

Introduction

Nahum Tate was born into a family of Puritan ministers in Ireland, most likely in 1652. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1672, and eventually moved to London. There he became acquainted and collaborated with John Dryden, around the time Dryden was working on his Shakespearean adaptations. *All for Love* and *Troilus and Cressida*. From 1680 to 1681 Tate produced three adaptations of Shakespeare: *The History of King Richard the Second*, also called *The Sicilian Usurper* (in order to disguise its content from politically sensitive censors); *The History of King Lear*; and *The Ingratitude of a Common-Wealth*, an adaptation of *Coriolanus*. His other works for the theatre include adaptations of works by Shakespeare's contemporaries, Chapman and Marston, Beaumont and Fletcher, and John Webster. Tate also wrote the libretto for Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*. In 1692 Tate was appointed Poet Laureate. He died in 1715.

Despite his attempt to disguise its content (the play deals with the deposition of a king) at a time of political crisis and insecurity brought on by opposition to the Catholic heir apparent, the future James II, Tate's adaptation of *Richard III* was banned from the stage after only two performances. His adaptation of *Coriolanus* had little success as well. His version of *King Lear*, however, was effectively to replace Shakespeare's original on the English stage well into the nineteenth century. For 150 years, in the theatre, Tate's version, with some modifications, was the only *King Lear* to be had. Laura Rosenthal notes, however, that printed editions of Shakespeare's play remained faithful to the text even as liberties were taken on the stage (331). Since the nineteenth century, Tate's version has been the subject of much critical derision, and 'Tatefication' was coined as a word for the debasement of great

The love interest also necessitates and effects the other major change in the story: in Tate's play there is a happy ending, in which Lear and Gloucester live and Edgar and Cordelia are betrothed. With this development, the story of Lear becomes something very different from what it was in Shakespeare – what Sandra Clark calls 'romantic melodrama' (lxix) – although editions of Tate's play continued to call it a tragedy. Tate is, therefore, an early example of adapting Shakespeare by changing genre – although Shakespeare, of course, had made equally drastic, if opposite, modifications to the source material for his play, especially by darkening the ending.

Clark notes that Shakespeare's ending appears to highlight extreme contingency and bad luck (lxx). Since the Second World War, the Holocaust, and nuclear destruction, audiences have found the bleakness of Shakespeare's ending not only probable but compellingly apocalyptic. Many, however, in the Restoration and eighteenth century – including Samuel Johnson – found Shakespeare's ending unduly harsh, improbable, and lacking in 'poetic justice' (Clark: lxx). As Johnson said: 'In the present case the publick has decided' (quoted in Clark: lxx). We might add that the public continues to decide, and not always in the same way.

Despite this difference, Restoration and twentieth-century adapters share – if for different reasons – an ethic and aesthetic which gives them licence to modify Shakespeare. Christopher Spencer writes, 'In Tate's age writers regarded the Elizabethan style as inferior to their own in sophistication and regularity' (72). He explains of writers of the Neoclassic age: 'if they admired an author . . . they imitated him, trying to write as they thought he would have written had he been their contemporary. If the author was an English playwright, this practice often meant fitting his work to the stage conditions of the day and adjusting his plot, characters, and language to contemporary taste.' In this way, Tate practiced 'the sincere form of flattery of keeping the works of the dead polished and up to date' (67). And so, as James Black puts it, 'The reasons for the popular success of Tate's version lie in his transformation of Shakespeare's play into typical Restoration drama' (xvi).

A different understanding of Tate's concerns in adapting Shakespeare, however, informs the work of Wikander and Maguire. For Wikander, Tate's adaptations and others of the period 'draw specific analogies between the unrest they depict, contemporary events in the 1680s, and the events

of the 1640s that led to the outbreak of civil war' (342), and Maguire writes: 'Tate probably chose, in part, to adapt Lear because Shakespeare's play resonated with the Restoration audience's experience: the mid-century division of the king's two bodies, for instance, and misplaced succession, the dangers of power unwisely delegated, and, of course, civil war' (33). For Maguire, these resonances explain in large part the play's immediate success (39), while Wikander sees in the imposition of 'divine justice' (355) at the end of the play an example of 'regularizing Shakespeare to find a coherent conservative political vision' (342).

Select bibliography

Entries marked * are particularly accessible.

- Adler, D. (1985) 'The Half-Life of Tate in *King Lear*', *Kerjyon Review* 7, 3: 52–56.
 *Black, J. (ed.) (1975) *The History of King Lear*. N. Tate, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
 Branam, G. C. (1956) *Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
 Clark, S. (ed.) (1997) *Shakespeare Made Fit: Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare*. London: J. M. Dent.
 Maguire, N. K. (1991) 'Nahum Tate's *King Lear*: "The King's Blest Restoration," in J. I. Marsden (ed.) *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth*. New York: St. Martin's Press: 29–43.
 Nameri, D. E. (1976) *Three Versions of the Story of King Lear*, 2 vols. Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur.
 Pericord, H. W. (1982) 'Shakespeare, Tate, and Garrick: New Light on Alterations of *King Lear*', *Theatre Notebook* 36.1: 14–21.
 Rosenthal, L. J. (1996) '(Re)Writing Lear: Literary Property and Dramatic Authorship,' in J. Brewer and S. Staves (eds) *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, London: Routledge.
 Shatkey, P. L. (1968) 'Performing Nahum Tate's *King Lear*: Coming Hither by Going Hence,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56: 398–403.
 Solomon, J. F. (1984) 'King in Lear: A Semiotic for Communal Adaptation,' *American Journal of Semiotics* 3.2: 56–76.
 *Spencer, C. (1972) *Nahum Tate*. New York: Twayne.
 *Wikander, M. H. (1986) 'The Spitted Infant: Scenic Emblem and Exclusionist Politics in Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37: 340–358.
 Zimbaro, R. A. (1950) 'The King and the Fool: *King Lear* as Self-Destructing Text,' *Criticism* 32.1: 1–29.

Prologue

Since by Mistakes your best Delights are made,
(For ev'n your Wives can please in Masquerade)
'Twere worth our While t' have drawn you in this
day

By a new Name to our old honest Play;
But he that did this Evenings Treat prepare
Bluntly resolv'd before-hand to declare
Your Entertainment should be most old Fare.
Yet hopes, since in rich Shakespear's soil it grew,
'Twill relish yet with those whose Tasts are True,
And his Ambition is to please a Few.
if then this Heap of Flow'rs-shall chance to wear
Fresh Beauty in the Order they now bear,
Ev'n this Shakespear's Praise; each Rustick knows
'Mongst plenteous Flow'rs a Garland to Compose,
Which strung by his course Hand may fairer Show,
But 'twas a Pow'r: Divine first made 'em Grow.
Why shou'd these Scenes lie hid, in which we find
What may at Once divert and teach the Mind?
Morals were alwaies proper for the Stage,
But are ev'n necessary in this Age.
Poets must take the Churches Teaching Trade,
Since Priests their Province of Intrigue invade;
But We the worst in this Exchange have got,
In vain our Poets Preach, whilst Church-men Plot.

Act I

(Enter BASTARD solus)

BASTARD Thou Nature art my Goddess, to thy
Law
My Services are bound, why am I then
Depriv'd of a Son's Right because I came not
in the dull Road that custom has prescrib'd?
Why Bastard, wherefore Base, when I can boast
A Mind as gen'rous and a Shape as true
As honest Madam's issue? why are we
Held Base, who in the lusty stealth of Nature

Draws plagues on my white head that urge me
still
To curse in Age the pleasure of my Youth.
Nay weep not, *Edmund*, for thy Brother's crimes;
O gen'rous Boy, thou shar'st but half his blood,
Yet lov'st beyond the kindness of a Brother.
But I'll reward thy Verue. Follow me.
My Lord, you wait the King who comes resolv'd
To quit the Toils of Empire, and divide
His Realms amongst his Daughters. Heaven
succeed it,
But much I fear the Change.
KENT I grieve to see him
With such wild starts of passion hourly seiz'd,
As renders Majesty beneath it self

GLOSTER Alas! 'tis the Infirmity of his Age,
Yet has his Temper ever been unfixt,
Chol'rick and suddain; hark, They approach.
(*Exeunt GLOSTER and BASTARD.*)
(*Flourish. Enter LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY,
BURGUNDY, EDGAR, GONERILL, REGAN,
CORDELIA, EDGAR, speaking to CORDELIA at
Entrance.*)

EDGAR *Cordelia*, royal Fair, turn yet once more,
An e're successful *Burgundy* receive
The treasure of thy Beauties from the King,
E're happy *Burgundy* for ever fold Thee,
Cast back one pitying Look on wretched *Edgar*.
CORDELIA Alas what wou'd the wretched *Edgar*
with

The more Unfortunate *Cordelia*;
Who in obedience to a Father's will
Flies from her *Edgar's* Arms to *Burgundy's*?
LEAR Attend my Lords of *Albany* and *Cornwall*
With Princely *Burgundy*.
ALBANY We do, my Liege.
LEAR Give me the Mapp - know, Lords, We have
divided

In Three our Kingdom, having now resolved
To disengage from Our long Toil of State,
Conferring All upon your younger years;
You, *Burgundy*, *Cornwall* and *Albany*
Long in Our Court have made your amorous
sojourn
And now are to be answer'd - tell me my
Daughters

Which of you Loves Us most, that We may place
Our largest Bounty with the largest Merit.
GONERILL, Our Eldest-born, speak first.
GONERILL Sir, I do love You more than words can
utter.
Beyond what can be valu'd, Rich or Rare,
Nor Liberty, nor Sight, Health, Fame, or Beauty
Are half so dear, my Life for you were vile.

LEAR And goes thy Heart with this?
'Tis said that I am Chol'rick, judge me Gods,
Is there not cause? now Mimion I perceive
The Truth of what has been suggested to Us,
Thy Fondness for the Rebel Son of *Gloster*,
False to his Father, as Thou art to my Hopes:
And oh take heed, rash Girl, lest We comply
With thy fond wishes, which thou wilt too late

As much as Child can love the best of Fathers.
LEAR Of all these Bounds, ev'n from this Line to
this
With shady Forests and wide-skirted Meads,
We make Thee Lady, to thine and *Albany's* Issue
Be this perpetual - What says Our Second
Daughter?
REGAN My Sister, Sir, in part express my Love,
For such as Hers, is mine, though more
extended,
Sense has no other Joy that I can relish,
I have my All in my dear Lieges Love!
LEAR Therefore to thee and thine Hereditary
Remain this ample Third of our fair Kingdom.
CORDELIA Now comes my Trial, how
(*Aside.*)
am I distress'd,
That must with cold speech tempt the chol'rick
King
Rather to leave me Dowerless, than condemn
me
To loath'd Embraces!
LEAR Speak now Our last, not least in Our dear
Love,
So ends my Task of State, - *Cordelia* speak,
What canst Thou say to win a richer Third
Than what thy Sisters gain'd?
CORDELIA Now must my Love in words fall short
of theirs
As much as it exceeds in Truth - Nothing my
Lord

LEAR Nothing can come of Nothing, speak again.
CORDELIA Unhappy am I that I can't dissemble,
Sir, as I ought, I love your Majesties.
No more nor less.
LEAR Take heed *Cordelia*,
Thy Fortunes are at stake, think better on't
And mend thy Speech a little.
CORDELIA O my Liege,
You gave me Being, Bred me, dearly Love me,
And I return my Duty as I ought,
Obey you, Love you, and most Honour you!
Why have my Sisters Husbands, if they love you
All?
Happy when I shall Wed, the Lord whose Hand
Shall take my Plight, will carry half my Love,
For I shall never marry, like my Sisters,
To Love my Father All.

