

Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd,  
 But it reserved some quantity of choice,<sup>12</sup>  
 To serve in such a difference. What devil was't,  
 That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?<sup>13</sup>  
 Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,  
 Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,  
 Or but a sickly part of one true sense  
 Could not so mope.<sup>14</sup>  
 O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious Hell,  
 If thou canst mutine<sup>15</sup> in a matron's bones,  
 To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,  
 And melt in her own fire:<sup>16</sup> proclaim no shame,  
 When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,  
 Since frost itself as actively doth burn,  
 And reason panders will.

which *sense* is used. The first *sense* is *sensation* as necessary to bodily motion; the second refers to the mind, and comes pretty near meaning *reason*. The idea seems to be, that her reason must be not merely unseated, as in madness, but absolutely quenched.—In "madness would not err," the meaning is, "madness would not *so* err."

<sup>12</sup> Sense was never so *dominated* by the delusions of *insanity*, but that it still retained some *power* of choice. We have before had *quantity* in much the same sense. See page 140, note 25.

<sup>13</sup> *Hoodman-blind* is the old game of *blindman's-buff*.

<sup>14</sup> To *mope* is to be *dull and stupid*.

<sup>15</sup> *Mutine* for *mutiny*. This is the old form of the verb. Shakespeare calls *mutineers mutines* in a subsequent scene.

<sup>16</sup> The views here set forth by Hamlet are very different from those of Polonius in his advice to Laertes, as remarked upon in note 22, page 72. Hamlet seems to think that generous passions are the proper safety of youth, and he would keep the soul sweet by setting it on fire with moral beauty. The author of *Ecce Homo* has an apt passage in point: "How can warmth cleanse? The answer is, that *moral* warmth does cleanse. No heart is pure that is not passionate; no virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic." The case is well-nigh desperate indeed, when the ardour of youth, which is the proper life of virtue, becomes itself the death of virtue.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, speak no more!  
 Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;  
 And there I see such black and grained<sup>17</sup> spots  
 As will not leave their tinct.

*Ham.* Nay, but to live  
 Stew'd in corruption, —

*Queen.* O, speak to me no more!  
 These words like daggers enter in mine ears:  
 No more, sweet Hamlet!

*Ham.* A murderer and a villain;  
 A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe  
 Of your precedent lord; a Vice of kings;<sup>18</sup>  
 A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,  
 That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,<sup>19</sup>  
 And put it in his pocket!

*Queen.* No more!

*Ham.* A king of shreds and patches, —

*Enter the GHOST.*

Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,  
 You heavenly guards! — What would your gracious figure?

*Queen.* Alas, he's mad!

*Ham.* Do you not come your tardy son to chide,

<sup>17</sup> "*Grained spots*" are spots *ingrained*, or *died in the grain*, so that they will not part with their colour, or lose their tinct.

<sup>18</sup> An allusion to the old Vice or jester, a stereotyped character in the Moral-plays, which were going out of use in the Poet's time. The Vice wore a motley or patchwork dress; hence the *shreds and patches* applied in this instance.

<sup>19</sup> This should not be taken as meaning that Claudius is not the lawful King of Denmark. He "stole the diadem," not by an act of usurpation but by murdering the rightful holder of it.



That, lapsed in time and passion,<sup>20</sup> lets go by  
Th' important acting of your dread command?

O, say!

*Ghost.* Do not forget. This visitation  
Is but to whet thy almost-blunted purpose.  
But, look, amazement on thy mother sits:  
O, step between her and her fighting soul!  
Conceit in weakest bodies<sup>21</sup> strongest works.  
Speak to her, Hamlet.

*Ham.* How is't with you, lady?

*Queen.* Alas, how is't with you,  
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,  
And with th' incorporal air do hold discourse?  
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;  
And, as the sleeping soldiers in th' alarm,  
Your bedded hairs, like life in excrements,<sup>22</sup>  
Start up, and stand on end. O gentle son,  
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper  
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?

