Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, modes, shows of grief,
That can denote me truly: these, indeed, seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

King. 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,

To give these mourning duties to your father: But, you must know, your father lost a father; That father lost, lost his; and the survivor bound In filial obligation for some term To do obsequious 21 sorrow: but to persevere In obstinate condolement is a course Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief: It shows a will most incorrect 22 to Heaven, A heart unfortified, a mind impatient, An understanding simple and unschool'd: For what we know must be, and is as common As any the most vulgar thing to sense, Why should we in our peevish opposition Take it to heart? Fie! 'tis a fault to Heaven, A fault against the dead, a fault to Nature, To reason most absurd; whose common theme Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried, From the first corse till he that died to-day, This must be so. We pray you, throw to earth

This unprevailing ²³ woe, and think of us As of a father; for let the world take note, You are the most immediate to our throne; And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his son Do I impart toward you. ²⁴ For your intent In going back to school in Wittenberg, ²⁵ It is most retrograde to our desire;
And we beseech you, bend you to remain Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye, Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

SCENE II.

Queen. Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet: I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

Ham. I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

King. Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply:

Be as ourself in Denmark.—Madam, come;

This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet

Sits smiling to my heart: in grace whereof,

No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,

But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell;

And the King's rouse 26 the heavens shall bruit again,

²¹ The Poet uses obsequious as having the sense of obsequies.

²² Incorrect is here used in the sense of incorrigible.

²³ Unprevailing was used in the sense of unavailing.

^{24 &}quot;Impart towards you," seems rather odd language, especially as impart has no object. The meaning probably is, "I take you into a partnership," or, "I invest you with a participation of the royal dignity, as heir-presumptive." — "Nobility of love" is merely a generous or heightened phrase for love. See Critical Notes.

²⁵ School was applied to places not only of academical, but also of professional study; and in the olden time men were wont to spend their whole lives in such cloistered retirements of learning. So that we need not suppose Hamlet was "going back to school" as an undergraduate.

²⁶ A rouse was a deep draught to one's health, wherein it was the custom to empty the cup or goblet. Its meaning, and probably its origin, was the same as carouse. To bruit is to noise; used with again, the same as echo or reverberate.

Respeaking earthly thunder. Come away.

[Exeunt all but HAMLET.

Ham. O, that this too-too solid flesh would melt, Thaw, and resolve 27 itself into a dew! Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God! How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable Seem to me all the uses of this world! Fie on't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden, That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature Possess it merely.28 That it should come to this! But two months dead ! - nay, not so much, not two: So excellent a king; that was, to this, Hyperion to a satyr; 29 so loving to my mother, That he might not beteem 30 the winds of heaven Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and Earth! Must I remember? why, she would hang on him, As if increase of appetite had grown By what it fed on: and yet, within a month, -Let me not think on't, - Frailty, thy name is woman! -A little month, or e'er 31 those shoes were old With which she follow'd my poor father's body,

Like Niobe, all tears; ³² — why, she, even she — O God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason, ³³ Would have mourn'd longer — married with my uncle, My father's brother; but no more like my father Than I to Hercules: within a month; Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears Had left the flushing ³⁴ in her gallèd eyes, She married. O, most wicked speed, to post With such dexterity to incestuous sheets! It is not, nor it cannot come to, good: But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

Enter Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo.

Hora. Hail to your lordship!

Ham. I'm glad to see you well:

Horatio, - or I do forget myself.

SCENE II.

Hora. The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

Ham. Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you: 35

And what make you³⁶ from Wittenberg, Horatio?— Marcellus?

²⁷ Resolve in its old sense of dissolve. The three words melt, thaw, and resolve, all signifying the same thing, are used merely for emphasis, — melt, melt,

²⁸ Merely in one of the Latin senses of mere; wholly, entirely.

²⁹ Hyperion, which literally means sublimity, was one of the names of Apollo, the most beautiful of all the gods, and much celebrated in classic poetry for his golden locks. Here, as often, to has the force of compared to, or in comparison with.

