

Strip thine own back.²⁰ — The usurer hangs the cozener.²¹
 Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear ;
 Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
 And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks ;
 Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it.
 None does offend, none ; I say, none ; I'll able 'em.²² —
 Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
 To seal th' accuser's lips. — Get thee glass eyes ;
 And, like a scurvy politician, seem
 To see the things thou dost not. — Now, now, now, now !
 Pull of my boots ; — harder, harder ; — so.

Edg. [*Aside.*] O, matter and impertinency mix'd !
 Reason in madness !

Lear. If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.
 I know thee well enough ; thy name is Gloster :
 Thou must be patient ; we came crying hither :
 Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air,
 We wawl and cry.²³ I'll preach to thee : mark me.

Glos. Alack, alack the day !

Lear. When we are born, we cry that we are come
 To this great stage of fools. — 'Tis a good block : —
 It were a delicate stratagem to shoe
 A troop of horse with felt :²⁴ I'll put 't in proof ;

²⁰ These words must be understood as inferring that the beadle is himself guilty of the very crime for which he is whipping another.

²¹ *Cozener* and to *cozen* were much used in the Poet's time, and are not entirely out of use yet. To *cozen* is to *cheat*, to *swindle*.

²² "I will *cancel* their *disability*"; or, "I will *warrant* or *answer* for them."

²³ This may have been taken from Pliny, as translated by Holland: "Man alone, poor wretch, nature hath laid all naked upon the bare earth, even on his birthday to *cry* and *wrawle* presently from the very first houre that he is borne into this world."

²⁴ So in Fenton's *Tragical Discourses*, 1567: "He attyreth himself for the purpose in a night-gowne girt to hym, with a payre of shoes of fette,

And when I've stol'n upon these sons-in-law,
 Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill !²⁵

Enter a Gentleman, with Attendants.

Gent. O, here he is : lay hands upon him. — Sir,
 Your most dear daughter —

Lear. No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even
 The natural fool of fortune. — Use me well ;
 You shall have ransom. Let me have a surgeon ;
 I'm cut to th' brains.

Gent. You shall have any thing.

Lear. No seconds? All myself?
 Why, this would make a man a man of salt,²⁶
 To use his eyes for garden water-pots,
 Ay, and for laying Autumn's dust.

Gent. Good sir, —

Lear. I will die bravely, like a smug²⁷ bridegroom. What !
 I will be jovial. Come, come ; I am a king,
 My masters : know you that ?

Gent. You are a royal one, and we obey you.

leaste the noyse of his feete might discover his goinge." — When Lear goes to preaching he takes off his hat and holds it in his hand, as preachers were wont to do in the Poet's time. " 'Tis a good *block*" doubtless refers to the *shape* or *form* of the *hat*. As he is holding the hat in his hand, or perhaps moulding it into some new shape, the thought strikes him what the hat is made of, and he starts off upon the stratagem of shoeing a troop of horses with *felt*. This use of *block* is well illustrated by a passage in Dekker's *Gull's Hornbook*, 1609: "That cannot observe the tune of his hatband, nor know what fashioned *block* is most kin to his head ; for in my opinion the brain cannot chuse his *felt* well."

²⁵ This was the cry formerly in the English army when an onset was made on the enemy.

²⁶ Would turn a man all to brine ; that is, to *tears*.

²⁷ *Smug* is *spruce*, *trim*, *fine*. So in *The Merchant of Venice*, iii. 1: "A beggar, that was used to come so *smug* upon the mart."

Lear. Then there's life in't.²⁸ Nay, an you get it, you shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.²⁹

[*Exit, running; Attendants follow.*]

Gent. A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch ;
Past speaking of in a king ! — Thou hast one daughter,
Who redeems nature from the general curse
Which twain have brought her to.

Edg. Hail, gentle sir !

Gent. Sir, speed you : what's your will ?

Edg. Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward ?

Gent. Most sure and vulgar :³⁰ every one hears that,
Which can distinguish sound.

Edg. But, by your favour,
How near's the other army ?

Gent. Near, and on speedy foot ; the main descry
Stands on the hourly thought.³¹

Edg. I thank you, sir : that's all.

Gent. Though that the Queen on special cause is here,
Her army is moved on.

Edg. I thank you, sir. [*Exit Gent.*]

Glos. You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me ;
Let not my worser spirit tempt me again
To die before you please !

Edg. Well pray you, father.³²

Glos. Now, good sir, what are you ?

²⁸ There is hope in it yet ; the case is not desperate.

²⁹ These syllables are probably meant for Lear's panting as he runs.

³⁰ *Vulgar* in its old sense of *common*. A frequent usage.

³¹ The main body is expected to be descried every hour. — "On speedy foot" is marching rapidly, or footing it fast.

