

## THE WINTER'S TALE.

### PERSONS REPRESENTED.

LEONTES, King of Sicilia.	Clown, his Son.
MAMILLIUS, his Son.	Servant to the old Shepherd.
CAMILLO,	AUTOLYCUS, a Rogue.
ANTIGONUS,	Time, as Chorus.
CLEOMENES,	
DION,	
ROGERO, a Sicilian Gentleman.	HERMIONE, Queen to Leontes.
Officers of a Court of Judicature.	PERDITA, Daughter to Leontes and Hermione.
POLIXENES, King of Bohemia.	PAULINA, Wife to Antigonus.
FLORIZEL, his Son.	EMILIA, a Lady attending on the Queen.
ARCHIDAMUS, a Bohemian Lord.	MOPSA, } Shepherdesses.
A Mariner.	DORCAS, }
A Jailer.	
An old Shepherd.	

Lords, Ladies, Gentlemen, and Attendants; Satyrs for a Dance; Shepherds, Shepherdesses, Guards, &c.

SCENE.— *Sometimes in Sicilia, sometimes in Bohemia.*

### ACT I.

SCENE I.— *Sicilia. An Antechamber in the Palace of LEONTES.*

*Enter CAMILLO and ARCHIDAMUS.*

*Arch.* If you shall chance, Camillo, to visit Bohemia, on the like occasion whereon my services are now on foot, you shall see, as I have said, great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia.

*Cam.* I think, this coming Summer, the King of Sicilia means to pay Bohemia the visitation which he justly owes him.

*Arch.* Wherein our entertainment shall shame us we will be justified in our loves; <sup>1</sup> for, indeed, —

*Cam.* Beseech you, —

*Arch.* Verily, I speak it in the freedom of my knowledge: we cannot with such magnificence — in so rare — I know not what to say. We will give you sleepy drinks, that your senses, unintelligent of our insufficiency, may, though they cannot praise us, as little accuse us.

*Cam.* You pay a great deal too dear for what's given freely.

*Arch.* Believe me, I speak as my understanding instructs me, and as mine honesty puts it to utterance.

*Cam.* Sicilia cannot show himself over-kind to Bohemia. They were trained together in their childhoods; and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which <sup>2</sup> cannot choose but branch now. Since their more mature dignities and royal necessities made separation of their society, their encounters, though not personal, have been royally attorneyed <sup>3</sup> with interchange of gifts, letters, loving embassies; that they have seem'd to be together, though absent; shook hands, as over a vast; <sup>4</sup> and embraced, as it were, from the ends of opposed winds. The Heavens continue their love!

<sup>1</sup> "In so far as our entertainment falls short, we will make up the deficiency with our love."

<sup>2</sup> Instead of *which*, the usage of our time would require *as* in this place. But in Shakespeare's time the demonstratives *this*, *that*, and *such*, and also the relatives *which*, *that*, and *as*, were often used indiscriminately.

<sup>3</sup> *Attorneyed* is done by deputy or representative, as a man is represented by his attorney in a lawsuit. — *That*, in the next clause, has the force of *so that*, or *inasmuch that*; a frequent usage with the Poet.

<sup>4</sup> *Vast* is here used in much the same sense as in *Hamlet*, i. 2: "In the

*Arch.* I think there is not in the world either malice or matter to alter it. You have an unspeakable comfort of your young Prince Mamillius: it is a gentleman of the greatest promise that ever came into my note.<sup>5</sup>

*Cam.* I very well agree with you in the hopes of him: it is a gallant child; one that, indeed, physics the subject,<sup>6</sup> makes old hearts fresh: they that went on crutches ere he was born desire yet their life to see him a man.

*Arch.* Would they else be content to die?

*Cam.* Yes; if there were no other excuse why they should desire to live.

*Arch.* If the King had no son, they would desire to live on crutches till he had one. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II. — *The Same.* A Room of State in the Palace.

Enter LEONTES, POLIXENES, HERMIONE, MAMILLIUS, CAMILLO, and Attendants.

*Polix.* Nine changes of the watery star <sup>1</sup> have been  
The shepherd's note since we have left our throne  
Without a burden: time as long again

dead *vast* and middle of the night." So in *Paradise Lost*, vi. 203: "Through the *vast* of Heaven it sounded, and the faithful armies sung hosanna to the Highest." See *The Tempest*, page 66, note 8r.

<sup>5</sup> "Come *within my notice* or knowledge." The Poet has *note* repeatedly in this sense. So in *King Lear*, iii. 1: "Sir, I do *know* you; and dare, upon the warrant of my *note*," &c.

<sup>6</sup> *Physic*, verb, was formerly used for to *heal* or *make healthy*. *Medicine* is still used in like manner; as in *Cymbeline*, iv. 2: "Great griefs, I see, *medicine* the less." — *Subject* here bears the sense of *subjects*, the singular for the plural. See *Hamlet*, page 49, note 17.

<sup>1</sup> The *watery star* is the Moon; probably called watery from her connection with the tides. And the meaning is, simply, that the shepherd hath

Would be fill'd up, my brother, with our thanks ;  
 And yet we should, for perpetuity,  
 Go hence in debt : and therefore, like a cipher,  
 Yet standing in rich place, I multiply  
 With one we-thank-you many thousands more  
 That go before it.