*Ham.* On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!  
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,  
Would make them capable.<sup>23</sup> — Do not look upon me;  
Lest with this piteous action you convert  
My stern affects:<sup>24</sup> then what I have to do

<sup>20</sup> The sense appears to be, having failed *in respect* both of time and of purpose. Or it may be, having allowed passion to cool by lapse of time.

<sup>21</sup> *Conceit*, again, for *conception*, *imagination*. *Bodies* is here put for *minds*, or *persons*; as *corpora* also is in classical Latin.

<sup>22</sup> That is, like excrements *alive*, or having *life in them*. *Hair*, nails, feathers, &c., were called *excrements*, as being without life.

<sup>23</sup> Would put sense and understanding into them. The use of *capable* for *susceptible*, *intelligent*, is not peculiar to Shakespeare.

<sup>24</sup> *Affects* is repeatedly used by Shakespeare for *affections* or *passions*.

Will want true colour; tears, perchance, for blood.

*Queen.* To whom do you speak this?

*Ham.* Do you see nothing there?

*Queen.* Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

*Ham.* Nor did you nothing hear?

*Queen.* No, nothing but ourselves.

*Ham.* Why, look you there! look, how it steals away!

My father, in his habit as he lived!

Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!

[Exit GHOST.]

*Queen.* This is the very coinage of your brain:  
This bodiless creation ecstasy  
Is very cunning in.<sup>25</sup>

*Ham.* Ecstasy!

My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,  
And makes as healthful music: 'tis not madness  
That I have utter'd: bring me to the test,  
And I the matter will re-word; which madness  
Would gambol from.<sup>26</sup> Mother, for love of grace,

and may signify any mood or temper of mind looking to action. Hamlet is afraid lest the "piteous action" of the Ghost should make his stern mood or temper of revenge give place to tenderness, so that he will see the ministry enjoined upon him in a false light, and go to shedding tears instead of blood.

<sup>25</sup> The Ghost in this scene, as also in the banquet-scene of *Macbeth*, is plainly what we should call a *subjective* ghost; that is, existing only in the heated imagination of the beholder. As the Queen says, insanity is very fertile in such "bodiless creations." It is not so with the apparition in the former scenes, as the Ghost is there seen by other persons. To be sure, it was part of the old belief, that ghosts could, if they chose, make themselves visible only to those with whom they were to deal; but this is just what we mean by *subjective*. The ancients could not take the idea of subjective visions, as we use the term. So that the words here put into the Ghost's mouth are to be regarded as merely the echo of Hamlet's own thoughts.

<sup>26</sup> Mad people, if asked to repeat a thing that they have just said, are apt



Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,  
That not your trespass but my madness speaks :  
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,  
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,  
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to Heaven ;  
Repent what's past, avoid what is to come ;  
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,  
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue ;  
For in the fatness of these pursy times  
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,  
Yea, coub<sup>27</sup> and woo for leave to do him good.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

*Ham.* O, throw away the worser part of it,  
And live the purer with the other half.  
Good night : but go not to my uncle's bed ;  
(Assume a virtue, if you have it not.)  
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat  
Of habits evil, is angel yet in this,<sup>28</sup>  
That to the use of actions fair and good  
He likewise gives a frock or livery,  
That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night,  
And that shall lend a kind of easiness  
To the next abstinence : the next more easy ;  
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,

to go on and say something else without knowing it; thus *gamboling* from the matter which they undertake to re-word. But the test is far from being a sure one; madmen being sometimes as firm and steady in the intellectual faculties as the sanest are.

<sup>27</sup> To *coub* is to *bend, curve, or truckle*; from the French *courber*.

<sup>28</sup> The meaning appears to be, that, though custom is a monster that *eats out all sensibility or consciousness* of evil habits; yet, on the other hand, it is an angel in this respect, that it works in a manner equally favourable to good actions. — In this passage *custom, habit, and use* all have about the same meaning; I mean the second *use*, — "For use almost," &c.