³² It was customary for young people to address an aged person as father or mother. Hence Edgar keeps addressing Gloucester so without being recognized as his son.

Edg. A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows ;
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
Am pregnant³³ to good pity. Give me your hand ;
I'll lead you to some bidding.

Glos. Hearty thanks ;
The bounty and the benison of Heaven
To boot, and boot !³⁴

Enter OSWALD.

Osw. A proclaim'd prize ! Most happy !
That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh
To raise my fortunes. — Thou old unhappy traitor,
Briefly thyself remember :³⁵ the sword is out
That must destroy thee.

Glos. Now let thy friendly hand
Put strength enough to it. [*EDGAR interposes.*]

Osw. Wherefore, bold peasant,
Darest thou support a publish'd traitor ? Hence ;
Lest that th' infection of his fortune take
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

³³ *Pregnant*, here, is *quick, prompt, ready*. Repeatedly so. — *Biding*, in the next line, is *lodging*, or *abiding-place*.

³⁴ Edgar, the champion of right, ever active in opposing evil and advancing the good cause, discovers that the gods are upon the side of right, are unceasingly at work in the vindication of truth, and the execution of justice. His faith lives through trial and disaster, a flame which will not be quenched. And he buoys up, by virtue of his own energy of soul, the spirit of his father, which, unprepared for calamity, is staggering blindly, stunned from its power to think, and ready to sink into darkness, and welter in chaotic disbelief. Gloucester, in his first confusion, exclaims bitterly against the divine government : "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods ; they kill us for their sport." But, before the end has come, he "shakes patiently his great affliction off" ; he will not quarrel with the "great opposeless will" of the gods ; nay, more than this, he can identify his will with theirs, he can accept life contentedly at their hands, or death. — DOWDEN.

³⁵ "Quickly call to mind thy past offences, and repent."

Edg. Ch'ill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion.

Osw. Let go, slave, or thou diest !

Edg. Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk pass. An ch'ud ha' been zwagger'd out of my life, 'twould not ha' been zo long as 'tis by a vortnight.³⁶ Nay, come not near th' old man ; keep out, che vor'ye, or ise try whether your costard or my ballow be the harder.³⁷ Ch'ill be plain with you.

Osw. Out, dunghill !

Edg. Ch'ill pick your teeth, zir : come ; no matter for your foins.³⁸ [*They fight ; EDGAR knocks him down.*]

Osw. Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse :
If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body ;
And give the letters which thou find'st about me
To Edmund Earl of Gloster : seek him out
Upon the British party. — O, untimely death ! [*Dies.*]

Edg. I know thee well : a serviceable villain ;
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
As badness would desire.

Glos. What, is he dead ?

Edg. Sit you down, father ; rest you.
Let's see his pockets : these letters that he speaks of
May be my friends. He's dead : I'm only sorry
He had no other death's-man. — Let us see :
Leave, gentle wax ; and, manners, blame us not :
To know our enemies' minds, we'd rip their hearts ;
Their papers, is more lawful.

³⁶ " If I could have been swaggered out of my life, 'twould not have been so long as it is by a fortnight."

³⁷ " Keep out, I warn you, or I'll try whether your head or my cudgel be the harder." Edgar here speaks the Somersetshire dialect.

³⁸ *Foins* are *thrusts*, or passes in fencing. The Poet has the verb to *foin*,

[*Reads.*] *Let our reciprocal vows be remember'd. You have many opportunities to cut him off: if your will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offer'd. There is nothing done, if he return the conqueror: then am I the prisoner, and his bed my jail; from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labour.*

Your (wife, so I would say)

affectionate Servant, GONERIL.

O undistinguish'd space of woman's will !³⁹
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life ;
And the exchange, my brother ! — Here, in the sands,
Thee I'll rake up,⁴⁰ the post unsanctified
Of murderous lechers ; and, in the mature time,
With this ungracious paper strike the sight
Of the death-practised Duke : for him 'tis well
That of thy death and business I can tell.

Glos. The King is mad : how stiff is my vile sense,
That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling⁴¹
Of my huge sorrows ! Better I were distract :
So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs ;
And woes, by wrong imaginations, lose
The knowledge of themselves.⁴²

[*Drum afar off.*]

Edg. Give me your hand :

³⁹ *Undistinguish'd* for *indistinguishable*, as, before, *unnumber'd* for *innumerable*. The meaning probably is, that woman's will has no distinguishable bounds, or no assignable limits ; there is no telling what she will do, or where she will stop.

⁴⁰ That is, " cover thee up." Singer says that in Staffordshire to *rake* the fire is to cover it for the night. So 'tis in New England.