*Leon.* Stay your thanks awhile,  
 And pay them when you part.<sup>2</sup>

*Polix.* Sir, that's to-morrow.  
 I'm question'd by my fear of what may chance  
 Or breed upon our absence : may there blow  
 No sneaping winds at home, to make us say,  
 This is put forth too truly !<sup>3</sup> Besides, I've stay'd  
 To tire your royalty.

*Leon.* We are tougher, brother,  
 Than you can put us to't.

*Polix.* No longer stay.

*Leon.* One seven-night longer.

*Polix.* Very sooth,<sup>4</sup> to-morrow.

*Leon.* We'll part the time between's, then : and in that  
 I'll no gainsaying.

*Polix.* Press me not, beseech you, so.  
 There is no tongue that moves, none, none i' the world,

noted, or seen, nine changes of the Moon. The "nine changes" are, I think, beyond question, nine *lunar months*, though some explain it nine *weeks*. But I doubt whether the *quarterings* of the Moon were called changes. And if the time had been but nine *weeks*, it is not likely that Leontes would speak, as he afterwards does, touching Perdita.

<sup>2</sup> Part for depart. The two were used interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> That is, "this fear of mine has too much cause"; this presage is too true. — *Sneaping* is biting or nipping.

<sup>4</sup> Very sooth is in real truth. Both words are often used thus, especially the latter. And so *soothsayer* originally meant *truth-speaker*.

So soon as yours, could win me : so it should now,  
 Were there necessity in your request, although  
 'Twere needful I denied it. My affairs  
 Do even drag me homeward : which to hinder,  
 Were, in your love, a whip to me ; my stay,  
 To you a charge and trouble : to save both,  
 Farewell, our brother.

*Leon.* Tongue-tied, our Queen? speak you.

*Herm.* I had thought, sir, to have held my peace until  
 You had drawn oaths from him not to stay. You, sir,  
 Charge him too coldly. Tell him, you are sure  
 All in Bohemia's well ; this satisfaction  
 The by-gone day proclaim'd : say this to him,  
 He's beat from his best ward.<sup>5</sup>

*Leon.* Well said, Hermione.

*Herm.* To tell, he longs to see his son, were strong :  
 But let him say so then, and let him go ;  
 But let him swear so, and he shall not stay,  
 We'll thwack him hence with distaffs. —  
 [*To POLIX.*] Yet of your royal presence I'll adventure  
 The borrow of a week. When at Bohemia  
 You take my lord, I'll give you my commission  
 To let him there a month behind the gest<sup>6</sup>  
 Prefix'd for's parting : — yet, good deed, Leontes,  
 I love thee not a jar o' the clock behind  
 What lady e'er her lord.<sup>7</sup> — You'll stay?

<sup>5</sup> To ward is to guard ; and the substantive was often used for *place* or *posture of defence*. See *The Tempest*, page 74, note 104.

<sup>6</sup> To let had for its synonymes to *stay* or *stop* ; to let him there is to *stay* him there. *Gests* were scrolls in which were marked the stages or places of rest in a progress or journey, especially a royal one.

<sup>7</sup> "A jar o' the clock" is a *tick* o' the clock ; *jar* being at that time often used for *tick*. — *Behind* is here equivalent to *less than* ; and "what lady e'er"

*Polix.*

*Herm.* Nay, but you will?

No, madam.

*Polix.*

*Herm.* Verily!

I may not, verily.

You put me off with limber vows; but I,  
Though you would seek t' unsphere the stars with oaths,  
Should yet say, *Sir, no going.* Verily,  
You shall not go: a lady's *verily* is  
As potent as a lord's. Will you go yet?  
Force me to keep you as a prisoner,  
Not like a guest; so you shall pay your fees  
When you depart, and save your thanks. How say you?  
My prisoner, or my guest? by your dread *verily*,  
One of them you shall be.

*Polix.*

Your guest, then, madam:  
To be your prisoner should import offending;  
Which is for me less easy to commit  
Than you to punish.

*Herm.*

Not your jailer, then,  
But your kind hostess. Come, I'll question you  
Of my lord's tricks and yours when you were boys:  
You were pretty lordings then?

*Polix.*

We were, fair Queen,  
Two lads that thought there was no more behind  
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,  
And to be boy eternal.

*Herm.*

Was not my lord the verier wag o' the two?

*Polix.*

We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' the  
sun,

means *whatever* lady. The language is elliptical; the full sense being, "not a jot less than *any* lady whatever loves her lord." We have a like expression in *Richard II.*, v. 3: "How heinous *e'er* it be."

And bleat the one at th' other: what we chang'd<sup>8</sup>  
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not  
The doctrine of ill-doing, no, nor dream'd  
That any did. Had we pursued that life,  
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd  
With stronger blood, we should have answer'd Heaven  
Boldly, *not guilty*; th' imposition clear'd  
Hereditary ours.<sup>9</sup>

*Herm.*

By this we gather

You have tripp'd since.

*Polix.*

O my most sacred lady,  
Temptations have since then been born to's; for  
In those unfledged days was my wife a girl;  
Your precious self had then not cross'd the eyes  
Of my young playfellow.

