

the platform scenes the chills of a northern winter midnight seem creeping over us as the heartsick sentinels pass in view, and, steeped in moonlight and drowsiness, exchange their meeting and parting salutations. The thoughts and images that rise up in their minds are just such as the anticipation of preternatural visions would be likely to inspire. And the sensations one has in reading these scenes are not unlike those of a child passing a graveyard by moonlight. Out of the dim and drowsy moonbeams apprehension creates its own objects; the fancies embody themselves in surrounding facts; fears giving shape to outward things, while those things give outwardness to the fears.—The heterogeneous, oddly-assorted elements that are brought together in the grave-digging scene; the strange mixture of songs and witticisms and dead-men's bones, and the still stranger transitions of the sprightly, the meditative, the solemn, the playful, the grotesque, make up such a combination as Shakespeare only could conceive. Here we have the hero's profound discourse of thought, his earnest moral reflectiveness, and his most idiomatic humour, all working out together. As illustrating his whole character, in all its depth and complexity, the scene is one of the richest and wisest in the play.

## HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK.

### PERSONS REPRESENTED.

CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark.	MARCELLUS, } Officers.
HAMLET, his Nephew, Son of the former King.	BERNARDO, }
OLONIUS, Lord Chamberlain.	FRANCISCO, a Soldier.
HORATIO, Friend to Hamlet.	REYNALDO, Servant to Polonius.
LAERTES, Son of Polonius.	A Captain. Ambassadors.
VOLTIMAND, } Courtiers.	The Ghost of Hamlet's Father.
CORNELIUS, }	FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway.
ROSENCRANTZ, }	Two Grave-diggers.
GUILDENSTERN, }	
OSRIC, a Courtier.	GERTRUDE, Mother of Hamlet, and Queen.
Another Courtier.	OPHELIA, Daughter of Polonius.
A Priest.	
Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Players, Sailors, Messengers, and Attendants. SCENE, Elsinore.	

### ACT I.

SCENE I. — *Elsinore. A Platform before the Castle.*

FRANCISCO *at his Post. Enter to him* BERNARDO.

*Bern.* Who's there?

*Fran.* Nay, answer me :<sup>1</sup> stand, and unfold yourself.

*Bern.* Long live the King!

*Fran.* Bernardo?

<sup>1</sup> Answer *me*, as I have the right to challenge *you*. Bernardo then gives in answer the watchword, "Long live the King!"

*Bern.* He.

*Fran.* You come most carefully upon your hour.

*Bern.* 'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco

*Fran.* For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,  
And I am sick at heart.

*Bern.* Have you had quiet guard?

*Fran.* Not a mouse stirring.

*Bern.* Well, good night.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,  
The rivals<sup>2</sup> of my watch, bid them make haste.

*Fran.* I think I hear them. — Stand, ho! Who is there?

*Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.*

*Hora.* Friends to this ground.

*Marc.* And liegemen to the Dane.

*Fran.* Give you good night.<sup>3</sup>

*Marc.* O, farewell, honest soldier:

Who hath relieved you?

*Fran.* Bernardo has my place.

Give you good night.

*Marc.* Holla! Bernardo!

*Bern.* Say,—

What, is Horatio there?

*Hora.* A piece of him.

*Bern.* Welcome, Horatio; welcome, good Marcellus.

<sup>2</sup> *Rivals* are associates or partners. A brook, rivulet, or river, *rius*, being a natural boundary between different proprietors, was owned by them in common; that is, they were *partners* in the right and use of it. From the strifes thus engendered, the *partners* came to be *contenders*: hence the ordinary sense of *rival*.

<sup>3</sup> This salutation is an abbreviated form of, "May God give you a good night"; which has been still further abbreviated in the phrase, "Good night."

*Hora.* What, has this thing<sup>4</sup> appear'd again to-night?

*Bern.* I have seen nothing.

*Marc.* Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,  
And will not let belief take hold of him  
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us:  
Therefore I have intreated him along  
With us to watch the minutes of this night,  
That, if again this apparition come,  
He may approve our eyes,<sup>5</sup> and speak to it.

*Hora.* Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

*Bern.* Sit down awhile;

And let us once again assail your ears,  
That are so fortified against our story,  
What<sup>6</sup> we two nights have seen.

