

For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a glass.

Lear. No, I will be the pattern of all patience ;
I will say nothing.

Enter KENT.

Kent. Alas, sir ! are you here ? things that love night
Love not such nights as these ; the wrathful skies
Gallow⁶ the very wanderers of the dark,
And make them keep their caves. Since I was man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
Remember to have heard : man's nature cannot carry
Th' affliction nor the fear.⁷

Lear. Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pothor o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulgèd crimes,
Unwhipp'd of justice : hide thee, thou bloody hand ;
Thou perjured, and thou simular⁸ of virtue
That art incestuous : caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
Hast practised on man's life : close pent-up guilts,

places with each other is the Fool's characteristic figure for such an inversion of things as Lear has made in setting his daughters above himself.

⁶ To *gallow* is to *frighten*, to *terrify*. The word is not met with elsewhere, I think, though the form *gally* is said to be used in the West of England.

⁷ *Affliction* for *infliction* ; the two being then equivalent. Man's nature cannot endure the infliction, nor even the fear of it. So in the Prayer-Book : "Defend us from all dangers and mischiefs, and from the fear of them."

⁸ *Simular* for *simulator*. A *simulator* is one who puts on the show of what he is not, as a *dissimulator* puts off the show of what he is.

Rive your concealing continents,⁹ and cry
These dreadful summoners grace.¹⁰ I am a man
More sinn'd against than sinning.

Kent. Alack, bare-headed !

Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel ;
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest :
Repose you there ; while I to this hard house
(More harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised ;
Which even but now, demanding after you,
Denied me to come in) return, and force
Their scanted courtesy.

Lear. My wits begin to turn. —
Come on, my boy : how dost, my boy ? art cold ?
I'm cold myself. — Where is this straw, my fellow ?
The art of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious.¹¹ Come, your hovel. —
Poor Fool and knave, I've one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.

Fool. [Sings.] *He that has and¹² a little tiny wit, —*
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain, —
Must make content with his fortunes fit,
Though the rain it raineth every day.

Lear. True, my good boy. — Come, bring us to this hovel. [Exeunt LEAR and KENT.]

⁹ *Continent* for that which *contains* or *encloses*. So in *Antony and Cleopatra* : "Heart, once be stronger than thy *continent*."

¹⁰ *Summoners* are officers that summon offenders for trial or punishment. To *cry grace* is to beg for mercy or pardon. Lear is regarding the raging elements as the agents or representatives of the gods, calling criminals to judgment.

¹¹ An allusion to alchemy, which was supposed to have the power of transmuting vile metals into precious, as lead into gold.

¹² In old ballads, *and* is sometimes, as here, apparently redundant, but adds a slight force to the expression, like *even*.

Fool. This is a brave night. I'll speak a prophecy ere I go :
 When priests are more in word than matter ;
 When brewers mar their malt with water ;
 When nobles are their tailors' tutors ;
 No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors ;
 When every case in law is right ;
 No squire in debt, nor no poor knight ;
 When slanders do not live in tongues,
 Nor cut-purses¹³ come not to throngs ;
 When usurers tell¹⁴ their gold i' the field ;—
 Then shall the realm of Albion
 Come to great confusion :
 Then comes the time, who lives to see't,
 That going shall be used with feet.

This prophecy Merlin shall make ;¹⁵ for I live before his time. [*Exit.*

SCENE III. — *A Room in GLOSTER'S Castle.*

Enter GLOSTER and EDMUND.

Glos. Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desired their leave that I might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house ; charged me, on pain of their perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, nor any way sustain him.

Edm. Most savage, and unnatural !

¹³ *Cut-purses* were the same as what we call *pickpockets*.

¹⁴ *To tell*, again, in the old sense of *to count*. See page 115, note 10.

¹⁵ Merlin was a famous prophet in the Druidical mythology of ancient Britain, who did divers wonderful things "by his deep science and Hell-dreaded might." Some of his marvels are sung in *The Faerie Queene*, iii. 2, 18-21. Part of his prophecy, which the Fool here anticipates, is given in Puttenham's *Art of Poetry*, 1589.