*Herm.*

God's grace to boot!<sup>10</sup>  
Of this make no conclusion, lest you say  
Your Queen and I are devils: yet, go on;  
Th' offences we have made you do, we'll answer;  
If you first sinn'd with us, and that with us  
You did continue fault, and that you slipp'd not  
With any but with us.

*Leon.*

Is he won yet?

*Herm.*

He'll stay, my lord.

*Leon.*

At my request he would not.

Hermione, my dear'st, thou never spokest  
To better purpose.

<sup>8</sup> *Changed* for *exchanged* or *interchanged*. So in *Hamlet*, i. 2: "Sir, my good friend; I'll *change* that name with you."

<sup>9</sup> "Setting aside or striking off the stain of original sin which we have inherited." Referring of course to "Man's first disobedience."

<sup>10</sup> The proper meaning of *boot* is *help, profit, or advantage*. So in iii. 2: "It shall scarce *boot* me to say, *Not guilty*."

Herm.

Never?

Leon.

Never, but once.

Herm. What! have I twice said well? when was't before?  
I pr'ythee tell me; cram's with praise, and make's  
As fat as tame things: one good deed dying tongueless  
Slaughters a thousand waiting upon that.  
Our praises are our wages: you may ride's  
With one soft kiss a thousand furlongs, ere  
With spur we heat an acre.<sup>11</sup> But to th' goal:  
My last good deed was to entreat his stay:  
What was my first? it has an elder sister,  
Or I mistake you: O, would her name were Grace!  
But once before I spoke to th' purpose: when?  
Nay, let me have't; I long.

Leon.

Why, that was when

Three crabbèd months had sour'd themselves to death,  
Ere I could make thee open thy white hand,  
And clap<sup>12</sup> thyself my love: then didst thou utter,  
*I'm yours for ever.*

Herm.

It is Grace indeed. —

Why, lo you now, I've spoke to th' purpose twice:  
The one for ever earn'd a royal husband;  
Th' other for some while a friend. [*Giving her hand to POLIX.*

Leon. [*Aside.*]

Too hot, too hot!

<sup>11</sup> To "heat an acre" is doubtless the same as to *run* an acre; just as, in the language of the race-ground, a three-mile heat is a race of three miles. Mr. Joseph Crosby, in a letter to me, justly observes that "the accompanying words, 'to th' goal,' show that the metaphor is from the race-course." And he adds that "heat is not simply the distance run, but the sporting-term for the race itself; 'winning the heat,' 'running the heat,' &c."

<sup>12</sup> On entering into any contract, or plighting of troth, this clapping of hands together set the seal. So in the old play of *Ram Alley*: "Come, clap hands, a match." The custom is not yet disused in common life.

To mingle friendship far, is mingling bloods.  
I've *tremor cordis* on me, — my heart dances;  
But not for joy, — not joy. This entertainment  
May a free face put on; derive a liberty  
From heartiness, from bounty's fertile bosom,  
And well become the agent; 't may, I grant:  
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,  
As now they are; and making practised smiles,  
As in a looking-glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere  
The mort o' the deer;<sup>13</sup> O, that is entertainment  
My bosom likes not, nor my brows! — Mamillius,  
Art thou my boy?

Mam.

Ay, my good lord.

Leon.

I'fecks!

Why, that's my bawcock.<sup>14</sup> What, hast smutch'd thy nose?  
They say it is a copy out of mine. Come, captain,  
We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, captain:  
And yet the steer, the heifer, and the calf,  
Are all call'd neat. — [*Observing POLIXENES and HERMIONE.*  
Still virginalling<sup>15</sup>

Upon his palm? — How now, you wanton calf!  
Art thou my calf?

Mam.

Yes, if you will, my lord.

<sup>13</sup> The *mort* was a long note played on the horn at the death of the deer. *Mort* is the French word for *death*; from the Latin *mors*.

<sup>14</sup> A burlesque word of endearment supposed to be derived from *beau-coq*, or *boy-cock*. It occurs in *Twelfth Night*, and in *King Henry V.*, and in both places is coupled with *chuck* or *chick*. It is said that *bra' cock* is still used in Scotland. — *I'fecks* is probably a corruption of *in faith*.

<sup>15</sup> Still playing with her fingers as a girl playing on the virginals. Virginals were stringed instruments played with keys like a spinnet, which they resembled in all respects but in shape, spinnets being nearly triangular, and virginals of an oblong square shape like a small piano-forte.

*Leon.* Thou want'st a rough pash, and the shoots that I have,<sup>16</sup>  
 To be full like me. — [*Aside.*] Yet they say we are  
 Almost as like as eggs; women say so,  
 That will say any thing: but were they false  
 As o'er-dyed blacks,<sup>17</sup> as winds, as waters; false  
 As dice are to be wish'd by one that fixes  
 No bourn<sup>18</sup> 'twixt his and mine; yet were it true  
 To say this boy were like me. — Come, sir page,  
 Look on me with your welkin eye: <sup>19</sup> sweet villain!  
 Most dear'st! my collop!<sup>20</sup> — Can thy dam? — may't be? —

<sup>16</sup> *Pash* is said to mean, in some places, a young bull-calf whose horns are just sprouting. According to Jamieson, it is a Scotch term for *head*. The sense of the text is, apparently, "To be altogether like me, thou must have the knobby forehead and the budding horns that I have."

