

may be supported from i. i. 73, "Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon". The nuns, nymphs, and fairies are all treated as in some ways identical by Shakespeare in the play, though I am not quite sure whether he is conscious that Titania, or Diana, was herself, in another aspect, the Moon.

101. *human mortals*. The two terms may be merely tautologous; or there may be a distinction between '*human mortals*' and '*fairy mortals*'. The fairies were not always considered as exempt from death. See Appendix A, §§ 6, 13 (g). But I incline to think that Shakespeare does so consider them here, and that the votaress of line 123 was not a fairy, but distinguished from Titania by being mortal.

winter here. Hanmer proposed *winter cheer*, but there is no need for any change of text.

102. All the critics have been misled by Steevens, the "Puck of commentators", who says: "Hymns and carols, in the time of Shakespeare, during the season of Christmas, were sung every night about the streets".

103, 104. *the moon, the governess of floods... washes all the air*. Cf. "the watery moon" (line 162); also *Hamlet*, i. i. 119—

"the moist star

Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands";

and *Winter's Tale*, i. 2. 426—

"You may as well

Forbid the sea for to obey the moon".

Shakespeare regards the moon, not only as ruling the tides, but also as drawing up moisture from the earth. It is true that a 'moist', 'watery', or hazy moon is generally followed by rain.

105. Accent *rheumatism*. From here onwards Titania describes a general confusion of the seasons, rather than the actual facts of any one season.

106. *this distemperature*, i.e. the disorder of the winds and moon. Malone interprets it, less probably, as referring to the dissensions between Oberon and Titania.

109. *thin*, i.e. 'scantily covered'. This is Tyrwhitt's conjecture for the *chin* of the Qq. Ff. You can hardly hang a chaplet on a chin. Grey proposed *chill*.

112. *childing*. So the Qq. Ff. 1-3: see Glossary. F4 has *chiding*.

113. *Their wonted liveries*, 'their wonted outward appearances'. The line may either be scanned—

"Their wo'nt | ed li'v | eries, | a'nd the | ma'z'd wo'rld",

which requires a rather undue stress on 'and', to avoid the succession of four unstressed syllables, or,

"Their wo'nt | ed li'v | eries, and | the ma' | zed wo'rld".

114. *their increase*, i.e. the natural products of each season, which no longer serve to distinguish them, by coming at their true time.

123. Cf. line 23 and note.

135. *being mortal*. Cf. line 101, note.

136, 137. A succession of lines which all begin in the same way is much in Shakespeare's earlier manner. Cf. e.g. *Merchant of Venice*, v. i. 193, 194—

"If you did know to whom I gave the ring,

If you did know for whom I gave the ring," &c.

138. *intend you stay*. The particle 'to' was much more freely omitted before the infinitive in Elizabethan than in modern English. Cf. Abbott, § 349.

146-168. On the supposed historical allusions in this passage, see Appendix G.

146. *thou shalt not from this grove*. A verb of motion is often omitted between an auxiliary and a preposition of motion. Cf. Abbott, § 405.

149. *Since*, in the sense of 'when'. Cf. Abbott, § 132.

153. *spheres*. Cf. line 7, note.

155. Oberon can see what Puck can not. Cf. Appendix A, § 14.

156. *cold*. The moon is *cold*, physically, because her rays do not burn like the sun's, and spiritually, as the patroness of chastity. Cf. line 162.

158. *vestal*. The priestesses of Vesta at Rome, like those of Artemis-Diana at Athens, were vowed to perpetual virginity.

by the west, i.e. in England, to the west of Athens.

162. *watery*. Cf. lines 103, 104, note.

168. *love-in-idleness*. The *Viola tricolor*, or common pansy, is sometimes of a milky-white colour, sometimes splashed and stained with purple. The difference is probably due to the nature of the soil it grows in. Shakespeare's conceit is founded upon divers stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which flowers are created or are changed in colour by the blood of some hero or heroine. Such is the staining of the mulberry by the blood of Pyramus. See Appendix E. Herrick makes frequent use of similar ideas, and sings "How roses first came red, and lilies white". Many of the popular names of the pansy treat it as the emblem of boy-and-girl love. It is called, for instance, besides 'Love in Idleness', 'Cuddle me to you', and 'Meet me in the Entry, and Kiss me in the Buttery'.

174. Cf. Chapman, *Bussy D'Ambois*, Act i. sc. 1—

"In tall ships richly built and ribbed with brass,
To put a girdle round about the world".

184. *another herb*, the 'Dian's bud'. Cf. iv. i. 72.

