotous inn:
For instant remedy, be, then, desired
By her, that else will take the thing she begs,

A little to disquantity your train;
And the remainder, that shall still depend,
To be such men as may besort your age,
Which know themselves and you.

Lear.

Darkness and devils!
Saddle my horses; call my train together.—
[*Exit attendant.*
Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee;
Yet have I left a daughter.

Gon.

You strike my people, and your disordered rabble
Make servants of their betters.

Lear.

Woe, that too late repents.—
[*Enter Albany* L. I. E.]
O, sir, are you come? [*To Albany.*
Is it your will? Speak, sir! Prepare my horses.
Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a child,
Than the sea-monster.

Alb.

Pray, sir, be patient.

Lear. [L. *to Goneril.*

Detested kite! thou liest!
My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
That all particulars of duty know,
And in the most exact regard support
The worships of their name.—O, most small fault,
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show,
Which, like an engine, wrenched my frame of nature
From the fixed place, drew from my heart all love,
And added to the gall. O, Lear, Lear, Lear!
[*Striking his head.*
Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in,
And thy dear judgment out!
Go, go, my people!

Alb.

Now, gods, that we adore, whereof comes this?
[*Albany crosses to Goneril* R.

Gon.

Never afflict yourself to know the cause;
But let his disposition have that scope
That dotage gives it.

Alb. [R.

What's the matter, sir?

Lear.

I'll tell thee! — Life and death! I am ashamed
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus:
[*To Goneril.*
That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,
Should make thee worth them. — Blasts and fogs upon thee!
The untented woundings of a father's curse
Pierce every sense about thee! — Old, fond eyes,
Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck you out;
And cast you, with the waters that you lose,
To temper clay. Ha! is it come to this?
Let it be so; yet have I left a daughter,
Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable;
When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails
She'll flay thy wolfish visage. Thou shalt find
That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think
I have cast off forever.

Alb.

My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant
Of what hath moved you.

Lear.

It may be so, my lord: —
Hear, Nature, hear; dear goddess, hear! [*Kneels.*
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful!
Into her womb convey sterility!

Dry up in her the organs of increase;
And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honour her! If she must teem,
Create her child of spleen; that it may live,
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her!
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth;
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks;
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits,
To laughter and contempt; that she may feel
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child!

[*Kent and Fool assist Lear to rise.*

QUICK CURTAIN.

Act Second.

Scene First. { IN FRONT OF GLOSTER'S CASTLE. CUT WOOD FRONT. CASTLE C. A WING OF THE CASTLE, WITH PRIVATE DOOR, SEEN L. U. E.

[*Enter Kent* R. 1. E., *and Oswald* L. 2. E.

Osw.

Good-morrow to thee, friend: art of this house?

Kent.

Ay.

Osw.

Where may we set our horses?

Kent.

I' the mire.

Osw.

Pr'ythee, if thou lovest me, tell me.

Kent.

I love thee not

Osw.

Why, then, I care not for thee.

Kent.

If I had thee in Lipsbury pinfold, I would make thee care for me.

Osw.

Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not.

Kent.

Fellow, I know thee.

Osw.

What dost thou know me for?

Kent.

A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking knave; a glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue.

Osw. [L.

Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on one that is neither known of thee, nor knows thee.

Kent.

What a brazen-faced varlet art thou, to deny that thou know'st me? Is it two days since I tripped up thy heels, and beat thee, before the king? Draw, you rogue!

[*Kent draws sword and menaces Oswald.*

Osw.

Away, I have nothing to do with thee.

Kent.

Draw, you rascal: you come with letters against the king, and take vanity the puppet's part, against the royalty of her father; draw, you rogue, or I 'll so carbonade your shanks;—draw, you rascal! Come your ways!

Osw.

Help, ho! Murder! Help!

Kent.

Strike, you slave; stand, rogue, stand; you neat slave, strike. [*Beating him.*

Osw.

Help, ho! Murder! Murder!

[*Exeunt* L. *Enter Edmund* C.

Edm.

The duke be here to-day? The better!
Best!
This weaves itself perforce into my business.
My father hath set guard to take my brother;
And I have one thing, of a queazy question,
Which I must act.—Briefness and fortune work!
Brother a word;—brother, I say!

[*Enter Edgar* L. U. E.

My father watches:—O, sir, fly this place;
Intelligence is given where you are hid:
Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?
He 's coming hither, and Regan with him:
Have you nothing said
Upon his party 'gainst the Duke of Albany?
Advise yourself.

Edgar.

I am sure on 't, not a word.

Edm.

[*During this speech, mock combat.*

I hear my father coming,—pardon me:
In cunning I must draw my sword upon you;
Draw; seem to defend yourself: now, 'quit you well.
Yield:—come before my father:
Fly brother! Help! Help! So, farewell.

[*Exit Edgar* L. I. E.

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion

[*Wounds his arm.*

Of my more fierce endeavour: I have seen drunkards,
Do more than this in sport.—Father! Father!
Stop, stop! No help?

[*Enter Gloster and two servants with torches, from castle* C.

Glos.

Now, Edmund, where 's the villain?

Edm.

Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out
Mumbling of wicked charms.

Glos.

But, where is he?

Edm.

Look, sir, I bleed.

Glos.

Where is the villain, Edmund?

Edm.

Fled this way, sir. [*Points* R. I. E.] When by no means
he could——

Glos.

Pursue him. Ho!—Go after!
[*Exeunt servants* R. I. E., *as Edmund directs, which is contrary to the way of Edgar's flight.*
By no means,—what?

Edm.

Persuade me to the murder of your lordship.
Seeing how loathly opposite I stood
To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion,
With his preparèd sword he charges home
My unprovided body, lanced mine arm;
But when he saw my best alarmèd spirits,
Bold in the quarrel's right,
Or whether ghasted by the noise I made,
Full suddenly he fled.

Glos.

Let him fly far;
Not in this land shall he remain uncaught,
And found—dispatch. The noble duke, my master,
My worthy arch and patron, comes.
By his authority I will proclaim it.

That he, which finds him, shall deserve our thanks,
Bringing the murderous coward to the stake;
He, that conceals him, death. [*Trumpets at distance.*
Hark! The duke's trumpets. I know not why he comes.
All ports I 'll bar; the villain shall not 'scape;
The duke must grant me that. And of my land,
Loyal and natural boy, I 'll work the means
To make thee capable.

[*Enter Cornwall, Regan, ladies, and attendants,* L. 2. E.

Corn.

How now, my noble friend! Since I came hither,—
Which I can call but now,—I have heard strange news.

Regan. [L.

If it be true, all vengeance comes too short,
Which can pursue the offender,
What! did my father's godson seek your life?
He whom my father named? Your Edgar?

Glos. [R. C.

O, lady, lady! shame would have it hid!

Regan.

Was he not companion with the riotous knights
That tend upon my father?

Edm.

Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

Regan. [*To Cornwall.*

No marvel, then, though he were ill-affected;
'T is they have put him on the old man's death,
To have the expense and waste of his revènues.
[*To Gloster.*
I have this present morning from my sister
Been well informèd of them; and with such cautions,
That if they come to sojourn at my house, I 'll not be there.

Corn.

Nor I, assure thee, Regan.—
Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father
A child-like office.

Edm.

It was my duty, sir.

Glos.

He did bewray his practice; and received
This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

Corn.

Is he pursued?

Glos.

Ay, my good lord.

Corn.

If he be taken, he shall nevermore
Be feared of doing harm; make your own purpose,
How in my strength you please. For you, Edmund,
Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant
So much commend itself, you shall be ours:
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need:
You we first seize on.

Edm.

I shall serve you, sir,
Truly, however else.

Glos. [*To Cornwall.*

For him, I thank your grace.

Corn.

You know not why we came to visit you.

Regan.

Thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night.
Occasions, noble Gloster, of some poise,
Wherein we must have use of your advice.
Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,
Of differences, which I best thought it fit

To answer from our home; the several messengers
From hence attend despatch. Our good old friend,
Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow,
Your needful counsel to our business,
Which craves the instant use.

Glos.

I serve you, madam.
Your graces are right welcome.

[*Enter* L. *Oswald crying "Help!" "help!" followed by Kent* L. U. E. *Oswald crosses to* R. *corner. Kent remains* L.

Edm.

How now? What's the matter?

Corn.

Keep peace, upon your lives;
He dies that strikes again. What is the matter?

Regan.

The messengers from our sister and the king.

Corn.

What is your difference? Speak!

Osw. [R.

I 'm scarce in breath, my lord.

Kent. [L.

No marvel, you have so bestirred your valour. You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee; a tailor made thee!

Corn.

Thou art a strange fellow; a tailor make a man?

Kent.

Ay, a tailor, sir; a stone-cutter, or a painter, could not have made him so ill, though they had been but two hours at the trade.

Corn.

Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

Osw.

This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared,
At suit of his grey beard,——

Kent.

Thou zed! Thou unnecessary letter!—My lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar. Spare my grey beard, you wagtail!

Corn.

Peace, sirrah! Have you no reverence?

Kent.

Yes, sir, but anger hath a privilege.

Corn.

Why art thou angry?

Kent.

That such a slave as this should wear a sword,
Who wears no honesty.
No contraries hold more antipathy
Than I and such a knave.

Corn.

Why dost thou call him knave? What's his offence?

Kent.

His countenance likes me not.

Corn.

No more perchance does mine, nor his, nor hers.

Kent.

Sir, 't is my occupation to be plain;
I have seen better faces in my time
Than stand on any shoulders that I see
Before me at this instant.

Corn.

This is some fellow,
Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect
A saucy roughness;
These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness
Harbour more craft, and more corrupter ends,
Than twenty silly, ducking observants,
That stretch their duties nicely.
What was the offence you gave him? [*To Oswald.*

Osw.

I never gave him any;
It pleased the king, his master, very late,
To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;
When he, compact, and flattering his displeasure,
Tripped me behind; being down, insulted, railed,
And put upon him such a deal of man,
That worthied him, got praises of the king,
And in the fleshment of this dread exploit
Drew on me here again.

Corn.

Fetch forth the stocks!

[*Two knights enter castle* C.

You stubborn, ancient knave, you reverend braggart,
We 'll teach you!

Kent.

Sir, I am too old to learn:
Call not your stocks for me: I serve the king,
On whose employment I was sent to you:
You shall do small respects, show too bold malice
Against the grace and person of my master,
Stocking his messenger.

Regan.

Fetch forth the stocks·
As I have life and honour, there shall he sit till night—
And all night too.

Kent.

Why, madam, if I were your father's dog,
You should not use me so.

Regan.

Sir, being his knave, I will.

[*Re-enter two knights, with two servants who carry the stocks.*

Glos.

Let me beseech your grace not to do so:
His fault is much, and the good king his master
Will check him for 't; the king must take it ill,
That he, so slightly valued in his messenger,
Should have him thus restrained.

Corn.

I'll answer that.

Regan.

My sister may receive it much more worse,
To have her gentleman abused, assaulted,
For following her affairs.

[*Kent is put into the stocks. Exeunt Regan, Cornwall, Edmund, and attendants,* C.

Glos. [*To Kent.*

I am sorry for thee, friend: 't is the duke's pleasure,
Whose disposition, all the world well knows,
Will not be rubbed, nor stopped: I'll entreat for thee.

Kent.

Pray, do not, sir. I have watched and travelled hard:
Sometime I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels:
Give you good-morrow!

Glos. [*To himself.*

The duke's to blame in this: 'T will be ill taken.