³⁰ Beteem is an old word for permit or suffer.

³¹ Or ever was in common use for before, sooner than. So in Daniel, vi. 24: "And the lions brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came to the bottom of the den."

⁸² Niobe was the wife of Amphion, King of Thebes. As she had twelve children, she went to crowing one day over Latona, who had only two. Apollo and Diana. In return for this, all her twelve were slain by Latona's two; and Jupiter, in pity of her sorrow, transformed her into a rock, from which her tears issued in a perennial stream.

³³ Discourse of reason, in old philosophical language, is rational discourse, or discursive reason; the faculty of pursuing a train of thought, or of passing from thought to thought in the way of inference or conclusion.

⁸⁴ Shakespeare has leave repeatedly in the sense of leave off, or cease. Flushing is the redness of the eyes caused by what the Poet elsewhere calls "eye-offending brine."

⁸⁵ As if he had said, "No, not my poor servant: we are *friends*; that is the style I will exchange with you."

^{86 &}quot;What make you?" is old language for "What do you?"

Marc. My good lord, -

Ham. I'm very glad to see you.—[To Bernardo.]
Good even, sir.³⁷—

But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

Hora. A truant disposition, good my lord.

Ham. I would not hear your enemy say so;

Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,

To make it truster of your own report

Against yourself: I know you are no truant.

But what is your affair in Elsinore?

We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.

Hora. My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

Ham. I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;

I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

Hora. Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.

* Ham. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked meats 38 Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

Would I had met my dearest 39 foe in Heaven

Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!

My father! - methinks I see my father.

Hora. O, where, my lord?

Ham.

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

Hora. I saw him once; he was a goodly king.

Ham. He was a man, take him for all in all,

I shall not look upon his like again.

Hora. My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

Ham. Saw who?

SCENE II.

Hora. My lord, the King your father.

Ham. The King my father!

Hora. Season your admiration 40 for a while

With an attentive ear, till I deliver, Upon the witness of these gentlemen,

This marvel to you.

Ham. For God's love, let me hear.

Hora. Two nights together had these gentlemen, Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch, In the dead vast 41 and middle of the night, Been thus encounter'd: A figure like your father, Arm'd at all points, exactly, cap-a-pie, Appears before them, and with solemn march Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walk'd By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes, Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distill'd Almost to jelly with the act of fear, 42 Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me In dreadful secrecy impart they did; And I with them the third night kept the watch: Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,

²⁷ The words, *Good even*, *sir*, are evidently addressed to Bernardo, whom Hamlet has not before known; but as he now meets him in company with old acquaintances, like a true gentleman, as he is, he gives him a salutation of kindness. — Marcellus has said before of Hamlet, "I this *morning* know where we shall find him." But *good even* was the common salutation after noon,

⁸⁸ Scott, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, has made the readers of romance familiar with the old custom of "funeral baked meats," which was kept up in Scotland till a recent period.— *Thrift* means *economy*: all was done merely to save cost.

⁸⁹ In Shakespeare's time dearest was applied to any person or thing that excites the liveliest interest, whether of love or hate.

⁴⁰ Admiration in the Latin sense of wonder or astonishment. — Season is qualify or temper.

⁴¹ Vast is void or vacancy. So in The Tempest, i. 2: "Urchins shall, for that vast of night that they may work," &c.

⁴² To distill is to fall in drops, to melt; so that distill d is a very natural and fit expression for the cold sweat caused by intense fear. "The act of tear" is the action or the effect of fear.

Form of the thing, each word made true and good, The apparition comes. I knew your father; These hands are not more like.

Ham. But where was this?

Marc. My lord, upon the platform where we watch'd.

Ham. Did you not speak to it?

Hora. My lord, I did;

But answer made it none: yet once methought It lifted up its head and did address Itself to motion, like as it would speak; But even then the morning cock crew loud, And at the sound it shrunk in haste away. And vanish'd from our sight.

Ham. 'Tis very strange.