186. I am invisible. It is not necessary for Oberon to tell Puck this, but it is necessary for Shakespeare to tell the audience, to explain how it is that Demetrius and Helena do not see him during what follows.

190. slay...slayeth. So Thirlby for the *stay...stayeth* of the Qq. Ff.

192. wode within this wood, a pun. Q1 distinguishes the words as *wodde* and *wood*; in Q2 F1 both are spelt *wood*. See Glossary.

195-197. I do not think that Helena is drawing a distinction between iron and steel. The point seems to be, 'you draw my heart as adamant draws iron; yet, though my heart be true as steel, it is not in other respects like iron; i.e. it is not hard'.

To get this sense, we must explain 'for' in the sense of 'for all that'. Abbott, § 154, quotes a passage from North's Plutarch, where 'for all these reasons' stands as a translation of '*nonobstant toutes ces raisons*'. Some editors adopt Lettson's *though my heart*.

195. adamant is here 'loadstone', more usually 'diamond'. See Glossary.

201. nor I cannot. A double negative is common in Shakespeare. Cf. Abbott, § 406.

208. worser. A double comparative or superlative is also frequently found. Cf. 'more better' (iii. i. 18). Abbott, § 11, explains the idiom as giving emphasis, but here at least it seems to be only due to the need for another syllable.

220, 221. The Qq. Ff. punctuation is—
"Your virtue is my privilege: for that
It is".

The alteration in the text, due to Malone, seems to me to give a better sense, and a better rhythm. Neither pauses after the fourth foot nor run-on lines are characteristic of this play. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 16.

231. The story of the flight of Daphne from Apollo, until she was turned into a laurel, is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, i. 452, 599.

235. stay, 'stay for'.

243. a heaven of hell. The opposite idea to that contained in i. i. 207.

244. upon here denotes the cause or instrument. Cf. Abbott, § 191.

245. Oberon again becomes an actor in the scene, and the verse consequently assumes a lyrical rhymed cast.

249. A difficult line to scan. Pope boldly read *whereon*. Other critics treat 'where' or 'wild' or 'thyme' as a dissyllable. It may be an octosyllabic line, with a tripping anapaestic third foot—

"I know' | a bank' | where the wild' | thyme' blows".

The trisyllable, followed by a spondee, prevents the line from being felt as too short. But anapaests are rare in Shakespeare's early plays, possibly even rarer than the elision of *the* before a consonant,

"I know' | a bank' | where th' wild' | thyme' blows".

See Essay on Metre, §§ 8 (v), 12 (iii), 14.

250. grows. Cf. line 91, note.

oxlips. The true oxlip is the plant known to botanists as *Primula elatior*, but the plant commonly so called is a hybrid between the primrose and the cowslip. "Bold oxlips" are among the flowers of Perdita's imagined nosegay in *Winter's Tale*, iv. 4. 124.

251. woodbine, probably honeysuckle, but see iv. i. 47, note.

It is possible to scan

"Quite o' | ver can' | opied with | lusc'ious | wood'bine'",

but this requires an awkward elision before 'p' in the third foot, and an awkward inversion of accent in the fourth foot. I should prefer, with Theobald, to read *lush*. The spelling of Q1 is *over-canop'd*, that of Q2 Ff. *over-canoped* or *over-cannoped*. Perhaps, therefore, if the word is shortened it should be by elision, not of 'o', but of 'ie'.

252. musk-roses. The name is generally given in the Herball to a large single garden rose, the *Rosa moschata*. If Shakespeare intends a wild flower it is perhaps the low-growing brown-calyxed *Rosa arvensis*.

eglantine, the sweet-brier, or *Rosa rubiginosa*. Arviragus says of Imogen in *Cymbeline*, iv. 2. 220—

"Thou shalt not lack.....

The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath".

Milton, however, in *L'Allegro* distinguishes the eglantine from the sweet-brier, but Milton did not know much about flowers. Cf. Ellacombe, *Plant-lore of Shakespeare*.

263, 264. man...on. Did Shakespeare pronounce 'man' with the broad Scotch sound of *mon*?

268. Another Biblical reminiscence; cf. *S. Luke*, vii. 8, "I say...to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it".

Scene 2.

Lines 1-26, with their song and dance, are part of the masque-like element in the play. The rest of the scene serves to advance the action of the fairy story and of the lover story. In the fairy story, lines 27-34 bring about the complication for which the motive was provided by the jealousy of Oberon in the last scene, and of which

the crisis will arrive in Act iii. sc. 1. In the lover story (lines 35-156), the crisis, which consists of the turning of both Demetrius and Lysander from Hermia to Helena, is divided between the present scene and Act iii. sc. 2. Puck's mistake comes in as a second motive, to alter the effect of Oberon's whim, and thus it is that Lysander's eyes are anointed instead of those of Demetrius.

