With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;
I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,[98]
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the Devil: and the Devil hath power
T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,
Out of my weakness and my melancholy, —
As he is very potent with such spirits, —
Abuses me to damn me.[99] I'll have grounds
More relative than this: [100] the play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *A Room in the Castle.*

Enter the KING, *the* QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. And can you, by no drift of circumstance,[1]
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,

[98] To *tent* was to *probe* a wound. To *blench* is to *shrink* or *start.*

[99] That Hamlet was not alone in the suspicion here started, appears from Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici:* "I believe that those apparitions and ghosts of departed persons are not the wandering souls of men, but the unquiet walks of devils, prompting and suggesting us into mischief, blood, and villainy; instilling and stealing into our hearts that the blessed spirits are not at rest in their graves, but wander, solicitous of the affairs of the world." — To *abuse*, in the Poet's language, is to *deceive*, or *practise upon* with illusions.

[100] Grounds standing in closer and clearer relation with the matter alleged by the Ghost.

[1] Course of indirect, roundabout inquiry.

Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?
Rosen. He does confess he feels himself distracted;
But from what cause he will by no means speak.
Guild. Nor do we find him forward to be sounded;
But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.
Queen. Did he receive you well?
Rosen. Most like a gentleman.
Guild. But with much forcing of his disposition.
Rosen. Most free of question,[2] but of our demands
Niggard in his reply.
Queen. Did you assay him
To any pastime?
Rosen. Madam, it so fell out that certain players
We o'er-raught[3] on the way: of these we told him;
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it. They are about the Court;
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.
Polo. 'Tis most true:
And he beseech'd me to entreat your Majesties
To hear and see the matter.
King. With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined. —
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

[2] Here, as often, *of* is probably equivalent to *in respect of.* Also in "*of* our demands." *Question* may here mean *inquiry*, or *conversation;* and either of these senses accords well enough with the occasion referred to. See Critical Notes.

[3] *O'er-raught* is *overtook; raught* being an old form of *reached.*

Rosen. We shall, my lord.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. Sweet Gertrude, leave us too;
For we have closely[4] sent for Hamlet hither,
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here
Affront[5] Ophelia.
Her father and myself, lawful espials,
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing, unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge;
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If't be the affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

Queen. I shall obey you. —
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauty be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness; so shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours.

Ophe. Madam, I wish it may. [*Exit* QUEEN.

Polo. Ophelia, walk you here. — Gracious, so please you,
We will bestow ourselves. — [*To* OPHE.] Read on this book;
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness. We're oft to blame in this, —
'Tis too much proved, — that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The Devil himself.

King. [*Aside.*] O, 'tis too true!
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!

[4] *Closely* is *secretly;* sent in such a way as not to let Hamlet know from whom the message came: a *got-up* accident.

[5] *Affront* was sometimes used for *meet*, or, as it is explained a little after, *encounter*. So in *Cymbeline*, iv. 3: "Your preparation can *affront* no less than what you hear of."

The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it[6]
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
O heavy burden!

Polo. I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord.

[*Exeunt* KING *and* POLONIUS.

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. To be, or not to be, — that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die, — to sleep, —
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, — 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, — to sleep; —
To sleep! perchance to dream! — ay, there's the rub;[7]
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,[8]
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;[9]
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,

[6] Not more ugly *in comparison with* the thing that helps it.

[7] *Rub* is *obstruction, hindrance.* The word was borrowed from the bowling-alley, where it was used of any thing that deflected the bowl from its aim.

[8] "This mortal *coil*" is the tumult and bustle of this mortal life; or, as Wordsworth has it, "the fretful stir unprofitable, and the fever of the world." Perhaps *coil* here means, also, the body.

[9] That is, the *consideration* that induces us to undergo the calamity of so long a life. This use of *respect* is very frequent.