Hora. As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true; and we did think it writ down in our duty
To let you know of it.

Ham. Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me. Hold you the watch to-night?

Marc. Bern. }
Ham. Arm'd, say you?

Marc.

Bern. Arm'd, my lord.

Ham. From top to toe?

Marc. \
Bern. \
My lord, from head to foot.

We do, my lord.

Ham. Then saw you not his face?

Hora. O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.43

Ham. What, look'd he frowningly?

Hora. A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

Ham. Pale, or red?

Hora. Nay, very pale.

Ham. And fix'd his eyes upon you?

Hora. Most constantly.

Ham. I would I had been there.

Hora. It would have much amazed you.

Ham. Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?

Hora. While one with moderate haste might tell 44 a hundred.

Marc.

SCENE II.

Bern. Longer, longer.

Hora. Not when I saw't.

Ham. His beard was grizzled?—no?

Hora. It was, as I have seen it in his life,

A sable silver'd.

Ham. I'll watch to-night;

Perchance 'twill walk again.

Hora. I warrant it will.

Ham. If it assume my noble father's person, I'll speak to it, though Hell itself should gape, And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all, If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight, Let it be tenable 45 in your silence still; And whatsoever else shall hap to-night, Give it an understanding, but no tongue:

I will requite your loves. So, fare you well: Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,

Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and tw I'll visit you.

All. Our duty to your Honour.

⁴⁸ The beaver was a movable part of the helmet, which could be drawn down over the face or pushed up over the for shead.

⁴⁴ To tell was continually used for to count.

⁴⁵ Tenable for retained. The Poet has many like instances of confusion

Ham. Your loves, as mine to you; farewell. —

[Excunt all but Hamlet.

My father's spirit in arms! all is not well; I doubt 46 some foul play: would the night were come! Till then sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise, I hough all the Earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes. [Exit.

Scene III.—A Room in Polonius's House. Enter Laertes and Ophelia.¹

Laer. My necessaries are embark'd; farewell: And, sister, as the winds give benefit And convoy is assistant,² do not sleep, But let me hear from you.³

Ophe. Do you doubt that?

Laer. For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The pérfume and supplyance of a minute;⁴
No more.

of forms; as admired for admirable, that is, wonderful, in Macbeth, iii. 4: "Broke the good meeting with most admired disorder.

46 Doubt in the sense of fear or suspect. Repeatedly so.

¹ This scene must be regarded as one of Shakespeare's lyric movements in the play, and the skill with which it is interwoven with the dramatic parts is peculiarly an excellence with our Poet. You experience the sensation of a pause, without the sense of a stop.—COLERIDGE.

² Convoy is used for conveyance. Communication with France being by sea, of course there needed both a ship to carry letters, and a wind to drive the ship.

⁸ That is, "without letting me hear from you." The Poet repeatedly uses but in this way; the exceptive but, from be out. The usage is very common in Scotch: Burns has it frequently

4 A mere pastime, to supply or fill up the passing hour; a sweet play, to

Ophe. No more but so?

Laer. Think it no more:5

SCENE III.

For nature, crescent, does not grow alone In thews⁶ and bulk, but, as this temple waxes, The inward service of the mind and soul Grows wide withal.7 Perhaps he loves you now; And now no soil nor cautel⁸ doth besmirch The virtue of his will: but you must fear; His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own; For he himself is subject to his birth:9 He may not, as unvalued persons do, Carve for himself; for on his choice depends The safety and the health of the whole State; And therefore must his choice be circumscribed Unto the voice and yielding of that body Whereof he is the head.¹⁰ Then, if he says he loves you, It fits your wisdom so far to believe it As he in his particular act and place May give his saying deed; 11 which is no further Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal. Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,

beguile the present idle time. Instead of *supplyance*, the Poet elsewhere has *supplyment* in much the same sense.

⁵ "Take for granted that such is the case, till you have clear proof to the contrary." — Crescent is growing, increasing.

