

***WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE***



***HAMLET,
PRINCE
OF DENMARK***

William Shakespeare

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

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PREFACE.

The play of *Hamlet* is above all others the most stupendous monument of Shakespeare's genius, standing as a beacon to command the wonder and admiration of the world, and as a memorial to future generations, that the mind of its author was moved by little less than inspiration. *Lear*, with its sublime picture of human misery;—*Othello*, with its harrowing overthrow of a nature great and amiable;—*Macbeth*, with its fearful murder of a monarch, whose "virtues plead like angels trumpet-tongued against the deep damnation of his taking off,"—severally exhibit, in the most pre-eminent degree, all those mighty elements which constitute the perfection of tragic art—the grand, the pitiful, and the terrible. *Hamlet* is a history of mind—a tragedy of thought. It contains the deepest philosophy, and most profound wisdom; yet speaks the language of the heart, touching the secret spring of every sense and feeling. Here we have no ideal exaltation of character, but life with its blended faults and, —a gentle nature unstrung by passing events, and thus rendered "out of tune and harsh."

The original story of Hamlet is to be found in the Latin pages of the Danish historian, Saxo Grammaticus, who died in the year 1208. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the French author, Francis de Belleforest, introduced the fable into a collection of novels, which were translated into English, and printed in a small quarto black letter volume, under the title of the "Historie of Hamblett," from which source Shakespeare constructed the present tragedy.

Saxo has placed his history about 200 years before Christianity, when barbarians, clothed in skins, peopled the shores of the Baltic. The poet, however, has so far modernised the subject as to make Hamlet a Christian, and England tributary to the "sovereign majesty of Denmark." A date can therefore be easily fixed, and the costume of the tenth and eleventh centuries may be selected for the purpose. There are but few authentic records in existence, but these few afford reason to believe that very slight difference existed between the dress of the Dane and that of the Anglo-Saxon of the same period.

Since its first representation, upwards of two centuries and a half ago, no play has been acted so frequently, or commanded such universal admiration. It draws within the sphere of its attraction both the scholastic and the unlearned. It finds a response in every breast, however high or however humble. By its colossal aid it exalts the drama of England above that of every nation, past or present. It is, indeed, the most marvellous creation of human intellect.

CHARLES KEAN.

HAMLET,

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PRINCE OF DENMARK.

ACT I.

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Scene I.—EL SINORE. A Platform before the Castle. Night.

Francisco on his post. Enter to him Bernardo, L.H.

Ber. Who's there?

Fran. (R.) Nay, answer me: **1** stand, and unfold **2** yourself.

Ber. Long live the king! **3**

Fran.

Bernardo?

Ber.

He.

Fran. You come most carefully upon your hour.

Ber. 'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.

Fran. For this relief much thanks: [*Crosses to L.*] 'tis bitter cold,

And I am sick at heart.

Ber. Have you had quiet guard?

Fran.

Not a mouse stirring.

Ber. Well, good night.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,

The rivals of my watch, **4** bid them make haste.

Fran. I think I hear them.—Stand, ho! Who's there?

Hor. Friends to this ground.

Mar.

And liegemen to the Dane. **5**

Enter Horatio and Marcellus L.H.

Fran. Give you good night.

Mar.

O, farewell, honest soldier:

Who hath reliev'd you?

Fran. Bernardo hath my place.
Give you good night.

[*Exit Francisco, L.H.*]

Mar.

Holloa! Bernardo!

Ber.

Say,

What, is Horatio there?

Hor. (*Crosses to C.*) A piece of him.⁶

Ber. (*R.*) Welcome, Horatio: welcome, good Marcellus.

Hor. What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?

Ber. I have seen nothing.

Mar. (*L.*) Horatio says, 'tis but our fantasy,

And will not let belief take hold of him,

Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us:

Therefore I have entreated him, along

With us, to watch the minutes of this night;⁷

That, if again this apparition come,

He may approve our eyes,⁸ and speak to it.

Hor. Tush! tush! 'twill not appear.

Ber. Come, let us once again assail your ears,

That are so fortified against our story,

What we two nights have seen.⁹

Hor. Well, let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

Ber. Last night of all,

When yon same star that's westward from the pole

Had made his course to illumine that part of heaven

Where now it burns, Marcellus, and myself,

The bell then beating one—

Mar. Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!

Enter Ghost L.H.

Ber. In the same figure, like the king that's dead.

Hor. Most like:—it harrows me with fear and wonder.¹⁰

Ber. It would be spoke to.

Mar. Speak to it, Horatio.

Hor. What art thou, that usurp'st this time of night,¹¹

Together with that fair and warlike form

In which the majesty of buried Denmark

Did sometimes march? By heaven I charge thee, speak!

Mar. It is offended.

