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**THE COMPLETE WORKS OF  
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
IN TWENTY VOLUMES**

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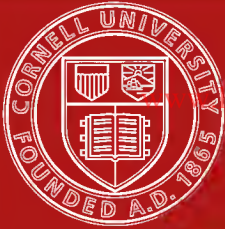
**ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL  
A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM**

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*VOLUME III*

*The annotations at the foot of the page are intended to explain difficult phrases or allusions. Single words, which are no longer in common use, appear only in the glossary, which is printed in last volume.*

*The numbering of the lines follows that of the Cambridge Edition, the text of which is used in this edition.*



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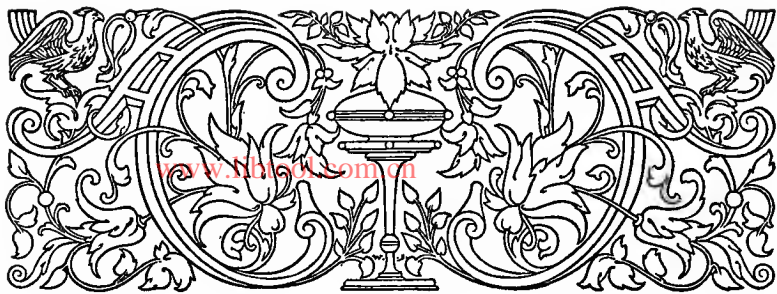


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# THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WITH ANNOTATIONS AND  
A GENERAL INTRODUCTION  
BY SIDNEY LEE

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VOLUME III

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## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

WITH A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY ANDREW LANG  
AND AN ORIGINAL FRONTISPIECE BY DUDLEY HARDY



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NEW YORK HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

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## CONTENTS

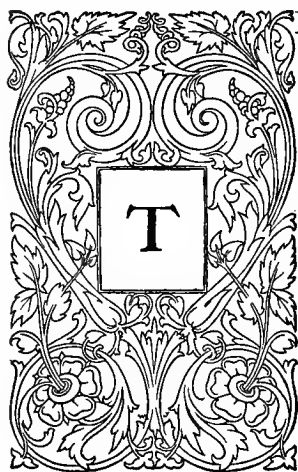
	PAGE
INTRODUCTION TO ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL BY ANDREW LANG . . . . .	ix
TEXT OF THE PLAY . . . . .	1

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## INTRODUCTION



THE comedy of "All's Well that Ends Well" is, perhaps, rather instructive than apt to provoke enthusiasm. Tennyson said that the composition of Shakespeare's plays, their genesis in the poet's mind, was a problem which entirely baffled him. In "All's Well that Ends Well," little as we know from external sources of the history of the piece, the intellectual processes appear unveiled. A play was wanted for the stage, perhaps in the poet's years as "Johannes Factotum." He took an Italian tale, which really "did not set his genius," did not set the genius of any dramatist working in his age and under his conditions. He wrote a piece full of the rhymed couplets, the euphuisms, the sonneteing of his early essays. Later, at an un-

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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known date, I guess, a play was needed, and Shakespeare rapidly vamped up the comedy as we possess it, mainly in blank verse. Probably it was never very popular. We have no Quarto of "All's Well that Ends Well." The drama first appears in the Folio, and it is clear that the printers set up the piece from a very bad text. But I do not suppose that such a distasteful passage as Helena's wit-combat with Parolles about virginity is mere "gag," an interpolation by the actors. Those who think so love Shakespeare, unlike Ben Jonson, on the other side of idolatry. George III was quite right, Shakespeare was very capable of having such things happen to him. In "All's Well that Ends Well" we have the work of the practical play-writer of the company, and the *charpentage* of the playwright is better than in "Cymbeline," for example.

The true poet — like cheerfulness on the philosophical reflections of Dr. Johnson's early friend, — "keeps breaking in," and the humourist makes gallant play with a character not present in the original story from Boccaccio, with that stock personage of the comedy, the Miles Gloriosus. Parolles is like Gullio in "The Return from Parnassus"; but a pretence of valour, not of taste and learning, is the motive of Parolles, "the vile Parolles," Mr. Israel Gollancz calls him. For me, no Parolles, no "All's Well that Ends Well!" The rascal "has given me medicines to make me love him." Shakespeare's rogues are dear to the readers as to the kind, smiling poet. But the poet is hampered by the intractable nature of his material. He seized on a story



## INTRODUCTION

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that would not be handled. The date of the piece, whether in the hypothetical early form, or in its actual shape, is unknown. Meres, in his "Palladis Tamia" (1598) mentions Shakespeare's "Love's Labour's Won," otherwise unnoted. "Love's Labour's Lost" is certainly an early play, answering in Shakespeare's work to "Les Précieuses Ridicules," in that of Molière. The quarto of "Love's Labour's Lost" is of 1598, but was then "newly corrected and augmented." It must have been an early success, rewritten in 1598. It was natural that Shakespeare should follow it up with a comedy which, in 1598, still bore the title of "Love's Labour's Won." The name is appropriate to the dingy triumph which crowns the long and complicated labour of the love of Helena. Later, Shakespeare, in his second manner, may well have "newly corrected and augmented" "Love's Labour's Won," and produced it on the stage as "All's Well that Ends Well."

The story of the piece reached Shakespeare through Painter's translation in "The Palace of Pleasure" (1566) of a novel from the Decameron. "Giletta, a physician's daughter of Narbon, healed the French king of a Fistula, for reward whereof she demanded Beltramo, Count of Rossiglione, to husband. The Count, being married against his will, for despite fled to Florence and loved another; Giletta his wife by policy found means to be with her husband in place of his lover, and was begotten with child of two sons: which known to her husband, he received her again, and afterwards he lived in great honour and felicity."

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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Too clearly "this will never do." Human nature, pitiful of her who "never told her love," revolts from the girl who does tell it, unasked, who, *tout entière a sa proie attachée*, seizes her advantage, and makes the King confer on her the hand of his reluctant ward: the King, by feudal privilege, having his ward's marriage. Bertram is but a boy: he is too young to go to the wars, which boys sought so early in the Middle Ages. "'Too young,' and 'the next year,' and 'it is too early.'" Helena, in the play, not in Boccaccio, is clearly older and more mature than the lad who is beguiled into thinking Parolles a hero. If the King had thus thrust a man on a reluctant girl ward, all the world would cry shame. And if the man, by Helena's trick, obtained "restitution of conjugal rights," we should deem worse of him than of d'Artagnan when he so shamefully deceives Milady. The act is not seemly in Mariana, in Helena it is shameful. Again, Shakespeare, who otherwise follows Boccaccio very closely, makes Bertram a cur and a liar, in his repudiation of Diana as a public light o' love, a leaguer lass. In the "Decameron," the sight of his two sons, the ring, and his vow, reconcile the Count to his wife: the infamy of Bertram, worse than the mere knavery of Parolles, is wilfully thrown in by the poet. Halliwell Phillipps says that it is "dangerous" to speak with common-sense about the art of Shakespeare. It is not a danger dire enough to terrify *constantem virum*. Shakespeare, probably in a hurry, chose an impossibly unsympathetic plot, and darkened what was already repulsive to all who respect womankind and mankind.

## INTRODUCTION

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How was the situation to be redeemed, how was Shakespeare to win our sympathy for Helena? Sympathy then was, perhaps it is no longer, with patient Grizel. A woman must endure everything; and even now hearts are touched when Helena exclaims, as if the words were wrung from her,

“Strangers and foes do sunder and not kiss.”

Helena, her quality of *crampon* apart, is to the peevish false boy whom she adores as Titania to Bottom. Her soliloquy of love is worthy of the poet. Bertram is leaving her, her dear father has been spoken of, she weeps as the women of Achilles wept when Patroclus fell, “in seeming for Patroclus, but each for her own sorrows.” It is for Bertram that she “lets these tears down fall.”

*Hel.* O, were that all! I think not on my father;  
And these great tears grace his remembrance more  
Than those I shed for him. What was he like?  
I have forgot him: my imagination  
Carries no favour in 't but Bertram's.  
I am undone: there is no living, none,  
If Bertram be away. 'T were all one  
That I should love a bright particular star  
And think to wed it, he is so above me:  
In his bright radiance and collateral light  
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.  
The ambition in my love thus plagues itself:  
The hind that would be mated by the lion  
Must die for love. 'T was pretty, though a plague,  
To see him every hour; to sit and draw  
His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls,

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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In our heart's table ; heart too capable  
Of every line and trick of his sweet favour :  
But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy  
Must sanctify his reliques. Who comes here ?

“The hind that would be mated with the lion,  
Must die for love.”

“Men have died, and the worms have eaten them, but not for love.” In any event it were better to die than to win, as Helena wins, a triumph worse than death. Having gained our hearts so far for Helena, Shakespeare very adroitly makes her a woman's woman, dear to her own sex, as perhaps Rosalind and Beatrix were not so dear. To this end he creates Bertram's admirable mother, the advocate of Helena as against her own son. How gracious must be the low-born maiden with “friends poor but honest” whom a feudal countess desires for the bride of her boy! This Countess has loved in her day, and is *veterum haud immemor amorum*. Helena's virtues in like sort conquer the Florentine widow. Her sex adores her: Helena must be good, — and not too vivaciously bewitching, perhaps. Mrs. Jameson, the critic, owns herself overcome. Let us quote Mrs. Jameson: “There never was, perhaps, a more beautiful picture of a woman's love, cherished in secret, not self-consuming in silent languishment, — not pining in thought, — not passive and ‘desponding over its idol,’ — but patient and hopeful, strong in its own intensity, and sustained by its own fond faith. The passion here reposes upon itself for all its interest; it derives nothing from art or ornament or circumstance; it

## INTRODUCTION

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has nothing of the picturesque charm or glowing romance of Juliet ; nothing of the poetical splendour of Portia, or the vestal grandeur of Isabel. The situation of Helena is the most painful and degrading in which a woman can be placed. She is poor and lowly ; she loves a man who is far her superior in rank, who repays her love with indifference, and rejects her hand with scorn. She marries him against his will ; he leaves her with contumely on the day of their marriage, and makes his return to her arms depend on conditions apparently impossible. All the circumstances and details with which Helena is surrounded are shocking to our feelings and wounding to our delicacy, and yet the beauty of the character is made to triumph over all ; and Shakespeare, resting for effect on its internal resources and its genuine truth and sweetness, has not even availed himself of some extraneous advantages with which Helena is represented in the original story." Hazlitt, a male critic, sings to the same tune. "The character of Helena is one of great sweetness and delicacy. She is placed" (that is, she goes and places herself) "in circumstances of the most critical kind, and has to court her husband both as a maiden and a wife ; yet the most scrupulous delicacy of female modesty is not once violated" by this female d'Artagnan ! And for what does Helena violate, as she does, every conceivable scruple of male as well as of female delicacy ? For a pretty, plucky, wanton boy, whose courage and good looks cannot atone for his abject falseness, for his dragged honour. Dr. Johnson speaks out like a man. "I cannot reconcile myself to him — a man noble without

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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generosity, and young without truth, who marries Helena as a coward, and leaves her as a profligate ; when she is dead by his unkindness sneaks home to another marriage ; is accused by a woman he has wronged, defends himself by falsehood, and is dismissed to happiness."

In part the Doctor is wrong. The King could have married Bertram to the ugliest widow in his realm. Again, nothing in Bertram's life "became him like the leaving" Helena. It was his duty not to live in the loveless wedlock thrust upon him : though not to repel the enforced bride with lack of courtesy. For the rest, regardless of Hazlitt and Mrs. Jameson, my heart is with Dr. Johnson. Shakespeare makes Helena — her passion apart — delightful. She has tenderness, wisdom, gentleness, and even humour. Unlike Mr. Israel Gollancz, she appreciates Parolles. She holds with him a wit-combat, that is not very witty, or of a "scrupulous female delicacy." She has a just estimate of Parolles, who easily imposes on Bertram's stupid boyhood.

" I know him a notorious liar,  
Think him a great way fool, solely a coward ;  
Yet these fixed evils sit so fit in him  
That they take place when virtue's steely bones  
Look bleak i' the cold wind."

Shakespeare, then, to make Helena sympathetic, has robed her in all the virtues and graces. Her tact, the affair of Bertram apart, is faultless ; her wisdom, goodness, delicacy, and humorous appreciation (the affair of Bertram apart) are exquisite. Unluckily the more of genius the poet lavishes on his heroine, the more incredi-

## INTRODUCTION

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ble does she become. This is not the woman to lose her heart to a pretty boy of fifteen, too young to go to the wars even in the age of the Renaissance. Younger than he have gallant soldiers made, in many a war. Helena, even if her mature wisdom could permit her to be tangled in Bertram's hair and fettered by his eye, for a while, would have plucked the passion out of her heart. On the contrary she gains "the hound" (thus freely speaks Herr George Brandes concerning Bertram) by means and tricks intolerable.

Herr Brandes has an explanation of Shakespeare's error, which perhaps he does not carry to its logical conclusion. The poet wrote "Love's Labour's Won" in youth, and in the light tone and rhyming method of which traces remain. In later years he found the world out of joint, became pessimistic, and unpacked his bosom in "Hamlet." But, his company being far from prosperous, bright little modern pieces had to be produced. "The thing had to be done." So Shakespeare, still as one in doleful dumps, took up his old bright little piece, "Love's Labour's Won," and tried to make a comedy out of that. "But now it did not turn out a comedy; the time was past when Shakespeare's chief strength lay in his humour." Herr Brandes is inconsistent. He admits that the banter about virginity, between Parolles and Helena, is part of the original early "Love's Labour's Won." Certainly Shakespeare's strength did not always lie in his humour, in the early days when he created *that* scene. Again, Parolles, in "All's Well that Ends Well," is regarded, as "in all probability, touched up and endowed

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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with new wit during the revision." Therefore Shakespeare had more wit to spend after writing "Hamlet" than in the early days when "his strength lay in his humour." Herr Brandes cannot have it both ways, one way in his first, the other way in his second volume. If Shakespeare lost his humour, it is impossible that Parolles should be "the first faint outline of the figure which, seven or eight years later, became the immortal Falstaff," for, in these years, Shakespeare was growing in humour as Falstaff was putting on flesh. Nor could Shakespeare's humour have been fading, if he later improved, after writing "Hamlet," in "All's Well that Ends Well," on the first draft of Parolles in "Love's Labour's Won."

We cannot disengage Shakespeare's emotional development from his plays. Of course we might argue the matter out on these lines. The bilious, morbid post-Hamletian Shakespeare says:—

"They want a comedy do they? I'll give them a comedy! Naught is everything, and everything is naught. That is the humour of it; that is the humour of everything in this lazar house of a life, in all this empty imposture of a world! Ho, boy, a flagon of that poor creature, small beer! I'll take up that empty little babyish 'Love's Labour's Won' of my salad days. I shall make Helena a perfect woman, nobly planned to warn, to comfort, and command, and I shall show how her whole moral nature is upset, — as in this pitiful life it would certainly be, — by the eyes and curls of a pretty, profligate, false, mannerless wretch of a boy. She shall sink deeper than ever plummet sounds, she shall marry



## INTRODUCTION

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him against his will, and win him by a trick that would sicken Nym and Pistol. I must make him a perfect hound, of course, ~~but mean, malignant~~ liar. I must drag the excellent Florentine widow, and the maidenly Diana through the mud, — what is life but mud? Ho, drawer, another firkin of your poor creature: I thirst! Then I must leave the peerless Helena in the arms of her moral poltroon, and add the cynical title, ‘All’s Well that Ends Well.’ ‘Well,’ ha, ha! Nothing is well, William feels far from well!” *[Drinks.*

Accepting this little soliloquy, we can understand how the melancholy William, after the Dark Lady showed in her true colours, and Essex came to grief, and things in general went wrong, and there was something rotten in the state of England, wrote “All’s Well that Ends Well,” when, in fact, everything ended horribly ill, and the married Bertram gave Helena cause for anxiety, and probably took to drink, and beat her. These things were in Bertram’s character. But we do not accept the soliloquy, or the idea that the piece is a pessimistic satire on human existence. Shakespeare had to turn out a comedy, in the way of business. He was lazy, and took up and revamped an old piece of his youth, a piece in which he was trysted with a perfectly impossible plot. He poured forth his genius on Helena; he created the old Countess (the best of women), he left the Clown as witless as he had always been; he left great boulders of his early rhymed scenes in the midst of his blank verse; all this just because Shakespeare was hurried, lazy, and did not care. He was a very human being, and never took him-

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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self with the portentous and admirable seriousness of the third-rate modern novelist. At least it is thus that I try to understand the man, not as the bitter mocker who wrote "All's Well that Ends Well" to be a satire on human excellence. We may look at it in that light, but nobody did so in the age either of Shakespeare or of Boccaccio. "Did she get him?" was all that Mr. Barrie's old Thrums lady asked to be told in a novel. Helena "got him," and all's well that ends well. The groundlings asked no more, but probably the play was never more popular than it deserved to be. Mr. Pepys saw "All's Lost by Lust," but he does not mention any performance of "All's Well that Ends Well."

As a comedy, the piece is saved by "the vile Parolles." Herr Brandes thinks that Parolles was invented and introduced to afford some excuse for the iniquity of Bertram, a boy deceived and trained by such a Mentor.

Though the Countess hints at this as an excuse for her son, more probably the stock figure of the braggart mercenary, who has haunted every camp, and speaks every tongue of Central and Southern Europe, was brought in merely for "comic relief," which the dull clown (no doubt very like a clown in real life), does not supply. We have many notable studies of cowardice. The poltroonery of Falstaff is but part of his humour: no doubt he had been a tall man of his hands. Eachan, in "The Fair Maid of Perth," is a coward because he has "drunk the milk of the white doe," and so drawn the curse into his blood. He knows and hates his own weakness; his temper is high, but his character does not back him; he is a tragic

## INTRODUCTION

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coward, not a comic poltroon, and wins pity not laughter. A recent hero of modern romance in Mr. Mason's "The Four Feathers" is only a coward in conceit, afraid of being afraid ; but, unlike Eachan, he conquers himself. Parolles, like Sir Andrew Aguecheek, is a comic coward ; his imagination is all warlike and chivalresque ; life is a burden under the dishonour of the lost drum : he dreams of military distinction as a child does, but has no more heart than a hare, and knows it. The cowardice sits well on Parolles, because he is all false together, whereas cowardice is tragical when it is the ineradicable fundamental sin of a nature otherwise noble. For evidence to character Parolles appeals to Captain Spurio of the regiment of the Spinii, "with his cicatrice, an emblem of war, here on his sinister cheek : it was this very sword entrenched it ; say to him : I live, and observe his reports for me." They had "begun to smoke" Parolles, before he had the happy idea of pretending to recover that regimental palladium, the lost drum. Perhaps he might beg, borrow, or steal a drum, "this or another." The marvel is that "he should know what he is, yet be what he is." But what would you have ? Renown in war is the ideal of Parolles, it is creditable to him that he has an ideal : and he has the strongest sense of humour. He remotely resembles the delightful Chevalier Burke, in Mr. Stevenson's "Master of Ballantrae." He can laugh himself out of most quandaries. Listeners to him, when he supposes himself in the hands of a barbaric enemy, hear no more good of themselves than the Duke heard from Lucio, or Poin from Falstaff. Parolles would ever

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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be and move "under the influence of the most received star," the most fashionable of the hosts of heaven; but, alas, he "was created for men to breathe themselves on," like the wooden soldan on whom poor Oliver Proudfoot, that honest Parolles of Perth, exercised his weapon. "Tongue, I must put you in a butter-woman's mouth, and buy myself another of Bajazet's mule, if you prattle me into these perils." Why Bajazet's mule? Probably the animal was admired for its reticence. Mr. Israel Gollancz suggests that perhaps 'Bajazet's' is a blunder on the part of Parolles for 'Balaam's.' But Balaam has no mule, an ass was Balaam's steed, and that ass "*parle, et même il parle bien.*" It was a still tongue that Parolles needed to borrow. Parolles gets off easily: no poetic justice ever falls on Shakespeare's poor merry rogues. He is to his characters a forgiving creator: he made them so, and will not damn them for no fault of theirs. He would have shewn mercy to Mr. Squeers and Mr. Pecksniff.

"By foolery thrive,  
There's place and means for every man alive,"

says the detected but optimistic Parolles. "If my heart were great, 't would burst at this." Happily the heart of Parolles is not great, and he has a smiling future as a buffoon, like the clown, "a shrewd knave and an unhappy." Motley is Parolles's only safe and profitable wear, "a man whom fortune hath cruelly scratched." The tolerant Shakespeare forgives Bertram too, in the high tide of his false meanness, when Lafeu rejects him with, "Your reputation comes too short for my daugh-

## INTRODUCTION

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ter ; you are no husband for her." But Bertram is good enough for the peerless Helena. So we end with [*Flourish*] "she has got him," —

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"I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly."

Shakespeare's hack-work is finished, as heaven would have it, and we may believe that, the needs of the company satisfied, he never thought of his play again.

ANDREW LANG.

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**ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL**

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**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ** <sup>1</sup>

**KING OF FRANCE.**

**DUKE OF FLORENCE.**

**BERTRAM, Count of Rousillon.**

**LAFEU, an old lord.**

**PAROLLES, a follower of Bertram.**

**Steward,**

**LAVACHE, a Clown,** } servants to the Countess of Rousillon.

**A Page.**

**COUNTESS OF ROUSILLON, mother to Bertram.**

**HELENA, a gentlewoman protected by the Countess.**

**An old Widow of Florence.**

**DIANA, daughter to the Widow.**

**VIOLENTA,** }

**MARIANA,** } neighbours and friends to the Widow.

**Lords, Officers, Soldiers, &c., French and Florentine.**

**SCENE — *Rousillon ; Paris ; Florence ; Marseilles***

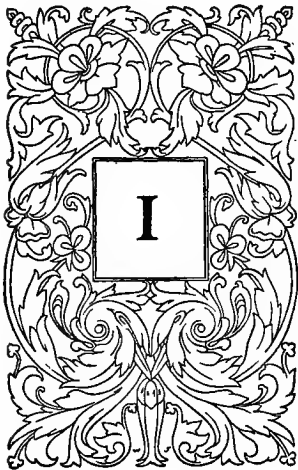
<sup>1</sup>DRAMATIS PERSONÆ] “All’s Well” was printed for the first time in the Folio of 1623. There the text is divided into acts, but not into scenes, although the play opens with the words Actus Primus, Scæna Prima. Rowe first supplied scenic divisions, as well as a list of “dramatis personæ,” in his edition of 1709.





ACT FIRST—SCENE I—ROUSILLON  
THE COUNT'S PALACE

Enter BERTRAM, the COUNTESS OF ROUSILLON, HELENA, and LAFEU,  
COUNTESS *all in black*



IN DELIVERING MY SON  
from me, I bury a second husband.

BER. And I in going, madam,  
weep o'er my father's death anew:  
but I must attend his majesty's  
command, to whom I am now in  
ward, evermore in subjection.

LAF. You shall find of the king  
a husband, madam; you, sir, a  
father: he that so generally is  
at all times good, must of ne-  
cessity hold his virtue to you;  
whose worthiness would stir it  
up where it wanted, rather than lack it where there is  
such abundance.

10

5-6 *in ward*] In feudal and Elizabethan England heirs of great fortunes  
were invariably made wards of the king; he acted as their guardian.

7-10 *he that so generally . . . abundance*] he that is so invariably kind

COUNT. What hope is there of his majesty's amendment?

LAF. He hath abandoned his physicians, madam; under whose practices he hath persecuted time with hope, and finds no other advantage in the process but only the losing of hope by time.

COUNT. This young gentlewoman had a father, — O, that "had"! how sad a passage 't is! — whose skill was almost as great as his honesty; had it stretched so far, would have made nature immortal, and death should have play for lack of work. Would, for the king's sake, <sup>20</sup> he were living! I think it would be the death of the king's disease.

LAF. How called you the man you speak of, madam?

COUNT. He was famous, sir, in his profession, and it was his great right to be so, — Gerard de Narbon.

LAF. He was excellent indeed, madam: the king very lately spoke of him admiringly and mourningly: he was skilful enough to have lived still, if knowledge could be set up against mortality.

BER. What is it, my good lord, the king languishes of?

LAF. A fistula, my lord.

BER. I heard not of it before.

---

must needs extend his (virtue of) kindness towards you, whose worth would be more likely to excite kindly feelings in those who are without them than to alienate them in one who is so richly endowed with them.

13 *persecuted time with hope*] The general meaning is: Hope of recovery, fostered by his physicians, has hampered the action of (time in developing) the disease. But the only real effect (since the disease is not arrested) is to lose hope, as time goes on.

SCENE I ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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LAF. I would it were not notorious. Was this gentlewoman the daughter of Gerard de Narbon ?

COUNT. His sole child, my lord ; and bequeathed to my overlooking. I have those hopes of her good that her education promises ; her disposition she inherits, which makes fair gifts fairer ; for where an unclean mind carries virtuous qualities, there commendations go with pity ; they are virtues and traitors too : in her they are the better for their simpleness ; she derives her honesty and achieves her goodness. 40

LAF. Your commendations, madam, get from her tears.

COUNT. 'T is the best brine a maiden can season her praise in. The remembrance of her father never approaches her heart but the tyranny of her sorrows takes all livelihood from her cheek. No more of this, Helena, go to, no more ; lest it be rather thought you affect a sorrow than to have —

HEL. I do affect a sorrow, indeed, but I have it too.

LAF. Moderate lamentation is the right of the dead ; excessive grief the enemy to the living.

37 *virtuous qualities*] qualities of good breeding, grace, erudition, the fruits of education : not here qualities of moral virtue.

38 *go with pity*] are to be regretted, are to be deprecated : *virtues and traitors* ; excellences which mislead as to the true character of their possessors. Cf. Bassanio's observation, *Merch. of Ven.*, I, iii, 180 : " I like not fair terms and a villain's mind."

39 *simpleness*] singleness, integrity, freedom from deceit or uncleanness.

46 *livelihood*] life, liveliness. Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 26 : " pith and livelihood" — the attributes of Adonis's sweating palm.

COUNT. If the living be enemy to the grief, the excess 50  
makes it soon mortal.

BER. Madam, I desire your holy wishes.

LAF. How understand we that ?

COUNT. Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy  
father

In manners, as in shape ! thy blood and virtue  
Contend for empire in thee, and thy goodness  
Share with thy birthright ! Love all, trust a few,  
Do wrong to none : be able for thine enemy  
Rather in power than use ; and keep thy friend  
Under thy own life's key : be check'd for silence, 60  
But never tax'd for speech. What heaven more will,  
That thee may furnish, and my prayers pluck down,  
Fall on thy head ! Farewell, my lord ;  
'T is an unseason'd courtier ; good my lord,  
Advise him.

LAF. He cannot want the best  
That shall attend his love.

COUNT. Heaven bless him ! Farewell, Bertram. [*Exit.*]

BER. [*To Helena*] The best wishes that can be forged  
in your thoughts be servants to you ! Be comfortable  
to my mother, your mistress, and make much of her. 70

LAF. Farewell, pretty lady : you must hold the credit  
of your father. [*Exeunt Bertram and Lafeu.*]

50-51 *excess . . . mortal*] excessive indulgence in grief puts an end  
to it. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, V, iii, 52 :

"no sorrow  
But killed itself much sooner."  
and *Rich. II*, II, i, 33 *seq.* : "Violent fires soon burn out themselves."

HEL. O, were that all! I think not on my father;  
 And these great tears grace his remembrance more  
 Than those I shed for him. What was he like?  
 I have forgot him: my imagination  
 Carries no favour in't but Bertram's.  
 I am undone: there is no living, none,  
 If Bertram be away. 'T were all one  
 That I should love a bright particular star 80  
 And think to wed it, he is so above me:  
 In his bright radiance and collateral light  
 Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.  
 The ambition in my love thus plagues itself:  
 The hind that would be mated by the lion  
 Must die for love. 'T was pretty, though a plague,  
 To see him every hour; to sit and draw  
 His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls,  
 In our heart's table; heart too capable 90  
 Of every line and trick of his sweet favour:  
 But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy  
 Must sanctify his reliques. Who comes here?

*Enter PAROLLES*

[*Aside*] One that goes with him: I love him for his sake;  
 And yet I know him a notorious liar,  
 Think him a great way fool, solely a coward;  
 Yet these fix'd evils sit so fit in him,  
 That they take place, when virtue's steely bones

74-75 *grace his remembrance . . . shed for him*] are mere ornamental tributes to his memory rather than outpourings of past affection.

97 *take place*] hold their own.

Look bleak i' the cold wind: withal, full oft we  
see

Cold wisdom waiting on superfluous folly.

PAR. Save you, fair queen!

100

HEL. And you, monarch!

PAR. No.

HEL. And no.

PAR. Are you meditating on virginity?

HEL. Ay. You have some stain of soldier in you: let me ask you a question. Man is enemy to virginity; how may we barricado it against him?

PAR. Keep him out.

HEL. But he assails; and our virginity, though valiant, in the defence yet is weak: unfold to us some warlike resistance.

111

PAR. There is none: man, sitting down before you, will undermine you and blow you up.

HEL. Bless our poor virginity from underminers and blowers up! Is there no military policy, how virgins might blow up men?

PAR. Virginity being blown down, man will quicklier be blown up: marry, in blowing him down again, with the breach yourselves made, you lose your city. It is not politic in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity. Loss of virginity is rational increase, and there was never virgin got till virginity was first lost. That you were made of is metal to make virgins. Virginity by being once lost may be ten times found; by

99 *Cold wisdom . . . folly*] cheerless wisdom holding a place of inferiority to folly, which has no call to exist.

SCENE 1 ALL 'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

being ever kept, it is ever lost: 't is too cold a companion; away with 't!

HEL. I will stand for 't a little, though therefore I die a virgin. 127

PAR. There's little can be said in 't; 't is against the rule of nature. To speak on the part of virginity, is to accuse your mothers; which is most infallible disobedience. He that hangs himself is a virgin: virginity murders itself; and should be buried in highways out of all sanctified limit, as a desperate offendress against nature. Virginity breeds mites, much like a cheese; consumes itself to the very paring, and so dies with feeding his own stomach. Besides, virginity is peevish, proud, idle, made of self-love, which is the most inhibited sin in the canon. Keep it not; you cannot choose but lose by 't: out with 't! within ten year it will make itself ten, which is a goodly increase; and the principle itself not much the worse: away with 't! 140

HEL. How might one do, sir, to lose it to her own liking?

PAR. Let me see: marry, ill, to like him that ne'er it likes. 'T is a commodity will lose the gloss with lying; the longer kept, the less worth: off with 't while 't is vendible; answer the time of request. Virginity, like an old courtier, wears her cap out of fashion; richly suited, but unsuitable: just like the brooch and the

139 *ten*] The First Folio reads *two*. *Ten*, which is Hanmer's emendation, is obviously correct. Cf. *Sonnet* vi, 9-10 (which treats of the same topic):

“*Ten* times thyself were happier than thou art,  
If ten of thine *ten* times refigured thee.”

tooth-pick, which wear not now. Your date is better in your pie and your porridge than in your cheek: and your virginity, your old virginity, is like one of our French withered pears, it looks ill, it eats drily; marry, 't is a withered pear; it was formerly better; marry, yet 't is a withered pear: will you any thing with it?

HEL. Not my virginity yet. . . . . 153

There shall your master have a thousand loves,  
 A mother and a mistress and a friend,  
 A phoenix, captain, and an enemy,  
 A guide, a goddess, and a sovereign,  
 A counsellor, a traitress, and a dear;  
 His humble ambition, proud humility,  
 His jarring concord, and his discord dulcet, 160  
 His faith, his sweet disaster; with a world  
 Of pretty, fond, adoptious christendoms,  
 That blinking Cupid gossips. Now shall he —  
 I know not what he shall. God send him well!  
 The court's a learning place, and he is one —

PAR. What one, i' faith?

HEL. That I wish well. 'T is pity —

PAR. What's pity?

HEL. That wishing well had not a body in 't,  
 Which might be felt; that we, the poorer born, 170

147 *wear not now*] are now out of fashion.

*date*] a pun on the word in its two senses of "fruit" and "time of life." Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, I, ii, 249: "And then to be baked with no *date* in the pie, for then the man's *date* is out."

162-163 *adoptious . . . gossips*] assumed Christian names, for which purblind Love is sponsor.



Whose baser stars do shut us up in wishes,  
Might with effects of them follow our friends,  
And show what we alone must think, which never  
Returns us thanks.

*Enter PAGE*

PAGE. Monsieur Parolles, my lord calls for you.

*[Exit.*

PAR. Little Helen, farewell: if I can remember thee,  
I will think of thee at court.

HEL. Monsieur Parolles, you were born under a  
charitable star.

PAR. Under Mars, I.

180

HEL. I especially think, under Mars.

PAR. Why under Mars?

HEL. The wars have so kept you under, that you  
must needs be born under Mars.

PAR. When he was predominant.

HEL. When he was retrograde, I think, rather.

PAR. Why think you so?

HEL. You go so much backward when you fight.

PAR. That's for advantage.

189

HEL. So is running away, when fear proposes the  
safety: but the composition that your valour and fear  
makes in you is a virtue of a good wing, and I like the  
wear well.

PAR. I am so full of businesses, I cannot answer thee

---

191-192 *composition . . . wing*] valour, which causes you to run (back-  
ward, as you say, to get up impetus), and fear, which also impels  
you to run (away), make up your being, of which the power of  
flight is consequently the main characteristic.

acutely. I will return perfect courtier ; in the which, my instruction shall serve to naturalize thee, so thou wilt be capable of a courtier's counsel, and understand what advice shall thrust upon thee ; else thou diest in thine unthankfulness, and thine ignorance makes thee away : farewell. When thou hast leisure, say thy prayers ; when thou hast none, remember thy friends : get thee a good husband, and use him as he uses thee : so, farewell.

[*Exit.* 201

HEL. Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,  
Which we ascribe to heaven : the fated sky  
Gives us free scope ; only doth backward pull  
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.  
What power is it which mounts my love so high ;  
That makes me see, and cannot feed mine eye ?  
The mightiest space in fortune nature brings  
To join like likes and kiss like native things.  
Impossible be strange attempts to those  
That weigh their pains in sense, and do suppose  
What hath been cannot be : who ever strove  
To show her merit, that did miss her love ?  
The king's disease — my project may deceive me,  
But my intents are fix'd, and will not leave me. [*Exit.*

210

208–212 *The mightiest space . . . cannot be*] The widest difference of fortune is bridged by nature, which brings together like objects, however far apart they may happen to be, and makes things of inherent similitude kiss or unite, whatever distance separates them. Impossible are unusual attempts to those who judge their efforts by normal experience and suppose that an exceptional occurrence can never recur. Hanmer's generally accepted change of *What hath been* (l. 212) into *What hath not been* scarcely improves the sense and injures the metre.

SCENE II — PARIS

*THE KING'S PALACE*  
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*Flourish of cornets. Enter the KING OF FRANCE with letters, and  
 divers Attendants*

KING. The Florentines and Senoys are by the ears ;  
 Have fought with equal fortune, and continue  
 A braving war.

FIRST LORD. So 't is reported, sir.

KING. Nay, 't is most credible ; we here receive it  
 A certainty, vouch'd from our cousin Austria,  
 With caution, that the Florentine will move us  
 For speedy aid ; wherein our dearest friend  
 Prejudicates the business, and would seem  
 To have us make denial.

FIRST LORD. His love and wisdom,  
 Approved so to your majesty, may plead  
 For amplest credence.

10

KING. He hath arm'd our answer,  
 And Florence is denied before he comes :  
 Yet, for our gentlemen that mean to see  
 The Tuscan service, freely have they leave  
 To stand on either part.

SEC. LORD. It well may serve

---

1 *Senoy's*] This is Painter's rendering in *The Palace of Pleasure* of  
 Boccaccio's "Sanesi," *i. e.* the people of Sienna.

11 *arm'd*] made ready, or confirmed.

A nursery to our gentry, who are sick  
For breathing and exploit.

KING. What 's he comes here ?