⁴¹ *Ingenious* is *intelligent, lively, acute*. Warburton says, "*Ingenious feeling* signifies a feeling from an understanding not disturbed or disordered, but which, representing things as they are, makes the sense of pain the more exquisite."

⁴² As the woes or sufferings of madmen are lost in imaginary felicities.

Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum.
Come, father; I'll bestow you with a friend. [Exeunt.]

SCENE VII. — *A Tent in the French Camp.*

LEAR on a Bed, asleep; soft Music playing; a Doctor, a Gentleman, and Others attending.

Enter CORDELIA and KENT.

Cord. O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work,
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,
And every measure fail me.

Kent. To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.
All my reports go with the modest truth;
Nor more, nor clipp'd, but so.¹

Cord. Be better suited:
These weeds are memories² of those worsè hours:
I pr'ythee, put them off.

Kent. Pardon me, dear madam;
Yet to be known shortens my made intent:³
My boon I make it, that you know me not
Till time and I think meet.

Cord. Then be't so, my good lord. — [To the Doct.]
How does the King?

Doct. Madam, sleeps still.

¹ "My reports are neither *exaggerated* nor *curtailed*; neither more nor less than the modest truth."

² "Better *suitèd*" is better *dressed*. — The Poet often has *memory* in the sense of *memorial* or *remembrance*. So, in *As You Like It*, ii. 3, the old man Adam says to Orlando, "O you *memory* of old Sir Roland!" — *Weeds* is an old word for *clothes*.

³ A *made* intent is an intent *formed*. We say in common language to *make* a design, and to *make* a resolution. See Critical Notes.

Cord. O you kind gods,
Cure this great breach in his abusèd nature!
Th' untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up
Of this child-changèd father!⁴

Doct. So please your Majesty
That we may wake the King? he hath slept long.

Cord. Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed
I' the sway of your own will. Is he array'd?

Gent. Ay, madam; in the heaviness of his sleep
We put fresh garments on him.

Doct. Be by, good madam, when we do awake him:
I doubt not of his temperance.

Cord. Very well.

Doct. Please you, draw near. — Louder the music there.⁵

Cord. O my dear father, restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips;⁶ and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made!

Kent. Kind and dear Princess!

Cord. Had you not been their father, these white flakes
Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face

⁴ So *care-crazed*, crazed by care; *woe-wearied*, wearied by woe.

⁵ Shakespeare considered *soft music* as favourable to sleep. Lear, we may suppose, had been thus composed to rest; and now the Doctor desires *louder* music to be played, for the purpose of waking him. This notion as to the effect of soft music is not peculiar to the Poet. So in *Wit Restored*, 1658:—

O, lull me, lull me, charming air,
My senses rock'd with wonder sweet;
Like snow on wool thy fallings are,
Soft like a spirit are thy feet.

⁶ In "Thy medicine," *Thy* may refer either to *father* or to *restoration*. I understand it as referring to *father*: "May restoration hang thy medicine on my lips!" Some, however, understand Cordelia as apostrophizing *restoration*.

To be opposed against the warring winds?
 To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?
 In the most terrible and nimble stroke
 Of quick, cross lightning? to watch — poor perdu! —
 With this thin helm?⁷ Mine enemy's dog,
 Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
 Against my fire;⁸ and wast thou fain, poor father,
 To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn,
 In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!
 'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once
 Had not concluded all.⁹ — He wakes; speak to him.

Doct. Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.

Cord. How does my royal lord? How fares your Majesty?

Lear. You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave:
 Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
 Upon a wheel of fire, that¹⁰ mine own tears
 Do scald like molten lead.

Cord. Sir, do you know me?

⁷ This thin *helmet* of "white flakes," or *gray hair*. The allusion is to the forlorn hope of an army, called in French *enfants perdus*; who, among other desperate services, often engage in night-watches. So in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Little French Lawyer*: "I am set here like a *perdu*, to watch a fellow that has wrong'd my mistress."

⁸ Verplanck tells us that Jarvis, the American painter-artist, used often to quote this passage as accumulating in the shortest compass the greatest causes of dislike, to be overcome by good-natured pity. "It is not merely the personal enemy, for whom there might be human sympathy, that is admitted to the family fireside, but his dog, and that a dog that had inflicted his own share of personal injury, and that, too, upon a gentle being from whom it was not possible that he could have received any provocation."

⁹ *All* may here be taken as going with the subject: "'Tis wonder that thy life and wits had not all concluded" — *ended* — "at once." Probably, however, *all* is here put for *altogether*. Spenser very often has it so.

¹⁰ The Poet very often uses *that* for *so that*, or *insomuch that*.

Lear. You are a spirit, I know: when did you die?

Cord. Still, still, far wide!

Doct. He's scarce awake: let him alone awhile.

Lear. Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?