[*Exit Gloster* C. *Oswald approaches Kent with drawn sword; Kent strikes at him; Oswald runs into castle* C. *Scene changes: lights down.*

Scene Second.—A LONELY HEATH. DIM STARLIGHT.

[*Enter Edgar* L. I. E.

Edgar.

I heard myself proclaimed;
And by the happy hollow of a tree
Escaped the hunt. No port is free; no place,
That guard, and most unusual vigilance,
Does not attend my taking. While I may 'scape,
I will preserve myself; and am bethought
To take the basest and most poorest shape,
That ever penury, in contempt of man,
Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth,
Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots,
And with presented nakedness out-face
The winds and persecutions of the sky.
The country gives me proof and precedent
Of Bedlam beggars, who with roaring voices,
Strike in their numbed and mortified bare arms,
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
And with this horrible object, from low farms,
Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes and mills
Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
Enforce their charity.—Poor Turlygod! poor Tom!
That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am!

[*Exit Edgar* R. I. E. *Scene changes: lights up.*

Scene Third. { IN FRONT OF GLOSTER'S CASTLE. KENT DISCOVERED, IN THE STOCKS L. U. E.

[*Enter Lear, Fool, and Lear's knights, who stand in front of Kent, not seeing him.*—N. B. *He is not seen by them till he speaks.*

Lear.

'T is strange that they should so depart from home,
And not send back my messenger.

Fool.

If a man's brains were in his heels, wer't not in danger of kibes?

Lear.

Ay, boy.

Fool. [R.

Then, I pr'ythee, be merry; thy wit shall not go slipshod.

Lear.

Ha! ha! ha!

Fool.

Shalt see, thy other daughter will use thee kindly; for though she's as like this as a crab is like an apple, yet I can tell what I can tell.

Lear.

What canst tell, boy?

Fool.

She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab. Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i' the middle of his face?

Lear.

No.

Fool.

Why, to keep his eyes on either side his nose; that what a man cannot smell out he may spy into.

Lear.

I did her wrong!—

Fool.

Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

Lear.

No.

Fool.

Nor I neither: but I can tell why a snail has a house.

Lear.

Why?

Fool.

Why, to put his head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case.

Lear.

I will forget my nature. So kind a father! See to my horses.

Fool.

Thy asses are gone about 'em. The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason.

Lear.

Because they are not eight.

Fool.

Yes, indeed; thou wouldst make a good fool.

Lear.

To take 't again perforce! — Monster ingratitude!

Fool.

If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.

Lear.

How 's that?

Fool.

Thou shouldst not have been old before thou hadst been wise.

Lear.

O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!
Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!

Kent.

Hail to thee, noble master!
[*Knights fall back, disclosing Kent in the stocks.*

Fool.

Ha, ha! Look, he wears cruel garters.

Lear.

Ha!
Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?

Kent.

No, my lord!

Lear.

What 's he, that hath so much thy place mistook,
To set thee here?

Kent.

It is both he and she;
Your son and daughter.

Lear.

No!

Kent.

Yes!

Lear.

No, I say.

Kent.

I say, yea.

Lear.

No, no; they would not.

Kent.

Yes, they have.

Lear.

By Jupiter, I swear, no.

Kent.

By Juno, I swear, ay.

Lear.

They durst not do it;
They could not, would not do 't; 't is worse than murder,
To do upon respect such violent outrage.
Resolve me with all modest haste which way
Thou mightst deserve, or they impose, this usage,
Coming from us.

Kent.

My lord, when at their home
I did commend your highness' letter to them,
Ere I was risen from the place that showed
My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,
Stewed in his haste, half breathless, panting forth
From Goneril, his mistress, salutations;
Delivered letters, spite of intermission,
Which presently they read; on whose contents,
They straight took horse;
Commanded me to follow, and attend
The leisure of their answer; gave me cold looks;
And, meeting here the other messenger,
Whose welcome, I perceived, had poisoned mine,—
Being the very fellow which of late
Displayed so saucily against your highness,—
Having more man than wit about me, drew;
He raised the house with loud and coward cries:
Your son and daughter found this trespass worth
The shame which here it suffers.

Fool.

Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that way. Thou shalt have as many dolours for thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year. [*To Lear.*

Lear.

O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!
Hysterica passio! Down, thou climbing sorrow!
Thy element's below. Where is this daughter?

Kent.

With the earl, sir; here, within.

Lear. [*To all.*

Follow me not:
Stay here.

[*Exit Lear* C.

Fool.

Made you no more offence but what you speak of?

Kent.

None.
How chance the king comes with so small a train?

Fool.

An thou hadst been set i' the stocks for that question, thou hadst well deserved it.

Kent.

Why, fool?

Fool.

We 'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach there's no labouring i' the winter.

[*Sings.*

He who serves and seeks for gain,
  And follows but for form,
Will pack when it begins to rain,
  And leave thee in the storm;
But, I will tarry; the fool will stay,
  And let the wise man fly;
The knave turns fool that runs away,
  The fool no knave, perdy.

Kent.

Where learned you this, fool?

Fool.

Not i' the stocks, fool.

[*Re-enter Lear and Gloster* C.

Lear.

Deny to speak with me? They are sick? they are weary?
They have travelled all the night? Mere fetches,
The images of revolt and flying off.
Fetch me a better answer.

Glos. [R.

My dear lord,
You know the fiery quality of the duke.

Lear.

Vengeance! Plague! Death! Confusion!
Fiery? What quality? Why, Gloster, Gloster,
I 'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

Glos.

Well, my good lord, I have informed them so.

Lear.

Informed them! Dost thou understand me, man?

Glos.

Ay, my good lord.

Lear.

The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear father
Would with his daughter speak, commands her service:
Are they informed of this? My breath and blood!
Fiery? The fiery duke!—tell the hot duke that—
[*Gloster starts towards* C.
No, but not yet:—may be, he is not well:
Infirmity doth still neglect all office,
Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves,
When nature, being oppressed, commands the mind
To suffer with the body: I 'll forbear;
And am fallen out with my more headier will,
To take the indisposed and sickly fit
For the sound man.—Death on my state! Wherefore
[*Looking on Kent.*
Should he sit here? This act persuades me

That this remotion of the duke and her
Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.
Go, tell the duke and 's wife I'd speak with them,
Now, presently; bid them come forth and hear me,
Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum,
Till it cry—"Sleep to death."

[*Enter Cornwall, Regan, lords, ladies and servants* C.

Corn.

Hail to your grace.

[*Cornwall silently indicates that Kent is to be released. Kent is set at liberty, by the servants, and goes* R.

Regan.

I am glad to see your highness.

Lear. [L. C.

Regan, I think you are; I know what reason
I have to think so; if thou shouldst not be glad,
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
Sepulch'ring an adultress.—O! are you free?

[*To Kent, who comes forward* R.

Some other time for that.—Belovèd Regan,
Thy sister's naught: O, Regan, she hath tied
Sharp-toothed unkindness, like a vulture, here,—

[*Points to his bosom.*

I can scarce speak to thee; thou 'lt not believe
With how depraved a quality—O, Regan!

Regan.

I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope
You less know how to value her desert
Than she to scant her duty.

Lear.

Say, how is that?

Regan.

I cannot think my sister in the least
Would fail her obligation; if, sir, perchance,
She have restrained the riots of your followers,
'T is on such ground, and to such wholesome end,
As clears her from all blame.

Lear.

My curses on her!

Regan.

O, sir, you are old;
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confine; you should be ruled and led
By some discretion, that discerns your state
Better than yourself; therefore I pray you
That to our sister you do make return;
Say you have wronged her, sir.

Lear.

Ask her forgiveness?
Do you but mark how this becomes the house:
Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;
Age is unnecessary; on my knees I beg
That you 'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food.

Regan.

Good sir, no more; these are unsightly tricks:
Return you to my sister.

Lear.

Never, Regan!
She hath abated me of half my train;
Looked black upon me; struck me with her tongue,
Most serpent-like, upon the very heart:—
All the stored vengeances of heaven fall
On her ungrateful top! Strike her young bones,
You taking airs, with lameness!

Corn.

Fie, fie, fie!

Lear.

You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames
Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,
You fen-sucked fogs, drawn by the powerful sun,
To fall and blast her pride!

Regan.

O, the blest gods!
So you will wish on me when the rash mood is on.

Lear.

No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse;
Thy tender-hested nature shall not give
Thee o'er to harshness: thou better know'st
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude;
Thy half o' the kingdom hast thou not forgot,
Wherein I thee endowed.

Regan.

Good sir, to the purpose.

Lear.

Who put my man i' the stocks?

[*Trumpets within pp.*

Corn.

What trumpet 's that?

Regan.

I know 't, my sister's.

Lear. [*Looking off* L.

This is a slave whose easy-borrowed pride
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.

[*Enter Oswald* L.

Out, varlet, from my sight!

[*Strikes Oswald, who retires.*

Corn.

What means your grace?

Lear.

Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope
Thou didst not know on 't. [*Trumpet p.*] Who comes here?
O, heavens!
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
Allow obedience, if yourselves are old,
Make it your cause; send down and take my part!
[*Enter Goneril, lords, and ladies* L. I. E.
Art not ashamed to look upon this beard? — [*To Goneril.*
[*Regan and Goneril embrace.*
O, Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

Gon. [*To Lear.*

Why not by the hand, sir? How have I offended?
All 's not offence that indiscretion finds,
And dotage terms so.

Lear.

O, heart! you are too tough! — too tough!

Regan. [*To Lear.*

I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.
If, till the expiration of your month,
You will return and sojourn with my sister,
Dismissing half your train, come then to me;
I am now from home, and out of that provision
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

Lear.

Return to her? and fifty men dismissed?
No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose
To wage against the enmity o' the air;
To be a comrade with the wolf and owl —
Necessity's sharp pinch! — return with her?

Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took
Our youngest born,—I could as well be brought
To knee his throne, and, squire-like, pension beg
To keep base life afoot.

Gon.

At your choice, sir.

Lear.

I pr'ythee, daughter, do not make me mad;
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell;
We 'll no more meet, no more see one another;
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;
Or rather, a disease that 's in my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine; but I 'll not chide thee;
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it;
I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove:
Mend; when thou canst; be better at thy leisure:
I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,
I, and my hundred knights.

Regan.

Not altogether so;
I looked not for you yet, nor am provided
For your fit welcome.

Lear.

Is this well spoken?

Regan.

What! fifty followers?
Is it not well? What should you need of more?
Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger
Speak 'gainst so great a number.

Gon.

Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance
From those that she calls servants, or from mine?

Regan.

Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack you,
We could controul them: if you will come to me,—
For now I spy a danger,—I entreat you
To bring but five and twenty; to no more
Will I give place or notice.

Lear.

I gave you all——

Regan.

And in good time you gave it.

Lear.

Made you my guardians, my depositaries,
But kept a reservation to be followed
With such a number. What! must I come to you
With five and twenty? Regan, said you so?

Regan.

And speak't again, my lord; no more with me.

Lear.

Those wicked creatures yet do look well favoured
When others are more wicked; not being the worst,
Stands in some rank of praise:—I'll go with thee.
[*To Goneril.*
Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,
And thou art twice her love.

Gon.

Hear me, my lord:
What need you five and twenty, ten, or five,
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

Regan.

What need one?

Lear.