LEAR And goes thy Heart with this?
'Tis said that I am Chol'rick, judge me Gods,
Is there not cause? now Mimion I perceive
The Truth of what has been suggested to Us,
Thy Fondness for the Rebel Son of *Gloster*,
False to his Father, as Thou art to my Hopes:
And oh take heed, rash Girl, lest We comply
With thy fond wishes, which thou wilt too late

LEAR And goes thy Heart with this?
'Tis said that I am Chol'rick, judge me Gods,
Is there not cause? now Mimion I perceive
The Truth of what has been suggested to Us,
Thy Fondness for the Rebel Son of *Gloster*,
False to his Father, as Thou art to my Hopes:
And oh take heed, rash Girl, lest We comply
With thy fond wishes, which thou wilt too late

LEAR And goes thy Heart with this?
'Tis said that I am Chol'rick, judge me Gods,
Is there not cause? now Mimion I perceive
The Truth of what has been suggested to Us,
Thy Fondness for the Rebel Son of *Gloster*,
False to his Father, as Thou art to my Hopes:
And oh take heed, rash Girl, lest We comply
With thy fond wishes, which thou wilt too late

LEAR And goes thy Heart with this?
'Tis said that I am Chol'rick, judge me Gods,
Is there not cause? now Mimion I perceive
The Truth of what has been suggested to Us,
Thy Fondness for the Rebel Son of *Gloster*,
False to his Father, as Thou art to my Hopes:
And oh take heed, rash Girl, lest We comply
With thy fond wishes, which thou wilt too late

LEAR And goes thy Heart with this?
'Tis said that I am Chol'rick, judge me Gods,
Is there not cause? now Mimion I perceive
The Truth of what has been suggested to Us,
Thy Fondness for the Rebel Son of *Gloster*,
False to his Father, as Thou art to my Hopes:
And oh take heed, rash Girl, lest We comply
With thy fond wishes, which thou wilt too late

LEAR And goes thy Heart with this?
'Tis said that I am Chol'rick, judge me Gods,
Is there not cause? now Mimion I perceive
The Truth of what has been suggested to Us,
Thy Fondness for the Rebel Son of *Gloster*,
False to his Father, as Thou art to my Hopes:
And oh take heed, rash Girl, lest We comply
With thy fond wishes, which thou wilt too late

LEAR And goes thy Heart with this?
'Tis said that I am Chol'rick, judge me Gods,
Is there not cause? now Mimion I perceive
The Truth of what has been suggested to Us,
Thy Fondness for the Rebel Son of *Gloster*,
False to his Father, as Thou art to my Hopes:
And oh take heed, rash Girl, lest We comply
With thy fond wishes, which thou wilt too late

Repent, for know Our nature cannot brook
 A Child so young and so Ungentle.
 CORDELIA So young my Lord and true.
 LEAR Thy Truth then be thy Dow'r,
 For by the sacred Sun and solemn Night
 I here disclaim all my paternal Care,
 And from this minute hold thee as a Stranger
 Both to my Blood and Favour.
 KENT This is Frenzy.
 Consider, good my Liege -
 LEAR Peace Kent.
 Come not between a Dragon and his Rage.
 I lov'd her most, and in her tender Trust
 Design'd to have bestow'd my Age at Ease!
 So be my Grave my Peace as here I give
 My Heart from her, and with it all my Wealth:
 My Lords of *Cornwall* and of *Albany*,
 I do invest you jointly with full Right
 In this fair Third, *Cordelia's* forfeit Dow'r.
 Mark me, My Lords, observe Our last Resolve,
 Our Self attended with an hundred Knights
 Will make Aboard with you in monthly Course,
 The Name alone of King remain with me,
 Yours be the Execution and Revenues,
 This is Our final Will, and to confirm it
 This Coronet part between you.
 KENT Royal Lear,
 Whom I have ever honour'd as my King,
 Lov'd as my Father, as my Master follow'd,
 And as my Patron thought on in my Pray'rs -
 LEAR Away, the Bow is bent, make from the
 Shaft.

And Kingdom; if when Three days are expir'd
 Thy hated Trunk be found in our Dominions
 That moment is thy Death: Away.
 KENT Why fare thee well, King, since thou art
 resolv'd,
 I take thee at thy word, and will not stay
 To see thy Fall: the gods protect the Maid
 That truly thinks, and has most justly said.
 Thus to new Climates my old Truth I bear,
 Friendship lives Hence, and Banishment is
 Here.
 LEAR Now *Burgundy*, you see her Price is falln,
 Yet if the fondness of your Passion still
 Affects her as she stands, Dow'rless, and lost
 In our Esteem, she's yours, take her or leave
 her.
 BURGUNDY Pardon me, Royal Lear, I but demand
 The Dow'r your Self propos'd, and here I take
Cordelia by the Hand Dutches of *Burgundy*.
 LEAR Then leave her Sir, for by a Father's rage
 I tell you all her Wealth, Away.
 BURGUNDY Then Sir be pleas'd to charge the
 breach
 Of our Alliance on your own Will
 Not my Inconstancy.
 (Exit *Manent* EDGAR and CORDELIA.)
 EDGAR Has Heaven then weigh'd the merit of my
 Love,
 Or is't the raving of my sickly Thought?
 Cou'd *Burgundy* forgoe so rich a Prize
 And leave her to despairing *Edgar's* Arms?
 Have I thy Hand *Cordelia*, do I clasp it,
 The Hand that was this minute to have join'd
 My hated Rivals? do I kneel before thee
 And offer at thy feet my panting Heart?
 Smile, Princess, and convince me, for as yet
 I doubt, and dare not trust the dazzling Joy.
 CORDELIA Some Comfort yet that 'twas no vicious
 Blot
 That has depriv'd me of a Father's Grace,
 But merely want of that that makes me rich
 In Wanting it, a smooth professing Tongue:
 O Sisters, I am loth to call your fault
 As it deserves; but use our Father well,
 And wrong'd *Cordelia* never shall repine.
 EDGAR O heav'nly Maid that art thy self thy
 Dow'r,
 Richer in Vertue than the Stars in Light,
 If *Edgar's* humble fortunes may be grac't
 With thy Acceptance, at thy feet he lays 'em.
 Ha my *Cordelia!* dost thou turn away?
 What have I done to offend Thee?
 CORDELIA Talk't of Love.
 EDGAR Then I've offended oft, *Cordelia* too
 Has oft permitted me so to offend.

CORDELIA When, *Edgar*, I permitted your
 Addresses,
 I was the darling Daughter of a King,
 Nor can I now forget my royal Birth,
 And live dependent on my Lover's Fortune.
 I cannot to so low a fate submit,
 And therefore study to forget your Passion,
 And trouble me upon this Theam no more.
 EDGAR Thus Majesty takes most State in
 Distress!
 How are we tost on Fortune's fickle flood!
 The Wave that with surprising kindness brought
 The wreck to my Arms, has snatcht it back,
 And left me mourning on the barren Shore.
 CORDELIA This Baseness of th' ignoble
Burgundy
 Draws just suspicion on the Race of Men,
 His Love was Int'rest, so may *Edgar's* be
 And He but with more Complement dissemble;
 If so, I shall oblige him by Denying:
 But if his Love be fixt, such Constant flame
 As warms our Breasts, if such I find his Passion,
 My Heart as gratefull to his Truth shall be,
 And Cold *Cordelia* prove as Kind as He. (Exit.)
 (Enter BASTARD hastily.)
 BASTARD Brother, I've found you in a lucky
 minute,
 Fly and be safe, some Villain has incens'd
 Our Father against your Life.
 EDGAR Distrest *Cordelia!* but oh! more Cruel!
 BASTARD Hear me Sir, your Life, your Life's in
 Danger.
 EDGAR A Resolve so sudden
 And of such black Importance!
 BASTARD 'Twas not sudden,
 Some Villain has of long time laid the Train.
 EDGAR And yet perhaps 'twas but pretended
 Coldness.
 To try how far my passion would pursue.
 BASTARD He hears me not, wake, wake Sir.
 EDGAR Say ye Brother? -
 No Tears good *Edmund*, if thou bringst me
 tidings
 To strike me dead, for Charity delay not,
 That present will befit so kind a Hand.
 BASTARD Your danger Sir comes on so fast
 That I want time t'inform you, but retire
 Whilst I take care to turn the pressing Stream.
 O gods! for Heav'n's sake Sir.
 EDGAR Pardon me Sir, a serious Thought
 Had seiz'd me, but I think you talk't of danger
 And wisht me to Retire; must all our Vows
 End thus! - Friend I obey you - O *Cordelia!*
 (Exit.)

BASTARD Ha! ha! fond Man, such credulous
 Honesty
 Lessens the Glory of my Artifice.
 His Nature is so far from doing wrongs
 That he suspects none: if this Letter speed
 And pass for *Edgar's*, as himself wou'd own
 The Counterfeit but for the foul Contents,
 Then my designs are perfect - here comes
Gloster. (Enter GLOSTER.)
 GLOSTER Stay *Edmund*, turn, what paper were
 you reading?
 BASTARD A Trifle Sir.
 GLOSTER What needed then that terrible dispatch
 of it
 Into your Pocket, come produce it Sir.
 BASTARD A Letter from my Brother Sir, I had
 Just broke the Seal but knew not the Contents,
 Yet fearing they might prove to blame
 Endeavour'd to conceal it from your sight.
 GLOSTER 'Tis *Edgar's* Character. (Reads.)
 This Policy of Fathers is intollerable that keeps our
 Fortunes from us till Age will not suffer us to enjoy
 'em; I am weary of the Tyranny: Come to me that of
 this I may speak more: if our Father would sleep till
 I wak't him, you should enjoy half his Possessions,
 and live beloved of your Brother
 Edgar.
 Slept till I wake him, you should enjoy
 Half his possessions - *Edgar* to write this
 'Gainst his indulgent Father! Death and Hell!
 Fly, *Edmund*, seek him out, wind me into him
 That I may bite the Traitor's heart, and fold
 His bleeding Entrails on my venetull Arm.
 BASTARD Perhaps 'twas writ, my Lord, to prove
 my Vertue.
 GLOSTER These late Eclipses of the Sun and
 Moon
 Can bode no less; Love cools, and friendship
 fails,
 In Cities mutiny, in Country's discord,
 The bond of Nature crack't 'twixt Son and
 Father:
 Find out the Villain, do it carefully
 And it shall lose thee nothing. (Exit.)
 BASTARD So, now my project's firm, but to make
 sure
 I'll throw in one proof more and that a bold one;
 I'll place old *Gloster* where he shall o're-hear us
 Confer of this design, whilst to his thinking,
 Deluded *Edgar* shall accuse himself.
 Be Honesty my Int'rest and I can
 Be honest too, and what Saint so Divine
 That will successful Villany decline! (Exit.)

(Enter KENT disguised.)

KENT Now barmisht Kent, if thou canst pay thy duty
In this disguise where thou dost stand
condemn'd,
Thy Master Lear shall find thee full of Labours.

(Enter LEAR attended.)

LEAR In there, and tell our Daughter we are here
Now; What art Thou?
KENT A Man, Sir.
LEAR What dost thou profess, or wou'dst with us?
KENT I do profess to be no less than I seem, to
serve him truly that puts me in Trust, to love
him that's Honest, to converse with him that's
wise and speaks little, to fight when I can't
choose, and to eat no Fish.
LEAR I say, what art Thou?
KENT A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor
as the King.
LEAR Then art thou poor indeed - What canst
thou do?
KENT I can keep honest Counsel, marr a curious
Tale in the telling, deliver a plain Message
bluntly, that which ordinary Men are fit for I am
qualify'd in, and the best of me is Diligence.
LEAR Follow me, thou shalt serve me.

(Enter one of GONERILL's Gentlemen.)

Now Sir?
GENTLEMAN Sir - (Exit KENT runs after him.)
LEAR What says the fellow? Call the Clatpole
back.

ATTENDANT My Lord, I know not, but methinks
your Highness is entertain'd with slender
Ceremony.
SERVANT He says, my Lord, your Daughter is not
well.

LEAR Why came not the Slave back when I call'd
him?
SERVANT My Lord, he answer'd me i'th' surliest
manner,
That he wou'd not.

(Re-enter GENTLEMAN brought in by KENT.)

LEAR I hope our Daughter did not so instruct him:
Now, who am I Sir?
GENTLEMAN My Ladies Father.
LEAR My Lord's Knave - (Strikes him.)
GENTLEMAN I'll not be struck my Lord.
KENT Nor tript neither, thou vile Civet-box.
GONERILL By Day and Night this is insufferable,
I will not bear it.

LEAR Now, Daughter, why that frontlet on?
Speak, do's that Frown become our Presence?
GONERILL Sir, this licentious Insolence of your
Servants
Is most unseemly, hourly they break out
In quarrels bred by their unbounded Riots,
I had fair hope by making this known to you
I have had a quick Redress, but find too late
That you protect and countenance their out-
rage;

And therefore, Sir, I take this freedom, which
Necessity makes Discreet.
LEAR Are you our Daughter?
GONERILL Come, Sir, let me entreat you to make
use
Of your discretion, and put off betimes
This Disposition that of late transforms you
From what you rightly are.

LEAR Do's any here know me? why this is not
Lear.

Do's Lear walk thus? speak thus? where are his
Eyes?
Who is it that can tell me who I am?
GONERILL Come, Sir, this Admiration's much o'th'
savour

Of other your new humours, I beseech you
To understand my purposes aright;
As you are old, you shou'd be staid and wise,
Here do you keep an hundred Knights and
Squires,
Men so debauch and bold that this our Palace
Shews like a riotous Inn, a Tavern, Brothel;
Be then advised by her that else will take
The thing she begs, to lessen your Attendance,
Take half a way, and see that the remainder
Be such as may befir your Age, and know
Themselves and you.

LEAR Darkness and Devils!
Saddle my Horses, call my Train together,
Degenerate Viper, I'll not stay with Thee;
I yet have left a Daughter - Serpent, Monster,
Lessen my Train, and call 'em riotous?
All men approv'd of choice and rarest Paris,
That each particular of duty know -
How small, Cordelia, was thy Fault? O Lear,
Beat at this Gate that let thy Folly in,
And thy dear Judgment out; Go, go, my People.
Ingratefull Duke, (Going off meets ALBANY entering.)
ALBANY What Sir?

LEAR Death! fifty of my Followers at a clap!
ALBANY The matter Madam?
GONERILL Never afflict your self to know the
Cause,
But give his Dotage way.

And Regan with him - heark! the Guards, Away.
EDGAR Let 'em come on, I'll stay and clear my
self.

BASTARD Your Innocence at Leisure may be
heard,
But Glosster's storming Rage as yet is deaf,
And you may perish e're allow'd the hearing.
(Exit EDGAR.)

Glosster comes yonder: now to my feign'd
scuffle -
Yield, come before my Father! Lights here,
Lights!
Some Blood drawn on me wou'd beget opinion
(Stabs his Arm.)
Of our more fierce Encounter - I have seen
Drunkards do more than this in sport.

(Enter GLOSTER and SERVANTS.)

GLOSTER Now, Edmund, where's the Traytour?
BASTARD That Name, Sir,
Strikes Horrour through me, but my Brother,
Sir,
Stood here i'th' Dark.