<sup>17</sup> *O'er-dyed blacks* means old faded stuffs of whatever colour dyed black. Under the word *false* there is probably an allusion to those who practised mourning as a sort of art, and kept certain articles of dress for that purpose, such as hat-bands and gloves, which, being dyed over repeatedly, not only became rotten, but were also regarded as badges of a hypocritical or simulated sorrow. The text is well illustrated in Massinger's *Old Law*, ii. 1:

I would not hear of blacks, I was so light,  
 But chose a colour orient like my mind:  
 For blacks are often such *dissembling mourners*,  
 There is no credit given to't; it has lost  
 All reputation by *false* sons and widows.  
 Now I would have men know what I resemble,  
 A truth, indeed; 'tis joy clad like a joy;  
 Which is more honest than a cunning grief,  
 That's only faced with sables for a show,  
 But gaudy-hearted.

<sup>18</sup> That is, makes no distinction. *Bourn* is *limit* or *boundary*; as in Hamlet's soliloquy: "The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn no traveller returns."

<sup>19</sup> *Welkin* is *blue*, the colour of the welkin or sky.

<sup>20</sup> This use of *collop* is well explained in one of Heywood's *Epigrams*, 1566: "For I have heard saie it is a deere *collup* that is cut out of thy owne

Affection, thy intention stabs the centre!<sup>21</sup>  
 Thou dost make possible, things not so held;  
 Communicatest with dreams, — how can this be? —  
 With what's unreal thou coactive art,  
 And fellow'st nothing: then 'tis very credent<sup>22</sup>  
 Thou mayst co-join with something; and thou dost,  
 And that beyond commission, (as I find it),  
 Ay, even to the infection of my brains  
 And hardening of my brows.<sup>23</sup>

flesh." Shakespeare has it again in *King Henry VI.*, v. 4: "God knows thou art a *collop* of my flesh." The sense of the word is now expressed in the phrase, "a chip of the old block."

<sup>21</sup> After a great deal of thought spent upon this line, I have tied up in the following: *Affection* here means what the old moralists called *carnal concupiscence*, or, in a word, *lust*. So in *Troilus and Cressida*, ii. 2: "What nearer debt in all humanity than wife is to the husband? if this law of Nature be corrupted through affection," &c. — *Intention* is *intenseness, energy, pervasive force*. — *Centre* is the Earth, which was held to be literally the centre of the visible Universe. And so I understand Leontes to mean that the potency of sexual desire is universal; that it penetrates everywhere, and pervades the whole world.

<sup>22</sup> *Credent* for *credible*; an instance of the active form with the passive sense. See *As You Like It*, page 96, note 4.

<sup>23</sup> A very obscure passage, and hard to explain; naturally made so, from the Saint-Vitus dance of agitation into which Leontes here works himself, and from a kind of self-shame instinctively prompting him to obscure or disguise his thoughts while giving vent to them. The best I can do with it is something as follows: After referring to the potency of sexual desire as explained in note 21, Leontes proceeds to descant on sundry workings of that potency: it achieves things that are deemed impossible; gives life to dreams; shapes imaginations; cooperates with unrealities; has commerce with things that are not; and is so like a planetary influence, that even what passes for angelic purity may not be proof against it. If it can do all these wonders, then he concludes that, in the person of his wife, it can certainly fellowship an actual object, and conspire with the answering motions of another person; and if this can be, then it is, and he is sure of it; and the *fact* is so working in his head as to cause a sprouting of horns. See Critical Notes.

*Polix.* What means Sicilia?

*Herm.* He something seems unsettled.

*Polix.* Ho, my lord!  
What cheer? how is't with you, best brother?

*Herm.* You look

As if you held a brow of much distraction:  
Are you not moved, my lord?

*Leon.* No, in good earnest.  
How sometimes nature will betray its folly,  
Its tenderness, and make itself a pastime  
To harder bosoms! Looking on the lines  
Of my boy's face, methought I did recoil  
Twenty-three years; and saw myself unbreech'd,  
In my green velvet coat; my dagger muzzled,  
Lest it should bite its master, and so prove,  
As ornaments oft do, too dangerous:  
How like, methought, I then was to this kernel,  
This squash,<sup>24</sup> this gentleman. — Mine honest friend,  
Will you take eggs for money?<sup>25</sup>

*Mam.* No, my lord, I'll fight.

*Leon.* You will? why, happy man be's dole!<sup>26</sup> — My  
brother,  
Are you so fond of your young Prince as we  
Do seem to be of ours?

*Polix.* If at home, sir,  
He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter:

<sup>24</sup> *Squash* is an immature pea-pod. In *Twelfth Night*, we have "As a *squash* before it is a peascod."

<sup>25</sup> A proverbial phrase for putting up with an affront or insult. The Prince evidently so understands it. It was sometimes used for any cowardly conduct.

<sup>26</sup> A common phrase in old writers, meaning "May happiness be his lot or portion!"

Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy;  
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all:  
He makes a July's day short as December's;  
And with his varying childness cures in me  
Thoughts that would thicken my blood.