And either shame the Devil or throw him out<sup>29</sup>  
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night :  
And when you are desirous to be blest,  
I'll blessing beg of you.<sup>30</sup> For this same lord,

[*Pointing to* POLONIUS.]

I do repent : but Heaven hath pleased it so,  
To punish me with this and this with me,  
That I must be their<sup>31</sup> scourge and minister.  
I will bestow him, and will answer well  
The death I gave him. So, again, good night. —  
[*Aside.*] I must be cruel, only to be kind :  
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind. —  
One word more, good lady.

*Queen.* What shall I do?

*Ham.* Not this, by no means, that I bid you do :  
Let the bloat<sup>32</sup> King tempt you again to bed ;  
Pinch wanton on your cheek ; call you his mouse ;<sup>33</sup>  
And let him, for a pair of reechy<sup>34</sup> kisses,  
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,  
Make you to ravel all this matter out,  
That I essentially am not in madness,

<sup>29</sup> The sense of *out* extends back over *shame* as well as over *throw*; the meaning being, "And either shame the Devil *out* or *force* him out." See Critical Notes.

<sup>30</sup> How beautiful this is ! Of course Hamlet means that, when he finds his mother on her knees to God, he will be on his knees to her.

<sup>31</sup> The pronoun *their* refers to *Heaven*, which is here used as a collective noun, and put for *heavenly powers*.

<sup>32</sup> *Bloat* for *bloated*. Many preterites were formed so. See page 56, note 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Mouse* was a term of endearment. Thus Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* : "Pleasant names may be invented, bird, mouse, lamb, puss, pigeon."

<sup>34</sup> *Reechy* and *reechy* are the same word, and applied to any vaporous exhalation.



But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know ;  
 For who, that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,  
 Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,<sup>35</sup>  
 Such dear concernings hide ? who would do so !  
 No, in despite of sense and secrecy,  
 Unpeg the basket on the house's top,  
 Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,  
 To try conclusions,<sup>36</sup> in the basket creep,  
 And break your own neck down.

*Queen.* Be thou assured, if words be made of breath,  
 And breath of life, I have no life to breathe  
 What thou hast said to me.

*Ham.* I must to England ; you know that ?

*Queen.*

Alack,

I had forgot : 'tis so concluded on.

*Ham.* There's letters seal'd ; and my two schoolfellows, —  
 Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd, —  
 They bear the mandate ; they must sweep my way,  
 And marshal me to knavery. Let it work ;  
 For 'tis the sport to have the engineer  
 Hoist with his own petar :<sup>37</sup> and't shall go hard  
 But I will delve one yard below their mines,  
 And blow them at the Moon. O, 'tis most sweet  
 When in one line two crafts directly meet !  
 This man shall set me packing :

<sup>35</sup> A paddock is a toad ; a gib, a cat.

<sup>36</sup> To try conclusions is the old phrase for trying experiments, or putting a thing to the proof. — The passage alludes, apparently, to some fable or story now quite forgotten. Sir John Suckling, in one of his letters, refers to "the story of the jackanapes and the partridges."

<sup>37</sup> Hoist for hoisted, as in note 32. — Petar, now spelt petard, is a kind of mortar used for blowing open gates and doors. — "It shall go hard" means "I will try hard." Repeatedly used so by the Poet.

I'll lug the corse into the neighbour room.  
 Mother, good night. Indeed this counsellor  
 Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,  
 Who was in life a foolish-prating knave. —  
 Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you. —  
 Good night, mother.

[*Exeunt severally ; HAMLET dragging in POLONIUS.*]

SCENE V. — *Another Room in the Castle.*

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

*King.* There's matter in these sighs : these profound  
 heaves

You must translate ; 'tis fit we understand them.  
 Where is your son ?

*Queen.* Bestow this place on us a little while. —

[*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*]

Ah, my good lord, what have I seen to-night !