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*Enter BERTRAM, LAFEU, and PAROLLES*

FIRST LORD. It is the Count Rousillon, my good lord,  
Young Bertram.

KING. Youth, thou bear'st thy father's face ;  
Frank nature, rather curious than in haste, 20  
Hath well composed thee. Thy father's moral parts  
Mayst thou inherit too ! Welcome to Paris.

BER. My thanks and duty are your majesty's.

KING. I would I had that corporal soundness now,  
As when thy father and myself in friendship  
First tried our soldiership ! He did look far  
Into the service of the time, and was  
Discipled of the bravest : he lasted long ;  
But on us both did haggish age steal on,  
And wore us out of act. It much repairs me 30  
To talk of your good father. In his youth  
He had the wit, which I can well observe  
To-day in our young lords ; but they may jest  
Till their own scorn return to them unnoted

33-38 *they may jest . . . awaked them*] they may go on jesting till they wear all point out of their gibes before they can cover their petty follies with meritorious achievement. He was so courtierlike, so urbane, that there was nothing of contempt in his dignified bearing nor aught of bitterness in his keenness of wit. If bitterness or scorn ever appeared, it was a man of his own rank who evoked them.

SCENE II ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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Ere they can hide their levity in honour :  
 So like a courtier, contempt nor bitterness  
 Were in his pride or sharpness ; if they were,  
 His equal had awaked them ; and his honour,  
 Clock to itself, knew the true minute when  
 Exception bid him speak, and at this time 40  
 His tongue obey'd his hand : who were below him  
 He used as creatures of another place ;  
 And bow'd his eminent top to their low ranks,  
 Making them proud of his humility,  
 In their poor praise he humbled. Such a man  
 Might be a copy to these younger times ;  
 Which, follow'd well, would demonstrate them now  
 But goes backward.

BER. His good remembrance, sir,  
 Lies richer in your thoughts than on his tomb ;  
 So in approof lives not his epitaph 50  
 As in your royal speech.

KING. Would I were with him ! He would always  
 say —  
 Methinks I hear him now ; his plausible words

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40 *Exception*] Blame, disapproval, the duty to take exception. Cf. *Hamlet*, V, ii, 223 :

“ What I have done,  
 That might your nature, honour and *exception*  
 Roughly awake.”

42 *creatures of another place*] of another and of superior rank to that which they really occupied.

45 *In their poor praise he*] At their simple praises of him he showed signs of modesty or humility.

50-51 *So in approof . . . royal speech*] His epitaph does not supply such confirmation of his merits as does the speech of the King.

He scatter'd not in ears, but grafted them,  
 To grow there and to bear, — “ Let me not live,” —  
 This his good melancholy oft began,  
 On the catastrophe and heel of pastime,  
 When it was out, — “ Let me not live,” quoth he,  
 “ After my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff  
 Of younger spirits, whose apprehensive senses  
 All but new things disdain ; whose judgements are  
 Mere fathers of their garments ; whose constancies  
 Expire before their fashions.” This he wish'd :  
 I after him do after him wish too,  
 Since I nor wax nor honey can bring home,  
 I quickly were dissolved from my hive,  
 To give some labourers room.

60

SEC. LORD. You are loved, sir ;  
 They that least lend it you shall lack you first.  
 KING. I fill a place, I know 't. How long is 't, count,  
 Since the physician at your father's died ?  
 He was much famed.

70

BER. Some six months since, my lord.  
 KING. If he were living, I would try him yet.  
 Lend me an arm ; the rest have worn me out  
 With several applications : nature and sickness  
 Debate it at their leisure. Welcome, count ;  
 My son 's no dearer.

BER. Thank your majesty.

[*Exeunt. Flourish.*]

59-61 *the snuff* . . . *disdain*] used-up wick, useless cinders, in the sight  
 of younger spirits, whose alert minds disdain all but new things.  
 66 *dissolved*] separated, cut off, discharged. Cf. *M. Wives*, V, v, 211 :  
 “ Nothing can *dissolve* us.”

SCENE III — ROUSILLON

THE COUNT'S PALACE

*Enter* COUNTESS, Steward, and Clown

COUNT. I will now hear ; what say you of this gentlewoman ?

STEW. Madam, the care I have had to even your content, I wish might be found in the calendar of my past endeavours ; for then we wound our modesty and make foul the clearness of our deservings, when of ourselves we publish them.

COUNT. What does this knave here ? Get you gone, sirrah : the complaints I have heard of you I do not all believe : 't is my slowness that I do not ; for I know you lack not folly to commit them, and have ability enough to make such knaveries yours.

CLO. 'T is not unknown to you, madam, I am a poor fellow.

COUNT. Well, sir.

CLO. No, madam, 't is not so well that I am poor, though many of the rich are damned : but, if I may have

---

3 *to even your content*] to do precisely what you wish.

4 *calendar*] record.

6-7 *make foul . . . publish them*] obscure the grounds of our deserts.

Cf. for the general sentiment, *Troil. and Cress.*, I, iii, 241 :

“ The worthiness of praise distains his worth,  
If that the praised himself bring the praise forth.”

your ladyship's good will to go to the world, Isbel the woman and I will do as we may.

COUNT. ~~Wilt thou needs be~~ a beggar? 20

CLO. I do beg your good will in this case.

COUNT. In what case?

CLO. In Isbel's case and mine own. Service is no heritage: and I think I shall never have the blessing of God till I have issue o' my body; for they say barnes are blessings.

COUNT. Tell me thy reason why thou wilt marry.

CLO. My poor body, madam, requires it: I am driven on by the flesh; and he must needs go that the devil drives.

COUNT. Is this all your worship's reason? 30

CLO. Faith, madam, I have other holy reasons, such as they are.

COUNT. May the world know them?

CLO. I have been, madam, a wicked creature, as you and all flesh and blood are; and, indeed, I do marry that I may repent.

COUNT. Thy marriage, sooner than thy wickedness.

CLO. I am out o' friends, madam; and I hope to have friends for my wife's sake.

COUNT. Such friends are thine enemies, knave. 40

CLO. You're shallow, madam, in great friends; for

18 *to go to the world*] to get married: a common phrase. Cf. *Much Ado*, II, i, 287: "Thus *goes* every one *to the world* but I." *As You Like It*, V, iii, 4: "A woman *of the world*" means "a married woman."  
 23 *Service is no heritage*] A common proverb, with which the speaker associates a reminiscence of *Ps.* cxxvii, 3: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord."



SCENE III ALL 'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

the knaves come to do that for me, which I am awear of. He that ears my land spares my team, and gives me leave to *in the crop*; if I be his cuckold, he's my drudge: he that comforts my wife is the cherisher of my flesh and blood; he that cherishes my flesh and blood loves my flesh and blood; he that loves my flesh and blood is my friend: ergo, he that kisses my wife is my friend. If men could be contented to be what they are, there were no fear in marriage; for young Charbon the puritan and old Poysam the papist, how-<sup>50</sup> some'er their hearts are severed in religion, their heads are both one; they may joul horns together, like any deer i' the herd.

COUNT. Wilt thou ever be a foul-mouthed and calumnious knave?

CLO. A prophet I, madam; and I speak the truth the next way:

For I the ballad will repeat,  
Which men full true shall find;  
Your marriage comes by destiny,  
Your cuckoo sings by kind.

60

<sup>50</sup> *Charbon . . . Poysam*] It has been ingeniously conjectured that these names are formed from the French words "chair bonne" (*i. e.*, good flesh), and "poisson" (*i. e.*, fish), and that reference is made to the Lenten fare characteristic respectively of Puritan and Papist. There is an old French proverb, "Jeune chair et vieil poisson" (meaning that meat is best eaten when the animal is young, fish when old and fat), which may well have suggested the collocation of the words, with their epithets.

<sup>57</sup> *the ballad*] Cf. John Grange's *Golden Aphroditis*, 1577:

"As cuckoldes come by destinie,  
So cuckowes sing by kind."

COUNT. Get you gone, sir; I'll talk with you more anon.

STEW. May it please you, madam, that he bid Helen come to you: of her I am to speak.

COUNT. Sirrah, tell my gentlewoman I would speak with her; Helen I mean.

CLO. Was this fair face the cause, quoth she,  
 Why the Grecians sacked Troy?  
 Fond done, done fond,  
 Was this King Priam's joy?  
 With that she sighed as she stood,  
 With that she sighed as she stood,  
 And gave this sentence then;  
 Among nine bad if one be good,  
 Among nine bad if one be good,  
 There's yet one good in ten.

70

COUNT. What, one good in ten? you corrupt the song, sirrah.

CLO. One good woman in ten, madam; which is a purifying o' the song: would God would serve the world so all the year! we'd find no fault with the tithe-woman, 80 if I were the parson: one in ten, quoth a'! an we might have a good woman born but one every blazing star, or

66 *seq.*] An obvious quotation from some old ballad about the siege of Troy. Cf. "St. George and the Dragon," in Percy's *Reliques*, which opens:

"Of Hector's deeds did Homer sing; and of the sack of stately Troy,  
 What griefs fair Helena did bring, which was Sir Paris' only joy."

80 *tithe-woman*] tenth woman. Probably the correct version of the song represented one woman to be bad out of every ten, a ratio which the clown roguishly reverses.

SCENE III ALL 'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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at an earthquake, 't would mend the lottery well : a man may draw his heart out, ere a' pluck one.

COUNT. You'll be gone, sir knave, and do as I command you.

CLO. That man should be at woman's command, and yet no hurt done ! Though honesty be no puritan, yet it will do no hurt ; it will wear the surplice of humility over the black gown of a big heart. I am going, forsooth : the business is for Helen to come hither. 90  
[Exit.]

COUNT. Well, now.

STEW. I know, madam, you love your gentlewoman entirely.

COUNT. Faith, I do : her father bequeathed her to me ; and she herself, without other advantage, may lawfully make title to as much love as she finds : there is more owing her than is paid ; and more shall be paid her than she 'll demand. 98

STEW. Madam, I was very late more near her than I think she wished me : alone she was, and did communicate to herself her own words to her own ears ; she thought, I dare vow for her, they touched not any stranger sense. Her matter was, she loved your son : Fortune, she said, was no goddess, that had put such difference betwixt their two estates ; Love no god, that would not extend his might, only where qualities were

---

89-90 *wear the surplice . . . black gown*] conform outwardly to the law. The reference is to the antipathy of the Puritan to the surplice which the law enjoined, and his exclusive devotion to the black gown.

level ; . . . queen of virgins, that would suffer her poor knight surprised, without rescue in the first assault, or ransom afterward. This she delivered in the most bitter touch of sorrow that e'er I heard virgin exclaim in : which I held my duty speedily to acquaint you withal ; sithence, in the loss that may happen, it concerns you something to know it. 112

COUNT. You have discharged this honestly ; keep it to yourself : many likelihoods informed me of this before, which hung so tottering in the balance, that I could neither believe nor misdoubt. Pray you, leave me : stall this in your bosom ; and I thank you for your honest care : I will speak with you further anon.

[Exit Steward.]

Enter HELENA

Even so it was with me when I was young :

If ever we are nature's, these are ours ; this thorn 120  
Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong ;

Our blood to us, this to our blood is born ;  
It is the show and seal of nature's truth,  
Where love's strong passion is impress'd in youth :

106 *queen of virgins*] The obvious lacuna in this line evoked Theobald's brilliant emendation, *Diana no queen of virgins*, which is commonly adopted. This reading, which should be compared with line 203 ("your Dian"), implies that "poor knight" (l. 107) is "a poor female votary." This interpretation is fully supported by the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, V, i, 140-144: "O sacred, shadowy, cold, and constant queen . . . who to thy female knights Allow'st no more blood," etc. Cf. *Much Ado*, V, iii, 13, where Hero is called "virgin knight."

By our remembrances of days foregone,  
 Such were our faults, or then we thought them none.  
 Her eye is sick on't: I observe her now.

HEL. What is your pleasure, madam ?

COUNT. You know, Helen,  
 I am a mother to you.

HEL. Mine honourable mistress.

COUNT. Nay, a mother : 130  
 Why not a mother ? When I said " a mother,"  
 Methought you saw a serpent : what 's in " mother,"  
 That you start at it ? I say, I am your mother ;  
 And put you in the catalogue of those  
 That were enwombed mine : 't is often seen  
 Adoption strives with nature ; and choice breeds  
 A native slip to us from foreign seeds :  
 You ne'er oppress'd me with a mother's groan,  
 Yet I express to you a mother's care :  
 God's mercy, maiden ! does it curd thy blood 140  
 To say I am thy mother ? What 's the matter,  
 That this distemper'd messenger of wet,  
 The many-colour'd Iris, rounds thine eye ?  
 Why ? that you are my daughter ?

HEL. That I am not.

COUNT. I say, I am your mother.

HEL. Pardon, madam ;  
 The Count Rousillon cannot be my brother :  
 I am from humble, he from honour'd name ;

---

142-143] Cf. *Lucrece*, 1586, 1587:

" And round about her tear-distained eye  
 Blue circles stream'd, like rainbows in the sky."

No note upon my parents, his all noble :

My master, my dear lord he is ; and I

His servant live, and will his vassal die :

He must not be my brother.

150

COUNT. Nor I your mother ?

HEL. You are my mother, madam ; would you  
were, —

So that my lord your son were not my brother, —

Indeed my mother ! or were you both our mothers,

I care no more for than I do for heaven,

So I were not his sister. Can't no other,

But I your daughter, he must be my brother ?

COUNT. Yes, Helen, you might be my daughter-in-  
law :

God shield you mean it not ! daughter and mother

So strive upon your pulse. What, pale again ?

My fear hath catch'd your fondness : now I see

The mystery of your loneliness, and find

Your salt tears' head : now to all sense 't is gross

You love my son ; invention is ashamed,

Against the proclamation of thy passion,

To say thou dost not : therefore tell me true ;

But tell me then, 't is so ; for, look, thy cheeks

Confess it, th' one to th' other ; and thine eyes

See it so grossly shown in thy behaviours,

160

160 *So strive . . . pulse*] So strain, excite your feeling.

162 *loneliness*] Theobald's admirable emendation for the old reading *loveliness*.

164-165 *invention . . . passion*] Falsehood would be ashamed to deny the fact in face of the plain avowal you made of your passion.

That in their kind they speak it : only sin 170  
 And hellish obstinacy tie thy tongue,  
 That truth ~~should be suspected~~. Speak, is 't so ?  
 If it be so, you have wound a goodly clew ;  
 If it be not, forswear 't : howe'er, I charge thee,  
 As heaven shall work in me for thine avail,  
 To tell me truly.

HEL. Good madam, pardon me !

COUNT. Do you love my son ?

HEL. Your pardon, noble mistress !

COUNT. Love you my son ?

HEL. Do not you love him, madam ?

COUNT. Go not about ; my love hath in 't a bond,  
 Whereof the world takes note : come, come, disclose 180  
 The state of your affection ; for your passions  
 Have to the full appeach'd.

HEL. Then, I confess,  
 Here on my knee, before high heaven and you,  
 That before you, and next unto high heaven,  
 I love your son.  
 My friends were poor, but honest ; so's my love :  
 Be not offended ; for it hurts not him  
 That he is loved of me : I follow him not  
 By any token of presumptuous suit ;  
 Nor would I have him till I do deserve him ; 190  
 Yet never know how that desert should be.  
 I know I love in vain, strive against hope ;

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182 *Have . . . appeach'd*] Have given accusatory evidence, have  
 "peached," in the slang sense.

Yet, in this captious and intenable sieve,  
 I still pour in the waters of my love,  
 And lack not to lose still : thus, Indian-like,  
 Religious in mine error, I adore  
 The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,  
 But knows of him no more. My dearest madam,  
 Let not your hate encounter with my love  
 For loving where you do : but if yourself,  
 Whose aged honour cites a virtuous youth,  
 Did ever in so true a flame of liking  
 Wish chastely and love dearly, that your Dian  
 Was both herself and love ; O, then, give pity  
 To her, whose state is such, that cannot choose  
 But lend and give where she is sure to lose ;  
 That seeks not to find that her search implies,  
 But riddle-like lives sweetly where she dies !

200

COUNT. Had you not lately an intent, — speak truly, —  
 To go to Paris ?

193 *captious and intenable sieve*] Both words, in the senses which are required by the context, are not met with elsewhere. "Captious" seems equivalent to "capacious," capable of receiving large quantities; "intenable" is its antithesis, "incapable of retaining."

197-198 *The sun . . . more*] For other references by Shakespeare to sun-worship cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, i, 116, 117, *L. L. L.*, IV, iii, 220, *seq.*, and *Sonnet* vii, 1-4.

201 *Whose aged honour*] Whose honourable conduct in age proves that you were virtuous in youth.

203-204 *your Dian . . . love*] The general meaning is, "The flame of liking" burned so purely in you that the goddess of Chastity (Dian), whom you worshipped, suffered no menace from your passion ; in your case Love and Chastity were at one.



HEL. Madam, I had.

COUNT. Wherefore? tell true. 210

HEL. I will tell truth; by grace itself I swear.  
 You know my father left me some prescriptions  
 Of rare and proved effects, such as his reading  
 And manifest experience had collected  
 For general sovereignty; and that he will'd me  
 In heedfull'st reservation to bestow them,  
 As notes, whose faculties inclusive were,  
 More than they were in note: amongst the rest,  
 There is a remedy, approved, set down,  
 To cure the desperate languishings whereof 220  
 The king is render'd lost.

COUNT. This was your motive  
 For Paris, was it? speak.

HEL. My lord your son made me to think of this;  
 Else Paris, and the medicine, and the king,  
 Had from the conversation of my thoughts  
 Haply been absent then.

COUNT. But think you, Helen,  
 If you should tender your supposed aid,  
 He would receive it? he and his physicians  
 Are of a mind; he, that they cannot help him,  
 They, that they cannot help: how shall they credit 230  
 A poor unlearned virgin, when the schools,

---

215 *For general sovereignty*] To serve as a sovereign remedy of universal application.

217-218 *As notes . . . note*] As prescriptions, whose inherent efficacy was greater than it was reputed to be.

Embowell'd of their doctrine, have left off  
The danger to itself?

HEL. There's something in 't,  
More than my father's skill, which was the great'st  
Of his profession, that his good receipt  
Shall for my legacy be sanctified  
By the luckiest stars in heaven : and, would your honour  
But give me leave to try success, I'd venture  
The well-lost life of mine on his Grace's cure  
By such a day and hour.

COUNT. Dost thou believe 't? 240

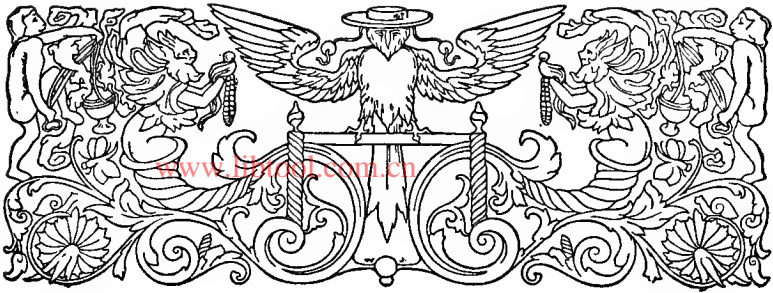
HEL. Ay, madam, knowingly.

COUNT. Why, Helen, thou shalt have my leave and  
love,  
Means and attendants, and my loving greetings  
To those of mine in court : I'll stay at home  
And pray God's blessing into thy attempt :  
Be gone to-morrow ; and be sure of this,  
What I can help thee to, thou shalt not miss. [*Exeunt.*]

232 *Embowell'd of their doctrine*] Exhausted of their learning.

233-235 *There's something . . . profession, that*] For *in't* Hanmer substitutes *hints* ; but the change, though widely adopted, is needless, if we understand "that" in the common Elizabethan sense of "to the effect that."

238 *success*] issue, result. "Succeeding" is similarly used, II, iii, 189, *infra*.



## ACT SECOND—SCENE I—PARIS

### THE KING'S PALACE

*Flourish of cornets. Enter the KING, attended with divers young Lords taking leave for the Florentine war; BERTRAM, and PAROLLES*

KING



A R E W E L L, Y O U N G  
lords ; these warlike principles  
Do not throw from you : and you,  
my lords, farewell :  
Share the advice betwixt you ; if  
both gain, all  
The gift doth stretch itself as 't is  
received,  
And is enough for both.

FIRST LORD. 'T is our hope,  
sir,  
After well-enter'd soldiers, to  
return

And find your Grace in health.

KING. No, no, it cannot be ; and yet my heart

1-2 *young lords . . . my lords*] This is the reading of the First Folio. Hanmer proposed to read *lord* in the singular in each case, but the plural is fully justified. The king appears to address him-

Will not confess he owes the malady  
 That doth my life besiege. Farewell, young lords ; 10  
 Whether I live or die, be you the sons  
 Of worthy Frenchmen: let higher Italy, —  
 Those bated that inherit but the fall  
 Of the last monarchy, — see that you come  
 Not to woo honour, but to wed it ; when  
 The bravest questant shrinks, find what you seek,  
 That fame may cry you loud : I say, farewell.

SEC. LORD. Health, at your bidding, serve your  
 majesty !

KING. Those girls of Italy, take heed of them :  
 They say, our French lack language to deny, 20  
 If they demand : beware of being captives,  
 Before you serve.

---

self to two parties of lords, of which one was to fight on the side of Florence, and the other on the side of Sienna. Already — cf. I, ii, 13–15, *supra* — he had given his courtiers leave to “stand on either part” in the Italian strife.

In the First Folio the First Lord is called “Lord G.” and the Second Lord “Lord E.” The same initials are repeated in the case of the two lords who reappear in iii, 2, *infra*, as well as in the case of another pair of French lords who figure in ii, 6, and iv, 3, *infra*. The initials “G” and “E” seem to be those of the actors who filled the parts in early productions of the piece. Goughe, Gilburne, and Ecclestone are mentioned among “the names of the principall actors in all these playes” in a preliminary page of the First Folio.

6 *After well-enter'd soldiers*] After (we have become) well initiated, well-trained soldiers.

12–14 *let higher Italy . . . monarchy*] let upper Italy — let your humbled foemen who inherit merely the decadence of the ended (Roman) empire.

SCENE I ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

BOTH. Our hearts receive your warnings.

KING. Farewell. Come hither to me. [*Exit.*]

FIRST LORD. O my sweet lord, that you will stay behind us!

PAR. 'T is not his fault, the spark.

SEC. LORD. O, 't is brave wars!

PAR. Most admirable: I have seen those wars.

BER. I am commanded here, and kept a coil with "Too young," and "the next year," and "'t is too early."

PAR. An thy mind stand to 't, boy, steal away bravely.

BER. I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock, 30  
Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry,  
Till honour be bought up, and no sword worn  
But one to dance with! By heaven, I'll steal away.

FIRST LORD. There's honour in the theft.

PAR. Commit it, count.

SEC. LORD. I am your accessory; and so, farewell.

BER. I grow to you, and our parting is a tortured body.

FIRST LORD. Farewell, captain.

SEC. LORD. Sweet Monsieur Parolles!

PAR. Noble heroes, my sword and yours are kin.  
Good sparks and lustrous, a word, good metals: you <sup>40</sup>  
shall find in the regiment of the Spinii one Captain  
Spurio, with his cicatrice, an emblem of war, here on

27 *kept a coil with*] pestered with fussy objections to my going.

30 *the forehorse to a smock*] the squire of petticoats. The forehorse was the leading horse of a team, and was often pranked out in ribbons.

32 *no sword*] Men wore short swords when they danced. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, III, ii, 35-36:

"He at Philippi kept  
His sword e'en like a dancer."

his sinister cheek ; it was this very sword entrenched it : say to him, I live ; and observe his reports for me.

FIRST LORD. We shall, noble captain. [*Exeunt Lords.*]

PAR. Mars dote on you for his novices ! what will ye do ?

BER. Stay : the king.

*Re-enter KING*

PAR. [*Aside to Ber.*] Use a more spacious ceremony to the noble lords ; you have restrained yourself within the list of too cold an adieu : be more expressive to them : <sup>50</sup> for they wear themselves in the cap of the time, there do muster true gait, eat, speak, and move under the influence of the most received star ; and though the devil lead the measure, such are to be followed : after them, and take a more dilated farewell.

BER. And I will do so.

PAR. Worthy fellows ; and like to prove most sinewy sword-men. [*Exeunt Bertram and Parolles.*]

*Enter LAFEU*

LAF. [*Kneeling*] Pardon, my lord, for me and for my tidings.

KING. I'll fee thee to stand up. 60

51-52 *in the cap of the time, . . . move*] in the height of the fashion ; in them is concentrated authentic etiquette in regard to eating, speaking, and moving.

60 *fee*] Theobald's correction of the Folio reading *see*. The meaning is, "I'd reward thee if I could stand up."

SCENE I ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

LAF. Then here's a man stands, that has brought his  
pardon.

I would you had kneel'd; my lord, to ask me mercy;  
And that at my bidding you could so stand up.

KING. I would I had; so I had broke thy pate,  
And ask'd thee mercy for 't.

LAF. Good faith, across: but, my good lord, 't is thus;  
Will you be cured of your infirmity?

KING. No.

LAF. O, will you eat no grapes, my royal fox?  
Yes, but you will my noble grapes, an if 70  
My royal fox could reach them: I have seen a medicine  
That's able to breathe life into a stone,  
Quicken a rock, and make you dance canary  
With spritely fire and motion; whose simple touch  
Is powerful to araise King Pepin, nay,  
To give great Charlemain a pen in 's hand,  
And write to her a love-line.

KING. What "her" is this?

LAF. Why, Doctor She: my lord, there's one arrived,  
If you will see her: now, by my faith and honour,  
If seriously I may convey my thoughts 80  
In this my light deliverance, I have spoke  
With one that, in her sex, her years, profession,

---

66 *across*] Lafeu's meaning is that the king's retort is clumsy. To thrust a lance in a tilting match "across" [the body of] an adversary instead of pushing the point towards him was a sign of awkwardness.

76 *great Charlemain*] There was a tradition that Charlemagne late in life made a vain endeavour to learn to write.

Wisdom and constancy, hath amazed me more  
 Than I dare blame my weakness : will you see her,  
 For that is her demand, and know her business ?  
 That done, laugh well at me.

KING. Now, good Lafeu,  
 Bring in the admiration ; that we with thee  
 May spend our wonder too, or take off thine  
 By wondering how thou took'st it.

LAF. Nay, I'll fit you,  
 And not be all day neither. [Exit. 90

KING. Thus he his special nothing ever prologues.

*Re-enter LAFEU, with HELENA*

LAF. Nay, come your ways.

KING. This haste hath wings indeed.

LAF. Nay, come your ways ;  
 This is his majesty, say your mind to him :  
 A traitor you do look like ; but such traitors  
 His majesty seldom fears : I am Cressid's uncle,  
 That dare leave two together ; fare you well. [Exit.

KING. Now, fair one, does your business follow us ?

HEL. Ay, my good lord.  
 Gerard de Narbon was my father ; 100  
 In what he did profess, well found.

KING. I knew him.

HEL. The rather will I spare my praises towards him ;

83-84 *Than I dare blame my weakness*] Than I care to admit for fear of exposing myself to the reproach of weakness.

96 *Cressid's uncle*] Pandarus, a leading character in Shakespeare's *Troil. and Cress.*



SCENE I ALL 'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

Knowing him is enough. On 's bed of death  
 Many receipts he gave me ; chiefly one,  
 Which, as the dearest issue of his practice,  
 And of his old experience the only darling,  
 He bade me store up, as a triple eye,  
 Safer than mine own two, more dear ; I have so :  
 And, hearing your high majesty is touch'd  
 With that malignant cause, wherein the honour 110  
 Of my dear father's gift stands chief in power,  
 I come to tender it and my appliance,  
 With all bound humbleness.

KING. We thank you, maiden ;  
 But may not be so credulous of cure,  
 When our most learned doctors leave us, and  
 The congregated college have concluded  
 That labouring art can never ransom nature  
 From her inaidible estate ; I say we must not  
 So stain our judgement, or corrupt our hope,  
 To prostitute our past-cure malady 120  
 To empirics, or to dissever so  
 Our great self and our credit, to esteem  
 A senseless help, when help past sense we deem.

HEL. My duty, then, shall pay me for my pains :  
 I will no more enforce mine office on you ;

---

107 *triple eye*] a third eye. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, I, i, 12: "The *triple* pillar of the world."

121-123 *dissever so . . . deem*] I must not so disjoin my person and place from their fit dignity by setting value on an ignorant offer of help, when I deem my case to be beyond the reach of intelligent assistance.

Humbly entreating from your royal thoughts  
A modest one, to bear me back again.

KING. I cannot give thee less, to be call'd grateful :  
Thou thought'st to help me ; and such thanks I  
give

As one near death to those that wish him live : 130  
But, what at full I know, thou know'st no part ;  
I knowing all my peril, thou no art.

HEL. What I can do can do no hurt to try,  
Since you set up your rest 'gainst remedy.  
He that of greatest works is finisher,  
Oft does them by the weakest minister :  
So holy writ in babes hath judgement shown,  
When judges have been babes ; great floods have flown  
From simple sources ; and great seas have dried,  
When miracles have by the greatest been denied 140  
Oft expectation fails, and most oft there  
Where most it promises ; and oft it hits  
Where hope is coldest, and despair most fits.

KING. I must not hear thee ; fare thee well, kind  
maid ;  
Thy pains not used must by thyself be paid :  
Proffers not took reap thanks for their reward.

HEL. Inspired merit so by breath is barr'd :  
It is not so with Him that all things knows,  
As 't is with us that square our guess by shows ;  
But most it is presumption in us when 150

---

143 *fits*] Theobald's emendation for the Folio reading *shifts*.

SCENE I ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

The help of heaven we count the act of men.  
Dear sir, to my endeavours give consent ;  
Of heaven, ~~not me~~, make an experiment.  
I am not an impostor, that proclaim  
Myself against the level of mine aim ;  
But know I think, and think I know most sure,  
My art is not past power, nor you past cure.

KING. Art thou so confident ? within what space  
Horest thou my cure ?

HEL.                           The great'st grace lending grace,  
Ere twice the horses of the sun shall bring 160  
Their fiery torcher his diurnal ring ;  
Ere twice in murk and occidental damp  
Moist Hesperus hath quenched his sleepy lamp ;  
Or four and twenty times the pilot's glass  
Hath told the thievish minutes how they pass ;  
What is infirm from your sound parts shall fly,  
Health shall live free, and sickness freely die.

KING. Upon thy certainty and confidence  
What darest thou venture ?

HEL.                           Tax of impudence,  
A strumpet's boldness, a divulged shame 170  
Traded by odious ballads : my maiden's name

---

154-155 *proclaim . . . aim*] make professions which are not in accord  
with my real intentions. "Level" is not uncommon in the sense  
of "purpose." Cf. the play of *Stucley*: "That is the end or *levels*  
of my thought" (Simpson's *School of Shakespeare*, I, 187).

160-161 *bring . . . ring*] carry their fiery torchbearer round his daily  
circuit or orbit.

Sear'd otherwise, ne worse of worst extended,  
With vilest torture let my life be ended.

KING. Methinks in thee some blessed spirit doth  
speak

His powerful sound within an organ weak :  
And what impossibility would slay  
In common sense, sense saves another way.  
Thy life is dear ; for all, that life can rate  
Worth name of life, in thee hath estimate,  
Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage, all  
That happiness and prime can happy call :  
Thou this to hazard needs must intimate  
Skill infinite or monstrous desperate.  
Sweet practiser, thy physic I will try,  
That ministers thine own death if I die.

180

HEL. If I break time, or flinch in property  
Of what I spoke, unpitied let me die,  
And well deserved : not helping, death's my fee ;  
But, if I help, what do you promise me ?

189

172 *ne worse of worst extended*] This is the reading of the First Folio. In the Second and later folios *no* was substituted for *ne*. "Ne" usually means "nor," but the meaning seems here to be "nay." Helena says: "let the worse come to the worst, let untoward fate be strained to the worse degree of what is very bad,—in effect, let me die under vilest torture."

176–177 *And what impossibility . . . another way*] A notion, which, in virtue of its incredibility, is liable to be destroyed by common sense, may survive after all; perception or sensation has means of preserving a notion in spite of its being rejected by ordinary reason.

180] Theobald proposed to insert *virtue* after *courage*, so as to complete the metre.

186 *flinch in property*] fail in any essential particular.

SCENE I ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

KING. Make thy demand.

HEL. But will you make it even?

KING. Ay, by my sceptre and my hopes of heaven.

HEL. Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand

What husband in thy power I will command :  
Exempted be from me the arrogance  
To choose from forth the royal blood of France,  
My low and humble name to propagate  
With any branch or image of thy state ;  
But such a one, thy vassal, whom I know  
Is free for me to ask, thee to bestow

KING. Here is my hand ; the premises observed, 200

Thy will by my performance shall be served :  
So make the choice of thy own time ; for I,  
Thy resolved patient, on thee still rely.  
More should I question thee, and more I must,  
Though more to know could not be more to trust,  
From whence thou camest, how tended on : but  
rest

Unquestion'd welcome, and undoubted blest.  
Give me some help here, ho ! If thou proceed  
As high as word, my deed shall match thy deed.

[*Flourish.* *Exeunt*

---

190 *make it even*] give precisely what is asked.

SCENE II — ROUSILLON

*THE COUNT'S PALACE*

*Enter COUNTESS and Clown*

COUNT. Come on, sir; I shall now put you to the height of your breeding.

CLO. I will show myself highly fed and lowly taught: I know my business is but to the court.

COUNT. To the court! why, what place make you special, when you put off that with such contempt? But to the court!

CLO. Truly, madam, if God have lent a man any manners, he may easily put it off at court: he that cannot make a leg, put off 's cap, kiss his hand, and say nothing, has neither leg, hands, lip, nor cap; and, indeed, such a fellow, to say precisely, were not for the court; but for me, I have an answer will serve all men.

COUNT. Marry, that 's a bountiful answer that fits all questions.

CLO. It is like a barber's chair, that fits all buttocks, the pin-buttock, the quatch-buttock, the brawn-buttock, or any buttock.

COUNT. Will your answer serve fit to all questions?

CLO. As fit as ten groats is for the hand of an attorney, as your French crown for your taffeta punk,<sup>20</sup> as Tib's rush for Tom's forefinger, as a pancake for

<sup>21</sup> *Tib's rush, etc.*] "Tib" and "Tom" were used for "lad" and "lass" much like "Jack" and "Jill." "Tib's rush" means a ring made of a rush, commonly used in rural districts as a love token.

SCENE II ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

Shrove Tuesday, a morris for May-day, as the nail to his hole, the cuckold to his horn, as a scolding quean to a wrangling knave, as the nun's lip to the friar's mouth, nay, as the pudding to his skin.

COUNT. Have you, I say, an answer of such fitness for all questions?

CLO. From below your duke to beneath your constable, it will fit any question. 30

COUNT. It must be an answer of most monstrous size that must fit all demands.

CLO. But a trifle neither, in good faith, if the learned should speak truth of it: here it is, and all that belongs to 't. Ask me if I am a courtier: it shall do you no harm to learn.

COUNT. To be young again, if we could: I will be a fool in question, hoping to be the wiser by your answer. I pray you, sir, are you a courtier?

CLO. O Lord, sir! There's a simple putting off. 40  
More, more, a hundred of them.

COUNT. Sir, I am a poor friend of yours, that loves you.

CLO. O Lord, sir! Thick, thick, spare not me.

COUNT. I think, sir, you can eat none of this homely meat.

CLO. O Lord, sir! Nay, put me to 't, I warrant you.

COUNT. You were lately whipped, sir, as I think.

CLO. O Lord, sir! spare not me.

COUNT. Do you cry, "O Lord, sir!" at your whipping, and "spare not me"? Indeed your "O Lord, sir!" is very sequent to your whipping: you would answer 50  
very well to a whipping, if you were but bound to 't.

CLO. I ne'er had worse luck in my life in my "O Lord, sir!" I see things may serve long, but not serve ever.

COUNT. I play the noble housewife with the time, To entertain 't so merrily with a fool.

CLO. O Lord, sir! why, there 't serves well again.