The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus[10] make
With a bare bodkin? who'd these fardels[11] bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death, —
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns,[12] — puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;[13]
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action. — Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! — Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

Ophe. Good my lord,
How does your Honour for this many a day?

[10] The allusion is to the term *quietus est*, used in settling accounts at exchequer audits. Thus in Sir Thomas Overbury's character of *a Franklin*: "Lastly, to *end* him, he cares not when his end comes; he needs not feare his audit, for his *quietus* is in heaven." — *Bodkin* was the ancient term for a small dagger.

[11] *Fardel* is an old word for *burden* or *bundle*.

[12] *Bourn* is *boundary*. So in *Troilus and Cressida*, ii. 3: "I will not praise thy wisdom, which, like a *bourn*, a pale, a shore, confines thy spacious and dilated parts." — Of course Hamlet means that no one comes back to the state of mortal life; or, as Coleridge says, "no traveller returns to this world as his home or abiding-place."

[13] That is, the pale *complexion of grief*. *Thought* was often used in this way. So in *Twelfth Night*, ii. 4: "She pined *in thought*"; that is, she wasted away *through grief*. Also in *Julius Cæsar*, ii. 1: "If he love Cæsar, all he can do is to himself; *take thought and die* for Cæsar"; which means *grieve himself to death*.

Ham. I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

Ophe. My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longèd long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them.

Ham. No, not I:
I never gave you aught.

Ophe. My honour'd lord, I know right well you did;
And with them words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

Ham. Ha, ha! are you honest?

Ophe. My lord?

Ham. Are you fair?[14]

Ophe. What means your lordship?

Ham. That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.[15]

Ophe. Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

Ham. Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner

[14] Here it is evident that the penetrating Hamlet perceives, from the strange and forced manner of Ophelia, that the sweet girl was not acting a part of her own, but was a decoy: and his after-speeches are not so much directed to her as to the listeners and spies. Such a discovery in a mood so anxious and irritable accounts for a certain harshness in him; and yet a wild up-working of love, sporting with opposites in a wilful, self-tormenting strain of irony, is perceptible throughout. — COLERIDGE.

[15] "Your *chastity* should have no conversation or acquaintance with your beauty." This use of *honesty* for *chastity* is very frequent in Shakespeare. — It should be noted, that in these speeches Hamlet refers, not to Ophelia personally, but to the sex in general. So, especially, when he says, "I have heard of your paintings too," he does not mean that Ophelia paints, but that the use of painting is common with her sex.

transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

Ophe. Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Ham. You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it:[16] I loved you not.

Ophe. I was the more deceived.

Ham. Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest:[17] but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck[18] than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

Ophe. At home, my lord.

Ham. Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool no where but in's own house. Farewell.

Ophe. [*Aside.*] O, help him, you sweet Heavens!

Ham. If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go; and quickly too. Farewell.

[16] "Cannot so penetrate and purify our nature, but that we shall still have a strong taste of our native badness."

[17] "*Indifferent* honest" is *tolerably* honest. See page 105, note 32.

[18] That is, "ready to come about me on a signal of permission."

Ophe. [*Aside.*] O heavenly powers, restore him!

Ham. I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance.[19] Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.[20] [*Exit*

Ophe. O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword;
Th' expectancy and rose of the fair State,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,[21]
Th' observed of all observers, — quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;

[19] Johnson explains this, "You mistake by wanton affectation, and pretend to mistake by *ignorance*." Moberly, "You use ambiguous words, as if you did not know their meaning."

[20] Throughout the latter part of this fine scene, Hamlet's disorder runs to a very high pitch, and he seems to take an insane delight in lacerating the gentle creature before him. Yet what keenness and volubility of wit! what energy and swiftness of discourse! the intellectual forces in a fiery gallop, while the social feelings seem totally benumbed. And when Ophelia meets his question, "Where's your father?" with the reply, "At home, my lord," how quickly he darts upon the true meaning of her presence! The sweet, innocent girl, who knows not how to word an untruth, having never tried on a lie in her life, becomes embarrassed in her part; and from her manner Hamlet instantly gathers what is on foot, and forthwith shapes his speech so as to sting the eavesdroppers.