GLOSTER Thou bleed'st, pursue the Villain
And bring him piece-meal to me.

BASTARD Sir, he's fled.

GLOSTER Let him fly far, this Kingdom shall not
hide him:

The noble Duke, my Patron, comes to Night,
By his Authority I will proclaim
Rewards for him that brings him to the Stake,
And Death for the Concealer.

Then of my Lands, loyal and natural Boy,
I'll work the means to make thee capable.
(Exit.)

(Enter KENT, disguised still, and GONERILL's
GENTLEMAN, severally.)

GENTLEMAN Good morrow Friend, belong'st thou
to this House?

KENT Ask them will answer thee.

GENTLEMAN Where may we set our Horses?

KENT I'th' Mire.

GENTLEMAN I am in haste, prethee an' thou lov'st
me, tell me.

KENT I love thee not.

GENTLEMAN Why then I care not for Thee.

KENT An' I had thee in Lipsbury Pinfold, I'd make
thee care for me.

GENTLEMAN What dost thou mean? I know thee
not.

KENT But, Minion, I know Thee.

GENTLEMAN What dost thou know me for?

KENT For a base, proud, beggarly, white-liver'd,
Glass-gazing, superserviceable finical Rogue;

LEAR Blasts upon thee,
Th' untented woundings of a Father's Curse
Pierce ev'ry Sense about Thee; old fond Eyes
Lament this Cause again, I'll pluck ye out
And cast ye with the Waters that ye lose
To temper Clay - No, Gorgon, thou shalt find
That I'll resume the Shape which thou dost
think

I have cast off for ever.

GONERILL Mark ye that.

LEAR Hear Nature!

Dear Goddess hear, and if thou dost intend

To make that Creature fruitfull, change thy

purpose;

Pronounce upon her Womb the barren Curse,

That from her blasted Body never spring

A Babe to honour her - but if she must bring

forth,

Defeat her Joy with same distorted Birth,

Or monstrous Form, the Prodigy o'th' Time,

And so perverse of spirit, that it may Live

Her Torment as 'twas Born, to fret her Cheeks

With constant Tears, and wrinkle her young

Brow.

Turn all her Mother's Pains to Shame and Scorn,

That she may curse her Crime too late, and

feel

How sharper than a Serpent's Tooth it is

To have a Thankless Child! Away, away.

(Exit cum suis.)

GONERILL Presuming thus upon his numerous

Train

He thinks to play the Tyrant here, and hold

Our lives at will.

ALBANY Well, you may bear too far.
(Exit.)

Act II

Scene: GLOSTER'S house.

(Enter BASTARD.)

BASTARD The Duke comes here to night, I'll take
advantage

Of his Arrival to compleat my project,

Brother a Word, come forth, 'tis I your Friend,
(Enter EDGAR.)

My Father watches for you, fly this place,

Intelligence is giv'n where you are hid,

Take the advantage of the Night, bethink ye

Have not spoke against the Duke of Cornwall

Something might shew you a favourer of

Duke Albany's Party?

EDGAR Nothing, why ask you?

BASTARD Because he's coming here to Night in
haste

one that would be a Pimp in way of good Service, and art nothing but a composition of Knave, Beggar, Coward, Pandar -

GENTLEMAN What a monstrous Fellow art thou to rail at one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee?

KENT Impudent Slave, not know me, who but two days since tript up thy heels before the King: draw, Miscreant, or I'll make the Moon shine through thee.

GENTLEMAN What means the Fellow? - Why prethee, prethee; I tell thee I have nothing to do with thee.

KENT I know your Rogueship's Office, you come with Letters against the King, taking my young Lady Vaniity's part against her royal Father; draw Rascal!

GENTLEMAN Murther, murther, help Ho!

KENT Dost thou scream Peacock, strike Puppet, stand dappar Slave.

GENTLEMAN Help Hea' Murther, help.
(Exit. KENT after him.)

(Flourish. Enter DUKE OF CORNWALL, REGAN, attended, GLOSTER, BASTARD.)

GLOSTER All Welcome to your Graces, you do me honour.

DUKE Glastier w've heard with sorrow that your Life Has been attempted by your impious Son, But *Edmund* here has paid you strictest Duty.

GLOSTER He did betray his Practice, and receiv'd The Hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

DUKE Is He pursu'd?

GLOSTER He is, my Lord.

REGAN Use our Authority to apprehend The Traytour and do Justice on his Head;

For you, *Edmund*, that have so signaliz'd Your Vertue, you from henceforth shall be ours; Natures of such firm Trust we much shall need. A charming Youth and worth my further Thought.

DUKE Lay comforts, noble *Gloster*, to your Breast, As we to ours, This Night be spent in Revels We choose you, *Gloster*, for our Host to Night, A troublesome expression of our Love.

On, to the Sports before us - who are These?
(Enter the Gentleman pursu'd by KENT.)

GLOSTER Now, what's the matter?
DUKE Keep peace upon your Lives, he dies that strikes.
Whence and what are ye?

ATTENDANT Sir, they are Messengers, the one from your Sister,

The other from the King.
DUKE Your Difference? speak.

GENTLEMAN I'm scarce in breath, my Lord.

KENT No marvel, you have so bestir'd your Valour,
Nature disclaims the Dastard, a Taylor made him.

DUKE Speak yet, how grew your Quarrel?

GENTLEMAN Sir this old Ruffian here, whose Life I spar'd
In pity to his Beard -
KENT Thou Essence Bottle!
In pity to my Beard? - Your leave, my Lord,
And I will tread the Muss cat into Mortar.
DUKE Know'st thou our Presence?
KENT Yes, Sir, but Anger has a Privilege.
DUKE Why art thou angry?
KENT That such a Slave as this shou'd wear a Sword
And have no Courage, Office and no Honesty.
Not Frost and Fire hold more Antipathy Than I and such a Knave.
GLOSTER Why dost thou call him Knave?
KENT His Countenance likes me not.
DUKE No more perhaps does Mine, nor His or Hers.
KENT Plain-dealing is my Trade, and to be plain, Sir,
I have seen better Faces in my time Than stands on any Shoulders now before me.

REGAN This is some Fellow that having once been prais'd,
For bluntness, since affects a sawcy Rudeness,
But I have known one of these surly Knaves That in his Plainness harbour'd more Design Than twenty cringing complementing Minions.

DUKE What's the offence you gave him?
GENTLEMAN Never any, Sir.
It pleas'd the King his Master lately To strike me on a slender misconstruction,
Whilst watching his Advantage this old Lurcher Tript me behind, for which the King extold him; And, flusht with th' honour of this bold exploit,
Drew on me here agen.
KENT Bring forth the Stocks, we'll teach you.
KENT Sir I'm too old to learn;
Call not the Stocks for me, I serve the King,
On whose Employment I was sent to you,
You'll shew too small Respect, and too bold Malice
Against the Person of my royal Master,
Stocking his Messenger.
DUKE Bring forth the Stocks, as I have Life and Honour,
There shall he sit till Noon.

REGAN Till Noon, my Lord? till Night, and all Night too.
You why'd not use me so.
REGAN Sir, being his Knave I will.
GLOSTER Let me beseech your Graces to forbear him.
His fault is much, and the good King his Master Will check him fort, but needs must take it ill To be thus slighted in his Messenger.
DUKE Wee'l answer that;
Our Sister may receive it worse to have Her Gentleman assaulted: to our business lead.
(Exit.)
GLOSTER I am sorry for thee, Friend, 'tis the Duke's pleasure
Whose Disposition will not be controll'd,
But I'll entreat for thee.
KENT Pray do not, Sir -
I have watcht and travell'd hard,
Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle;
Fare-well t'ye, Sir.
(Exit GLOSTER.)
All weary and o're-watcht,
I feel the drowzy Guest steal on me; take Advantage heavy Eyes of this kind Slumber,
Not to behold this vile and shameful Lodging.
(Sleeps.)
(Enter EDGAR.)
EDGAR I heard my self proclaim'd,
And by the friendly Hollow of a Tree Escapt the Hunt, no Port is free, no place Where Guards and most unusual Vigilance Do not attend to take me - how easie now 'Twere to defeat the malice of my Traile,
And leave my Grievs on my Sword's reeking point;
But Love detains me from Death's peaceful Cell,
Still whispering me *Cordeilia*'s in distress;
Unkinde as she is I cannot see her wretched,
But must be near to wait upon her Fortune.
Who knows but the white minute yet may come That *Edgar* may do service to *Cordeilia*,
When charming Hope still ties me to the Oar Of painfull Life, and makes me too, submit To th' humblest shifts to keep that Life a foot;
My Face I will besmeare and knit my Locks,
The Country gives me proof and president Of Bedlam Beggars, who with roaring Voices Strike in their numm'd and mortify'd bare Arms
Pines, Iron-spikes, Thorns, sprigs of Rosemary,
And thus from Sheep-coats Villages and Mills, Sometimes with Prayers, sometimes with Lunatick Banns

Enforce their Charity, poor *Tyitigod*, poor *Tom* That's something yet, *Edgar* I am no more.
(Exit.)
(KENT in the Stocks still; Enter LEAR attended.)
LEAR 'Tis strange that they shou'd so depart from home
And not send back our Messenger.
KENT Hail, noble Master.
LEAR How? mak'st thou this Shame thy Passtime?
To set thee here?
KENT It is both He and She, Sir, your Son and Daughter.
LEAR No.
KENT Yes.
LEAR No I say.
KENT I say yea.
LEAR By *Jupiter* I swear no.
KENT By *Juno* I swear I swear I.
LEAR They durst not do't
They cou'd not, wou'd not do't, 'tis worse then Murder
To doe upon Respect such violent out-rage.
Resolve me with all modest haste which way Thou mayst deserve, or they impose this usage?
KENT My Lord, when at their Home I did commend your Highness Letters to them,
E'er I was Ris'n, arriv'd another Post Steer'd in his haste, breathless and panting forth From *Gonerill* his Mistress Salutations,
Whose Message being deliver'd, they took Horse,
Commanding me to follow and attend The leisure of their Answer, which I did,
But meeting that other Messenger Whose welcome I perceiv'd had poison'd mine,
Being the very Fellow that of late Had shew'n such rudeness to your Highness, I Having more Man than Wit about me, Drew, On which he raid the House with Coward cries:
This was the Trespass which your Son and Daughter Thought worth the shame you see it suffer here.
LEAR Oh! how this Spleen swells upward to my Heart
And heaves for passage - down thou climbing Rage
Thy Element's below; where is this Daughter?
KENT Within, Sir, at a Masque.
(Enter GLOSTER.)
LEAR Now *Gloster*? - ha!
Deny to speak with me? th' are sick, th' are weary,

KENT Not all my best intreaties can persuade him into some needfull shelter, or to 'bide This poor slight Cov'ring on his aged Head Exposed to this wild war of Earth and Heav'n.
LEAR Rumble thy fill, fight Whirlwind, Rain and Fire:

Not Fire, Wind, Rain or Thunder are my Daughters:
I tax not you ye Elements with unkindness; I never gave you Kingdoms, call'd you Children, You owe me no Obedience, then let fall Your horrible pleasure, here I stand your Slave, A poor, infirm, weak and despis'd old man; Yet I will call you servile Ministers, That have with two pernicious Daughters join'd Their high-engender'd Battle against a Head So Old and White as mine, Oh! 'tis Foul.
KENT Hard by, Sir, is a Hovel that will lend Some shelter from this Tempest.
LEAR I will forget my Nature, what? so kind a Father,

I, there's the point.
KENT Consider, good my Liege, Things that love Night

Love not such Nights as this; these wreathtull Skies Frighten the very wanderers o'th' Dark, And make 'em keep their Caves; such drenching Rain, Such Sheets of Fire, such Claps of horrid Thunder, Such Groans of roaring Winds have ne're been known.

LEAR Let the Great Gods, That keep this dreadful pudder o're our Heads Find out their Enemies now, tremble thou Wretch

That hast within thee undiscover'd Crimes. Hide, thou bloody Hand, Thou perjur'd Villain, holy, holy Hypocrite, That drinkst the Widows Tears, sigh now and cry
These dreadful Summoners Grace, I am a Man More sin'd against than sinning.

KENT Good Sir, to th' Hovell.
LEAR My wit begins to burn, Come on my Boy, how dost my Boy? art Cold? I'm cold my Self; shew me this Straw, my Fellow,

The Art of our Necessity is strange, And can make vile things precious; my poor Knave,

Cold as I am at Heart, I've one place There
(Loud Storm.)
That's sorry yet for Thee.
(Exit.)

(GLOSTER'S Palace. Enter BASTARD.)
BASTARD The Storm is in our louder Rev'lings drown'd.

Thus wou'd I Reign cou'd I but mount a Throne. The Riots of these proud imperial sisters Already have impos'd the galling Yoke Of Taxes, and hard Impositions on The drudging Peasants Neck, who bellow out Their loud Complaints in Vain - Triumphant Queens!

With what Assurance do they tread the Crowd. O for a Taste of such Majestick Beauty, Which none but my hot Veins are fit t' engage; Nor are my Wishes desprate, for ev'n now During the Banquet I observed their Glances Shot thick at me, and as they left the Room Each cast by stealth a kind inviting Smile, The happy Earnest - ha!

(Two Servants from several Entrances deliver him each a Letter, and Exit.)

'Where merit is so Transparent, not to behold it Were Blindness, and not to reward it Ingratitude.

