

Fortune And Men's Eyes

BY JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

Josephine Preston Peabody (Mrs. Lionel S. Marks) was born in New York on May 30, 1874. She attended the Girls' Latin School in Boston and later went to Radcliffe College. From 1901 to 1903 she taught English literature at Wellesley College. Her verse, dramatic and lyric, has made her an outstanding figure in American letters.

Fortune and Men's Eyes (1900), the first of her published plays, is written in blank verse. *Marlowe*, likewise a study of a great Elizabethan, *The Wings*, the setting of which is early English, *The Piper*, a new version of the medieval legend made famous by Browning, and *The Wolf of Gubbio*, dominated by the lovely figure of St. Francis of Assisi, are also poetic dramas. Her best known play, *The Piper*, was awarded the first prize in 1910 in the Stratford-on-Avon competition in which there were three hundred and fifteen contestants. It was then produced at the Memorial Theatre at Stratford.

In recent years two playwrights have consulted Shakespeare's sonnets for dramatic themes; first, Josephine Preston Peabody found in them a motive for her poetic play, *Fortune and Men's Eyes*, and later George Bernard Shaw turned them to dramatic account, in his own fashion, in *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. The dramatic situation chosen for *Fortune and Men's Eyes* has been read by some Shakespearian scholars into the familiar dedication of the 1609 edition of the Sonnets, which runs: "To the only begetter of these ensuing sonnets Mr. W. H. all happiness and that eternity promised by our ever-living poet wisheth the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth T. T." The last initials stand for the name of the publisher, Thomas Thorpe. "Begetter" has been variously interpreted as inspirer of the Sonnets or as partner in the commercial enterprise of their publication. "Mr. W. H." has been more usually identified with William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, though some have thought that the initials were inverted and referred to Henry Wriothesly, earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare's other poems were dedicated. If W. H. does refer to the earl of Pembroke, it is usually held that the "dark lady" is in reality the

blond Mistress Mary Fytton, whose name was coupled with Pembroke's. Whether the sonnets are in any sense at all autobiographical has also been endlessly debated. It was admittedly an age when every poet tried his hand at sonnet sequences and in all these sequences, not excepting Shakespeare's, there are to be found the same conventional conceits. But it is generally believed now that the sonnets of Spenser and Sidney refer to the personal experiences of their authors. It is quite possible, then, that Shakespeare, too, may have used a literary convention as a means of personal expression, though it seems impertinent in any case to question the feeling back of "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes." This brief reference to conflicting interpretations of the Sonnets shows how material of dramatic value may lurk even in the purlieus of textual criticism.

Josephine Preston Peabody herself says: "The play was written after long worship of the W. S. Sonnets, as a method of introspection, to satisfy my own curiosity concerning the truth of the sonnet theories. In spite of recurrent threats, by one actor after another, it has never yet been produced on the professional stage. But it has been read and recommended for reading, in various colleges, as a picture of Elizabethan times, and as an interpretation of the Pembroke-Fytton aspect of the sonnet story."

FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES

"When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes" ...

Sonnet xxix.

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM HERBERT, *son of the Earl of Pembroke.*

SIMEON DYER, *a Puritan.*

TOBIAS, *host of "The Bear and The Angel."*

WAT BURROW, *a bear-ward.*

DICKON, *a little boy, son to TOBIAS.*

CHIFFIN, *a ballad-monger.*

A PRENTICE.

A PLAYER, *master W. S. of the Lord Chamberlain's Company.*

MISTRESS MARY FYTTON, *a maid-of-honor to Queen Elizabeth.*

MISTRESS ANNE HUGHES, *also of the Court.*

TAVERNERS AND PRENTICES.

Time represented: An afternoon in the autumn of the year 1599.

SCENE.--Interior of "The Bear and the Angel," South London. At back, the center entrance gives on a short alley-walk which joins the street beyond at a right angle. To right and left of this doorway, casements. Down, on the right, a door opening upon the inn-garden; a second door on the right, up, leading to a tap-room. Opposite this, left, a door leading into a buttery. Opposite the garden-door, a large chimney-piece with a smoldering wood-fire. A few seats; a lantern (unlighted) in a corner. In the foreground, to the right, a long and narrow table with several mugs of ale upon it, also a lute.

At one end of the table WAT BURROW is finishing his ale and holding forth to the PRENTICE (who thrums the lute) and a group of taverners, some smoking. At the further end of the table SIMEON DYER observes all with grave curiosity. TOBIAS and DICKON draw near. General noise.