2. the third part of a minute. The fairies dwell in small degrees, both of time and space.

3. musk-rose buds. Cf. ii. 1. 252, note.

6. clamorous owl. Cf. *Macbeth*, ii. 3. 65—
"the obscure bird
Clamoured the live-long night".

9. double, i.e. forked.

11. Newts and blind-worms are harmless enough, but 'eye of newt' and 'blindworm's sting' are included among the poisonous elements of the witches' caldron in *Macbeth*, iv. 1. 14-16.

13. Philomel, the Greek name for the nightingale.

20. spiders were held to be poisonous. Cf. *Richard II.*, ii. 1.

14. "Thy spiders, that suck up thy venom" (i.e. 'earth's venom').

27-34. The trochaic metre used here and in lines 66-83 is Shakespeare's favourite rhythm for supernatural speakers. See Essay on Metre, § 17 (ii).

30, 31. ounce and Pard, at any rate, were never found either at Stratford or Athens. But in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare introduces a lion into Arden.

35-65. There is not, as has been said in the Introduction, much character-drawing among the lovers, but there is a contrast between the maidenliness of Hermia in this scene and the somewhat oncoming disposition of Helena in ii. 1. 188-244.

46. 'Love enables lovers to understand each other's true meaning.'

49. interchanged. So Qq.: the *interchanged* of the Ff. is less forcible.

77. A difficult line to scan. Pope read *near to*, and Walker *nearer*. But a line of more than four feet would be out of keeping, metrically, with the rest of the passage. I should read it with a rather forced accent on the last syllable to bring out the rhyme—

"Near this' | lack-love', | this kill' | courtesy'".

There are other iambic lines (e.g. line 74) scattered among the trochaic ones.

86. darkling, in the dark. Cf. *King Lear*, i. 4. 237, "So out went the candle, and we were left darkling". Milton has, in *Paradise Lost*, iii. 39, of the nightingale—

"the wakeful bird
Sings darkling".

89. lesser. Cf. note on 'worse' (ii. 1. 208).

grace, 'answer to prayer', and so, 'good fortune', 'happiness'.

99. sphery eyne, not, one may assume, 'spherical' eyes; but 'eyes that have the brightness of stars in their spheres'.

104. Nature shows art. So the Qq. F1 has *Nature her shews art*, corrected by the later Ff. into *Nature here shews art*, and by Malone into *Nature shews her art*. Either reading will scan, according as you make a dissyllable or a trisyllable of 'Helena'.

108, 109. These jerky lines, with their staccato emphasis, and reiteration of the sound 'so...so...though...though', may be looked upon as comparatively youthful work.

113. Helena I love. So Q1. Q2, Ff. have *Helena now I love*.

118. ripe. I think it is right to take *ripe* as a verb here. 'Cf. *As You Like It*, ii. 7. 26—

"And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot".

119. My reason has reached the 'point', that is, the 'height' of human 'skill' or 'wisdom', in learning to appreciate Helena.

120. marshal. The herald or pursuivant, who leads a dignified procession. See Glossary.

122. love's richest book. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. 3. 350—

"From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;
They are the books, the arts, the academes,
That show, contain, and nourish all the world";

and *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 3. 81—

"Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,

And what obscured in this fair volume lies,
Find written in the margin of his eyes".

150. you. So Qq.: Ff. read *yet*.

154. of all loves. *Of* is often used in protestations: cf. Abbott, § 169. In *Othello*, iii. 1. 13, Q1 has "*of all loves*", which is altered in F1 into "*for love's sake*". Cf. also *Twelfth Night*, v. 1. 237, "Of charity, what kin are you to me?"

156. Either must be scanned as a monosyllable: cf. ii. 1. 32, note.

Act III.—Scene 1.

In this scene the fairy story and the rustic story meet. The action is so contrived that one event, the translation of Bottom, serves as the complication in them both; in the rustic story, by breaking up

the rehearsal; in the fairy story, by providing a monster for Titania to fall in love with. The result of this combination is to provide just that absurd mixture of masque and antimasque, the broadly farcical and the delicately beautiful, which the Elizabethan taste loved.

Bottom and his fellows have come to the same part of the wood in which the last scene took place. The elves have departed on their various offices, and Titania is sleeping on her bank. She is, of course, invisible to the rustics.