I'm mightily abused.¹¹ I should even die with pity,
 To see another thus. I know not what to say.
 I will not swear these are my hands: let's see;
 I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured
 Of my condition!

Cord. O, look upon me, sir!
 And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.¹²
 No, sir, you must not kneel.

Lear. Pray, do not mock me:
 I am a very foolish fond old man,
 Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;
 And, to deal plainly,
 I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
 Methinks I should know you, and know this man;
 Yet I am doubtful: for I'm mainly¹³ ignorant
 What place this is; and all the skill I have
 Remembers not these garments; nor I know not
 Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me;
 For, as I am a man, I think this lady
 To be my child Cordelia.

¹¹ To *lead astray* with illusions is an old meaning of *abuse*.

¹² A parent's curse was a dreadful thing with our ancestors; and so Cordelia longs first of all to have her father revoke the curse he pronounced upon her in the opening of the play. She had not learned to act as if "a man were author of himself, and knew no other kin."

¹³ Shakespeare sometimes uses *mainly* for *greatly*, *strongly*, or *mightily*. So Falstaff says, "These four came all a-front, and *mainly* thrust at me." See, also, *Hamlet*, page 189, note 1.

Cord. And so I am, I am.

Lear. Be your tears wet? Yes, 'faith. I pray, weep not :

If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me ; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong :
You have some cause, they have not.

Cord. No cause, no cause.

Lear. Am I in France?

Kent. In your own kingdom, sir.

Lear. Do not abuse me.

Doct. Be comforted, good madam : the great rage,
You see, is cured in him ; and yet 'tis danger
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.¹⁴
Desire him to go in ; trouble him no more
Till further settling.

Cord. Will't please your Highness walk?

Lear. You must bear with me :
Pray you now, forget and forgive : I'm old and foolish.

[*Exeunt all but KENT and Gentleman.*]

Gent. Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was
so slain?

Kent. Most certain, sir.

Gent. Who is conductor of his people?

Kent. As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloster.

Gent. They say Edgar, his banish'd son, is with the Earl
of Kent in Germany.

Kent. Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look about ;
the powers of the kingdom approach apace.

¹⁴ "Even o'er the time" here means *try to account for* the time, or to make the last day of his remembering tally or fit in with the present.

Gent. The arbitrement is like to be bloody. Fare you
well, sir. [*Exit.*]

Kent. My point and period will be thoroughly¹⁵ wrought,
Or well or ill, as this day's battle's fought. [*Exit.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *The British Camp, near Dover.*

*Enter, with Drum and Colours, EDMUND, REGAN, Officers,
Soldiers, and Others.*

Edm. Know of the Duke if his last purpose hold,
Or whether since he is advised by aught
To change the course.¹ He's full of alteration
And self-reproving : bring his constant pleasure.

[*To an Officer, who goes out.*]

Reg. Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

Edm. 'Tis to be doubted,² madam.

Reg. Now, sweet lord,

You know the goodness I intend upon you :
Tell me, — but truly, — but then speak the truth,
Do you not love my sister?

Edm. In honour'd love.

¹⁵ *Thoroughly* and *thoroughly*, as also *through* and *thorough*, were used interchangeably in Shakespeare's time. So in St. Matthew, iii. 12: "He will *thoroughly* purge his floor." See, also, *Hamlet*, page 183, note 21.

¹ A military commander is apt, especially on the eve of a battle, to vary his orders frequently, or to give out an order one hour, and to countermand it the next, as he receives further intelligence of the enemy's movements. Hence, to his subordinates, he often seems not to know his own mind ; and his second order appears to *reprove* his first.

² Here, as often, *doubted* has the sense of *feared*. The same with *doubtful* in the third speech below.

Reg. I am doubtful that you have been conjunct
And bosom'd with her, as far as we call hers.³

Edm. No, by mine honour, madam.

Reg. I never shall endure her: dear my lord,
Be not familiar with her.

Edm. Fear me not: —
She and the Duke her husband!

*Enter, with Drum and Colours, ALBANY, GONERIL, and
Soldiers.*

Gon. [*Aside.*] I had rather lose the battle than that sister
Should loosen him and me.

Alb. Our very loving sister, well be-met. —
Sir, this I hear, — the King is come to his daughter,
With others whom the rigour of our State
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest,
I never yet was valiant: for this business,
It toucheth us, as France invades our land,
Not bolds the King,⁴ with others, whom, I fear,
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

Edm. Sir, you speak nobly.

Reg. Why is this reason'd?⁵

Gon. Combine together 'gainst the enemy;
For these domestic and particular broils
Are not the question here.

³ Probably meaning, as far as she has any favours to bestow.