6 Thews is an old word for sinews or muscles.

⁷ The idea is, that Hamlet's love is but a youthful fancy which, as his mind comes to maturity, he will outgrow. The passage would seem to infer that the Prince is not so old as he is elsewhere represented to be.

8 Cautel is a debauched relation of caution, and means fraud or deceit.

9 Subject to the conditions which his birth entails upon him.

10 His choice of a wife must be limited by the approval or consent of the nation.

11 So far only as he, in his public and official character, shall make his promise good.

If with too credent ear you list his songs, 12
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmaster'd importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister;
And keep you in the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
Th' unchariest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the Moon:
Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes:
The canker galls the infants of the Spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed; 13
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Be wary, then; best safety lies in fear:
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

Ophe. I shall th' effect of this good lesson keep, As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother, Do not, as some ungracious pastors ¹⁴ do, Show me the steep and thorny way to Heaven, Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine, Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads, And recks not his own read. ¹⁵

Laer. O, fear me not. I stay too long: but here my father comes.—

Enter POLONIUS.

A double blessing is a double grace; Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

SCENE III.

Polo. Yet here, Laertes? aboard, aboard, for shame! The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail, And you are stay'd for. There; my blessing with thee! And these few precepts in thy memory See thou charácter. 16 / Give thy thoughts no tongue, Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.17 Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar. 18 The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried. Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel: But do not dull thy palm with entertainment Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade. 19 Beware Of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in, Bear't that th' opposèd may beware of thee. Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice: Take each man's censure,20 but reserve thy judgment. Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy: For the apparel oft proclaims the man; And they in France of the best rank and station Are most select and generous, chief in that.21 Neither a borrower nor a lender be: For loan oft loses both itself and friend;

^{12 &}quot; If with too credulous ear you listen to his songs."

¹⁸ In Shakespeare's time, canker was often used of the worm that kills the early buds before they open out into flowers. Perhaps it here means a disease that sometimes infests plants, and eats out their life.—Buttons is buds, and disclose is used in the sense of open or unfold.

¹⁴ Pastors that have not the grace to practice what they preach.

¹⁵ Regards not his own lesson.

¹⁶ To character is to engrave or imprint.

¹⁷ Unproportion'd for unhandsome or unfitting. His, again, for its. See page 47, note 8.

¹⁸ Vulgar is here used in its old sense of common.

¹⁹ "Do not *blunt* thy feeling by taking every new acquaintance by the hand, or by admitting him to the intimacy of a friend."

²⁰ Censure was continually used for opinion, or judgment.

 $^{^{21}}$ That is, most select and generous, but chiefly or especially so in the matter of dress.

And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry. This above all: To thine own self be true; And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.²² Farewell; my blessing season ²³ this in thee!

Laer Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

Polo. The time invites you; go, your servants tend. Laer. Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well

What I have said to you.

Ophe. (Tis in my memory lock'd,

And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

Laer. Farewell.

[Exit.

Polo. What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

Ophe. So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

Polo. Marry,²⁴ well bethought:
'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you; and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.
If it be so, — as so 'tis put on me,

22 This is regarded by many as a very high strain of morality. I cannot see it so; though, to be sure, it is as high as Polonius can go: it is the height of worldly wisdom,—a rule of being wisely selfish. In the same sense, "honesty is the best policy"; but no truly honest man ever acts on that principle; and a man who fixes upon no higher rule than that of being true to himself will never be really true to himself. This is one of the cases wherein a man must aim at the greater, else he will not attain the less. In other words, a man will never be really true to himself, unless it be a matter of conscience with him to be true to something higher than himself. A passion for rectitude is the only thing that will serve. See iii. 4, note 16.

23 Season is here used, apparently, in the sense of ingrain; the idea being that of so steeping the counsel into his mind that it will not fade out.

24 Marry was continually used as a general intensive, like heracle and edepol in Latin. The usage sprang from the custom of swearing by St. Mary the Virgin Mother.

And that in way of caution,—I must tell you, You do not understand yourself so clearly As it behoves my daughter and your honour. What is between you? give me up the truth.