O, reason not the need; our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous.
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady;
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But for true need,—
You heavens give me patience, patience I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretchèd in both:
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger!
O! let not woman's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both
That all the world shall—I will do such things,—
What they are yet I know not, but, they shall be
The terrors of the earth! [*Fool comes down* L.
You think I'll weep;
No, I'll not weep;—
I have full cause of weeping—
But this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I'll weep!—O, fool! I shall go mad!
[*Exeunt Lear, Kent and Fool* L. I. E.

CURTAIN.

Act Third.

Scene First. { A Room in Gloster's Castle. Faint noise of Storm heard, now and then.

[*Enter Gloster and Edmund* L. I. E.

Glos.

Alack! alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desired their leave that I might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house; charged me, on pain of their perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, nor any way sustain him.

Edm.

Most savage and unnatural!

Glos.

Go to; say you nothing: there is division between the dukes, and a worse matter than that. Read this letter [*gives him a letter*] I have received to-night;—'tis dangerous to be spoken. These injuries the king now bears will be revenged home. There is a part of a power already footed. We must incline to the king. I will seek him and privily relieve him. Go you, and maintain talk with the duke, that my charity be not of him perceived. If he ask for me, I am ill, and gone to bed. If I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the king, my old master, must be relieved. There is strange things toward, Edmund; pray you be careful.

[*Exit Gloster* R. I. E.

Edm.

This courtesy forbid thee shall the duke
Instantly know; and of this letter too:
[*Looking upon letter.*
This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me
That which my father loses; no less than all:
The younger rises when the old doth fall.
[*Enter Cornwall* L. I. E.

Corn.

Where is your father, Edmund?

Edm.

How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just! He hath gone to relieve the king;—and see, this letter approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France, whose armies now are moving. O, heaven! that this treason were not, or not I the detector!

Corn. [*Takes letter.*

I will have my revenge ere I depart this house.

Edm.

If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.

Corn.

True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloster. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.

Edm. [*Aside.*

If I find him comforting the king, I will stuff his suspicion more fully. I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.
[*During this aside, Cornwall reads the letter.*

Corn.

I will lay trust upon thee; thou shalt find
A dearer father in my love.
Edmund, farewell. Go, seek the traitor Gloster:
Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.
Though well we may not pass upon his life
Without the form of justice, yet our power
Shall do a courtesy to our wrath, which men
May blame, but not controul.

[*Exeunt Edmund* R., *Cornwall* L.

Scene Second. { A HEATH. STORM. LOUD AND CONTINUED WIND AND RAIN. LIGHTNING AND THUNDER. LEAR DISCOVERED.

Lear.

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout,
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!
[*Lightning.*
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt couriers of oak-cleaving thunder-bolts,
Singe my white head! [*Thunder.*
And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
Crack nature's moulds, all germins spill at once
That make ingrateful man!

[*Rain and thunder and noise of the whistling blast.*

[*Enter Fool* L. U. E.

Fool.

O, nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in and ask thy daughters' blessing; here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools. [*Thunder.*

Lear.

Rumble thy belly-full! spit fire! spout rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, called you children;
You owe me no subscription: then let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man:—
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That will with two pernicious daughters join
Your high-engendered battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O, O, 't is foul!
[*Thunder, rain, and wind. Enter Kent* L. 2. E.

Kent.

Who 's there?

Fool.

Marry, a wise man and a fool.

Kent. [*To Lear.*

Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love night
Love not such nights as these; the wrathful skies
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark,
And make them keep their caves.
[*Lightning and loud thunder.*

Lear.

Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulgèd crimes,
Unwhipped of justice: hide thee, thou bloody hand;
Thou perjured, and thou simular of virtue
That art incestuous: caitiff to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming

Hast practised on man's life: close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace.—
I am a man,
More sinned against than sinning.

[*Thunder, very loud.*

Kent.

Gracious, my lord, hard by there is a hovel;
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest.

[*Loud sound of rain.*

Lear.

My wits begin to turn.—
Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?

[*To Fool.*

I am cold, myself.—Where is this straw, my fellow?
The art of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.
Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.

Fool.

[*Sings. All quiet, meanwhile.*

He that has a little tiny wit,—
With heigh, ho, the wind and the rain,—
Must make content with his fortunes fit;
For the rain it raineth every day.

Lear.

True, my good boy. [*Distant thunder and rain.*

Kent.

[*Pointing to hovel* L. U. E.

Here is the place, my lord; good my lord, enter:
The tyranny of the open night's too rough
For nature to endure.

[*Storm sounds heard, but faintly—seeming to die away.*

Lear.

Let me alone.

Kent.

Good my lord, enter here.

Lear.

Wilt break my heart?

Kent.

I'd rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

Lear.

Thou think'st 'tis much, that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so, 't is, to thee;
But where the greater malady is fixed
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear;
But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea
Thou'dst meet the bear i' the mouth. When the mind's free,
The body's delicate: the tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
Save what beats there.— Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand,
For lifting food to 't? But I will punish home.—
No, I will weep no more.

[*Thunder and rain.*

In such a night
To shut me out! pour on; I will endure:—
In such a night as this! O, Regan, Goneril!
Your old, kind father, whose frank heart gave all;—
O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;
No more of that.

Kent. [L.

Good my lord, enter here?

Lear.

Pr'ythee go in thyself; seek thine own ease;
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more.— But I'll go in;
In boy; go first. [*To Fool.*
You houseless poverty,—

[*Kent and Fool endeavour to lead Lear.*

Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

[*Fool goes into hovel* L. U. E.

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel;
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just. [*Thunder.*

Fool. [*Within.*

Help! help! help!

Edgar. [*Within.*

Fathom and half, fathom and half! Poor Tom!

Fool. [*Within.*

Come not in here, nuncle; here's a spirit.
Help me! help me!

Kent.

Give me thy hand.
Who's there?

[*To Fool,—who enters* L. U. E. *and runs to Lear.*

Fool.

A spirit, a spirit; he says his name's poor Tom.

Kent.

What are thou that dost grumble there i' the straw?
Come forth!

[*Enter from the hovel* L. U. E. *Edgar, disguised as a madman. He runs to* R. *Kent comes behind Lear and interposes between him and Edgar.*

Edgar.

Away! the foul fiend follows me!
Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind:
Humph! go to thy cold bed, and warm thee.

Lear. [*To Edgar.*

Hast thou given all to thy two daughters?
And art thou come to this?

Edgar. [R.

Who gives anything to poor Tom, whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, through ford and whirlpool, over bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under his pillow, and halters in his pew; made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inched bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor. Bless thy five wits!

[*Wind and rain.*

Tom's a-cold. O, do de, do de, do de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting and taking! Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him now,—and there,—and there,—and there again, and there.

[*Rain, and rumble of distant thunder.*

Lear.

What! have his daughters brought him to this pass?
[*To Edgar.*
Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give them all?

Fool.

Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all shamed.

Lear.

Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air
Hang fated o'er men's faults, fall on thy daughters!

Kent.

He hath no daughters, sir.

Lear.

Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued nature
To such a lowness, but his unkind daughters!
Is it the fashion that discarded fathers

Should have thus little mercy on their flesh ?

[*Draws a thorn, or wooden spike, from Edgar's arm and tries to thrust it into his own.*

Judicious punishment ! 'T was this flesh begot
Those pelican daughters.

[*Edgar seizes Lear's hand and takes away the thorn.*

Edgar.

Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill ; —
Halloo, halloo, loo, loo !

Fool.

This night will turn us all to fools and madmen.

Edgar.

Take heed o' the foul fiend. Obey thy parents ; keep thy word justly ; swear not ; commit not with man's sworn spouse ; set not thy sweet heart on proud array. Tom 's a-cold.

Lear.

What hast thou been ?

Edgar.

A serving man, proud in heart and mind ; that curled my hair ; wore gloves in my cap ; swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke them in the sweet face of heaven. Wine loved I deeply ; dice dearly ; false of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand ; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes, nor the rustling of silks, betray thy poor heart to woman : keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend. — Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind. Sessa, sessa ! Ha, no, nonny. Dolphin, my boy, my boy ; sessa ! sessa ! Let him trot by.

[*Distant rain and thunder.*

Lear.

Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. — Ha! here 's three of us are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forkèd animal as thou art.— Off! off! you lendings: —come; unbutton here.

[*Lear essays to tear off his clothes.*

Fool. [*Preventing him.*

Pr'ythee, nuncle, be contented; 't is a naughty night to swim in. Look, here comes a walking fire.

[*Pointing* L. 2. E.

Edgar.

This is the foul fiend, Flibbertigibbet; he begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock; he gives the web and the pin, squints the eye, and makes the hare-lip; mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

Saint Withold footed thrice the wold;
He met the night-mare and her nine-fold;
Bid her alight, and her troth plight,
And, aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!

Kent.

[*Speaking to those who approach.*

Who 's there. What is 't you seek?

[*Lear sits on a fallen tree. Fool sits at his left. Kent at* L. *back.*

Glos. [*Calling, within.*

What are you there? Your names?

[*Enter Gloster, and two servants with torches,* L. 2. E.

Edgar.

Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt, and the water; that, in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, swallows the old rat,

and the ditch dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipped from tything to tything, and stocked, punished, and imprisoned; who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body, horse to ride, and weapon to wear.

But mice and rats, and such small deer,
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

Beware my follower:—Peace, Smolkin; peace, thou fiend!

[*Edgar goes to Lear* C. *Gloster takes torch and sends off servants, who go out* L. 2. E.

Glos. [*To Lear.*

What, hath your grace no better company?

Edgar.

The prince of darkness is a gentleman;
Modo he 's called, and Mahu.

Glos.

Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile
That it doth hate what gets it.

Edgar.

Poor Tom 's a-cold.

Glos. [*To Lear.*

Go in with me: my duty cannot suffer
To obey in all your daughters' hard commands!
Though their injunction be to bar my doors,
[*Thunder and lightning.*
And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,
Yet have I ventured to come seek you out,
And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

Lear.

First let me talk with this philosopher. [*Thunder.*
What is the cause of thunder? [*To Edgar.*

Kent.

Good my lord, take his offer.

Lear.

I'll talk a word with this same learnèd Theban:—
What is your study? [*To Edgar.*

Edgar.

How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin.

Lear.

Let me ask you one word in private.
[*He whispers to Edgar.*

Kent. [*To Gloster.*

Importune him once more to go, my lord;
His wits begin to unsettle.

Glos.

Canst thou blame him?
His daughters seek his death:—ah, that good Kent!
He said it would be thus: poor banished man.
I'll tell thee, friend,
I am almost mad myself; I had a son,
Now outlawed from my blood: he sought my life,
[*Edgar listens, and evinces emotion.*
But lately, very late: I loved him, friend,—
No father his son dearer: true to tell thee,
The grief hath crazed my wits.
[*Sounds of tempest.*
What a night's this!
I do beseech your grace—— [*To Lear.*

Lear.

I'll see their trial first.—Bring in the evidence.
Thou robèd man of justice, take thy place; [*To Edgar.*
And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity, [*To Fool.*
Bench by his side.
[*Fool runs to* R. *of Lear and sits near him.*
Now, you she-foxes!

Edgar.

[*As if stroking a cat beside him at* R.
Purr! the cat is grey!

Lear.

Arraign her first: 't is Goneril.
And here's another, whose warped looks proclaim
What store her heart is made of.— Stop her there!
Arms, arms, sword, fire! — Corruption in the place!
False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?

Edgar.

[N. B.—*See bier ready* L.

Bless thy five wits!

Kent.

O, pity! — Sir, where is the patience now,
That you so oft have boasted to retain? [*To Lear.*

Lear.