⁴ To *bold* was sometimes used as a transitive verb for to *encourage* or *embolden*. Albany means that the invasion touches him, not as it is a be-friending of the old King, and aims to reinstate him in the throne, but as it threatens the independence of the kingdom. — *With* has simply the force of *and*, connecting *others* and *King*.

⁵ "Why is this talked about?" To *talk*, to *converse* is an old meaning of to *reason*. Shakespeare has it repeatedly so.

Alb. Let's, then, determine
With the ancient of war on our proceedings.⁶

Edm. I shall attend you⁷ presently at your tent.

Reg. Sister, you'll go with us?

Gon. No.

Reg. 'Tis most convenient; pray you, go with us.

Gon. [*Aside.*] O, ho, I know the riddle. — I will go.

Enter EDGAR disguised.

Edg. If e'er your Grace had speech with man so poor,
Hear me one word.

Alb. I'll overtake you. — Speak.

[*Exeunt all but ALBANY and EDGAR.*]

Edg. Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.
If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
For him that brought it: wretched though I seem,
I can produce a champion that will prove
What is avouchèd there. If you miscarry,
Your business of the world hath so an end,
And machination ceases.⁸ Fortune love you!

Alb. Stay till I've read the letter.

Edg. I was forbid it.

When time shall serve, let but the herald cry,
And I'll appear again.

Alb. Why, fare thee well: I will o'erlook thy paper.

[*Exit EDGAR.*]

⁶ This is meant as a proposal, or an order, to hold a council of *veteran* warriors for determining what course to pursue.

⁷ Edmund means that he will soon *join* Albany at his tent, instead of going *along with* him. So the Poet often uses *attend*. In what follows, Goneril lingers, to keep with Edmund; and this at once starts Regan's suspicions. When Regan urges Goneril to go along with them, the latter instantly guesses the cause, — the *riddle*, — and replies, "I will go." Very intellectual ladies! "Dragons in the prime, that tear each other in their slime."

⁸ "All plottings or designs against your life have an end."

Re-enter EDMUND.

Edm. The enemy's in view ; draw up your powers.
Here is the guess of their true strength and forces
By diligent discovery : but your haste
Is now urged on you.

Alb. We will greet the time.⁹ [*Exit.*

Edm. To both these sisters have I sworn my love ;
Each jealous of the other, as the stung
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
Both? one? or neither? Neither can be enjoy'd,
If both remain alive : to take the widow
Exasperates, makes mad, her sister Goneril ;
And hardly shall I carry out my side,¹⁰
Her husband being alive. Now, then, we'll use
His countenance for the battle ; which being done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise
His speedy taking-off. As for the mercy
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia, —
The battle done, and they within our power,
Shall never see his pardon ; for my state
Stands on me to defend, not to debate. [*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *A Field between the two Camps.*

*Alarum within. Enter, with Drum and Colours, LEAR,
CORDELIA, and their Forces ; and exeunt.*

Enter EDGAR and GLOSTER.

Edg. Here, father, take the shadow of this tree

⁹ "We will be ready for the occasion, or at hand to welcome it."

¹⁰ "I shall hardly be able to make out my game." In the language of the card-table, to *set up a side* was to become partners in a game ; and to *carry out a side* was to win or succeed in the game.

For your good host :¹ pray that the right may thrive.
If ever I return to you again,
I'll bring you comfort.

Glos. Grace go with you, sir !

[*Exit EDGAR.*

Alarum and Retreat within. Re-enter EDGAR.

Edg. Away, old man, — give me thy hand, — away !
King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en :
Give me thy hand ; come on.

Glos. No further, sir ; a man may rot even here.

Edg. What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither :
Ripeness is all :² come on.

Glos. And that's true too. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. — *The British Camp, near Dover.*

*Enter, in Conquest, with Drum and Colours, EDMUND ;
LEAR and CORDELIA Prisoners ; Officers, Soldiers, &c.*

Edm. Some officers take them away : good guard,
Until their greater pleasures first be known
That are to censure them.³

Cord. We're not the first
Who, with best meaning, have incur'd the worst.
For thee, oppress'd King, am I cast down ;

¹ A rather strange use of *host* ; but Shakespeare has at least two instances of *host* used as a verb for to *lodge*.

² *Ripeness*, here, is *preparedness* or *readiness*. So Hamlet, on a like occasion, says "the *readiness* is all." And so the phrase, "Like a shock of corn *fully ripe*."

³ "Their *greater pleasures*" means the pleasure of the *greater persons*. — Here, as usual, to *censure* is to *judge*, to *pass sentence*.

Myself could else outfrown false fortune's frown.
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

Lear. No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of Court news; and we'll talk with them too,—
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;⁴
And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,
That ebb and flow by th' Moon.

Edm. Take them away.