*Leon.* So stands this squire  
Officed with me. We two will walk, my lord,  
And leave you to your graver steps. — Hermione,  
How thou lovest us, show in our brother's welcome;  
Let what is dear in Sicily be cheap:  
Next to thyself and my young rover, he's  
Apparent<sup>27</sup> to my heart.

*Herm.* If you would seek us,  
We're yours i' the garden: shall's attend you there?

*Leon.* To your own bents dispose you: you'll be found,  
Be you beneath the sky. — [*Aside.*] I'm angling now,  
Though you perceive me not how I give line.  
Go to, go to! [*Observing POLIXENES and HERMIONE.*  
How she holds up the neb,<sup>28</sup> the bill to him!  
And arms her with the boldness of a wife  
To her allowing<sup>29</sup> husband! —

[*Exeunt* POLIX., HERM., and Attend.  
Gone already!

Inch-thick, knee-deep, o'er head and ears a fork'd one!<sup>30</sup> —  
Go, play, boy, play: — thy mother plays, and I  
Play too; but so disgraced a part, whose issue

<sup>27</sup> That is, heir-apparent, next claimant, or nearest kin.

<sup>28</sup> *Neb* is *beak*, *bill*, or *nose*. So "meeting *noses*," later in this scene.

<sup>29</sup> *Allowing* is *approving*. Such is often the meaning of to *allow* in old writers. See *Twelfth Night*, page 34, note 7.

<sup>30</sup> "A *fork'd one*" is one having his brow forked with horns. Allusions to this occur *ad nauseam*. See page 46, note 16.

Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour  
 Will be my knell. — Go, play, boy, play. — Should all despair  
 That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind  
 Would hang themselves. Many thousand on's  
 Have the disease, and feel't not. — How now, boy!

*Mam.* I am like you, they say.

*Leon.*

Why, that's some comfort. —

What, Camillo there?

*Cam.*

Ay, my good lord.

*Leon.* Go, play, Mamillius; thou'rt an honest man. —

[*Exit* MAMILLIUS.]

Camillo, this great sir will yet stay longer.

*Cam.* You had much ado to make his anchor hold:  
 When you cast out, it still came home.

*Leon.*

Didst note it?

*Cam.* He would not stay at your petitions; made  
 His business more material.

*Leon.*

Didst perceive it? —

[*Aside.*] They're here with me already;<sup>31</sup> whispering, rounding,  
*Sicilia is a — so-forth*: 'tis far gone,

When I shall gust it last.<sup>32</sup> — How came't, Camillo,  
 That he did stay?

*Cam.*

At the good Queen's entreaty.

*Leon.* At the Queen's be't: *good* should be pertinent;  
 But, so it is, it is not. Was this taken  
 By any understanding pate but thine?

<sup>31</sup> "They are already aware of my dishonour"; they referring not to Polixenes and Hermione, but to the people about the Court. — *Rounding* is much the same as *muttering*. To *round* one in the ear, was a common phrase.

<sup>32</sup> "The knowledge of my disgrace has spread far and wide, since I am the last to find it out." *Gust* for *taste*; as in *disgust*.

For thy conceit<sup>33</sup> is soaking, will draw in  
 More than the common blocks: not noted, is't,  
 But of the finer natures? by some severals  
 Of head-piece extraordinary? lower messes<sup>34</sup>  
 Perchance are to this business purblind? say.

*Cam.* Business, my lord! I think most understand  
 Bohemia stays here longer.

*Leon.*

Ha!

*Cam.*

Stays here longer.

*Leon.* Ay, but why?

*Cam.* To satisfy your Highness, and th' entreaties  
 Of our most gracious mistress.

*Leon.*

Satisfy

Th' entreaties of your mistress! — satisfy!  
 Let that suffice. I've trusted thee, Camillo,  
 With all the near'st things to my heart,<sup>35</sup> as well  
 My chamber-councils; wherein, priest-like, thou  
 Hast cleansed my bosom; I from thee departed  
 Thy penitent reform'd: but we have been  
 Deceived in thy integrity, deceived  
 In that which seems so.

*Cam.*

Be't forbid, my lord!

<sup>33</sup> *Conceit* was always used in a good sense, and with reference to the faculties of thought generally: *judgment, understanding, &c.*

<sup>34</sup> *Messes* is here put for *degrees, conditions*. The company at great tables were divided according to their rank into higher and lower messes. Sometimes the *messes* were served at different tables, and seem to have been arranged in *fours*, whence the word came to express *four* in vulgar speech. — Of course Leontes in his self-delusion is mightily puffed up with a conceit of his own superior insight and sagacity.

<sup>35</sup> "The things nearest to my heart." Such transpositions are frequent. — In what follows, *as well* has the force of *as well as*. Often so. "Chamber counsels" are official consultations held in the King's Council-chamber.



*Leon.* To bide upon't,<sup>36</sup> thou art not honest ; or,  
If thou inclinest that way, thou art a coward,  
Which hoxes<sup>37</sup> honesty behind, restraining  
From course required ; or else thou must be counted  
A servant grafted in my serious trust,  
And therein negligent ; or else a fool  
That see'st a game play'd home,<sup>38</sup> the rich stake drawn,  
And takest it all for jest.