4. **tiring-house**, that is, 'attiring-house' or 'green-room'; which, in the Elizabethan theatre, appears to have been a room immediately behind the stage.

6. Bottom has an important criticism to make. He clears his throat to call attention, and addresses himself in a loud voice to the stage-manager.

12. **By'r lakin**, in full, 'by our ladykin' or 'little lady', is, like 'marry', an oath by the Virgin Mary. Q 1 spells it *Berlakin*; Q 2 *Ff. Berlaken*.

15. Bottom has not raised the difficulty without being prepared to solve it.

16. a **prologue**. The 'πρόλογος', 'prologue' or 'fore-word', of Greek drama, was the name given to the opening scene, in which the situation of the *dramatis personae* was generally described by one of them. It lingered in the Elizabethan drama, not as part of the action, but as an introductory speech delivered from the stage before the actual play began. Shakespeare introduced a prologue into the interlude in *Hamlet*, Act iii. sc. 2, and uses the device himself in *Henry V.* and in *Romeo and Juliet*. But the Elizabethan prologue, unlike the Greek one, generally gave an outline of the coming plot. Cf. *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 151, "We shall know by this fellow; the players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all". Sometimes, however, it was rather of the nature of an address or apology from the actors or the poet to the audience. Ben Jonson so uses it; and that is what Bottom here proposes. An epilogue occasionally, as in *As You Like It*, served a similar purpose.

18. **more better**. Cf. note on 'worse' in ii. 1. 208.

19. **not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver**. Cf. line 47. Malone finds here a reminiscence of an event of which an account is preserved in a MS. collection of jests made by Sir Nicholas L'Estrange in Harl. MS. 6395: "There was a spectacle presented to Queen Elizabeth upon the water, and among others Harry Goldingham was to represent Arion upon the dolphin's back; but finding his voice to be very hoarse and unpleasant, when he came to perform it, he tears off his disguise, and swears he was none of Arion, not he, but even honest Harry Goldingham; which blunt discovery pleased the queen better than if it had gone through in

the right way: yet he could order his voice to an instrument exceeding well". Scott has used this incident in *Kenilworth*.

22. **eight and six**; i.e. alternating lines of eight and six syllables respectively, the metre of Bottom's song (lines 117-120), and the 'common metre' of the metrical psalms.

Quince appears to be the author of the interlude. He is doubtless the local poet. Bottom says in iv. 1. 209, 210, "I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream".

23. Bottom's only reason for objecting to 'eight and six' is that he wants to have things his own way.

28. **a lion among ladies**. Malone finds here an obvious allusion to an event at the christening of Prince Henry of Scotland on 30th August, 1594. It is thus described in a printed description dated 1603. A triumphal car was drawn in by a blackamoor. "This chariot should have been drawn in by a lion, but because his presence might have brought some fear to the nearest, or that the sight of the lights and torches might have commoved his tameness, it was thought meet that the Moor should supply that room." It is surprising that more notice has not been taken of this allusion as helping to determine the date of our play. See Introduction, p. 10.

29. **fearful wild-fowl**, a delightfully topsy-turvy phrase.

30. **your**. Cf. i. 2. 80, note.

35. **defect**. Bottom means 'effect'.

39. **pity of my life**, a common phrase. *Of* has the sense of 'concerning', 'about'. Cf. 'desire you of more acquaintance' (line 163), and Abbott, § 174.

42. **there is two hard things**. A singular verb goes more readily with a plural subject when the verb comes first. Cf. Abbott, § 335.

48. See the note on the *Time* of the Play.

52, 53. **a bush of thorns and a lanthorn**. Cf. v. i. 248-250, note.

53. **disfigure**. Bottom means 'figure forth'.

present, a technical stage term for 'act'.

58. Bottom, for all his swagger, is justly looked up to as a man of considerable resources.

59. **and let**. So Collier for the *or let* of the Qq. *Ff*.

67-94. It is noteworthy that the passages here rehearsed do not form part of the play as presented in Act v.; and further, that the prologue actually used is not written either in 'eight and six' or 'eight and eight', but in 'ten and ten'. Again, Starveling, Snout, and Quince do not play Thisby's mother, Pyramus' father, and Thisby's father, as was arranged in Act i. sc. 1, for those characters do not appear at all. The actors assigned to them probably play Prologue, Wall, and Moonshine. One gathers that Quince revised his play between this rehearsal and the performance, though there is no mention of a second rehearsal. The inconsistency is quite easily

understood. It would be very tedious for Shakespeare's audience to go a second time over the same bit of burlesque.