*Hora.* Well, sit we down,  
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

*Bern.* Last night of all,  
When yond same star that's westward from the pole<sup>7</sup>  
Had made his<sup>8</sup> course t' illume that part of heaven

<sup>4</sup> There is a temperate scepticism, well befitting a scholar, in Horatio's "has this *thing* appeared again to-night." *Thing* is the most general and indefinite substantive in the language. Observe the gradual approach to what is more and more definite. "Dreaded sight" cuts off a large part of the indefiniteness, and "this apparition" is a further advance to the particular. The matter is aptly ordered for what Coleridge calls "*credibilizing* effect."

<sup>5</sup> That is, *make good* our vision, or *prove* our eyes to be true. *Approve* was often thus used in the sense of *confirm*.

<sup>6</sup> "With an account of what," is the meaning; the language being elliptical.

<sup>7</sup> Of course the *polar star*, or north star, is meant, which appears to stand still, while the other stars in its neighbourhood seem to revolve around it.

<sup>8</sup> *His* was continually used for *its* in Shakespeare's time, the latter not being then an accepted word, though it was just creeping into use. The English Bible abounds in instances of *his* so used; as, "the fruit-tree yielding fruit after *his* kind"; and, "giveth to every seed *his* own body."

Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,  
The bell then beating one,—

*Enter the GHOST.*

*Marc.* Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!

*Bern.* In the same figure, like the King that's dead.

*Marc.* Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.<sup>9</sup>

*Bern.* Looks it not like the King? mark it, Horatio.

*Hora.* Most like: it harrows me<sup>10</sup> with fear and wonder.

*Bern.* It would<sup>11</sup> be spoke to.

*Marc.* Question it, Horatio.

*Hora.* What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,  
Together with that fair and warlike form  
In which the Majesty of buried Denmark  
Did sometimes<sup>12</sup> march? by Heaven I charge thee, speak!

*Marc.* It is offended.

*Bern.* See, it stalks away!

*Hora.* Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

*[Exit GHOST.]*

*Marc.* 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

*Bern.* How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale:  
Is not this something more than fantasy?  
What think you on't?

<sup>9</sup> It was believed that a supernatural being could only be spoken to with effect by persons of learning; exorcisms being usually practiced by the clergy in Latin. So in *The Night Walker* of Beaumont and Fletcher: "Let's call the butler up, for he speaks Latin, and that will daunt the Devil."

<sup>10</sup> To *harrow* is to *distress*, to *vex*, to *disturb*. To *harry* and to *harass* have the same origin. Milton has the word in *Comus*: "Amazed I stood *har-row'd* with grief and fear."

<sup>11</sup> *Would* and *should* were often used indiscriminately. I am not clear, however, whether the meaning here is, "It *wants* to be spoke to," or "It *ought* to be spoke to." Perhaps both.

<sup>12</sup> *Sometimes* and *sometime* were used indiscriminately, and often, as here in the sense of *formerly*.

*Hora.* Before my God, I might not this believe  
Without the sensible and true avouch  
Of mine own eyes.

*Marc.* Is it not like the King?

*Hora.* As thou art to thyself:

Such was the very armour he had on  
When he th' ambitious Norway combated;  
So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle,  
He smote the sledded Polacks<sup>13</sup> on the ice.  
'Tis strange.

*Marc.* Thus twice before, and jump<sup>14</sup> at this dead hour,  
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

*Hora.* In what particular thought to work I know not;  
But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,  
This bodes some strange eruption to our State.<sup>15</sup>

*Marc.* Good now,<sup>16</sup> sit down, and tell me, he that knows,  
Why this same strict and most observant watch  
So nightly toils the subject<sup>17</sup> of the land,  
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,  
And foreign mart for implements of war;

<sup>13</sup> *Polacks* was used for *Polanders* in Shakespeare's time. *Sledded* is *sledged*; on a *sled* or *sleigh*.—*Parle*, in the preceding line, is the same as *parley*.

<sup>14</sup> *Jump* and *just* were synonymous in the time of Shakespeare. So in Chapman's *May Day*, 1611: "Your appointment was *jumpe* at three with me."

<sup>15</sup> Horatio means that, in a general interpretation of the matter, this fore-shadows some great evil or disaster to the State; though he cannot conceive in what particular shape the evil is to come.

<sup>16</sup> "Good now" was often used precisely as the phrase "*well now*." Also, *good* for *well*. So in *The Tempest*, i. 1: "Good, speak to the mariners." And again: "Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard."

<sup>17</sup> The Poet sometimes uses an adjective with the sense of the plural substantive; as here *subject* for *subjects*.—*Toils* is here a transitive verb.—*Mart*, in the next line but one, is *trade*.