PRENTICE [*singing*].

What do I give for the Pope and his riches!

I's my ale and my Sunday breeches;

I's an old master, I's a young lass,

And we'll eat green goose, come Martinmas!

Sing Rowdy Dowdy,

Look ye don't crowd me

I's a good club,

--So let me pass!

DICKON.
Again! again!

PRENTICE. *Sing Rowdy--*

WAT [*finishing his beer*]. Swallow it down.
Sling all such froth and follow me to the Bear!
They stay for me, lined up to see us pass
From end to end o' the alley. Ho! You doubt?
From Lambeth to the Bridge!

TAVERNERS. } {'Tis so; ay.
PRENTICES. } {Come, follow! Come.

WAT. Greg's stuck his ears
With nosegays, and his chain is wound about
Like any May-pole. What? I tell ye, boys,
Ye have seen no such bear, a Bear o' Bears,
Fit to bite off the prophet, in the show,
With seventy such boys!
[*Pulling DICKON's ear*]. Bears, say you, bears?
Why, Rursus Major, as your scholars tell,
A royal bear, the greatest in his day,
The sport of Alexander, unto Nick--
Was a ewe-lamb, dyed black; no worse, no worse.
To-morrow come and see him with the dogs;
He'll not give way,--not he!

DICKON. To-morrow's Thursday!
To-morrow's Thursday!

PRENTICE. Will ye lead by here?

TOBIAS.
Ay, that would be a sight. Wat, man, this way!

WAT.
Ho, would you squinch us? Why, there be a press
O' gentry by this tide to measure Nick

And lay their wagers, at a blink of him,
Against to-morrow! Why, the stairs be full.
To-morrow you shall see the Bridge a-creak,
The river--dry with barges,--London gape,
Gape! While the Borough buzzes like a hive
With all their worships! Sirs, the fame o' Nick
Has so pluckt out the gentry by the sleeve,
'Tis said the Queen would see him.

TOBIAS. } {Ay, 'tis grand.
DICKON. } {O-oh, the Queen?

PRENTICE.
How now? Thou art no man to lead a bear,
Forgetting both his quality and hers!
Drink all; come, drink to her.

TOBIAS. Ay, now.

WAT. To her!--
And harkee, boy, this saying will serve you learn:
"The Queen, her high and glorious majesty!"

SIMEON [*gravely*].
Long live the Queen!

WAT. Maker of golden laws
For baitings! She that cherishes the Borough
And shines upon our pastimes. By the mass!
Thank her for the crowd to-morrow. But for her,
We were a homesick handful of brave souls
That love the royal sport. These mouthing players,
These hookers, would 'a' spoiled us of our beer--

PRENTICE.
Lying by to catch the gentry at the stairs,--
All pressing to Bear Alley--

WAT. Run 'em in
At stage-plays and show-fooleries on the way.

Stage-plays, with their tart nonsense and their flags,
Their "Tamerlanes" and "Humors" and what not!
My life on't, there was not a man of us
But fared his Lent, by reason of their fatness,
And on a holiday ate not at all!

TOBIAS [*solemnly*].
'Tis so; 'tis so.

WAT. But when she heard it told
How lean the sport was grown, she damns stage-plays
O' Thursday. So: Nick gets his turn to grow!

PRENTICE.
As well as any player.
[*With a dumb show of ranting among the TAVERNERS.*]

WAT. Players?--Hang them!
I know 'em, I. I've been with 'em.... I was
As sweet a gentlewoman in my voice
As any of your finches that sings small.

TOBIAS. 'Twas high.

[*Enter THE PLAYER, followed by CHIFFIN, the ballad-monger. He is abstracted and weary.*]

WAT [*lingering at the table*].
I say, I've played.... There's not one man
Of all the gang--save one.... Ay, there be one
I grant you, now!... He used me in right sort;
A man worth better trades.

[*Seeing THE PLAYER.*]

--Lord love you, sir!
Why, this is you indeed. 'Tis a long day, sir,
Since I clapped eyes on you. But even now
Your name was on my tongue as pat as ale!
You see me off. We bait to-morrow, sir;

Will you come see? Nick's fresh, and every soul
As hot to see the fight as 'twere to be--
Man Daniel, baited with the lions!

TOBIAS. Sir,
'Tis high ... 'tis high.

WAT. We show him in the street
With dogs and all, ay, now, if you will see.

THE PLAYER.
Why, so I will. A show and I not there?
Bear it out bravely, Wat. High fortune, man!
Commend me to thy bear.