Enough! Blind, and Ingratefull should I be Not to Obey the Summons of This Oracle. Now for a Second Letter. (Opens the other.) 'If Modesty be not your Enemy, doubt not to Find me your Friend

Excellent Sybil! O my glowing Blood! I am already sick of expectation, And pant for the Possession - here *Gloster* comes

With Bus'ness on his Brow; be hush't my Joys. GLOSTER I come to seek thee, *Edmund*, to impart a business of Importance; I knew thy loyal Heart is touch't to see the Cruelty of these ingratefull Daughters against our royal Master.

BASTARD Most Savage and Unnatural. GLOSTER This change in the State sits uneasie. The Commons repine aloud at their female Tyrants, already they Cry out for the re-Installment of their good old King, whose Injuries I fear will inflame 'em into Mutiny.

BASTARD 'Tis to be hop't, not fear'd. GLOSTER Thou hast it Boy, 'tis to be hop't indeed, On me they cast their Eyes, and hourly Court me

To lead 'em on, and whilst this Head is Mine I am Theirs, a little covert Craft, my Boy, And then for open Action, 'twill be Employment Worthy such honest daring Souls as Thine.

Thou, *Edmund*, art my trusty Emissary, Hasten on the Spur at the first break of day
(Gives him Letters.)

With these Dispatches to the Duke of *Combray*; You know what mortal Feuds have alwaies flam'd Between this Duke of *Cornwall's* Family, and his Full Twenty thousand Mountainers Th' invetrate Prince will send to our Assistance. Dispatch; Commend us to his Grace, and Prosper.

BASTARD Yes, creditulous old Man, (Aside) I will commend you to his Grace, His Grace the Duke of *Cornwall* - instantly To shew him these Contents in thy own Character.

And Seal'd with thy own Signet; then forthwith The Chol'trick Duke gives Sentence on thy Life;

And to my hand thy vast Revenues fall To glut my Pleasure that till now has starv'd.

(GLOSTER going off is met by CORDELIA entering, BASTARD observing at a Distance.)

CORDELIA Turn, *Gloster*, Turn, by all the sacred Pow'rs

I do conjure you give my Grievs a Hearing, You must, you shall, nay I am sure you will, For you were always still'd the Just and Good.

GLOSTER What wou'dst thou, Princess? rise and speak thy Grievs.

CORDELIA Nay, you shall promise to redress 'em too.

Or here I'll kneel for ever; I intreat Thy succour for a Father and a King.

An injur'd Father and an injur'd King. BASTARD O charming Sorrow! how her Tears adorn her

Like Dew on Flow'rs, but she is Virtuous, And I must quench this hopeless Fire i'th' Kindling.

GLOSTER Consider, Princess, For whom thou begg'st, 'tis for the King that wrong'd Thee.

CORDELIA O name not that; he did not, cou'd not wrong me.

Nay muse not, *Gloster*, for it is too likely This injur'd King e're this is past your Aid, And gone Distracted with his savage Wrongs. BASTARD I'll gaze no more. - and yet my Eyes are Charm'd.

CORDELIA Or what if it be Worse? can there be Worse?

As 'tis too probable this furious Night Has pierc'd his tender Body, the bleak Winds

And cold Rain chill'd, or Lightning struck him Dead;

'If it be so your Promise is discharg'd, And I have only one poor Boon to beg, That you'd Convey me to his breathless Trunk, With my torn Robes to wrap his hoary Head, With my torn Hair to bind his Hands and Feet, Then with a show'r of Tears To wash his Clay-smear'd Cheeks, and Die beside him.

GLOSTER Rise, fair *Cordelia*, thou hast Piety Enough t' atone for both thy Sisters Crimes. I have already plotted to restore My injur'd Master, and thy Vertue tells me We shall succeed, and suddenly.
(Exit.)
CORDELIA Dispatch, *Arante*.

Provide me a Disguise, we'll instantly Go seek the King, and bring him some Relief.
ARANTE (A Servant.) How, Madam? are you Ignorant

Of what your impious Sisters have decreed? Immediate Death for any that relieve him.

CORDELIA I cannot dread the Furies in this case. ARANTE In such a Night as This? Consider, Madam,

For many Miles about there's scarce a Bush To shelter in.

CORDELIA Therefore no shelter for the King, And more our Charity to find him out.

What have not Women dar'd for vicious Love, And we'll be shaming Proofs that they can dare For Piety as much, blow Winds, and Lightnings fall.

Bold in my Virgin Innocence, I'll flie My Royal Father to Relieve, or Die. (Exit.)

BASTARD Provide me a Disguise, we'll instantly Go seek the King; - ha! ha! a lucky change, That Vertue which I fear'd would be my hindrance

Has prov'd the Bond to my Design; I'll bribe two Ruffians that shall at a distance follow,

And seise 'em in some desert Place, and there Whilst one retains her t' other shall return T' inform me where she's Lodg'd; I'll be disguis'd too.

Whilst they are poching for me I'll to the Duke

With these Dispatches, then to th' Field Where like the vigorous *Jove* I will enjoy

This Semele in a Storm, 'twill deaf her Cries Like Drums in Battle, lest her Groans shou'd pierce

My pitying Ear, and make the amorous Fight less fierce.
(Exit.)

(Enter Two RUFFIANS.)
 1 RUFFIAN We have dog'd 'em far enough, this Place is private, I'll keep 'em Prisoners here within this Hovel, Whilst you return and bring Lord Edmund Hither;
 But help me first to House 'em.
 2 RUFFIAN Nothing but this dear Devil (Shows Gold.)
 Shou'd have drawn me through all this Tempest; But to our Work.
 (They seize CORDELIA and ARANTE, who Shriek out.)
 Soft, Madam, we are Friends, dispatch, I say.
 CORDELIA Help, Murder, help! Gods! some kind Thunderbolt.
 To strike me Dead.

(Enter EDGAR.)
 EDGAR What Cry was That? - ha, Women seiz'd by Ruffians?
 Is this a Place and Time for Villany?
 Avaunt ye Bloud-hounds.
 (Drives 'em with his Quarter-staff.)
 BOTH The Devil, the Devil!
 EDGAR O speak, what are ye that appear to be O'th' tender Sex, and yet unguarded Wander Through the dead Mazes of this dreadful Night, Where (tho' at full) the Clouded Moon scarce darts Imperfect Glimmerings.
 CORDELIA First say what art thou
 Our Guardian Angel, that wert pleas'd t' assume That horrid shape to fright the Ravishers?
 We'll kneel to Thee.

EDGAR O my tumultuous Bloud!
 By all my trembling Veins Cordelia's Voice!
 'Tis she her self - My Senses sure conform To my wild Garb, and I am Mad indeed.
 CORDELIA Whate're thou art, befriend a wretched Virgin,
 And if thou canst direct our weary search.
 EDGAR Who relieves poor Tom, that sleeps on the Nettle, with the Hedge-pig for his Pillow.
 Whilst Smug ply'd the Bellows
 She truckt with her Fellows,
 The Freckle-fact Mab
 Was a Blouse and a Drab,
 Yet Swithin made Oberon jealous - Ohi Torture.
 ARANTE Alack, Madam, a poor wandering Lunatick.
 CORDELIA And yet his Language seem'd but now well temper'd.
 Speak, Friend, to one more wretched than thy self,

And if thou hast one Interval of sense, Inform us if thou canst where we may find A poor old Man, who through this Heath has stray'd
 The tedious Night - Speak, sawest thou such a One?
 EDGAR The King, her Father, whom she's come to seek (Aside.)
 Through all the Terrors of this Night. O Gods! That such amazing Piety, such Tenderness Shou'd yet to me be Cruel -
 Yes, Fair One, such a One was lately here, And is convey'd by some that came to seek him, T' a Neighb'ring Cottage; but distinctly where, I know not.
 CORDELIA Blessings on 'em,
 Let's find him out, Arante, for thou seest We are in Heavens Protection. (Going off.)
 EDGAR O Cordelia!
 CORDELIA Ha! - Thou knowst my Name.
 EDGAR As you did once know Edgar's.
 CORDELIA Edgar!
 EDGAR The poor Remains of Edgar, what your Scorn
 Has left him.
 CORDELIA Do we wake, Arante?
 EDGAR My Father seeks my Life, which I preserv'd
 In hopes of some blest Minute to oblige Distress Cordelia, and the Gods have giv'n it; That Thought alone prevail'd with me to take This Frantick Dress, to make the Earth my Bed, With these bare Limbs all change of Seasons bide,
 Noons scorching Heat, and Midnights piercing Cold,
 To feed on Offals, and to drink with Herds,
 To Combat with the Winds, and be the Sport Of Clowns, or what's more wretched yet, their Pity.

ARANTE Was ever Tale so full of Misery!
 EDGAR But such a Fall as this I grant was due To my aspiring Love, for 'twas presumptuous, Though not presumptuously persu'd;
 For well you know I wore my Flames conceal'd, And silent as the Lamps that Burn in Tombs, 'Till you perceiv'd my Grief, with modest Grace Drew forth the Secret, and then seal'd my Pardon.
 CORDELIA You had your Pardon, nor can you Challenge more.
 EDGAR What do I Challenge more?
 Such Vanity agrees not with these Rags; When in my prosperous State rich Gloster's Heir, You silenc'd my Pretences, and enjoy'd me

And if thou canst direct our weary search.
 EDGAR Who relieves poor Tom, that sleeps on the Nettle, with the Hedge-pig for his Pillow.
 Whilst Smug ply'd the Bellows
 She truckt with her Fellows,
 The Freckle-fact Mab
 Was a Blouse and a Drab,
 Yet Swithin made Oberon jealous - Ohi Torture.
 ARANTE Alack, Madam, a poor wandering Lunatick.
 CORDELIA And yet his Language seem'd but now well temper'd.
 Speak, Friend, to one more wretched than thy self,

To trouble you upon that Theam no more; Then what Reception must Love's Language find From these bare Limbs and Beggars humble Weeds?
 CORDELIA Such as the Voice of Pardon to a Wretch Condemn'd;
 Such as the Shouts
 Of succ'ring Forces to a Town besieg'd.
 EDGAR Ah! what new Method now of Cruelty?
 CORDELIA Come to my Arms, thou dearest, best of Men,
 And take the kindest Vows that e're were spoke By a protesting Maid.
 T' a Neighb'ring Cottage; but distinctly where, I know not.
 CORDELIA By the dear Vital Stream that baths my Heart,
 These hallow'd Rags of Thine, and naked Vertue,
 These abject Tassels, these fantastick Shreds, (Ridiculous ev'n to the meanest Clown)
 To me are dearer than the richest Pomp Of purple Monarchs.
 EDGAR Generous charming Maid,
 The Gods alone that made, can rate thy Worth! This most amazing Excellence shall be Fame's Triumph, in succeeding Ages, when Thy bright Example shall adorn the Scene, And teach the World Perfection.

CORDELIA Cold and weary,
 We'll rest a while, Arante, on that Straw,
 Then forward to find out the poor Old King.
 EDGAR Look I have Flint and Steel, the Implements
 Of wandering Lunaticks, I'll strike a Light,
 And make a Fire beneath this Shed, to dry Thy Storm-drencht Garments, e're thou Lie to rest thee;
 Then Fierce and Wakefull as th' Hesperian Dragon,
 I'll watch beside thee to protect thy Sleep;
 Mean while, the Stars shall dart their kindest Beams,
 And Angels Visit my Cordelia's Dreams. (Exeunt.)
 Scene: the palace.
 (Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, BASTARD, SERVANTS.
 CORNWALL with GLOSTER's Letters.)
 DUKE I will have my Revenge e're I depart his house.
 Regan, see here, a Plot upon our State,
 'Tis Gloster's Character, that has betray'd His double Trust of Subject, and of Oth.

REGAN Then double be our Vengeance, this confirms
 Th' Intelligence that we but now receiv'd,
 That he has been this Night to seek the King;
 But who, Sir, was the kind Discoverer?
 DUKE Our Eagle, quick to spy, and fierce to seize,
 Our trusty Edmund.
 REGAN 'Twas a noble Service;
 O Cornwall, take him to thy deepest Trust,
 And wear him as a Jewel at thy Heart.
 BASTARD Think, Sir, how hard a Fortune I sustain,
 That makes me thus repent of serving you! (Weeps.)
 O that this Treason had not been, or I Not the Discoverer.

A Father in our Love, and from this Minute We call thee Earl of Gloster; but there yet Remains another Justice to be done,
 And that's to punish this discarded Traytor;
 But least thy tender Nature shou'd relent At his just Sufferings, nor brooke the Sight,
 We wish thee to withdraw.
 REGAN The Grotto, Sir, (To EDMUND Aside.)
 within the lower Grove,
 Has Privacy to suit a Mourner's Thought.
 BASTARD And there I may expect a Comforter,
 Ha, Madam?
 REGAN What may happen, Sir, I know not,
 But 'twas a Friends Advice. (Exit BASTARD.)
 DUKE Bring in the Traytour.