Why such impress<sup>18</sup> of shipwrights, whose sore task  
Does not divide the Sunday from the week :  
What might be toward,<sup>19</sup> that this sweaty haste  
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day?  
Who is't that can inform me?

*Hora.* That can I ;  
At least, the whisper goes so.<sup>20</sup> Our last King,  
Whose image even but now appear'd to us,  
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,  
Thereto prick'd on<sup>21</sup> by a most emulate pride,  
Dared to the combat ; in which our valiant Hamlet —  
For so this side of our known world esteem'd him —  
Did slay this Fortinbras ; who, by a seal'd compact,  
Well ratified by law and heraldry,<sup>22</sup>  
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands  
Which he stood seized of,<sup>23</sup> to the conqueror :  
Against the which a moiety competent<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Impress* here means pressing or forcing of men into the service. — *Divide*, next line, is *distinguish*. Of course, *week* is put for *week-days*.

<sup>19</sup> *Toward*, here, is *at hand*, or *forthcoming*. Often so used.

<sup>20</sup> That is, "so as I am going to tell you."

<sup>21</sup> *Prick'd on* refers to Fortinbras ; the sense being, "by Fortinbras, *who* was prick'd on thereto."

<sup>22</sup> "Law and heraldry" is the same as "*the law of heraldry*"; what is sometimes called "the code of honour." Private duels were conducted according to an established code, and heralds had full authority in the matter. The Poet has many like expressions. So in *The Merchant*, v. 1: "I was beset with shame and courtesy"; which means "with the shame of *discourtesy*." Also in *King Lear*, i. 2: "This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter," &c.; meaning "This policy, or *practice*, of reverencing age," &c.

<sup>23</sup> This is the old legal phrase, still in use, for *held possession of*, or *was the rightful owner of*.

<sup>24</sup> *Moiety competent* is *equivalent portion*. The proper meaning of *moiety* is *half*; so that the sense here is, half of the entire value put in pledge on both sides. — *Gaged* is *pledged*.

Was gag'd by our King ; which had return'd  
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,  
Had he been vanquisher ; as, by the same co-mart<sup>25</sup>  
And carriage of the article design'd,<sup>26</sup>  
His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,  
Of unimprov'd mettle<sup>27</sup> hot and full,  
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there  
Shark'd up<sup>28</sup> a list of lawless resolute,  
For food and diet, to some enterprise  
That hath a stomach in't ;<sup>29</sup> which is no other —  
As it doth well appear unto our State —  
But to recover of us, by strong hand  
And terms compulsative, those foresaid lands  
So by his father lost : and this, I take it,  
Is the main motive of our preparations,  
The source of this our watch, and the chief head  
Of this post-haste and romage<sup>30</sup> in the land.

<sup>25</sup> *Co-mart* is *joint-bargain* or *mutual agreement*; the same as *compact* a little before. So, in the preceding speech, *mart* for *trade*, *purchase*, or *bargain*.

<sup>26</sup> *Design'd* in the sense of the Latin *designatus*; *marked out* or *drawn up*. *Carriage* is *purport* or *drift*.

<sup>27</sup> *Mettle*, in Shakespeare, is *spirit*, *temper*, *disposition*. — *Unimproved* is commonly explained *unimpeached*, *unquestioned*; and so, it appears, the word was sometimes used. But it may here mean *rude*, *wild*, *uncultured*; since Fortinbras, as "like will to like," may well be supposed of a somewhat *lawless spirit*.

<sup>28</sup> *Shark'd up* is *snapped up*, or *raked together*; the idea being, that Fortinbras has gathered eagerly, wherever he could, a band of desperadoes, hard cases, or roughs, who were up to any thing bold and adventurous, and required no pay but their keep.

<sup>29</sup> *Stomach* was often used in the sense of *courage*, or appetite for danger or for fighting. So in *Julius Cæsar*, v. 1: "If you dare fight to-day, come to the field; if not, when you have *stomachs*."

<sup>30</sup> *Romage*, now spelt *rummage*, is used for ransacking, or making a thorough search.

*Bern.* I think it be no other but e'en so.  
Well may it sort<sup>31</sup> that this portentous figure  
Comes armed through our watch, so like the King  
That was and is the question of these wars.