Glos. Go to ; say you nothing. There is division between the Dukes ; and a worse matter than that : I have received a letter this night ; — 'tis dangerous to be spoken ; — I have lock'd the letter in my closet : these injuries the King now bears will be revenged home ;¹ there is part of a power already footed : we must incline to the King. I will seek him, and privily relieve him : go you, and maintain talk with the Duke, that my charity be not of him perceived : if he ask for me, I am ill, and gone to bed. Though I die for it, as no less is threaten'd me, the King my old master must be relieved. There is some strange thing toward,² Edmund ; pray you, be careful. [*Exit.*

Edm. This courtesy, forbid thee !³ shall the Duke Instantly know ; and of that letter too. This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me That which my father loses, — no less than all : The younger rises when the old doth fall. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV. — *The Heav'n, near a Hovel. Storm continues.*

*Enter LEAR, KENT, and the FOOL.*¹

Kent. Here is the place, my lord ; good my lord, enter : The tyranny of the open night's too rough For nature to endure.

¹ Here, as often, *home* has the adverbial sense of *thoroughly, to the utmost*.

² *Toward*, again, for *at hand* or *forthcoming*. See page 96, note 2.

³ "*Forbid thee*" I take to mean "*A curse upon thee*," or like our phrase, "*Confound you*." So in *Macbeth*, i. 3, we have "He shall live a man *forbid*"; that is, shall live *under a curse* or *an interdict*; pursued by an evil fate. Mr. Crosby, however, takes *forbid* in the sense merely of *forbidden*, and as agreeing with *courtesy*. In this case, the reference of course would be to the aid and comfort which Gloster resolves to give the old King, notwithstanding the threats of Cornwall and Regan. It may be so : but does not this make the sense too tame ?

¹ O, what a world's convention of agonies is here ! All external nature

Lear. Let me alone.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Wilt break my heart?

Kent. I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

Lear. Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin : so 'tis to thee ;
But where the greater malady is fix'd,
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear ;
But, if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea,
Thou'dst meet the bear i' the mouth. When the mind's free,
The body's delicate : the tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there. — Filial ingratitude !
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to't? But I will punish home :
No, I will weep no more. In such a night
To shut me out ! — Pour on ; I will endure ; —
In such a night as this ! O Regan, Goneril !
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all, —
O, that way madness lies ; let me shun that ;
No more of that.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Pr'ythee, go in thyself ; seek thine own ease :
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder

in a storm, all moral nature convulsed, — the real madness of Lear, the feigned madness of Edgar, the babbling of the Fool, the desperate fidelity of Kent, — surely such a scene was never conceived before or since ! Take it but as a picture for the eye only, it is more terrific than any which a Michael Angelo, inspired by a Dante, could have conceived, and which none but a Michael Angelo could have executed. Or let it have been uttered to the blind, the howlings of nature would seem converted into the voice of conscious humanity. — COLERIDGE.

On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in. —

[*To the FOOL.*] In, boy ; go first. — You houseless poverty, —

Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep. —

[*The FOOL goes in.*]

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd² raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this ! Take physic, pomp ;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel ;
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the Heavens more just.

Edg. [*Within.*] Fathom and half, fathom and half !
Poor Tom ! [*The FOOL runs out.*]

Fool. Come not in here, nuncle ; here's a spirit. Help me, help me !

Kent. Give me thy hand. — Who's there?

Fool. A spirit, a spirit : he says his name's poor Tom.

Kent. What art thou that dost grumble there i' the straw?
Come forth.

Enter EDGAR, disguised as a Madman.

Edg. Away ! the foul fiend follows me !³

² *Loop'd* and *window'd* is full of *holes* and *apertures*. The allusion is to loop-holes, such as are found in ancient castles, and designed for the admission of light and air.

³ Edgar's assumed madness serves the great purpose of taking off part of the shock which would otherwise be caused by the true madness of Lear, and further displays the profound difference between the two. In Edgar's ravings Shakespeare all the while lets you see a fixed purpose, a practical end in view ; — in Lear's, there is only the brooding of the one anguish, an eddy without progression. — COLERIDGE.

Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.

Hum! go to thy cold bed, and warm thee.⁴

Lear. Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?

Edg. Who gives any thing to poor Tom? whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, through ford and whirlpool, over bog and quagmire;⁵ that hath laid knives under his pillow, and halters in his pew; set ratsbane by his porridge;⁶ made him, proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inch'd bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor. — Bless thy five wits!⁷ — Tom's a-cold. O, do de, do de, do de.⁸ — Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking!⁹ Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes: — There could I have him now, — and there, — and there, — and there again, and there.