COUNT. An end, sir; to your business. Give Helen this,

And urge her to a present answer back:

Commend me to my kinsmen and my son:

This is not much.

60

CLO. Not much commendation to them.

COUNT. Not much employment for you: you understand me?

CLO. Most fruitfully: I am there before my legs.

COUNT. Haste you again. [*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III — PARIS

THE KING'S PALACE

*Enter* BERTRAM, LAFEU, and PAROLLES

LAF. They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence is it that we

<sup>3</sup> *causeless*] Coleridge points out that a cause is only predicable of things natural (phenomena), and that Shakespeare is strictly accurate from a philosophical point of view in describing things super-



make trifles of terrors ; ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

PAR. Why, 't is the rarest argument of wonder that hath shot out in our latter times.

BER. And so 't is.

LAF. To be relinquished of the artists, — 10

PAR. So I say ; both of Galen and Paracelsus.

LAF. Of all the learned and authentic fellows, —

PAR. Right ; so I say.

LAF. That gave him out incurable, —

PAR. Why, there 't is ; so say I too.

LAF. Not to be helped, —

PAR. Right ; as 't were, a man assured of a —

LAF. Uncertain life, and sure death.

PAR. Just, you say well ; so would I have said.

LAF. I may truly say, it is a novelty to the world. 20

PAR. It is, indeed : if you will have it in showing, you shall read it in — what do ye call there ?

LAF. A showing of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor.

PAR. That 's it ; I would have said the very same.

LAF. Why, your dolphin is not lustier : 'fore me, I speak in respect —

PAR. Nay, 't is strange, 't is very strange, that is the brief and the tedious of it ; and he's of a most facinerious spirit that will not acknowledge it to be the —

---

natural (noumena) as "causeless," *i. e.* without mundane origin or connection with matter.

LAF. Very hand of heaven.

30

PAR. Ay, so I say.

LAF. In a most weak —

PAR. And debile minister, great power, great transcendence : which should, indeed, give us a further use to be made than alone the recovery of the king, as to be —

LAF. Generally thankful.

PAR. I would have said it ; you say well. Here comes the king.

*Enter KING, HELENA, and Attendants*

LAF. Lustig, as the Dutchman says : I 'll like a maid the better, whilst I have a tooth in my head : why, he 's 40 able to lead her a coranto.

PAR. Mort du vinaigre ! is not this Helen ?

LAF. 'Fore God, I think so.

KING. Go, call before me all the lords in court.  
Sit, my preserver, by thy patient's side ;  
And with this healthful hand, whose banish'd sense  
Thou hast repeal'd, a second time receive  
The confirmation of my promised gift,  
Which but attends thy naming.

*Enter three or four Lords*

Fair maid, send forth thine eye : this youthful parcel 50  
Of noble bachelors stand at my bestowing,  
O'er whom both sovereign power and father's voice

39 *Lustig*] The Dutch word is "Lustigh," meaning lusty, vigorous.  
52 *father's voice*] father's approval. Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, I, i, 54.

I have to use : thy frank election make ;  
 Thou hast power to choose, and they none to forsake.

HEL. To each of you one fair and virtuous mistress  
 Fall, when Love please ! marry, to each, but one !

LAF. I 'ld give bay Curtal and his furniture,  
 My mouth no more were broken than these boys',  
 And writ as little beard.

KING. Peruse them well :  
 Not one of those but had a noble father.

60

HEL. Gentlemen,  
 Heaven hath through me restored the king to health.

ALL. We understand it, and thank heaven for  
 you.

HEL. I am a simple maid ; and therein wealthiest,  
 That I protest I simply am a maid.  
 Please it your majesty, I have done already :  
 The blushes in my cheeks thus whisper me,  
 " We blush that thou shouldst choose ; but, be refused,  
 Let the white death sit on thy cheek for ever ;  
 We 'll ne'er come there again."

KING. Make choice ; and, see, 70  
 Who shuns thy love shuns all his love in me.

HEL. Now, Dian, from thy altar do I fly ;  
 And to imperial Love, that god most high,  
 Do my sighs stream. Sir, will you hear my suit ?

FIRST LORD. And grant it.

HEL. Thanks, sir ; all the rest is mute.

---

75 *all the rest is mute*] I will say no more. Cf. *Hamlet*, V, ii, 380: "The rest is silence."

LAF. I had rather be in this choice than throw ames-  
ace for my life.

HEL. The honour, sir, that flames in your fair  
eyes,

Before I speak, too threateningly replies :

Love make your fortunes twenty times above

80

Her that so wishes and her humble love !

SEC. LORD. No better, if you please.

HEL. My wish receive,

Which great Love grant ! and so, I take my leave.

LAF. Do all they deny her ? An they were sons of  
mine, I 'ld have them whipped ; or I would send them to  
the Turk, to make eunuchs of.

HEL. Be not afraid that I your hand should take ;

I 'll never do you wrong for your own sake :

Blessing upon your vows ! and in your bed

Find fairer fortune, if you ever wed !

90

LAF. These boys are boys of ice, they 'll none have  
her : sure, they are bastards to the English ; the French  
ne'er got 'em.

HEL. You are too young, too happy, and too good,  
To make yourself a son out of my blood.

FOURTH LORD. Fair one, I think not so.

LAF. There's one grape yet ; I am sure thy father

76 *ames-ace*] ambs-ace, the two aces, the lowest throw of the dice, a  
thing of no value. The general meaning of Lafen's somewhat  
lame irony seems to be, " I had rather be a competitor in this con-  
test than risk my life for nothing at all."

97-99 *I am sure . . . already*] Thy father put some spirit into you ;  
but I know enough of you to know you for an ass.

SCENE III ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

drunk wine : but if thou be'st not an ass, I am a youth of fourteen ; I have known thee already.

HEL. [*To Bertram*] I dare not say I take you ; but I give 100

Me and my service, ever whilst I live,  
Into your guiding power. This is the man.

KING. Why, then, young Bertram, take her ; she's thy wife.

BER. My wife, my liege ! I shall beseech your highness,  
In such a business give me leave to use  
The help of mine own eyes.

KING. Know'st thou not, Bertram,  
What she has done for me ?

BER. Yes, my good lord ;  
But never hope to know why I should marry her.

KING. Thou know'st she has raised me from my sickly bed.

BER. But follows it, my lord, to bring me down 110  
Must answer for your raising ? I know her well :  
She had her breeding at my father's charge.  
A poor physician's daughter my wife ! Disdain  
Rather corrupt me ever !

KING. 'T is only title thou disdain'st in her, the which  
I can build up. Strange is it, that our bloods,  
Of colour, weight, and heat, pour'd all together,  
Would quite confound distinction, yet stand off

113-114 *Disdain . . . ever*] May ignominy or disgrace otherwise taint me for ever.

117 *Of colour, etc.*] As far as colour, etc., are concerned.

In differences so mighty. If she be  
 All that is virtuous, save what thou dislikest, 120  
 A poor physician's daughter, thou dislikest  
 Of virtue for the name: but do not so:  
 From lowest place when virtuous things proceed  
 The place is dignified by the doer's deed:  
 Where great additions swell's and virtue none,  
 It is a dropsied honour. Good alone  
 Is good without a name. Vileness is so:  
 The property by what it is should go,  
 Not by the title. She is young, wise, fair;  
 In these to nature she's immediate heir, 130  
 And these breed honour: that is honour's scorn,  
 Which challenges itself as honour's born,  
 And is not like the sire: honours thrive,  
 When rather from our acts we them derive  
 Than our foregoers: the mere word's a slave  
 Debosh'd on every tomb, on every grave  
 A lying trophy; and as oft is dumb  
 Where dust and damn'd oblivion is the tomb  
 Of honour'd bones indeed. What should be said?  
 If thou canst like this creature as a maid, 140  
 I can create the rest: virtue and she  
 Is her own dower; honour and wealth from me.  
 BER. I cannot love her, nor will strive to do't.  
 KING. Thou wrong'st thyself, if thou shouldst strive  
 to choose.

127 *Vileness is so*] Vileness is in the same case.

132 *challenges itself as*] asserts a claim to be.

SCENE III ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

HEL. That you are well restored, my lord, I'm glad:  
Let the rest go.

KING. My honour's at the stake; which to defeat,  
I must produce my power. Here, take her hand,  
Proud scornful boy, unworthy this good gift;  
That dost in vile misprision shackle up 150  
My love and her desert; that canst not dream,  
We, poisoning us in her defective scale,  
Shall weigh thee to the beam; that wilt not know,  
It is in us to plant thine honour where  
We please to have it grow. Check thy contempt:  
Obey our will, which travails in thy good:  
Believe not thy disdain, but presently  
Do thine own fortunes that obedient right  
Which both thy duty owes and our power claims;  
Or I will throw thee from my care for ever 160  
Into the staggers and the careless lapse  
Of youth and ignorance; both my revenge and hate  
Loosing upon thee, in the name of justice,  
Without all terms of pity. Speak; thine answer.

147 *which to defeat*] and to destroy this risk of injury to my honour.

150 *in vile misprision shackle up*] contemptibly undervalue or disdain.  
"Misprision" means here "the act of undervaluing." Cf. III, ii,  
29, *infra*, where the countess talks of "the misprising of" Helena  
by her son.

152-153 *We, poisoning . . . beam*] We, throwing the weight of our in-  
fluence in her favour or scale, which of itself were deficient in weight,  
shall make the scale in which you are placed strike the beam,  
*i. e.*, weigh nothing at all.

161 *staggers*] strictly speaking, apoplexy in horses. Here "staggering  
helplessness" or "bewilderment" (of men). Cf. *Cymb.*, V, v, 233:  
"How come these *staggers* on me?"

BER. Pardon, my gracious lord ; for I submit  
 My fancy to your eyes : when I consider  
 What great creation and what dole of honour  
 Flies where you bid it, I find that she, which late  
 Was in my nobler thoughts most base, is now  
 The praised of the king ; who, so ennobled, 170  
 Is as 't were born so.

KING. Take her by the hand,  
 And tell her she is thine : to whom I promise  
 A counterpoise ; if not to thy estate,  
 A balance more replete.

BER. I take her hand.

KING. Good fortune and the favour of the king  
 Smile upon this contract ; whose ceremony  
 Shall seem expedient on the now-born brief,  
 And be perform'd to-night : the solemn feast  
 Shall more attend upon the coming space,  
 Expecting absent friends. As thou lovest her, 180  
 Thy love 's to me religious ; else, does err.

[*Exeunt all but Lafeu and Parolles.*]

LAF. Do you hear, monsieur ? a word with you.

PAR. Your pleasure, sir ?

LAF. Your lord and master did well to make his re-  
 cantation.

178 *Shall seem expedient on the now-born brief*] Shall rightly follow immediately on the short and summary engagement. "Brief" here means "a short" verbal assurance. Cf. V, iii, 137, *infra*, "a sweet verbal *brief*."

179-180 *Shall more attend . . . friends*] shall take place at a longer interval hereafter, awaiting the coming of absent friends.



SCENE III ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

PAR. Recantation! My lord! my master!

LAF. Ay; is it not a language I speak?

PAR. A most harsh one, and not to be understood without bloody succeeding. My master!

LAF. Are you companion to the Count Rousillon? 190

PAR. To any count, to all counts, to what is man.

LAF. To what is count's man: count's master is of another style.

PAR. You are too old, sir; let it satisfy you, you are too old.

LAF. I must tell thee, sirrah, I write man; to which title age cannot bring thee.

PAR. What I dare too well do, I dare not do. 198

LAF. I did think thee, for two ordinaries, to be a pretty wise fellow; thou didst make tolerable vent of thy travel; it might pass: yet the scarfs and the banners about thee did manifoldly dissuade me from believing thee a vessel of too great a burthen. I have now found thee; when I lose thee again, I care not: yet art thou good for nothing but taking up; and that thou'rt scarce worth.

---

189 *succeeding*] sequel, result, issue. "Success" is similarly used. I, i, 138, *supra*.

196 *I write man*] I declare myself a man. Cf. III, v, 63, *infra*: "*I write good creature*."

199 *for two ordinaries*] for two dinners, for the time spent over two dinners with you.

205 *taking up*] There is a play here on the two meanings of this expression "buying on credit" and "contradicting or exposing error in conversation."

PAR. Hadst thou not the privilege of antiquity upon thee, —

LAF. Do not plunge thyself too far in anger, lest thou hasten thy trial; which if— Lord have mercy on thee for a hen! So, my good window of lattice, fare thee well: thy casement I need not open, for I look through thee. Give me thy hand. 212

PAR. My lord, you give me most egregious indignity.

LAF. Ay, with all my heart; and thou art worthy of it.

PAR. I have not, my lord, deserved it.

LAF. Yes, good faith, every dram of it; and I will not bate thee a scruple.

PAR. Well, I shall be wiser. 213

LAF. Ev'n as soon as thou canst, for thou hast to pull at a smack o' the contrary. If ever thou be'st bound in thy scarf and beaten, thou shalt find what it is to be proud of thy bondage. I have a desire to hold my acquaintance with thee, or rather my knowledge, that I may say in the default, he is a man I know.

PAR. My lord, you do me most insupportable vexation.

LAF. I would it were hell-pains for thy sake, and my poor doing eternal: for doing I am past; as I will by thee, in what motion age will give me leave. [*Exit.* 223

PAR. Well, thou hast a son shall take this disgrace off me; scurvy, old, filthy, scurvy lord! Well, I must be

210 *a hen*] a coward. Cf. "hen-hearted," "chicken-hearted."

*window of lattice*] a window with a blind that may be seen through.

227-228 *for doing . . . leave*] My time of doing or action is past, so I will pass by thee (*i. e.* leave thee) as quickly as age permits.

There is a lame quibble on "past" as a participle of "pass."

patient; there is no fettering of authority. I'll beat him, by my life, if I can meet him with any convenience, an he were double and double a lord. I'll have no more pity of his age than I would have of — I'll beat him, an if I could but meet him again.

*Re-enter LAFEU*

LAF. Sirrah, your lord and master's married; there's news for you: you have a new mistress.

PAR. I most unfeignedly beseech your lordship to make some reservation of your wrongs: he is my good lord: whom I serve above is my master. 240

LAF. Who? God?

PAR. Ay, sir.

LAF. The devil it is that's thy master. Why dost thou garter up thy arms o' this fashion? dost make hose of thy sleeves? do other servants so? Thou wert best set thy lower part where thy nose stands. By mine honour, if I were but two hours younger, I'd beat thee: methinks't, thou art a general offence, and every man should beat thee: I think thou wast created for men to breathe themselves upon thee. 250

PAR. This is hard and undeserved measure, my lord.

LAF. Go to, sir; you were beaten in Italy for picking a kernel out of a pomegranate; you are a vagabond, and no true traveller: you are more saucy with lords and honourable personages than the commission of your birth and virtue gives you heraldry. You are not worth another word, else I'd call you knave. I leave you. [*Exit.*]

PAR. Good, very good ; it is so then : good, very good ; let it be concealed awhile.

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Re-enter BERTRAM

BER. Undone, and forfeited to cares for ever ! 260

PAR. What 's the matter, sweet-heart ?

BER. Although before the solemn priest I have sworn,  
I will not bed her.

PAR. What, what, sweet-heart ?

BER. O my Parolles, they have married me !  
I 'll to the 'Tuscan wars, and never bed her.

PAR. France is a dog-hole, and it no more merits  
The tread of a man's foot : to the wars !

BER. There 's letters from my mother : what the  
import is, I know not yet. 270

PAR. Ay, that would be known. To the wars, my  
boy, to the wars !

He wears his honour in a box unseen,  
That hugs his kicky-wicky here at home,  
Spending his manly marrow in her arms,  
Which should sustain the bound and high curvet  
Of Mars's fiery steed. To other regions  
France is a stable ; we that dwell in 't jades ;  
Therefore, to the war !

BER. It shall be so : I 'll send her to my house,  
Acquaint my mother with my hate to her, 280  
And wherefore I am fled ; write to the king  
That which I durst not speak : his present gift  
Shall furnish me to those Italian fields,

SCENE IV ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

Where noble fellows strike : war is no strife  
To the dark house and the detested wife.

PAR. Will this capriccio hold in thee, art sure ?

BER. Go with me to my chamber, and advise me.  
I'll send her straight away : to-morrow  
I'll to the wars, she to her single sorrow.

PAR. Why, these balls bound ; there's noise in it.  
'T is hard :

290

A young man married is a man that's marr'd :  
Therefore away, and leave her bravely ; go :  
The king has done you wrong : but, hush, 't is so.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV — PARIS

*THE KING'S PALACE*

*Enter HELENA and Clown*

HEL. My mother greets me kindly : is she well ?

CLO. She is not well ; but yet she has her health :  
she's very merry ; but yet she is not well : but thanks  
be given, she's very well and wants nothing i' the world ;  
but yet she is not well.

HEL. If she be very well, what does she ail, that she's  
not very well ?

---

285 *To the dark house, etc.*] Compared with the gloomy home and  
the hated wife. *Detested* is Rowe's correction for *detected* of the  
Folios.

290 *Why, these balls . . . hard*] Proverbial expressions meaning "This  
goes well."

CLO. Truly, she's very well indeed, but for two things.

HEL. What two things?

CLO. One, ~~that she's not in~~ heaven, whither God send 10  
her quickly! the other, that she's in earth, from whence  
God send her quickly!

*Enter PAROLLES*

PAR. Bless you, my fortunate lady!

HEL. I hope, sir, I have your good will to have mine  
own good fortunes.

PAR. You had my prayers to lead them on; and to  
keep them on, have them still. O, my knave, how does  
my old lady?

CLO. So that you had her wrinkles, and I her money,  
I would she did as you say. 20

PAR. Why, I say nothing.

CLO. Marry, you are the wiser man; for many a  
man's tongue shakes out his master's undoing: to say  
nothing, to do nothing, to know nothing, and to have  
nothing, is to be a great part of your title; which is  
within a very little of nothing.

PAR. Away! thou'rt a knave.

CLO. You should have said, sir, before a knave thou'rt  
a knave; that's, before me thou'rt a knave: this had  
been truth, sir. 30

PAR. Go to, thou art a witty fool; I have found thee.

CLO. Did you find me in yourself, sir? or were you  
taught to find me? The search, sir, was profitable; and

SCENE IV ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

much fool may you find in you, even to the world's pleasure and the increase of laughter.

PAR. A good knave, i' faith, and well fed.

Madam, my lord will go away to-night ;

A very serious business calls on him.

The great prerogative and rite of love,

Which, as your due, time claims, he does acknowledge ; 40

But puts it off to a compell'd restraint ;

Whose want, and whose delay, is strew'd with sweets,

Which they distil now in the curbed time,

To make the coming hour o'erflow with joy,

And pleasure drown the brim.

HEL. What's his will else ?

PAR. That you will take your instant leave o' the king,

And make this haste as your own good proceeding,

Strengthen'd with what apology you think

May make it probable need.

HEL. What more commands he ?

PAR. That, having this obtain'd, you presently 50  
Attend his further pleasure.

HEL. In every thing I wait upon his will.

PAR. I shall report it so.

HEL. I pray you. [*Exit Parolles.*] Come, sirrah.

[*Exeunt.*]

---

43 *curbed time*] the season of restraint.

49 *make it probable need*] give it a specious appearance of necessity.

SCENE V — PARIS

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*Enter LAFEU and BERTRAM*

LAF. But I hope your lordship thinks not him a soldier.

BER. Yes, my lord, and of very valiant approof.

LAF. You have it from his own deliverance.

BER. And by other warranted testimony.

LAF. Then my dial goes not true: I took this lark for a bunting.

BER. I do assure you, my lord, he is very great in knowledge, and accordingly valiant.

LAF. I have then sinned against his experience and transgressed against his valour; and my state that way is dangerous, since I cannot yet find in my heart to repent. Here he comes: I pray you, make us friends; I will pursue the amity.

*Enter PAROLLES*

PAR. These things shall be done, sir. [To Bertram.]

LAF. Pray you, sir, who's his tailor?

PAR. Sir?

LAF. O, I know him well, I, sir; he, sir, 's a good workman, a very good tailor.

---

6 a *bunting*] a bird with plumage resembling that of a lark, but without the lark's note.



BER. Is she gone to the king? [*Aside to Parolles.*

PAR. She is.

20

BER. Will she away to-night?

PAR. As you 'll have her.

BER. I have writ my letters, casketed my treasure,  
Given order for our horses; and to-night,  
When I should take possession of the bride,  
End ere I do begin.

LAF. A good traveller is something at the latter end of  
a dinner; but one that lies three thirds, and uses a known  
truth to pass a thousand nothings with, should be once  
heard, and thrice beaten. God save you, captain.

30

BER. Is there any unkindness between my lord and  
you, monsieur?

PAR. I know not how I have deserved to run into my  
lord's displeasure.

LAF. You have made shift to run into 't, boots and  
spurs and all, like him that leaped into the custard; and  
out of it you 'll run again, rather than suffer question for  
your residence.

BER. It may be you have mistaken him, my lord.

LAF. And shall do so ever, though I took him at 's  
prayers. Fare you well, my lord; and believe this of  
me, there can be no kernel in this light nut; the soul of

---

36 *leaped into the custard*] At the Lord Mayor's banquets in the city  
of London, the city fool was wont to leap into a custard prepared  
for the purpose. Cf. Ben Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, I, i, 95-97:

"He may perchance, in tale of a Sheriff's dinner,  
Skip with a rime o' the Table, from New-Nothing,  
And take his *Almaine-leap* into a custard."

this man is his clothes. Trust him not in matter of heavy consequence ; I have kept of them tame, and know their natures. Farewell, monsieur ; I have spoken better of you than you have or will to deserve at my hand ; but we must do good against evil. [Exit.

PAR. An idle lord, I swear.

BER. I think so.

PAR. Why, do you not know him ?

50

BER. Yes, I do know him well, and common speech

Gives him a worthy pass. Here comes my clog.

*Enter HELENA*

HEL. I have, sir, as I was commanded from you, Spoke with the king, and have procured his leave For present parting ; only he desires Some private speech with you.

BER. I shall obey his will.

You must not marvel, Helen, at my course, Which holds not colour with the time, nor does The ministration and required office On my particular. Prepared I was not For such a business ; therefore am I found So much unsettled : this drives me to entreat you, That presently you take your way for home, And rather muse than ask why I entreat you ; For my respects are better than they seem,

60

60 *On my particular*] On my part, as far as I am concerned.

65 *respects*] reasons, motives.

And my appointments have in them a need  
 Greater than shows itself at the first view  
 To you that know them not. This to my mother :

[Giving a letter.]

'T will be two days ere I shall see you ; so,  
 I leave you to your wisdom.

HEL. Sir, I can nothing say, 70  
 But that I am your most obedient servant.

BER. Come, come, no more of that.

HEL. And ever shall  
 With true observance seek to eke out that  
 Wherein toward me my homely stars have fail'd  
 To equal my great fortune.

BER. Let that go :  
 My haste is very great : farewell ; hie home.

HEL. Pray, sir, your pardon.

BER. Well, what would you say ?

HEL. I am not worthy of the wealth I owe ;  
 Nor dare I say 't is mine, and yet it is ;  
 But, like a timorous thief, most fain would steal 80  
 What law does vouch mine own.

BER. What would you have ?

HEL. Something ; and scarce so much : nothing,  
 indeed.

I would not tell you what I would, my lord : faith,  
 yes ;

Strangers and foes do sunder, and not kiss.

BER. I pray you, stay not, but in haste to horse.

HEL. I shall not break your bidding, good my  
 lord.

BER. Where are my other men, monsieur? Farewell!

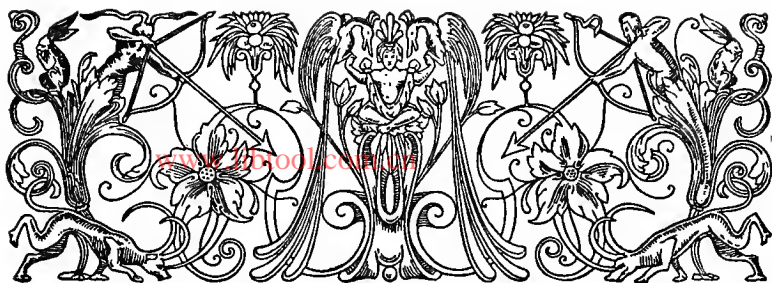
[*Exit Helena.*]

Go thou toward home; where I will never come,  
Whilst I can shake my sword, or hear the drum.  
Away, and for our flight.

PAR. Bravely, coragio! [*Exeunt.* 90]

---

87 *Where are my other, etc.*] Theobald first gave this speech to Bertram.  
In the earlier editions it is assigned to Helena.

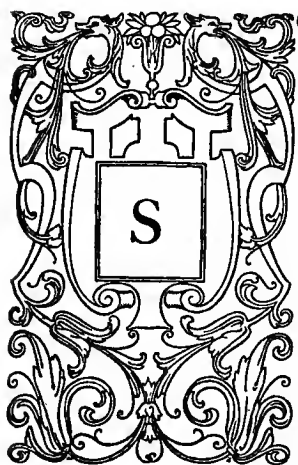


ACT THIRD — SCENE I — FLORENCE

THE DUKE'S PALACE

*Flourish. Enter the DUKE of Florence, attended ; the two Frenchmen  
with a troop of soldiers*

DUKE



SO THAT FROM POINT  
to point now have you heard  
The fundamental reasons of this  
war,

Whose great decision hath much  
blood let forth  
And more thirsts after.

FIRST LORD. Holy seems the  
quarrel  
Upon your Grace's part ; black  
and fearful  
On the opposer.

DUKE. Therefore we marvel  
much our cousin France  
Would in so just a business shut his bosom  
Against our borrowing prayers.

SEC. LORD.

Good my lord,

9 *borrowing prayers*] prayers that would borrow of him assistance.

The reasons of our state I cannot yield, 10  
 But like a common and an outward man,  
 That the great figure of a council frames  
 By self-unable motion : therefore dare not  
 Say what I think of it, since I have found  
 Myself in my incertain grounds to fail  
 As often as I guess'd.

DUKE. Be it his pleasure.

FIRST LORD. But I am sure the younger of our  
 nature,  
 That surfeit on their ease, will day by day  
 Come here for physic.

DUKE. Welcome shall they be ;  
 And all the honours that can fly from us 90  
 Shall on them settle. You know your places well ;  
 When better fall, for your avails they fell :  
 To-morrow to the field. [Flourish.

10-13 *The reasons . . . motion*] I know nothing of politics, except, like any ordinary outsider, who forms some idea of what the great councillors determine by effort, which of itself is inadequate to attain full knowledge. "Self-unable motion" is "mental or physical activity which is not self-sufficing, and bears no fruit.

17 *younger of our nature*] young men of our rank or condition.

22 *When . . . fell*] When men in higher positions fall, their fall must be to your advantage; you know the usual conditions of promotion.

SCENE II — ROUSILLON  
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THE COUNT'S PALACE

*Enter* COUNTESS *and* Clown

COUNT. It hath happened all as I would have had it, save that he comes not along with her.

CLO. By my troth, I take my young lord to be a very melancholy man.

COUNT. By what observance, I pray you?

CLO. Why, he will look upon his boot and sing; mend the ruff and sing; ask questions and sing; pick his teeth and sing. I know a man that had this trick of melancholy sold a goodly manor for a song.

COUNT. Let me see what he writes, and when he means to come. 10

*[Opening a letter.]*

CLO. I have no mind to Isbel since I was at court: our old ling and our Isbels o' the country are nothing like your old ling and your Isbels o' the court: the brains of my Cupid's knocked out, and I begin to love, as an old man loves money, with no stomach.

---

7 *the ruff*] Here used of the boot, the top edge of which often had an ornamental ruff or ruffle. Cf. Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour*, IV, 2, *ad fin*, "*the ruffle of my boot.*"

13 *old ling*] literally, "stale salt fish, which was ordinary Lenten fare." The words may here be applied to old women. Such usage adds very little point to the clown's contrast of women of the court with those of the country. It has been ingeniously suggested that, both in this and the next line, *old ling* is a misreading of *codlings*, *i. e.* "raw youths."

COUNT. What have we here ?

CLO. E'en that you have there. [Exit.

COUNT. [*reads*] I have sent you a daughter-in-law : she hath recovered the king, and undone me. I have wedded her, not bedded her ; and sworn to make the "not" eternal. You shall hear I am run away : know it before the report come. If there be breadth enough in the world, I will hold a long distance. My duty to you,  
Your unfortunate son,

BERTRAM.

This is not well, rash and unbridled boy,  
To fly the favours of so good a king ;  
To pluck his indignation on thy head  
By the misprising of a maid too virtuous  
For the contempt of empire.

30

*Re-enter Clown*

CLO. O madam, yonder is heavy news within between two soldiers and my young lady !

COUNT. What is the matter ?

CLO. Nay, there is some comfort in the news, some comfort ; your son will not be killed so soon as I thought he would.

COUNT. Why should he be killed ?

CLO. So say I, madam, if he run away, as I hear he does : the danger is in standing to 't ; that's the loss of men, though it be the getting of children. Here they come will tell you more : for my part, I only hear your son was run away. [Exit.

---

29 *misprising*] contemning. See note on ii, 3, 150, *supra*.



SCENE II ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

*Enter HELENA and two Gentlemen*

FIRST GENT. Save you, good madam.

HEL. Madam, my lord is gone, for ever gone.

SEC. GENT. Do not say so.

COUNT. Think upon patience. Pray you, gentlemen,  
I have felt so many quirks of joy and grief,  
That the first face of neither, on the start,  
Can woman me unto 't: where is my son, I pray you?

SEC. GENT. Madam, he's gone to serve the duke of  
Florence :

50

We met him thitherward ; for thence we came,  
And, after some dispatch in hand at court,  
Thither we bend again.

HEL. Look on his letter, madam ; here's my passport.  
[reads] When thou canst get the ring upon my finger which never  
shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I  
am father to, then call me husband : but in such a " then " I write  
a " never."

This is a dreadful sentence.

COUNT. Brought you this letter, gentlemen?

FIRST GENT. Ay, madam ; 60

And for the contents' sake are sorry for our pains.

COUNT. I prithee, lady, have a better cheer ;  
If thou engrossest all the griefs are thine,  
Thou robb'st me of a moiety : he was my son ;

---

43 *First Gent.*] In the First Folio this character is called " French E,"  
and the " Second Gent." is called " French G." See note on II, i,  
1-2, *supra*.

49 *Can woman me unto 't:*] Can make me womanlike give way to  
emotion.

But I do wash his name out of my blood,  
 And thou art all my child. Towards Florence is he ?

SEC. GENT. Ay, madam.

COUNT. And to be a soldier ?

SEC. GENT. Such is his noble purpose ; and, believe 't,  
 The Duke will lay upon him all the honour  
 That good convenience claims.

COUNT. Return you thither ? 70

FIRST GENT. Ay, madam, with the swiftest wing of  
 speed.

HEL. [*reads*] Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France.  
 'T is bitter.

COUNT. Find you that there ?

HEL. Ay, madam.

FIRST GENT. 'T is but the boldness of his hand, haply,  
 which his heart was not consenting to.

COUNT. Nothing in France, until he have no wife !  
 There 's nothing here that is too good for him

But only she ; and she deserves a lord  
 That twenty such rude boys might tend upon 80  
 And call her hourly mistress. Who was with him ?

FIRST GENT. A servant only, and a gentleman  
 Which I have sometime known.

COUNT. Parolles, was it not ?

FIRST GENT. Ay, my good lady, he.

COUNT. A very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness.  
 My son corrupts a well-derived nature  
 With his inducement.

---

87 *With his inducement*] Under his influence.

FIRST GENT. Indeed, good lady,  
The fellow has a deal of that too much,  
Which holds him much to have.

COUNT. Y' are welcome, gentlemen. 90  
I will entreat you, when you see my son,  
To tell him that his sword can never win  
The honour that he loses : more I'll entreat you  
Written to bear along.

SEC. GENT. We serve you, madam,  
In that and all your worthiest affairs.

COUNT. Not so, but as we change our courtesies.  
Will you draw near ? [Exeunt Countess and Gentlemen.]

HEL. "Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France."  
Nothing in France, until he has no wife !  
Thou shalt have none, Rousillon, none in France ; 100  
Then hast thou all again. Poor lord ! is 't I  
That chase thee from thy country and expose  
Those tender limbs of thine to the event  
Of the none-sparing war ? and is it I  
That drive thee from the sportive court, where thou  
Wast shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark  
Of smoky muskets ? O you leaden messengers,

88-89 *The fellow . . . have*] "Too much" seems to be used as a substantive in the sense of "excess" (of vanity). Cf. *Hamlet*, IV, vii, 117-118 : "For goodness, growing to a plurisy, Dies in his own *too much*. The meaning may be, "The fellow has a deal of that excess (of vanity) which gives him the repute of possessing an amplitude or sufficiency (of valour)." But the difficult phrase "holds him much to have" is usually reckoned to be corrupt. The suggestion "fouls him," etc., is worth attention.

96 *change our courtesies*] exchange or reciprocate civilities.

That ride upon the violent speed of fire,  
 Fly with false aim ; move the still-peering air,  
 That sings with piercing ; do not touch my lord. 110  
 Whoever shoots at him, I set him there ;  
 Whoever charges on his forward breast,  
 I am the caitiff that do hold him to 't ;  
 And, though I kill him not, I am the cause  
 His death was so effected : better 't were  
 I met the ravin lion when he roar'd  
 With sharp constraint of hunger ; better 't were  
 That all the miseries which nature owes  
 Were mine at once. No, come thou home, Rousillon,  
 Whence honour but of danger wins a scar, 120  
 As oft it loses all : I will be gone ;  
 My being here it is that holds thee hence :  
 Shall I stay here to do 't ? no, no, although  
 The air of paradise did fan the house,  
 And angels officed all : I will be gone,  
 That pitiful rumour may report my flight,  
 To console thine ear. Come, night ; end, day !  
 For with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal away. [*Exit.*]

109-110 *the still-peering air . . . lord*] "Disturb or cut through the still, quiet air, which makes a singing or hissing sound as the bullet pierces it ; (take any course, do anything, but) do not touch my lord." "Still-peering" is an emphatic amplification of "still," *i. e.* quiet. "Peer" is frequently used for "appear," or "seen." The epithet is equivalent to "still seeming," "silent to all appearance."

119-121 *come . . . all*] come home from that place where the quest of honour gets at most out of a dangerous adventure nothing but a scar, while it as often loses everything.

SCENE IV ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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SCENE III — FLORENCE

*BEFORE THE DUKE'S PALACE*

*Flourish. Enter the DUKE of Florence, BERTRAM, PAROLLES, Soldiers, Drum, and Trumpets*

DUKE. The general of our horse thou art ; and we,  
Great in our hope, lay our best love and credence  
Upon thy promising fortune.

BER. Sir, it is  
A charge too heavy for my strength ; but yet  
We'll strive to bear it for your worthy sake  
To the extreme edge of hazard.

DUKE. Then go thou forth ;  
And fortune play upon thy prosperous helm,  
As thy auspicious mistress !

BER. This very day,  
Great Mars, I put myself into thy file :  
Make me but like my thoughts, and I shall prove 10  
A lover of thy drum, hater of love. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV — ROUSILLON

*THE COUNT'S PALACE*

*Enter COUNTESS and Steward*

COUNT. Alas ! and would you take the letter of her ?  
Might you not know she would do as she has done,  
By sending me a letter ? Read it again.

STEW. [*reads*] I am Saint Jaques' pilgrim, thither gone :

Ambitious love hath so in me offended,  
 That barefoot plod I the cold ground upon,  
 With ~~sainted~~ <sup>humbled</sup> ~~vow~~ <sup>my</sup> faults to have amended.  
 Write, write, that from the bloody course of war  
 My dearest master, your dear son, may hie :  
 Bless him at home in peace, whilst I from far  
 His name with zealous fervour sanctify :  
 His taken labours bid him me forgive ;  
 I, his despiteful Juno, sent him forth  
 From courtly friends with camping foes to live,  
 Where death and danger dogs the heels of worth :  
 He is too good and fair for death and me ;  
 Whom I myself embrace to set him free.