*King.* What, Gertrude ? How does Hamlet ?

*Queen.* Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend  
 Which is the mightier : in his lawless fit,  
 Behind the arras hearing something stir,  
 He whips his rapier out, and cries *A rat, a rat !*  
 And in this brainish<sup>1</sup> apprehension kills  
 The unseen good old man.

*King.* O heavy deed !

It had been so with us, had we been there :  
 His liberty is full of threats to all,  
 To you yourself, to us, to every one.  
 Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd ?

<sup>1</sup> Brainish for brainsick ; that is, crazy.



It will be laid to us, whose providence  
Should have kept short, restrain'd, and out of haunt,<sup>2</sup>  
This mad young man : but so much was our love,  
We would not understand what was most fit ;  
But, like the owner of a foul disease,  
To keep it from divulging, let it feed  
Even on the pith of life.<sup>3</sup> Where is he gone ?

*Queen.* To draw apart the body he hath kill'd ;  
O'er whom his very madness, like fine ore  
Among a mineral<sup>4</sup> of metals base,  
Shows itself pure : he weeps for what is done.

*King.* O Gertrude, come away !  
The Sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,  
But we will ship him hence ; and this vile deed  
We must, with all our majesty and skill,  
Both countenance and excuse. — Ho, Guildenstern !

*Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*

Friends both, go join you with some further aid :  
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,  
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him :  
Go seek him out ; speak fair, and bring the body  
Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this. —

*[Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.]*

Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends ;

<sup>2</sup> Out of *haunt* means out of *company*.

<sup>3</sup> Certain diseases appear to be attended with an instinct of concealment. I have heard of persons dying of external cancer ; yet they had kept so secret about it that their nearest friends had not suspected it.

<sup>4</sup> *Mineral* for *mine* ; in accordance with old usage. So Hooker, in *Ecclesiastical Polity*, i. 4, 3, speaks of the fallen Angels as "being dispersed, some on the earth, some in the water, some amongst the *minerals*, dens, and caves, that are under the earth."

And let them know both what we mean to do  
And what's untimely done : so, haply, slander —  
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,  
As level as the cannon to his blank,<sup>5</sup>  
Transports his poison'd shot — may miss our name,  
And hit the woundless air. O, come away !  
My soul is full of discord and dismay. *[Exeunt]*

SCENE VI. — *Another Room in the Castle.*

*Enter HAMLET.*

*Ham.* Safely stowed.

*Rosen.* } *[Within.]* Hamlet ! Lord Hamlet !  
*Guild.* }

*Ham.* What noise ? who calls on Hamlet ? O, here they come.

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*

*Rosen.* What have you done, my lord, with the dead body ?

*Ham.* Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

*Rosen.* Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence  
And bear it to the chapel.

*Ham.* Do not believe it.

*Rosen.* Believe what ?

*Ham.* That I can keep your counsel and not mine own.  
Besides, to be demanded of a sponge,<sup>1</sup> what replication should  
be made by the son of a king ?

<sup>5</sup> As *direct*, or as *sure-aimed*, as the cannon to its *mark*. *Direct* is one of the old meanings of *level*. The *blank* was the *white* spot at which aim was taken in target-shooting.

<sup>1</sup> That is, *on being* demanded by a sponge. An instance of the infinitive used *gerundively*, or like the Latin *Gerund*, and equivalent, in English, to a



*Rosen.* Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

*Ham.* Ay, sir; that soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end: he keeps them, as an ape doth nuts, in the corner of his jaw; first mouth'd, to be last swallowed:<sup>2</sup> when he needs what you have glean'd, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall<sup>3</sup> be dry again.

*Rosen.* I understand you not, my lord.

*Ham.* I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.<sup>4</sup>

*Rosen.* My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the King.

*Ham.* The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body.<sup>5</sup> The King is a thing —

*Guild.* A thing, my lord!