To have a thousand, with red burning spits
Come hissing in upon them!

Edgar. [*Aside.*

My tears begin to take his part so much,
They'll mar my counterfeiting.

Lear.

The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanch, and Sweet-heart, see, they bark at me.

Edgar. [R.

Tom will throw his head at them. [*Rises.*
Avaunt, you curs!
Be thy mouth or black or white,
Tooth that poisons if it bite;
Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,
Hound or spaniel, brach or lym;
Or bobtail tike or trundle-tail,
Tom will make him weep and wail:
For, with throwing thus my head,
[*Throws straw crown to* L.
Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.
Sessa! — Come, march to wakes and fairs and market-towns: — [*Crosses* L. H.
Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.

Lear. [*To Edgar.*

You sir, I entertain for one of my hundred; only, I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian; but let them be changed.

Edgar.

[*Crouching at the feet of Lear.*

Fratteretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent, and beware the foul fiend.

Kent. [*To Lear.*

Now, good my lord, go in, and rest awhile.

Edgar

Tom's a-cold.

Glos. [*Touches Edgar.*

In fellow, there, into the hovel: keep thee warm.

[*Gloster goes to* L. *corner.*

Edgar. [*Rising slowly.*

Childe Rowland to the dark tower came;
His word was still—Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man.

[*Exit Edgar* L. U. E.

[*At Edgar's exit Gloster comes behind, from* L., *gives torch to Fool, and stands at* R. *of Lear, ready to place him on the bier. Lear, left by Edgar, gradually sinks into the arms of Kent, who stands beside him at* L.

[*Enter two servants with a bier; they place it* L. I. E., *and retire up.*

Lear.

Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart: is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?

[*Kent and Gloster gently place Lear on the bier.*

Hush! Hush! Make no noise—make no noise: draw the curtains: so—so, so; we'll go to supper i' the morning. So—so, so.

Fool.

And I'll go bed at noon.

[*Kent, Gloster, and the two servants lift the bier gently, and carry it slowly towards* R. 2. E. *As they are crossing the Fool sings*:

Fool.

He that hath a little tiny wit,
With heigh, ho, the wind and the rain,—
Must make content with his fortunes fit,
For the rain it raineth every day!

SLOW CURTAIN.

Act Fourth.

Scene First. { HEATH. SAME AS IN ACT THIRD. DAYLIGHT AND FAIR WEATHER.

[*Enter Albany and a herald.*

Herald.

O, my lord!
The Duke of Cornwall's dead; slain by his servant,
While putting out the eyes of Gloster.

Alb.

Gloster's eyes! This shows you are above,
You justicers, that these our nether crimes
So speedily can venge! But, O, poor Gloster!
Lost he his eyes?

Herald.

Yes, my lord.

Alb.

Where was his son?
Knows he the wickedness?

Herald.

Ay, my good lord, 't was he informed against him;
And quit the house on purpose that their punishment
Might have the freer course.

Alb.

Gloster, I live,
To thank thee for the love thou show'dst the king,
And to revenge thee! Come friend,
Tell me what more thou knowest.

[*Exeunt* R. I. E. *Enter Edgar, from hovel* L. U. E.

Edgar.

Yet better thus and known to be contemned
Than still contemned and flattered: to be worst,
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,
Stand still in esperance, lives not in fear;
The lamentable change is from the best;
The worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,
Thou unsubstantial air, that I embrace:
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst
Owes nothing to thy blasts. But who comes here?
My father, poorly led? World, world, O, world!
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,
[*Enter Gloster, led by an old man.*
Life would not yield to age.

Old Man.

O, my good lord, I have been your tenant, and your father's tenant, these fourscore years.

Glos.

Away, get thee away! Good friend, begone;
Thy comforts can do me no good at all;
Thee they may hurt.

Old Man.

Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

Glos.

I have no way, and therefore want no eyes:
I stumbled when I saw.
Ah, dear son, Edgar,
The food of thy abusèd father's wrath,
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had my eyes again!

Old Man.

How now! Who's there?

Edgar. [*Aside.*

O, gods! Who is't can say, I am at the worst?
I am worse than e'er I was.

Old Man.

'Tis poor mad Tom.

Edgar. [*Aside.*

And wôrse I may be yet: the worst is not,
So long as we can say, "This is the worst."

Old Man.

Fellow, where goest?

Glos.

Is it a beggar-man?

Old Man.

Madman and beggar too.

Glos.

He has some reason, else he could not beg.
I' the last night's storm I such a fellow saw,
Which made me think a man a worm: my son
Came then into my mind: and yet my mind
Was then scarce friends with him; I have heard more since.
As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport.

Edgar. [*Aside.*

How should this be?
Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,
Angering itself and others.
[*To Gloster.—Edgar assumes the voice of the Bedlamite when speaking to Gloster.*
Bless thee, master!

Glos.

Is that the naked fellow?

Old Man.

Ay, my lord.

Glos.

Then pr'ythee, get thee gone. If, for my sake,
Thou wilt o'ertake us, hence a mile or twain,
I' the way toward Dover, do it for ancient love;
And bring some covering for this naked soul,
Whom I'll entreat to lead me.

Old Man.

Alack, sir! he is mad.

Glos.

'Tis the time's plague, when madmen lead the blind.
Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure;
Above the rest, be gone.

Old Man. [*To himself.*

I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have,
Come on't what will. [*Exit Old Man* L. I. E.

Glos.

Sirrah; naked fellow!

Edgar.

Poor Tom's a-cold.—I cannot daub it further. [*Aside.*

Glos.

Come hither, fellow.

Edgar. [*Aside.*

And yet I must.
Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed. [*To Gloster.*

Glos.

Know'st thou the way to Dover?

Edgar.

Both stile and gate—horse-way and foot-path. Poor Tom hath been scared out of his good wits; bless thee, good man's son, from the foul fiend!

Glos.

Here, take this purse, thou whom the heaven's plagues
Have humbled to all strokes: that I am wretched,
Makes thee the happier. Dost thou know Dover?

Edgar.

Ay, master.

Glos.

There is a cliff, whose high and bending head
Looks fearfully in the confinèd deep:
Bring me but to the very brim of it,
And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear,
With something rich about me: from that place
I shall no leading need.

Edgar.

Give me thy arm!
Poor Tom shall lead thee.

[*Exeunt Gloster and Edgar* R. *Enter Cordelia, Physician, and soldiers* L.

Cord.

Alack! 't is he; why, he was met, even now,
As mad as the vexed sea; singing aloud;
Crowned with rank fumiter and farrow weeds,
With harlocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo flowers,
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn.—A century send forth;
Search every acre in the high-grown field,
And bring him to our eye. [*Exit an officer* R.
What can man's wisdom, [*To Physician.*
In the restoring his bereavèd sense?
He that helps him take all my outward worth.

Phy.

There is means, madam.
Our foster-nurse of nature is repose,
The which he lacks; that to provoke in him
Are many simples operative, whose power
Will close the eye of anguish.

Cord.

All blessed secrets,
All you unpublished virtues of the earth,
Spring with my tears! be aidant and remediate,
In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him;
Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life
That wants the means to lead it. [*Enter Curan* R. I. E.

Curan.

News, madam.
The British powers are marching hitherward.

Cord.

'T is known before: our preparation stands
In expectation of them.—O, dear father!
It is thy business that I go about,
Therefore great France
My mourning and important tears hath pitied.
No blown ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love, and our aged father's right.

[*Exeunt Cordelia, Physician, Curan and soldiers* R. I. E. *Enter Gloster and Edgar* L. U. E. *Edgar is dressed in garments of a peasant.*

Glos.

When shall I come to the top of that same hill?

Edgar.

[*Assuming a rougher voice than is natural to him.*

You do climb it now: look, how we labour.

Glos.

Methinks the ground is even.

Edgar.

Horrible steep!
Hark! Do you hear the sea?

Glos.

No, truly.

Edgar.

Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect,
By your eyes' anguish.

Glos.

So it may be, indeed.
Methinks thy voice is altered; and thou speakest
In better phrase and manner than thou didst.

Edgar.

You are much deceived; in nothing am I changed
But in my garments.

Glos.

Methinks you are better spoken.

Edgar.

Come on, sir; here 's the place; stand still.—How fearful
And dizzy 't is to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs, that wing the midway air,
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire; dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice; and yon tall anchoring bark,
Diminished to her cock; her cock, a buoy,
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
That on the unnumbered idle pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I 'll look no more;
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.

Glos.

Set me where you stand.

Edgar.

Give me your hand; you are now within a foot
Of th' extreme verge: for all beneath the moon
Would I not leap upright.

Glos.

Let go my hand.
Here, friend, is another purse; in it a jewel
Well worth a poor man's taking; fairies and gods,
Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off;
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

Edgar.

Now fare you well, good sir. [*Edgar retires up.*

Glos.

With all my heart.

Edgar.

Why I do trifle thus with his despair,
Is done to cure it.

Glos. [*Kneels.*

O, you mighty gods!
This world I do renounce, and in your sights
Shake patiently my great affliction off.
If I could bear it longer, and not fall
To quarrel with your great, opposeless wills,
My loathèd part of nature should itself
Burn to the last.
If Edgar live, O, bless him!— [*Rises.*
Now, fellow, fare thee well. [*To Edgar.*
[*Is about to leap forward, when Edgar catches him.*

Edgar.

Hold! Who comes here?
[*Enter Lear, fantastically dressed up with wild flowers.*

Lear.

No, they cannot touch me for coining;
I am the king himself.

Edgar. [*Aside.*

O, thou side-piercing sight!

Lear.

Nature 's above art in that respect.—There 's your press-money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper: draw me a clothier's yard. — Look, look, a mouse. Peace, peace! — This piece of toasted cheese will do it. There 's my gauntlet; I 'll prove it on a giant. — Bring up the brown-bills — O, well-flown bird! — I' the clout, i' the clout: hewgh! — Give the word. [*To Edgar.*

Edgar.

Sweet marjoram!

Lear.

Pass. [*Edgar crosses* L.

Glos. [R.

I know that voice.

Lear. [*Perceiving Gloster.*

Ha! Goneril! — with a white beard! They flattered me like a dog; and told me I had white hairs in my beard, ere the black ones were there. To say "ay," and "no," to everything I said. — "Ay" and "no" too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men of their words; they told me I was everything: 't is a lie; I am not ague-proof.

Glos.

The trick of that voice I do well remember;
Is 't not the king?

Lear.

Ay, every inch a king!
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.
I pardon that man's life: what was the cause?
Adultery?
Thou shalt not die: die for adultery? no:
The wren goes to 't, and the small gilded fly
Does lecher in my sight.

To 't luxury, pell-mell, for I lack soldiers.
Fie, fie, fie! Pah; pah!
Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary,
To sweeten my imagination.
There 's money for thee.

Glos.

O, let me kiss that hand!

Lear.

Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

Glos.

O, ruined piece of nature! This great world
Should so wear out to nought. Dost thou know me?

Lear.

I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou squiny at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid; I'll not love. Read thou this challenge; mark but the penning of it.

Glos.

Were all the letters suns I could not see one.

Edgar. [*Aside.*

I would not take this from report: it is—
And my heart breaks at it.

Lear.

Read.

Glos.

What, with this case of eyes?

Lear.

O, ho! are you there with me? No eyes in your head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, your purse in a light: yet, you see how this world goes.

Glos.

I see it feelingly.

Lear.