SCENE III.

Ophe. He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders Of his affection to me.

Polo. Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl, Unsifted ²⁵ in such perilous circumstance.

Do you believe his — tenders, as you call them?

Ophe. I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

Polo. Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby;
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly; 27
Or — not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
Running it thus 28 — you'll tender me a fool.

Ophe. My lord, he hath importuned me with love In honourable fashion;—

Polo. Ay, fashion you may call it; go to, go to.²⁹
Ophe. — And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,

With almost all the holy vows of Heaven.

Polo. Ay, springes to catch woodcocks.30 I do know,

²⁷ "Take better care of yourself." To *tender* a thing is, in one sense, to be tender or careful of it. Shakespeare has the word repeatedly so.

28 Polonius is likening the phrase to a poor nag, which, if run too hard, will be wind-broken.

²⁵ Unsifted is untried, inexperienced. We still speak of sifting a matter in the same sense.

²⁶ Polonius is using *tender* in different senses; here in a business or financial sense, as in the phrase "legal tender." So our "greenbacks," though legal tender, have not been *sterling*; that is, have been *below par*.

²⁹ Go to is an old phrase of varying import; sometimes meaning hush up, sometimes come on, sometimes go ahead.

⁸⁰ This was a proverbial phrase. There is a collection of epigrams under

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter, Giving more light than heat, extinct in both, Even in their promise, as it is a-making, You must not take for fire.31 From this time Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence; Set your entreatments at a higher rate Than a command to parley.32 For Lord Hamlet, Believe so much in him, that he is young; And with a larger tether 33 may he walk Than may be given you. In few,34 Ophelia, Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers, 35 -Not of that dye which their investments show, But mere implorators of unholy suits, Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,36 The better to beguile. This is for all, -I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth, Have you so slander³⁷ any moment's leisure.

that title: the woodcock being accounted a witless bird, from a vulgar notion that it had no brains. "Springes to catch woodcocks" means arts to entrap simplicity. Springe is, properly, snare or trap.—Blood, in the next line, is put for passion. Often so.

31 Here, as often, fire is two syllables: the verse requires it so.

82 Be more difficult of access, and let the suits to you for that purpose be of higher respect than a command to parley.

33 That is, with a longer line; a horse, fastened by a string to a stake, is tethered.

84 In few words; in short.

35 Brokers, as the word is here used, are go-betweens, or panders; the same as bawds, a little after.

³⁶ So in As You Like It, ii. 3: "Your virtues are sanctified and holy traitors to you." This joining of words that are really contradictory, or qualifying of a noun with adjectives that literally quench it, sometimes gives great strength of expression. Even so grave a writer as Hooker speaks of stealing certain benefits upon men "through a kind of heavenly fraud."

87 That is, so disgrace, or misuse, as to cause slander.

As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet. Look to't, I charge you: come your ways.

Ophe. I shall obey, my lord.

[Exeunt.

Scene IV. - The Platform.

Enter Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus.

Ham. The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

Hora. It is a nipping and an eager 1 air.

Ham. What hour now?

SCENE IV.

Hora. I think it lacks of twelve.

Ham. No. it is struck.

Hora. Indeed? I heard it not: it then draws near the season

Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

[A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off within.

What does this mean, my lord?

Ham. The King doth wake to-night, and takes his rouse, Reeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels; And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down, The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out The triumph of his pledge.

Hora. Is it a custom?

Ham. Ay, marry is't;
But to my mind, though I am native here

1 Eager was used in the sense of the French aigre, sharp, biting.

² To wake is to hold a late revel or debauch. A rouse is what we now sall a bumper.—Wassail originally meant a drinking to one's health; from was hal, health be to you: hence it came to be used for any festivity of the bottle and the bowl.

*3 Reels through the swaggering up-spring, which was the name of a rude, boisterous German dance, as appears from a passage in Chapman's Alphonsus: "We Germans have no changes in our dances; an almain and an upspring, that is all."