*Ham.* — of nothing: bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after.<sup>6</sup>

*Exeunt.*

participle and a preposition. The usage is very frequent in Shakespeare, and sometimes renders his meaning rather obscure.—*Replication* is the same as *reply*.

<sup>2</sup> Apes are provided with a pouch on each side of the jaw, in which they stow away the food first taken, and there keep it till they have eaten the rest.

<sup>3</sup> *Shall for will*; the two being often used indiscriminately.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps this is best explained by a passage in *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 2: "A jest's prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it, never in the tongue of him that makes it."

<sup>5</sup> Hamlet is talking riddles, in order to tease and puzzle his questioners. The meaning of this riddle, to the best of my guessing, is, that the King's body is with the King, but not the King's soul: he's a king without kingliness. Perhaps, however, the passage should be regarded simply as a piece of intentional downright nonsense.

<sup>6</sup> "Hide fox, and all after," was a juvenile sport, most probably what is now called *hide and seek*.

SCENE VII. — *Another Room in the Castle.*

*Enter the KING, attended.*

*King.* I have sent to seek him, and to find the body. How dangerous is it that this man goes loose! Yet must not we put the strong law on him: He's loved of the distracted<sup>1</sup> multitude, Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes; And where 'tis so, th' offender's scourge is weigh'd, But never the offence.<sup>2</sup> To bear all smooth and even, This sudden sending him away must seem Deliberate pause:<sup>3</sup> diseases desperate grown By desperate appliance are relieved, Or not at all. —

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ.*

How now! what hath befall'n?

*Rosen.* Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord, We cannot get from him.

*King.* But where is he?

*Rosen.* Without, my lord; guarded, to know your pleasure.

*King.* Bring him before us.

*Rosen.* Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

*Enter HAMLET and GUILDENSTERN.*

*King.* Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

*Ham.* At supper.

<sup>1</sup> *Distracted* in the sense of *discordant*, or *disagreeing*; sometimes called *many-headed*. Perhaps the sense of *fickle*, *inconstant*, is also intended.

<sup>2</sup> Who like not what their judgment approves, for they have none, but what pleases their eyes; and in this case the criminal's punishment is considered, but not his crime.

<sup>3</sup> "To keep all things quiet and in order, this sudden act must seem a thing that we have paused and deliberated upon." See page 99, note II.



*King.* At supper! where?

*Ham.* Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him.<sup>4</sup> Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service,—two dishes, but to one table: that's the end.

*King.* Alas, alas!

*Ham.* A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

*King.* What dost thou mean by this?

*Ham.* Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through a beggar.<sup>5</sup>

*King.* Where is Polonius?

*Ham.* In Heaven; send thither to see: if your messenger find him not there, seek him i' the other place yourself. But indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

*King.* [*To some Attendants.*] Go seek him there.

*Ham.* He will stay till ye come. [*Exeunt Attendants.*]

*King.* Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,—Which we do tender,<sup>6</sup> as we dearly grieve For that which thou hast done,—must send thee hence With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;

<sup>4</sup> Alluding, probably, to the Diet of Worms, which Protestants regarded as a convocation of *politicians*. Here, again, I am indebted to Mr. Joseph Crosby, who aptly prompts me, that there is a further allusion to the character of Polonius; meaning such worms as might naturally be bred in the carcass of a defunct old political wire-puller. And he remarks, "Had the old gentleman been conspicuous for his ambition, it would have been just like Shakespeare to call the worms bred from him *aspiring* worms."

<sup>5</sup> Alluding to the *royal* journeys of state, called *progresses*.

<sup>6</sup> To *tender* a thing is to be *careful* of it. See page 73, note 27.

The bark is ready, and the wind at help,  
Th' associates tend,<sup>7</sup> and every thing is bent  
For England.

*Ham.* For England!

*King.* Ay, Hamlet.

*Ham.* Good.

*King.* So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

*Ham.* I see a cherub that sees them.<sup>8</sup>—But, come; for England!—Farewell, dear mother.