*Cam.* My gracious lord,  
I may be negligent, foolish, and fearful ;  
In every one of these no man is free,  
But that his negligence, his folly, fear,  
Among the infinite doings of the world,  
Sometime puts forth. In your affairs, my lord,  
If ever I were wilful-negligent,  
It was my folly ; if industriously  
I play'd the fool, it was my negligence,  
Not weighing well the end ; if ever fearful  
To do a thing, where I the issue doubted,  
Whereof the execution did cry out  
Against the non-performance,<sup>39</sup> 'twas a fear  
Which oft infects the wisest : these, my lord,  
Are such allow'd infirmities that honesty

<sup>36</sup> This phrase means "it is my fixed opinion." So in Beaumont and Fletcher's *King and no King*, iv. 3: "Captain, thou art a valiant gentleman; to bide upon't, a very valiant man."

<sup>37</sup> To *hox* is to *hamstring*. The proper form of the word is *hough*.

<sup>38</sup> *Home*, adverb, is *to the utmost, thoroughly, or to the quick*. So we have "strike her *home*," "pay us *home*," "satisfy me *home*," and many others.

<sup>39</sup> An obscure passage, but probably meaning, "the non-performance of which was matter of regret or blame afterwards, when the reasons for doing it became evident." So the event often proves that it were better to have done things that were left undone. In that case, the advantage of having gone ahead may be said to reprove the holding back.

Is never free of. But, beseech your Grace,  
Be plainer with me ; let me know my trespass  
By its own visage : if I then deny it,  
'Tis none of mine.

*Leon.* Ha' not you seen, Camillo, —  
But that's past doubt, you have ; or heard, —  
For, to a vision so apparent, rumour  
Cannot be mute ; or thought, — for cogitation  
Resides not in that man that does not think't, —  
My wife is slippery ? If thou wilt confess, —  
Or else be impudently negative,  
To have nor eyes nor ears nor thought, — then say  
My wife's a hobby-horse :<sup>40</sup> say't, and justify't.

*Cam.* I would not be a stander-by to hear  
My sovereign mistress clouded so, without  
My present vengeance taken : 'shrew my heart,<sup>42</sup>  
You never spoke what did become you less  
Than this ; which to reiterate were sin  
As deep as that, though true.<sup>43</sup>

*Leon.* Is whispering nothing ?  
Is leaning cheek to cheek ? is meeting noses ?  
Kissing with inside lip ? stopping the career  
Of laughter with a sigh ? — a note infallible  
Of breaking honesty ; — horsing foot on foot ?  
Skulking in corners ? wishing clocks more swift ?  
Hours, minutes ? noon, midnight ? and all eyes else

<sup>40</sup> *Hobby-horse* was applied in contempt to frivolous or licentious persons of either sex.

<sup>42</sup> "*Beshrew* me" was a common imprecation ; equivalent to *confound* me, or *plague take* me.

<sup>43</sup> "To reiterate your accusation of the Queen were as deep a sin as that you charge her with, even though she be guilty of it."

Blind with the pin-and-web,<sup>44</sup> but theirs, theirs only,  
That would unseen be wicked? is this nothing?  
Why, then the world and all that's in't is nothing;  
The covering sky is nothing; Bohemia nothing;  
My wife is nothing; nor nothing have these nothings,  
If this be nothing.

*Cam.* Good my lord, be cured  
Of this diseased opinion, and betimes;  
For 'tis most dangerous.

*Leon.* Say it be, 'tis true.

*Cam.* No, no, my lord.

*Leon.* It is; you lie, you lie:  
I say thou liest, Camillo, and I hate thee;  
Pronounce thee a gross lout, a mindless slave;  
Or else a hovering temporizer,<sup>45</sup> that  
Canst with thine eyes at once see good and evil,  
Inclining to them both: were my wife's liver  
Infected as her life, she would not live  
The running of one glass.

*Cam.* Who does infect her?

*Leon.* Why, he that wears her like a medal hanging  
About his neck, Bohemia; who, — if I  
Had servants true about me, that bare eyes  
To see alike mine honour as their profits,  
Their own particular thrifts, — they would do that  
Which should undo more doing: ay, and thou,  
His cupbearer, — whom I from meaner form

<sup>44</sup> The *pin-and-web* is the cataract in an early stage.

<sup>45</sup> A *hovering temporizer* is a *waverer*, or, in our language, a *waiter* upon Providence; one who sits astride the fence, watching the chances, or the setting of the current, and at last takes the side where "thrift may follow fawning."

Have bench'd,<sup>46</sup> and rear'd to worship; who mayst see  
Plainly, as Heaven sees Earth, and Earth sees Heaven,  
How I am gall'd, — thou mightst bespice a cup,  
To give mine enemy a lasting wink;  
Which draught to me were cordial.

*Cam.* Sir, my lord,  
I could do this, and that with no rash<sup>47</sup> potion,  
But with a lingering dram, that should not work  
Maliciously like poison: but I cannot  
Believe this crack to be in my dread mistress,  
So sovereignly being honourable.<sup>48</sup>  
I have loved thee, —

*Leon.* Make that thy question, and go rot!  
Dost think I am so muddy, so unsettled,  
T' appoint myself in this vexation,  
Give scandal to the blood o' the Prince my son, —  
Who I do think is mine, and love as mine, —  
Without ripe moving to't? Would I do this?  
Could man so blench?<sup>49</sup>

*Cam.* I must believe you, sir:  
I do; and will fetch off Bohemia for't;  
Provided that, when he's removed, your Highness

<sup>46</sup> *Meaner form* is *lower seat, place, or rank*; and the meaning is, "whom I have raised from a lower bench to a higher." So classes in schools were numbered according to the *forms*, or benches, whereon they sat. The Poet has *forms* repeatedly so.