[*Ghost crosses to R.*]

Ber.

See! it stalks away!

Hor. Stay!—speak!—speak, I charge thee, speak!

[*Exit Ghost, R.H.*]

Mar. 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

Ber. How now, Horatio! You tremble, and look pale:

Is not this something more than fantasy?

What think you of it?

Hor. Before heaven, I might not this believe,

Without the sensible and true avouch¹²

Of mine own eyes.

Mar.

Is it not like the king?

Hor. As thou art to thyself:

Such was the very armour he had on,

When he the ambitious Norway combated.

Mar. Thus, twice before, and jump at this dead hour,¹³
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.
Hor. In what particular thought to work,¹⁴ I know not;
But in the gross and scope¹⁵ of mine opinion,
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.¹⁶
In the most high and palmy¹⁷ state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets.
Re-enter Ghost R.H.
But, (L.C.) soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me.

[Horatio crosses in front of the Ghost to R. Ghost crosses to L.]

Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,¹⁸
Speak to me:
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,
Speak to me:
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
O, speak!
O, if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,¹⁹
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
Speak of it:—stay, and speak!

[Exit Ghost, L.H.]

Mar. 'Tis gone!

We do it wrong, being so majestic,
To offer it the show of violence.

Ber. It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

Hor. And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons.²⁰ I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet of the morn,
Doth with his lofty²¹ and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day; and, at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit²² hies
To his confine.

But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill:
Break we our watch up; and, by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.

[*Exeunt, L.H.*]

Scene II.—A ROOM OF STATE IN THE PALACE.

Trumpet March.

Enter the King and Queen, preceded by Polonius, Hamlet,
Laertes²³, Lords, Ladies, and Attendants.

King. R.C. Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green;²⁴ and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe;
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature,

That we with wisest sorrow²⁵ think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
The imperial jointress of this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,²⁶
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd²⁷
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along:—For all, our thanks.
And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; What is't, Laertes?

Laer. (R.)

My dread lord,
Your leave and favour²⁸ to return to France;
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France,
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

King. Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

Pol. (R.) He hath, my lord, (wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition; and, at last,
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent):²⁹
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

King. Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!³⁰

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,—

Ham. (L.) A little more than kin, and less than kind.³¹

[*Aside.*]

King. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Ham. Not so, my lord; I am too much i'the sun.³²

Queen. (L.C.) Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour³³ off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

Do not for ever with thy veiled lids³⁴

Seek for thy noble father in the dust:

Thou know'st 'tis common, all that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

Ham. Ay, madam, it is common.

Queen.

If it be,

Why seems it so particular with thee?

Ham. Seems, madam! nay, it is; I know not seems.

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,

Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,

No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,

Together with all forms, modes, shows of grief,

That can denote me truly: These, indeed, seem,

For they are actions that a man might play.

But I have that within which passeth show;³⁵

These but the trappings³⁶ and the suits of woe.

King. 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature,
Hamlet,

To give these mourning duties to your father:

But, you must know, your father lost a father;

That father lost, lost his;³⁷ and the survivor bound,
In filial obligation, for some term

To do obsequious sorrow:³⁸ But to perséver³⁹

In obstinate condolment,⁴⁰ is a course

Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief:

It shows a will most incorrect to Heaven.⁴¹

We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing⁴² woe; and think of us
As of a father: for let the world take note,
You are the most immediate to our throne;
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.
Queen. Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.
Ham. I shall in all my best obey you, madam.
King. Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply;
Be as ourself in Denmark.—Madam, come;
This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart:⁴³ in grace whereof,⁴⁴
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,⁴⁵
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell;
Re-speaking earthly thunder.

[*Trumpet March repeated. Exeunt King and Queen, preceded
by Polonius, Lords, Ladies, Laertes, and Attendants, R.H.*]

Ham. O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself⁴⁶ into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon⁴⁷ 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!⁴⁸
Fye on't! O fye! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.⁴⁹ That it should come to this!
But two months dead!—nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr:⁵⁰ so loving to my mother,

That he might not beteem⁵¹ the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: And yet, within a month,—
Let me not think on't,—Frailty, thy name is Woman!—
A little month; or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears;—she married with my uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules.

It is not, nor it cannot come to, good:
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!
Enter Horatio, Bernardo, and Marcellus R.H.

Hor. Hail to your lordship!

Ham.

I am glad to see you well:
Horatio,—or I do forget myself.

Hor. The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

Ham. Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with
you:⁵²

And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?—
Marcellus?

[*Crosses to C.*]

Mar. (R.) My good lord,—

Ham. (C.) I am very glad to see you; good even, sir.

[*To Bernardo, R.*]

But what, in faith,⁵³ make you⁵⁴ from Wittenberg?⁵⁵