10

COUNT. Ah, what sharp stings are in her mildest  
 words !

Rinaldo, you did never lack advice so much,  
 As letting her pass so : had I spoke with her,  
 I could have well diverted her intents,  
 Which thus she hath prevented.

20

STEW. Pardon me, madam :  
 If I had given you this at over-night,  
 She might have been o'erta'en ; and yet she writes,  
 Pursuit would be but vain.

COUNT. What angel shall  
 Bless this unworthy husband ? he cannot thrive,

---

4 *Saint Jaques' pilgrim*] Shakespeare invented the reference to Saint Jaques (Saint James the Greater), but gives no precise indication as to which of the many shrines of the saint Helena pretends to make pilgrimage. She subsequently calls the saint "Jaques le Grand" and "great Saint Jaques," III, v, 31 and 92, *infra*.

Unless her prayers, whom heaven delights to hear  
 And loves to grant, relieve him from the wrath  
 Of greatest justice. Write, write, Rinaldo,  
 To this unworthy husband of his wife ; 30  
 Let every word weigh heavy of her worth  
 That he does weigh too light : my greatest grief,  
 Though little he do feel it, set down sharply.  
 Dispatch the most convenient messenger :  
 When haply he shall hear that she is gone,  
 He will return ; and hope I may that she,  
 Hearing so much, will speed her foot again,  
 Led hither by pure love : which of them both  
 Is dearest to me, I have no skill in sense  
 To make distinction : provide this messenger : 40  
 My heart is heavy and mine age is weak ;  
 Grief would have tears, and sorrow bids me speak.

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE V — FLORENCE. WITHOUT THE WALLS

## A TUCKET AFAR OFF

*Enter an old Widow of Florence, DIANA, VIOLENTA, and MARIANA,  
 with other Citizens*

WID. Nay, come ; for if they do approach the city,  
 we shall lose all the sight.

DIA. They say the French count has done most  
 honourable service.

3 DIA. *They say, etc.*] The Cambridge editors assign this speech to  
 Violenta, who, though mentioned in the stage direction, does not  
 figure among the speakers in the old editions.

WID. It is reported that he has taken their greatest commander; and that with his own hand he slew the Duke's brother. [*Tucket.*] We have lost our labour; they are gone a contrary way: hark! you may know by their trumpets.

MAR. Come, let's return again, and suffice ourselves with the report of it. Well, Diana, take heed of this <sup>10</sup> French earl: the honour of a maid is her name; and no legacy is so rich as honesty.

WID. I have told my neighbour how you have been solicited by a gentleman his companion.

MAR. I know that knave; hang him! one Parolles: a filthy officer he is in those suggestions for the young earl. Beware of them, Diana; their promises, enticements, oaths, tokens, and all these engines of lust, are not the things they go under: many a maid hath been seduced by them; and the misery is, example, that so terrible shows in the wreck of maidenhood, cannot for <sup>20</sup> all that dissuade succession, but that they are limed with the twigs that threaten them. I hope I need not to advise you further; but I hope your own grace will keep you where you are, though there were no further danger known but the modesty which is so lost.

DIA. You shall not need to fear me.

WID. I hope so.

<sup>19</sup> *go under*] pass for, profess to be.

<sup>21</sup> *dissuade succession*] dissuade from following the same track.

<sup>22</sup> *limed with the twigs*] ensnared with the twigs, as in hunting wild animals. Cf. *infra*, III, vi, 97.



SCENE V ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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*Enter HELENA, disguised like a Pilgrim*

Look, here comes a pilgrim. I know she will lie at my house ; thither they send one another : I'll question her. God save you, pilgrim ! whither are you bound ? 30

HEL. To Saint Jaques le Grand.

Where do the palmers lodge, I do beseech you ?

WID. At the Saint Francis here beside the port.

HEL. Is this the way ?

WID. Ay, marry, is 't. [*A march afar.*] Hark you ! they come this way.

If you will tarry, holy pilgrim,  
But till the troops come by,  
I will conduct you where you shall be lodged ;  
The rather, for I think I know your hostess  
As ample as myself.

HEL. Is it yourself ? 40

WID. If you shall please so, pilgrim.

HEL. I thank you, and will stay upon your leisure.

WID. You came, I think, from France ?

HEL. I did so.

WID. Here you shall see a countryman of yours  
That has done worthy service.

HEL. His name, I pray you ?

DIA. The Count Rousillon : know you such a one ?

HEL. But by the ear, that hears most nobly of him :  
His face I know not.

DIA. Whatsome'er he is,

---

40 *ample*] fully, well.

He 's bravely taken here. He stole from France,  
As 't is reported, for the king had married him 50  
Against his liking : think you it is so ?

HEL. Ay, surely, mere the truth : I know his lady.

DIA. There is a gentleman that serves the count  
Reports but coarsely of her.

HEL. What 's his name ?

DIA. Monsieur Parolles.

HEL. O, I believe with him,  
In argument of praise, or to the worth  
Of the great count himself, she is too mean  
To have her name repeated : all her deserving  
Is a reserved honesty, and that  
I have not heard examined.

DIA. Alas, poor lady ! 60  
'T is a hard bondage to become the wife  
Of a detesting lord.

WID. I write good creature, wheresoe'er she is,  
Her heart weighs sadly : this young maid might do her  
A shrewd turn, if she pleased.

HEL. How do you mean ?  
May be the amorous count solicits her  
In the unlawful purpose.

WID. He does indeed ;

49 *He 's bravely taken*] He is held in high esteem.

52 *mere the truth*] absolutely true.

63 *I write good creature*] I declare her to be good creature. Cf. II, iii, 196, *supra*, "*I write man*." *I write* is the First Folio reading for which *I right* [*i. e.* Ay, right ;] *good creature* is substituted in the Second and later Folios and has been adopted by most eighteenth and nineteenth century editors.

And brokes with all that can in such a suit  
Corrupt the tender honour of a maid :  
But she is arm'd for him, and keeps her guard  
In honestest defence.

70

MAR. The gods forbid else !

WID. So, now they come :

*Drum and Colours*

*Enter BERTRAM, PAROLLES, and the whole army*

That is Antonio, the Duke's eldest son ;  
That, Escalus.

HEL. Which is the Frenchman ?

DIA. He ;

That with the plume : 't is a most gallant fellow.  
I would he loved his wife : if he were honest  
He were much goodlier : is't not a handsome gentle-  
man ?

HEL. I like him well.

DIA. 'T is pity he is not honest : yond's that same  
knave

That leads him to these places : were I his lady,  
I would poison that vile rascal.

80

HEL. Which is he ?

DIA. That jack-an-apes with scarfs : why is he mel-  
ancholy ?

HEL. Perchance he's hurt i' the battle.

PAR. Lose our drum ! well.

---

68 *brokes*] trades, acts as broker or pander.

MAR. He's shrewdly vexed at something: look, he has spied us.

WID. Marry, hang you!

MAR. And your courtesies, for a ring-carrier!

[*Exeunt Bertram, Parolles, and army.*]

WID. The troop is past. Come, pilgrim, I will bring you

90

Where you shall host: of enjoin'd penitents  
There's four or five, to great Saint Jaques bound,  
Already at my house.

HEL. I humbly thank you:  
Please it this matron and this gentle maid  
To eat with us to-night, the charge and thanking  
Shall be for me; and, to requite you further,  
I will bestow some precepts of this virgin  
Worthy the note.

BOTH. We'll take your offer kindly. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI—CAMP BEFORE FLORENCE

*Enter BERTRAM and the two French Lords*

SEC. LORD. Nay, good my lord, put him to 't; let him have his way.

FIRST LORD. If your lordship find him not a hilding, hold me no more in your respect.

89 *ring-carrier*] pander, bawd.

91 *enjoin'd penitents*] persons under a vow of doing penance.

1 *Sec. Lord*] In the First Folio this character is called "Cap. E" and the "First Lord" is called "Cap. G." See note on II, i, 1-2, *supra*.

SEC. LORD. On my life, my lord, a bubble.

BER. Do you think I am so far deceived in him?

SEC. LORD. Believe it, my lord, in mine own direct knowledge, without any malice, but to speak of him as my kinsman, he's a most notable coward, an infinite and endless liar, an hourly promise-breaker, the owner of no 10 one good quality worthy your lordship's entertainment.

FIRST LORD. It were fit you knew him; lest, reposing too far in his virtue, which he hath not, he might at some great and trusty business in a main danger fail you.

BER. I would I knew in what particular action to try him.

FIRST LORD. None better than to let him fetch off his drum, which you hear him so confidently undertake to do.

SEC. LORD. I, with a troop of Florentines, will suddenly surprise him; such I will have, whom I am sure he knows not from the enemy: we will bind and hood- 20 wink him so, that he shall suppose no other but that he is carried into the leaguer of the adversaries, when we bring him to our own tents. Be but your lordship present at his examination: if he do not, for the promise of his life and in the highest compulsion of base fear, offer to betray you and deliver all the intelligence in his power against you, and that with the divine forfeit of his soul upon oath, never trust my judgement in any thing.

FIRST LORD. O, for the love of laughter, let him fetch his drum; he says he has a stratagem for't: 30

when your lordship sees the bottom of his success in't, and to what metal this counterfeit lump of ore will be melted, if you give him not John Drum's entertainment, your inclining cannot be removed. Here he comes.

*Enter PAROLLES*

SEC. LORD. [*Aside to Ber.*] O, for the love of laughter, hinder not the honour of his design: let him fetch off his drum in any hand.

BER. How now, monsieur! this drum sticks sorely in your disposition.

FIRST LORD. A pox on't, let it go; 't is but a drum. 40

PAR. "But a drum"! is't "but a drum"? A drum so lost! There was excellent command, — to charge in with our horse upon our own wings, and to rend our own soldiers!

FIRST LORD. That was not to be blamed in the command of the service: it was a disaster of war that Cæsar himself could not have prevented, if he had been there to command.

BER. Well, we cannot greatly condemn our success: some dishonour we had in the loss of that drum; but it is not to be recovered. 50

---

33 *give him John Drum's entertainment*] give him a good beating. The phrase is common. Cf. Edward Aston's translation of Boemus' *Manners and Customs of all Nations*, 1611: "some others on the contrarie part, give them *John Drum's intertainm<sup>t</sup>* reviling and beating them away from their houses."

37 *in any hand*] in any case, at any rate.

PAR. It might have been recovered.

BER. It might ; but it is not now.

PAR. It is to be recovered ; but that the merit of service is seldom attributed to the true and exact performer, I would have that drum or another, or "hic jacet."

BER. Why, if you have a stomach, to 't, monsieur : if you think your mystery in stratagem can bring this instrument of honour again into his native quarter, be magnanimous in the enterprize and go on ; I will grace the attempt for a worthy exploit : if you speed well in it, the Duke shall both speak of it, and extend to you what further becomes his greatness, even to the utmost syllable of your worthiness. 60

PAR. By the hand of a soldier, I will undertake it.

BER. But you must not now slumber in it.

PAR. I'll about it this evening : and I will presently pen down my dilemmas, encourage myself in my certainty, put myself into my mortal preparation ; and by midnight look to hear further from me.

BER. May I be bold to acquaint his Grace you are gone about it ? 70

PAR. I know not what the success will be, my lord ; but the attempt I vow.

BER. I know thou 'rt valiant ; and, to the possibility of thy soldiership, will subscribe for thee. Farewell.

PAR. I love not many words. [Exit.

SEC. LORD. No more than a fish loves water. Is not this a strange fellow, my lord, that so confidently seems

---

67 dilemmas] the various difficulties of the undertaking.

to undertake this business, which he knows is not to be done ; damns himself to do, and dares better be damned 80 than to do 't?

FIRST LORD. You do not know him, my lord, as we do : certain it is, that he will steal himself into a man's favour and for a week escape a great deal of discoveries ; but when you find him out, you have him ever after.

BER. Why, do you think he will make no deed at all of this that so seriously he does address himself unto ?

SEC. LORD. None in the world ; but return with an invention, and clap upon you two or three probable lies : but we have almost embossed him ; you shall see 90 his fall to-night ; for indeed he is not for your lordship's respect.

FIRST LORD. We'll make you some sport with the fox ere we case him. He was first smoked by the old lord Lafeu : when his disguise and he is parted, tell me what a sprat you shall find him ; which you shall see this very night.

SEC. LORD. I must go look my twigs : he shall be caught.

BER. Your brother he shall go along with me.

SEC. LORD. As 't please your lordship : I'll leave you. [Exit.]

90 *embossed*] used of a hunted animal driven to extremities. Cf. Spenser, *Fairy Queen*, III, i, 21 : "The savage beast *embossed* in weary chase."

97 *I must go look my twigs*. Cf. III, v, 22, *supra* : "They are limed [*i. e.* ensnared] with *the twigs*."



SCENE VII ALL 'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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BER. Now will I lead you to the house, and show you  
The lass I spoke of. 100

FIRST LORD. *But you say she's honest.*

BER. That's all the fault: I spoke with her but once  
And found her wondrous cold; but I sent to her,  
By this same coxcomb that we have i' the wind,  
Tokens and letters which she did re-send;  
And this is all I have done. She's a fair creature:  
Will you go see her?

FIRST LORD. With all my heart, my lord.  
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII—FLORENCE

*THE WIDOW'S HOUSE*

*Enter HELENA and Widow*

HEL. If you misdoubt me that I am not she,  
I know not how I shall assure you further,  
But I shall lose the grounds I work upon.

WID. Though my estate be fallen, I was well born,  
Nothing acquainted with these businesses;  
And would not put my reputation now  
In any staining act.

HEL. Nor would I wish you.  
First, give me trust, the count he is my husband,  
And what to your sworn counsel I have spoken  
Is so from word to word; and then you cannot, 10

---

<sup>3</sup> *But I . . . upon*] Unless I forfeit my present aim (which is to conceal my identity from Bertram).

By the good aid that I of you shall borrow,  
Err in bestowing it.

WID. [www.lib](http://www.lib)I should believe you ;  
For you have show'd me that which well approves  
You're great in fortune.

HEL. Take this purse of gold,  
And let me buy your friendly help thus far,  
Which I will over-pay and pay again  
When I have found it. The count he woos your  
daughter,

Lays down his wanton siege before her beauty,  
Resolved to carry her : let her in fine consent,  
As we'll direct her how 't is best to bear it. 20  
Now his important blood will nought deny  
That she'll demand : a ring the county wears,  
That downward hath succeeded in his house  
From son to son, some four or five descents  
Since the first father wore it : this ring he holds  
In most rich choice ; yet in his idle fire,  
To buy his will, it would not seem too dear,  
Howe'er repented after.

WID. Now I see  
The bottom of your purpose.

HEL. You see it lawful, then : it is no more, 30  
But that your daughter, ere she seems as won,  
Desires this ring ; appoints him an encounter ;  
In fine, delivers me to fill the time,

---

21 *important blood*] importunate blood. Cf. *Lear*, IV, iv, 26, "*important tears*."

Herself most chastely absent : after this,  
To marry her, I 'll add three thousand crowns  
To what is ~~past already~~.com.cn

WID. I have yielded :

Instruct my daughter how she shall persever,  
That time and place with this deceit so lawful  
May prove coherent. Every night he comes  
With musics of all sorts and songs composed  
To her unworthiness : it nothing steads us  
To chide him from our eaves ; for he persists  
As if his life lay on 't.

40

HEL. Why then to-night  
Let us essay our plot ; which, if it speed,  
Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed,  
And lawful meaning in a lawful act,  
Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact :  
But let 's about it.

[*Exeunt.*]

---

47 *both . . . a sinful fact*] both parties are free from sin ; and yet the deed is rendered sinful by the attendant deception and mystification.



ACT FOURTH—SCENE I

*WITHOUT THE FLORENTINE CAMP*

*Enter Second French Lord, with five or six other Soldiers in ambush*

SECOND LORD



WE CAN COME NO other way but by this hedge-corner. When you sally upon him, speak what terrible language you will: though you understand it not yourselves, no matter; for we must not seem to understand him, unless some one among us whom we must produce for an interpreter.

FIRST SOLD. Good captain, let me be the interpreter.

SEC. LORD. Art not acquainted with him? knows he not thy voice?

FIRST SOLD. No, sir, I warrant you.

SEC. LORD. But what linsey-woolsey hast thou to speak to us again?

SCENE I ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

FIRST SOLD. E'en such as you speak to me.

SEC. LORD. He must think us some band of strangers i' the adversary's entertainment. Now he hath a smack of all neighbouring languages; therefore we must every one be a man of his own fancy, not to know what we speak one to another; so we seem to know, is to know straight our purpose: choughs' language, gabble enough, and good enough. As for you, interpreter, you must seem very politic. But couch, ho! here he comes, to beguile two hours in a sleep, and then to return and swear the lies he forges.

*Enter PAROLLES*

PAR. Ten o'clock: within these three hours 't will be time enough to go home. What shall I say I have done? It must be a very plausible invention that carries it: they begin to smoke me; and disgraces have of late knocked too often at my door. I find my tongue is too foolhardy; but my heart hath the fear of Mars before it and of his creatures, not daring the reports of my tongue.

SEC. LORD. This is the first truth that e'er thine own tongue was guilty of.

PAR. What the devil should move me to undertake the recovery of this drum, being not ignorant of the impossibility, and knowing I had no such purpose? I must give myself some hurts, and say I got them in

---

11 *linsey-woolsey*] gibberish. Cf. l. 19, *infra*: "choughs' language, gabble enough."

29 *not daring*] putting no reliance in.

exploit: yet slight ones will not carry it; they will say, "Came you off with so little?" and great ones I dare not give. Wherefore, what's the instance? Tongue, I must put you into a butter-woman's mouth, and buy myself another of Bajazet's mule, if you prattle me into 40 these perils.

SEC. LORD. Is it possible he should know what he is, and be that he is?

PAR. I would the cutting of my garments would serve the turn, or the breaking of my Spanish sword.

SEC. LORD. We cannot afford you so.

PAR. Or the baring of my beard; and to say it was in stratagem.

SEC. LORD. 'T would not do.

PAR. Or to drown my clothes, and say I was stripped.

SEC. LORD. Hardly serve.

PAR. Though I swore I leaped from the window of the citadel—

SEC. LORD. How deep?

PAR. Thirty fathom.

SEC. LORD. Three great oaths would scarce make that be believed.

40 *mule*] This is the old reading, for which *mute* was substituted by Hanmer. Cf. *Hen. V*, I, ii, 231–232: "our grave, Like Turkish *mute*, shall have a tongueless mouth." But "*mule*" is often used as a synonym for "dumbness," and may well stand. The general meaning seems to be that Parolles will have to give his tongue away to a chattering butterwoman, and get another that won't speak at all, if his tongue be likely to get him into more difficulties of the kind that he is now experiencing. No other precise reference to "*Bajazet's mule*" or to "*Bajazet's mute*" has been found.

SCENE I ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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PAR. I would I had any drum of the enemy's: I would swear I recovered it.

SEC. LORD. You shall hear one anon.

PAR. A drum now of the enemy's, — [*Alarum within.* 60

SEC. LORD. Throca movousus, cargo, cargo, cargo.

ALL. Cargo, cargo, cargo, villianda par corbo, cargo.

PAR. O, ransom, ransom! do not hide mine eyes.

[*They seize and blindfold him.*

FIRST SOLD. Boskos thromuldo boskos.

PAR. I know you are the Muskos' regiment;  
And I shall lose my life for want of language:  
If there be here German, or Dane, low Dutch,  
Italian, or French, let him speak to me; I'll  
Discover that which shall undo the Florentine.

FIRST SOLD. Boskos vauvado: I understand thee, 70  
and can speak thy tongue. Kerelybonto, sir, betake  
thee to thy faith, for seventeen poniards are at thy  
bosom.

PAR. O!

FIRST SOLD. O, pray, pray, pray! Manka revania  
dulche.

SEC. LORD. Oscorbidulchos volivorco.

FIRST SOLD. The general is content to spare thee yet;  
And, hoodwink'd as thou art, will lead thee on  
To gather from thee: haply thou mayst inform  
Something to save thy life.

PAR.

O, let me live!

80

And all the secrets of our camp I'll show,  
Their force, their purposes; nay, I'll speak that  
Which you will wonder at.

FIRST SOLD. But wilt thou faithfully ?

PAR. If I do not, damn me.

FIRST SOLD. *Acordo linta.*

Come on ; thou art granted space.

*[Exit, with Parolles guarded. A short alarum within.]*

SEC. LORD. Go, tell the Count Rousillon, and my brother,

We have caught the woodcock, and will keep him muffled

Till we do hear from them.

SEC. SOLD. Captain, I will.

SEC. LORD. A' will betray us all unto ourselves : 90

Inform on that.

SEC. SOLD. So I will, sir.

SEC. LORD. Till then I'll keep him dark and safely lock'd. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE II — FLORENCE

*THE WIDOW'S HOUSE*

*Enter BERTRAM and DIANA*

BER. They told me that your name was Fontibell.

DIA. No, my good lord, Diana.

BER. Titled goddess ;

And worth it, with addition ! But, fair soul,

In your fine frame hath love no quality ?

If the quick fire of youth light not your mind,

You are no maiden, but a monument :



When you are dead, you should be such a one  
 As you are now, for you are cold and stern ;  
 And now you should be as your mother was  
 When your sweet self was got.

10

DIA. She then was honest.

BER. So should you be.

DIA. No :

My mother did but duty ; such, my lord,  
 As you owe to your wife.

BER. No more o' that ;

I prithee, do not strive against my vows :  
 I was compell'd to her ; but I love thee  
 By love's own sweet constraint, and will for ever  
 Do thee all rights of service.

DIA. Ay, so you serve us  
 Till we serve you ; but when you have our roses,  
 You barely leave our thorns to prick ourselves,  
 And mock us with our bareness.

BER. How have I sworn ! 20

DIA. 'T is not the many oaths that makes the truth,  
 But the plain single vow that is vow'd true.  
 What is not holy, that we swear not by,  
 But take the High'st to witness : then, pray you, tell me,  
 If I should swear by Jove's great attributes,  
 I loved you dearly, would you believe my oaths,  
 When I did love you ill ? This has no holding,  
 To swear by him whom I protest to love,

14 *my vows*] my vows to renounce my wife.

19 *barely*] in their bareness.

27-29 *When I did . . . work against him*] When I loved you to your

That I will work against him : therefore your oaths  
 Are words and poor conditions, but unseal'd, 30  
 At least in my opinion.

BER. Change it, change it ;  
 Be not so holy-cruel : love is holy ;  
 And my integrity ne'er knew the crafts  
 That you do charge men with. Stand no more off,  
 But give thyself unto my sick desires,  
 Who then recover : say thou art mine, and ever  
 My love as it begins shall so persever.

DIA. I see that men make rope's in such a scarre  
 That we'll forsake ourselves. Give me that ring.

BER. I'll lend it thee, my dear ; but have no power 40  
 To give it from me.

DIA. Will you not, my lord ?

BER. It is an honour 'longing to our house,  
 Bequeathed down from many ancestors ;  
 Which were the greatest obloquy i' the world  
 In me to lose.

---

dishonour and injury. There is no sense, no consistency, in taking an oath, in the name of him whom I protest to love, to do him a wrong.

38-39 *I see that men . . . ourselves*] This is the difficult reading of the First and Second Folios ; *ropes* is substituted for *rope's* in the Third Folio. The general intention of the sentence is that men prove so persuasive that women abandon their virtue without demur. "Scarre" means "ravine," and there would seem to be some reference to making a bridge or ladder of ropes over a difficult pass, and so to making a dangerous situation alluringly facile. Numerous emendations have been suggested, but none are satisfactory.

DIA. Mine honour's such a ring :  
My chastity's the jewel of our house,  
Bequeathed down from many ancestors ;  
Which were the greatest obloquy i' the world  
In me to lose : thus your own proper wisdom  
Brings in the champion Honour on my part,  
Against your vain assault.

50

BER. Here, take my ring :  
My house, mine honour, yea, my life, be thine,  
And I'll be bid by thee.

DIA. When midnight comes, knock at my chamber-  
window :

I'll order take my mother shall not hear.  
Now will I charge you in the band of truth,  
When you have conquer'd my yet maiden bed,  
Remain there but an hour, nor speak to me :  
My reasons are most strong ; and you shall know them  
When back again this ring shall be deliver'd :  
And on your finger in the night I'll put  
Another ring, that what in time proceeds  
May token to the future our past deeds.  
Adieu, till then ; then, fail not. You have won  
A wife of me, though there my hope be done.

60

BER. A heaven on earth I have won by wooing thee.  
*[Exit.*

DIA. For which live long to thank both heaven and  
me !

You may so in the end.  
My mother told me just how he would woo,  
As if she sat in 's heart ; she says all men

70

Have the like oaths : he had sworn to marry me  
 When his wife's dead ; therefore I'll lie with him  
 When I am buried. Since Frenchmen are so braid,  
 Marry that will, I live and die a maid :  
 Only in this disguise I think 't no sin  
 To cozen him that would unjustly win. [*Exit.*

SCENE III—THE FLORENTINE CAMP

*Enter the two French Lords and some two or three Soldiers*

FIRST LORD. You have not given him his mother's letter ?

SEC. LORD. I have delivered it an hour since : there is something in 't that stings his nature ; for on the reading it he changed almost into another man.

FIRST LORD. He has much worthy blame laid upon him for shaking off so good a wife and so sweet a lady.

SEC. LORD. Especially he hath incurred the everlasting displeasure of the king, who had even tuned his bounty to sing happiness to him. I will tell you a thing, but you shall let it dwell darkly with you. 10

73 *braid*] deceitful, tricky. The adjective is unknown elsewhere. A substantive "braid" is often found in the sense of trick. Cf. Greene's *Never too Late* (1592): "love's braids" (*i. e.* deceits). "Braidiness," *i. e.* deceitfulness, appears in Montgomerie, *Poems*, 1600.

1 *First Lord*] In the Folios the "First Lord" is called "Cap. G," and the Second Lord "Cap. E." See note II, i, 1-2, *supra*.

SCENE III ALL 'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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FIRST LORD. When you have spoken it, 'tis dead, and I am the grave of it.

SEC. LORD. He hath perverted a young gentlewoman here in Florence, of a most chaste renown ; and this night he fleshes his will in the spoil of her honour : he hath given her his monumental ring, and thinks himself made in the unchaste composition.

FIRST LORD. Now, God delay our rebellion ! as we are ourselves, what things are we !

SEC. LORD. Merely our own traitors. And as in the common course of all treasons, we still see them reveal themselves, till they attain to their abhorred ends, so he that in this action contrives against his own nobility, in his proper stream o'erflows himself.

FIRST LORD. Is it not meant damnable in us, to be trumpeters of our unlawful intents ? We shall not then have his company to-night ?

SEC. LORD. Not till after midnight ; for he is dieted to his hour.

FIRST LORD. That approaches apace : I would gladly

---

17 *composition*] compact.

18 *God delay our rebellion*] God retard or mitigate our tendency to rebel, or sin. Cf. *infra*, "Natural *rebellion* done i' the blaze of youth," V, iii, 6. "Delay" has often the sense of "allay."

22 *till they attain to their abhorred ends*] till they reach or reap their ignominious punishments.

23-24 *in his . . . o'erflows himself*] blabs his secrets in his own stream (of talk), "reveals himself."

28-29 *he is dieted to his hour*] he has food or work prescribed for him within the appointed hour. Diana has bidden him remain with her "but an hour," IV, ii, 57, *supra*.

have him see his company anatomized, that he might take a measure of his own judgements, wherein so curiously he had set this counterfeit.

SEC. LORD. We will not meddle with him till he come; for his presence must be the whip of the other.

FIRST LORD. In the meantime, what hear you of these wars?

SEC. LORD. I hear there is an overture of peace.

FIRST LORD. Nay, I assure you, a peace concluded.

SEC. LORD. What will Count Rousillon do then? <sup>40</sup> will he travel higher, or return again into France?

FIRST LORD. I perceive, by this demand, you are not altogether of his council.

SEC. LORD. Let it be forbid, sir; so should I be a great deal of his act.

FIRST LORD. Sir, his wife some two months since fled from his house: her pretence is a pilgrimage to Saint Jaques le Grand; which holy undertaking with most austere sanctimony she accomplished; and, there residing, the tenderness of her nature became as a prey to her grief; in fine, made a groan of her last breath, and <sup>50</sup> now she sings in heaven.

SEC. LORD. How is this justified?

FIRST LORD. The stronger part of it by her own letters, which makes her story true, even to the point of her death: her death itself, which could not be her office to say is come, was faithfully confirmed by the rector of the place.

<sup>33</sup> *counterfeit*] false coin, impostor.

<sup>41</sup> *higher*] further inland.

SCENE III ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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SEC. LORD. Hath the count all this intelligence ?

FIRST LORD. Ay, and the particular confirmations, point from point, to the full arming of the verity.

SEC. LORD. I am heartily sorry that he'll be glad of 60 this.

FIRST LORD. How mightily sometimes we make us comforts of our losses !

SEC. LORD. And how mightily some other times we drown our gain in tears ! The great dignity that his valour hath here acquired for him shall at home be encountered with a shame as ample.

FIRST LORD. The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together : our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipped them not ; and our crimes would despair, if they were not cherished by our virtues. 70

*Enter a Messenger*

How now ! where's your master !

SERV. He met the Duke in the street, sir, of whom he hath taken a solemn leave : his lordship will next morning for France. The Duke hath offered him letters of commendations to the king.

SEC. LORD. They shall be no more than needful there, if they were more than they can commend.

FIRST LORD. They cannot be too sweet for the king's tartness. Here's his lordship now.

*Enter BERTRAM*

How now, my lord ! is 't not after midnight ?

80

BER. I have to-night dispatched sixteen businesses, a

month's length a-piece, by an abstract of success : I have congied with the Duke, done my adieu with his nearest ; buried a wife, mourned for her ; writ to my lady mother I am returning ; entertained my convoy ; and between these main parcels of dispatch effected many nicer needs : the last was the greatest, but that I have not ended yet.

SEC. LORD. If the business be of any difficulty, and this morning your departure hence, it requires haste of your lordship. 90

BER. I mean, the business is not ended, as fearing to hear of it hereafter. But shall we have this dialogue between the fool and the soldier ? Come, bring forth this counterfeit module, has deceived me, like a double-meaning prophesier.

SEC. LORD. Bring him forth : has sat i' the stocks all night, poor gallant knave.

BER. No matter ; his heels have deserved it, in usurping his spurs so long. How does he carry himself ? 99

SEC. LORD. I have told your lordship already, the stocks carry him. But to answer you as you would be understood ; he weeps like a wench that had shed her

---

82 *by an abstract of success*] summarily, in rapid succession, without any pause.

85 *entertained my convoy*] engaged my guides, escort.

94 *module*] mould, model or copy, used contemptuously. Cf. *K. John*, V, vii, 57-58 : " a clod And *module* of confounded royalty."

95 *double-meaning*] Cf. *Macbeth*, V, viii, 20 : " That palter with us in a *double sense*."

98-99 *usurping . . . long*] A soldier convicted of cowardice was forcibly deprived of his spurs.



milk: he hath confessed himself to Morgan, whom he supposes to be a friar, from the time of his remembrance to this very instant disaster of his setting i' the stocks: and what think you he hath confessed?

BER. Nothing of me, has a'?

SEC. LORD. His confession is taken, and it shall be read to his face: if your lordship be in 't, as I believe you are, you must have the patience to hear it. 110

*Enter PAROLLES guarded, and First Soldier*

BER. A plague upon him! muffled! he can say nothing of me: hush, hush!

FIRST LORD. Hoodman comes! Portotartarossa.

FIRST SOLD. He calls for the tortures: what will you say without 'em?

PAR. I will confess what I know without constraint: if ye pinch me like a pasty, I can say no more.

FIRST SOLD. Bosko chimurcho.

FIRST LORD. Boblibindo chicurmurco.

FIRST SOLD. You are a merciful general. Our general bids you answer to what I shall ask you out of a note. 121

PAR. And truly, as I hope to live.

FIRST SOLD. [*reads*] First demand of him how many horse the Duke is strong. What say you to that?

PAR. Five or six thousand; but very weak and unserviceable: the troops are all scattered, and the commanders very poor rogues, upon my reputation and credit, and as I hope to live.

---

113 *Hoodman comes!*] The cry of players at blind man's buff.

FIRST SOLD. Shall I set down your answer so ?

PAR. Do: I'll take the sacrament on't, how and which way you will. 131

BER. All's one to him. What a past-saving slave is this !

FIRST LORD. You're deceived, my lord: this is Monsieur Parolles, the gallant militarist, — that was his own phrase, — that had the whole theoretic of war in the knot of his scarf, and the practice in the chape of his dagger.

SEC. LORD. I will never trust a man again for keeping his sword clean, nor believe he can have every thing in him by wearing his apparel neatly.

FIRST SOLD. Well, that's set down. 140

PAR. Five or six thousand horse, I said, — I will say true, — or thereabouts, set down, for I'll speak truth.

FIRST LORD. He's very near the truth in this.

BER. But I con him no thanks for 't, in the nature he delivers it.

PAR. Poor rogues, I pray you, say.

FIRST SOLD. Well, that's set down.

PAR. I humbly thank you, sir: a truth's a truth, the rogues are marvellous poor.

FIRST SOLD. [*reads*] Demand of him, of what strength they are a-foot. What say you to that ? 151

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135-136 *the whole theoretic . . . dagger*] "Theorique (*i. e.* theory) and practice of warre" is a phrase commonly met with, and is the title of a book translated from the Spanish by Sir Edward Hoby (1597). The "chape" of the dagger was correctly the metal point at the end of the scabbard, but here seems used for the scabbard itself.

PAR. By my troth, sir, if I were to live this present hour, I will tell true. Let me see: Spurio, a hundred and fifty; Sebastian, so many; Corambus, so many; Jaques, so many; Gultian, Cosmo, Lodowick, and Gratii, two hundred and fifty each; mine own company, Chitopher, Vaumond, Bentii, two hundred and fifty each: so that the muster-file, rotten and sound, upon my life, amounts not to fifteen thousand poll; half of the which dare not shake the snow from off their cassocks, lest they shake themselves to pieces. 160

BER. What shall be done to him?

FIRST LORD. Nothing, but let him have thanks. Demand of him my condition, and what credit I have with the Duke.

FIRST SOLD. Well, that's set down. [*Reads*] You shall demand of him, whether one Captain Dumain be i' the camp, a Frenchman; what his reputation is with the Duke; what his valour, honesty, and expertness in wars; or whether he thinks it were not possible, with well-weighing sums of gold, to corrupt him to a revolt. What say you to this? what do you know of it?

PAR. I beseech you, let me answer to the particular of the inter'gatories: demand them singly. 171

FIRST SOLD. Do you know this Captain Dumain?

PAR. I know him: a' was a botcher's 'prentice in Paris, from whence he was whipped for getting the shrieve's fool with child,—a dumb innocent, that could not say him nay.

174 *shrieve's fool*] Here an idiot woman in charge of the sheriff, who was official guardian of all imbeciles.

BER. Nay, by your leave, hold your hands ; though I know his brains are forfeit to the next tile that falls.

FIRST SOLD. Well, is this captain in the Duke of Florence's camp ?

PAR. Upon my knowledge, he is, and lousy. 180

FIRST LORD. Nay, look not so upon me ; we shall hear of your lordship anon.

FIRST SOLD. What is his reputation with the Duke ?

PAR. The Duke knows him for no other but a poor officer of mine ; and writ to me this other day to turn him out o' the band : I think I have his letter in my pocket.

FIRST SOLD. Marry, we'll search.

PAR. In good sadness, I do not know ; either it is there, or it is upon a file with the Duke's other letters in my tent.

FIRST SOLD. Here 't is ; here 's a paper : shall I read it to you ? 191

PAR. I do not know if it be it or no.

BER. Our interpreter does it well.

FIRST LORD. Excellently.

FIRST SOLD. [*reads*] Dian, the count 's a fool, and full of gold, —

PAR. That is not the Duke's letter, sir ; that is an advertisement to a proper maid in Florence, one Diana, to take heed of the allurements of one Count Rousillon, a foolish idle boy, but for all that very ruttish : I pray you, sir, put it up again. 200

FIRST SOLD. Nay, I'll read it first, by your favour.