Lear. Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?
He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,
And fire us hence like foxes.⁵ Wipe thine eyes;
The goujeers shall devour them, flesh and fell,⁶
Ere they shall make us weep; we'll see 'em starve first.
Come. [*Excunt LEAR and CORDELIA, guarded.*]

Edm. Come hither, Captain; hark. [*Giving a paper.*]
Take thou this note; go follow them to prison:

⁴ The old King refers to the intrigues and rivalries, the plottings and counter-plottings of courtiers, to get ahead of each other in the sovereign's favour. The swift vicissitudes of *ins* and *outs* in Court life was a common theme of talk in the Poet's time.

⁵ Alluding to the old practice of smoking foxes out of their holes.

⁶ *Goujeer* was the name of what was often spoken of in the Poet's time as the French disease; a disease noted for its effects in *eating away* certain parts of the body.—*Fell* is an old word for *skin*.

⁷ This is a warrant signed by Edmund and Goneril, for the execution of Lear and Cordelia, referred to afterwards.

One step I have advanced thee; if thou dost
As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way
To noble fortunes. Know thou this, that men
Are as the time is: to be tender-minded
Does not become a sword. Thy great employment
Will not bear question:⁸ either say thou'lt do't,
Or thrive by other means.

Capt. I'll do't, my lord.

Edm. About it; and write happy, when thou'st done.
Mark,—I say, instantly; and carry it so
As I have set it down.

Capt. I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats:
If't be man's work, I'll do't.

[*Exit.*]

Flourish. Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, Officers, and Attendants.

Alb. Sir, you have shown to-day your valiant strain,⁹
And fortune led you well. You have the captives
Who were the opposites of this day's strife:
We do require them of you, so to use them
As we shall find their merits and our safety
May equally determine.

Edm. Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable King
To some retention and appointed guard;
Whose age has charms in it, whose title more,

⁸ "The great employment now entrusted to thee will not admit of delay or scrupulous inquiry."

⁹ *Strain* is repeatedly used by Shakespeare in the sense of *turn*, *aptitude*, or *inborn disposition*; like the Latin *indoles*. So in *The Merry Wives*, ii. 1: "Unless he know some *strain* in me, that I know not myself, he never would have boarded me in this fury." Also in iii. 3: "I would all of the same *strain* were in the same distress,"

To pluck the common bosom on his side,
 And turn our impress'd lances¹⁰ in our eyes
 Which do command them. With him I sent the Queen;
 My reason all the same; and they are ready
 To-morrow, or at further space, t' appear
 Where you shall hold your session. At this time
 We sweat and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend;
 And the best quarrels, in the heat, are cursed
 By those that feel their sharpness.¹¹
 The question of Cordelia and her father
 Requires a fitter place.

Alb. Sir, by your patience,
 I hold you but a subject of this war,
 Not as a brother.

Reg. That's as we list to grace him:
 Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,
 Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers;
 Bore the commission of my place and person;
 The which immediacy¹² may well stand up
 And call itself your brother.

Gon. Not so hot:
 In his own grace he doth exalt himself,

¹⁰ *Lances* for soldiers armed with lances, as, before, *brown-bills* for men armed with battle-axes. — *Impress'd* referring to the men's having been pressed into the service, and received the "press-money."

¹¹ In a war, even those of the victorious side, those who have the *best* of it, curse the quarrel at first, while they feel its sharpness in the loss of friends, or perhaps in their own wounds.

¹² This apt and forcible word is probably of the Poet's own coinage. Nares says that "the word, so far as is known, is peculiar to this passage." Of course the meaning is, that Edmund has his commission *directly* from her, and not *through* any one else; that is, he is *her* lieutenant, not Albany's. So in *Hamlet* we have "the most *immediate* to the throne." *Commission* is here used in the sense of *authority*.

More than in your addition.

Reg. In my rights
 By me invested, he compeers the best.

Gon. That were the most, if he should husband you.

Reg. Jesters do oft prove prophets.

Gon. Holla, holla!

That eye that told you so look'd but a-squint.¹³

Reg. Lady, I am not well; else I should answer
 From a full-flowing stomach.¹⁴ — General,
 Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony;
 Dispose of them, of me; yea, all is thine:
 Witness the world that I create thee here
 My lord and master.

Gon. Mean you to enjoy him?

Alb. The let-alone lies not in your good will.¹⁵

Edm. Nor in thine, lord.

Alb. Half-blooded fellow, yes!

Reg. [*To EDMUND.*] Let the drum strike, and prove my
 title thine.

Alb. Stay yet; hear reason. — Edmund, I arrest thee
 On capital treason; and, in thy arrest,
 'This gilded serpent. [*Pointing to GONER.*] — For your claim,
 fair sister,

I bar it in the interest of my wife:
 'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord,
 And I, her husband, contradict your banns.