What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears! See how yond' justice rails at yond' simple thief. Hark, in thine ear; change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

Glos.

Ay, sir.

Lear.

And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed in office.

The usurer hangs the cozener;
Through tattered clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it.
None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em:
Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
To seal the accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,
And, like a scurvy politician, seem
To see the things thou dost not.

Edgar. [*Aside.*

O, matter and impertinency mixed!
Reason in madness!

Lear.

If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.
I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloster.
Thou must be patient. We came crying hither.
Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air,
We wawl and cry:—I will preach to thee; mark me.

Glos.

Alack, alack the day!

Lear.

When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools;—

[*Enter Curan with attendants* L. U. E.

Curan.

O, here he is; lay hand upon him.

[*They take Lear very gently by the arms.*

Sir, your most dear daughter——

Lear.

No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even
The natural fool of fortune.—Use me well;
You shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons,—
I am cut to the brains.

Curan.

You shall have anything.

Lear.

No seconds? All myself!
I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom. What?
I will be jovial: come, come; I am a king,
My masters, know you that?

Curan. [R.

You are a royal one, and we obey you.

[*Curan and attendants uncover and fall back. Lear takes Curan's hat.*

Lear.

This is a good block.
It were a delicate stratagem, to shoe
A troop of horse with felt: I'll put it in proof;
And when I have stolen upon these sons-in-law,
Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

[*Exit Lear, followed by Curan and attendants.*

Edgar. [*Aside.*

A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch;
Past speaking of in a king!—Thou hast one daughter;
Who redeems nature from the general curse
Which twain have brought her to.

Glos.

You ever gentle gods, take my breath from me;
Let not my worser spirit tempt me again
To die before you please.

Edgar.

Well pray you, father.

Glos.

Now, good sir, who are you?

Edgar.

A most poor man, made tame by fortune's blows,
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand;
I'll lead you to some biding.
[*Edgar leads Gloster* L. *Enter Oswald* L. I. E.

Osw.

A proclaimèd prize! Most happy!
That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh
To raise my fortunes.—Thou old, unhappy traitor,
Briefly thyself remember: the sword is out
[*Draws sword.*
That must destroy thee.

Glos. [*To Edgar.*

Now let thy friendly hand
Put strength into it. [*Edgar opposes Oswald.*

Osw.

Wherefore, bold peasant,
Dar'st thou support a published traitor? Hence;
Lest that infection of his fortune take
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm!

Edgar.

Ch 'ill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion.

Osw.

Let go, slave, or thou diest!

Edgar.

Good gentleman, go your gate, and let poor volk pass. And ch 'ud ha' been zwaggared out of my life, 't would not ha' been zo long as 't is by a vortnight. Nay, come [*Oswald advances.*
not near th' old man; keep che vor 'ye, or ise try whether your costard or my ballow be the harder. Ch 'ill be plain with you.

Osw.

Out, dunghill!

Edgar.

Ch 'ill pick your teeth, zir; come; no matter vor your foins.

[*They fight. Edgar disarms Oswald, and kills him.*

Osw.

Slave, thou hast slain me: villain, take my purse;
If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body;
And give the letters, which thou find'st about me,
To Edmund, Earl of Gloster: seek him out
Upon the British party:—O, untimely death!
[*Oswald dies.*

Edgar.

I know thee well—a serviceable villain;
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress,
As badness would desire.

Glos.

What! is he dead?

Edgar.

Let 's see his pockets; these letters that he speaks of
May be my friends. He 's dead; I am only sorry
He had no other death's-man.—Let us see:
[*Takes letters from pockets of Oswald.*
Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not;
To know our enemies' minds, we rip their hearts;
Their paper is more lawful.
[*Reads.*

"Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many opportunities to cut him off: if your will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offered. There is nothing done if he return the conqueror; then I am the prisoner —deliver me and supply his place for your labour.

"Your—wife, so I would say,—
"affectionate servant,
"GONERIL."
[*Aside.*

O, undistinguished space of woman's will!
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life;
And the exchange, my brother. [*Drums at distance.*
Give me your hand; [*To Gloster.*
Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum.
Come father; I 'll bestow you with a friend.
[*Exeunt* L. 2. E.

Scene Second. A TENT IN THE FRENCH CAMP; CURTAINS ON TENT. COUCH AND STOOL BEHIND TENT.

[*Enter Cordelia and Kent* R. 1. E.

Cord.

O, thou good Kent! How shall I live and work
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,
And every measure fail me.

Kent.

To be acknowledged, madam, is o'er-paid.
All my reports go with the modest truth;
Nor more, nor clipped, but so.

Cord.

Be better suited:
These weeds are memories of those worser hours;
I pr'ythee put them off.

Kent.

Pardon me, dear madam;
Yet to be known shortens my made intent:
My boon, I make it, that you know me not,
Till time and I think meet.
[*Enter Physician and attendant, from tent.*

Cord.

Then be 't so, my good lord.
How does the king? [*To Physician.*

Phy.

Madam, sleeps still. [*Physician sends attendant off* L.

Cord.

O, you kind gods,
Cure this great grief in his abusèd nature!
The untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up,
Of this child-changèd father!

Phy.

So please your majesty,
That we may wake the king? He hath slept long.

Cord.

Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed
I' the sway of your own will. Is he arrayed?

Phy.

Ay, madam; in the heaviness of sleep
We put fresh garments on him.

Kent.

Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;
I doubt not of his temperance.

Cord.

Very well. [*Music pp.*

Phy.

Please you draw near. [*To Cordelia.*
Louder the music there. [*Spoken off.*
[*Music p.*

[*Kent and Physician raise curtains of tent, discovering Lear. Kent* R. *Physician* L.

Cord. [C.

O, my dear father! Restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips; and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made! [*Kisses Lear.*

Kent.

Kind and dear princess!

Cord.

Had you not been their father, these white flakes
Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face
To be exposed against the warring winds?
To stand against the deep, dread-bolted thunder,
In the most terrible and nimble stroke
Of quick cross-lightning? Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire: and wast thou fain, poor father,
To hovel thee with swine, and rogues forlorn,
In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!
'T is wonder that thy life and wits at once
Had not concluded all.—He wakes; speak to him.

Phy.

Madam, do you; 't is fittest.

Cord. [*To Lear, who awakes.*

How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

Lear.

You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave.
Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.

Cord.

Sir, do you know me?

Lear.

You are a spirit, I know. When did you die?

Cord.

Still, still, far wide.

Phy.

He's scarce awake; let him alone awhile.

Lear.

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?—
[*Kent and Physician assist Lear to rise. Music ceases.*
I am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity,
To see another thus. I know not what to say:
I will not swear these are my hands:—
Would I were assured
Of my condition!

Cord.

O, look upon me, sir,
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me:—
No, sir, you must not kneel.
[*As Lear is about to kneel, Cordelia and Physician raise him. Physician brings down stool from tent. Lear sits on it* C.

Lear.

Pray, do not mock me;
I am a very foolish, fond old man,
Four score and upward; not an hour more nor less;
And, to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
[*Cordelia goes down to* R. *corner.*
Methinks I should know you, and know this man;
Yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly ignorant
What place this is: and all the skill I have
Remembers not these garments; nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me;
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.
[*Cordelia rushes to Lear and falls on her knees in front of him.*

Cord.

And so I am! I am!

Lear.

Be your tears wet? Yes 'faith. I pray, weep not;
If you have poison for me I will drink it.
I know you do not love me; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong.
You have some cause; they have not.

Cord.

No cause, no cause.

Lear.

Am I in France?

Kent.

In your own kingdom, sir.

Lear.

Do not abuse me.

Phy.

Be comforted, good madam; the great rage,
You see, is cured in him; trouble him no more,
Till further settling.

Lear.

You must bear with me:
Pray you, now forget and forgive: [*Music pp.*
I am old and foolish. Forget and forgive!
Forget and forgive! forget and forgive!

SLOW CURTAIN.

Act Fifth.

Scene First. { An Encampment. Flourish at rise of Curtain. Albany and Forces, and Edgar, disguised, are discovered. Edgar and Albany advance.

Edgar.

If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor,
Hear me one word. Ope this letter.
Wretchèd though I seem,
I can produce a champion that will prove
What is avouchèd there. Fortune love you! [*Going* R.

Alb.

Stay till I have read the letter.

Edgar.

I was forbid it.
When time shall serve, let but the herald cry
And I'll appear again. [*Exit Edgar* R.

Alb.

Why, fare thee well. I will o'erlook thy paper.
[*Exit Albany* L. U. E. *Enter Edmund* L. 2. E.

Edm.

To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
Each jealous of the other, as the stung
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
Both? one? or neither? Neither,
If both remain alive; to take the widow,
Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril;
And hardly shall I carry out my side,

Her husband being alive. Now, the battle done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,
They shall never see his pardon; for my state
Stands on me to defend, not to debate.

[*Enter Albany.*

Alb.

Sir, you have shown to-day your valiant strain,
And fortune led you well: you have the captives
Who were the opposites of this day's strife.
We do require them of you, so to use them,
As we shall find their merits, and our safety
May equally determine.

Edm.

Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable king
To some retention and appointed guard:
With him I sent the queen;
My reason all the same; and they are ready,
To-morrow, or at further space, to appear
Where you shall hold your session.
The question of Cordelia and her father
Requires a fitter place.

Alb.

Sir, by your patience,
I hold you but a subject of this war,
Not as a brother. I arrest thee on capital treason.
Thou art armed, Gloster. Let the trumpet sound:
If none appear, to prove upon thy person,
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
There is my pledge.

[*Throws down glove.*

I'll prove it on thy heart,
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
Than I have here proclaimed thee.

Edm.

There's my exchange;

[*Throws down glove.*

What in the world he is
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.
Call by thy trumpet: he that dares approach,
On him, on you, who not? I will maintain
My truth and honour firmly.

Alb.

Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,
All levied in my name, have in my name
Took their discharge.
Come hither, herald,—let the trumpet sound,
And read out this.

Herald.

Sound trumpet! [*Trumpet sounds.*

Herald. [*Reads.*

"If any man of quality or degree, within the lists of the army, will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloster, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear at the third sound of the trumpet: he is bold in his defence!"

Edm.

Sound! [*Trumpet sounds.*

Herald.

Again! [*Trumpet sounds.*

Herald.

Again! [*Trumpet sounds.*

[*Trumpet answers within. Flourish. Edgar enters, armed,* R. I. E.

Alb. [*To Herald.*

Ask him his purpose, why he appears
Upon this call of the trumpet?

Herald.

What are you?
Your name, your quality, and why you answer
This present summons? [*Herald retires up.*

Edgar.

Know, my name is lost;
By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit;
Yet am I noble as the adversary
I come to cope withal.

Alb.

Which is that adversary?

Edgar.

What 's he that speaks for Edmund, Earl of Gloster?

Edm.

Himself: what say'st thou to him?

Edgar.

Draw thy sword;
That, if my speech offend a noble heart,
Thy arm may do thee justice: here is mine.
[*Displays sword.*
Behold, it is my privilege, the privilege of mine honours,
My oath and my profession: I protest,
Maugre thy strength, place, youth, and eminence,
Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,
Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor;
False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father;
Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince;
And, from the extremest upward of thy head,
To the descent and dust below thy feet,
A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou "No,"
This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent
To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,
Thou liest!

Edm.