(GLOSTER brought in.)
 Bind fast his Arms.
 GLOSTER What mean your Graces?
 You are my Guests, pray do me no foul Play.
 DUKE Bind him, I say, hard, harder yet.
 REGAN Now, Traytor, thou shalt find -
 DUKE Speak, Rebel, where hast thou sent the King?
 Whom spight of our Decree thou saw'st last Night.
 GLOSTER I'm tide to th' Stake, and I must stand the Course.
 REGAN Say where, and why thou hast conceal'd him.
 GLOSTER Because I wou'd not see thy cruel Hands
 Tear out his poor old Eyes, nor thy fierce Sister Carve his anointed Flesh; but I shall see The swift wing'd Vengeance overtake such Children.
 DUKE See't shalt thou never, Slaves perform your Work,

Out with those treacherous Eyes, dispatch, I say,
If thou seest Vengeance -
GLOSTER He that will think to live 'till he be old,
Give me some help - O cruel! oh! ye Gods,

(*They put out his Eyes.*)
SERVANT Hold, hold, my Lord, I bar your Cruelty,
I cannot love your safety and give way
To such a barbarous Practise.
DUKE Ha, my Villain.

SERVANT I have been your Servant from my
Infancy,

But better Service have I never done you
Than with this Boldness -

DUKE Take thy Death, Slave.
SERVANT Nay, then Revenge whilst yet my Blood
is Warm.

REGAN Help here - are you not hurt, my Lord?
GLOSTER *Edmund*, enkindle all the sparks of
Nature

To quit this horrid Act.

REGAN Out, treacherous Villain,
Thou call'st on him that Hates thee, it was He
That brought thy Treason, shew'd us thy
Dispatches;

There - read, and save the *Cambrian* Prince a
Labour,

If thy Eyes fail thee call for Spectacles.
GLOSTER O my Folly!

Then *Edgar* was abus'd, kind Gods forgive me
that.

REGAN How is't, my Lord?

DUKE Turn out that Eye-less Villain, let him smell
His way to *Cambrey*, throw this Slave upon a
Dunghill.

Regan, I Bleed apace, give me your Arm.
(*Exeunt.*)

GLOSTER All Dark and Comfortless!
Where are those various Objects that but now
Employ'd my busie Eyes? where those Eyes?
Dead are their piercing Rays that lately shot
O're flowry Vales to distant Sunny Hills,
And drew with Joy the vast Horizon in.
These groping Hands are now my only Guides,
And Feeling all my Sight.

O Misery! what words can sound my Grief?
Shut from the Living whilst among the Living:
Dark as the Grave amidst the bustling World.
At once from Business and from Pleasure bar'd;
No more to view the Beauty of the Spring,
Nor see the Face of Kindred, or of Friend:
Yet still one way th' extremest Fate affords,
And ev'n the Blind can find the Way to Death,
Must I then tamely Die, and unreveng'd?
So *Lear* may fall: No, with these bleeding
Rings

I will present me to the pitying Crowd,
And with the Rhetorick of these dropping Veins
Enflame 'em to Revenge their King and me;
Then when the Glorious Mischief is on Wing,
This Lumber from some Precipice I'll throw,
And dash it on the ragged Flint below:
Whence my freed Soul to her bright Sphear shall
fly.

Through boundless Orbs, eternal Regions spy,
And like the Sun, be All one glorious Eye. (*Exit.*)

Act IV
A Grotto.

(*EDMUND and REGAN amorously Seated,
Lisping to Music.*)

BASTARD Why were those Beauties made
Another's Right

Which None can prize like Me? charming Queen
Take all my blooming Youth, for ever fold me
In those soft Arms, Lull me in endless Sleep
That I may dream of pleasures too transporting
For Life to bear.

REGAN Live, live, my *Gloster*.
And feel no Death but that of swooning joy,
I yield thee Bliss on no harder Terms
Than that thou continue to be Happy.

BASTARD This Jealousie is yet more kind, is't
possible

That I should wander from a Paradise
To feed on sickly Weeds? such Sweets live here
That Constancy will be no Vertue in me,
And yet must I forthwith go meet
her Sister,

To whom I must protest as much -
Suppose it be the same; why best of all,
And I have then my Lesson ready conn'd.

REGAN Wear this Remembrance of me - I dare
now
(*Gives him a Ring.*)
Absent my self no longer from the Duke
Whose Wound grows Dangerous - I hope Mortal.

BASTARD And let this happy Image of your
Gloster,
(*Pulling out a Picture drops a Note.*)
Lodge in that Breast where all his Treasure lies.
(*Exit.*)

REGAN To this brave Youth a Womans blooming
beauties
Are due: my Fool usurps my Bed - What's here?
Confusion on my Eyes.
(*Reads.*)

*Where Merit is so Transparent, not to behold it
were Blindness, and not to reward it, Ingratitude.*

Conerill.
Vexatious Accident! yet Fortunate too,

My Jealousie's confirm'd, and I am taught
To cast for my Defence - (*Enter an Officer.*)
Now, what mean those Shouts? and what thy
hasty Entrance?

OFFICER A most surprizing and a sudden Change,
The Peasants are all up in Mutiny,
And only want a Chief to lead 'em on
To Storm your Palace.

REGAN On what Provocation?

OFFICER At last day's publick Festival, to which
The Yeomen from all Quarters had repair'd,
Old *Gloster*, whom you late depriv'd of Sight
(His Veins yet Streaming fresh) presents
himself,

Proclaims your Cruelty, and their Oppression,
With the King's Injuries; which so enrag'd 'em,
That now that Mutiny which long had crept
Takes Wing, and threatens your Best Pow'rs.

REGAN White-liver'd Slave!
Our Forces rais'd and led by Valiant *Edmund*,
Shall drive this Monster of Rebellion back
To her dark Cell; young *Gloster*'s Arm allays
The Storm, his Father's feeble Breath did Raise.
(*Exit.*)

The Field Scene. (Enter EDGAR.)

EDGAR The lowest and most abject Thing of
Fortune
Stands still in Hope, and is secure from Fear,
The lamentable Change is from the Best,
The Worst returns to Better - who comes here
(*Enter GLOSTER, led by an old Man*)
My Father poorly led? depriv'd of Sight,
The precious Stones torn from their bleeding
Rings!

Some-thing I heard of this inhumane Deed
But disbeliev'd it, as an Act too horrid
For the hot Hell of a curst Woman's fury,
When will the measure of my woes be full?
GLOSTER Revenge, thou art afoot, Success attend
Thee.

Well have I sold my Eyes, if the Event
Prove happy for the injur'd King.

OLD MAN O, my good Lord, I have been your
Tenant, and your Father's Tenant these
Fourscore years.

GLOSTER Away, get thee Away, good Friend, be
gone,
Thy Comforts can do me no good at All,
Thee they may hurt.

OLD MAN You cannot see your Way.
GLOSTER I have no Way, and therefore want no
Eyes,
I stumbled when I saw: O dear Son *Edgar*,
The Food of thy abused Father's Wrath,

Might I but live to see thee in my Touch
I'd say, I had Eyes agen.
EDGAR Alas, he's sensible that I was wrong'd,
And should I own my Self, his tender Heart
Would break betwixt th' extremes of Grief and
Joy.

OLD MAN How now, who's There?
EDGAR A Charity for poor *Tom*. Play fair, and
defie the foul Fiend.

O Gods! and must I still pursue this
Trade,
Trifling beneath such Loads of Misery?

OLD MAN 'Tis poor mad *Tom*.
GLOSTER In the late Storm I such a Fellow saw,
Which made me think a Man a Worm,
Where is the Lunatick?

OLD MAN Here, my Lord.
GLOSTER Get thee now away, if for my sake
Thou wilt o're-take us hence a Mile or Two
I' th' way tow'rd *Dover*, dot for ancient Love,
And bring some cov'ring for this naked Wretch
Whom I'll intreat to lead me.

OLD MAN Alack, my Lord, He's Mad.
GLOSTER 'Tis the Time's Plague when Mad-men
lead the Blind.
Do as I bid thee.
OLD MAN I'll bring him the best 'Parrel that I have
Come on't what will. (*Exit.*)

GLOSTER Sirrah, naked Fellow.
EDGAR Poor *Tom*'s a cold; - I cannot fool it
longer,
And yet I must - bless thy sweet Eyes they
Bleed,
Believe't poor *Tom* ev'n weeps his Blind to see
'em.

GLOSTER Know'st thou the way to *Dover*?

EDGAR Both Stile and Gate, Horse-way and Foot-
path, poor *Tom* has been scar'd out of his good
Wits; bless every true Man's Son from the foul
Fiend.

GLOSTER Here, take this Purse, that I am
wretched
Makes thee the Happier, Heav'n deal so still.
Thus let the griping Users Hoard be Scatter'd,
So Distribution shall undo Excess,
And each Man have enough. Dost thou know
Dover?

EDGAR I, Master.
GLOSTER There is a Cliff, whose high and bending
Head
Looks dreadfully down on the roaring Deep.
Bring me but to the very Brink of it,
And I'll repair the Poverty thou beart
With something Rich about me, from that Place
I shall no leading need.

EDGAR Give me thy Arm: poor Tom shall guide thee.
GLOSTER Soft, for I hear the Tread of Passengers.
(Enter KENT and CORDELIA.)
CORDELIA Ah me! your Fear's too true, it was the King.

I spoke but now with some that met him
As Mad as the vex'd Sea, Singing aloud,
Crown'd with rank Femiter and furrow Weeds,
With Berries, Burdocks, Violets, Dazies,
Poppies,
And all the idle Flow'rs that grow
In our sustaining Corn, conduct me to him,
To prove my last Endeavours to restore him,
And Heav'n so prosper thee.

KENT I will, good Lady.
Ha, *Gloster* here! - turn, poor dark Man, and hear

A Friend's Condolement, who at Sight of thine
Forgets his own Distress, thy old true *Kent*.
GLOSTER How, *Kent*? from whence return'd?
KENT I have not since my Banishment been absent.
But in Disguise follow'd the abandon'd King:
'Twas me thou saw'st with him in the late Storm.

GLOSTER Let me embrace thee, had I Eyes I now
Should weep for Joy, but let this trickling Blood
Suffice instead of Tears.

CORDELIA O misery!
To whom shall I complain, or in what Language?
Forgive, O wretched Man, the Pity
That brought thee to this pass, 'twas I that caus'd it.
I cast me at thy Feet, and beg of thee
To crush these weeping Eyes to equal Darkness,
If that will give thee any Recompence.

EDGAR Was ever Season so distrest as This?
(*Aside*)
GLOSTER I think *Cordelia's* Voice! rise, pious Princess,

And take a dark Man's Blessing.
CORDELIA O, my *Edgar*,
My Virtue's now grown Guilty, works the Bane
Of those that do befriend me, Heav'n forsakes me.

And when you look that Way, it is but Just
That you should hate me too.
EDGAR O wave this cutting Speech, and spare to wound
A Heart that's on the Rack.

GLOSTER No longer cloud thee, *Kent*, in that Disguise,

There's business for thee and of noblest weight;
Our injur'd Country is at length in Arms,
Urg'd by the King's inhumane Wrongs and Mine,
And only want a Chief to lead 'em on.
That Task be Thine.

EDGAR Brave *Britains* then there's Life in 't yet.
KENT Then have we one cast for our Fortune yet.
(*Aside*)

Come, Princess, I'll bestow you with the King,
Then on the Spur to Head these Forces.
Farewell, good *Gloster*, to our Conduct trust.
GLOSTER And be your Cause as Prosp'rous as tis Just.

(*Exeunt*.)
GONERILL'S Palace (Enter GONERILL,
ATTENDANTS.)

GONERILL It was great Ignorance *Gloster's* Eyes
being out
To let him live, where he arrives he moves
All Hearts against us, *Edmund* I think is gone
In pity to his Misery to dispatch him.

GENTLEMAN No, Madam, he's return'd on
speedy Summons.
Back to your Sister.

GONERILL Ha! I like not That,
Such speed must have the Wings of Love;
where's *Albany*.
GENTLEMAN Madam, within, but never Man so
chang'd;

I told him of the uproar of the Peasants,
He smil'd at it, when I inform'd him
Of *Gloster's* Treason -
GONERILL Trouble him no further.

It is his coward Spirit, back to our Sister,
Hasten her Musters, and let her know
I have giv'n the Distaff into my Husband's
Hands.

That done, with special Care deliver these
Dispatches
In private to young *Gloster*.
(*Enter a MESSENGER*.)

MESSENGER O Madam, most unreasonable News,
The Duke of *Cornwall's* Dead of his late Wound,
Whose loss your Sister has in part supply'd,
Making brave *Edmund* General of her Forces.

GONERILL One way I like this well;
But being Widow and my *Gloster* with her
May blast the promis'd Harvest of our Love.
A word more, Sir, - add Speed to your Journey,
And if you chance to meet with that blind
Traitor,

Preferment, falls on him that cuts him off
(*Exeunt*.)

Field Scene. (GLOSTER and EDGAR.)

GLOSTER When shall we come to th' Top of that
same Hill?
EDGAR We climb it now, mark how we Labour.

GLOSTER Methinks the Ground is even.
EDGAR Horrible Steep, heark, do you hear the
Sea?

GLOSTER No truly.
EDGAR Why then your other Senses grow
imperfect,
By your Eyes Anguish.

GLOSTER So may it be indeed.
Methinks thy Voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st
In better Phrase and Matter than thou did'st.
EDGAR You are much deceiv'd, in nothing am I
Alter'd

But in my Garments.
GLOSTER Methinks y'are better Spoken.
EDGAR Come on, Sir, here's the Place, how
fearful

And dizzy tis to cast one's Eyes so Low.
The Crows and Choughs that wing the Mid-way
Air

Shew scarce so big as Beetles, halfway down
Hangs one that gathers Sampire, dreadful
Trade!