¹³ Alluding to the proverb, "Love being jealous makes a good eye look a-squint." So in Milton's *Comus*: "And gladly banish squint suspicion."

¹⁴ Here, as often, *stomach* is *anger* or *resentment*.

¹⁵ Well explained by Ritson: "Albany tells his wife that, however she might want the *power*, she evidently did not want the *inclination*, to prevent the match." In other words, "I see *you* would willingly stop it, if you could." A taunt to his wife, equivalent to "You want him yourself."

If you will marry, make your love to me ;
My lady is bespoke.

Gon. An interlude !¹⁶

Alb. Thou art arm'd, Gloster. Let the trumpet sound :
If none appear, to prove upon thy person
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
There is my pledge : [*Throwing down a glove.*] I'll prove
it on thy heart,

Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

Reg. Sick ! O, sick !

Gon. [*Aside.*] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

Edm. [*Throwing a glove.*] There's my exchange : what
in the world he is

That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.
Call by thy trumpet : he that dares approach,
On him, on you, who not ? I will maintain
My truth and honour firmly.

Alb. A herald, ho !

Edm. A herald, ho, a herald !

Alb. Trust to thy single virtue ;¹⁷ for thy soldiers,
All levied in my name, have in my name
Took their discharge.

Reg. My sickness grows upon me.

Alb. She is not well ; convey her to my tent. —

[*Exit REGAN, led.*]

Enter a Herald.

Come hither, herald. — Let the trumpet sound, —
And read out this.

¹⁶ This is intended sarcastically ; as if Albany had got up a play or a scene for the entertainment of the company.

¹⁷ *Virtue* is used in the old Roman sense ; for *valour*.

Off. Sound, trumpet ! [*A Trumpet sounds.*]

Her. [*Reads.*] *If any man of quality or degree within the lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloster, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear at the third sound of the trumpet: he is bold in his defence.*

Edm. Sound ! [*1 Trumpet.*]

Her. Again ! [*2 Trumpet.*]

Her. Again ! [*3 Trumpet.*]

[*Trumpet answers within.*]

Enter EDGAR, armed, preceded by a Trumpet.

Alb. Ask him his purposes, why he appears
Upon this call o' the trumpet.¹⁸

Her. What are you ?
Your name, your quality ? and why you answer
This present summons ?

Edg. Know, my name is lost ;
By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit :
Yet am I noble as the adversary
I come to cope.

Alb. Which is that adversary ?

Edg. What's he that speaks for Edmund Earl of Gloster ?

Edm. Himself : what say'st thou to him ?

Edg. Draw thy sword,

That, if my speech offend a noble heart,
Thy arm may do thee justice : here is mine.
Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours,
My oath, and my profession : I protest, —

¹⁸ This is in accordance with the old ceremonial of the trial by combat in criminal cases. So stated in Selden's *Duello* : "The appellant and his procurator first come to the gate. The constable and marshal demand by voice of herald, what he is, and why he comes so arrayed." The same ceremonial is followed in detail in *King Richard II.*, i. 3.

Maugre thy strength, youth, place, and eminence,
 Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,
 Thy valour and thy heart, — thou art a traitor ;
 False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father ;
 Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious Prince ;
 And, from th' extremest upward of thy head
 To the descent and dust beneath thy foot,
 A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou *no*,
 This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent
 To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,
 Thou liest.

Edm. In wisdom I should ask thy name ;¹⁹
 But, since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
 And that thy tongue some 'say²⁰ of breeding breathes,
 What safe and nicely I might well delay²¹
 By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.
 Back do I toss these treasons to thy head ;
 With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart ;
 Which — for they yet glance by, and scarcely bruise —
 This sword of mine shall give them instant way,
 Where they shall rest for ever.²² — Trumpets, speak !

[*Alarums. They fight: EDMUND falls.*]

Gon. O save him, save him ! — This is practice,²³ Gloster :
 By th' law of arms thou wast not bound to answer

¹⁹ Because, if his adversary were not of equal rank, Edmund might decline the combat. See *King Richard II.*, page 123, note 5.

²⁰ "Some 'say," that is, *assay*, is some *taste*, some *smack*.

²¹ Meaning, no doubt, "What I might safely well delay if I acted *punctiliously*." Such is one of the old meanings of *nicely*. See page 107, note 23.

²² *To the place* where they shall rest for ever ; that is, in Edgar's heart.

²³ *Practice*, again, for *plot*, *stratagem*, *artifice*. See page 76, note 27. Other instances of the same have occurred in this play ; such as "damned *practice*," and "he did bewray his *practice*."

An unknown opposite ; thou art not vanquish'd,
 But cozen'd and beguiled.