[*Storm still.*]

Lear. What, have his daughters brought him to this pass? — Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give 'em all?

⁴ This appears to have been a sort of proverbial phrase. Shakespeare has it again in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Staunton quotes, from *The Spanish Tragedy*, "What outcries pluck me from my naked bed?" and says, "The phrase to go to a cold bed meant only to go cold to bed; to rise from a naked bed signified to get up naked from bed."

⁵ Alluding to the *ignis fatuus*, supposed to be lights kindled by mischievous beings to lead travellers into destruction.

⁶ Fiends were commonly represented as thus tempting the wretched to suicide. So in *Doctor Faustus*, 1604: "Swords, poisons, halters, and envenomed steel are laid before me, to dispatch myself."

⁷ The five senses were sometimes called the *five wits*. And the mental powers, being supposed to correspond in number to the senses, were called the *five wits* also. The reference here is, probably, to the latter.

⁸ These syllables are probably meant to represent the chattering of one who shivers with cold.

⁹ To *take* is to strike with malignant influence. So in ii. 4 of this play: "Strike her young bones, you *taking* airs, with lameness!"

Fool. Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all shamed.

Lear. Now, all the plagues that in the pendulous air Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters!

Kent. He hath no daughters, sir.

Lear. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature To such a lowness but his unkind daughters. Is it the fashion, that discarded fathers Should have thus little mercy on their flesh? Judicious punishment! 'twas this flesh begot Those pelican daughters.¹⁰

Edg. *Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill:*

Halloo, halloo, loo, loo!¹¹

Fool. This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.

Edg. Take heed o' the foul fiend: obey thy parents; keep thy word justly; swear not; set not thy sweet heart on proud array. Tom's a-cold.

Lear. What hast thou been?

Edg. A serving-man, proud in heart and mind; that curl'd my hair; wore gloves in my cap;¹² swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke them in the sweet face of Heaven: wine loved I deeply; dice dearly: false of heart, light of ear,¹³ bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth,

¹⁰ The young pelican is fabled to suck the mother's blood. The allusions to this fable are very numerous in old writers.

¹¹ In illustration of this, Mr. Halliwell has pointed out the following couplet in *Gammer Gurton's Garland*: —

Pillycock, Pillycock sat on a hill;
If he's not gone, he sits there still.

¹² *Gloves* were anciently worn in the cap, either as the favour of a mistress, or as the memorial of a friend, or as a badge to be challenged.

¹³ *Light of ear* means "sinning with the ear"; that is, greedy or credulous of slander and malicious reports, or of obscene talk.

wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to women: keep thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend.

Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind;

Says suum, mun, ha, no, nonny:

*Dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa! let him trot by.*¹⁴

[Storm still.

Lear. Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncover'd body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on's are sophisticated.¹⁵ Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. — Off, off, you lendings! — come, unbutton here.

[*Tearing off his clothes.*

Fool. Pr'ythee, nuncle, be contented; 'tis a naughty night to swim in. Look, here comes a walking fire.

Edg. This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet:¹⁶ he begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock; he gives the web and

¹⁴ Much effort has been made to explain this strain of jargon; but it probably was not meant to be understood, its sense lying in its having no sense. And Edgar's counterfeit seems to proceed in part by stringing together odds and ends of old ballads, without connection or intelligible purpose. *Sessa* is elsewhere used by the Poet for *cease* or *be quiet*. *Dolphin* is the old form of *Dauphin*; and "Dolphin my boy, my boy, cease, let him trot by" is the burden of a ridiculous old song.

¹⁵ Meaning himself, Kent, and the Fool; and they three are sophisticated out of nature in wearing clothes. Therefore, to become unsophisticated, he will off with his "lendings," and be as Edgar is.

¹⁶ The names of this fiend and most of the fiends mentioned by Edgar were found in Harsnet's book. It was an old tradition that spirits were relieved from confinement at the time of curfew, that is, at the close of

the pin,¹⁷ squints the eye, and makes the harelip; mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature of Earth.

Saint Withold footed thrice the 'old;

He met the night-mare and her nine-fold;

*Bid her alight, and her troth plight,*¹⁸

*And, aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!*¹⁹

Kent. How fares your Grace?

Enter GLOSTER, with a Torch.

Lear. What's he?

Kent. Who's there? What is't you seek?

Glos. What are you there? Your names?