<sup>47</sup> *Rash* here means *swift or sudden*, the idea being of a poison that acts so slowly as to be unperceived and unsuspected.

<sup>48</sup> The meaning probably is, "*she* being so *supremely* honourable"; or, it may be, "*she* being so perfect in *queenly honour*." — In the next speech, when Leontes says "Make that thy question," he evidently refers to Herminion's alleged disloyalty, the *crack* which Camillo cannot admit.

<sup>49</sup> To *blench* is to *start aside, to fly off, or to shrink*; and the meaning is, "Could any man so start or fly off from propriety of behaviour?"

Will take again your Queen as yours at first,  
Even for your son's sake ; and thereby for sealing  
The injury of tongues in Courts and kingdoms  
Known and allied to yours.

*Leon.* Thou dost advise me  
Even so as I mine own course have set down :  
I'll give no blemish to her honour, none.

*Cam.* My lord,  
Go then ; and with a countenance as clear  
As friendship wears at feasts, keep with Bohemia  
And with your Queen. I am his cupbearer :  
If from me he have wholesome beverage,  
Account me not your servant.

*Leon.* This is all :  
Do't, and thou hast the one half of my heart ;  
Do't not, thou splitt'st thine own.

*Cam.* I'll do't, my lord.

*Leon.* I will seem friendly, as thou hast advised me. [*Exit.*]

*Cam.* O miserable lady !— But, for me,  
What case stand I in ? I must be the poisoner  
Of good Polixenes : and my ground to do't  
Is the obedience to a master ; one  
Who, in rebellion with himself, will have  
All that are his so too. To do this deed,  
Promotion follows. If I could find example  
Of thousands that had struck anointed kings,  
And flourish'd after, I'd not do't ; but, since  
Nor brass nor stone nor parchment bears not one,  
Let villainy itself forswear't. I must  
Forsake the Court : to do't, or no, is certain  
To me a break-neck. Happy star reign now !  
Here comes Bohemia.

*Re-enter POLIXENES.*

*Polix.* This is strange : methinks  
My favour here begins to warp. Not speak?—  
Good day, Camillo.

*Cam.* Hail, most royal sir !

*Polix.* What is the news i' the Court ?

*Cam.* None rare, my lord.

*Polix.* The King hath on him such a countenance  
As he had lost some province, and a region  
Loved as he loves himself : even now I met him  
With customary compliment ; when he,  
Wafting his eyes to th' contrary, and falling  
A lip of much contempt, speeds from me ; and  
So leaves me to consider. What is breeding,  
That changes thus his manners ?

*Cam.* I dare not know, my lord.

*Polix.* How ! dare not !— do not ? Do you know, and  
dare not

Be intelligent to me ? 'Tis thereabouts ;<sup>50</sup>  
For, to yourself, what you do know, you must,  
And cannot say you dare not. Good Camillo,  
Your changed complexions are to me a mirror,  
Which shows me mine changed too ; for I must be  
A party in this alteration, finding  
Myself thus alter'd with't.

*Cam.* There is a sickness  
Which puts some of us in distemper ; but  
I cannot name the disease ; and it is caught  
Of you that yet are well.

<sup>50</sup> "Such, or something such, is the true interpretation of your language."  
—"Be intelligent" here means *give intelligence*.

*Polix.* How! caught of me!  
 Make me not sighted like the basilisk:<sup>51</sup>  
 I've look'd on thousands, who have sped the better  
 By my regard, but kill'd none so. Camillo, —  
 As you are certainly a gentleman; thereto  
 Clerk-like, experienced, which no less adorns  
 Our gentry than our parents' noble names,  
 In whose success we're gentle,<sup>52</sup> — I beseech you,  
 If you know aught which does behove my knowledge  
 Thereof to be inform'd, imprison't not  
 In ignorant concealment.

*Cam.* I may not answer.

*Polix.* A sickness caught of me, and yet I well!  
 I must be answer'd. Dost thou hear, Camillo?  
 I conjure<sup>53</sup> thee, by all the parts of man  
 Which honour does acknowledge, — whereof the least  
 Is not this suit of mine,<sup>54</sup> — that thou declare  
 What incidency thou dost guess of harm

<sup>51</sup> Shakespeare has many allusions to this old fabulous serpent, which was said to have the power of killing by its look, or of darting deadly venom from its eyes. *Cockatrice* was another name of the beast. See *Twelfth Night*, page 103, note 15.

<sup>52</sup> "In whose *succession*, or by succession *from whom*, we are *well-born*, or inherit our nobility of rank." So both *success* and *gentle* were often used; the latter being opposed to *simple*, or *low-born*. — *Clerk-like* is *learned* or *scholarly*; *scholar* being the proper meaning of *clerk*.