The Fisher-men that walk upon the Beach
Appear like Mice, and yon rail Anch'ring Barque
Seems lessen'd to her Cock, her Cock a Buoy
Almost too small for Sight; the murmuring Surge
Cannot be heard so high, I'll look no more
Lest my Brain turn, and the disorder make me
Tumble down head long.

GLOSTER Set me where you stand.
EDGAR You are now within a Foot of th' extrem
Verge.

For all beneath the Moon I wou'd not now
Leap forward.

GLOSTER Let go my Hand,
Here, Friend, is another Purse, in it a Jewel
Well worth a poor Man's taking; get thee further,
Bid me Farewell, and let me hear thee going.

EDGAR Fare you well, Sir, - that I do Trifle thus
With this his Despair is with Design to cure it.
GLOSTER Thus, mighty Gods, this World I do
renounce,

And in your Sight shake my Afflictions off;
If I cou'd bear 'em longer and not fall
To quarrel with your great opposess Wills,
My Snuff and feebler Part of Nature shou'd
Burn it self out; if *Edgar* Live, O Bless him.
Now, Fellow, fare thee well.
EDGAR Gone, Sir! Farewell.

And yet I know not how Conceit may rob

The Treasury of Life, had he been where he
thought.

By this had Thought been past - Alive, or Dead?
Hos Sir, Friend; hear you, Sir, speak -
That might he pass indeed - yet he revives.
What are you, Sir?

GLOSTER Away, and let me Die.
EDGAR Hadst thou been ought but Gosmore,
Feathers, Air,

Falling so many Fathom down
Thou hadst Shiver'd like an Egg; but thou dost
breathe
Hast heavy Substance, bleedst not, speak'st, art
sound;

Thy Life's a Miracle.
GLOSTER But have I faim or no?
EDGAR From the dread Summit of this chalky
Bourn:

Look up an Height, the Shril- tun'd Lark so high
Cannot be seen, or heard; do but look up.
GLOSTER Alack, I have no Eyes.

Is wretchedness depriv'd that Benefit
To End it self by Death?

EDGAR Give me your Arm.
Up, so, how is't? feel you your Legs? you stand.
GLOSTER Too well, too well.

EDGAR Upon the Crown o'th' Cliff: what Thing
was that
Which parted from you?

GLOSTER A poor unfortunate Begger.
EDGAR As I stood here below, me-thought his
Eyes

Were two Full Moons, wide Nostrils breathing
Fire.

It was some Fiend, therefore thou happy Father,
Think that th'all-powerfull Gods who make them
Honours

Of Mens Impossibilities have preserv'd thee.
GLOSTER 'Tis wonderful; henceforth I'll bear
Affliction

Till it expire; the Goblin which you speak of,
I took it for a Man: oft-times 'twould say,
The Fiend, the Fiend: He led me to that Place.
EDGAR Bear free and patient Thoughts: but who
comes here?

(*Enter* LEAR, a *Coronet* of *Flowers* on his Head,
Wreaths and *Garlands* about him.)

LEAR No, no, they cannot touch me for Coynung, I
am the King Himself.

EDGAR O piercing Sight.
LEAR Nature's above Art in that Respect; There's
your Press-money: that Fellow handles his Bow
like a Cow-keeper, - draw me a Clothier's yard.
A Mouse, a Mouse; peace hoa: there's my

Gauntlet, I'll prove it on a Giant: bring up the brown Bills: O well flown Bird: i'th' White, i'th' White - Hewgh! give the Word.

EDGAR Sweet Marjoram.
LEAR Pass.

GLOSTER I know that Voice.
LEAR Ha! Gonerill with a white Beard! they flatter'd me like a Dog, and told me I had white Hairs on my Chin, before the Black ones were there; to say I and No to every thing that I said, I and No too was no good Divinity. When the Rain came once to wet me and the Winds to make me Chatter: when the Thunder wou'd not Peace at my Bidding. There I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out; go too, they are not men of their words, They told me I was a King, 'tis a Lie, I am not Ague proof.

GLOSTER That Voice I well remember, is't not the King's?

LEAR I, every Inch a King, when I do Stare See how the Subject quakes.
I pardon that Man's Life, what was the Cause? Adultery? Thou shalt not Die. Die for Adultery! The Wren goes to 't, and the small gilded Pile Engenders in my Sight: Let Copulation thrive, For Glos'ter's Bastard Son was kinder to his Father

Than were my Daughters got i'th' lawful Bed.
To 't Luxury, pell mell, for I lack Souldiers.
GLOSTER Not all my Sorrows past so deep have toucht me,

As the sad Accents: Sight were now a Torment -
LEAR Behold that simpr'ing Lady, she that starts At Pleasure's Name, and thinks her Ear profan'd With the least wanton Word, wou'd you believe it, The Fitcher nor the pamper'd Steed goes to 't With such a riotous Appetite: down from the Wast they are Centaurs, tho Women all Above; but to the Girdle do the Gods inherit, beneath is all the Fiends; There's Hell, there's Darkness, the Sulphurous unfathom'd - Fie! fie! pah! - an Ounce of Civet, good Apothecary, to sweeten my Imagination - There's Money for thee. ¹
GLOSTER Let me kiss that Hand.

LEAR Let me wipe it first; it smells of Mortality.
GLOSTER Speak, Sir: do you know me?
LEAR I remember thy Eyes well enough: Nay, do thy worst, blind Cupid, I'll not Love - read me this Challenge, mark but the penning of it.

GLOSTER Were all the Letters Suns I cou'd not see.

EDGAR I wou'd not take this from Report: wretched Cordelia,
What will thy Vertue do when thou shalt find

This fresh Affliction added to the Tale Of thy unparralle'd Grievs.

LEAR Read.

GLOSTER What with this Case of Eyes? LEAR O ho! are you there with me? no Eyes in your Head, and no money in your Purse: yet you see how this World goes.

GLOSTER I see it Feelingly.
LEAR What? art Mad? a Man may see how this World goes with no Eyes. Look with thy Ears, see how you Justice rails on that simple Thief; shake 'em together, and the first that drops, be it Thief or Justice, is a Villain. - Thou hast seen a Farmer's Dog bark at a Beggar.

GLOSTER I, Sir.

LEAR And the Man ran from the Curr; there thou mightst behold the great Image of Authority, a Dog's obey'd in Office. Thou Rascal, Beadle, hold thy bloody Hand, why dost thou Lash that Strumpet? thou hotly Lust'st to enjoy her in that kind for which thou whipst her, do, do, the Judge that sentenc'd her has been before-hand with thee.

GLOSTER How stiff is my vile Sense that yields not yet?

LEAR I tell thee the Usurer hangs the Couz'ner, through tatter'd Robes small Vices do appear, Robes and Fur-gowns hide All: Place Sins with Gold, why there 'tis for thee, my Friend, make much of it, it has the Pow'r to seal the Accuser's Lips. Get thee glass Eyes, and like a dusty Politician, seem to see the Things thou dost not. Pull, pull off my Boots, hard, harder, so, so.

GLOSTER O Matter and Impertinency mixt Reason in Madness.

LEAR If thou wilt weep my Fortunes take my Eyes,

I know thee well enough, thy Name is Glos'ter. Thou must be patient, we came Crying hither Thou knowst, the first time that We tast the Air We Wail and Cry - I'll preach to thee, Mark.
EDGAR Break lab'ring Heart.

LEAR When we are Born we Cry that we are come To this great Stage of Fools. -

(Enter Two or Three GENTLEMEN.)

GENTLEMAN O here he is, lay hand upon him, Sir,

Your dearest Daughter sends -

LEAR No Rescue? what, a Prisoner? I am even the natural Fool of Fortune: Use me well, you shall have Ransome - let me have Surgeons, Oh I am cut to th' Brains.

GENTLEMAN You shall have any Thing.

LEAR No Second's? all my Self? I will Die bravely like a smug Bridegroom, flusht and pamper'd as a Priest's Whore. I am a King, my Masters, know ye that?

GENTLEMAN You are a Royal one, and we Obey you.

LEAR It were an excellent Stratagem to Shoe a Troop of Horse with Felt, I'll put in proof - no Noise, no Noise - now will we steal upon these Sons in Law, and then - Kill, kill, kill, kill!

GLOSTER A Sight most moving in the meanest Wretch,
Past speaking in a King. Now, good Sir, what are you?

EDGAR A most poor Man made tame to Fortune's strokes,
And prone to Pity by experienc'd Sorrows; give me your Hand.

GLOSTER You ever gentle Gods take my Breath from me,
And let not my ill Genius tempt me more To Die before you please.

(Enter GONERILL'S Gentleman Usher.)

GENTLEMAN A proclaim'd Prize, O most happily met,
That Eye-less Head of thine was first fram'd
Flesh

To raise my Fortunes: Thou old unhappy Traytor,
The Sword is out that must Destroy thee.
GLOSTER Now let thy friendly Hand put Strength enough to 't.

GENTLEMAN Wherefore, bold Peasant,
Dart thou support a publiisht Traytor, hence,
Lest I destroy Thee too. Let go his Arm.

EDGAR 'Chill not Let go Zir, without 'vurther 'Casion.

GENTLEMAN Let go Slave, or thou Dyest.

EDGAR Good Gentleman go your Gate, and let poor Volk pass, and 'Chud ha' bin Zwagger'd out of my Life it wou'd not a bin zo long as 'tis by a Vort-night - Nay, an' thou com'st near th' old Man, I'ce try whether your Costard or my Ballow be th' harder.

GENTLEMAN Out, Dunchill.

EDGAR 'Chill pick your Teeth, Zir; Come, no matter vor your Voines.

GENTLEMAN Slave, thou hast Slain me; oh untimely Death.

EDGAR I know thee well, a serviceable Villain, As duteous to the Vices of thy Mistress As Lust cou'd wish.

GLOSTER What, is he Dead?

EDGAR Sit you, Sir, and rest you.

This is a Letter Carrier, and may have Some Papers of Intelligence that may stand Our Party in good stead, to know - what's here?

(Takes a Letter out of his Pocket, opens, and reads.)

To Edmund Earl of Gloster.

Let our Mutual Loves be remembered, you have many opportunities to Cut him off, if he return the Conqueror then I am still a Prisoner, and his Bed my Goal, from the loath'd Warmth of which deliver me, and supply the Place for your Labour.

Gonerill.

A Plot upon her Husband's Life,
And the Exchange my Brother - here i'th' Sands, I'll rake thee up thou Messenger of Lust,
Griev'd only that thou hadst no other Deaths-man.

In Time and Place convenient I'll produce These Letters to the Sight of th' injur'd Duke
As best shall serve our Purpose; Come, your Hand.

Far off methinks I hear the beaten Drum,
Come, Sir, I will bestow you with a Friend.

(Exit.)
A Chamber. (LEAR a Sleep on a Couch; CORDELIA, and ATTENDANTS standing by him.)

CORDELIA His Sleep is sound, and may have good Effect

To Cure his jarring Senses, and repair This Breach of Nature.

PHYSICIAN We have employ'd the utmost Pow'r of Art,

And this deep Rest will perfect our Design.

CORDELIA O Regan, Gonerill, inhumane Sisters,
Had he not been your Father, these white Hairs Had challeng'd sure some pity, was this a Face To be expos'd against the jarring Winds?

My Enemy's Dog though he had bit me shou'd Have stood that Night against my Fire - he wakes, speak to him.

GENTLEMAN Madam, do you, 'tis fittest.

CORDELIA How do's my royal Lord? how fares your Majesty?

LEAR You do me wrong to take me out o'th' Grave.

Ha! is this too a World of Cruelty?

I know my Privilege, think not that I will Be us'd still like a wretched Mortal, no, No more of That.

CORDELIA Speak to me, Sir, who am I?

LEAR You are a Soul in Bliss, but I am bound
Upon a wheel of Fire, which my own Tears
Do scald like Molten Lead.
CORDELIA Sir, do you know me?
LEAR You are a Spirit, I know, where did you Die?
CORDELIA Still, still, far wide.
PHYSICIAN Madam, he's scarce awake; he'll soon
grow more compos'd.

LEAR Where have I been? where am I? fair Day-
light!
I am mightily abus'd, I shou'd ev'n Die with pity
To see Another thus, I will not swear
These are my Hands.

CORDELIA O look upon me, Sir,
And hold your Hands in Blessing o're me, nay,
You must not kneel.

LEAR Pray do not mock me.
I am a very foolish fond Old Man,
Fourscore and upward, and to deal plainly with
you,

If I fear I am not in my perfect Mind.
CORDELIA Nay, then farewell to patience; witness
for me

Ye mighty Pow'rs, I ne're complain'd till now!
LEAR Methinks I shou'd know you, and know this
Man,

Yet I am Doubtfull, for I am mainly Ignorant
What Place this is, and all the skill I have
Remembers not these Garments, nor do I know
Where I did Sleep last Night - pray do not mock
me -

For, as I am a Man, I think that Lady
To be my Child *Cordelia*.

CORDELIA O my dear, dear Father!
LEAR Be your Tears wet? yes faith, pray do not
weep,

I know I have giv'n thee Cause, and am so
humbled
With Crosses since, that I cou'd ask
Forgiveness of thee were it possible
That thou cou'dst grant it, but I'm well assur'd
Thou canst not; therefore I do stand thy
Justice.

If thou hast Poyson for me I will Drink it, &
Bless thee and Die.

CORDELIA O pity, Sir, a bleeding Heart, and cease
This killing Language.

LEAR Tell me, Friends, where am I?
GENTLEMAN In your own Kingdom, Sir.
LEAR Do not Abuse me.