Edg. Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water;²⁰ swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipp'd from tything to tything, and stock-

the day, and were permitted to wander at large till the first cock-crowing. Hence, in *The Tempest*, they are said to "rejoice to hear the solemn curfew."

¹⁷ "The web and the pin" is thus explained in Florio's *Italian and English Dictionary*: "Cataratta, — a dimnesse of sight occasioned by humores hardned in the eies, called a Cataract, or a pin and a web." Also in Cotgrave's *French and English Dictionary*: "*Taye*, — any filme, or thinn skinne, &c.; and hence a pin or web in th' eye, a white filme overgrowing the eye."

¹⁸ Who Saint Withold was, or was supposed to have been, is uncertain. — *Wold* is a plain open country, whether hilly or not; formerly spelt *old*, *ould*, and *wold*, indifferently. *Nine-fold* is put for *nine foals*, to rhyme with *wold*. The *troth-plight* here referred to was meant as a charm against the *night-mare*.

¹⁹ There is some diversity of opinion as to the origin and meaning of *aroint*. In *Macbeth*, i. 3, "*Aroint* thee, witch," seems to be used as a charm against witchcraft; and the angry threatenings of the Witch at having it pronounced to her by the "rump-fed ronyon" looks as if she had been baffled by it. So that the more likely meaning seems to be, *stand off* or *be gone*.

²⁰ The wall-newt and the water-newt; small lizards.

punish'd, and imprison'd ;²¹ who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body, horse to ride, and weapon to wear ;

But mice and rats, and such small deer,

*Have been Tom's food for seven long year.*²²

Beware my follower. — Peace, Smulkin ! peace, thou fiend !

Glos. What, hath your Grace no better company ?

Edg. *The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman :*

*Modo he's call'd, and Mahu.*²³

Glos. Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile,
That it doth hate what gets it.²⁴

Edg. Poor Tom's a-cold.

Glos. Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer
T' obey in all your daughters' hard commands :
Though their injunction be to bar my doors,

²¹ "From *tything* to *tything*" is from *parish* to *parish*. The severities inflicted on the wretched beings, one of whom Edgar is here personating, are set forth in Harrison's *Description of England*: "The rogue being apprehended, committed to prison, and tried at the next assizes, if he be convicted for a vagabond, he is then adjudged to be grievously whipped, and burned through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron, as a manifestation of his wicked life, and due punishment received for the same."

²² This couplet is founded on one in the old metrical romance of *Sir Bevis*, who was confined seven years in a dungeon:—

Rattes and myce and such smal dere
Was his meate that seven yere.

²³ So in Harsnet's *Declaration*: "*Maho* was the chief devil that had possession of Sarah Williams; but another of the possessed, named Richard Mainy, was molested by a still more considerable fiend, called *Modu*." Again the said Richard Mainy deposes: "Furthermore it is pretended, that there remaineth still in mee the prince of devils, whose name should be *Modu*."—The two lines conclude a catch in *The Goblins*, a piece ascribed to Sir John Suckling.

²⁴ Of course Gloster here alludes to his son Edgar, as well as to Lear's daughters; and this makes Edgar the more anxious to keep up his disguise, lest his feelings should mar his counterfeiting. Hence he exclaims, "Poor Tom's a-cold."

And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,
Yet have I ventured to come seek you out,
And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

Lear. First let me talk with this philosopher. —
What is the cause of thunder ?

Kent. Good my lord, take his offer ; go into the house.

Lear. I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban. —
What is your study ?

Edg. How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin.

Lear. Let me ask you one word in private.

Kent. Impórtune him once more to go, my lord ;
His wits begin t' unsettle.

Glos. Canst thou blame him ?

His daughters seek his death : — ah, that good Kent !
He said it would be thus, — poor banish'd man !

Thou say'st the King grows mad : I'll tell thee, friend,
I'm almost mad myself : I had a son,

Now outlaw'd from my blood ; he sought my life,

But lately, very late : I loved him, friend,

No father his son dearer : true to tell thee, [*Storm still.*]

The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this ! —

I do beseech your Grace, —

Lear. O, cry you mercy,²⁵ sir. —

Noble philosopher, your company.

Edg. Tom's a-cold.

Glos. In, fellow, there, into the hovel ; keep thee warm.

Lear. Come, let's in all.

Kent. This way, my lord.

Lear. With him ;

I will keep still with my philosopher.