*Hora.* A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.  
In the most high and palmy<sup>32</sup> state of Rome,  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets :  
So,<sup>33</sup> stars with trains of fire ; and dews of blood ;  
Disasters in the Sun ; and the moist star,<sup>34</sup>  
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,  
Was sick almost to doomsday<sup>35</sup> with eclipse :  
And even the like precurse of fierce<sup>36</sup> events,  
As harbingers preceding still the fates  
And prologue to the omen<sup>37</sup> coming on,  
Have Heaven and Earth together demonstrated  
Unto our climature<sup>38</sup> and countrymen. —

<sup>31</sup> *Sort*, probably, for *happen*, or *fall out*. Often so. The word was sometimes used for *suit*, *fit*, or *agree* ; which may be the sense here.

<sup>32</sup> *Palmy* is *victorious* ; the *palm* being the old badge of victory.

<sup>33</sup> *So* is here equivalent, apparently, to *in like sort*, or *like manner*, and naturally draws in the sense of *there were* ; unless we choose to regard these words as understood. See Critical Notes.

<sup>34</sup> "The moist star" is the Moon ; so called, no doubt, either from the dews that attend her shining, or from her connection with the tides. — "Disasters in the Sun" is astrological, referring to the calamities supposed to be portended by certain aspects or conditions of that luminary.

<sup>35</sup> *Doomsday* is the old word for *judgment-day*. The meaning is that the Moon was sick almost unto death.

<sup>36</sup> The Poet repeatedly uses *fierce* in the general sense of *violent*, *swift*, *excessive*, *vehement*. So he has "*fierce* vanities," "*fierce* abridgment," and "*fierce* wretchedness." — *Precurse* for *precursor*, *forerunner*.

<sup>37</sup> *Omen* is here a *portentous* or *ominous* event.

<sup>38</sup> *Climature* for *clime* or *climate* ; used in a local sense.

But soft, behold ! lo, where it comes again !

*Re-enter the GHOST.*

I'll cross it, though it blast me.<sup>39</sup> — Stay, illusion !  
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,  
Speak to me :  
If there be any good thing to be done,  
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,  
Speak to me :  
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,  
Which happily foreknowing<sup>40</sup> may avoid,  
O, speak !  
Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life  
Extorted treasure in the womb of Earth,  
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,  
Speak of it : [*Cock crows.*]

stay, and speak ! — Stop it, Marcellus.

*Marc.* Shall I strike at it with my partisan ?<sup>41</sup>

*Hora.* Do, if it will not stand.

*Bern.* 'Tis here !

*Hora.* 'Tis here !

*Marc.* 'Tis gone ! [*Exit GHOST.*]

We do it wrong, being so majestic,

<sup>39</sup> It was believed that a person crossing the path of a spectre became subject to its malignant influence. Lodge's *Illustrations of English History*, speaking of Ferdinand, Earl of Derby, who died by witchcraft, as was supposed, in 1594, has the following : "On Friday there appeared a tall man, who twice crossed him swiftly ; and when the earl came to the place where he saw this man, he fell sick."

<sup>40</sup> Which *happy* or *fortunate* *foreknowledge* may avoid : a participle and adverb used with the sense of a substantive and adjective. — It was an old superstition that, if a man had "devoured widows' houses" or the portion of orphans, he could not lie quiet in his grave.

<sup>41</sup> *Partisan* was a *halbert* or *pole* ; a weapon used by watchmen.

To offer it the show of violence ;  
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,  
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

*Bern.* It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

*Hora.* And then it started like a guilty thing  
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,  
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,  
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat  
Awake the god of day ; and at his warning,  
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,  
Th' extravagant and erring<sup>42</sup> spirit hies  
To his confine :<sup>43</sup> and of the truth herein  
This present object made probation.<sup>44</sup>

*Marc.* It faded on the crowing of the cock.  
Some say that ever, 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
The bird of dawning singeth all night long :  
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad ;  
The nights are wholesome ; then no planets strike,

<sup>42</sup> *Extravagant* is *extra-vagans*, wandering about, going beyond bounds. *Erring* is *erraticus*, straying or roving up and down.

<sup>43</sup> *Confine* for *place of confinement*. — This is a very ancient belief. Prudentius, born in 348, has a hymn, *Ad Gallicinium*, which aptly illustrates the text : —

Ferunt, vagantes Dæmonas,	Hoc esse signum præscii
Lætos tenebris Noctium,	Norunt repromissæ Spei,
Gallo canente exterritos	Qua nos soporis liberi
Sparsim timere, et cedere.	Speramus adventum Dei.