[21] This is well explained in what Lady Percy says of her lost Hotspur, in *2 King Henry IV.*, ii. 3: "By his light did all the chivalry of England move; he was indeed the glass wherein the noble youth did dress themselves."

That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. O, woe is me,
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

Enter the KING *and* POLONIUS.

King. Love! his affections do not that way tend;
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul,
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
And I do doubt[22] the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger: which for to prevent,
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down: He shall with speed to England,
For the demand of our neglected tribute:
Haply the seas and countries different,
With variable objects, shall expel
This something-settled matter in his heart;
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

Polo. It shall do well: but yet do I believe
The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love. — How now, Ophelia!
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;
We heard it all. — My lord, do as you please;
But, if you hold it fit, after the play
Let his Queen mother all alone entreat him
To show his grief: let her be round[23] with him;
And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference. If she find him not,

[22] *Doubt*, again, in the sense of *fear* or *suspect*.
[23] *Round*, again, for *plain-spoken, downright*.

To England send him; or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

King. It shall be so:
Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Hall in the Castle.*

Enter HAMLET *and* Players.[1]

Ham. Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus; but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings;[2] who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipp'd for o'erdoing Termagant; it outherods Herod:[3] pray you, avoid it.

[1] "This dialogue of Hamlet with the players," says Coleridge, "is one of the happiest instances of Shakespeare's power of diversifying the scene while he is carrying on the plot."

[2] The ancient theatres were far from the commodious, elegant structures which later times have seen. The *pit* was, truly, what its name denotes, an unfloored space in the area of the house, sunk considerably beneath the level of the stage. Hence this part of the audience were called *groundlings*.

[3] *Termagaunt* is the name given in old romances to the tempestuous god of the Saracens. He is usually joined with *Mahound*, or Mahomet. John Florio calls him "*Termigisto*, a great boaster, quarreller, killer, tamer, or ruler of the universe; the child of the earthquake and of the thunder, the brother of death." Hence this personage was introduced into the old Miracle-plays as a demon of outrageous and violent demeanour; or, as Bale says, "*Termagauntes* altogether, and very devils incarnate." The murder of

1 Play. I warrant your Honour.

Ham. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to Nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.[4] Now, this overdone, or come tardy of,[5] though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must, in your allowance,[6] o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor Turk, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made them, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

1 Play. I hope we have reform'd that indifferently[7] with us, sir.

Ham. O, reform it altogether. And let those that play

the innocents was a favourite subject for a Miracle-play; and wherever Herod is introduced, he plays the part of a vaunting braggart, a tyrant of tyrants, and does indeed *outdo Termagant.*

[4] *Pressure* is *impression* here; as when, in i. 5: Hamlet says, "I'll wipe away all forms, all *pressures* past."

[5] To "come tardy of" a thing is evidently the same as to come short of it.

[6] "The *censure* of the *which one*" means the *judgment* of *one of which*, or of *whom*. This use of *censure* is very frequent. — *Allowance* is *estimation* or *approval*. To *approve* is the more frequent meaning of to *allow*, in Shakespeare. And so in the Bible; as, "The Lord *alloweth* the righteous"; and, "That which I do I *allow* not."

[7] That is, *tolerably well*. See page 130, note 17.

your Clowns speak no more than is set down for them: for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the meantime, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the Fool that uses it. Go, make you ready. —

[*Exeunt* Players.

Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

How now, my lord! will the King hear this piece of work?

Polo. And the Queen too, and that presently.

Ham. Bid the players make haste. [*Exit* POLONIUS.] — Will you two help to hasten them?

Rosen. } We will, my lord.
Guild. }

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Ham. What ho! Horatio!

Enter HORATIO.

Hora. Here, sweet lord, at your service.

Ham. Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.