67. *hempen home-spuns*. Has Shakespeare remembered the part that hemp, at one time more cultivated in England than now, plays in the traditional stories of Robin Goodfellow? See Appendix A, § 18 (a).

73. *Odorous, odorous*. The Qq. have *odours, odorous*; the Ff. *odours, odours*. I have ventured to adopt Collier's emendation. The Ff. reading makes Quince's correction as absurd as Bottom's original mistake. Cf. the "caparisons are odorous" of Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop.

74. *odours*. Bottom has not quite caught the right word even now.

78. Puck's instinct for mischief suggests to him a trick which will fit in admirably with Oberon's scheme to make Titania ridiculous.

84. *Jew*. Why *Jew*, except for the jingle with 'juvenal'? According to the legend, Pyramus and Thisbe were of Babylon, but perhaps this is near enough to Judæa for Shakespeare.

92. For some hints whence Shakespeare may have got the idea of transformation to an ass, see Appendix A, § 18 (a). In the prose *History of Dr. Faustus*, the magician puts asses' heads on the guests at a banquet. The Cl. Pr. ed. quotes a receipt for the transformation from Copland's translation of Albertus Magnus, *De Secretis Naturæ*.

This line is variously punctuated by the commentators. I think the sense is—

'If I were, fair Thisby, [if] I were only thine'.

But perhaps the punctuation of the text, which is also that of the Qq. Ff., should be retained, and Bottom be supposed to blunder over his stops, like Quince in his Prologue (v. 1. 108-117).

95. On Puck's powers of transformation, &c., see Appendix A, § 16.

96. Cf. ii. 1. 3-5.

98. a fire, in his capacity as Will o' the Wisp, or *ignis fatuus*.

105, 106. *you see an ass-head of your own, do you?* Bottom must not be supposed now, or at any time, to realize the full nature of the change that has befallen him. So far, of course, he has not realized that there has been any change at all. There is a comic irony in his allusions to asses here and in iv. 1. 205, *sqq.* They have a meaning to his hearers which he does not know of. Halliwell says that Bottom is using a vernacular Elizabethan retort, and compares *Merry Wives*—

"You shall have a fool's head of your own".

Johnson very unnecessarily proposed to end Snout's speech thus: *what do I see on thee? an ass's head?*

107. *translated, 'transformed'*: see Glossary.

108. *make an ass of me*. Cf. lines 105, 106, note.

112. *ousel cock*. An *ousel*, or *woozel*, was the ordinary name for a blackbird.

115. *little quill*. This refers to the shrill note of the wren, rather than to its diminutive wing-feathers.

116. Malone finds in this line a parody of the famous one of Hieronimo in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*—

"What outcry calls me from my naked bed?"

118. *plain-song cuckoo*. Mr. Chappell defines plain-song as song in which "the descant rested with the will of the singer", as opposed to "prick-song", i.e. "harmony written or pricked down". But is not the real point rather that plain-song is unvarying traditional melody, whereas in prick-song elaborate variations were introduced? Plain-song was a term originally applied to grave, simple ecclesiastical chants. This distinction exactly fits the difference between the monotonous note of the cuckoo, and the richly-varied music—"brave prick-song" Lyly calls it—of the nightingale. But the cuckoo's note is definitely *song*. Mr. W. W. Fowler, in his *Summer Studies of Birds and Books*, points out that this is one of the few birds, the intervals of whose voices agree with those of our artificial musical scale. Generally the cuckoo sings in a minor third. This was observed by White of Selborne, and by Browning, who speaks of—

"the word in a minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows".

But all cuckoos occasionally, and some of them always, prefer some other interval, such as a major third.

119. The note of the cuckoo, resembling a mocking repetition of "cuckold, cuckold", was supposed to hint to the hearer that his wife had been unfaithful to him. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 1. 908—

"The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo;
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear".

125-127. This is the order of the lines in Q1; Q2 Ff., by an obvious error, place 127 before 125.

133. There is a fine ironical humour in Shakespeare's handling of the scenes between Titania and Bottom. The compliment contained in the present line is ambiguous, and the audience may take it in what way they will.

138. On Titania's description of herself, see Appendix A, § 13 (d), and cf. Nash's *Summer's Last Will*—

"died had I indeed unto the earth,
But that Eliza, England's beauteous queen,
On whom all seasons prosperously attend,
Forbad the execution of my fate".

No doubt Shakespeare would be willing to let Elizabeth believe herself complimented in the character of Titania.