²⁵ "I cry you mercy" is an old phrase for "I ask your pardon."

Kent. Good my lord, soothe him ; let him take the fellow.

Glos. Take him you on.

Kent. Sirrah, come on ; go along with us.

Lear. Come, good Athenian.

Glos. No words, no words : hush.

Edg. *Child Roland to the dark tower came
His word was still, Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man.*²⁶ [Exeunt.

SCENE V. — *A Room in GLOSTER'S Castle.*

Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND.

Corn. I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

Edm. How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.

Corn. I now perceive, it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death ; but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reprobable badness in himself.¹

²⁶ Child Roland, that is, Knight Orlando, was reputed to be the youngest son of King Arthur. Edgar, it seems, purposely disjoins his quotations, or leaves their sense incomplete. In the ballad of *Jack and the Giants*, which, if not older than the play, may have been compiled from something that was so, a giant lets off this : —

Fee, faw, fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman :
Be he alive, or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread.

¹ By a "provoking merit" Cornwall means, apparently, a *virtue apt to be provoked*, or *stirred into act*; which virtue was set to work by some flagrant evil in Gloster himself; and it was this, and not altogether a bad disposition in Edgar, that made Edgar seek the old man's life. *Provoking* for *provocable*; the active form with the passive sense. The Poet has a great many instances of such usage. Mr. Crosby, however, gives me a different interpretation; taking *merit* in the neutral sense of *desert*, as the word is sometimes so used. "It was not altogether your brother Edgar's evil disposition

Edm. How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just!² This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France. O Heavens ! that this treason were not, or not I the detector !

Corn. Go with me to the Duchess.

Edm. If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.³

Corn. True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloster. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.

Edm. [*Aside.*] If I find him comforting the King, it will stuff his suspicion more fully. — [*To CORN.*] I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.

Corn. I will lay trust upon thee ; and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. — *A Chamber in a Farm-house adjoining the Castle.*

Enter GLOSTER, LEAR, KENT, the FOOL, and EDGAR.

Glos. Here is better than the open air ; take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can : I will not be long from you.

that made him seek his father's death : it was the old man's *desert* that *provoked* him to it ; that is, the old man *deserved* it." Cornwall then attempts to soften his remark by saying that this "provoking merit" was set at work by a reprobable badness in Edgar himself ; using the mild term *reprobable* in connection with the unfilial badness of a son in seeking his father's death, even though the father deserved it.

² "To be just" is another instance of the infinitive used gerundively, and is equivalent to *of being just*. See page 117, note 18.

³ The "mighty business in hand" is a war ; as the "paper" in question is a letter informing Gloster that an army had landed from France.

Kent. All the power of his wits hath given way to his impatience. The gods reward your kindness! [*Exit GLOSTER.*]

Edg. Frateretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent,¹ and beware the foul fiend.

Fool. Pr'ythee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman?

Lear. A king, a king!

Fool. No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son; for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.²

Lear. To have a thousand with red burning spits
Come hissing in upon 'em, —

Edg. The foul fiend bites my back.

Fool. He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a horse's health, a boy's love, or a trull's oath.

Lear. It shall be done; I will arraign them straight. —

[*To EDGAR.*] Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer;³ —
[*To the FOOL.*] Thou, sapient sir, sit here. — Now, you she foxes! —

Edg. Look, where he stands and glares! — Wantest thou eyes at trial, madam?⁴

Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me: —

¹ Rabelais says that Nero was a fiddler in Hell, and Trajan an angler. The history of Gargantua appeared in English before 1575. *Fools* were anciently termed *innocents*.

² A rather curious commentary on some of the Poet's own doings; who obtained from the Heralds' College a coat of arms in his father's name; thus getting his yeoman father dubbed a gentleman, in order, no doubt, that himself might inherit the rank.

³ *Justicer* is the older and better word for what we now call a justice.

⁴ When Edgar says, "Look, where he stands and glares!" he seems to be speaking in the character of a madman, who thinks he sees the fiend. "Wantest thou eyes at trial, madam?" is a question addressed to some

Fool. *Her boat hath a leak,
And she must not speak
Why she dares not come over to thee.*⁵

Edg. The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale. Hopdance cries in Tom for two white herring. — Croak not, black angel; I have no food for thee.