*King.* Thy loving father, Hamlet.

*Ham.* My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother.—Come, for England!  
[*Exit.*]

*King.* Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard;  
Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night:  
Away! for every thing is seal'd and done  
That else leans on th' affair; pray you, make haste.—

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.]

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught,—  
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,  
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red  
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe  
Pays homage to us,—thou may'st not coldly set<sup>9</sup>  
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,  
By letters conjuring<sup>10</sup> to that effect,

<sup>7</sup> The associates of your voyage *are waiting*.—"The wind at *help*" means the wind *serves*, or is right, to forward you.

<sup>8</sup> Hamlet means that he divines them, or has an inkling of them.

<sup>9</sup> To *set* formerly meant to *estimate*. To *set* much or little by a thing, is to *estimate* it much or little.

<sup>10</sup> In Shakespeare's time the two senses of *conjure* had not acquired each its peculiar way of pronouncing the word. Here *conjuring* has the *first* syllable long, with the sense of *earnestly entreating*.



The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;  
 For like the hectic in my blood he rages,  
 And thou must cure me: till I know 'tis done,  
 Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.<sup>11</sup> [Exit.

## ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *A Plain in Denmark.*

*Enter* FORTINBRAS, a Captain, and Soldiers, *marching.*

*Fortin.* Go, captain, from me greet the Danish King;  
 Tell him that by his license Fortinbras  
 Claims the conveyance of a promised march  
 Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.<sup>1</sup>  
 If that his Majesty would aught with us,  
 We shall express our duty in his eye;<sup>2</sup>  
 And let him know so.

*Capt.* I will do't, my lord.

*Fortin.* Go softly on.

[*Exeunt* FORTINBRAS and Soldiers.

*Enter* HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and others.

*Ham.* Good sir, whose powers are these?

*Capt.* They are of Norway, sir.

<sup>11</sup> Of course strict grammar would here require "*will* ne'er *begin*"; the tense being changed for the rhyme. See page 96, note 26.

<sup>1</sup> The rendezvous here meant is the place where Fortinbras is to wait for the Captain after the latter has done his message to the King.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Regulations for the Establishment of the Queen's Household*, 1627: "All such as doe service in the queen's eye." And in *The Establishment of Prince Henry's Household*, 1610: "All such as doe service in the prince's eye." Fortinbras means, "I will wait upon his presence, and pay my respects to him in person."

*Ham.* How purposed, sir, I pray you?

*Capt.* Against some part of Poland.

*Ham.* Who commands them, sir?

*Capt.* The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

*Ham.* Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,  
 Or for some frontier?

*Capt.* Truly to speak, sir, and with no addition,  
 We go to gain a little patch of ground  
 That hath in it no profit but the name.  
 To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;<sup>3</sup>  
 Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole  
 A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

*Ham.* Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

*Capt.* Yes, 'tis already garrison'd.

*Ham.* Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats  
 Will not debate the question of this straw:  
 This is th' imposthume<sup>4</sup> of much wealth and peace,  
 That inward breaks, and shows no cause without  
 Why the man dies. — I humbly thank you, sir.

*Capt.* God b' wi' you, sir. [Exit.

*Rosen.* Will't please you go, my lord?

*Ham.* I'll be with you straight. Go a little before. —

[*Exeunt all but* HAMLET.

<sup>3</sup> The meaning is, "I would not pay five ducats for the exclusive privilege of collecting all the revenue it will yield to the State. To *farm* or *farm out* taxes is to sell commissions for collecting them, the buyers to have the privilege of making what they can by the process. Burke uses the word in a like sense in his *Articles of Charge against Hastings*: "The *farm*ing of the defence of a country, being wholly unprecedented and evidently abused, could have no real object but to enrich the contractors at the Company's expense." — To *pay* has the force of *by paying*. The infinitive again used *gerundively*. See page 169, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Imposthume* was in common use for *abscess* in Shakespeare's time. It is a corruption of *apostem*.