150. *dewberries*, the fruit of the *Rubus Caesius*, a low-growing, large-berried kind of bramble.

154. *the fiery glow-worm's eyes*. It is, of course, the tail of the glow-worm, and not its head, that is phosphorescent. Shakespeare's observation is that of the poet, rather than the naturalist. He believes the sting of the adder to lie in its tongue: cf. iii. 2. 72, and *Richard II.*, iii. 1. 20—

"a lurking adder,
Whose double tongue may with a mortal touch
Throw death upon the sovereign's enemies".

But perhaps by 'fiery eyes' Shakespeare here means 'eyes, or spots of light'. Cf. iii. 2. 188, 'all yon fiery oes and eyes of light'.

160. *mercy*, i.e. 'pardon'.

163. *desire you of more acquaintance*. 'Of' has the sense of 'as regards'. Cf. 'pity of my life' (line 44), and Abbott, § 174.

164. *if I cut my finger*. Cobweb is popularly used as a styptic, to stanch blood.

167. *Squash*, an unripe peascod; cf. Glossary.

178. *a watery eye*. Cf. ii. 1. 103, note; and ii. 1. 101, note, on the moon as a patroness of *chastity*.

180. *enforced chastity*, not 'compulsory chastity', but 'violated chastity'.

181. Another finely-humorous touch to finish up the scene.

love's. So Pope, for the *lover's* of the Qq. Ff.

Scene 2.

This long scene deals almost entirely with the story of the lovers, taking it up where it was dropped at the end of Act ii. scene 2. There are just sufficient references to the fairy story in lines 1-34 and lines 374-377 to prevent it from passing altogether out of mind. Act i. scene 2 contained the first step in the complication of the lover story, in that, through Oberon's good-nature, and Puck's mistake, Lysander's love was turned from Hermia to Helena. The present scene contains, (1) the second step in this complication, the diversion of Demetrius' love also to Helena; (2) the crisis, in

the angry disputes of the men and maidens; (3) the beginning of the resolution, or unravelling, by the application of the antidote to Lysander's eye.

The scene is laid in another part of the wood from that in which both Act ii. sc. 2 and Act iii. sc. 1 took place.

1-40. Puck reports to Oberon his success in making Titania ridiculous, and, as he thinks, in bewitching Demetrius with Helena.

3. *in extremity*, to an extreme degree.

5. *night-rule*. This has been somewhat fantastically regarded as a corruption of 'night-revel'; but it does not seem to mean anything but 'order kept by night'. Halliwell quotes from the statutes of London, as given in Stow's *Survey*, "No man shall, after the hour of nine at the night, keep any rule whereby any such sudden outcry be made in the still of the night, as making any affray". Cf. also *Twelfth Night*, ii. 3. 132, "Mistress Mary, if you prized my lady's favour at anything more than contempt, you would not give means for this uncivil rule".

13. *thick-skin*. Hammer needlessly read *thick-skull*. Cf. Philemon Holland, *Pliny*, i. 346, "Some measure not the fineness of spirit and wit by the purity of blood, but suppose that creatures are brutish, more or less, according as their skin is thicker or thinner".

sort, company. See Glossary, s.v.

19. *mimic*. In the sense of 'actor'. Q 1 has *minnick*, Q 2 *minnock*, F 1 *mimmick*. Ebsworth argues in favour of *minnick* in the sense of *minnikin*, effeminate. It would be used ironically of Bottom, 'my dainty fellow'. Ritson proposed *mamnock*, 'a huge misshapen thing'.

21. *russet-pated choughs*, jackdaws with russet or ashen-gray heads. Mr. Bennett (*Zool. Journal*, v. 496), taking 'russet' as 'red', proposed *russet-patted*, as referring to the red legs of the Cornish chough. See Glossary, s.v. *Russet*.

25. *at our stamp*. The fairies, as elemental beings, have the power of shaking the earth. Cf. Appendix A, § 13 (d), and iv. 1. 82, 83, where Oberon says—

"Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be".

Cf. the 'hemton hamten' passage quoted from Scot in Appendix A, § 18 (a), which here, as in iii. 1. 79, may have stuck in Shakespeare's memory. Johnson, however, proposed to read *at a stump*, and illustrated it from Drayton's *Nymphidia*—

"A stump doth trip him in his pace.
Down fell poor Hob upon his face".

32. *sweet*. Often used contemptuously by Shakespeare. See Glossary.

41-87. Hermia discovered the absence of Lysander at the close of Act ii. scene 2. In seeking for him she falls in with Demetrius. He woos, and she responds with questions as to Lysander. In the end she goes, and Demetrius lies down to sleep.