177 *next tile that falls*] a figurative expression for "sudden death."

188 *in good sadness*] in all seriousness.

SCENE III ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

PAR. My meaning in 't, I protest, was very honest in the behalf of the maid ; for I knew the young count to be a dangerous and lascivious boy, who is a whale to virginity and devours up all the fry it finds.

BER. Damnable both-sides rogue !

FIRST SOLD. [*reads*] When he swears oaths, bid him drop gold, and take it ;

After he scores, he never pays the score :  
Half won is match well made ; match, and well make it ;

He ne'er pays after-debts, take it before ; 210  
And say a soldier, Dian, told thee this,  
Men are to mell with, boys are not to kiss :  
For count of this, the count 's a fool, I know it,  
Who pays before, but not when he does owe it.

Thine, as he vowed to thee in thine ear,

PAROLLES.

BER. He shall be whipped through the army with this rhyme in 's forehead.

SEC. LORD. This is your devoted friend, sir, the manifold linguist and the armipotent soldier. 220

PAR. I could endure any thing before but a cat, and now he's a cat to me.

FIRST SOLD. I perceive, sir, by the general's looks, we shall be fain to hang you.

PAR. My life, sir, in any case : not that I am afraid to die ; but that, my offences being many, I would repent out the remainder of nature : let me live, sir, in a dungeon, i' the stocks, or any where, so I may live.

FIRST SOLD. We'll see what may be done, so you confess freely ; therefore, once more to this Captain

Dumain : you have answered to his reputation with the Duke and to his valour : what is his honesty ? 232

PAR. He will steal, sir, an egg out of a cloister : for rapes and ravishments he parallels Nessus : he professes not keeping of oaths ; in breaking 'em he is stronger than Hercules : he will lie, sir, with such volubility, that you would think truth were a fool : drunkenness is his best virtue, for he will be swine-drunk ; and in his sleep he does little harm, save to his bed-clothes about him ; but they know his conditions and lay him in straw. I have but little more to say, sir, of his honesty : he has every thing that an honest man should not have ; what an honest man should have, he has nothing. 243

FIRST LORD. I begin to love him for this.

BER. For this description of thine honesty ? A pox upon him for me, he's more and more a cat.

FIRST SOLD. What say you to his expertness in war ?

PAR. Faith, sir, has led the drum before the English tragedians ; to belie him, I will not, and more of his soldiership I know not ; except, in that country he had the honour to be the officer at a place there called Mile-end, to instruct for the doubling of files : I would do the man what honour I can, but of this I am not certain. 253

FIRST LORD. He hath out-villained villany so far, that the rarity redeems him.

233 *steal, sir, an egg . . . cloister*] steal anything, however trifling, from any place however holy. It is possible that "egg" is used here for a young girl. The term is applied to a child in *Macbeth*, IV, ii, 82.

251-252 *Mile-end*] The drilling ground of the London train bands.

BER. A pox on him, he's a cat still.

FIRST SOLD. His qualities being at this poor price, I need not to ask you if gold will corrupt him to revolt.

PAR. Sir, for a quart d'écu he will sell the fee-simple of his salvation, the inheritance of it; and cut the entail from all remainders, and a perpetual succession for it perpetually. 261

FIRST SOLD. What's his brother, the other Captain Dumain?

SEC. LORD. Why does he ask him of me?

FIRST SOLD. What's he?

PAR. E'en a crow o' the same nest; not altogether so great as the first in goodness, but greater a great deal in evil: he excels his brother for a coward, yet his brother is reputed one of the best that is: in a retreat he out-runs any lackey; marry, in coming on he has the cramp. 270

FIRST SOLD. If your life be saved, will you undertake to betray the Florentine?

PAR. Ay, and the captain of his horse, Count Rousillon.

FIRST SOLD. I'll whisper with the general, and know his pleasure.

PAR. [*Aside*] I'll no more drumming; a plague of all drums! Only to seem to deserve well, and to beguile the supposition of that lascivious young boy the count,

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260-261 *cut the entail . . . perpetually*] give absolute possession in perpetuity, by freeing the estate of all other claims.

269 *lackey*] running footman.

have I run into this danger. Yet who would have suspected an ambush where I was taken? 280

FIRST SOLD. There is no remedy, sir, but you must die: the general says, you that have so traitorously discovered the secrets of your army and made such pestiferous reports of men very nobly held, can serve the world for no honest use; therefore you must die. Come, headsman, off with his head.

PAR. O Lord, sir, let me live, or let me see my death!

FIRST SOLD. That shall you, and take your leave of all your friends. [Unblinding him.]

So, look about you: know you any here? 290

BER. Good morrow, noble captain.

SEC. LORD. God bless you, Captain Parolles.

FIRST LORD. God save you, noble captain.

SEC. LORD. Captain, what greeting will you to my Lord Lafeu? I am for France.

FIRST LORD. Good captain, will you give me a copy of the sonnet you writ to Diana in behalf of the Count Rousillon? an I were not a very coward, I'd compel it of you: but fare you well. [Exeunt Bertram and Lords.]

FIRST SOLD. You are undone, captain, all but your scarf; that has a knot on't yet. 301

PAR. Who cannot be crushed with a plot?

FIRST SOLD. If you could find out a country where but women were that had received so much shame, you might begin an impudent nation. Fair ye well, sir; I am for France too: we shall speak of you there.

[Exit, with Soldiers.]



PAR. Yet am I thankful : if my heart were great,  
 'T would burst at this. Captain I'll be no more ;  
 But I will eat and drink, and sleep as soft  
 As captain shall : simply the thing I am  
 Shall make me live. Who knows himself a braggart,  
 Let him fear this, for it will come to pass  
 That every braggart shall be found an ass.  
 Rust, sword ! cool, blushes ! and, Parolles, live  
 Safest in shame ! being fool'd, by foolery thrive !  
 There's place and means for every man alive.  
 I'll after them. [Exit.

310

## SCENE IV — FLORENCE

## THE WIDOW'S HOUSE

*Enter HELENA, Widow, and DIANA*

HEL. That you may well perceive I have not wrong'd  
 you,  
 One of the greatest in the Christian world  
 Shall be my surety ; 'fore whose throne 't is needful,  
 Ere I can perfect mine intents, to kneel :  
 Time was, I did him a desired office,  
 Dear almost as his life ; which gratitude  
 Through flinty Tartar's bosom would peep forth,  
 And answer, thanks : I duly am inform'd  
 His Grace is at Marseilles ; to which place

9 *Marseilles*] pronounced as a trisyllable. *Marsellis* is the reading of the Second and Third Folios.

We have convenient convoy. You must know, 10  
 I am supposed dead : the army breaking,  
 My husband hies him home ; where, heaven aiding,  
 And by the leave of my good lord the king,  
 We 'll be before our welcome.

WID. Gentle madam,  
 You never had a servant to whose trust  
 Your business was more welcome.

HEL. Nor you, mistress,  
 Ever a friend whose thoughts more truly labour  
 To recompense your love : doubt not but heaven  
 Hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower,  
 As it hath fated her to be my motive 20  
 And helper to a husband. But, O strange men !  
 That can such sweet use make of what they hate,  
 When saucy trusting of the cozen'd thoughts  
 Defiles the pitchy night : so lust doth play  
 With what it loathes for that which is away.  
 But more of this hereafter. You, Diana,  
 Under my poor instructions yet must suffer  
 Something in my behalf.

DIA. Let death and honesty  
 Go with your impositions, I am yours  
 Upon your will to suffer.

HEL. Yet, I pray you : 30

11 *breaking*] disbanding.

19-20 *dower* . . . *motive*] Both words are here used, in conformity with  
 a common Elizabethan usage, in a personal significance, *viz.* : giver  
 of dower, and supplier of motion, *i. e.* the mover or instrument.

30 *Yet*] For a while. Cf. 27, *supra*, "*yet* must suffer."

SCENE V ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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But with the word the time will bring on summer,  
When briars shall have leaves as well as thorns,  
And be as sweet as sharp. We must away ;  
Our waggon is prepared, and time revives us :  
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL : still the fine 's the  
crown ;  
Whate'er the course, the end is the renown. [ *Exeunt.*

SCENE V — ROUSILLON

THE COUNT'S PALACE

*Enter* COUNTESS, LAFEU, and Clown

LAF. No, no, no, your son was misled with a snipt-taffeta fellow there, whose villanous saffron would have made all the unbaked and doughy youth of a nation in his colour : your daughter-in-law had been alive at this hour, and your son here at home, more advanced by the king than by that red-tailed humble-bee I speak of.

COUNT. I would I had not known him ; it was the death of the most virtuous gentlewoman that ever nature

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31 *with the word*] immediately ; as soon as the word is spoken, or promise given.

35 *All's well that ends well, etc.*] A common proverb. "The fine 's the crown" translates the Latin proverb "*finis coronat opus.*"

2 *saffron*] Saffron was commonly used in the colouring of pastry. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, IV, iii, 44 : "I must have *saffron to colour the warden pies.*" Saffron was also a popular dye for both men and women's dress. Reference is here made to both uses of the colouring matter, of which the tinge easily infects its environment.

had praise for creating. If she had partaken of my flesh, and cost me the dearest groans of a mother, I could not have owed her a more rooted love.

LAF. 'T was a good lady, 't was a good lady: we may pick a thousand salads ere we light on such another herb.

CLO. Indeed, sir, she was the sweet-marjoram of the salad, or rather, the herb of grace.

LAF. They are not herbs, you knave; they are nose-herbs.

CLO. I am no great Nebuchadnezzar, sir; I have not much skill in grass.

LAF. Whether dost thou profess thyself, a knave or 20 a fool?

CLO. A fool, sir, at a woman's service, and a knave at a man's.

LAF. Your distinction?

CLO. I would cozen the man of his wife and do his service.

LAF. So you were a knave at his service, indeed.

CLO. And I would give his wife my bauble, sir, to do her service.

LAF. I will subscribe for thee, thou art both knave and fool.

CLO. At your service.

LAF. No, no, no.

CLO. Why, sir, if I cannot serve you, I can serve as great a prince as you are.

15 *herb of grace*] rue.

16 *nose-herbs*] herbs to be smelled, not eaten.

28 *I will subscribe for thee*] I'll warrant thee.

SCENE V ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

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LAF. Who 's that ? a Frenchman ?

CLO. Faith, sir, a' has an English name ; but his fis-  
nomy is more ~~hotter~~ in France than there.

LAF. What prince is that ?

CLO. The black prince, sir ; alias, the prince of dark-  
ness ; alias, the devil.

LAF. Hold thee, there 's my purse : I give thee not 40  
this to suggest thee from thy master thou talkest of ;  
serve him still.

CLO. I am a woodland fellow, sir, that always loved a  
great fire ; and the master I speak of ever keeps a good  
fire. But, sure, he is the prince of the world ; let his  
nobility remain in 's court. I am for the house with the  
narrow gate, which I take to be too little for pomp to  
enter : some that humble themselves may ; but the many  
will be too chill and tender, and they 'll be for the flowery  
way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire.

LAF. Go thy ways, I begin to be aweary of thee ; and 50  
I tell thee so before, because I would not fall out with  
thee. Go thy ways : let my horses be well looked to,  
without any tricks.

CLO. If I put any tricks upon 'em, sir, they shall be  
jades' tricks ; which are their own right by the law of  
nature. [Exit.

LAF. A shrewd knave and an unhappy.

COUNT. So he is. My lord that 's gone made himself

35 *name*] Rowe's satisfactory emendation of the First Folio *maine*.

56 *A shrewd knave and an unhappy*] A roguish knave, and one that  
causes ill-hap or bad luck.

much sport out of him : by his authority he remains here, which he thinks is a patent for his sauciness ; and, indeed, he ~~has no pace, but runs~~ where he will. 60

LAF. I like him well ; 'tis not amiss. And I was about to tell you, since I heard of the good lady's death and that my lord your son was upon his return home, I moved the king my master to speak in the behalf of my daughter ; which, in the minority of them both, his majesty, out of a self-gracious remembrance, did first propose : his highness hath promised me to do it : and, to stop up the displeasure he hath conceived against your son, there is no fitter matter. How does your ladyship like it ?

COUNT. With very much content, my lord ; and I 70 wish it happily effected.

LAF. His highness comes post from Marseilles, of as able body as when he numbered thirty : he will be here to-morrow, or I am deceived by him that in such intelligence hath seldom failed.

COUNT. It rejoices me, that I hope I shall see him ere I die. I have letters that my son will be here to-night : I shall beseech your lordship to remain with me till they meet together.

LAF. Madam, I was thinking with what manners I 80 might safely be admitted.

COUNT. You need but plead your honourable privilege.

LAF. Lady, of that I have made a bold charter ; but I thank my God it holds yet.

---

60 *he has no pace*] he has no prescribed rule of conduct.

SCENE V ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

*Re-enter Clown*

CLO. O madam, yonder's my lord your son with a patch of velvet on's face: whether there be a scar under't or no, the velvet knows; but 't is a goodly patch of velvet: his left cheek is a cheek of two pile and a half, but his right cheek is worn bare.

LAF. A scar nobly got, or a noble scar, is a good livery of honour; so belike is that.

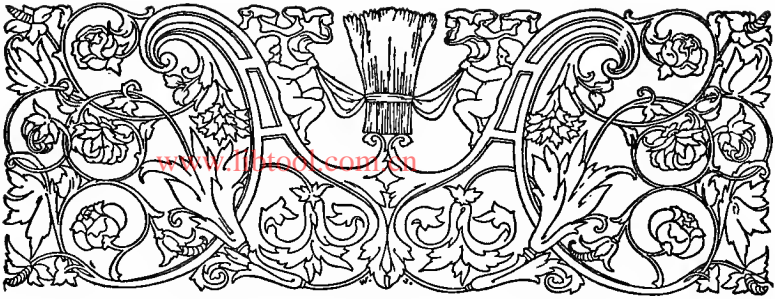
CLO. But it is your carbonadoed face.

LAF. Let us go see your son, I pray you: I long to talk with the young noble soldier.

CLO. Faith, there's a dozen of 'em, with delicate fine hats and most courteous feathers, which bow the head and nod at every man. [*Exeunt.*

---

88-89 *two pile and a half*] a reference to the quality of the velvet of which the patch was made. Three piled velvet was the best quality. Cf. *Meas. for Meas.*, I, ii, 32: "Thou art good velvet; thou'rt a *three piled* piece."



ACT FIFTH — SCENE I — MARSEILLES  
A STREET

*Enter HELENA, Widow, and DIANA, with two Attendants*

HELENA



UT THIS EXCEEDING  
posting day and night.  
Must wear your spirits low ; we  
cannot help it :  
But since you have made the  
days and nights as one,  
To wear your gentle limbs in my  
affairs,  
Be bold you do so grow in my  
requital  
As nothing can unroot you. In  
happy time ;

*Enter a Gentleman*

This man may help me to his majesty's ear,  
If he would spend his power. God save you, sir.

5, 6 *Be bold . . . unroot you*] Be assured that the claims on my recognition are growing so great that nothing can cancel them.

6 *Enter a Gentleman*] This is Rowe's emendation of the First Folio



SCENE I ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

GENT. And you.

HEL. Sir, I have seen you in the court of France. 10

GENT. I have been sometimes there.

HEL. I do presume, sir, that you are not fallen  
From the report that goes upon your goodness ;  
And therefore, goaded with most sharp occasions,  
Which lay nice manners by, I put you to  
The use of your own virtues, for the which  
I shall continue thankful.

GENT. What's your will ?

HEL. That it will please you  
To give this poor petition to the king,  
And aid me with that store of power you have 20  
To come into his presence.

GENT. The king's not here.

HEL. Not here, sir !

GENT. Not, indeed :  
He hence removed last night and with more haste  
Than is his use.

WID. Lord, how we lose our pains !

HEL. ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL yet,  
Though time seem so adverse and means unfit.  
I do beseech you, whither is he gone ?

GENT. Marry, as I take it, to Rousillon ;  
Whither I am going.

HEL. I do beseech you, sir,

---

reading, *Enter a gentle Astringer (i. e. falconer)*, a reading which  
the text fails to justify.

14 *goaded . . . occasions*] incited by most pressing needs.

Since you are like to see the king before me, 30  
 Commend the paper to his gracious hand,  
 Which I presume shall render you no blame  
 But rather make you thank your pains for it.  
 I will come after you with what good speed  
 Our means will make us means.

GENT. This I'll do for you.

HEL. And you shall find yourself to be well  
 thank'd,

Whate'er falls more. We must to horse again.

Go, go, provide. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II — ROUSILLON

BEFORE THE COUNT'S PALACE

*Enter Clown, and PAROLLES, following*

PAR. Good Monsieur Lavache, give my Lord Lafeu  
 this letter: I have ere now, sir, been better known to  
 you, when I have held familiarity with fresher clothes;  
 but I am now, sir, muddied in fortune's mood, and smell  
 somewhat strong of her strong displeasure.

CLO. Truly, fortune's displeasure is but sluttish, if it  
 smell so strongly as thou speakest of: I will henceforth  
 eat no fish of fortune's buttering. Prithee, allow the  
 wind.

PAR. Nay, you need not to stop your nose, sir; I  
 spake but by a metaphor. 10

CLO. Indeed, sir, if your metaphor stink, I will stop

SCENE II ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

---

my nose ; or against any man's metaphor. Prithee, get thee further.

PAR. Pray you, sir, deliver me this paper.

CLO. Foh ! prithee, stand away : a paper from fortune's close-stool to give to a nobleman ! Look, here he comes himself.

*Enter LAFEU*

Here is a purr of fortune's, sir, or of fortune's cat, — but not a musk-cat, — that has fallen into the unclean fish-pond of her displeasure, and, as he says, is muddied 20 withal : pray you, sir, use the carp as you may ; for he looks like a poor, decayed, ingenious, foolish, rascally knave. I do pity his distress in my similes of comfort and leave him to your lordship. *[Exit.*

PAR. My lord, I am a man whom fortune hath cruelly scratched.

LAF. And what would you have me to do ? 'T is too late to pare her nails now. Wherein have you played the knave with fortune, that she should scratch you, who of herself is a good lady and would not have knaves 30 thrive long under her ? There's a quart d'écu for you : let the justices make you and fortune friends : I am for other business.

---

18 *purr of fortune's . . . cat*] Parolles' speech is contemptuously compared to the murmurings of a cat.

23 *similes*] Theobald's emendation of the First Folio reading *smiles*. "Unsavoury *similes*" is misprinted "unsavoury *smiles*" in the older editions in 1 *Hen. IV*, I, ii, 77.

PAR. I beseech your honour to hear me one single word.

LAF. You beg a single penny more : come, you shall ha't; save your word.

PAR. My name, my good lord, is Parolles.

LAF. You beg more than "word," then. Cox my passion! give me your hand. How does your drum? 40

PAR. O my good lord, you were the first that found me!

LAF. Was I, in sooth? and I was the first that lost thee.

PAR. It lies in you, my lord, to bring me in some grace, for you did bring me out.

LAF. Out upon thee, knave! dost thou put upon me at once both the office of God and the devil? One brings thee in grace and the other brings thee 48 out. [*Trumpets sound.*] The king's coming; I know by his trumpets. Sirrah, inquire further after me; I had talk of you last night: though you are a fool and a knave, you shall eat; go to, follow.

PAR. I praise God for you. [*Exeunt.*]

---

39 more than "word"] an obvious quibble on the fact that "Parolles" (*i. e.* paroles) is the plural of the French parole (*i. e.* word).

SCENE III — ROUSILLON  
[www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn)  
 THE COUNT'S PALACE

*Flourish.* Enter KING, COUNTESS, LAFEU, the two French Lords,  
 with Attendants

KING. We lost a jewel of her ; and our esteem  
 Was made much poorer by it : but your son,  
 As mad in folly, lack'd the sense to know  
 Her estimation home.

COUNT. 'T is past, my liege ;  
 And I beseech your majesty to make it  
 Natural rebellion, done i' the blaze of youth ;  
 When oil and fire, too strong for reason's force,  
 O'erbears it and burns on.

KING. My honour'd lady,  
 I have forgiven and forgotten all ;  
 Though my revenges were high bent upon him,  
 And watch'd the time to shoot.

10

LAF. This I must say,  
 But first I beg my pardon, the young lord  
 Did to his majesty, his mother and his lady  
 Offence of mighty note ; but to himself  
 The greatest wrong of all. He lost a wife

---

1 *our esteem*] the esteem in which we held the world at large, or things in general.

3-4 *know . . . home*] thoroughly appreciate her worth.

6 *blaze*] Theobald's emendation of the reading of the Folios, *blade*.

Whose beauty did astonish the survey  
Of richest eyes, whose words all ears took captive,  
Whose dear perfection hearts that scorn'd to serve  
Humbly call'd mistress.

KING. Praising what is lost  
Makes the remembrance dear. Well, call him hither ; 20  
We are reconciled, and the first view shall kill  
All repetition : let him not ask our pardon ;  
The nature of his great offence is dead,  
And deeper than oblivion we do bury  
The incensing relics of it : let him approach,  
A stranger, no offender ; and inform him  
So 't is our will he should.

GENT. I shall, my liege. [Exit.

KING. What says he to your daughter ? have you  
spoke ?

LAF. All that he is hath reference to your highness.

KING. Then shall we have a match. I have letters  
sent me 30  
That set him high in fame.

*Enter* BERTRAM

LAF. He looks well on 't.

KING. I am not a day of season,

17 *richest eyes*] eyes that have seen most beauty. Cf. *As You Like It*,  
IV, i, 21-22 : "To have seen much . . . is to have *rich eyes*."

25 *incensing relics*] surviving details capable of incensing us.

29 *All . . . highness*] He refers himself entirely, wholly submits to  
your highness.

32 *a day of season*] a seasonable day, in which the weather is all of  
the same character.

For thou mayst see a sunshine and a hail  
In me at once : but to the brightest beams  
Distracted clouds give way ; so stand thou forth ;  
The time is fair again.

BER. My high-repented blames,  
Dear sovereign, pardon to me.

KING. All is whole ;  
Not one word more of the consumed time.  
Let 's take the instant by the forward top ;  
For we are old, and on our quick'st decrees  
The inaudible and noiseless foot of Time  
Steals ere we can effect them. You remember  
The daughter of this lord ?

40

BER. Admiringly, my liege, at first  
I stuck my choice upon her, ere my heart  
Durst make too bold a herald of my tongue :  
Where the impression of mine eye infixing,  
Contempt his scornful perspective did lend me,  
Which warp'd the line of every other favour ;  
Scorn'd a fair colour, or express'd it stolen ;  
Extended or contracted all proportions  
To a most hideous object : thence it came  
That she whom all men praised and whom myself,  
Since I have lost, have loved, was in mine eye  
The dust that did offend it.

50

KING. Well excused :

---

48 *perspective*] a glass or sort of telescope that distorts the object to which it is directed. Cf. *Rich. II*, II, ii, 18-19: "Like *perspectives*, which, rightly gazed upon, Show nothing but confusion."

That thou didst love her, strikes some scores away  
 From the great compt : but love that comes too late,  
 Like a remorseful pardon slowly carried,  
 To the great sender turns a sour offence,  
 Crying "That 's good that 's gone." Our rash faults 60  
 Make trivial price of serious things we have,  
 Not knowing them until we know their grave :  
 Oft our displeasures, to ourselves unjust,  
 Destroy our friends and after weep their dust :  
 Our own love waking cries to see what 's done,  
 While shameful hate sleeps out the afternoon.  
 Be this sweet Helen's knell, and now forget her.  
 Send forth your amorous token for fair Maudlin :  
 The main consents are had ; and here we 'll stay  
 To see our widower's second marriage-day. 70

COUNT. Which better than the first, O dear heaven,  
 bless !

Or, ere they meet, in me, O nature, cesse !

LAF. Come on, my son, in whom my house's name  
 Must be digested, give a favour from you  
 To sparkle in the spirits of my daughter,  
 That she may quickly come. [Bertram gives a ring.] By  
 my old beard,  
 And every hair that 's on 't, Helen, that 's dead,

66 *While . . . afternoon*] On the other hand, downright shameful hate (incapable of love's remorse) goes on enjoying its habitual afternoon slumbers unconcerned by any havoc that it may have worked.

72 *cesse*] the old spelling of "cease," retained here for the sake of the rhyme.

74 *digested*] incorporated.



Was a sweet creature : such a ring as this,  
The last that e'er I took her leave at court,  
I saw upon her finger.

BER. www.histool.com.cn Hers it was not.

80

KING. Now, pray you, let me see it ; for mine eye,  
While I was speaking, oft was fasten'd to 't.  
This ring was mine ; and, when I gave it Helen,  
I bade her, if her fortunes ever stood  
Necessitied to help, that by this token  
I would relieve her. Had you that craft, to reave her  
Of what should stead her most ?

BER. My gracious sovereign,  
Howe'er it pleases you to take it so,  
The ring was never hers.

COUNT. Son, on my life,  
I have seen her wear it ; and she reckon'd it  
At her life's rate.

91

LAF. I am sure I saw her wear it.

BER. You are deceived, my lord ; she never saw it :  
In Florence was it from a casement thrown me,  
Wrapp'd in a paper, which contain'd the name  
Of her that threw it : noble she was, and thought  
I stood engaged : but when I had subscribed  
To mine own fortune and inform'd her fully  
I could not answer in that **course of honour**  
As she had made the overture, she ceased

---

79 *The last*] The last time.

96-97 *I stood engaged . . . fortune*] I stood engaged to her ; but when  
I had formally given my consent to what my fortune required.

In heavy satisfaction and would never  
Receive the ring again. 100

KING. *Plutus himself,*  
That knows the tinct and multiplying medicine,  
Hath not in nature's mystery more science  
Than I have in this ring: 't was mine, 't was Helen's,  
Whoever gave it you. Then, if you know  
That you are well acquainted with yourself,  
Confess 't was hers, and by what rough enforcement  
You got it from her: she call'd the saints to surety  
That she would never put it from her finger,  
Unless she gave it to yourself in bed, 110  
Where you have never come, or sent it us  
Upon her great disaster.

BER. She never saw it.

KING. Thou speak'st it falsely, as I love mine honour;  
And makest conjectural fears to come into me,  
Which I would fain shut out. If it should prove  
That thou art so inhuman, — 't will not prove so; —  
And yet I know not: thou didst hate her deadly,  
And she is dead; which nothing, but to close  
Her eyes myself, could win me to believe,  
More than to see this ring. Take him away. 120

[*Guards seize Bertram.*]

My fore-past proofs, howe'er the matter fall,

100 *In heavy satisfaction*] Sorrowfully admitting that she was satisfied  
(of my obligation elsewhere).

102 *tinct and multiplying medicine*] the alchemical tincture or elixir  
which multiplies gold by transmuting into it other metals.

121-123 *My fore-past proofs . . . little*] However the matter turn

Shall tax my fears of little vanity,  
 Having vainly fear'd too little. Away with him !  
 We'll sift this matter further.

BER. If you shall prove  
 This ring was ever hers, you shall as easy  
 Prove that I husbanded her bed in Florence,  
 Where yet she never was. [Exit, guarded.]

KING. I am wrapp'd in dismal thinkings.

*Enter a Gentleman*

GENT. Gracious sovereign,  
 Whether I have been to blame or no, I know not :  
 Here 's a petition from a Florentine, 130  
 Who hath for four or five removes come short  
 To tender it herself. I undertook it,  
 Vanquish'd thereto by the fair grace and speech  
 Of the poor suppliant, who by this I know  
 Is here attending : her business looks in her  
 With an importing visage ; and she told me,  
 In a sweet verbal brief, it did concern  
 Your highness with herself. 138

KING. [*reads*] Upon his many protestations to marry me when  
 his wife was dead, I blush to say it, he won me. Now is the Count  
 Rousillon a widower : his vows are forfeited to me, and my  
 honour's paid to him. He stole from Florence, taking no leave,

---

out, the proofs I have already got together are sufficient to  
 relieve my fears of any suspicion of their being vain or groundless.  
 Hitherto I have ineptly been too little suspicious.  
 137 *a sweet verbal brief*] Cf. II, iii, 178, *supra*, "the now-born *brief*."

and I follow him to his country for justice : grant it me, O king !  
 in you it best lies ; otherwise a seducer flourishes, and a poor maid  
 is undone. DIANA CAPILET.

LAF. I will buy me a son-in-law in a fair, and toll  
 for this : I'll none of him.

KING. The heavens have thought well on thee, Lafeu,  
 To bring forth this discovery. Seek these suitors :  
 Go speedily and bring again the count. 150

I am afeard the life of Helen, lady,  
 Was foully snatch'd.

COUNT. Now, justice on the doers !

*Re-enter BERTRAM, guarded*

KING. I wonder, sir, sith wives are monsters to  
 you,  
 And that you fly them as you swear them lordship,  
 Yet you desire to marry.

*Enter Widow and DIANA*

What woman 's that ?

DIA. I am, my lord, a wretched Florentine,  
 Derived from the ancient Capilet :  
 My suit, as I do understand, you know,  
 And therefore know how far I may be pitied.

WID. I am her mother, sir, whose age and honour 160

---

146 *toll*] pay toll for him, like the purchaser of a horse at a fair ; come  
 honestly by him.

154 *swear them lordship*] swear (in the marriage service) to become  
 their lords.

Both suffer under this complaint we bring,  
 And both shall cease, without your remedy.

KING. Come hither, count; do you know these  
 women?

BER. My lord, I neither can nor will deny  
 But that I know them: do they charge me further?

DIA. Why do you look so strange upon your wife?

BER. She 's none of mine, my lord.

DIA. If you shall marry,  
 You give away this hand, and that is mine;  
 You give away heaven's vows, and those are mine;  
 You give away myself, which is known mine; 170  
 For I by vow am so embodied yours,  
 That she which marries you must marry me,  
 Either both or none.

LAF. Your reputation comes too short for my daughter;  
 you are no husband for her.

BER. My lord, this is a fond and desperate creature,  
 Whom sometime I have laugh'd with: let your highness  
 Lay a more noble thought upon mine honour  
 Than for to think that I would sink it here.

KING. Sir, for my thoughts, you have them ill to friend  
 Till your deeds gain them: fairer prove your honour 181  
 Than in my thought it lies.

DIA. Good my lord,  
 Ask him upon his oath, if he does think  
 He had not my virginity.

KING. What say'st thou to her?

---

162 *both . . . remedy*] both shall perish, unless you give the remedy.

BER. She 's impudent, my lord,  
And was a common gamester to the camp.

DIA. He does me wrong, my lord ; if I were so,  
He might have bought me at a common price :  
Do not believe him. O, behold this ring,  
Whose high respect and rich validity  
Did lack a parallel ; yet for all that  
He gave it to a commoner o' the camp,  
If I be one.

190

COUNT. He blushes, and 't is it :  
Of six preceding ancestors, that gem,  
Confer'd by testament to the sequent issue,  
Hath it been owed and worn. This is his wife ;  
That ring 's a thousand proofs.

KING. Methought you said  
You saw one here in court could witness it.

DIA. I did, my lord, but loath am to produce  
So bad an instrument : his name 's Parolles.

200

LAF. I saw the man to-day, if man he be.

KING. Find him, and bring him hither.

*[Exit an Attendant.]*

BER. What of him ?

He 's quoted for a most perfidious slave,  
With all the spots o' the world tax'd and debosh'd ;  
Whose nature sickens but to speak a truth.  
Am I or that or this for what he'll utter,  
That will speak any thing ?

KING. She hath that ring of yours.

BER. I think she has : certain it is I liked her,  
And boarded her i' the wanton way of youth :

She knew her distance, and did angle for me, 210  
 Madding my eagerness with her restraint,  
 As all impediments in fancy's course  
 Are motives of more fancy; and, in fine,  
 Her infinite cunning, with her modern grace,  
 Subdued me to her rate: she got the ring;  
 And I had that which any inferior might  
 At market-price have bought.

DIA. I must be patient:  
 You, that have turn'd off a first so noble wife,  
 May justly diet me. I pray you yet,  
 Since you lack virtue I will lose a husband, 220  
 Send for your ring, I will return it home,  
 And give me mine again.

BER. I have it not.

KING. What ring was yours, I pray you?

DIA. Sir, much like  
 The same upon your finger.

KING. Know you this ring? this ring was his of late.

212-213 *As all impediments . . . fancy*] As all obstructions in the way of love only incite its increase.

214 *Her infinite cunning*] The First Folio reading is *Her insuite coming*, of which no sense has been made. The felicitous emendation in the text is due to Sidney Walker. "Modern grace" may be "modish grace." But the conjectural reading, *modest grace*, deserves attention.

215 *Subdued me to her rate*] Brought me to accept her terms.

219 *diet me*] Perhaps this may mean "prescribe for me a regimen or course of living." Cf. note on IV, iii, 28, *supra*. The reading is generally held to be corrupt. The meaning required seems to be something like "feed on me."

DIA. And this was it I gave him, being abed.

KING. The story then goes false, you threw it him  
Out of a casement.

DIA. I have spoke the truth.

*Enter PAROLLES*

BER. My lord, I do confess the ring was hers.

KING. You boggle shrewdly, every feather starts you.  
Is this the man you speak of?

DIA. Ay, my lord. 231

KING. Tell me, sirrah, but tell me true, I charge you,  
Not fearing the displeasure of your master,  
Which on your just proceeding I'll keep off,  
By him and by this woman here what know you?

PAR. So please your majesty, my master hath been  
an honourable gentleman: tricks he hath had in him,  
which gentlemen have.

KING. Come, come, to the purpose: did he love this  
woman? 240

PAR. Faith, sir, he did love her; but how?

KING. How, I pray you?

PAR. He did love her, sir, as a gentleman loves a  
woman.

KING. How is that?

PAR. He loved her, sir, and loved her not.

KING. As thou art a knave, and no knave. What an  
equivocal companion is this!

PAR. I am a poor man, and at your majesty's command.

LAF. He's a good drum, my lord, but a naughty orator.



DIA. Do you know he promised me marriage ? 250

PAR. Faith, I know more than I 'll speak.

KING. But wilt thou not speak all thou knowest ?

PAR. Yes, so please your majesty. I did go between them, as I said ; but more than that, he loved her : for indeed he was mad for her, and talked of Satan, and of Limbo, and of Furies, and I know not what : yet I was in that credit with them at that time, that I knew of their going to bed, and of other motions, as promising her marriage, and things which would derive me ill will to speak of ; therefore I will not speak what I know. 260

KING. Thou hast spoken all already, unless thou canst say they are married : but thou art too fine in thy evidence ; therefore stand aside.

This ring, you say, was yours ?

DIA. Ay, my good lord.

KING. Where did you buy it ? or who gave it you ?

DIA. It was not given me, nor I did not buy it.

KING. Who lent it you ?

DIA. It was not lent me neither.

KING. Where did you find it, then ?

DIA. I found it not.

KING. If it were yours by none of all these ways, How could you give it him ?

DIA. I never gave it him. 270

LAF. This woman's an easy glove, my lord ; she goes off and on at pleasure.

259 *derive me ill will*] get me, bring down on me, ill will.

262 *too fine*] too subtle, artful.

KING. This ring was mine ; I gave it his first wife.

DIA. It might be yours or hers, for aught I know.

KING. Take her away, I do not like her now ;  
To prison with her : and away with him.  
Unless thou tell'st me where thou hadst this ring,  
Thou diest within this hour.

DIA. I'll never tell you.

KING. Take her away.

DIA. I'll put in bail, my liege.

KING. I think thee now some common customer. 280

DIA. By Jove, if ever I knew man, 't was you.

KING. Wherefore hast thou accused him all this  
while?

DIA. Because he 's guilty, and he is not guilty :  
He knows I am no maid, and he 'll swear to 't ;  
I'll swear I am a maid, and he knows not.  
Great king, I am no strumpet, by my life ;  
I am either maid, or else this old man's wife.

KING. She does abuse our ears : to prison with her.