In wisdom, I should ask thy name;
But, since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
And that thy tongue some 'say of breeding breathes,
What safe and nicely I might well delay,
By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.
Back do I toss these treasons to thy head;
With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart;
Which, for they yet glance by, and scarcely bruise,
This sword of mine shall give them instant way
Where they shall rest forever.—Trumpets speak!

[*Flourish. Edgar and Edmund fight. Edmund falls* R., *and is caught and supported by two officers.*

Edm.

What you have charged me with, that have I done;
And more, much more; the time will bring it out:
'T is past, and so am I: but what art thou,
That hast this fortune on me? If thou 'rt noble,
I do forgive thee.

Edgar.

Let's exchange charity.
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund:
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us.

Edm.

Thou hast spoken right; 't is true;
The wheel is come full circle; I am here;
But, O, I pant for life.
Some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send—
Be brief in it—to the castle; for my writ
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.

Edgar.

Who has the office? Send
Thy token of reprieve!

Edm.

Take my sword;
Give it the captain.

[*Edgar picks up sword and goes out.*

Edm. [*To Albany.*

He hath commission from thy wife and me
To hang Cordelia, in the prison, and
To lay the blame upon her own despair,
That she fordid herself.

Alb.

The gods defend her! Bear him hence.

[*Edmund is borne off* R. *Albany in* R. *corner. Enter Lear, with Cordelia, dead, in his arms. Edgar, Officer, Curan, and Kent follow him.*

Lear.

Howl, howl, howl, howl!—O! you are men of stone!
Had I your tongues and eyes, I 'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack:—she 's gone forever!
I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
She 's dead as earth:—lend me a looking-glass;
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why, then she lives.

Kent.

Is this the promised end?

Edgar.

Or image of that horror?

Alb.

Fall and cease.

Lear.

[*Takes feather from Kent's hat and holds it to Cordelia's lips.*

This feather stirs: she lives!
If it be so,
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt.

Kent. [*Kneeling.*

O, my good master!

Lear.

Pr'ythee away.

Edgar.

'T is noble Kent, your friend.

Lear.

A plague upon you, murderers, traitors, all!
I might have saved her: now, she's gone forever!
Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little! ha!
What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle and low — an excellent thing in woman.—
I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee.

Curan. [*To all.*

'Tis true, my lords, he did.

Lear.

Did I not, fellow?
I have seen the day with my good biting faulchion
I would have made them skip: I am old now,
And these same crosses spoil me.— Who are you?
[*To Kent.*
Mine eyes are not of the best:— I'll tell you straight.

Kent.

If fortune brag of two she loved and hated,
One of them we behold.

Lear.

This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

Kent.

The same.
Your servant Kent: where is your servant Caius?

Lear.

He's a good fellow, I can tell you that.
He'll strike, and quickly too: he's dead and rotten.

Kent.

No, my good lord, I am the very man——

Lear.

I'll see that straight.

Kent.

That from your first of difference and decay
Have followed your sad steps.

Lear.

You are welcome hither.

Kent.

Nor no man else; all's cheerless, dark and deadly.
Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves
And desperately are dead.

Lear.

Ay, so I think.

Alb.

He knows not what he says, and vain it is,
That we present us to him.

Edgar.

Very bootless. O! see! see!

Lear.

And my poor fool is hanged. No, no, no life:
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!—
Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.—
Do you see this? Look on her,—look, her lips.—
Look there! Look there!

Kent.

Break heart; I pray thee, break!

Edgar.

My lord! My lord!

} *Lear dies.*

Kent.

Vex not his ghost!

[*Music very soft and mournful, to end of the scene.*

O, let him pass; he hates him,
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.

Edgar.

He is gone indeed.

SLOW CURTAIN.

KING LEAR.

APPENDIX.

I.—The Character of King Lear.

THE elements and attributes of Lear are not obscurely furnished. He comes before us, at the first, an old man, but not decrepit—a man who is beginning to break, but who is not yet broken. His aspect is massive, majestic and venerable. He still wears dominion in his countenance. He is exceedingly tender in heart and magnanimous in disposition. His age is that of simplicity and goodness; but his mind is blindly suspicious of its own decadence; and he will prove exacting, irrational, fiery, capricious and unpleasant, after the fashion of choleric and selfish senility. In the fibre of his character, however, —in his essential personality and interior spirit,—he is, above all things else, large, spacious, and noble. He is not a common man grown old. He must, all his life, have carried the stamp and the magnetic allurement and domination of a great and charming nature. He must have captured hearts and ruled minds by something beautiful and strong in his fate. He does not hold royalty by lineage or by human law alone, but by divine endowment. He is born to the purple. He is a mountain in the midst of a plain; and the crumbling of his mind and fortunes is like the fall of the avalanche. Vitalized with this immaculate and charming excellence, endowed with this innate majesty, and invested with this personal grandeur, he becomes the most colossal figure that ever was reared in the Pantheon of the human imagination; and his experience, his suffering, his frenzy, his senile insanity, and the whirlwind of agony in which he dies, become tremendous and overwhelming. It is not old Brabantio, or old Capulet, or even old Shylock, who goes mad, under the strokes of unkindness, the wear of age, the ravages of tempest, and the human woes and spiritual perplexities of life: it is old Lear: and when this awful presence totters, with streaming white hair and blazing eye-balls, across the thunder-riven heath, under the night and through the storm, he breaks our hearts, not alone with

afflicting sense of the torment into which he has fallen, but of the stately yet lovable nobility from which he fell. King Lear is an august and splendid personality, and he bears the authentic sceptre of sorrow. We see him torn from all moorings and driven out upon the gale-swept ocean-wastes of misery; but it is less for what he suffers than for what he is, that we pity, and love, and reverence, and deplore him. The highest and best elements of our human nature are felt to be crystallized and combined in this woeful, terrific image of shattered royalty; and so his misery comes home to us with a keen personal force. There are many denotements of this imperial fascination, which is the pervading and characteristic quality of Lear, and which has enthroned him in the love of all the world. It is the soul of the character. It links to the ruined monarch all the virtues that surround his time and person. It holds the heart-strings of the celestial Cordelia. It holds the devotion of the wise and honest Kent. Nothing, indeed, can be more significant of what Lear is than the passionate fealty of this follower, who "from the first of difference and decay" has attended his steps, and who will not be left by him, even at the brink of the grave.

> "I have a journey, sir, shortly to go:
> My master calls me—I must not say no."

W. W.

II.—Origin, Basis, and Date of King Lear.

The story of Lear and his daughters was found by Shakespeare in Holinshed, and he may have taken a few hints from an old play, "The True Chronicle Historie of King Leir." In both Holinshed's version and that of the "True Chronicle" the army of Lear and his French allies is victorious; Lear is re-instated in his kingdom; but Holinshed relates how, after Lear's death, her sisters' sons warred against Cordelia and took her prisoner, when, "being a woman of a manly courage, and despairing to recover liberty," she slew herself. The story is also told by Higgins in the "Mirror for Magistrates;" by Spenser ("Faerie Queene," II., x. 27–32), from whom Shakespeare adopted the form of the name, "Cordelia;" and in a ballad (printed in Percy's "Reliques") probably later in date than Shakespeare's play. With the story of Lear Shakespeare connects that of Gloster and his two sons. An episode in Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia" supplied characters and incidents for this portion of the play,—Sidney's blind king of Paphlagonia corresponding to the Gloster of Shakespeare. But here, too, the story had, in the dramatist's original, a happy ending: the Paphlagonian king is restored to his throne and the brothers are reconciled.

The date of Shakespeare's play is probably 1605 or 1606. It was entered on the Stationer's register, November 26th, 1607, and the entry states that it had been acted "upon St. Stephen's day, at Christmas last," *i. e.*, December 26th, 1606. The play was printed, in quarto, in 1608. "An upward limit of date is supplied by the publication of Harsnet's 'Declaration of Popish Impostures,' 1603, to which Shakespeare was indebted for the names of many of the devils in Edgar's speeches." It has been suggested that Gloster's mention of "late eclipses of the sun and moon" (Act I., Scene ii. L. 112) refers to the great eclipse of the sun, October, 1605, preceded, within a month, by an eclipse of the moon, and that the words which follow shortly after the mention of eclipse—"machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves"—had special point if delivered on the stage while the Gunpowder Plot, of November 5th, 1605, was still fresh in men's minds. * * * The text of the quarto differs considerably from that of the folio; but the opinion that the later text—that of the folio—exhibits a revision of his own work by Shakespeare is not supported by sufficient evidence. "The folio was printed from an independent manuscript, and its text is, on the whole, much superior to that of the quartos. Each, however, supplies passages that are wanting in the other." Scene iii. of Act IV. is not found in the folio.

EDWARD DOWDEN.

III.—THE ORIGINAL STORY OF KING LEAR.

"Leir, the son of Baldud, was admitted ruler over the Britains in the year of the world 3105. At what time Joas reigned as yet in Juda. This Leir was a prince of noble demeanour, governing his land and subjects in great wealth. He made the town of Carleir, now called Leicester, which standeth upon the river Dore. It is writ that he had, by his wife, three daughters, without other issue, whose names were Gonorilla, Regan, and Cordilla, which daughters he greatly loved, but especially the youngest, Cordilla, far above the two elder.

"When this Leir had come to great years, and began to wear unwieldy through age, he thought to understand the affections of his daughters towards him, and prefer her whom he best loved to the succession of the kingdom; therefore, he first asked Gonorilla, the eldest, how well she loved him, the which, calling her gods to record, protested that she loved him more than her own life, which by right and reason should be most dear unto her; with which answer the father, being well pleased, turned to the second, and demanded of her how well she loved him; which answered (confirming her sayings with oaths) that she loved

him more than tongue can express, and far above all other creatures in the world.

"Then called he his youngest daughter, Cordilla, before him, and asked of her what account she made of him; unto whom she made this answer as followeth: 'Knowing the great love and fatherly zeal you have always borne towards me (for the which, that I may not answer you otherwise than I think, and as my conscience leadeth me), I protest to you that I have always loved you, and shall continually, while I live, love you as my natural father; and if you would more understand of the love that I bear you, ascertain yourself, that so much as you have, so much you are worth, and so much I love you, and no more.'

"The father, nothing content with this answer, married the two eldest daughters, the one unto the Duke of Cornwall, named Henninus, and the other unto the Duke of Albania, called Maglanus; and betwixt them, after his death, he willed and ordained his land should be divided, and the one-half thereof should be immediately assigned unto them in hand; but for the third daughter, Cordilla, he reserved nothing.

"Yet it fortuned that one of the princes of Gallia (which now is called France), whose name was Aganippus, hearing of the beauty, womanhood, and good conditions of the said Cordilla, desired to have her in marriage, and sent over to her father, requiring that he might have her to wife; to whom answer was made, that he might have his daughter, but for any dowry he could have none, for all was promised and assured to her other sisters already.

"Aganippus, notwithstanding this answer of denial to receive anything by way of dower with Cordilla, took her to wife, only moved thereto (I say) for respect of her person and amiable virtues. This Aganippus was one of the twelve kings that ruled Gallia in those days, as in the British history it is recorded. But to proceed: after that Leir was fallen into age, the two dukes that had married his two eldest daughters, thinking it long ere the government of the land did come to their hands, arose against him in armour, and reft from him the governance of the land, upon conditions to be continued for term of life; by the which he was put to his portion; that is, to live after a rate assigned to him for the maintainance of his estate, which in process of time was diminished, as well by Maglanus as by Henninus.