Still more apposite is the following from the old Sarum service : —

Preco diei jam sonat,	Hoc excitatus Lucifer
Noctis profundæ pervigil ;	Solvit polum caligine ;
Nocturna lux vix tantibus,	Hoc omnis errorum chorus
A nocte noctem segregans.	Viam nocendi deserit.
	Gallo canente, spes redit, &c.

<sup>44</sup> *Probation* for *proof*. Repeatedly so.

No fairy takes,<sup>45</sup> nor witch hath power to charm,  
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

*Hora.* So have I heard and do in part believe it.  
But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
Walks o'er the dew of yond high eastern hill ;<sup>46</sup>  
Break we our watch up ;<sup>47</sup> and, by my advice,  
Let us impart what we have seen to-night  
Unto young Hamlet ; for, upon my life,  
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.  
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,  
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty ?

*Marc.* Let's do't, I pray ; and I this morning know  
Where we shall find him most conveniently. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. — *A Room of State in the Castle.*

*Enter the KING, the QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES,  
VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, Lords, and Attendants.*

*King.* Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
The memory be green, and that<sup>1</sup> it us befitted

<sup>45</sup> *Take* was used for *blast*, *infect*, or *smite with disease*. So in *King Lear*, ii. 4 : "Strike her young bones, you *taking* airs, with lameness." — *Gracious*, in Shakespeare, sometimes means *full of grace* or of the *Divine favour*.

<sup>46</sup> These last three speeches are admirably conceived. The speakers are in a highly kindled state : when the Ghost vanishes, their terror presently subsides into an inspiration of the finest quality, and their intense excitement, as it passes off, blazes up in a subdued and pious rapture of poetry.

<sup>47</sup> This, let the grammarians say what they will, is a clear instance of the first person plural, in the imperative mood. The same has occurred once before : "Well, *sit we down*, and let us hear Bernardo speak of this."

<sup>1</sup> Instead of *that*, present usage would repeat *though*. But in such cases the old language in full was *though that, if that, since that, when that, &c.* ; and Shakespeare, in a second clause, very often uses the latter word instead of repeating the first. The same thing often occurs in Burke, who died in 1797.

To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom  
 To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
 That we with wiser sorrow think on him,  
 Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
 Therefore our sometime<sup>2</sup> sister, now our Queen,  
 Th' imperial jointress<sup>3</sup> of this warlike State,  
 Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy, —  
 With one auspicious and one dropping eye;<sup>4</sup>  
 With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
 In equal scale weighing delight and dole; —  
 Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd  
 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone  
 With this affair along:<sup>5</sup> For all, our thanks.

Now follows that you know:<sup>6</sup> Young Fortinbras,  
 Holding a weak supposal of our worth,  
 Or thinking by our late dear brother's death  
 Our State to be disjoint<sup>7</sup> and out of frame,

<sup>2</sup> *Sometime*, in the sense of *former*, or *formerly*. See page 48, note 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Jointress* is the same as *heiress*. The Poet herein follows the history, which represents the former King to have come to the throne by marriage; so that whatever of hereditary claim Hamlet has to the crown is in right of his mother. See the Introduction, page 7.

<sup>4</sup> The same thought occurs in *The Winter's Tale*, v. 2: "She had one eye declined for the loss of her husband, another elevated that the oracle was fulfill'd." There is an old proverbial phrase, "To laugh with one eye, and cry with the other."

<sup>5</sup> Note the strained, elaborate, and antithetic style of the King's speech thus far. As he is there shamming and playing the hypocrite, he naturally tries how finely he can word it. In what follows, he speaks like a man, his mind moving with simplicity and directness as soon as he comes to plain matters of business.

<sup>6</sup> "Now follows that *which* you know *already*." That was continually used where we should use *what*.

<sup>7</sup> *Disjoint* for *disjointed*. The Poet has many preterites so formed.

Colleaguèd<sup>8</sup> with the dream of his advantage,  
 He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,  
 Importing the surrender of those lands  
 Lost by his father, with all bands<sup>9</sup> of law,  
 To our most valiant brother. So much for him.  
 Now for ourself, and for this time of meeting:  
 Thus much the business is: We have here writ  
 To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, —  
 Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears  
 Of this his nephew's purpose, — to suppress  
 His further gait herein; in that<sup>10</sup> the levies,  
 The lists, and full proportions, are all made  
 Out of his subject: — And we here dispatch  
 You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,  
 For bearers of this greeting to old Norway;  
 Giving to you no further personal power  
 To<sup>11</sup> business with the King more than the scope  
 Of these dilated articles allow.<sup>12</sup>

(Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.)