Kent. How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed: Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

Lear. I'll see their trial first. — Bring in the evidence. —
[*To EDGAR.*] Thou robèd man of justice, take thy place; —
[*To the FOOL.*] And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity,
Bench by his side. — [*To KENT.*] You are o' the commision,
Sit you too.

Edg. Let us deal justly.

Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?

Thy sheep be in the corn;

And for one blast of thy minikin⁶ mouth

Thy sheep shall take no harm.

Pur! the cat is gray.⁷

visionary person who is supposed, apparently, to be on trial, but does not see the spectre.

⁵ *Bourn* here means a brook or rivulet, as streams of all sorts were apt to be taken for *boundaries*. These four lines are probably from an old song, which was imitated by Birch in his *Dialogue between Elizabeth and England*; the imitation beginning thus: —

Come over the bourn, Bessy, come over the bourn, Bessy,

Sweet Bessy, come over to me:

And I shall thee take, and my dear lady make

Before all that ever I see.

⁶ *Minikin* was a term of endearment; *pretty, delicate, handsome*.

⁷ The meaning of *Pur* is any thing but obvious. But *Purre* is the name of a devil in Harsnet. So perhaps the name suggests the purring of a cat, and of a cat *too old to sing*.

Lear. Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril. I here take my oath before this honourable assembly, she kick'd the poor King her father.

Fool. Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

Lear. She cannot deny it.

Fool. Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.⁸

Lear. And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim What store her heart is made on. — Stop her there! Arms, arms, sword, fire! — Corruption in the place! — False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?⁹

Edg. Bless thy five wits!

Kent. O pity! — Sir, where is the patience now That you so oft have boasted to retain?

Edg. [*Aside.*] My tears begin to take his part so much, They'll mar my counterfeiting.

Lear. The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanch, and Sweet-heart, see, they bark at me.

Edg. Tom will throw his head at them. — Avaunt, you curs!

Be thy mouth or black or white,
Tooth that poisons if it bite;
Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,

⁸ This appears to have been a proverbial expression. It occurs again, somewhat modified, in *1 King Henry IV.*, ii. 4: "Thy state is taken for a joint-stool." It is also met with in various other old writings. — "I cry you mercy," again, for "I ask your pardon."

⁹ It does not seem probable that Shakespeare wished to represent Lear as the subject of so extreme an hallucination as that his daughters were present, in their own figure and appearance, and that one of them escaped. It is more probable that he wished to represent them, personified by the excited imagination, in the form of stools; and that Kent or Edgar, seeing the bad effects which this vivid personification was working, snatched away one of the stools; and this produces the passionate explosion on Regan's supposed escape. — DR. BUCKNILL.

Hound or spaniel, brach or lym;¹⁰
Or bobtail tike or trundle-tail;
Tom will make them weep and wail:
For, with throwing thus my head,
Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.

Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs and market towns. — Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.¹¹

Lear. Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in Nature that makes these hard hearts? — [*To EDGAR.*] You, sir, I entertain for one of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian attire; but let them be changed.¹²

Kent. Now, good my lord, lie here and rest awhile.

¹⁰ A *lym* or *lyme* was a *hound*; sometimes also called a *limmer* or *leamer*; from the *leam* or *leash*, in which he was held till he was let slip.

¹¹ A *horn* was usually carried by every Tom of Bedlam, to receive such drink as the charitable might afford him, with whatever scraps of food they might give him. When, therefore, he says his *horn is dry*, or *empty*, he merely means, in the language of the character he assumes, to supplicate that it may be filled with drink.

¹² The intellectual and excited babbling of the Fool, and the exaggerated absurdities of Edgar, are stated by Ulrici and other critics to exert a bad influence upon the King's mind. To persons unacquainted with the character of the insane, this opinion must seem, at least, to be highly probable, notwithstanding that the evidence of the drama itself is against it; for Lear is comparatively tranquil in conduct and language during the whole period of Edgar's mad companionship. It is only after the Fool has disappeared, — gone to sleep at midday, as he says, — and Edgar has left, to be the guide of his blind father, that the King becomes absolutely wild and incoherent. The singular and undoubted fact was probably unknown to Ulrici, that few things tranquillize the insane more than the companionship of the insane. It is a fact not easily explicable; but it is one of which, either by the intuition of genius or by the information of experience, Shakespeare appears to have been aware. — DR. BUCKNILL.

Lear. Make no noise, make no noise : draw the curtains.
So, so, so : we'll go to supper i' the morning : so, so, so.