Alb. Shut your mouth, dame,
 Or with this paper shall I stop it. — [*To EDGAR.*] Hold,
 sir ! —

[*To GON.*] Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil :
 No tearing, lady ; I perceive you know it.

Gon. Say, if I do ; the laws are mine, not thine :
 Who can arraign me for't? [*Exit.*]

Alb. Most monstrous ! — O,
 Know'st thou this paper? [*Offers the letter to EDMUND.*]

Edm. Ask me not what I know.²⁴

Alb. Go after her : she's desperate ; govern her.
 [*To an Officer, who goes out.*]

Edm. [*To EDGAR.*] What you have charged me with, that
 have I done ;

And more, much more ; the time will bring it out :
 'Tis past, and so am I. But what art thou
 That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,
 I do forgive thee.

Edg. Let's exchange charity.
 I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund ;
 If more, the more thou'st wrong'd me.
 My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
 The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
 Make instruments to plague us.

Edm. Thou'st spoken right, 'tis true ;
 The wheel is come full circle ; I am here.

²⁴ Albany might well ask Edmund, "know'st thou this paper?" for, in fact, Goneril's letter did not reach Edmund ; he had not seen it. Edmund, with some spirit of manhood, refuses to make any answers that will criminate or blacken a woman by whom he is loved ; and then proceeds, consistently, to answer *Edgar's* charges.

Alb. Methought thy very gait did prophesy
A royal nobleness. I must embrace thee :
Let sorrow split my heart, if ever I
Did hate thee or thy father !

Edg. Worthy Prince,
I know't.

Alb. Where have you hid yourself?
How have you known the miseries of your father ?

Edg. By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale ;
And, when 'tis told, O, that my heart would burst !
The bloody proclamation to escape,
That follow'd me so near, — O, our lives' sweetness !
That with the pain of death we'd hourly die²⁵
Rather than die at once ! — taught me to shift
Into a madman's rags ; t' assume a semblance
That very dogs disdain'd : and in this habit
Met I my father with his bleeding rings,
Their precious stones new lost ; became his guide,
Led him, begg'd for him, saved him from despair ;
Never — O fault ! — reveal'd myself unto him,
Until some half-hour past, when I was arm'd :
Not sure, though hoping, of this good success,²⁶
I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last
Told him my pilgrimage ; but his flaw'd heart,
Alack, too weak the conflict to support

²⁵ "To die hourly with the pain of death," is a periphrasis for to suffer hourly the pain of death.

²⁶ Here, as in many other places, *success* is *issue* or *result*. See page 75, note 21. — "This good success" refers to the combat with Edmund. Edgar, apprehensive that he might fall, had piously craved his father's benediction on the undertaking. So, in the long run, he who believes in the gods, and fears them, proves too much for the intellectual sceptic and scoffer,

'Twi't two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
Burst smilingly.²⁷

Edm. This speech of yours hath moved me,
And shall perchance do good : but speak you on ;
You look as you had something more to say.

Alb. If there be more, more woeful, hold it in ;
For I am almost ready to dissolve,
Hearing of this.

Edg. This would have seem'd a period
To such as love not sorrow ; but another,
To amplify too-much, would make much more,
And top extremity.²⁸

²⁷ Is it indeed the stars that govern our condition? Upon what theory shall we account for the sisterhood of a Goneril and a Cordelia? And why is it that Gloster, whose suffering is the retribution for past misdeeds, should be restored to spiritual calm and light, and should pass away in a rapture of mingled gladness and grief, while Lear, "a man more sinned against than sinning," should be robbed of the comfort of Cordelia's love, should be stretched, to the last moment, upon "the rack of this tough world," and should expire in the climax of a paroxysm of unproductive anguish? Shakespeare does not attempt to answer these questions. The impression which the facts themselves produce, their influence to "free, arouse, dilate," seems to Shakespeare more precious than any proposed explanation of the facts which cannot be verified. The heart is purified, not by dogma, but by pity and terror. — DOWDEN.

²⁸ This obscure passage has commonly been set down as corrupt, and I formerly thought it so myself; but I am now all but satisfied that it is quite sound. *To amplify* is another instance of the infinitive used gerundively, and is equivalent to *in* or *by amplifying*. See page 117, note 18. — The use of *to top* for *to surpass* is very frequent. See page 70, note 4. So that the sense of the text comes something thus: "To those who are not in love with sorrow, this tale which I have just told would seem to be enough, — seem to require a period, or full stop; but another *such tale added to this*, by amplifying what is already too much, by making that too-much still more, would pass beyond or overtop the utmost limit of distress." — This explanation was suggested to me by Mr. Crosby. *Another* has been mistaken to mean another *person*. The key to the right sense is in the gerundial infinitive