Corn. }  
 Volt. } In that and all things will we show our duty.

<sup>8</sup> *Colleaguèd* does not refer to, or, as we should say, agree with *Fortinbras*, but with *supposal*, or rather with the whole sense of the three preceding lines. So that the meaning is, "his supposal of our weakness, or of our unsettled condition, united with his expectation of advantage."

<sup>9</sup> *Band* and *bond* were the same, and both used for *obligation*.

<sup>10</sup> *Gait* is *course*, *progress*; which is much the same as *walk*. — In that has the sense of *because* or *inasmuch as*. Often so.

<sup>11</sup> *To* was often thus used where we should use *for*. So a little before, in "taken to wife," and a little after in "bow them to your gracious leave."

<sup>12</sup> The scope of these articles when dilated or explained in full. Such elliptical expressions are common with the Poet. The rules of modern grammar would require *allows* instead of *allow*; but in old writers, when the noun and the verb have a genitive intervening, it is very common for the verb to take the number of the genitive.

*King.* We doubt it nothing ; heartily farewell. —

[*Exeunt* VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS.

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you ?  
You told us of some suit : what is't, Laertes ?  
You cannot speak of reason<sup>13</sup> to the Dane,  
And lose your voice : what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,  
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking ?  
The head is not more native to the heart,  
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,  
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.<sup>14</sup>  
What wouldst thou have, Laertes ?

*Laer.* Dread my lord,<sup>15</sup>  
Your leave and favour to return to France ;  
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,  
To show my duty in your coronation,  
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,  
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France,  
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

*King.* Have you your father's leave ? — What says Polonius ?

*Polo.* He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave  
By laboursome petition ; and at last  
Upon his will I seal'd my hard<sup>16</sup> consent :  
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

*King.* Take thy fair hour, Laertes ; time be thine,

<sup>13</sup> That is, cannot speak *what is reasonable*.

<sup>14</sup> The various parts of the body enumerated are not more *allied, more necessary* to each other, than the King of Denmark is bound to your father to do him service.

<sup>15</sup> We should say "my dread lord." Shakespeare abounds in such inversions. So "good my lord," "dear my brother," "sweet my sister," &c.

<sup>16</sup> *Hard* for *reluctant, difficult* ; like *slow* just before.

And thy best graces spend it at thy will !<sup>17</sup> —  
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son, —

*Ham.* [*Aside.*] A little more than kin, and less than kind.<sup>18</sup>

*King.* — How is it that the clouds still hang on you ?

*Ham.* Not so, my lord ; I am too much i' the sun.<sup>19</sup>

*Queen.* Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
Do not for ever with thy vail'd lids<sup>20</sup>

Seek for thy noble father in the dust.  
Thou know'st 'tis common ; all that live must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.

*Ham.* Ay, madam, it is common.

*Queen.* If it be,

Why seems it so particular with thee ?

*Ham.* Seems, madam ! nay, it is ; I know not *seems*.  
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,

<sup>17</sup> "Take an auspicious hour, Laertes ; be your time your own, and thy best virtues guide thee in spending of it at thy will."

<sup>18</sup> The King is "a little more than kin" to Hamlet, because, in being at once his uncle and his father, he is *twice* kin. And he is "less than kind," because his incestuous marriage, as Hamlet views it, is *unnatural* or *out of nature*. The Poet repeatedly uses *kind* in its primitive sense of *nature*. So, "your cuckoo sings by *kind*," and, "fitted by *kind* for rape and villainy." — *Cousin* was used in the general sense of *kinsman*, especially for *nephew* and *niece*, as well as in its modern sense.

<sup>19</sup> Hamlet seems to have a twofold, perhaps a threefold meaning here. First, he intends a sort of antithesis to the King's, "How is it that the clouds still hang on you ?" Second, he probably alludes to the old proverbial phrase of being *in the sun*, or *in the warm sun*, which used to signify the state of being without the charities of home and kindred, — exposed to the social inclemencies of the world. Hamlet regards himself as exiled from these charities, as having lost both father and mother. Perhaps he also intends a sarcastic quibble between *sun* and *son*.

<sup>20</sup> With *downcast eyes*. To *vail* is to *lower*, to *let fall*.