"But the greatest grief that Leir took was to see the unkindness of his daughters, who seemed to think that all was too much which their father had, the same being never so little; in so much that, going from one to the other, he was brought to that misery that they would allow him only one servant to wait upon him. In the end, such was the unkindness, or,

as I may say, the unnaturalness, which he found in his two daughters, notwithstanding their fair and pleasant words uttered in time past, that, being constrained of necessity, he fled the land, and sailed into Gallia, there to seek some comfort of his youngest daughter, Cordilla, whom before he hated.

"The lady Cordilla, hearing he was arrived, in poor estate, she first sent to him privately a sum of money, to apparel himself withal, and to retain a certain number of servants, that might attend upon him in honourable wise, as apperteyned to the estate which he had borne. And then, so accompanyed, she appointed him to come to the court, which he did, and was so joyfully, honourably and lovingly received, both by his son-in-law, Aganippus, and also by his daughter Cordilla, that his heart was greatly comforted; for he was no less honoured than if he had been king of the whole country himself. Also, after that he had informed his son-in-law and his daughter in what sort he had been used by his other daughters, Aganippus caused a mighty army to be put in readiness, and likewise a great navy of ships to be rigged, to pass over into Britain, with Leir, his father-in-law, to see him again restored to his kingdom.

"It was accorded that Cordilla should also go with him to take possession of the land, the which he promised to leave unto her, as his rightful inheritor after his decease, notwithstanding any former grants made unto her sisters, or unto their husbands, in any manner of wise. Hereupon, when this army and navy of ships were ready, Leir and his daughter Cordilla, with her husband, took the sea, and arriving in Britain fought with their enemies, and discomfited them in battle, in the which Maglanus and Henninus were slain, and then was Leir restored to his kingdom, which he ruled after this by the space of two years, and then died, forty years after he first began to reign. His body was buried at Leicester, in a vault under the channel of the river Dore, beneath the town."

HOLINSHED'S CHRONICLE.

IV.—THE IDEA AND SUBSTANCE OF KING LEAR.

"The modern practice of blending comedy with tragedy, though liable to great abuse in point of practice, is undoubtedly an extension of the dramatic circle; but the comedy should be, as in 'King Lear,' universal, ideal, and sublime. It is, perhaps, the intervention of this principle which determines the balance in favour of 'King Lear' against the 'Œdipus Tyrannus,' or the 'Agamemnon,' or, if you will, the Trilogies with which they are connected; unless the intense power of the choral poetry, especially that of the latter, should be considered as restoring the

equilibrium. 'King Lear,' if it can sustain that comparison, may be judged to be the most perfect specimen of the dramatic art existing in the world."

SHELLEY.

"We must never forget that unity, in Shakespeare's view, consists in one dominant idea, which, reproducing itself under various forms, incessantly produces, continues, and redoubles the same impression. Thus, as in 'Macbeth,' the poet displays man in conflict with the passions of crime, so in 'King Lear' he depicts him in conflict with misfortune, the action of which is modified according to the different characters of the individuals who experience it."

GUIZOT.

"The artful involution of distinct interests, the striking opposition of contrary characters, the sudden changes of fortune, and the quick succession of events, fill the mind with a perpetual tumult of indignation, pity, and hope. There is no scene which does not contribute to the aggravation of the distress or conduct of the action; and scarce a line which does not conduce to the progress of the scene."

DR. JOHNSON.

"The deeper our study of Shakespeare the more we are impressed with the extent to which his pathos is independent of condition and common to humanity: not independent of condition, in reference to his dramatic purpose and effect; but independent of condition, in reference to the essence of the suffering. If Lear had never been a king, the man, without a shred of royal robes, is all-sufficient to account for the madness of the father."

HENRY GILES.

"Lear combines length with rapidity—like the hurricane and the whirlpool, absorbing while it advances. It begins as a stormy day in summer, with brightness; but that brightness is lurid, and anticipates the tempest. It was not without forethought, nor is it without its due significance, that the division of Lear's kingdom is, in the first lines of the play, stated as a thing already determined, in all its particulars, previously to the trial of professions as the relative rewards of which the daughters were to be made to consider their several portions. The strange, yet by no means unnatural, mixture, of selfishness, sensibility, and habit of feeling derived from and fostered by the particular rank and usages of the individual; the intense desire of being intensely beloved—

selfish and yet characteristic of the selfishness of a loving and kindly nature alone; the self-supportless leaning, for all pleasure, on another's breast; the craving after sympathy as with a prodigal disinterestedness, frustrated by its own ostentation and the mode and texture of its claims; the anxiety, the distrust, the jealousy, which more or less accompany all selfish affections, and are amongst the surest contradistinctions of mere fondness from pure love, and which originate Lear's eager wish to enjoy his daughters' violent professions, whilst the inveterate habits of sovereignty convert the wish into claim and positive right, and an incompliance with it into crime and treason;—these facts, these passions, these moral verities, on which the whole tragedy is founded, are all prepared for, and will, to the retrospect, be implied in the first four or five lines of the play. They let us know that the trial is but a trick, and that the grossness of the old king's rage is in part the natural result of a silly trick suddenly and most unexpectedly baffled and disappointed."

COLERIDGE.

"Good and evil, in this play, are clearly severed from one another—more so than in 'Macbeth' or in 'Othello'—and, at the last, goodness, if we judge merely by external fortune, would seem to be, if not defeated, at least not triumphant. Shakespeare has dared, while paying little regard to mere historical verisimilitude; to represent the most solemn and awful mysteries of life as they actually are, without attempting to offer a ready-made explanation of them. Cordelia dies strangled in prison; yet we know that her devotion of love was not mis-spent. Lear expires in an agony of grief; but he has been delivered from his pride and passionate wilfulness; he has found that instead of being a master, at whose nod all things must bow, he is weak and helpless, a sport even of the wind and the rain; his ignorance of true love, and pleasure in false professions of love, have given place to an agonized clinging to the love which is real, deep, and tranquil because of its fullness. Lear is the greatest sufferer in Shakespeare's plays. Though so old, he has strength which makes him a subject for prolonged and vast agony; and patience is unknown to him. The elements seem to have conspired against him with his unnatural daughters; the upheaval of the moral world and the rage of the tempest in the air seem to be parts of the same gigantic convulsion. In the midst of this tempest wanders unhoused the white-haired Lear; while his Fool—most pathetic of all the minor characters of Shakespeare—jests, half-wildly, half-coherently, half-bitterly, half-tenderly, and always with a sad remembrance of the happier past. The poor boy's heart has been sore, ever since his 'young mistress went to

France.' * * * * Everywhere throughout the play Shakespeare's imaginative daring impresses us. Nothing in poetry is bolder or more wonderful than the scene on the night of the tempest, in the hovel where the king, whose intellect has now given way, is in company with Edgar, assuming madness, the Fool, with his forced and pathetic mirth, and Kent."

EDWARD DOWDEN.

"The story of Lear and his daughters was left by Shakespeare exactly as he found it in a fabulous tradition, with all the features characteristical of the simplicity of old times. But, in that tradition there is not the slightest trace of the story of Gloster and his sons, which was derived by Shakespeare from another source. The incorporation of the two stories has been censured as destructive of the unity of action. But, whatever contributes to the intrigue or the *denouement* must always possess unity: and with what ingenuity and skill are the two main parts of the composition dove-tailed into one another! The pity felt by Gloster for the fate of Lear becomes the means which enables his son Edmund to effect his complete destruction, and affords the outcast Edgar an opportunity of being the saviour of his father. On the other hand, Edmund is active in the cause of Regan and Goneril: and the criminal passion which they both entertain for him induces them to execute justice on each other and themselves. The laws of the drama have, therefore, been sufficiently complied with; but that is the least: it is the very combination which constitutes the sublime beauty of the work." * * * *

"Of Cordelia's heavenly beauty of soul, painted in so few words, I will not venture to speak. She can only be named in the same breath with Antigone. Her death has been thought too cruel; and in England the piece is, in acting, so far altered that she remains victorious and happy. I must own I cannot conceive what ideas of art and dramatic connection those persons have who suppose that we can at pleasure tack a double conclusion to a tragedy: a melancholy one for hard-hearted spectators, and a happy one for souls of a softer mould. After surviving so many sufferings Lear can only die; and what more truly tragic ending for him than to die from grief for the death of Cordelia? And, if he is also to be saved and to pass the remainder of his days in happiness, the whole loses its signification. According to Shakespeare's plan, the guilty, it is true, are punished, for wickedness destroys itself; but the virtues that would bring help and succour are everywhere too late, or overmatched by the cunning activity of malice. The persons of this drama have only such a faint belief in Providence as heathens may

be supposed to have; and the poet here wishes to show us that this belief requires a wider range than the dark pilgrimage on earth, to be established in full extent." SCHLEGEL.

"The Fool is no comic buffoon, to make the groundlings laugh, no forced condescension of Shakespeare's genius to the taste of his audience. Accordingly, the poet prepares for his introduction, which he never does with any of his common clowns and fools, by bringing him into living connection with the pathos of the play. He is as wonderful a creation as Caliban: his wild babblings and inspired idiocy articulate and gauge the horrors of the scene." COLERIDGE.

"True love and fidelity are no more to be estranged by *ill* than falsehood and hollow-heartedness can be conciliated by *good* usage."

CHARLES LAMB.

"Most actors,—Garrick, Kemble, and Kean, among others,—seem to have based their conception of the character of King Lear on the infirmity usually associated with 'four-score and upwards,' and have represented the feebleness instead of the vigour of old age. But Lear's was, in truth, 'a lusty winter:' his language never betrays imbecility of mind or body. He confers his kingdom, indeed, on 'younger strengths;' but there is still sufficient invigorating him to allow him to ride, to hunt, to run wildly through the fury of the storm, to slay the ruffian who murdered his Cordelia, and to bear about her dead body in his arms. There is, moreover, a heartiness, and even jollity, in his blither moments, no way akin to the helplessness of senility. Indeed, the towering range of thought with which his mind dilates,—identifying the heavens themselves with his grief,—and the power of conceiving such vast imaginings would seem incompatible with a tottering, trembling frame, and betoken, rather, one of 'mighty bone and bold emprise,' in the outward bearing of the grand old man." MACREADY.

V.—ULRICI'S THOUGHTS ON KING LEAR.

"To understand the organic coherence of the whole—to discover the intrinsic necessity of the tragic development in all its moments—to find the fundamental idea—the living centre, as it were, around which the

several parts revolve, and thereby adjust themselves into a whole—all this requires profundity of view and a firm, æsthetical basis of criticism.

"In the present piece the ground idea of the whole is reflected in all the subordinate parts, more clearly than in any other of Shakespeare's dramas: for the tie between parent and child, which in a high historical sense forms here the basis of the tragic sentiment, has for its foundation wedlock, and the religious sanction of the intercourse of the sexes. Accordingly, strong rays of light are thrown off from this central idea upon both these civilizing influences of human life.

"In 'King Lear' *parental affection* and *filial reverence* are contemplated as the focus towards which all the ties of life converge, and the *family*—in its largest and historical import—is the particular grade of life in which the poet has here taken up his position within the domain of poetry.

"Lear, 'in every inch a king,' had accustomed himself to the thought of, and set his heart on, being the unlimited master of the world; although in boundless love he gives his kingdom away, it is still his sovereign pleasure to measure even affection by his own arbitrary will, and he would lord even over it. Even when he has overthrown this visionary empire by his own folly, he must still command; he fights against the very elements, he is determined to be at least the master of his own sufferings and his own destiny. But for this the necessary powers fail him; and consequently the general disorder of all the moral relations of life terminates in madness. It was only by such an affliction that a character like his could be brought to repentance; and by such means alone could the propitiatory element of tragedy be manifested in his case. It was not until his kingly spirit, his haughty virtue, his energy and sovereignty of will, had been utterly overthrown, that he could be brought to the *humility* which is the parent of true love, and that love in him could be purified.