[Drinks and passes him the cup.]

WAT. Lord love you, sir!
'Twas ever so you gave a man godspeed....
And yet your spirits flag; you look but palely.
I'll take your kindness, thank ye.

[Turning away.]

 In good time!
Come after me and Nick, now. Follow all;
Come boys, come, pack!

[Exit WAT, still descanting. Exeunt most of the TAVERNERS, with the PRENTICE. SIMEON DYER draws near THE PLAYER, regarding him gravely. CHIFFIN sells ballads to those who go out. DICKON is about to follow them, when TOBIAS stops him.]

TOBIAS.
What? Not so fast, you there;
Who gave you holiday? Bide by the inn;
Tend on our gentry.

[Exit after the crowd.]

CHIFFIN. Ballads, gentlemen?
Ballads, new ballads?

SIMEON [*to THE PLAYER.*]
With your pardon, sir,
I am gratified to note your abstinence
From this deplorable fond merriment
Of baiting of a bear.

THE PLAYER. Your friendship then
Takes pleasure in the heaviness of my legs.
But I am weary I would see the bear.
Nay, rest you happy; malt shall comfort us.

SIMEON.
You do mistake me. I am--

CHIFFIN. Ballad, sir?
"How a Young Spark would Woo a Tanner's Wife,
And She Sings Sweet in Turn."

SIMEON [*indignantly*].
Abandoned poet!

CHIFFIN [*indignantly*].
I'm no such thing! An honest ballad, sir,
No poetry at all.

THE PLAYER.
Good, sell thy wares.

CHIFFIN.
"A Ballad of a Virtuous Country-Maid
Forswears the Follies of the Flaunting Town"--
And tends her geese all day, and weds a vicar.

SIMEON.
A godlier tale, in sooth. But speak, my man;
If she be virtuous, and the tale a true one,
Can she not do't in prose?

THE PLAYER. Beseech her, man.
'Tis scandal she should use a measure so.
For no more sin than dealing out false measure
Was Dame Sapphira slain.

SIMEON. You are with me, sir;
Although methinks you do mistake the sense
O' that you have read.... This jiggling, jog-trot rime,
This ring-me-round, debaseth mind and matter,
To make the reason giddy--

CHIFFIN [*to THE PLAYER*].

 Ballad, sir?

"Hear All!" A fine brave ballad of a Fish
Just caught off Dover; nay, a one-eyed fish,
With teeth in double rows.

THE PLAYER. Nay, nay, go to.

CHIFFIN.

"My Fortune's Folly," then; or "The True Tale
Of an Angry Gull;" or "Cherries Like Me Best."
"Black Sheep, or How a Cut-Purse Robbed His Mother;"
"The Prentice and the Dell!" ... "Plays Play not Fair,"
Or how a *gentlewoman's* heart was took
By a player that was king in a stage-play....
"The Merry Salutation," "How a Spark
Would Woo a Tanner's Wife!" "The Direful Fish"--
Cock's passion, sir! not buy a cleanly ballad
Of the great fish, late ta'en off Dover coast,
Having two heads and teeth in double rows....
Salt fish caught in fresh water?...

 'Od's my life!

What if or salt or fresh? A prodigy!
A ballad like "Hear All!" And me and mine,
Five children and a wife would bait the devil,
May lap the water out o' Lambeth Marsh
Before he'll buy a ballad. My poor wife,
That lies a-weeping for a tansy-cake!

Body o' me, shall I scent ale again?

THE PLAYER.

Why, here's persuasion; logic, arguments.
Nay, not the ballad. Read for thine own joy.
I doubt not but it stretches, honest length,
From Maid Lane to the Bridge and so across.
But for thy length of thirst--

[*Giving him a coin.*]

That touches near.

CHIFFIN [*apart*].

A vagrom player, would not buy a tale
O' the Great Fish with the twy rows o' teeth!
Learn you to read! [*Exit.*]

SIMEON.

Thou seemest, sir, from that I have overheard,
A man, as one should grant, beyond thy calling....
I would I might assure thee of the way,
To urge thee quit this painted infamy.
There may be time, seeing thou art still young,
To pluck thee from the burning. How are ye 'stroyed,
Ye foolish grasshoppers! Cut off, forgotten,
When moth and rust corrupt your flaunting shows,
The Earth shall have no memory of your name!

DICKON.

Pray you, what's yours?

SIMEON. I am called Simeon Dyer.

[*There is the sudden uproar of a crowd in the distance. It continues at intervals for some time.*]

} Hey, lads?