DIA. Good mother, fetch my bail. Stay, royal sir :

[*Exit Widow.*

The jeweller that owes the ring is sent for,  
And he shall surety me. But for this lord,  
Who hath abused me, as he knows himself,  
Though yet he never harm'd me, here I quit him :  
He knows himself my bed he hath defiled ;  
And at that time he got his wife with child :  
Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick :  
So there 's my riddle, — One that 's dead is quick :  
And now behold the meaning.

*Re-enter Widow, with HELENA*

KING. [www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn) Is there no exorcist  
 Beguiles the truer office of mine eyes?  
 Is 't real that I see?

HEL. No, my good lord; 300  
 'T is but the shadow of a wife you see,  
 The name and not the thing.

BER. Both, both. O, pardon!

HEL. O my good lord, when I was like this maid,  
 I found you wondrous kind. There is your ring;  
 And, look you, here 's your letter; this it says:  
 "When from my finger you can get this ring  
 And are by me with child," &c. This is done:  
 Will you be mine, now you are doubly won?

BER. If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly,  
 I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly. 310

HEL. If it appear not plain and prove untrue,  
 Deadly divorce step between me and you!  
 O my dear mother, do I see you living?

LAF. Mine eyes smell onions; I shall weep anon:  
 [*To Parolles*] Good Tom Drum, lend me a handkercher:  
 so, I thank thee: wait on me home, I'll make sport with  
 thee: let thy courtesies alone, they are scurvy ones.

KING. Let us from point to point this story know,  
 To make the even truth in pleasure flow.

[*To Diana*] If thou be'st yet a fresh uncropped flower, 320

298 *exorcist*] one who raises spirits. Cf. *Jul. Caes.* II, i, 323, 324:  
 "Thou like an *exorcist*, hast conjured up My mortified spirit."

Choose thou thy husband, and I'll pay thy dower ;  
 For I can guess that by thy honest aid  
 Thou kept'st a wife herself thyself a maid.  
 Of that and all the progress, more and less,  
 Resolvedly more leisure shall express :  
 All yet seems well ; and if it end so meet,  
 The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet. [Flourish.

EPILOGUE

KING. The king's a beggar, now the play is done :  
 All is well ended, if this suit be won,  
 That you express content ; which we will pay,  
 With strife to please you, day exceeding day :  
 Ours be your patience then, and yours our parts ;  
 Your gentle hands lend us, and take our hearts. [*Exeunt.*

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5 parts] abilities.

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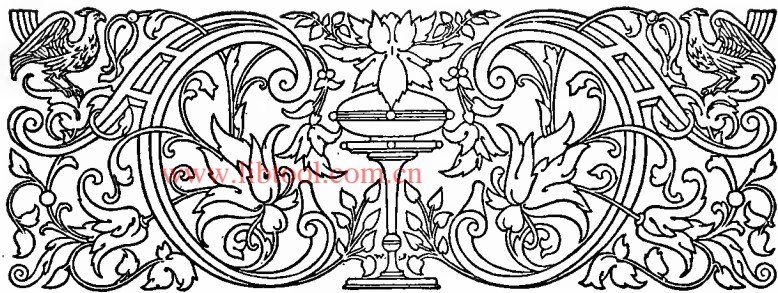


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# THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WITH ANNOTATIONS AND  
A GENERAL INTRODUCTION  
BY SIDNEY LEE

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VOLUME III

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## A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

WITH A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY GEORGE E. WOODBERRY  
AND AN ORIGINAL FRONTISPIECE BY C. WILHELM



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## CONTENTS

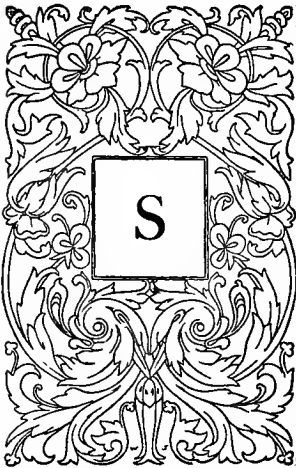
	PAGE
INTRODUCTION TO A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM BY GEORGE E. WOODBERRY . . . . .	ix
TEXT OF THE PLAY . . . . .	1

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## INTRODUCTION



**S**HAKESPEARE was first a poet, and afterwards a dramatist; the history of his development was the powerful specialisation of general poetical faculty. He was a very conscious artist; he came early to hold clearly defined in his mind the matter appropriate to imagination, a method of work and a philosophy, — by which I mean a way of conceiving the world, — in whose sphere this matter took on intellectual worth, moral order, and sensuous charm, and from whose laws this method proceeded. Life first appeared to him as a lyrical power; in his earlier plays this tone is constant, and often exceeds and impairs their dramatic quality; golden words, the echo of rhyme, the linked melody of stanzaic structure inside the dialogue, the chorus combination of the speeches

## MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

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at marked points, the line for line antiphony of older drama which he inherited, are some of these obvious lyrical traits; and lyricism shows its dominancy also in frequent situations and in soliloquy more deeply imbedded in the drama, and even controls character itself, as in Richard II., Queen Margaret, and perhaps Romeo, in whose career of passion the climaxes of the play are not only lyrical moments but take lyrical form, except in the last act, which is in a greater dramatic manner. This lyricism Shakespeare was slow to disuse, and in his latest work it came back with an autumnal flowering. It was at the first not only youthfully impulsive, but reflective and studious. In "Love's Labour's Lost" may be seen the delight of the young poet conning his art, interested in rhetoric, style, diction; examining, choosing, and refining; concerned with the externals of poetising. The height of his lyricism is reached in "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; and naturally the same play discloses the completion of his self-education in this direction, when he had left all questions of verbal surface and structure behind and, entering into the inner secrecy of art, saw its essential nature. What Biron had begun, Theseus finishes.

Every play of Shakespeare is unique and has a world to itself. In some of the dramas this other world is so powerfully made, it draws into itself so much of the reality of the interest, that it seems to persist by a being of its own long after its inhabitants have been laid away in the tragic grave or love's felicity, as the case may be. "Hamlet" and "Twelfth Night" have such an atmos-

## INTRODUCTION

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phere ; but the disclosure is more striking when there is a finer sense of fresh discovery in it. In that age of new geography and England's adventurers taking practical possession of the globe, the inland poet added something to her domain ; he found the forest of Arden, the witch-haunted Scottish heath, the magic isle of Prospero, and together with these he entered what was the most marvellous realm in this kind, the fairy world. If "A Midsummer Night's Dream" attended the celebration of some noble marriage, that was incidental ; but no setting could be more appropriate to the play than such an occasion where the stately lovers should see themselves mirrored in the Athenian king and queen witnessing a play and spectators besides of the action of that fairy power, in an enchantment of midsummer night, which was also to invoke blessings on their wedded union. The bride-bed begins and ends the play ; sleep, night, and dream are its world ; poesy — to use the word of lyrical touch — is its element. The marriage of Theseus is the enclosing frame of all ; but in the foreground and centre are the creatures, sports, and affairs of the fairy sphere. Oberon holds the sceptre and is master of the revels ; the Athenian court, except for its wandering lovers, lies on the outskirts of the scene. Dream is the key-word, the master note on which the melody is built and to which through all changes it returns. It is not the old story how *Life is a Dream* ; with greater subtlety and more philosophical truth, here life is rather a thing that dreams, and all the scene in its moments of high poetic relief has the vivid unreality which is the sphere of

## MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

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dreaming power. But even a dream, for dramatic purposes, must have its own cosmos; and this is supplied by the fairy world. It is near nature, near mortals, and fills the visible and known world, but it is isolated from our world by night, and also by sleep, for it is by the intervention of sleep that the lovers come within its sway; it is concentrated, for local habitation and a name, in the enchanted wood. It is, nevertheless, a true world measured by time and space and action; it has distant territories and past history, a king and queen and court with a life of amusement, revels, love-episodes, and royal vexations, all its own; the Indian boy, whose fragranciness is only told of, gives substance to its polity and its affairs. Its function is to organise the dream-spirit of the play, to give sensuous definition and dramatic opportunity, and especially to body forth in films of reality as thin as rainbow bubbles that world of glamour in which Shakespeare will express the essence of the imagination most fantastically, most lyrically. It is the ethereal substance of the play, that in which all the rest coheres and exists, though when it vanishes it leaves "not a rack behind."

Shakespeare, however far afield he may range for poetical matter and creative atmosphere, nevertheless places the true interest in man's life. "Man is one world," in Herbert's phrase, and the other world, in Shakespeare's dramas, whether natural or demoniac or of the elemental spirits, "attends him." Human life in this play is set forth doubly. The court sphere holds the first place, but so far as concerns the action of its higher figures, it is



## INTRODUCTION

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very subordinate. Theseus is king, with the duty to administer the laws of the state unwaveringly, to do justice by the code; and he discharges this office with a noble dignity of speech. He has, moreover, a paternal solicitude for the youthful lovers, and on the proper occasion an older man's resources to satisfy the father behind the scenes. His is the royal sport of hunting, and the final festivities are for his pleasure. He utters the words of most weight in the intellectual sphere, and gives them authority by his grave character. Yet both he and Hippolyta, who is only a consort, are almost lay figures, decorative with a certain antique severity of outline and pose, the restful part in the general action. To the court sphere belong also the two pair of lovers, Valentine and Hermia, Demetrius and Helena. The youths are the ordinary gentleman lovers of Shakespeare's early stage, with the behaviour and love-psychology belonging to the part. Helena, her pursuit of the graceless Demetrius being granted and her betrayal of the rival lovers' plans being excused, is a more maidenly and attractive character than her schoolmate, Hermia, who only dotes upon Valentine and displays the shrewish temper that Shakespeare so often depicts as a feminine trait. The human plot lies in these characters; it is slight, and does not greatly interest the spectator in their fortunes; it is conducted with lively incident by the resources of a comedy of errors freshly handled in which a change of parts in the lovers is effected, with surprises for the two maidens resulting in great discomposure for Hermia, and a doubly ironical situation for Helena,

## MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

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wretched in being sought by both lovers, falsely and to her flouting as she thinks. The dramatic action is conventional, yet skilfully contrived, involving the familiar matching of wits, the feminine scolding scene and awakening dream device in *Hermia*; but freshness arises in the treatment of the old machinery of play-acting by means of the novel enviroing circumstances. The story of the lovers, nevertheless, has by itself little vitality, and is principally an instance of invention.

The second phase of human life exhibited lies in the clown-sphere of the play, the crew of Athenian working-men, who in love and duty tender their poor interlude, the first labour of their minds, for the royal pleasure. The humour that flows from their presence is blended from many sources. Bottom, in whom it is concentrated, own countryman of *Dogberry*, is yet singular in his power to expose himself, laying grossly bare a universal human weakness, in his confident ability to play all parts with the unconscious notion that the use of each is to unlock some talent of his own. There is comic situation in the first contact of ignorance with art, when these rude craftsmen attempt to compass it; in the clinging of their minds to the fact of wall and moonshine, and the ludicrous symbolism of their first essays at representation; in the contrast of their coarse realism with the *Thisbe* fable, turning it to silliness with a clayey hand. There is also, of course, an abstract humour in that a parody of the old stage is involved, still effective though the special plays and authors aimed at are no longer of importance, if indeed there was any pointed contemporary satire in the

## INTRODUCTION

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piece. The main comedy is in the English characterisation, the low life, which is rendered in the usual way of Shakespeare in dealing with the populace. The clown-sphere is, however, not dramatically in contrast with the court-sphere; its points are not worked out with that end. Its true opposition is rather with the fairy world, and comes to its dramatic height in the enamouring of Titania with the "translated" Bottom. The fairy plot, slighter even than the human plot, is worked out by this incident in the course of which Oberon obtains the Indian boy and peace is restored to the fairy kingdom. The comedy is most exquisite at this point in the play, and composed at once so grotesquely and delicately that the scene remains one of the capital memories of literature. Titania passes under enchantment through sleep, as the lovers do; but for Bottom a way more appropriate for his character is found in Puck's mischief-making spell who claps the ass's head on him. Titania awakes changed within by the herb's compulsion; Bottom is externally changed, yet in the change reveals himself in his proper nature, — the mask on him is really an unmasking; and his mind is unaffected, but adapts itself at once to his new fairy dignities and services as readily as to the lion's part. Enchantment is at its climax; illusion can do no more; the scene goes on with beauty and humour in one rivalry, and only the merriment of surprised delight fills the onlooker at the masque-like spectacle. The clowns are fled to Athens, and following them there after daybreak Bottom returns to his original world and the task in hand, and they act before Theseus's

## MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

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court. The play within the play now takes the place of the woodland masque ; but the same opposition of the crass mind with art is subtly echoed in the enactment of the interlude, and the scene is still illusory, though now with the illusion of art.

Character, plot, incident, situation, dialogue, — it is plain that the interest of the play, the charm that has made it a marvel of fantasy and beauty, does not lie in these, but in the diffused dream-atmosphere in which all of life is breathing in the enchanted night. Illusion is the theme to which the play returns in Protean shapes. In its grossest form, the illusion of the senses, which is such a stumbling-block to the hard-headed workingmen of Athens, it is given only by the instrumentality of Puck, the mischief-maker ; he transforms Bottom to his marvellous self, the ass-headed one, and he misleads the angry lovers, keeping them apart in the tangled wood. The illusion of the heart appears at every turn and in various disguises : humanly speaking, love is the only interest of the play, and love is the illusion of the heart. So it seems, though obscurely and poetically, to the happy pair of eloping lovers, who in that lyrical part for part chorused dialogue, in which they take up each other's words as in a little song, join in speaking of it, Elizabethan-wise, as

“ Momentary as a sound,  
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream ;  
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,  
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,  
And ere a man hath power to say ‘ Behold ! ’  
The jaws of darkness do devour it up.”

[ xvi ]

## INTRODUCTION

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More clearly to Helena, seeing how love's enchantment works on the deceived Demetrius disdainfully abandoning her charms for Hermia, its true nature is apparent as she uses the stock-expression of Elizabethan love-psychology : —

“ Things base and vile, holding no quantity,  
Love can transpose to form and dignity :  
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind ;  
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind :  
Nor hath love's mind of any judgement taste ;  
Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste :  
And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.”

In the wood the juice of the little flower of lovers, on which Cupid's arrow fell when he shot harmlessly at the virgin votaress of the West, distilled on the eyes of Valentine made him pursue Helena, and with changed affections call her

“ goddess, nymph, divine and rare,  
Precious, celestial ; ”

on the eyes of Titania made her wake to mirror the tender vision of the ass's head, engarlanded with flowers, curried by the patient Cobweb and Mustardseed, with “ a great desire to a bottle of hay ” ; on the eyes of Demetrius gave him back to wronged Helena, never to change more, the gift of Oberon, gentle to lovers, who took not off the powerful charm. The lovers woke deeming Theseus with his hounds a vision of that sleep-cumbered night, where, as if it had been Morpheus's own realm every one

## MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

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fell to slumber with the frequency and inconsequence of childhood or old age in its neglected corner. But the great illusion is the illusion of art. It is stated with philosophical precision in the front of the last act, which is its sphere ;

“Such tricks hath strong imagination ;  
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy.”

It is described as the function of the poet : —

“And, as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.”

It is put forth by Theseus as the essence of all art : “The best in this kind are but shadows ; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.” This is that great shadow-idea, one of the few that are constant in Shakespeare, whose persistence through all his thought is so marked a characteristic. King Richard's mirror is an early example ; and here, in this play, Oberon, who is a prophecy of Prospero, is named “King of Shadows.” Thus Oberon, who controls the action of the play, is the master spirit of its idea.

Illusion in these various forms, involving the whole compass of life, is strongly supported on all sides by the lyrical element which is also omnipresent. It appears, characteristically, in that opening song-dialogue of Lysander and Hermia ; it is the natural speech, song-

## INTRODUCTION

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speech, of Puck and the fairies in the induction to the fairy world; and it governs the close in those songs of blessing which Coleridge thought the English notes of a better Anacreon. But it is more pervasive than this; its pastoralism gives the atmosphere, and detail as well, to the rural description, and absorbs all nature in its own point of view in the account of the blight that had fallen on the land: it yields those idyl pictures of girlhood friendship, Cupid shooting his bolt into the West, Hermia's awaking, the Indian boy's mother, the hounds of Theseus, which enamel the verse; and throughout it inspires the infinite touches of golden word and melodious cadence which make the language of such surpassing beauty and pure vocal charm. It is in such a garment of lyricism that the theme of illusion is clothed, and it is thrown over the humour as well as the beauty of the play. It seems sometimes that Shakespeare in "the Northern Island sundered once from all the human race" was the crest of the Renaissance that there and in him reached its climax; the historical perspective of three centuries is not yet enough to let this be certainly said; but in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," how much there is characteristic of the great Italian mood of Europe, idyllic, pastoral, delighting in beauty, painting the frieze of the world with mingled loveliness and grotesqueness, but on no part of it, however Cupid and monster wreathed, such a twine of delicacy and fun as the creatures and pranks of Oberon's court in the wood.

Many of the plays of Shakespeare appear to be climactic, and there may be error in ascribing such swift

## MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

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and mighty changes even to the soul most capable of education of all born of English earth. If the view here taken have any colour of probability, if it be not in its turn a dreaming of the mind, this play discloses as its main characteristic the ripened presence of the poetical faculty, exceeding in value and power the human material with which the dramatist dealt; here Shakespeare at the height of his lyrical inspiration, at the climax of the modes of power possible to its exercise, has reached for the time being a limit. The eloquence of Richard has become, not the passion of Lear, not the natural elevation of Hamlet even, but pure poetry; here the experimental study of Biron has become the mastery of the nature of art in its substance beyond the form; here the handling of the dramatic means of earlier comedy and history has become so habitual that it ceases to occupy any special place or prominence. A supremacy of power in many ways has been achieved. But the sign and proof of excellency in the poetical faculty, which is here to the fore, is the temper of grace by which humour itself is transformed. Bottom, even, in his adornments of flower and leaf, with the doting fondness of the queen of the fairies and the ministries of the sweet winged courtiers, becomes almost poetical. To poetise humour is the last victory of the spirit of the beautiful. Courtesy wins a similar noble triumph in the human sphere, when Theseus lays down its law, finding grace in halting words and simple virtue in the awkward service of even the coarse-handed and rude-minded craftsmen of Athens turned poet and player in their lowest



## INTRODUCTION

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estate for his sake. The presence of this spirit in both kinds is like the touch of Shakespeare's hand ; the man is felt through it, whose wisdom was amiableness in that morning hour. It is a poet's wisdom and fitly crowns him at the moment of his achievement.

The play, too, is throughout a poet's play. It has the fluidity, the brightness, the insubstantiality of a poet's conception of life ; for life to him in whose hand it is plastic, contracts plasticity from his hand. Amid such scenes rising in the wakeful fancy life collects enchantment like dew, and seems itself the wood blown through by the breath of the summer night, sleep-heavy, dream-haunted. Then it is nature to use Puck's words, saying, "What fools these mortals be," who take this world for eternal where there is no abiding principle. Art itself is but Hamlet's "shadow's shadow," yet it has more of eternity in it, and passes not away. This supremacy of the imaginative view of the world which permeates the play has made it peculiarly dear to poets, and there was such felicity in its conception that it has fertilised their minds, and occasioned a European progeny whose dwelling place is Oberon's world, so real has that world which Shakespeare evoked become to the imagination of men. It is true, of course, that historical probability gives such credence to Oberon as the legend of Troy gave to Achilles ; in an old French poem he appears, and even the Indian boy in his company ; but it is to be feared that, like Agamemnon, the Indian boy without his poet would have slipped into oblivion. The issue of genius is of more import than its obscure ancestry ; it is often

## MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

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infertile ; but Shakespeare not only gave the mould of heroic and romantic human character to the English imagination ; he also made it free of his domains, though it is a daring spirit who ventures to conjure there. The fairy world, by virtue of some kindness in it, has been nearer to the poetic mind than Arden or the magic isle, and more familiarly ranged. A literature, indeed, has sprung from it trailing a bright track in the world's fancy. The source, nevertheless, remains shining over all. In this play,—to draw these suggestions to an end,—Shakespeare, perfected in poetry, found himself in Oberon “King of Shadows,” lord of the lyrical world of sensuous emotion and all that there inhabits, even to laughter at its clownish human visitants. He left this realm of the gracious comedy of beauty to hold the sceptre of illusion in the human soul, and sway for a season the tragic world ; but in that Buddhistic progress he made through the souls of men, within the limits of one mortal life, coming to his last transmigration in Prospero, he again unveiled himself as “King of Shadows,” still in the same dream-life that he had first seized in the conception of the midsummer night,—the illusory world of art, of life, of all being known to man's consciousness ; and wrote the last word of poetic truth :—

“We are such stuff  
As dreams are made of, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.”

G. E. WOODBERRY.

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# A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THESEUS, Duke of Athens.

EGEUS, father to Hermia.

LYSANDER, } in love with Hermia.

DEMETRIUS, }

PHILOSTRATE, master of the revels to Theseus.

QUINCE, a carpenter.

SNUG, a joiner.

BOTTOM, a weaver.

FLUTE, a bellows-mender.

SNOUT, a tinker.

STARVELING, a tailor.

HIPPOLYTA, queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.

HERMIA, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander.

HELENA, in love with Demetrius.

OBERON, king of the fairies.

TITANIA, queen of the fairies.

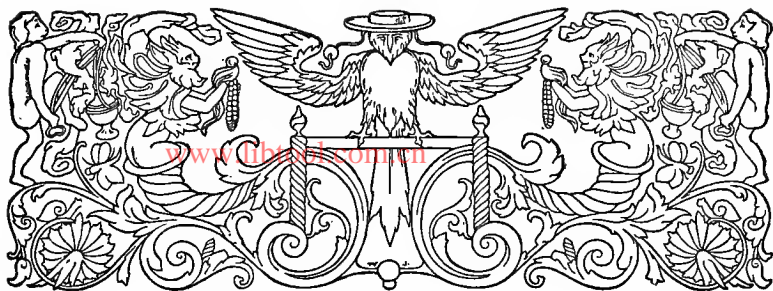
PUCK, or Robin Goodfellow.

PEASEBLOSSOM, }  
COBWEB, } fairies.  
MOTH, }  
MUSTARDSEED, }

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

SCENE — *Athens, and a wood near it*

<sup>1</sup> DRAMATIS PERSONÆ] Two editions of the play appeared in quarto in 1600, during Shakespeare's lifetime. Of these, that which was "printed by James Roberts" was followed in the First Folio of 1623. None of the early texts are divided into scenes. The Folio version marked the acts alone. The Quartos ignore acts and scenes alike. Again, neither Folios nor Quartos supply the "dramatis personæ." Rowe's edition of 1709 first gave a list of characters, with indication of the scenes. The scenic divisions, as usually adopted now, were devised by a later commentator, Capell.



ACT FIRST—SCENE I—ATHENS  
THE PALACE OF THESEUS

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants*

THESEUS



OW, FAIR HIPPOLYTA,  
our nuptial hour  
Draws on apace ; four happy days  
bring in  
Another moon : but, O, methinks,  
how slow  
This old moon wanes ! she lingers  
my desires,  
Like to a step-dame, or a dowager,  
Long withering out a young man's  
revenue.

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

10

4 *lingers*] causes to linger, protracts.

10 *New-bent*] Rowe's correction of the original reading *Now bent*.

MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM ACT I

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

*Enter* EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS

EGE. Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke ! 20

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

EGE. Full of vexation come I, with complaint  
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.  
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,  
This man hath my consent to marry her.  
Stand forth, Lysander: and, my gracious duke,  
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child :  
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,  
And interchanged love-tokens with my child :  
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung, 30  
With feigning voice, verses of feigning love ;

---

27 *This man hath bewitch'd*] This is the reading of the two Quartos and the First Folio. By slurring "hath" in pronunciation, the metrical irregularity may be neutralised. The later Folios improve the metre by reading *This hath bewitch'd*. Theobald proposed *This man hath witch'd*.

31 *feigning voice . . . feigning love*] There is a play on the word

And stolen the impression of her fantasy  
 With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,  
 Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers  
 Of strong prevailment in unharden'd youth:  
 With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart;  
 Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,  
 To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,  
 Be it so she will not here before your Grace  
 Consent to marry with Demetrius, 40  
 I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,  
 As she is mine, I may dispose of her:  
 Which shall be either to this gentleman  
 Or to her death, according to our law  
 Immediately provided in that case.

THE. What say you, Hermia? be advised, fair maid:  
 To you your father should be as a god;  
 One that composed your beauties; yea, and one  
 To whom you are but as a form in wax  
 By him imprinted and within his power 50

"feigning," which is first used in the technical sense (in music) of "singing softly," "humming," and then in the ordinary sense of "dissembling."

32 *And stolen . . . fantasy*] The general sense is "stealthily gained her affections." "Fantasy" is used like "fancy," for "love" or "thought of love." Cf. line 155, *infra*, and *M. Wives*, V, v, 91: "Fie on sinful *fantasy*." "Impression" means semblance or shape, so that "impression of her fantasy" is equivalent to the "semblance of her love." Cf. *Two Gent.*, II, iv, 197, 198:

"a waxen image 'gainst the fire,

Bears no *impression* of the thing it was."

35 *unharden'd*] soft, impressionable.

To leave the figure or disfigure it.  
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HER. So is Lysander.

THE. In himself he is ;

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

HER. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

THE. Rather your eyes must with his judgement  
look.

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

60

THE. Either to die the death, or to abjure  
For ever the society of men.  
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires ;  
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,  
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,  
You can endure the livery of a nun ;  
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,  
To live a barren sister all your life,  
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.  
Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood,  
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage ;

70

54 *in this kind*] in business of this nature. The expression twice recurs  
below. Cf. IV, i, 88 and 210.

*father's voice*] father's approval. Cf. *All's Well*, II, iii, 52.



But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,  
 Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,  
 Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

HER. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,  
 Ere I will yield my virgin patent up  
 Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke  
 My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

80

THE. Take time to pause; and, by the next new  
 moon, —

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

90

DEM. Relent, sweet Hermia: and, Lysander, yield  
 Thy crazed title to my certain right.

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

EGE. Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love,  
 And what is mine my love shall render him.

76 *distill'd*] with its scent extracted and preserved by distillation. Cf. *Sonnet* V, 9, "summer's *distillation*," and 13, "flowers *distilled*," and *Sonnet* LIV, 21: "Of their [*i. e.*, roses] sweet deaths are sweetest odours made." The general sentiment is a leading topic of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*.

80 *virgin patent*] the privilege of remaining a virgin.

81 *his lordship, whose*] the dominion or guardianship of him, to whose, etc.

And she is mine, and all my right of her  
I do estate unto Demetrius.

Lys. I am, my lord, as well derived as he,  
As well possess'd ; my love is more than his ; 100  
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,  
If not with vantage, as Demetrius' ;  
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,  
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia :  
Why should not I then prosecute my right ?  
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,  
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,  
And won her soul ; and she, sweet lady, dotes,  
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,  
Upon this spotted and inconstant man. 110

THE. I must confess that I have heard so much,  
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof ;  
But, being over-full of self-affairs,  
My mind did lose it. But, Demetrius, come ;  
And come, Egeus ; you shall go with me,  
I have some private schooling for you both.  
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself  
To fit your fancies to your father's will ;  
Or else the law of Athens yields you up, — 120  
Which by no means we may extenuate, —  
To death, or to a vow of single life.  
Come, my Hippolyta : what cheer, my love ?  
Demetrius and Egeus, go along :  
I must employ you in some business  
Against our nuptial, and confer with you  
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

SCENE I MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

EGE. With duty and desire we follow you.

[*Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.*]

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

HER. Belike for want of rain, which I could well 130  
Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes.

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

HER. O cross! too high to be enthralld to low.

LYS. Or else misgraffed in respect of years, —

HER. O spite! too old to be engaged to young.

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

HER. O hell! to choose love by another's eyes. 140

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

HER. If then true lovers have been ever cross'd, 150  
It stands as an edict in destiny:

136 *low*] Theobald's emendation for the old reading *love*.

143 *momentary*] The reading of the Quartos. The Folios read *momentarie*. Both forms were common. *Momentary* had the authority of early usage. Cf. "momemtaine," Fr. Lat. "momentaneus."

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

LYS. A good persuasion : therefore, hear me, Hermia.  
 I have a widow aunt, a dowager  
 Of great revenue, and she hath no child :  
 From Athens is her house remote seven leagues ;  
 And she respects me as her only son. 160  
 There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee ;  
 And to that place the sharp Athenian law  
 Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me, then,  
 Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night ;  
 And in the wood, a league without the town,  
 Where I did meet thee once with Helena,  
 To do observance to a morn of May,  
 There will I stay for thee.

HER. My good Lysander !  
 I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,  
 By his best arrow with the golden head, 170  
 By the simplicity of Venus' doves,  
 By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,

155 *fancy's followers*] For "fancy" in the sense of love, cf. "fancy-free," II, i, 164, *infra*, "fancy-sick," III, ii, 96, and "in fancy," IV, i, 160.

156 *persuasion*] persuasive argument.

170 *By his . . . head*] Ovid (*Met.*, I, 466) credits Cupid with two arrows ; one, that "causeth love," is "all of gold with point full sharpe and bright" ; the other, that "chaseth love," is blunt, "whose steele with leaden head is dight." The quoted words are from Golding's translation.

And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,  
 When the false Trojan under sail was seen,  
 By all the vows that ever men have broke,  
 In number more than ever women spoke,  
 In that same place thou hast appointed me,  
 To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lys. Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

*Enter HELENA*

HER. God speed fair Helena! whither away? 180

HEL. Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.  
 Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!  
 Your eyes are lode-stars; and your tongue's sweet air  
 More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,  
 When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.  
 Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,  
 Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;  
 My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,  
 My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.  
 Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated, 190  
 The rest I'd give to be to you translated.  
 O, teach me how you look; and with what art  
 You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart!

HER. I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

HEL. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such  
 skill!

HER. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

173 *the Carthage queen*] In *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, the play by Marlowe and Nashe, the heroine is thus described four times. Cf. Act. III, Sc. iv, 40, and IV, iv, 29, 132, 157.

HEL. O that my prayers could such affection move !

HER. The more I hate, the more he follows me.

HEL. The more I love, the more he hateth me.

HER. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine. 200

HEL. None, but your beauty : would that fault were mine !

HER. Take comfort : he no more shall see my face ;  
Lysander and myself will fly this place.  
Before the time I did Lysander see,  
Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me :

O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,  
That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell !

Lys. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold :  
To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold  
Her silver visage in the watery glass, 210  
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,  
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,  
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

HER. And in the wood, where often you and I  
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,  
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,  
There my Lysander and myself shall meet ;  
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,  
To seek new friends and stranger companies.

200 *no fault*] the reading of the first Quarto. The second Quarto and the Folios read *none fault*.

215 *faint primrose-beds*] The epithet probably refers to the colour rather than to the smell. Steevens thought reference was made to the smell. Cf. "pale primroses," *Wint. Tale*, IV, iv, 122, and *Cymb.*, IV, ii, 221 ; "This pale *faint* swan," *K. John*, V, vii, 21.

SCENE I MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

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Farewell, sweet playfellow : pray thou for us ; 220  
 And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius !  
 Keep word, *Lysander* : ~~we~~ must starve our sight  
 From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

Lys. I will, my *Hermia*. [*Exit Herm.*

Helena, adieu :  
 As you on him, *Demetrius* dote on you ! [*Exit.*

HEL. How happy some o'er other some can be !  
 Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.  
 But what of that ? *Demetrius* thinks not so ;  
 He will not know what all but he do know :  
 And as he errs, doting on *Hermia's* eyes, 230  
 So I, admiring of his qualities :  
 Things base and vile, holding no quantity,  
 Love can transpose to form and dignity :  
 Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind ;  
 And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind :  
 Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste ;  
 Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste :  
 And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
 Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.  
 As waggish boys in game themselves forswear, 240  
 So the boy Love is perjured everywhere :  
 For ere *Demetrius* look'd on *Hermia's* eyne,  
 He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine ;  
 And when this hail some heat from *Hermia* felt,  
 So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.

---

<sup>232</sup> *holding no quantity*] having no genuine value, no value proportioned to that which is perversely set on them (by love). Cf. *Hamlet*, III, ii, 162 : "For women's fear and love *holds quantity*."

I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:  
 Then to the wood will he to-morrow night  
 Pursue her, ~~and for this intelligence~~  
 If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:  
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain,  
 To have his sight thither and back again.

250

[*Exit.*]

## SCENE II — THE SAME

## QUINCE'S HOUSE

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

QUIN. Is all our company here?

BOT. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

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

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

QUIN. Marry, our play is, The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.

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

249 *it is a dear expense*] I pay dearly, I make a bitter bargain (in giving Demetrius information, which will put him on the track of my rival Hermia).

2 *generally*] Bottom's confused error for "particularly," or "severally."



QUIN. Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

BOT. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

QUIN. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOT. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

QUIN. A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

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

The raging rocks  
And shivering shocks  
Shall break the locks  
Of prison-gates;

22 *condole*] mourn, show signs of lamentation. Cf. *Hamlet*, I, ii, 93: "In obstinate *condolement*," and "*condoling*," line 34, *infra*.

23 *Ercles*] Apparent reference to a popular play of the period. Cf. Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*: "The twelve labors of *Hercules* have I terribly thundered on the stage." Greene's Works, Ed. Grosart, Vol. XII, p. 131.

24 *to tear a cat in*] to rant violently. In Middleton's *Roaring Girl*, 1611, a roguish character is called "*Tearcat*"; cf. V, i, 160-161: "*Ruffling Tearcat* is my name, and a ruffler is my style, my title, my profession." In the anonymous piece called *Histriomastix*, 1610, it was said of an actor that he "would rend and *tear a cat* upon the stage." *Hamlet* illustrates the general sentiment in his advice to the players to beware of tearing a passion to tatters. *Hamlet*, III, ii, 9 *seq.*

*to make all split*] to use extravagantly violent gesture; an expression derived from the figure of a storm splitting a vessel at sea. Cf. Beaumont and Fletcher's *Scornful Lady*, II, iii: "Two roaring boys of Rome, that *made all split*."

And Phibbus' car  
 Shall shine from far,  
 And make and mar  
 The foolish Fates.

30

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

QUIN. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

FLU. Here, Peter Quince.

QUIN. Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

FLU. What is Thisby? a wandering knight?

QUIN. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

FLU. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a 40 beard coming.

QUIN. That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

BOT. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice, "Thisne, Thisne;" "Ah Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!"

QUIN. No, no; you must play Pyramus: and, Flute, you Thisby.

BOT. Well, proceed.

QUIN. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

50

STAR. Here, Peter Quince.

QUIN. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

43 *speaks as small*] Cf. *M. Wives*, I, i, 43, where Slender says of Anne Page, "She has brown hair, and *speaks small like a woman*."

52-53 *Thisby's mother*] This character, like "Pyramus' father," and "This-

SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

SNOUT. Here, Peter Quince.

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

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

QUIN. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing <sup>60</sup> but roaring.

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

QUIN. An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek ; and that were enough to hang us all.

ALL. That would hang us, every mother's son.

BOT. I grant you, friends, if you should fright the <sup>70</sup> ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us : but I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove ; I will roar you an 't were any nightingale.

QUIN. You can play no part but Pyramus ; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man ; a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day ; a most lovely, gentleman-like man : therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

---

by's father," mentioned below (l. 55), does not appear in the interlude, as presented in Act V. Sc. i. Starveling, Snout, and Quince play respectively the parts of Moonshine, Wall, and Prologue, which are not noticed in the rehearsals.

BOT. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in? 80

QUIN. Why, what you will.

BOT. I will discharge it in either your straw colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French crown colour beard, your perfect yellow.

QUIN. Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced. But, masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the mean time I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

BOT. We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect: adieu.

QUIN. At the duke's oak we meet.

BOT. Enough; hold or cut bow-strings. [*Exeunt.*]

83 *purple-in-grain*] scarlet or crimson. Under "migraine," Cotgrave, *Fr.-Engl. Dict.*, gives the meanings scarlet or *purple in grain*.