45. should, ought to.

49. The broken line may be explained by the change of subject. Hermia is lost for a moment in contemplation of the virtues of Lysander, before she begins again in a slightly different direction.

54. displease. So Qq. Ff. Some editors accept Hanmer's quite unnecessary *disease*.

55. Her brother's. The classical moon-goddess, Phœbe, was sister of the sun-god, Phœbus or Apollo.

the Antipodes, that is, properly, not the opposite hemisphere itself, but the dwellers there, whose feet are over against ours. Cf. *Rich. II.*, iii. 2. 47, where Richard compares himself to the sun—

"this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke,
Who all this while hath revell'd in the night
Whilst we were wandering with the Antipodes".

57. dead, deadly. See Glossary. The double sense of the word gives Demetrius his opportunity for a retort.

72. doubler tongue. Here again Shakespeare's natural history is at fault. Cf. iii. 1. 154, note. But of course the adder's *double tongue* is symbolical of the doubleness of treachery.

74. a misprised mood, a mood caused by misprision, or mistake.

80. Pope added *so*, which is omitted in the Qq. Ff.

87. his tender, *i.e.* 'sleep's tender'.

88-176. Oberon gathers from what he has overheard that it is not Demetrius whose eyes have been enchanted. He resolves to repair the error, sends Puck for Hermia, and in the meantime himself anoints Demetrius' eyes. Helena enters, still wooed by Lysander, who had followed her at the end of Act ii. scene 2. Demetrius wakes, and he too, as soon as his eyes fall upon Helena, begins to woo her. So that now the fairies have brought about a double faithlessness, and both of Hermia's former lovers have left her for Helena.

92, 93. Puck glances at the central idea of the play. Whatever we may do, fate will have it so that most men are false and changeable in love.

97. sighs... that cost the fresh blood dear. Cf. *2 Hen. VI.*, iii. 2. 60-63—

"Might liquid tears or heart-offending groans
Or blood-consuming sighs recall his life,
I would be blind with weeping, sick with groans,
Look pale as primrose with blood-drinking sighs".

97. costs. Ff. read *costs*, another instance of a singular verb after a plural subject. Cf. ii. 1. 91, note.

101. Douce quotes Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bk. x., "Swift as arrow from a Turkye bow". Cf. also Drayton's *Nymphidia*—

"And through the air away doth go,
Swift as an arrow from the bow".

And Chaucer, *Marchant's Tale*, 428—

"Than shal your soule up to hevne skippe,
Swifter than dooth an arwe out of the bowe".

113. a lover's fee. Halliwell explains this as meaning proverbially three kisses. He quotes an old ballad—

"How many? says Batt;
Why, three, says Matt,
For that's a maiden's fee".

119. alone, that is, 'unequaled'. Cf. *Ant. and Cleo.*, iv. 6. 30—

"I am alone the villain of the earth".

120, 121. It is the essence of Puck to delight in mischief. See Appendix A, § 16.

129. truth kills truth. 'If Lysander's present vows to Helena are true, then he must have been perjured to Hermia.'

136. Lysander's confident assertion of Demetrius' love for Hermia leads up dramatically to the latter's declaration to Helena.

137-144. These lines are amusingly reminiscent of the traditional hyperboles in which Elizabethan sonneteers celebrated the charms of their mistresses.

144. princess of pure white. There does not seem to be any difficulty in this phrase as applied to a lady's hand, but Hanmer thought it necessary to read *pureness*, and Collier *impress*.

150. join in souls, 'agree together'. Helena thinks throughout the scene that the two men have conspired with Hermia to mock her. Against this ungenerous conduct she makes a very proper and spirited protest. Here, too, the commentators have boggled, for *in souls* reading in *flouts, insolents, ill souls, in sport, in sooth, in shoals* (!), &c. &c.

160. extort, wrest away.

177-344. Hermia, still pursuing Lysander, enters to complete the situation, and in the humorous absurdities of the passage that follows, the lover story reaches its crisis. Helena still thinks she is flouted, and that Hermia is in the plot; finding Hermia to be downright angry, she gets frightened, and would gladly escape to Athens. Lysander and Demetrius end by going off to fight for Helena. Hermia at first believes that Lysander is only scorning Helena; when she

realizes that she has lost her lover, she flies into a passion, and wishes to do her rival an injury. There is more differentiation of character here than elsewhere in the story, between Hermia, the diminutive shrew, and Helena, the long-legged coward.