Hora. O, my dear lord, —

Ham. Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from thee
That no revénue[8] hast but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,

[8] Here, and generally, though not always, in Shakespeare, *revenue* has the accent on the second syllable. And such is undoubtedly the right pronunciation. I have marked the word in Spenser, Daniel, Dryden, Young, and Thomson, and all have it so. So, too, Daniel Webster, Rufus Choate, and Edward Everett always spoke it.

And crook the pregnant[9] hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself: for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
Hath ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee. — Something too much of this. —
There is a play to-night before the King:
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death.
I pr'ythee, when thou seest that act a-foot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul
Observe my uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damnèd ghost that we have seen;
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy.[10] Give him heedful note:
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face;
And, after, we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.

Hora. Well, my lord;
If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

[9] *Pregnant* is *ready, prompt.* — *Candied* is *sugared;* a tongue steeped in the sweetness of adulation. — *Thrift* is *profit;* the gold that flatterers lie for.

[10] Vulcan's workshop or *smithy; stith* being an *anvil.*

Ham. They're coming to the play; I must be idle:[11]
Get you a place.

Danish march. A flourish. Enter the KING, *the* QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and others.*

King. How fares our cousin Hamlet?

Ham. Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-cramm'd:[12] you cannot feed capons so.

King. I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.

Ham. No, nor mine now. — [*To* POLONIUS.] My lord, you played once i' the university, you say?

Polo. That did I, my lord; and was accounted a good actor.

Ham. What did you enact?

Polo. I did enact Julius Cæsar: I was kill'd i' the Capitol; Brutus kill'd me.[13]

Ham. It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.[14] — Be the players ready?

Rosen. Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.

Queen. Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

[11] Must *seem* idle; must behave as if his mind were purposeless, or intent upon nothing in particular.

[12] Because the chameleon was supposed to live on air. In fact, this and various other reptiles will live a long time without any visible food. So in *Othello*, iii. 3: "I had rather be a toad, and *live upon the vapour* of a dungeon," &c. — The King snuffs offence in "I eat the air, promise-cramm'd," as implying that he has not kept his promise to Hamlet.

[13] A Latin play on Cæsar's death was performed at Christ's Church, Oxford, in 1582. Malone thinks that there was an English play on the same subject previous to Shakespeare's. Cæsar was killed in *Pompey's portico*, and not in the Capitol; but the error is at least as old as Chaucer's time.

[14] He *acted* the part of a brute. — The play on *Capitol* and *capital* is obvious enough.

Ham. No, good mother; here's metal more attractive.

Polo. [*To the* KING.] O ho! do you mark that?

Ham. Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

[*Lying down at* OPHELIA'S *feet.*

Ophe. No, my lord.

Ham. I mean, my head upon your lap?

Ophe. Ay, my lord. You are merry, my lord.

Ham. Who, I?

Ophe. Ay, my lord.

Ham. O God, your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's[15] two hours.

Ophe. Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

Ham. So long? Nay, then let the Devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sabell.[16] O Heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: but, by'r Lady, he must build churches, then; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is *For O, for O, the hobby-horse is forgot!*[17]

[15] *Within's* is a contraction of *within this.* The Poet has some contractions even harsher than this.

[16] *Sabell* is a *flame*-colour. A writer in *The Critic* for 1854, page 373, remarks that "*sabell* or *sabelle* is properly a fawn-colour a good deal heightened with red, and that the term came from the French *couleur d'isabelle.*" According to the *Dictionary of the French Academy*, *isabelle* is a colour "between white and *yellow*, but with the yellow predominating." It is therefore a very showy, flaring colour; as far as possible from mourning.

[17] The *Hobby-horse* was a part of the old Morris-dance, which was used in the May-games. It was the figure of a horse fastened round a man's waist, the man's legs going through the horse's body, and enabling him to walk, but covered by a long footcloth; while false legs appeared where those of the man's should be, astride the horse. The Puritans waged a furious war against the Morris-dance; which caused the Hobby-horse to be left out of it: hence the burden of a song, which passed into a proverb. The plays of the times have many allusions to it.