GENTLEMAN Be comforted, good Madam, for the
Violence
Of his Distemper's past; we'll lead him in
Nor trouble him, till he is better Settled.
Wilt please you, Sir, walk into freer Air.

LEAR You must bear with me, I am Old and
Foolish. (*They lead him off*)
CORDELIA The Gods restore you - heark, I hear
afar

The beaten Drum, Old *Kent*'s a Man of's Word.
O for an Arm
Like the fierce Thunderer's, when th' earth-born
Sons
Storm'd Heav'n, to fight this injur'd Father's
Battle.

That I cou'd shift my Sex, and die me deep
In his Opposer's Blood, but as I may
With Womens Weapons, Pity and Pray'rs,
I'll aid his Cause - You never-erring Gods
Fight on his side, and Thunder on his Foes
Such Tempest as his poor ag'd Head sustain'd;
Your Image suffers when a Monarch bleeds.
'Tis your own Cause, for that your Succours
bring,

Revenge your Selves, and right an injur'd King.

Act V

Scene: A Camp.

(*Enter GONERILL and ATTENDANTS.*)

GONERILL Our Sisters Pow'rs already are arriv'd,
And She her self has promis'd to prevent
The Night with her Approach: have you
provided

The Banquet I bespoke for her Reception
At my Tent?

ATTENDANTS So, please your Grace, we have.
GONERILL But thou, my Poysner, must prepare
the Bowl

That Crowns this Banquet, when our Mirth is
high,

The Trumpets sounding and the Flutes
replying,

Then is the Time to give this fatal Draught
To this imperious Sister; if then our Arms
succeed,

Edmund more dear than Victory is mine.

But if Defeat or Death it self attend me,
'Twill charm my Ghost to think I've left behind
me

No happy Rival: heark, she comes. (*Trumpet*)
(*Exeunt.*)

(*Enter BASTARD in his Tent.*)

BASTARD To both these Sisters have I sworn my
Love,

Each jealous of the other, as the Stung
Are of the Adder; neither can be held
If both remain Alive; where shall I fix?

Cornwall is Dead, and *Regan*'s empty Bed
Seems cast by Fortune for me, but already
I have enjoy'd her, and bright *Gonerill*
With equal Charms brings dear variety,
And yet untasted Beauty: I will use
Her Husband's Countenance for the Battail, then
Usurp at once his Bed and Throne.

(*Enter Officers.*)
My trusty Scouts y' are well return'd, have ye
descry'd

The Strength and Posture of the Enemy?

OFFICER We have, and were surpriz'd to find
The banisht *Kent* return'd, and at their Head;
Your Brother *Edgar* on the Rear; Old *Gloster*
(a moving Spectacle) led through their Ranks,
Whose powerfull Tongue, and more prevailing
Wrongs,

Have so enrag'd their rustick Spirits, that with
Th' approaching Dawn we must expect their
Battle.

BASTARD You bring a welcome Hearing; Each to
his Charge.

Line well your Ranks and stand on your Award,
To Night repose you, and i'th' Morn we'll give
The Sun a Sight that shall be worth his Rising.

(*Exeunt.*)

Scene: A Valley near the Camp.

(*Enter EDGAR and GLOSTER.*)

EDGAR Here, Sir, take you the shadow of this
Tree

For your good Host, pray that the Right may
thrive:

If ever I return to you again
I'll bring you Comfort. (*Exit.*)

GLOSTER Thanks, friendly Sir,
The Fortune your good Cause deserves betide
you.

(*An Alarum, after which GLOSTER speaks.*)

The Fight grows hot; the whole War's now at
Work,

And the goar'd Battle bleeds in every Vein,
Whilst Drums and Trumpets drown loud
Slaughter's Roar:

Where's *Gloster* now that us'd to head the Fray,
And scour the Ranks where deadliest Danger
lay?

Here like a Shepherd in a lonely Shade,
Idle, unarm'd, and listening to the Fight.

Yet the disabled Course, Maim'd and Blind,
When to his Stall he hears the rattling War,

Foaming with Rage tears up the batter'd Ground,

And tugs for Liberty.

No more of Shelter, thou blind Worm, but forth
To th' open Field; the War may come this way
And crush thee into Rest. - Here lay thee down
And tear the Earth, that work befits a Mole.
O dark Despair! when, *Edgar*, wilt thou come
To pardon and dismiss me to the Grave!

(*A Retreat sounded*)
Heark! a retreat, the King has Lost or Won.

(*Re-enter EDGAR, bloody*)

EDGAR Away, old Man, give me your Hand, away!
King Lear has lost, He and his Daughter tane,
And this, ye Gods, is all that I can save
Of this most precious Wreck: give me your Hand.
GLOSTER No farther, Sir, a Man may Rot even
here.

EDGAR What? in ill Thoughts again? Men must
endure

Their going hence ev'n as their coming hither.
GLOSTER And that's true too. (*Exeunt.*)

(*Flourish. Enter in Conquest, ALBANY, GONERILL,
REGAN, BASTARD. - LEAR, KENT,
CORDELIA Prisoners.*)

ALBANY It is enough to have Conquer'd, Cruely
Shou'd ne're survive the Fight, Captain o'th'
Guards

Treat well your royal Prisoners till you have
Our further Orders, as you hold our Pleasure.
GONERILL Heark, Sir, not as you hold our
Husbands pleasure: (*To the Captain aside*)
But as you hold your Life, dispatch your
Pris'ners.

Our Empire can have no sure Settlement
But in their Death, the Earth that covers them
Binds fast our Throne. Let me hear they are
Dead.

CAPTAIN I shall obey your Orders.

BASTARD Sir, I approve it safest to pronounce
Sentence of Death upon this wretched King,
Whose Age has Charms in it, his Title more,
To draw the Commons once more to his Side,
'Twere best prevent -

ALBANY Sir, by your Favour,
I hold you but a Subject of this War,
Not as a Brother.

REGAN That's as we list to Grace him.
Have you forgot that He did lead our Pow'rs?
Bore the Commission of our Place and Person?
And that Authority may well stand up
And call it self your Brother.

GONERILL Not so hot,
In his own Merits he exalts himself
More than in your Addition.

(Enter EDGAR, disguised.)

ALBANY What art Thou?
 EDGAR Pardon me, Sir, that I presume to stop
 A Prince and Conquerour, yet e'er you Triumph,
 Give Ear to what a Stranger can deliver
 Of what concerns you more than Triumph can.
 I do impeach your General there of Treason,
 Lord *Edmund*, that usurps the Name of *Gloster*,
 Of fowlest Practice 'gainst your Life and
 Honour;
 This Charge is True, and wretched though I
 seem
 I can produce a Champion that will prove
 in single Combat what I do avouch;
 If *Edmund* dares but trust his Cause and Sword,
BASTARD What will not *Edmund* dare, my Lord, I
 beg-
 The favour that you'd instantly appoint
 The Place where I may meet this Challenger,
 Whom I will sacrifice to my wrong'd Fame,
 Remember, Sir, that injur'd Honour's nice
 And cannot brook delay.
 ALBANY Anon, before our Tent, th' Army's view,
 There let the Herald cry.
 EDGAR I thank your Highness in my Champion's
 Name,
 He'll wait your Trumpet's call.
 ALBANY Lead.
 (Exit.)
 (Mament, LEAR, KENT, CORDELIA, guarded.)
 LEAR O *Kent*, *Cordelia*!
 You are the onely Pair that I e'er wrong'd,
 And the just Gods have made you Witnesses
 Of my Disgrace, the very shame of Fortune,
 To see me chain'd and shackled at these years!
 Yet were you but Spectatours of my Woes,
 Not fellow-sufferers, all were well!
 CORDELIA This language, Sir, adds yet to our
 Affliction.
 LEAR Thou, *Kent*, didst head the Troops that
 fought my Battel,
 Expos'd thy Life and Fortunes for a Master
 That had (as I remember) banisht Thee.
 KENT Pardon me, Sir, that once I broke your
 Orders,
 Banisht by you, I kept me here disguis'd
 To watch your Fortunes, and protect your
 Person.
 You know you entertain'd a rough blunt
 Fellow,
 One *Cajus*, and you thought he did you Service.
 LEAR My trusty *Cajus*, I have lost him too!
 (Weeps.)
 'Twas a rough Honesty.

appear by the third sound of the Trumpet: He is
 bold in his Defence - Agen, Agen.

(Trumpet Answers from within.)

(Enter EDGAR, Arm'd.)

ALBANY Lord *Edgar*!
BASTARD Ha! my Brother!
 This is the onely Combatant that I cou'd fear;
 For in my Breast Guilt Duels on his side,
 But Conscience, what have I to do with Thee?
 Awe Thou thy dull Legitimate Slaves, but I
 Was born a Libertine, and so I keep me.
 EDGAR My noble Prince, a word - e'er we engage
 Into your Highness's Hands I give this Paper,
 It will the truth of my impeachment prove
 What ever be my fortune in the Fight.
 ALBANY We shall peruse it.
 EDGAR Now, *Edmund*, draw thy Sword,
 That if my Speech has wrong'd a noble Heart,
 Thy Arm may doe thee Justice: here it h'
 presence
 Of this high Prince, these Queens, and this
 crown'd List,
 I brand thee with the spotted name of Traytour,
 False to thy Gods, thy Father and thy Brother.
 And what is more, thy Friend; false to this
 Prince:
 If then Thou shar'st a spark of *Gloster's* Vertue,
 Acquit thy self, or if Thou shar'st his Courage,
 Meet this Defence bravely.
BASTARD And dares *Edgar*,
 The beaten routed *Edgar*, brave his Conquerour?
 From all thy Troops and Thee, I forc't the Field,
 Thou hast lost the gen'ral Stake, and art Thou
 now
 Come with thy petty single Stock to play
 This after-Game?
 EDGAR Half-blooded Man,
 Thy Father's Sin first, then his Punishment,
 The dark and vicious Place where he begot
 thee
 Cost him his Eyes: from thy licentious Mother
 Thou draw'st thy Villany; but for thy part
 Of *Gloster's* Blood, I hold thee worth my Sword.
BASTARD Thou bear'st thee on thy Mother's Piety,
 Which I despise; thy Mother being chaste
 Thou art assur'd Thou art but *Gloster's* Son,
 But mine, disdaining Constancy, leaves me
 To hope that I am sprung from nobler Blood,
 And possibly a King might be my Sire:
 But be my Birth's uncertain Chance as 'twill,
 Who 'twas that had the hit to Father me
 I know not; 'tis enough that I am I:
 Of this one thing I'm certain - that I have

A daring Soul, and so have at thy Heart.
 Sound Trumpet. (Fight, *BASTARD* falls.)
GONERILL and *REGAN* Save him, save him.
GONERILL This was Practice, *Gloster*,
 Thou won'st the Field, and wast not bound to
 Fight

A vanquish'd Enemy, Thou art not Conquer'd
 But couz'n'd and betray'd.
 ALBANY Shut your Mouth, Lady.
 Or with this Paper I shall stop it - hold, Sir,
 Thou worse than any Name, reade thy own evil,
 No Tearing, Lady, I perceive you know it.
GONERILL Say if I do, who shall arraign me for't?
 The Laws are Mine, not Thine.
 ALBANY Most monstrous! ha, Thou know'st it too.
BASTARD Ask me not what I know,
 I have not Breath to Answer idle Questions.
 ALBANY I have resolv'd - your Right, brave Sir,
 has conquer'd,
 Along with me, I must consult your Father.
 (Exit ALBANY and EDGAR.)
 REGAN Help every Hand to save a noble Life;
 My half o'th' Kingdom for a Man of Skill
 To stop this precious stream.
BASTARD Away ye Empericks,
 Torment me not with your vain Offices:
 The Sword has pierc't too far; *Legitimacy*
 At last has got it.

REGAN The Pride of Nature Dies.
GONERILL Away, the minutes are too precious,
 Disturb us not with thy impertinent Sorrow.
REGAN Art Thou my Rival then profess't?
GONERILL Why, was our Love a Secret? cou'd
 there be

Beauty like Mine, and Gallantry like His
 And not a mutual Love? just Nature then
 Had err'd: behold that Copy of Perfection,
 That Youth whose Story will have no foul Page
 But where it says he stoop't to *Regan's* Arms:
 Which yet was but Compliance, not Affection;
 A Charity to begging, ruin'd Beauty!
 REGAN Who begg'd when *Gonerill* writ That?
 expose it (Thrus her a Letter.)
 And let it be your Army's mirth, as 'twas
 This charming Youth's and mine, when in the
 Bow'r
 He breath'd the warmest ecstasies of Love,
 Then panting on my Breast, cry'd matchless
Regan
 That *Gonerill* and Thou should e'er be Kin!
 End.

Expire before my Face, and let me see
 How well that boasted Beauty will become
 Congealing Blood and Death's convulsive Pangs.