177. *his*. This is the usual form in Elizabethan as in Middle English for the possessive of the neuter as well as of the masculine pronoun. 'Its' was just coming into use in Shakespeare's time. It is common in Florio's *Montaigne*, but is never found in the 1611 version of the Bible. Both Shakespeare and Milton avoid as far as possible the necessity for using either form. But where it cannot be helped, Milton always uses *its*, while Shakespeare prefers *his*. *Its* only appears six times in the early editions of his plays, and all of these are in F1. The Q1 of *King Lear*, iv. 2. 32, has *ith*, which is probably a misprint for the uninflected pronoun *it*, which was used as a possessive in the Midland dialect. This is found several times in Shakespeare. See Sweet, *Short English Grammar*, § 399; Abbott, § 228; and G. L. Craik, *English of Shakespeare*, pp. 91-97.

188. *oes and eyes of light*. There is probably a pun here. Shakespeare elsewhere uses O for a circle. In *Hen. V.*, Prol. 13, he calls the theatre a "wooden O"; and in *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. 2. 81, speaks of "this little O, the earth". Cf. also Bacon, *Essay* 37, "And *oes* or *spangs*, as they are of no great cost, so they are of most glory".

201. *O, is all forgot?* So Qq. Ff. Many editors adopt Spalding's conjecture, *O, is it all forgot*: but the *O* really represents a sob, and is metrically equivalent to two syllables. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 14.

203-214. Marshall quotes a somewhat similar description of girl-friendship from *Two Noble Kinsmen*, Act i. sc. 3.

203. *artificial gods*, that is, I suppose, gods whose creative power works in the sphere of art, not nature. Shakespeare expresses almost any relation between two ideas by making one of them adjectival to the other.

204. *needles*, a monosyllable. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 7.

213, 214. Theobald suggested *first, like*, for the *first life* of the Qq. Ff.

Douce explains the passage thus: "Helen says, 'we had two seeming bodies, but only one heart'. She then exemplifies her position by a simile—'we had two of the *first*, i.e. *bodies*, like the double coats in heraldry, that belong to man and wife as *one person*, but which, like our *single heart*, have but one *crest*.' But heraldically of the *first* signifies the repetition of identical quarterings more than once in the same shield. Helena likens Hermia and herself to such quarterings, and as they are due but to one bearer, and are surmounted with his single crest, so she and her friend had but a single heart."

220. *passionate*. F1 inserts this word, accidentally omitted in the Qq.

237. *perséver* is regularly so accented in Shakespeare. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 7, 10 N.B. i.

242. *argument*, subject of *jest*.

250. *prayers*. So Theobald for the *praise* of the Qq. Ff.

256. It begins to dawn upon Hermia that Lysander is in earnest.

257. *Ethiope*. Cf. line 263, "out, tawny Tartar". I suppose that Hermia is intended to be a dark beauty and Helena a fair one. Brunettes were out of fashion in the reign of the blonde Elizabeth.

257, 258. The Qq. have—

Dem. *no, no; he'll
Seem to break loose,*

and the Ff.—

Dem. *No, no, Sir,
Seem to break loose.*

The arrangement of the text, which I have adopted, was suggested by Mr. G. Joicey in *Notes and Queries*, 8th series, iii. 102. Mr. Joicey, however, gives the first half-line to Helena. But it is Hermia who has flung her arms round Lysander, and is holding him back from fighting. The Cambridge editors give the whole to Demetrius, supposing him to begin his taunt impersonally, "No, no, he'll" [not fight]; and then, breaking off, to address Lysander directly.

260. *thou cat, thou burr*. The point is in the way Hermia is clinging to him.

265. Helena still thinks that both Lysander and Hermia are playing a pre-arranged comedy.

275. *Since night*, i.e. 'since night fell'; it is still the same night.

282. *juggler*, a trisyllable. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 8 (iii).

canker-blossom. This may mean either (1) a 'worm i' the bud', a noxious grub, which spoils the flowers, as Helena has spoilt Lysander's love for Hermia. This is the usual meaning of the word 'canker'. So in ii. 2. 3 Titania bids her elves "kill cankers in the musk-rose buds"; or it may be (2) the blossom of the dog-rose, *Rosa canina*, which was sometimes called the Canker-rose. Cf. Sonnet 54—

"The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns and play as wantonly
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:
But, for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwoo'd and unrespected fade,
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made."

'Canker' sometimes has this sense; cf. *Henry IV.*, i. 3. 175—

"To put down Richard, that sweet, lovely rose,
And plant this thorn, this canker, Bolingbroke";