"Lear is depicted as the head not only of a family, but also of the state—as the ruler of a great nation. The more seriously, therefore, and the more directly his domestic circumstances influence the destinies of a whole people, the more clearly does the importance of the family bond appear. The tragedy sets before us the public fortunes of a great nation in the first instance, and ultimately the history of the whole world, as affected by the morality or immorality of private life, and it becomes, consequently, not merely in its ideal subject-matter, but also by the course taken by the represented fable, a mirror of history in general.

"Lear's stronger and bolder spirit makes head against external troubles; he struggles against the fury of the elements as against the wickedness

of man. It is only from within that he can be conquered; in the violent convulsive effort to master the deep emotions of his heart, the bonds of reason snap asunder, and madness spreads its nightly, veiling darkness over him.

"As the family tie—the first and absolutely indispensable foundation of all moral and intellectual development has been irremediably broken, and thereby the whole of human existence completely unsettled, being let loose from its primary source and reality in God; this convulsion and the extreme enormity of sin must be exhibited both internally and externally. Its external and objective manifestation is in the disruption of all human relations, and in the fruitless struggle of good against evil; inwardly and subjectively it attains its climax in the disorganization of the King's mind, whose personality formed the subjective centre of the whole piece.

"The high mid-day sun has now sunk into the fresh, glowing, but fast fading tints of evening. The old Lear is still vigorous both in mind and body; his old age has not tempered the faults of his nature; his obstinacy, love of power, passion and rashness, are as strong as ever; his heart still retains all its freshness and impetuosity. The rich measure of love which has fallen to the portion of Lear's heart is blindly lavished by him to the last drops upon his children; he resigns to them his all, in the hope of finding in their love and gratitude repose from the storms and fatigues of his long life. But the affection of Lear leads him to forget the king in the parent, and in a father's care to overlook all other duties. Its first thought is of the external and terrestrial, not the inward and everlasting, welfare of his children. As it has not its root in the divine truth, it consequently mistakes its true nature, and, refusing the genuine return of deep and silent gratitude, accepts in the stead a worthless counterfeit. Such a false, and in fact immoral love of the parent, is, by an intrinsic necessity, closely followed by the perfidy, ingratitude, and guilt of the children. True family love can only exist in the calm, unconscious, disinterested union of hearts in which outward and inward, objective and subjective, are so perfectly blended into one, that no outward sanction, no notions of right and duty, reward or recompense, are ever pressed into consideration. Accordingly, we must look upon Lear himself as the prime cause of the tragic complication, and the guilty author of his own fate, no less than of the crimes and sufferings of his daughters. He falls the victim of the errors and weakness of his own affectionate heart. Thus invariably does the lovely and noble of this earth hasten to perdition whenever unpurified and earthly: it neglects to look back to its divine origin for its true strength and support.

"As Shakespeare everywhere exhibits the most wonderful power in completely exhausting the particular subject he has in hand, so, in the present piece, he is not content with simply exhibiting the fundamental idea in the fortunes of the King and his family. He sets it forth under another aspect.

"In order to shew that a moral corruption is never solitary, but is in its seed and principle *universal* and ultimately resting on the sinfulness of the whole human race, he has taken the noblest families as representatives of the great family of man, and made them the victims of the moral pestilence. While a passionate, unreal tenderness avenges itself on Lear, the fate of Gloster is the consequence of unrepented juvenile excess, on which (as shewn in the first scene) the old man still reflects with wanton pleasure. For the stain of his birth the bastard Edmund punishes his father, who is as credulous and superstitious in his old age as he was light-hearted and thoughtless in youth. While in the one case the open folly of the parent is answered by the open and shameless crimes of the children, in the other, secret sins are met by hidden and sanctified enormity. In the former case the family tie is broken, together with the false and rickety foundation on which it rested; in the latter it is annihilated by the retributive poison of a single sin, which from the first had eaten away the only stay of domestic happiness—true purity of heart.

"It was necessary to portray Lear and Gloster as infinitely more sinned against than sinning, in order thereby to point out how sins, such as those of which they were the first cause, spring up like weeds, from small beginnings to an unforeseen magnitude, until they cover the whole soil, and absorb its most precious juices. That their baneful influence should have been stronger on the female mind than on that of man — for Edmund, however guilty, has some palliation to plead in the dishonour of his origin — is but founded on the truth of nature. Since the vocation of woman is domestic life, from which both her character and feelings take their tone, whenever this is corrupt and her sole stay undermined, woman necessarily falls lower than man, who, by his very nature, is thrown more upon himself, and placed on a wider basis of existence.

"Cordelia pays the penalty of the fault she committed, when, instead of affectionately humouring the weakness of her aged father, she met him with unfilial frowardness, and answered his, no doubt, foolish questions with unbecoming harshness and asperity; a father's curse lights upon her head, and its direful consequences cannot afterwards be avoided. The slighter her failing may appear, the deeper is the tragic effect of its heavy penalty. For the true force of the tragic lies exactly in this, that

the trivial faults of the good are overwhelmed in the same ruin as the most revolting offences of the bad; with this difference, however, that whereas to the former purification and atonement (and consequently true life also) is conveyed in its annihilation, to the latter temporary destruction and punishment bring likewise eternal death.

"All the profound thoughtfulness on which the tragic view of the world ultimately rests, lies hidden in the deep meditative humour of the Fool, against which the tragic form of art is, as it were, broken, in order to display more clearly its inmost core. This genuine humour of the Fool plays, as it were, with the tragical; to it pain or pleasure, happiness or misery, are all the same; it makes a sport of the most heart-rending sufferings and misfortunes of earthly existence; even from death and destruction it can derive amusement. By these qualities he is raised high *above* this earthly existence; and he has already attained to that elevation of the human mind *above* all the pursuits or sorrows of this earthly life, which it is the end of this tragic art to set forth, and which is, as it were, personified in him. The humour itself is, in its very essence, the *sublime* of Comic. Although fully conscious of all the grave seriousness and responsibilities of life, in its profoundest depths, he yet pursues, even with this profundity and seriousness, his sportive mockery, and has no misgivings even, because he is raised far above this earth and its interests. To one who looks upon the whole of life as nothing, his outward position in it must be immaterial. Accordingly, the Fool departs from this life with a witticism in his mouth—'He 'll go to bed at noon.' But his sublime elevation is not a mere stoical indifference; it is united with the truest love and fidelity, and the most rare sympathy. His heartfelt sorrow for his dear Cordelia and his beloved King has sapped his life.

"Lear's madness, too, terminates with his mortal sigh for Cordelia's loss. In this moment of anguish all the rich intensity of love, which sat enthroned in the heart of Lear, has found its worthy object. While the faint sparks of life are extinguishing, his love puts off its last earthly weakness, and ascends purified and refined to heaven. The tragic impression loses its crushing and oppressive horror, and is transmuted into the calm consolatory feeling of a gentle death and a blissful peace."

VI.—The Madness of King Lear.

"It is on the development of insanity, the gradual loosening of the mind from the props and supports of reason and of fact, the gradual transition of the feelings from their old habitudes and relations to morbid

and perverted excess, the gradual exaggeration of some feelings and the extinction of others, and the utter loss of mental balance resulting therefrom; it is on this passage from the state of man, when reason is on its throne, to a state when the royal insignia of his pre-eminence among God's creatures are defaced, that the great dramatist loves to dwell. The wilfulness with which critics have refused to see the symptoms of insanity in Lear until the reasoning power itself has become undeniably alienated, is founded upon the view of mental disease which has, until recently, been entertained even by physicians, and which is still maintained in courts of law, namely, that insanity is an affection of the intellectual and not of the emotional part of man's nature. * * * No state of the reasoning faculty can, by itself, be the cause or condition of madness; congenital idiocy and acquired dementia being alone excepted. The intellectual and excited babbling of the Fool and the exaggerated absurdities of Edgar are stated by Ulrici, and other critics, to exert a bad influence upon the king's mind. To persons unacquainted with the character of the insane, this opinion must seem, at least, to be highly probable, notwithstanding that the evidence of the drama itself is against it; for Lear is comparatively tranquil in conduct and language during the whole period of Edgar's mad companionship. * * * * The singular and undoubted fact was probably unknown to Ulrici, that few things tranquilize the insane more than the companionship of the insane. It is a fact not easily explicable, but it is one of which, either by the intuition of genius, or by the information of experience, Shakespeare appears to be aware."

BUCKNILL.

"In the anger and agony of Lear; in the muscular insanity with which he tries to grapple with fate, as if to catch it by the throat, and strangle it in mortal fight; in his measuring his passions with elemental forces; looking for sympathy with his age to the olden heavens, and finding in the hurricane but inadequate resemblance to the malignity of his daughters;—in all this we have no incidental ebullition: we have, in condensation, the wholeness of a life, the entireness of a self-willed, self-indulgent, impulsive mind, wrenched from all that kept it stable, and whirled into darkness, amidst tempest and convulsion—the turbulence and fury of a most physical and most impassioned nature. It is thus that Shakespeare constantly shows us the radical nature of a man in his supreme trial, even in the wildness and terrors of insanity."

HENRY GILES.

"Edgar's assumed madness serves the great purpose of taking off part of the shock which would otherwise be caused by the true madness of Lear, and further displays the profound difference between the two. In every attempt at representing madness, throughout the whole range of dramatic literature, with the single exception of Lear, it is mere light-headedness, as especially in Otway. In Edgar's ravings, Shakespeare all the while lets you see a fixed purpose, a practical end in view. In Lear's there is only the brooding of the one anguish, an eddy without progression." COLERIDGE.

VII.—THE DRESSING, ETC., OF KING LEAR.

Guizot remarks that: "The time in which Shakespeare laid his action seems to have emancipated him from all conventional forms; and just as he felt no difficulty in placing a King of France, a Duke of Albany, and a Duke of Cornwall eight hundred years [and more] before the Christian era, so he felt no necessity for connecting the language and the characters of his drama with any determinate period." And Dr. Johnson says, in a kindred vein, that: "Shakespeare, by the mention of his earls and dukes [in this tragedy], has given us the idea of times more civilized and of life regulated by softer manners."—These views indicate the usage proper to be followed in mounting and dressing "King Lear." The Britons of A. M. 3105 probably wore skins—principally their own. The tragedy should be dressed according to the civilization of a much later period, with rude fabrics, but with some pomp and richness. The time of the action of this tragedy cannot be determined with absolute precision. Immediately after the partition of the kingdom is accomplished, Lear departs to the castle of Goneril. The first quarrel occurs before the close of the first month—apparently—of his residence in that place. There is nothing, however, to make it certain that this breach should not be referred to a later time—the third month or the fifth. It is here assumed, however, to occur in the first. Then comes the quarrel with Regan, which the text distinctly places within two days after the quarrel with Goneril. The incidents of the night and tempest, upon the heath, immediately follow. Three acts of the piece are thus comprised within less than a month. It seems sufficient to allow about three weeks for the military proceedings which bring on the final catastrophe. The scrupulous analyst of the text obtains many side lights upon points of this class: such as Lear's reference to his dead wife, and Regan's remembrance that Edgar, when an infant, received his name from Lear.

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