Fool. And I'll go to bed at noon.¹³

Re-enter GLOSTER.

Glos. Come hither, friend ; where is the King my master ?

Kent. Here, sir ; but trouble him not, — his wits are gone.

Glos. Good friend, I pr'ythee take him in thy arms ;

I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him :

There is a litter ready ; lay him in't,

And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet

Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master :

If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,

With thine, and all that offer to defend him,

Stand in assurèd loss : take up, take up ;

And follow me, that will to some provision

Give thee quick conduct.

Kent. Oppress'd nature sleeps.

This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken senses,

Which, if convenience¹⁴ will not allow,

Stand in hard cure.¹⁵ — [*To the FOOL.*] Come, help to bear
thy master ;

Thou must not stay behind.

¹³ These words are the last we have from the Fool. They are probably meant as a characteristic notice that the poor fellow's heart is breaking.

¹⁴ *Convenience* is here meant as a word of four syllables, and must be so in order to fill up the verse. In like manner, the Poet repeatedly uses *conscience* and *patience* as trisyllables. Generally, indeed, in Shakespeare's time, the ending *-ience* was used by the poets as two syllables or as one, according to the occasion of their verse.

¹⁵ That is, *can hardly be cured*. Similarly a little before: "Stand in assurèd loss." And a like phrase occurs in *Othello*, ii. 1: "Therefore my hopes, not suffocate to death, stand in bold cure."

Glos.

Come, come, away.

[*Exeunt* KENT, GLOSTER, and the FOOL,
bearing off the King.]

Edg. When we our betters see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
Who alone suffers, suffers most i' the mind,
Leaving free things and happy shows behind ;
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip,
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.
How light and portable¹⁶ my pain seems now,
When that which makes me bend makes the King bow ;
He childed as I father'd ! — Tom, away !
Mark the high noises ;¹⁷ and thyself bewray,
When false opinion, whose wrong thought defiles thee,
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.
What will hap more to-night,¹⁸ safe 'scape the King !
Lurk, lurk.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE VII. — *A Room in GLOSTER'S Castle.*

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and Servants.

Corn. Post speedily to my lord your husband ; show him
this letter : the army of France is landed. — Seek out the
traitor Gloster. [*Exeunt some of the Servants.*]

Reg. Hang him instantly.

Gon. Pluck out his eyes.

Corn. Leave him to my displeasure. — Edmund, keep
you our sister company : the revenges we are bound to take
upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding.

¹⁶ *Portable* is *endurable*. Shakespeare has it repeatedly.

¹⁷ The great events that are at hand ; the exciting sounds of war.

¹⁸ The meaning is, "Whatever else may happen to-night."

Advise the Duke, where you are going, to a most festinate¹ preparation: we are bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us. — Farewell, dear sister: — farewell, my Lord of Gloster.² —

Enter OSWALD.

How now! where's the King?

Osw. My Lord of Gloster hath convey'd him hence. Some five or six and thirty of his knights, Hot questrists³ after him, met him at gate; Who with some other of the lords dependants,⁴ Are gone with him towards Dover, where they boast To have well-armèd friends.

Corn. Get horses for your mistress.

Gon. Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

Corn. Edmund, farewell. —

[*Exeunt GONERIL, EDMUND, and OSWALD.*

Go seek the traitor Gloster,

Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us. —

[*Exeunt other Servants.*

Though well we may not pass⁵ upon his life
Without the form of justice, yet our power
Shall do a courtesy to our wrath,⁶ which men

¹ *Festinate* is *speedy*. Not used again by the Poet, though he has *festinately* in the same sense.

² Meaning Edmund, who is now invested with his father's titles. Oswald, speaking immediately after, refers to the father by the same title.

³ *Questrists* for *pursuers*; those who go in *quest* of any thing.

⁴ Some other of the *dependant lords*, or, as we should say, the lords *dependant*; meaning lords of the King's retinue, and dependant upon him. So the Poet has "letters *patents*" where we should say "letters *patent*." See *King Richard II.*, page 76, note 26.

⁵ That is, pass *sentence* or *judgment*. To *pass* was often used thus.

⁶ Shall *bend* to our wrath; *wait upon* it or be its servant.

May blame, but not control. — Who's there? the traitor?

Re-enter Servants, with GLOSTER.

Reg. Ingrateful fox! 'tis he.

Corn. Bind fast his corky arms.⁷

Glos. What mean your Graces? Good my friends, consider

You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends.