Die and be hush'd, for at my Tent last Night
Thou drank'st thy Bane, amidst thy revling
Bowls:
Ha! dost thou Smile? is then thy Death thy Sport
Or has the trusty Potion made thee Mad?
REGAN Thou com'st as short of me in thy
Revenge

As in my *Gloster's* Love, my Jealousie
Inspir'd me to prevent thy feeble Malice
And Poison Thee at thy own Banquet.
CONERILL Ha!
BASTARD No more, my Queens, of this untimely
Strife,

You both deserv'd my Love and both possess it.
Come, Soldiers, bear me in; and let
Your royal Presence grace my last minutes:
Now, *Edgar*, thy proud Conquest I forgive;
Who would not choose, like me, to yield his
Breath
T' have Rival Queens contend for him in Death?
(*Exeunt.*)

Scene: A Prison

(*LEAR asleep, with his Head on CORDELIA'S Lap*)
CORDELIA What Toils, thou wretched King, hast
Thou endur'd

To make thee draw, in Chains, a Sleep so sound?
Thy better Angel charm thy ravish'd Mind
With fancy'd Freedom; Peace is us'd to lodge
On Cottage Straw, Thou hast the Begger's Bed
Therefore shou'dst have the Begger's careless
Thought.
And now, my *Edgar*, I remember Thee,
What Fate has seiz'd Thee in this general
Wreck
I know not, but I know thou must be wretched
Because *Cordelia* holds Thee Dear.

O Gods! a sudden Gloom o'erwhelms me, and
Of Death o'er-spreads the Place. - ha! who are
These?

(*Enter CAPTAIN and OFFICERS with Corda*)

CAPTAIN Now, Sirs, dispatch, already you are
paid
In part, the best of your Reward's to come.
LEAR Charge, charge upon their Flank, their last
Wing hauls;
Push, push the Battel, and the Day's our own.
Their Ranks are broke, down, down with
Albany
Who holds my Hands? - O thou deceiving Sleep,
I was this very Minute on the Chace;

And now a Prisoner here - What mean the
Slaves?
You will not Murder me?
CORDELIA Help Earth and Heaven!
For your Souls sake's, dear Sirs, and for the
Gods.

OFFICER No Tears, good Lady, no pleading
against Gold and Preferment;
Come, Sirs, make ready your Cords.

CORDELIA You, Sir, I'll seize,
You have a humane Form, and if no Pray'r's
Can touch your Soul to spare a poor King's
Life,

if there be any Thing that you hold dear,
By That I beg you to dispatch me First.

CAPTAIN Comply with her Request, dispatch her
First.

LEAR Off Hell-hounds, by the Gods I charge you
spare her;
'Tis my *Cordelia*, my true pious Daughter:
No Pity? - Nay then take an old Man's
Vengeance.

(*Snatches a Partizan, and strikes down two of them;
the rest quit CORDELIA, and turn upon him.*
Enter EDGAR and ALBANY.)

EDGAR Death! Hell! Ye Vultures hold your
impious Hands,
Or take a speedier Death than you would give.

CAPTAIN By whose Command?
EDGAR Behold the Duke your Lord.
ALBANY Guards, seize those Instruments of
Cruelty.

CORDELIA My *Edgar*! Oh!
EDGAR My dear *Cordelia*, Lucky was the Minute
Of our Approach, the Gods have weight'd our
Suffrings;
We are past the Fire, and now must shine to
Ages.

GENTLEMAN Look here, my Lord, see where the
generous King
Has slain Two of 'em.
LEAR Did I not, Fellow?

I've seen the Day, with my good biting
Faulchion
I cou'd have made 'em skip; I am Old now,
And these vile Crosses spoil me; Out of Breath!
Fie, Oh! quite out of Breath and spent.
ALBANY Bring in old *Kent*, and, *Edgar*, guide you
hither
Your Father, whom you said was near,
(*Exit EDGAR.*)
He may be an Ear-witness at the least
Of our Proceedings. (KENT brought in here.)
LEAR Who are you?

My Eyes are none o' th' best, I'll tell you
straight;
Oh *Albany*! Well, Sir, we are your Captives,
And you are come to see Death pass upon us.
Why this Delay? - or is 't your Highness
pleasure

To give us first the Torture? Say ye so?
Why here's old *Kent* and I, as tough a Pair
As e'er bore Tyrant's Stroke: - but my *Cordelia*,
My poor *Cordelia* here, O pity! -
ALBANY Take off their Chains - Thou injur'd
Majesty,

The Wheel of Fortune now has made her Circle,
And Blessings yet stand 'twixt thy Grave and
Thee.

LEAR Com'st Thou, inhumane Lord, to sooth us
back
To a Fool's Paradise of Hope, to make
well

Acquainted with Misfortune to be gull'd
With Lying Hope; No, we will hope no more.
ALBANY I have a Tale t' unfold so full of Wonder
AS cannot meet an easy Faith;

But by that Royal injur'd Head 'tis True.
KENT What would your Highness?

ALBANY Know the noble *Edgar*
Impeacht Lord *Edmund* since the Fight, of
Treason,

And dar'd him for the Proof to single Combat,
In which the Gods confirm'd his Charge by
Conquest;

I left ev'n now the Traytor wounded Mortally.
LEAR And whither tends this Story?

ALBANY E'er they fought
Lord *Edgar* gave into my Hands this Paper,
A blacker Scrowl of Treason, and of Lust
Than can be found in the Records of Hell;
There, Sacred Sir, behold the Character
Of *Goneril* the worst of Daughters, but
More Vicious Wife.

CORDELIA Cou'd there be yet Addition to their
Guilt?

What will not They that wrong a Father doe?
ALBANY Since then my Injuries, *LEAR*, fall in with
Thine:

I have resolv'd the same Redress for Both.
KENT What says my Lord?

CORDELIA Speak, for me thought I heard
The charming Voice of a descending God.
ALBANY The Troops by *Edmund* rais'd, I have
disbanded;

Those that remain are under my Command.
What Comfort may be brought to cheer your Age
And heal your savage Wrongs, shall be apply'd;

For to your Majesty we do Resign
Your Kingdom, save what Part your Self
conferr'd
On Us in Marriage.
KENT Hear you that, my Liege?
CORDELIA Then there are Gods, and Vertue is
their Care.

LEAR Ist Possible?

Let the Spheres stop their Course, the Sun make
Hault,
The Winds be hush'd, the Seas and Fountains
Rest;

All Nature pause, and listen to the Change.
Where is my *Kent*, my *Cagus*?

KENT Here, my Liege.

LEAR Why I have News that will recall thy Youth:
Ha! Didst Thou hear 't, or didst 't inspiring
Gods

Whisper to me Alone? Old *LEAR* shall be
A King again.

KENT The Prince, that like a God has Pow'r, has
said it.

LEAR *Cordelia* then shall be a Queen, mark that:
Cordelia shall be Queen; Winds catch the Sound
And bear it on your roste Wings to Heav'n.
Cordelia is a Queen.

(*Re-enter EDGAR with GLOSTER.*)

ALBANY Look, Sir, where pious *Edgar* comes
Leading his Eye-less Father: O my Liege!
His wondrous Story will deserve your Leisure:
What He has done and suffer'd for your Sake.

What for the Fair *Cordelia*'s.
GLOSTER Where is my Liege? Conduct me to his
Knees to hail

His second Birth of Empire; my dear *Edgar*
Has, with himself, reveal'd the King's blest
Restoration.

LEAR My poor dark *Gloster*.

GLOSTER O let me kiss that once more sceptred
Hand!

LEAR Hold, Thou mistak'st the Majesty, kneel
here;

Cordelia has our Pow'r, *Cordelia*'s Queen.

Speak, is not that the noble Suffering *Edgar*?
GLOSTER My pious Son, more dear than my lost
Eyes.

LEAR I wrong'd Him too, but here's the fair
Amends.

EDGAR Your leave, my Liege, for an unwelcome
Message.

Edmund (but that's a Trifle) is expir'd:

What more will touch you, your imperious
Daughters

Goneril and haughty *Regan*, both are Dead.

Each by the other poison'd at a Banquet;
This, Dying, they confest.

CORDELIA O fatal Period of ill-govern'd Life!
LEAR Ingratefull as they were, my Heart feels
yet

A Pang of Nature for their wretched Fall; -
But, *Edgar*, I defer thy Joys too long:
Thou serv'dst distrest *Cordelia*; take her
Crown'd:

Th' imperial Grace fresh Blooming on her Brow;
Nay, *Gloster*, Thou hast here a Father's Right;
Thy helping Hand t' heap Blessings on their
Head.

KENT Old *Kent* throws in his hearty Wishes too.
EDGAR The Gods and You too largely recompence
What I have done; the Gift strikes Merit Dumb.
CORDELIA Nor do I blush to own my Self o'er-paid
For all my Sufferings past.

GLOSTER Now, gentle Gods, give *Gloster* his
Discharge.

LEAR No, *Gloster*, Thou hast Business yet for Life;
Thou *Kent* and I, retir'd to some cool Cell
Will gently pass our short reserves of Time
In calm Reflections on our Fortunes past,
Cheer'd with relation of the prosperous Reign
Of this celestial Pair; Thus our Remains
Shall in an even Course of Thought be past,
Enjoy the present Hour, nor fear the Last.
EDGAR Our drooping Country now erects her
Head,

Peace spreads her balmy Wings, and Plenty
Blooms.

Divine *Cordelia*, all the Gods can witness
How much thy Love to Empire I prefer!
Thy bright Example shall convince the World
(Whatever Storms of Fortune are decreed)
That Truth and Vertue shall at last succeed.

(*Exeunt Omnes.*)

Epilogue

(Spoken by Mrs. Barry, who played CORDELIA.)

Inconstancy, the reigning Sin o' th' Age,
Will scarce endure true Lovers on the Stage;
You hardly evn in Plays with such dispense,
And Poëts kill 'em in their own Defence.
Yet One bold Proof I was resolv'd to give,
That I cou'd three Hours Constasy Out-live.
You fear, perhaps, whilst on the Stage w' are made
Such Saints, we shall indeed take up the Trade;
Sometimes we Threaten - but our Vertue may
For Truth I fear with your Pit-Valour weigh.
For (not to flatter either) I much doubt
When We are off the Stage, and You are out,
We are not quite so Coy, nor You so Stout.
We talk of Nunn'ries - but to be sincere
Whoever lives to see us Cloyster'd There,
May hope to meet our Critiques at Tangier.
For shame give over this inglorious Trade
Of worrying Poëts, and go manle th' Alcade.
Well - since y' are All for blustering in the Pit,
This Play's Reviver humbly do's admit
Your absol'ute Pow'r to damn his Part of it,
But still so many Master-Touches shine
Of that vast Hand that first laid this Design,
That in great Shakespear's Right, He's bold to say
If you like nothing you have seen to Day
The Play your Judgment damns, not you the Play.

King Stephen: A Dramatic Fragment

John Keats

Introduction

John Keats was born in 1795, son to a manager of livery stables in Moorfields Pavement, London. His earliest literary work involved attempting a translation of the *Aeneid* as a schoolboy before he went on to apprentice as an apothecary-surgeon. Profoundly influenced by Elizabethan writers such as Edmund Spenser and Shakespeare, Keats 'acknowledged Shakespeare not only as one of the greatest literary models but as his "good genius" guiding him in his own poetic enterprise' (White: 7). This affinity for Shakespeare has been noted by John Middleton Murry, who argues, in the mode of Matthew Arnold's 'Essay on Keats,' that Keats 'was potentially, at least, our next greatest poet after Shakespeare and the only poet who is like Shakespeare' (4). Keats abandoned his apprenticeship in 1815 to study at Guy's Hospital, while also working on early poems. In 1816 he was licensed to work as an apothecary but left the profession to pursue his literary career.

One of the key figures in the Romantic movement, Keats published his first book of poems in March 1817. Despite poor health, in 1818 Keats began what is sometimes called the *amnis mirabilis* or Great Year, a period during which he wrote some of his best-known poems, including the first version of *Hyperion*, 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci,' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' both parts of *Lamia*, and *The Fall of Hyperion*. Keats 'was writing his own greatest poetry which is often called "Shakespearean"', the result of a 'saturation' in Shakespearean texts, and, as R. S. White argues, 'he had absorbed the influence so deeply that the word "sources" is inadequate to describe [in Keats's writing] the omnipresent but transformed ghost of Shakespeare's poetry and language' (15). During this time Keats also attempted dramatic works, including the unfinished play *King Stephen* (1819),

which 'involved Stephen's seizure of the English crown in 1135, and his eventual defeat by the Empress Maud at Lincoln in 1141' (Morton: 428). Keats was persistently beset by financial problems and his health worsened after his second volume of poems was published in 1820. He died of consumption in Rome in February 1821.

At once a fragmentary tragedy and an attempt at a history play in the style of Shakespeare (what Claude Lee Finney calls a 'chronicle play' [vol. 2: 727]), Keats's *King Stephen* is worth noting for a number of reasons. First, it shows a certain kind of writing potential in relation to an obvious series of influences on Keats's style. Robert Gittings argues that

The few scenes he wrote have a tremendous sense of physical action; he was seeing the actor in the part . . . The verse too was not merely Shakespearean, but had the rough vigour he had learnt from Dryden and Massinger, and assimilated so well into the first part of *Lamia*. Above all he was writing with confidence and gusto . . . (1968: 335)

Though Andrew Motion argues that *King Stephen* is 'too frankly derivative, too quick in its narration, and too stiffly theatrical. . . . Abandoning *Stephen* meant that [Keats] could deploy ideas and energies which were already well rehearsed' (429).

Second, the play demonstrates how Keats as a writer in a crucial period of life linked his writing practice with that of Shakespeare. Keats, as Gittings notes, 'wanted to write in unfettered style the play he felt was in him, designed expressly for [Edmund] Kean, and based on the actor's great Richard the Third' (335). Keats quit writing the play because it was rumoured that Kean intended an American tour. In order to complete a book of poetry that would alleviate his financial