86 *French crowns*] coins of a bright yellow colour. There is a playful allusion here to the belief that baldness was due to venereal disease, which was held to be a peculiarly French malady.

95 *obscenely*] an ignorant blunder for "seemly." Cf. *L. L. L.*, IV, i, 145, where the clown Costard employs the word with like clumsiness.

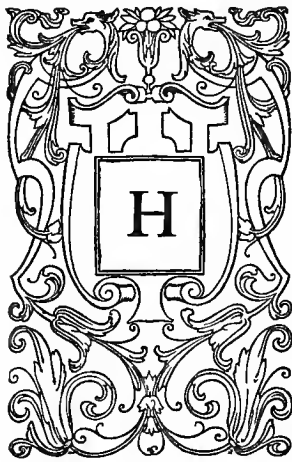
98 *hold or cut bow-strings*] a colloquial expression for "whatever happens," "in any event."



## ACT SECOND — SCENE I

### A WOOD NEAR ATHENS

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



**OW NOW, SPIRIT!**  
whither wander you?

**FAL.** Over hill, over dale,  
Thorough bush, thorough brier,  
Over park, over pale,  
Thorough flood, thorough fire,  
I do wander every where,  
Swifter than the moon's sphere;  
And I serve the fairy queen,  
To dew her orbs upon the green.  
The cowslips tall her pensioners  
be :

10

In their gold coats spots you see ;  
Those be rubies, fairy favours,  
In those freckles live their savours :

7 *moon's sphere*] The metre requires that *moon's* should be pronounced dissyllabically. The moon, like all other planets and stars, was currently held to be enclosed in a hollow crystalline globe or sphere, and it was this sphere which was supposed to circle swiftly round the earth.

9 *To dew her orbs*] To sprinkle with dew fairy rings.

I must go seek some dewdrops here,  
 And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.  
 Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:  
 Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

PUCK. The king doth keep his revels here to-night:  
 Take heed the queen come not within his sight;  
 For Oberon is passing fell and wrath, 20  
 Because that she as her attendant hath  
 A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king;  
 She never had so sweet a changeling:  
 And jealous Oberon would have the child  
 Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;  
 But she perforce withholds the loved boy,  
 Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy:  
 And now they never meet in grove or green,  
 By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,  
 But they do square, that all their elves for fear 30  
 Creep into acorn cups and hide them there.

---

10 *pensioners*] The cowslips are here likened to Queen Elizabeth's gentlemen-at-arms, who were called "pensioners" and wore rich uniforms.

11 *spots*] A reference to the red spots, "the crimson drops I' the bottom of a cowslip," *Cymb.*, II, ii, 38.

15 *hang a pearl . . . ear*] an allusion to the custom of wearing pearl or other jewel in the ear. Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, v, 44: "Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear."

23 *changeling*] Here the child stolen by the fairies; but commonly applied to the feeble infant who is left by the fairies in exchange for the strong child which they stole away.

30 *square*] Cf. Cotgrave, *Fr.-Engl. Dict.*, "*Sequarrer*: to strut, or *square* it; looke big on't, carrie his armes a kemboll, bragadocio-like."

FAL. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,  
 Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite  
 Call'd Robin Goodfellow : are not you he  
 That frights the maidens of the villagery ;  
 Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,  
 And bootless make the breathless housewife churn ;  
 And sometime make the drink to bear no barm ;  
 Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm ?  
 Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck, 40  
 You do their work, and they shall have good luck :  
 Are not you he ?

PUCK. Thou speak'st aright ;  
 I am that merry wanderer of the night.  
 I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,  
 When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,  
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal :  
 And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,  
 In very likeness of a roasted crab ;  
 And when she drinks, against her lips I bob  
 And on her withered dewlap pour the ale. 50  
 The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,  
 Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me ;  
 Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,  
 And "tailor" cries, and falls into a cough ;

47-48 *gossip's bowl* . . . *crab*] an old crone's drink of spiced ale, with roasted crab apples floating in it. Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, III, v, 174: "a *gossip's bowl*."

54 "tailor"] The reading seems doubtful. Dr. Johnson thought that he had heard some such exclamation start to the lips of one who suddenly fell backward; the doctor also suggested that one who slips beside his chair "falls as a tailor squats upon his board."

And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh ;  
 And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear  
 A merrier hour was never wasted there.  
 But, room, fairy ! here comes Oberon.

FAI. And here my mistress. Would that he were  
 gone !

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

OBE. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania. 60

TITA. What, jealous Oberon ! Fairies, skip hence :  
 I have forsworn his bed and company.

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

TITA. Then I must be thy lady : but I know  
 When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,  
 And in the shape of Corin sat all day,  
 Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love  
 To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,  
 Come from the farthest steppe of India ?  
 But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,  
 Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,  
 To Theseus must be wedded, and you come  
 To give their bed joy and prosperity.

OBE. How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,

---

No contemporary usage has been met with to confirm the doctor's  
 conjectural explanation.

69 *steppe*] This is the reading of the first Quarto, but is doubtless a mis-  
 spelling of "steepe" or "mountain," which is found in all other  
 early editions. The Russian form, "steppe," was unknown to  
 Western Europe till the end of the 18th century.



Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,  
 Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?  
 Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night  
 From Perigenia, whom he ravished?  
 And make him with fair Ægle break his faith,  
 With Ariadne and Antiopa?

80

TITA. These are the forgeries of jealousy:  
 And never, since the middle summer's spring,  
 Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,  
 By paved fountain or by rushy brook,  
 Or in the beached margent of the sea,  
 To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,  
 But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.  
 Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,  
 As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea  
 Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land,  
 Have every pelting river made so proud,  
 That they have overborne their continents:  
 The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,  
 The ploughman lost his sweat; and the green corn

90

78-80 *Perigenia . . . Ægle . . . Ariadne . . . Antiopa*] The tale of Theseus's relations with these four women is described in Plutarch's life of Theseus, with which his collected "Lives" begin. The book was accessible to Shakespeare in North's translation. North transforms the Greek Περικουρή into the unauthorised shape "Perigouna."

88-114 *the winds . . . which is which*] The extremely bad weather in England during the winter of 1593-94 seems to have suggested this passage. The meteorological disturbances of that season are described in very similar terms in Dr. King's "Lectures upon Ionas," delivered at York in 1594, but not published till 1618.

Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard :  
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,  
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock ;  
The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud ;  
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,  
For lack of tread, are undistinguishable :  
The human mortals want their winter here ;  
No night is now with hymn or carol blest :  
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,  
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,  
That rheumatic diseases do abound :  
And thorough this distemperature we see  
The seasons alter : hoary-headed frosts  
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose ;  
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown

100

---

98 *nine men's morris*] This was a boy's game, popular in the Midlands. It was played on turf. Three concentric squares were cut. The middle space was kept clear. Outside it, four lines connected the angular points of the three squares, while another four bisected their sides. Holes in each of these eight transverse lines emphasised the points at which they crossed or touched the squares. There were two players, each of whom, being provided with "nine men," or counters, sought to prevent the other from filling with his counters the three holes in any one of the eight transverse lines. Players were permitted alternate moves, as in draughts. The French name of "merelles," which the men or counters originally bore, was corrupted into "morris."

99 *quaint mazes*] complicated labyrinthine figures, which boys were in the habit of marking on the grass.

109 *thin*] All the early editions read *chin*. Theobald conjectured *chill*. "Thin," a late emendation, often means "thin haired." Cf.

An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds 110  
 Is, as in mockery, set : the spring, the summer,  
 The chiding autumn, angry winter, change  
 Their wonted liveries ; and the mazed world,  
 By their increase, now knows not which is which :  
 And this same progeny of evils comes  
 From our debate, from our dissension ;  
 We are their parents and original.

OBE. Do you amend it, then ; it lies in you :  
 Why should Titania cross her Oberon ?  
 I do but beg a little changeling boy, 120  
 To be my henchman.

TITA.                    Set your heart at rest :  
 The fairy land buys not the child of me.  
 His mother was a votaress of my order :  
 And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,  
 Full often hath she gossip'd by my side ;  
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,  
 Marking the embarked traders on the flood ;  
 When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive  
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind ;  
 Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait 130  
 Following, — her womb then rich with my young  
                   squire, —  
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land,  
 To fetch me trifles, and return again,  
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.

---

*Rich. II*, III, ii, 112 : “*thin* and hairless scalps.” In Elizabethan writing *t* and *c* were difficult to distinguish.  
 130 *swimming*] gliding ; a dancing step was called the *swim*.

But she, being mortal, of that boy did die ;  
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy ;  
 And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBE. How long within this wood intend you stay ?

TITA. Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.  
 If you will patiently dance in our round, 140  
 And see our moonlight revels, go with us ;  
 If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

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

TITA. Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away !  
 We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

*[Exit Titania with her Train.]*

OBE. Well, go thy way : thou shalt not from this  
                   grove  
 Till I torment thee for this injury.  
 My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest  
 Since once I sat upon a promontory,  
 And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back, 150  
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,  
 That the rude sea grew civil at her song,

149-166. This passage is commonly interpreted as a reminiscence of the pageant with which the Earl of Leicester entertained Queen Elizabeth on her visit to his castle of Kenilworth in 1575. It is quite possible that the outdoor fêtes which distinguished the royal reception were witnessed by Shakespeare in boyhood. Queen Elizabeth is certainly intended by "a fair vestal throned by the west" (l. 158). The ordinary interpretation identifies "Cupid all arm'd" with the Queen's host, Leicester, who, failing in his endeavour to entrap his sovereign's affections, attracted the love of Lettice, Countess of Essex, whom he subsequently married. On the other hand, the lines may be no more than a play of fancy encircling a poetic compliment to Queen Elizabeth.

And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,  
To hear the sea-maid's music.

PUCK. [www.libtool.com.cn](http://www.libtool.com.cn) I remember.

OBE. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,  
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,  
Cupid all arm'd : a certain aim he took  
At a fair vestal throned by the west,  
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,  
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts : 160  
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft  
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,  
And the imperial votaress passed on,  
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.  
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell :  
It fell upon a little western flower,  
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,  
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.  
Fetch me that flower ; the herb I shew'd thee once :  
The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid 170  
Will make or man or woman madly dote  
Upon the next live creature that it sees.  
Fetch me this herb ; and be thou here again  
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

PUCK. I'll put a girdle round about the earth  
In forty minutes.

[*Exit.*

OBE. Having once this juice,

164 *fancy-free*] free from love ; cf. "fancy-sick," III, ii, 96, *infra*, and note on I, i, 155, *supra*.

168 *love-in-idleness*] one of the many popular names of the pansy, or heart's-ease (Lat., *Viola tricolor*).

I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,  
 And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.  
 The next thing then she waking looks upon,  
 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, 180  
 On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,  
 She shall pursue it with the soul of love :  
 And ere I take this charm from off her sight,  
 As I can take it with another herb,  
 I'll make her render up her page to me.  
 But who comes here ? I am invisible ;  
 And I will overhear their conference.

*Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him*

DEM. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.  
 Where is Lysander and fair Hermia ?  
 The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me. 190  
 Thou told'st me they were stolen unto this wood ;  
 And here am I, and wode within this wood,  
 Because I cannot meet my Hermia.  
 Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

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

DEM. Do I entice you ? do I speak you fair ?  
 Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth 200  
 Tell you, I do not nor I cannot love you ?

---

186 *I am invisible*] Among the properties enumerated in the Diary of the stage-manager, Henslowe, was "a robe for to go *invisible*." This Oberon now assumes.

HEL. And even for that do I love you the more.  
 I am your spaniel ; and, Demetrius,  
 The more you beat me, I will fawn on you :  
 Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,  
 Neglect me, lose me ; only give me leave,  
 Unworthy as I am, to follow you.  
 What worser place can I beg in your love, —  
 And yet a place of high respect with me, —  
 Than to be used as you use your dog ? 210

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

HEL. And I am sick when I look not on you.

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

HEL. Your virtue is my privilege : for that 220  
 It is not night when I do see your face,  
 Therefore I think I am not in the night ;  
 Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,  
 For you in my respect are all the world :  
 Then how can it be said I am alone,  
 When all the world is here to look on me ?

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

220-224] This seems an echo of *Tibullus*, IV, xiii, 11 :

“ tu nocte vel atra  
 Lumen, et in solis tu mihi turba locis.”

HEL. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.  
 Run when you will, the story shall be changed : 230  
 Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase ;  
 The dove pursues the griffin ; the mild hind  
 Makes speed to catch the tiger ; bootless speed,  
 When cowardice pursues, and valour flies.

DEM. I will not stay thy questions ; let me go :  
 Or, if thou follow me, do not believe  
 But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

HEL. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,  
 You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius !  
 Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex : 240  
 We cannot fight for love, as men may do ;  
 We should be woo'd, and were not made to woo.

[*Exit Dem.*]

I'll follow thee, and make a heaven of hell,  
 To die upon the hand I love so well. [*Exit.*]

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

*Re-enter Puck*

Hast thou the flower there ? Welcome, wanderer.

PUCK. Ay, there it is.

OBE. I pray thee, give it me.  
 I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
 Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows ; 250  
 Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
 With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine :

244 *upon the hand*] by the hand. Cf. *Much Ado*, IV, i, 223 : "She died *upon his words*."



SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,  
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight ;  
And there ~~the snake throws her~~ enamell'd skin,  
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in :  
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,  
And make her full of hateful fantasies.  
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove :  
A sweet Athenian lady is in love  
With a disdainful youth : anoint his eyes ;  
But do it when the next thing he espies  
May be the lady : thou shalt know the man  
By the Athenian garments he hath on.  
Effect it with some care that he may prove  
More fond on her than she upon her love :  
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

260

PUCK. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II — ANOTHER PART OF THE WOOD

*Enter TITANIA, with her train*

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

[ 31 ]

SONG

*Fir. Fairy.* You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
 Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen ; 10  
 Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,  
 Come not near our fairy queen.

CHORUS

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

*Fir. Fairy.* Weaving spiders, come not here ; 20  
 Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence !  
 Beetles black, approach not near ;  
 Worm nor snail, do no offence.

CHORUS

Philomel, with melody, &c.

SEC. FAIRY. Hence, away ! now all is well :  
 One aloof stand sentinel.

[*Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.*]

---

9 *double*] forked. Cf. III, ii, 72, *infra*, "adder . . . with doubler tongue," and *Tempest*, II, ii, 13: "Adders who with cloven tongues."

21 *long-legg'd spinners*] a synonym of the "weaving spiders" of the previous line.

SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

*Enter OBERON, and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids*

OBE. What thou seest when thou dost wake,  
 Do it for thy true-love take ;  
 Love and languish for his sake :  
 Be it ounce, or cat, or bear, 30  
 Pard, or boar with bristled hair,  
 In thy eye that shall appear  
 When thou wakest, it is thy dear :  
 Wake when some vile thing is near. [Exit.

*Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA*

LYS. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the  
 wood ;

And to speak troth, I have forgot our way :  
 We 'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,  
 And tarry for the comfort of the day.

HER. Be it so, Lysander : find you out a bed ;  
 For I upon this bank will rest my head. 40

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

HER. Nay, good Lysander ; for my sake, my dear,  
 Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

LYS. O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence !  
 Love takes the meaning in love's conference.  
 I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit,  
 So that but one heart we can make of it :  
 Two bosoms interchained with an oath ;

---

49 *interchained*] the reading of the Quartos. The Folios read, less intelligibly, *interchanged*.

So then two bosoms and a single troth. 50  
 Then by your side no bed-room me deny ;  
 For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

HER. Lysander riddles very prettily :  
 Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,  
 If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.  
 But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy  
 Lie further off ; in human modesty,  
 Such separation as may well be said  
 Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,  
 So far be distant ; and, good night, sweet friend : 60  
 Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end !

LYS. Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I ;  
 And then end life when I end loyalty !  
 Here is my bed : sleep give thee all his rest !

HER. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be  
 press'd ! [They sleep.]

*Enter PUCK*

PUCK. Through the forest have I gone,  
 But Athenian found I none,  
 On whose eyes I might approve  
 This flower's force in stirring love.  
 Night and silence. — Who is here ? 70  
 Weeds of Athens he doth wear :  
 This is he, my master said,  
 Despised the Athenian maid ;  
 And here the maiden, sleeping sound,  
 On the dank and dirty ground.  
 Pretty soul ! she durst not lie

Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.  
 Churl, upon thy eyes I throw  
 All the power this charm doth owe.  
 When thou wakest, let love forbid 80  
 Sleep his seat on thy eyelid :  
 So awake when I am gone ;  
 For I must now to Oberon. [Exit.

*Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running*

HEL. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

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

HEL. O, wilt thou darkling leave me ? do not so.

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

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

The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies ; 90

For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.

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

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

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

For beasts that meet me run away for fear :

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne ?

But who is here ? Lysander ! on the ground ! 100

Dead ? or asleep ? I see no blood, no wound.

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

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

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

HEL. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.  
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what  
though?

Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content. 110

Lys. Content with Hermia! No; I do repent  
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

Not Hermia but Helena I love:

Who will not change a raven for a dove?

The will of man is by his reason sway'd

And reason says you are the worthier maid.

Things growing are not ripe until their season:

So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;

And touching now the point of human skill,

Reason becomes the marshal to my will, 120

And leads me to your eyes; where I o'erlook

---

104 *Nature shews art*] This is the reading of the Quartos. The First Folio substitutes *Nature her shewes*. The other Folios read *here* for *her*. In any case the metre is slightly irregular. *Nature here shows art* gives the best sense and metre: "in the present instance Nature displays the ingenuity of art, which has invented transparent substances like glass."

118-120 *So I . . . will*] While I was young I did not grow ripe in reason, and now that I have reached the height of human intelligence, reason takes command of my will.

SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

Love's stories, written in love's richest book.

HEL. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born ?

When at your hands did I deserve this scorn ?

Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man,

That I did never, no, nor never can,

Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,

But you must flout my insufficiency ?

Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,

In such disdainful manner me to woo.

130

But fare you well : perforce I must confess

I thought you lord of more true gentleness.

O, that a lady, of one man refused,

Should of another therefore be abused !

[Exit.

Lys. She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there :

And never mayst thou come Lysander near !

For as a surfeit of the sweetest things

The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,

Or as the heresies that men do leave

Are hated most of those they did deceive,

140

So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,

Of all be hated, but the most of me !

And, all my powers, address your love and might

To honour Helen and to be her knight !

[Exit.

HER. [Awaking] Help me, Lysander, help me ! do thy  
best

To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast !

---

122 *love's richest book*] Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, iii, 86, *seq.* :

“ And what obscured in this fair volume lies

Find written in the margent of his eyes.

This *precious book of love* . . . ”

Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here!  
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear:  
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,  
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey. 150  
Lysander! what, removed? Lysander! lord!  
What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?  
Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear:  
Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.  
No? then I well perceive you are not nigh:  
Either death or you I'll find immediately. [*Exit.*]

154 *of all loves!*] in the name of all lovers, a common adjuration.





ACT THIRD — SCENE I — THE WOOD

*TITANIA LYING ASLEEP*

*Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOOT, and STARVELING*

**BOTTOM**



ARE WE ALL MET?

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

BOT. Peter Quince, —

QUIN. What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

BOT. There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself ; which the ladies cannot abide. 10 How answer you that ?

<sup>7</sup> *bully*] A good fellow ; a general term of endearment, without any insinuation of blustering or hectoring. Cf. *Henry V*, IV, i, 48 : " I love the lovely *bully*."

SNOUT. By'r lakin, a parlous fear.

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

BOT. Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear. 20

QUIN. Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.

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

SNOUT. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

STAR. I fear it, I promise you.

BOT. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in, — God shield us! — a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living: and we ought to look to 't. 30

SNOUT. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

BOT. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect, — "Ladies," — or, "Fair ladies, — I would wish you,"

22 *eight and six*] in alternate verses of eight and six syllables, a common metre of ballads. The prologue, as spoken in Act V. i. 108 *seq.*, when the play is performed, is in alternately rhymed lines of ten syllables each. The piece, as rehearsed, bears small relation at this and other points to the actual performance.

— or, “I would request you,” — or, “I would entreat you, — not to fear, not to tremble : my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life : no, I am no such thing ; I am a man as other men are :” and there indeed let him name his name, and tell 40 them plainly, he is Snug the joiner.

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

SNOUT. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play ?

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

QUIN. Yes, it doth shine that night.

BOT. Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the 50 moon may shine in at the casement.

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

SNOUT. You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom ?

BOT. Some man or other must present wall : and let 60 him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall ; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

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

*Enter Puck behind*

PUCK. What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,  
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?  
What, a play toward! I'll be an auditor;  
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause. 70

QUIN. Speak, Pyramus. Thisby, stand forth.

BOT. Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet, —

QUIN. Odours, odours.

BOT. — odours savours sweet:

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.

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

And by and by I will to thee appear. [Exit.

PUCK. A stranger Pyramus than e'er play'd here. [Exit.

FLU. Must I speak now? 80

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

FLU. Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,

Most brisky juvenal, and eke most lovely Jew,

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

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

85 *Jew*] See note on *L. L. L.*, III, i, 128.

QUIN. "Ninus' tomb," man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, cues and all. Pyramus enter: your cue is past; ~~it is, if never tire."~~

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

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

BOT. If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.

QUIN. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

*[Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.]*

PUCK. I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,  
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through  
brier:

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;

And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn, 100

Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. *[Exit.]*

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

*Re-enter SNOOT*

SNOOT. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

BOT. What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? *[Exit Snout.]*

106 *an ass-head of your own*] a familiar *tu quoque*. Cf. *M. Wives*, I, iv, 114: "You shall have a *fool's head of your own*." The transformation or "translation" of a man into an ass is the main topic of the popular Greek novel, *The Golden Ass*, of Apuleius, translated by William Adlington, 1566. Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*, 1584, and

*Re-enter* QUINCE

QUIN. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated. [*Exit.* 109

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

The ousel cock so black of hue,  
With orange-tawny bill,  
The throstle with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill;

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

BOT. [*Sings*]

The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
The plain-song cuckoo gray, 120  
Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
And dares not answer nay;—

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry “cuckoo” never so?

TITA. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:

---

the prose history of *Dr. Faustus*, cap. xliii, both describe the magical change of a man's head into an ass's head. Shakespeare probably derived hints for Bottom's experience from all these sources.

117 *quill*] musical pipe, not feather, as sometimes interpreted.

120 *plain-song*] melody without variation or accompaniment; the epithet is appropriate to the monotonous note of the cuckoo.

123 *set his wit to*] would match his wit against. Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, II, i, 84: “Will you *set your wit to a fool's*?”

Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note ;  
 So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape ;  
 And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me  
 On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee. 129

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

TITA. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

BOT. Not so, neither : but if I had wit enough to get  
 out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

TITA. Out of this wood do not desire to go :  
 Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.  
 I am a spirit of no common rate : 140  
 The summer still doth tend upon my state ;  
 And I do love thee : therefore, go with me ;  
 I 'll give thee fairies to attend on thee ;  
 And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,  
 And sing, while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep :  
 And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,  
 That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.  
 Peaseblossom ! Cobweb ! Moth ! and Mustardseed !

*Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED*

FIRST FAI. Ready.

SEC. FAI. And I.

THIRD FAI. And I.

FOURTH FAI. And I.

ALL. Where shall we go ?

TITA. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman ; 150  
 Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes ;  
 Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,  
 With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries ;  
 The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,  
 And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,  
 And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,  
 To have my love to bed and to arise ;  
 And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,  
 To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes :  
 Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies. 160

FIRST FAI. Hail, mortal !

SEC. FAI. Hail !

THIRD FAI. Hail !

FOURTH FAI. Hail !

BOT. I cry your worships mercy, heartily : I beseech  
 your worship's name.

COB. Cobweb.

BOT. I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good  
 Master Cobweb : if I cut my finger, I shall make bold  
 with you. Your name, honest gentleman ? 170

PEAS. Peaseblossom.

BOT. I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash,  
 your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father.  
 Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more  
 acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir ?

156 *fiery glow-worm's eyes*] Commentators invariably point out that the glow-worm's light is in its tail, and that Shakespeare is here in error.  
 172 *Squash*] Cf. *Tw. Night*, I, v, 149: "As a *squash* is before it is a *peascod*."



SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

MUS. Mustardseed.

BOT. Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house: I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire your more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

TITA. Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower. 182

The moon methinks looks with a watery eye;  
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,  
Lamenting some enforced chastity.

Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II — ANOTHER PART OF THE WOOD

*Enter OBERON*

OBE. I wonder if Titania be awaked;  
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,  
Which she must dote on in extremity.

*Enter PUCK*

Here comes my messenger.

How now, mad spirit!  
What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

---

177 *patience*] used ironically, mustard being credited with exciting anger or impatience.

186 *love's tongue*] Pope's emendation for the old reading *lover's tongue*, which is difficult to scan.

5 *night-rule*] night revelry. Cf. *Tw. Night*, II. iii 117: "this uncivil rule."

MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM ACT III

PUCK. My mistress with a monster is in love.  
 Near to her close and consecrated bower,  
 While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,  
 A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,  
 That work for bread upon Athenian stalls, 10  
 Were met together to rehearse a play,  
 Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.  
 The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,  
 Who Pyramus presented, in their sport  
 Forsook his scene, and enter'd in a brake :  
 When I did him at this advantage take,  
 An ass's nolle I fixed on his head :  
 Anon his Thisbe must be answered,  
 And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,  
 As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye, 20  
 Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,  
 Rising and cawing at the gun's report,  
 Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,  
 So, at his sight, away his fellows fly ;  
 And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls ;  
 He murder cries, and help from Athens calls.  
 Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,  
 Made senseless things begin to do them wrong ;  
 For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch ;  
 Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch. 30  
 I led them on in this distracted fear,  
 And left sweet Pyramus translated there :

13 *barren sort*] dull, brainless company. Cf. *Hamlet*, III, ii, 44-46 :

"Some quantity of *barren* spectators."

25 *at our stamp*] at hearing our footsteps.

When in that moment, so it came to pass,  
Titania waked, and straightway loved an ass.

OBE. This falls out better than I could devise.  
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes  
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

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

40

*Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS*

OBE. Stand close : this is the same Athenian.

PUCK. This is the woman, but not this the man.

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

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

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

50

57 *dead*] deadly. Cf. *2 Hen. IV*, I, i, 71 : "So dull, so *dead* in look,  
so woe-begone."

DEM. So should the murder'd look ; and so should I,  
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty :  
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear, 60  
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

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

DEM. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

HER. Out, dog ! out, cur ! thou drivest me past the  
bounds  
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then ?  
Henceforth be never number'd among men !  
O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake !  
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,  
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch ! 70  
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much ?  
An adder did it ; for with doubler tongue  
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

DEM. You spend your passion on a misprised mood :  
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood ;  
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

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

DEM. An if I could, what should I get therefore ?

HER. A privilege, never to see me more.

72 *doubler tongue*] See note on II, ii, 9, *supra* : "Snakes with *double* [*i. e.* forked] tongue." There is a play here on the word "double" in the sense of "deceitful" as well as in that of "forked."

74 *on a misprised mood*] on a fit of anger caused by a mistake. "Misprision" (line 90, *infra*) means "mistake." "Mood" is not uncommonly used by Shakespeare in the sense of "anger" or "fit of anger."

SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

And from thy hated presence part I so :  
 See me no more, whether he be dead or no. 80 [Exit.

DEM. There is but no following her in this fierce  
 vein :

Here therefore for a while I will remain.  
 So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow  
 For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe ;  
 Which now in some slight measure it will pay,  
 If for his tender here I make some stay.  
[Lies down and sleeps.

OBE. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken  
 quite,  
 And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight :  
 Of thy misprision must perforce ensue 90  
 Some true love turn'd, and not a false turn'd true.

PUCK. Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding  
 troth,  
 A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

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

PUCK. I go, I go ; look how I go, 100  
 Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. [Exit.

96 *fancy-sick*] See note on I, i, 155, *supra*.

101 *Tartar's bow*] Probably an Ovidian reminiscence. Cf. *Met.*, X. 588 : "*Scythicâ non setius sagittâ,*" rendered by Golding, "as swift as arrow from a Turkey bow." *Tartar's bow* is a more accurate rendering of the Latin.

OBE. Flower of this purple dye,  
 Hit with Cupid's archery,  
~~Sink in apple of his eye.~~  
 When his love he doth espy,  
 Let her shine as gloriously  
 As the Venus of the sky.  
 When thou wakest, if she be by,  
 Beg of her for remedy.

*Re-enter PUCK*

PUCK. Captain of our fairy band, 110  
 Helena is here at hand ;  
 And the youth, mistook by me,  
 Pleading for a lover's fee.

Shall we their fond pageant see ?  
 Lord, what fools these mortals be !

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

PUCK. Then will two at once woo one ;  
 That must needs be sport alone ;  
 And those things do best please me 120  
 That befall preposterously.

*Enter LYSANDER and HELENA*

LYS. Why should you think that I should woo in  
 scorn ?

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

SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

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

HEL. You do advance your cunning more and  
more.

When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray !  
These vows are Hermia's : will you give her o'er ? 130

Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh :  
Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,  
Will even weigh ; and both as light as tales.

Lys. I had no judgement when to her I swore.

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

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

DEM. [*Awaking*] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect,  
divine !

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne ?  
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show

Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow ! 140

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

HEL. O spite ! O hell ! I see you all are bent  
To set against me for your merriment :  
If you were civil and knew courtesy,  
You would not do me thus much injury.

144 *princess of pure white*] That which is the most excellent of its kind may easily be called the *princess* of its kind. Suggested emendations, *e. g. pureness, impress (i. e. crest)*, and others, may be neglected.

Can you not hate me, as I know you do,  
 But you must join in souls to mock me too ? 150  
 If you were ~~men, as men~~ you are in show,  
 You would not use a gentle lady so ;  
 To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,  
 When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.  
 You both are rivals, and love Hermia ;  
 And now both rivals, to mock Helena :  
 A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,  
 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes  
 With your derision ! none of noble sort  
 Would so offend a virgin, and extort 160  
 A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

LYS. You are unkind, Demetrius ; be not so ;  
 For you love Hermia ; this you know I know :  
 And here, with all good will, with all my heart,  
 In Hermia's love I yield you up my part ;  
 And yours of Helena to me bequeath,  
 Whom I do love, and will do till my death.

HEL. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEM. Lysander, keep thy Hermia ; I will none :  
 If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone. 170  
 My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,  
 And now to Helen is it home return'd,  
 There to remain.

150 *in souls*] "heartily," "earnestly," "of set purpose," like the Latin "ex animo." Very many emendations have been suggested, but the original reading is obviously right.

171 *to her*] Modern usage requires *with her*. Elsewhere Shakespeare has "make friends to" (*i. e.* with), *Meas. for Meas.*, I, ii, 186.



SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

LYS. Helen, it is not so.

DEM. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,  
Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear.  
Look, where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

*Re-enter HERMIA*

HER. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,  
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;  
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,  
It pays the hearing double recompence. 180  
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;  
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.  
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYS. Why should he stay, whom love doth press to  
go?

HER. What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYS. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,  
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night  
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.  
Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,  
The hate I bare thee made me leave thee so? 190

HER. You speak not as you think: it cannot be.

HEL. Lo, she is one of this confederacy!  
Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three  
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.  
Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!  
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived  
To bait me with this foul derision?  
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,

188 *fiery oes*] circles of fire, stars.

The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,  
 When we have chid the hasty-footed time 200  
 For parting us, — O, is all forgot ?  
 All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence ?  
 We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,  
 Have with our needles created both one flower,  
 Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,  
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key ;  
 As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,  
 Had been incorporate. So we grew together,  
 Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,  
 But yet an union in partition ; 210  
 Two lovely berries moulded on one stem ;  
 So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart ;  
 Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,  
 Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.  
 And will you rent our ancient love asunder,  
 To join with men in scorning your poor friend ?  
 It is not friendly, 't is not maidenly :  
 Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,  
 Though I alone do feel the injury.

HER. I am amazed at your passionate words. 220  
 I scorn you not : it seems that you scorn me.

HEL. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,  
 To follow me and praise my eyes and face ?  
 And made your other love, Demetrius,  
 Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,

---

213-214 *Two of the first, . . . crest*] Our two bodies resemble two coats of arms in heraldry, which belong to a single person, and are surrounded by a single crest.

To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,  
 Precious, celestial ? Wherefore speaks he this  
 To her he hates ? and wherefore doth Lysander  
 Deny your love, so rich within his soul,  
 And tender me, forsooth, affection, 230  
 But by your setting on, by your consent ?  
 What though I be not so in grace as you,  
 So hung upon with love, so fortunate,  
 But miserable most, to love unloved ?  
 This you should pity rather than despise.

HER. I understand not what you mean by this.

HEL. Ay, do, persever, counterfeit sad looks,  
 Make mouths upon me when I turn my back ;  
 Wink each at other ; hold the sweet jest up :  
 This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled. 240  
 If you have any pity, grace, or manners,  
 You would not make me such an argument.  
 But fare ye well : 't is partly my own fault ;  
 Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

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

HEL. O excellent !

HER. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEM. If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYS. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat :  
 Thy threats have no more strength than her weak  
 prayers. 250

Helen, I love thee ; by my life, I do :

250 *prayers*] Theobald's emendation for the old meaningless reading *praise*.

I swear by that which I will lose for thee,  
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

DEM. I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYS. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

DEM. Quick, come!

HER. Lysander, whereto tends all this?

LYS. Away, you Ethiopie!

DEM. No, no; he'll . . .

Seem to break loose; take on as you would follow,

But yet come not: you are a tame man, go!

LYS. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let  
loose,

260

Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

HER. Why are you grown so rude? what change is  
this?

Sweet love, —

257 *Ethiophe*] Sneering allusion to Hermia's brunette complexion. Cf. *L. L. L.*, IV, iii, 268: "And *Ethiopes* of their sweet complexion crack."

257-258 *No, no; he'll . . . loose* ;] In the first Quarto this difficult passage read: "No, no; heele seeme to breake loose." In the First Folio *Sir* is substituted for *hee*, and the line ends at *loose*. Perhaps some words have dropped out. It is difficult to make logical sense of these abrupt expressions. Demetrius denounces Lysander with angry incoherence, in a general sense anticipating his "I'll not trust your word" of line 268, *infra*. First addressing the forsaken Hermia, he now says in effect: "I don't believe Lysander; he'll say anything. He is only pretending to give you up." Then, turning to face his rival Lysander, he adds threateningly: "Behave honestly; take the course that you propose to follow and stick to it; yet don't cross my path (unless at your peril). You are a spiritless, contemptible fellow. Get out of my way."

SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

LYS. Thy love ! out, tawny Tartar, out !  
Out, loathed medicine ! hated potion, hence !

HER. Do you not jest ?

HEL. Yes, sooth ; and so do you.

LYS. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

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

LYS. What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her  
dead ?

Although I hate her, I 'll not harm her so. 270

HER. What, can you do me greater harm than hate ?  
Hate me ! wherefore ? O me ! what news, my love !  
Am not I Hermia ? are not you Lysander ?  
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.  
Since night you loved me ; yet since night you left  
me :

Why, then you left me, — O, the gods forbid ! —  
In earnest, shall I say ?

LYS. Ay, by my life ;  
And never did desire to see thee more.

Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt ;  
Be certain, nothing truer ; 't is no jest 280  
That I do hate thee, and love Helena.

HER. O me ! you juggler ! you canker-blossom !  
You thief of love ! what, have you come by night  
And stolen my love's heart from him ?

HEL. Fine, i' faith !  
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,

272 *what news, my love !*] what new-fangled notion. Collier's emenda-  
tion, *what means my love ?* is unnecessary.

No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear  
 Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?  
 Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

HER. Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.  
 Now I perceive that she hath made compare 290  
 Between our statures; she hath urged her height;  
 And with her personage, her tall personage,  
 Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.  
 And are you grown so high in his esteem,  
 Because I am so dwarfish and so low?  
 How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;  
 How low am I? I am not yet so low  
 But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

HEL. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,  
 Let her not hurt me: I was never curst; 300  
 I have no gift at all in shrewishness;  
 I am a right maid for my cowardice:  
 Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,  
 Because she is something lower than myself,  
 That I can match her.

HER. Lower! hark, again.