Hautboys play. The Dumb-show enters.

Enter a King *and a* Queen *very lovingly; the* Queen *embracing him, and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck; lays him down upon a bank of flowers: she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the* King's *ears, and exit. The* Queen *returns, finds the* King *dead, and makes passionate action. The* Poisoner, *with some two or three* Mutes, *comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The* Poisoner *wooes the* Queen *with gifts: she seems loth and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love.*[18] [Exeunt.

Ophe. What means this, my lord?

Ham. Marry, this is miching mallecho;[19] it means mischief.

Ophe. Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

Enter Prologue.

Ham. We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all.[20]

Ophe. Will he tell us what this show meant?

[18] As the King does not take fire at this Dumb-show, we may suppose his attention to be so engaged with some about him, that he does not mark it.

[19] *Miching mallecho* is lurking mischief or evil-doing. To *mich*, for to skulk, to lurk, was an old English verb in common use in Shakespeare's time; and *mallecho* or *malhecho*, *misdeed*, he borrowed from the Spanish.

[20] Hamlet is running a high strain of jocularity with Ophelia, in order to hide his purpose. The wit here turns upon the fact, that an actor's business is speaking; blurting out before the world what would else be unknown; as dramatic personages are always supposed to be speaking, as *without an audience*, what an audience is nevertheless listening to. Hence, even when keeping counsel, they are *not* keeping it; are telling the very things they are hiding, and blabbing to the public what they are confiding to each other.

Ham. Ay, or any show that you'll show him: be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means.

Ophe. You are naught,[21] you are naught; I'll mark the play.

Prologue. *For us, and for our tragedy,*
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently. [Exit.

Ham. Is this a prologue, or the posy[22] of a ring?

Ophe. 'Tis brief, my lord.

Ham. As woman's love.

Enter two Players, King *and* Queen.

Play. K. *Full thirty times hath Phœbus' cart*[23] *gone round*
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbèd ground,
And thirty dozen moons with borrow'd sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been,
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

Play. Q. *So many journeys may the Sun and Moon*
Make us again count o'er ere love be done!
But, woe is me! you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you.[24] *Yet, though I distrust,*
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must:
For women's fear and love hold quantity;[25]

[21] That is *naughty*, *bad*; not *nothing* or *nought*.

[22] The *posy* is the *motto*, that is, words inscribed, and of course very brief.

[23] *Cart*, *car*, and *chariot* were used indiscriminately.—"The style," says Coleridge, "of the interlude here is distinguished from the real dialogue by rhyme, as in the first interview with the players by epic verse."

[24] "Distrust *your health*"; "am solicitous about you."

[25] "Hold quantity" is *have equal strength*.

In neither aught, or in extremity.
Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know;
And as my love is sized, my fear is so:
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

Play. K. *Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;*
My operant[26] *powers their functions leave to do:*
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honour'd, beloved; and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou—

Play. Q. *O, confound the rest!*
Such love must needs be treason in my breast:
In second husband let me be accurst!
None wed the second but who kill'd the first.

Ham. [*Aside.*] Wormwood, wormwood!

Play. Q. *The instances*[27] *that second marriage move*
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love:
A second time I kill my husband dead,
When second husband kisses me in bed.

Play. K. *I do believe you think what now you speak;*
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth, but poor validity;
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree,
But fall unshaken when they mellow be.
Most necessary[28] *'tis that we forget*

[26] "*Operant* for *active* or *operative*. So in *Timon of Athens*, iv. 3: "Sauce his palate with thy most *operant* poison."

[27] *Instances* for *inducements*. In the next line, *respects* is *considerations* or *motives*, as usual in Shakespeare.

[28] *Necessary* here means *natural* simply. So in *Measure for Measure*, ii. 4: "Dispossessing all my other parts of *necessary* fitness."