Corn. Bind him, I say. [Servants *bind him*.

Reg. Hard, hard. — O filthy traitor!

Glos. Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

Corn. To this chair bind him. — Villain, thou shalt find —
[REGAN *plucks his beard*.

Glos. By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done
To pluck me by the beard.

Reg. So white, and such a traitor!

Glos. Naughty lady,

These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,

Will quicken, and accuse thee. I'm your host:

With robbers' hands my hospitable favours⁸

You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

Corn. Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?

Reg. Be simple-answer'd, for we know the truth.

Corn. And what confederacy have you with the traitors
Late footed in the kingdom?

Reg. To whose hands have you sent the lunatic King?
Speak.

Glos. I have a letter guessingly set down,
Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,
And not from one opposed.

⁷ *Corky* means *dry, withered, or shrivelled* with age.

⁸ *Favours* here means *features*.

Corn.

Cunning.

Reg.

And false.

Corn. Where hast thou sent the King?

Glos. To Dover.

Reg. Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged at peril —

Corn. Wherefore to Dover? Let him answer that.

Glos. I'm tied to th' stake, and I must stand the course.⁹

Reg. Wherefore to Dover?

Glos. Because I would not see thy cruel nails

Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister

In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.

The sea, with such a storm as his bare head

In hell-black night endured, would have buoy'd up,

And quench'd the stellèd fires: ¹⁰ yet, poor old heart,

He help the heavens to rain.

If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time,

Thou shouldst have said, *Good porter, turn the key.*

All cruels else subscribe, but I shall see

The wingèd vengeance overtake such children.¹¹

⁹ An allusion to bear-baiting, where the custom was to chain a bear to a post, and then set the dogs on him. See *Macbeth*, page 161, note 2.

¹⁰ "The stellèd fires" are the *starry* lights; *stella* being the Latin for *star*.—Heath says, "The verb *buoy up* is here used as a verb deponent, or as the middle form of the Greek verbs, to signify *buoy* or *lift itself up*."

¹¹ *Cruels*, probably, for *cruelties*, or *acts of cruelty*; *subscribe* an imperative verb, with *cruels* for its object; and *but* with the force of *if not*, like the Latin *nisi*. So that the meaning probably is, "Subscribe thou, that is, underwrite, guarantee, make good, all other deeds or instances of cruelty, if I do not see," &c. In other words, "If swift retribution be not seen to catch you for what you have done, then do not scruple to go security, to stand sponsor for all possible strains of inhumanity." The Poet has many words shortened in like manner; as *dispose* for *disposition*, *suspects* for *suspensions*, *characts* for *characters*, &c. He also has many instances of *but* used in that way. See *The Merchant*, page 121, note 19.

Corn. See't shalt thou never. — Fellows, hold the chair. —
Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

Glos. He that will think to live till he be old,
Give me some help! — O cruel! — O you gods!

Reg. Onè side will mock another; th' other too.

Corn. If you see vengeance, —

I Serv. Hold your hand, my lord:

I've served you ever since I was a child;

But better service have I never done you

Than now to bid you hold.

Reg. How now, you dog!

I Serv. If you did wear a beard upon your chin,
I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean?

Corn. My villain! [*Draws.*

I Serv. Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of
anger.

[*Draws. They fight. CORNWALL is wounded.*

Reg. Give me thy sword. — A peasant stand up thus!

[*Seizes a sword, and runs at him behind.*

I Serv. O, I am slain! — My lord, you have one eye left
To see some mischief on him. — O! [*Dies.*

Corn. Lest it see more, prevent it. — Out, vile jelly!
Where is thy lustre now?¹²

¹² The shocking savagery here displayed is commented on by Coleridge thus: "I will not disguise my conviction that, in this one point, the tragic in this play has been urged beyond the outermost mark and *ne plus ultra* of the dramatic." And again: "What shall I say of this scene? There is my reluctance to think Shakespeare wrong, and yet—" Professor Dowden aptly remarks upon the scene as follows: "The treachery of Edmund, and the torture to which Gloster is subjected, are out of the course of familiar experience; but they are commonplace and prosaic in comparison with the inhumanity of the sisters, and the agony of Lear. When we have climbed the steep ascent of Gloster's mount of passion, we see still above us another *via dolomsa* leading to that 'wall of eagle-baffling mountain, black, wintry,