HEL. Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.  
 I evermore did love you, Hermia,  
 Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;  
 Save that, in love unto Demetrius,  
 I told him of your stealth unto this wood. 310  
 He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;  
 But he hath chid me hence, and threaten'd me  
 To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:  
 And now, so you will let me quiet go,

To Athens will I bear my folly back,  
 And follow you no further : let me go :  
 You see how simple and how fond I am.

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

HEL. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

HER. What, with Lysander ?

HEL. With Demetrius. 320

LYS. Be not afraid ; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

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

HEL. O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd !  
 She was a vixen when she went to school ;  
 And though she be but little, she is fierce.

HER. Little again ! nothing but low and little !  
 Why will you suffer her to flout me thus ?  
 Let me come to her.

LYS. Get you gone, you dwarf ;  
 You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made ;  
 You bead, you acorn.

DEM. You are too officious 330  
 In her behalf that scorns your services.  
 Let her alone : speak not of Helena ;  
 Take not her part ; for, if thou dost intend  
 Never so little show of love to her,  
 Thou shalt aby it.

LYS. Now she holds me not ;

---

329 *knot-grass*] a reference to "knot-grass," a straggling, many jointed weed, which was supposed when eaten to check a child's growth. Cf. Beaumont and Fletcher, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, II, 2 : "Should they put him into a strait pair of gaskins, 't were worse than *knot-grass* ; he would never grow after it."

Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,  
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

DEM. Follow me, nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

[*Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.*]

HER. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you :  
Nay, go not back.

HEL. I will not trust you, I, 340  
Nor longer stay in your curst company.  
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,  
My legs are longer though, to run away. [*Exit.*]

HER. I am amazed, and know not what to say. [*Exit.*]

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

PUCK. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.  
Did not you tell me I should know the man  
By the Athenian garments he had on ?  
And so far blameless proves my enterprise, 350  
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes ;  
And so far am I glad it so did sort,  
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

OBE. Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight :  
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night ;  
The starry welkin cover thou anon  
With drooping fog, as black as Acheron ;  
And lead these testy rivals so astray,  
As one come not within another's way.

357 *Acheron*] a river of Hades (not, as Shakespeare describes it in *Macb.*, III, v, 15, "a pit"). "Blackness" was an invariable characteristic of the river. Cf. Verg. *Æn.*, vi, 107, "*Tenebrosa palus Acheronte refuso*," and Milton, *Par. Lost*, II, 578, "Sad Acheron of sorrow *black* and deep."



Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue, 360  
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong ;  
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius ;  
And from each other look thou lead them thus,  
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep  
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep :  
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye ;  
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,  
To take from thence all error with his might,  
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.

When they next wake, all this derision 370  
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision ;  
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,  
With league whose date till death shall never end.  
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,  
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy ;  
And then I will her charmed eye release  
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,  
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,  
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger ; 380  
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,  
Troop home to churchyards : damned spirits all,  
That in crossways and floods have burial,  
Already to their wormy beds are gone ;  
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,  
They wilfully themselves exile from light,  
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

---

379 See note *infra*, V, i, 373 ("Hecate's team").

OBE. But we are spirits of another sort :  
 I with the morning's love have oft made sport ;  
 And, like a forester, the groves may tread, 390  
 Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,  
 Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,  
 Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.  
 But, notwithstanding, haste ; make no delay :  
 We may effect this business yet ere day. [Exit.

PUCK. Up and down, up and down,  
 I will lead them up and down :  
 I am fear'd in field and town :  
 Goblin, lead them up and down.  
 Here comes one. 400

*Re-enter* LYSANDER

LYS. Where art thou, proud Demetrius ? speak thou  
 now.

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

LYS. I will be with thee straight.

PUCK. Follow me, then,  
 To plainer ground. [Exit Lysander, as following the voice.

*Re-enter* DEMETRIUS

DEM. Lysander ! speak again :  
 Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled ?

389 *the morning's love*] Doubtless a reference to Cephalus, the huntsman, to whom the goddess of the morning, Aurora, made love. Cf. *Ov., Met.*, VII, 700 *seq.*

393 *Turns . . . streams*] Cf. *Sonnet xxxiii*, 4 : "Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy."

SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

PUCK. Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,  
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,  
And wilt not come? Come, recreant; come, thou  
child;

I'll whip thee with a rod: he is defiled 410  
That draws a sword on thee.

DEM. Yea, art thou there?

PUCK. Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here.  
*[Exeunt.]*

*Re-enter* LYSANDER

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

For if but once thou show me thy grey light,  
I'll find Demetrius, and revenge this spite. *[Sleeps.]* 420

*Re-enter* PUCK and DEMETRIUS

PUCK. Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why comest thou not?

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

PUCK. Come hither: I am here.

MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM ACT III

DEM. Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy  
this dear,

If ever I thy face by daylight see :

Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me

To measure out my length on this cold bed.

By day's approach look to be visited.

430

*[Lies down and sleeps.]*

*Re-enter* HELENA

HEL. O weary night, O long and tedious night,

Abate thy hours! Shine comforts from the east,

That I may back to Athens by daylight,

From these that my poor company detest :

And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,

Steal me awhile from mine own company.

*[Lies down and sleeps.]*

PUCK. Yet but three? Come one more ;

Two of both kinds makes up four.

Here she comes, curst and sad :

Cupid is a knavish lad,

Thus to make poor females mad.

440

*Re-enter* HERMIA

HER. Never so weary, never so in woe ;

Bedabbled with the dew, and torn with briers ;

I can no further crawl, no further go ;

My legs can keep no pace with my desires.

Here will I rest me till the break of day.

Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray !

*[Lies down and sleeps.]*

SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

PUCK.

On the ground

Sleep sound :

I'll apply

[www.iboook.com.cn](http://www.iboook.com.cn)

To your eye,

450

Gentle lover, remedy.

*[Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eye.]*

When thou wakest

Thou takest

True delight

In the sight

Of thy former lady's eye :

And the country proverb known,

That every man should take his own,

In your waking shall be shown :

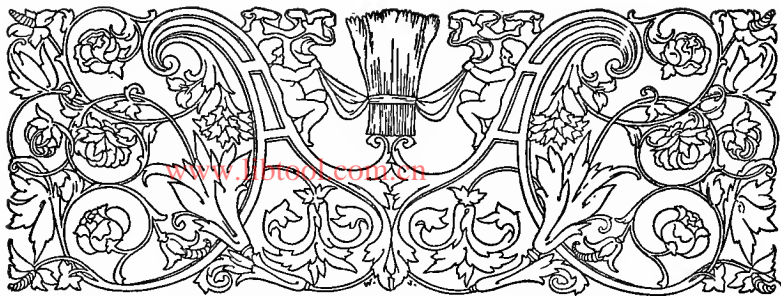
460

Jack shall have Jill ;

Nought shall go ill ;

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

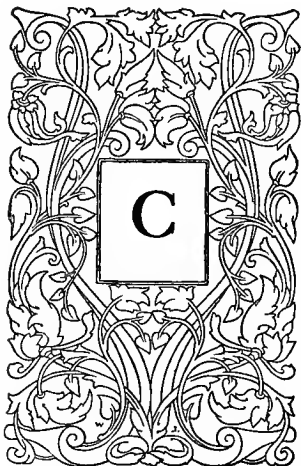
*[Exit.]*



ACT FOURTH—SCENE I—THE SAME  
LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, AND HERMIA,  
LYING ASLEEP

*Enter TITANIA and BOTTOM; PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARD-SEED, and other Fairies attending; OBERON behind unseen*

TITANIA



COME, SIT THEE DOWN  
upon this flowery bed,  
While I thy amiable cheeks do  
coy,  
And stick musk-roses in thy  
sleek smooth head,  
And kiss thy fair large ears, my  
gentle joy.

BOT. Where's Peaseblossom?

PEAS. Ready.

BOT. Scratch my head, Pease-  
blossom. Where's Mounsieur  
Cobweb?

COB. Ready.

BOT. Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get you 10  
your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped

*2 amiable cheeks do coy]* caress thy lovely cheeks.

SCENE I MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

humble-bee on the top of a thistle ; and, good mounsiour, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, mounsiour ; and, good mounsiour, have a care the honey-bag break not ; I would be loth to have you overflown with a honey-bag, signior. Where's Mounsiour Mustardseed ?

MUS. Ready.

BOT. Give me your neaf, Mounsiour Mustardseed. Pray you, leave your courtesy, good mounsiour.

MUS. What's your will ?

20

BOT. Nothing, good mounsiour, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsiour ; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face ; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

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

BOT. I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones.

TITA. Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

BOT. Truly, a peck of provender : I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to 30 a bottle of hay : good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

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

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

---

30 *bottle*] bundle or measure of hay. Cf. Cotgrave's *Fr.-Engl. Dict.* :

"Boteau, a bundle or *bottle*, as of hay," etc.

TITA. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.  
 Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away. [*Exeunt Fairies.*  
 So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
 Gently entwist; the female ivy so  
 Enrings the barked fingers of the elm.  
 O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee! [*They sleep.*

40

*Enter* PUCK

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

Her dotage now I do begin to pity:  
 For, meeting her of late behind the wood,  
 Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,  
 I did upbraid her, and fall out with her;  
 For she his hairy temples then had rounded  
 With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;  
 And that same dew, which sometime on the buds  
 Was wont to swell, like round and orient pearls,  
 Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes,  
 Like tears, that did their own disgrace bewail.  
 When I had at my pleasure taunted her,  
 And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,

50

38 *be all ways away*] disperse in all directions. Theobald corrected the original reading *almadies* into *all ways*.

39 *woodbine . . . honeysuckle*] Woodbine and honeysuckle are usually employed as names of the same plant. But here woodbine would seem to mean "bind-weed," a species of *convulvulus*. Cf. Jonson's *Vision of Delight*: "Behold! How the *blue bind-weed* doth itself infold with honeysuckle."

51 *orient*] sparkling, pellucid; the ordinary epithet of pearls of the finest quality, which came from the East.



I then did ask of her her changeling child ;  
 Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent  
 To bear him to my bower in fairy land.  
 And now I have the boy, I will undo  
 This hateful imperfection of her eyes :  
 And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp  
 From off the head of this Athenian swain ;  
 That, he awaking when the other do,  
 May all to Athens back again repair,  
 And think no more of this night's accidents  
 But as the fierce vexation of a dream.  
 But first I will release the fairy queen.

60

Be as thou wast wont to be ;  
 See as thou wast wont to see :  
 Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower  
 Hath such force and blessed power.

70

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

TITA. My Oberon ! what visions have I seen !  
 Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

OBE. There lies your love.

TITA. How came these things to pass ?  
 O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now !

OBE. Silence awhile. Robin, take off this head.  
 Titania, music call ; and strike more dead  
 Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

70 *Dian's bud*] The part of the vitex agnus castus, leaves of which were believed to insure chastity in those who tasted them. Chaucer, who in his *Flower and the Leaf*, ll. 472-475, represents Dian, goddess of chastity, as bearing a branch of the "agnus castus" in her hand. "Cupid's flower" is the pansy, which already has been mentioned under the name of "love-in-idleness," II, i, 168, *supra*.

MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM ACT IV

---

TITA. Music, ho ! music, such as charmeth sleep ! 80

[*Music, still.*]

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

OBE. Sound, music ! Come, my queen, take hands  
with me,

And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

Now thou and I are new in amity,

And will to-morrow midnight solemnly

Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,

And bless it to all fair prosperity :

There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be

Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

PUCK. Fairy king, attend, and mark :

90

I do hear the morning lark.

OBE. Then, my queen, in silence sad,

Trip we after night's shade :

We the globe can compass soon,

Swifter than the wandering moon.

TITA. Come, my lord ; and in our flight,

Tell me how it came this night,

That I sleeping here was found

With these mortals on the ground. [*Exeunt.*]

[*Horns winded within.*]

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and train

THE. Go, one of you, find out the forester ;

100

For now our observation is perform'd ;

101 *observation*] *sc.* of the rites of May-day. Cf. I, i, 167, *supra*, "Observance to a morn of May," and line 130, *infra*, "to observe The rite of May."

And since we have the vaward of the day,  
 My love shall hear the music of my hounds.  
 Uncouple in the western valley; let them go :  
 Dispatch, I say, and find the forester. [*Exit an attend.*]  
 We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,  
 And mark the musical confusion  
 Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

HIP. I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,  
 When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear 110  
 With hounds of Sparta : never did I hear  
 Such gallant chiding ; for, besides the groves,  
 The skies, the fountains, every region near  
 Seem'd all one mutual cry : I never heard  
 So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

THE. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,  
 So flew'd, so sanded ; and their heads are hung  
 With ears that sweep away the morning dew ;  
 Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls ;  
 Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells, 120  
 Each under each. A cry more tuneable  
 Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,  
 In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly :  
 Judge when you hear. But, soft ! what nymphs are these ?

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

117 *flew'd*] Cf. *Ov., Met.*, III (Golding's translation, leaf 33 a, last line) : " a great and large *flew'd* (i. e. with hanging chaps) hound."

THE. No doubt they rose up early to observe  
 The rite of May ; and, hearing our intent, 130  
 Came here in grace of our solemnity.  
 But speak, Egeus ; is not this the day  
 That Hermia should give answer of her choice ?

EGE. It is, my lord.

THE. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their  
 horns. [Horns and shout within. Lys., Dem.,  
 Hel., and Her., wake and start up.]

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

LYS. Pardon, my lord.

THE. I pray you all, stand up.  
 I know you two are rival enemies :  
 How comes this gentle concord in the world, 140  
 That hatred is so far from jealousy,  
 To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity ?

LYS. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,  
 Half sleep, half waking : but as yet, I swear,  
 I cannot truly say how I came here ;  
 But, as I think, — for truly would I speak,  
 And now I do bethink me, so it is, —  
 I came with Hermia hither : our intent  
 Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,  
 Without the peril of the Athenian law. 150

144 *Half sleep, half waking :*] “Sleep” and “waking” are substantives, the objects of the verb “reply.” “He speaks holiday” (*M. Wives*, III, ii, 59) is a similar construction.

149 *where we might*] This is the obviously right reading of the first Quarto, which was wrongly altered in the second Quarto and Folios to *where we might be*.

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

DEM. My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,  
 Of this their purpose hither to this wood ;  
 And I in fury hither follow'd them,  
 Fair Helena in fancy following me. 160  
 But, my good lord, I wot not by what power, —  
 But by some power it is, — my love to Hermia,  
 Melted as the snow, seems to me now  
 As the remembrance of an idle gaud,  
 Which in my childhood I did dote upon ;  
 And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,  
 The object and the pleasure of mine eye,  
 Is only Helena. To her, my lord,  
 Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia :  
 But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food ; 170  
 But, as in health, come to my natural taste,  
 Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,  
 And will for evermore be true to it.

THE. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met :  
 Of this discourse we more will hear anon.  
 Egeus, I will overbear your will ;  
 For in the temple, by and by, with us  
 These couples shall eternally be knit :

---

160 *fancy*] love. Cf. I, i, 155, *supra*, and note.

And, for the morning now is something worn,  
 Our purposed hunting shall be set aside. 180  
 Away with us to Athens! three and three,  
 We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.

Come, Hippolyta. [*Exeunt The., Hip., Ege., and train.*]

DEM. These things seem small and undistinguishable,  
 Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

HER. Methinks I see these things with parted eye,  
 When every thing seems double.

HEL. So methinks :  
 And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,  
 Mine own, and not mine own.

DEM. Are you sure  
 That we are awake? It seems to me 190  
 That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think  
 The Duke was here, and bid us follow him?

HER. Yea; and my father.

HEL. And Hippolyta.

LYS. And he did bid us follow to the temple.

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

BOT. [*Awaking*] When my cue comes, call me, and  
 I will answer: my next is, "Most fair Pyramus."  
 Heigh-ho! Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender!

186 *with parted eye*] with eye out of focus, which sees two objects when only one is present.

188 *found . . . like a jewel*] Hermia compares herself to one who, finding a jewel by accident, is uncertain whether he ought to retain it or no, is not sure whether the jewel is his own property or another's.

189-190 *Are you sure . . . awake?*] This query is only found in the Quartos.

## SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was — there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, — and methought I had, — but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the Duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death. [Exit. 213

### SCENE II — ATHENS

#### QUINCE'S HOUSE

*Enter* QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOOT, and STARVELING

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

STAR. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.

213 *at her death*] obviously at Thisbe's death in the play.

4 *transported*] Apparently an echo of Quince's "thou art translated," *i. e.* "transformed" (III, i, 108, *supra*). Starveling cannot but believe that Bottom has been "transported to the next world," *i. e.*

[ 77 ]

FLU. If he come not, then the play is marred : it goes not forward, doth it ?

QUIN. It is not possible ; you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

FLU. No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens. 10

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

FLU. You must say "paragon" : a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

*Enter SNUG*

SNUG. Masters, the Duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married : if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

FLU. O sweet bully Bottom ! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life ; he could not have scaped sixpence a day : an the Duke had not given him six-<sup>20</sup>pence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged ; he would have deserved it : sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

*Enter BOTTOM*

BOT. Where are these lads ? where are these hearts ?

QUIN. Bottom ! O most courageous day ! O most happy hour !

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

---

"killed," in which sense the word is used in *Meas. for Meas.*, IV, iii, 64.



SCENE II MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

QUIN. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

BOT. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, <sup>30</sup>  
that the Duke hath dined. Get your apparel together,  
good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your  
pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look  
o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is  
preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen;  
and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for  
they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most  
dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter  
sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them  
say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go,  
away!

[*Exeunt.* 40

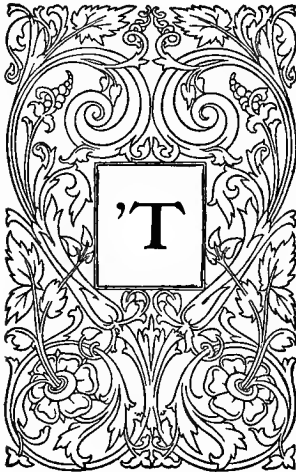


ACT FIFTH — SCENE I — ATHENS

*THE PALACE OF THESEUS*

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

HIPPOLYTA



IS STRANGE, MY THESEUS, that these lovers speak of.

THE. More strange than true :  
I never may believe  
These antique fables, nor these  
fairy toys.

Lovers and madmen have such  
seething brains,

Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend

More than cool reason ever  
comprehends.

The lunatic, the lover and the  
Are of imagination all compact : [poet

One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,  
That is, the madman : the lover, all as frantic,

10

SCENE I    MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt :  
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to  
          heaven ;

And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

Such tricks hath strong imagination,  
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy ;  
Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear !

20

HIP. But all the story of the night told over,  
And all their minds transfigured so together,  
More witnesseth than fancy's images,  
And grows to something of great constancy ;  
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

THE. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

*Enter* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, and HELENA

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

LYS.                                More than to us  
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed !

30

THE. Come now ; what masques, what dances shall  
          we have,

---

11 *a brow of Egypt*] a brow of a gipsy.

To wear away this long age of three hours  
 Between our after-supper and bed-time?  
 Where is our usual manager of mirth?  
 What revels are in hand? Is there no play,  
 To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?  
 Call Philostrate.

PHIL. Here, mighty Theseus.

THE. Say, what abridgement have you for this evening?

What masque? what music? How shall we beguile 40  
 The lazy time, if not with some delight?

PHIL. There is a brief how many sports are ripe:

Make choice of which your highness will see first.

[Giving a paper.]

THE. [reads] The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung  
 By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.

We'll none of that: that have I told my love,  
 In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

[Reads] The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,  
 Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.

That is an old device; and it was play'd 50  
 When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

34 *after-supper*] Cf. Cotgrave's *Fr.-Engl. Dict.*: "Regoubillonner, to make a *reare supper*, steal an *after supper*."

42 *ripe*] This obvious correct reading is in the First Quarto alone, and is wrongly altered elsewhere to *rife*.

44-49 The references both to "the Centaurs" and to "the Thracian singer" Orpheus are reminiscences of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. See Bks. XII and XI, respectively.

SCENE I MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

[*Reads*] The thrice three Muses mourning for the death  
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary.

That is some satire, keen and critical,  
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

[*Reads*] A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus  
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth.

Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!

That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.

How shall we find the concord of this discord?

60

PHIL. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,

Which is as brief as I have known a play;

But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,

Which makes it tedious; for in all the play

There is not one word apt, one player fitted:

And tragical, my noble lord, it is;

For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.

Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,

Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears

The passion of loud laughter never shed.

70

THE. What are they that do play it?

PHIL. Hard-handed men, that work in Athens here,

Which never labour'd in their minds till now;

And now have toil'd their unbreathed memories

---

52 *The thrice three Muses*] Probably an allusion to the *Tears of the Muses*, a poem by Edmund Spenser, lamenting the decay of literature, which was published in 1591.

59 *wondrous strange snow*] a tautological echo of hot ice. For "wondrous strange," cf. *Hamlet*, I, v, 164: "O day and night, but this is *wondrous strange!*" and *3 Hen. VI*, II, i, 33: "'T is *wondrous strange*, the like yet never heard of."

74 *toil'd . . . memories*] wearied out their unpractised memories.

With this same play, against your nuptial.

THE. And we will hear it.

PHIL. [www.libtool.com](http://www.libtool.com) No, my noble lord ;  
 It is not for you : I have heard it over,  
 And it is nothing, nothing in the world ;  
 Unless you can find sport in their intents,  
 Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain,  
 To do you service.

80

THE. I will hear that play ;  
 For never any thing can be amiss,  
 When simpleness and duty tender it.  
 Go, bring them in : and take your places, ladies.

[*Exit Philostrate.*]

HIP. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged,  
 And duty in his service perishing.

THE. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such  
 thing.

HIP. He says they can do nothing in this kind.

THE. The kinder we, to give them thanks for  
 nothing.

Our sport shall be to take what they mistake :  
 And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect  
 Takes it in might, not merit.

90

Where I have come, great clerks have purpos'd  
 To greet me with premeditated welcomes ;  
 Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,

88 *in this kind*] See note, I, i, 54, *supra*; cf. V, i., 210, *infra*.

91-92 *And what . . . merit*] And any genuine effort to please is welcomed by the magnanimous for its good intention without regard to its intrinsic merit.

SCENE I MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

Make periods in the midst of sentences,  
 Throttle their practised accent in their fears,  
 And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off,  
 Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,  
 Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome ; 100  
 And in the modesty of fearful duty  
 I read as much as from the rattling tongue  
 Of saucy and audacious eloquence.  
 Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity  
 In least speak most, to my capacity.

Re-enter PHILOSTRATE

PHIL. So please your Grace, the Prologue is address'd.  
 THE. Let him approach. [*Flourish of trumpets.*]

*Enter QUINCE for the Prologue*

PRO. If we offend, it is with our good will.  
 That you should think, we come not to offend,  
 But with good will. To show our simple skill, 110  
 That is the true beginning of our end.  
 Consider, then, we come but in despite.  
 We do not come, as minding to content you,  
 Our true intent is. All for your delight,  
 We are not here. That you should here repent you,  
 The actors are at hand ; and, by their show,  
 You shall know all, that you are like to know.

THE. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

LYS. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt ; he

108 *seq.*] Mispunctuation gives these lines a sense opposite to that which is intended. A like comic device is employed in the old farce *Ralph Roister Doister*, III, 4.

knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord : it is not enough to speak, but to speak true. 121

HIP. Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder ; a sound, but not in government.

THE. His speech was like a tangled chain ; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next ?

*Enter PYRAMUS and THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE, and LION*

PRO. Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show ;  
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know ;

This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.

This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present 130

Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder ;

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content

To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.

This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,

Presenteth Moonshine ; for, if you will know,

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn

To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.

This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,

The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,

Did scare away, or rather did affright ; 140

And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,

And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain :

Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,

He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast ;

145-146 *Whereat . . . breast*] Shakespeare has already ridiculed the practice of alliteration in *L. L. L.*, IV, ii, 52 : "I will some thing affect the letter," etc.



And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,  
 His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,  
 Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain  
 At large discourse, while here they do remain. 150

[*Exeunt Prologue, Pyramus, Thisbe, Lion, and Moonshine.*]

THE. I wonder if the lion be to speak.

DEM. No wonder, my lord : one lion may, when many  
 asses do.

WALL. In this same interlude it doth befall  
 That I, one Snout by name, present a wall ;  
 And such a wall, as I would have you think,  
 That had in it a crannied hole or chink,  
 Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,  
 Did whisper often very secretly.  
 This loam, this rough-cast, and this stone, doth show 160  
 That I am that same wall ; the truth is so :  
 And this the cranny is, right and sinister,  
 Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

THE. Would you desire lime and hair to speak better ?

DEM. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard dis-  
 course, my lord.

THE. Pyramus draws near the wall : silence !

*Re-enter PYRAMUS*

PYR. O grim-look'd night ! O night with hue so black !

O night, which ever art when day is not !

O night, O night ! alack, alack, alack, 170

I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot !

157-162 *crannied hole . . . cranny*] This feature of Thisbe's story is derived directly from Ovid's *Met.*, IV, 65-69 : "Fissus erat tenui rima," etc., rendered by Golding thus : "A wall that parted house from house have riven therein a *crany*."

And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,  
 That stand'st between her father's ground and mine!  
 Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,  
 Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne!  
 [Wall holds up his fingers.

Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!

But what see I? No Thisby do I see.

O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!

Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THE. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse  
 again. 180

PYR. No, in truth, sir, he should not. "Deceiving  
 me" is Thisby's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to  
 spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat  
 as I told you. Yonder she comes.

*Re-enter THISBE*

THIS. O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,  
 For parting my fair Pyramus and me!  
 My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,  
 Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

PYR. I see a voice: now will I to the chink,  
 To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face. 190  
 Thisby!

THIS. My love thou art, my love I think.

PYR. Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;  
 And, like Limander, am I trusty still.

THIS. And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

---

195-196 *Limander* . . . *Helen*] A blunder apparently for Leander and  
 Hero.

PYR. Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

THIS. As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

PYR. O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!

THIS. I kiss ~~the wall's hole, not your~~ lips at all. 200

PYR. Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

THIS. 'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.

[*Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe.*]

WALL. Thus have I, wall, my part discharged so;

And, being done, thus wall away doth go. [*Exit.*]

THE. Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.

DEM. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to hear without warning.

HIP. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard. 209

THE. The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

HIP. It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

THE. If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

197-198 *Shafalus to Procrus*] A blunder for Cephalus and Procris, whose story of constant love is in Ovid's *Met.*, VII. A poem on the subject was entered in the Stationers' Register, 1593. The only copy known to be extant is dated 1595.

205 *Now is the mural down*] This is Pope's emendation of the obviously erroneous readings of the early editions. The Quartos read, *moon vsed.* "The Folios' alteration, *morall downe*, justifies Pope's correction.

210 *in this kind*] See note, I, i, 54, *supra*; cf. V, i, 88.

*Re-enter* LION and MOONSHINE

LION. You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear  
 The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,  
 May now perchance both quake and tremble here,  
 When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.  
 Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am 220  
 A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam ;  
 For, if I should as lion come in strife  
 Into this place, 't were pity on my life.

THE. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

DEM. The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I  
 saw.

LYS. This lion is a very fox for his valour.

THE. True ; and a goose for his discretion.

DEM. Not so, my lord ; for his valour cannot carry  
 his discretion ; and the fox carries the goose.

THE. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his  
 valour ; for the goose carries not the fox. It is well :  
 leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the moon. 232

MOON. This lanthorn doth the horned moon present ;—

DEM. He should have worn the horns on his  
 head.

THE. He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible  
 within the circumference.

MOON. This lanthorn doth the horned moon present ;  
 Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.

THE. This is the greatest error of all the rest : the  
 man should be put into the lantern. How is it else the  
 man i' the moon ? 241

221 *A lion-fell*] a lion's skin (not a real lion).

SCENE I MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

DEM. He dares not come there for the candle ; for, you see, it is already in snuff.

HIP. I am weary of this moon : would he would change !

THE. It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane ; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

LYS. Proceed, Moon.

249

MOON. All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon ; I, the man i' the moon ; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush ; and this dog, my dog.

DEM. Why, all these should be in the lantern ; for all these are in the moon. But, silence ! here comes Thisbe.

*Re-enter THISBE*

THIS. This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love ?

LION. [*Roaring*] Oh —

[*Thisbe runs off.*]

DEM. Well roared, Lion.

THE. Well run, Thisbe.

HIP. Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace. [*The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, and exit.*]

THE. Well moused, Lion.

261

DEM. And then came Pyramus.

LYS. And so the lion vanished.

---

243 *in snuff*] See note on *L. L. L.*, V, ii, 22.

262-263 *And then . . . vanished*] It has been suggested that these lines ought to be reversed. But Lysander may be reminding Demetrius of a point that he had omitted to mention.

MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM ACT V

*Re-enter* PYRAMUS

PYR. Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams ;  
 I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright ;  
 For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,  
 I trust to take of truest Thisby sight.

But stay, O spite !  
 But mark, poor knight,  
 What dreadful dole is here ! 270  
 Eyes, do you see ?  
 How can it be ?  
 O dainty duck ! O dear !  
 Thy mantle good,  
 What, stain'd with blood !  
 Approach, ye Furies fell !  
 O Fates, come, come,  
 Cut thread and thrum ;  
 Quail, crush, conclude, and quell !

THE. This passion, and the death of a dear friend,  
 would go near to make a man look sad. 281

HIP. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

PYR. O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame ?  
 Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear :  
 Which is — no, no — which was the fairest dame  
 That lived, that loved, that liked, that look'd with cheer.

Come, tears, confound ;  
 Out, sword, and wound  
 The pap of Pyramus ;  
 Ay, that left pap, 290  
 Where heart doth hop : [Stabs himself.]  
 Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.

266 *gleams*] The Quartos and First Folio read *beames*, a careless repetition of line 264. The other Folios read *streams*. *Gleams* is Knight's conjecture.

SCENE I MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

---

Now am I dead,

Now am I fled ;

My soul is in the sky :

Tongue, lose thy light ;

Moon, take thy flight : [*Exit Moonshine.*

Now die, die, die, die, die. [*Dies.*

DEM. No die, but an ace, for him ; for he is but one.

LYS. Less than an ace, man ; for he is dead ; he is nothing. 301

THE. With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

HIP. How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover ?

THE. She will find him by starlight. Here she comes ; and her passion ends the play.

*Re-enter THISBE*

HIP. Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus : I hope she will be brief. 309

DEM. A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better ; he for a man, God warrant us ; she for a woman, God bless us.

LYS. She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

---

299 *No die, but an ace*] A play upon words which depends on "ace" and "ass," being given the same sound in pronunciation.

311-312 *he for a man . . . God bless us*] These words only appear in the Quartos, and were omitted from the Folios, perhaps on account of the statute of 1605, which prohibited the use of the name of God on the stage.

DEM. And thus she means, videlicet :—

THIS.

Asleep, my love ?

What, dead, my dove ?

O Pyramus, arise !

Speak, speak. Quite dumb ?

Dead, dead ? A tomb

Must cover thy sweet eyes. 320

These lily lips,

This cherry nose,

These yellow cowslip cheeks,

Are gone, are gone :

Lovers, make moan :

His eyes were green as leeks.

O Sisters Three,

Come, come to me,

With hands as pale as milk :

Lay them in gore, 330

Since you have shore

With shears his thread of silk.

Tongue, not a word :

Come, trusty sword ;

Come, blade, my breast imbrue : [Stabs herself.

And, farewell, friends ;

Thus Thisby ends :

Adieu, adieu, adieu. [Dies.

THE. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEM. Ay, and Wall too. 340

BOT. [*Starting up*] No, I assure you ; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the

314 *means*] This is the original reading, and Theobald's emendation of *moans* is unnecessary. "Means" was itself often used in the sense of "lament." But its union here with "videlicet" suggests that the sense is, "she has that meaning," "she takes it seriously."



epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?

THE. No epilogue. I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy: and so it is, truly; and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask: let your epilogue alone. [*A dance.* 351

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:

Lovers, to bed; 't is almost fairy time.

I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn,

As much as we this night have overwatch'd.

This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled

The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity,

In nightly revels and new jollity.

[*Exeunt.*

*Enter Puck*

PUCK. Now the hungry lion roars,

360

And the wolf howls the moon;

Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,

All with weary task fordone.

Now the wasted brands do glow,

Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,

---

357 *gait*] march. Cf. l. 405, *infra*, "take his *gait*," i. e., take his march, go away.

361 *howls*] The emendation of Warburton which Theobald accepted for the original *beholds*.

Puts the wretch that lies in woe  
 In remembrance of a shroud.  
 Now it is the time of night,  
 That the graves, all gaping wide,  
 Every one lets forth his sprite,  
 In the church-way paths to glide :  
 And we fairies, that do run  
 By the triple Hecate's team,  
 From the presence of the sun,  
 Following darkness like a dream,  
 Now are frolic : not a mouse  
 Shall disturb this hallow'd house :  
 I am sent with broom before,  
 To sweep the dust behind the door.

370

*Enter OBERON and TITANIA with their train*

OBE. Through the house give glimmering light,  
 By the dead and drowsy fire :

380

368-369 *Now . . . wide*] Cf. *Hamlet*, III, ii, 378-379 :

“T is now the witching time of night,  
 When churchyards yawn,” etc.

373 *triple Hecate's*] Hecate is here a dissyllable. The epithet “triple” is derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the goddess Hecate is called “triformis dea” (vii, 94), and “triceps Hecate” (vii, 194). Both epithets appear in Golding as “triple.” The epithet is commonly explained by the fact that the goddess has a threefold sovereignty over heaven, earth, and hell, under the respective names of Luna, Diana, and Hecate. In the present text she figures as goddess of the infernal regions or darkness, whose “team” consists of dragons. “Triple Hecate's team” is thus equivalent to “night's swift dragons,” III, ii, 379, *supra*.

380-381 *Through . . . fire*] Through the house shed gleams of light,

Every elf and fairy sprite  
 Hop as light as bird from brier ;  
 And this ditty, after me,  
 Sing, and dance it trippingly.

TITA. First, rehearse your song by rote,  
 To each word a warbling note :  
 Hand in hand, with fairy grace,  
 Will we sing, and bless this place.

[*Song and dance.*]

OBE. Now, until the break of day,  
 Through this house each fairy stray. 390  
 To the best bride-bed will we,  
 Which by us shall blessed be ;  
 And the issue there create  
 Ever shall be fortunate.  
 So shall all the couples three  
 Ever true in loving be ;  
 And the blots of Nature's hand  
 Shall not in their issue stand ;  
 Never mole, hare lip, nor scar, 400  
 Nor mark prodigious, such as are  
 Despised in nativity,  
 Shall upon their children be.  
 With this field-dew consecrate,  
 Every fairy take his gait ;

---

with the aid of the drooping fire. For *through* it has been proposed needlessly to read *though*, and to substitute a comma for a colon at "fire." The meaning would then be : "Though the house is almost in darkness, (still) by the light of the dead fire," etc.

405 *gait*] See note on l. 357, *supra*.

And each several chamber bless,  
 Through this palace, with sweet peace,  
 Ever shall in safety rest,  
 And the owner of it blest.  
 Trip away ; make no stay ;  
 Meet me all by break of day.

410

[*Exeunt Oberon, Titania, and train.*]

PUCK. If we shadows have offended,  
 Think but this, and all is mended,  
 That you have but slumber'd here,  
 While these visions did appear.  
 And this weak and idle theme,  
 No more yielding but a dream,  
 Gentles, do not reprehend :  
 If you pardon, we will mend.  
 And, as I am an honest Puck,  
 If we have unearned luck  
 Now to scape the serpent's tongue,  
 We will make amends ere long ;  
 Else the Puck a liar call :  
 So, good night unto you all.  
 Give me your hands, if we be friends,  
 And Robin shall restore amends.

420

[*Exit.*]

420 *an honest Puck*] Puck, or "the Puck" (as at line 424), is a title usually conferred in contemporary literature on an evil spirit who is incapable of honesty. The speaker deprecates complete identification with ordinary creatures of his name.

421-422 *unearned . . . tongue*] luck that we have not earned (or deserved) of being dismissed without hisses.

426 *Give . . . hands*] Clap hands, give a round of applause.

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