<sup>53</sup> In Shakespeare's time, *conjure*, in the sense of *earnestly request*, was pronounced with the accent on the first or the second syllable, indifferently; the two ways of pronunciation not having become appropriated to the different senses of the word.

<sup>54</sup> Some obscurity again. *Whereof* refers to *parts*; *parts* means *duties*, *claims*, or *rights*; and the order of the words according to the sense is, "whereof this suit of mine is not the least"; that is, not the least of all the claims of man which honour does acknowledge. — *Incidency* is *contingency* or *likelihood*; what is likely to happen or befall.

Is creeping toward me; how far off, how near;  
 Which way to be prevented, if to be;  
 If not, how best to bear it.

*Cam.* Sir, I'll tell you;  
 Since I am charged in honour, and by him  
 That I think honourable: therefore mark my counsel,  
 Which must be even as swiftly follow'd as  
 I mean to utter it, or both yourself and me  
 Cry *lost*, and so good night!

*Polix.* On, good Camillo.

*Cam.* I am appointed him<sup>55</sup> to murder you.

*Polix.* By whom, Camillo?

*Cam.* By the King.

*Polix.* For what?

*Cam.* He thinks, nay, with all confidence he swears,  
 As he had seen't, or been an instrument  
 To vice<sup>56</sup> you to't, that you have touch'd his Queen  
 Forbiddenly.

*Polix.* O, then my best blood turn  
 To an infected jelly, and my name  
 Be yoked with his<sup>57</sup> that did betray the Best!

<sup>55</sup> Am appointed *the one*, or *the man*, apparently.

<sup>56</sup> *Vice* is commonly explained as meaning to *force*; the word being used of any engine worked by a screw. This explanation is certainly countenanced by a passage in *Twelfth Night*, v. 1: "Since you to non-regardance cast my faith, and that I partly know the *instrument* that *screws* me from my true place in your favour," &c. Another explanation may be, that *vice* is here used in the sense of to *tempt*, to *corrupt*, to *vitate*. Mr. Joseph Crosby thinks it may be "that the Poet here purposely employed the word *vice* as possessing a double propriety, implying not only 'as though he had been an instrument to urge you to it,' but 'had been a *vicious* instrument, viciously to screw you up, or impel you along, to the commission of this crime.'"

<sup>57</sup> Judas. A clause in the sentence of excommunicated persons was, "let them have part with Judas that betrayed Christ."

Turn then my freshest reputation to  
 A savour that may strike the dullest nostril  
 Where I arrive, and my approach be shunn'd,  
 Nay, hated too, worse than the great'st infection  
 That e'er was heard or read!

*Cam.*

Swear this thought over

By each particular star in heaven and  
 By all their influences, you may as well  
 Forbid the sea for to obey the Moon,  
 As or by oath remove, or counsel shake,  
 The fabric of his folly; whose foundation  
 Is piled upon his faith, and will continue  
 The standing of his body.

*Polix.*

How should this grow?

*Cam.* I know not: but I'm sure 'tis safer to  
 Avoid what's grown than question how 'tis born.  
 If, therefore, you dare trust my honesty,—  
 That lies enclosed in this trunk, which you  
 Shall bear along impawn'd,—away to-night!  
 Your followers I will whisper to the business;  
 And will, by twos and threes, at several posterns,  
 Clear them o' the city: for myself, I'll put  
 My fortunes to your service, which are here  
 By this discovery lost. Be not uncertain;  
 For, by the honour of my parents, I  
 Have utter'd truth: which if you seek to prove,  
 I dare not stand by; nor shall you be safer  
 Than one condemn'd by th' King's own mouth, thereon  
 His execution sworn.

*Polix.*

I do believe thee:

I saw his heart in's face. Give me thy hand:

Be pilot to me, and thy places<sup>58</sup> shall  
 Still neighbour mine. My ships are ready, and  
 My people did expect my hence-departure  
 Two days ago. This jealousy of his  
 Is for a precious creature: as she's rare,  
 Must it be great; and, as his person's mighty,  
 Must it be violent; and as he does conceive  
 He is dishonour'd by a man which ever  
 Profess'd to him, why, his revenges must  
 In that be made more bitter. Fear o'ershades me:  
 Good expedition be my friend, and nothing  
 The gracious Queen, part of his theme, discomfort  
 Of his ill-ta'en suspicion!<sup>59</sup> Come, Camillo;  
 I will respect thee as a father, if  
 Thou bear'st my life off hence: let us avoid.

*Cam.* It is in mine authority to command  
 The keys of all the posterns: please your Highness  
 To take the urgent hour: come, sir, away. [Exeunt.

<sup>58</sup> *Places* clearly means *offices* or *honours*. Polixenes means that Camillo shall be placed near him, or in the highest offices under him.

<sup>59</sup> The meaning seems to be, "May a speedy departure befriend me, and nowise discomfort the Queen in respect of his groundless suspicion!" Polixenes is apprehensive, as he well may be, that his flight will confirm the jealousy of Leontes, and so add to the sufferings of the Queen. And such is indeed the effect of the "good expedition" that rescues him from danger. Shakespeare often uses *nothing* simply as a strong negative, equivalent to *nowise* or *not at all*. He also repeatedly uses *of* with the force of *in respect of*. See Critical Notes.