PRENTICES. } Some noise beyond: Come, cudgels, come!

} Come on, come on, I'm for it.

[*Exeunt all but THE PLAYER, SIMEON, and DICKON.*]

SIMEON.

Something untoward, without: or is it rather
The tumult of some uproar incident
To this ... vicinity?

THE PLAYER. It is an uproar
Most incident to bears.

DICKON. I would I knew!

THE PLAYER [*holding him off at arm's length*].
Hey, boy? We would have tidings of the bear:
Go thou, I'll be thy surety. Mark him well.
Omit no fact; I would have all of it:
What manner o' bear he is,--how bears himself;
Number and pattern of ears, and eyes what hue;
His voice and fashion o' coat. Nay, come not back,
Till thou hast all. Skip, sirrah!

[*Exit DICKON.*]

SIMEON. Think, fair sir.
Take this new word of mine to be a seed
Of thought in that neglected garden plot,
Thy mind, thy worthier part. But think!

THE PLAYER. Why, so;
Thou hast some right, friend; now and then it serves.
Sometimes I have thought, and even now sometimes,
... I think.

SIMEON [*benevolently*]. Heaven ripen thought unto an harvest!
[*Exit.*]

[*THE PLAYER rises, stretches his arms, and paces the floor, wearily.*]

THE PLAYER [*alone*].

Some quiet now.... Why should I thirst for it
As if my thoughts were noble company?
Alone with the one man of all living men
I have least cause to honor....

I'm no lover,
That seek to be alone!... She is too false--
At last, to keep a spaniel's loyalty.
I do believe it. And by my own soul,
She shall not have me, what remains of me
That may be beaten back into the ranks.
I will not look upon her.... Bitter Sweet.
This fever that torments me day by day--
Call it not love--this servitude, this spell
That haunts me like a sick man's fantasy,
With pleading of her eyes, her voice, her eyes--
It shall not have me. I am too much stained:
But, God or no God, yet I do not live
And have to bear my own soul company,
To have it stoop so low. She looks on Herbert.
Oh, I have seen. But he,--he must withstand.
He knows that I have suffered,--suffer still--
Although I love her not. Her ways, her ways--
It is her ways that eat into the heart
With beauty more than Beauty; and her voice
That silvers o'er the meaning of her speech
Like moonshine on black waters. Ah, uncoil!...
He's the sure morning after this dark dream;
Clear daylight and west wind of a lad's love;
With all his golden pride, for my dull hours,
Still climbing sunward! Sink all loves in him!
And cleanse me of this cursèd, fell distrust
That marks the pestilence....

'Fair, kind, and true.'

Lad, lad. How could I turn from friendliness
To worship such false gods?--
There cannot thrive a greater love than this,
'Fair, kind, and true.' And yet, if She were true
To me, though false to all things else;--one truth,
So one truth lived--. One truth! O beggared soul

--Foul Lazarus, so starved it can make shift
To feed on crumbs of honor!--Am I this?

[*Enter ANNE HUGHES. She has been running in evident terror, and stands against the door looking about her.*]

ANNE.
Are you the inn-keeper?

[*THE PLAYER turns and bows courteously.*]

Nay, sir, your pardon.
I saw you not... And yet your face, methinks,
But--yes, I'm sure....
But where's the inn-keeper?
I know not where I am, nor where to go.

THE PLAYER.
Madam, it is my fortune that I may
Procure you service. [*Going towards the door. The uproar sounds nearer.*]

ANNE. Nay! what if the bear--

THE PLAYER.
The bear?

ANNE.
The door! The bear is broken loose.
Did you not hear? I scarce could make my way
Through that rank crowd, in search of some safe place.
You smile, sir! But you had not seen the bear,--
Nor I, this morning. Pray you, hear me out,--
For surely you are gentler than the place.
I came ... I came by water ... to the Garden,
Alone, ... from bravery, to see the show
And tell of it hereafter at the Court!
There's one of us makes count of all such 'scapes
(Tis Mistress Fytton). She will ever tell
The sport it is to see the people's games

Among themselves,--to go *incognita*
And take all as it is not for the Queen,
Gallants and rabble! But by Banbury Cross,
I am of tamer mettle!--All alone,
Among ten thousand noisy watermen;
And then the foul ways leading from the Stair;
And then ... no friends I knew, nay, not a face.
And my dear nose beset, and my pomander
Lost in the rout,--or else a cut-purse had it:
And then the bear breaks loose! Oh, 'tis a day
Full of vexations, nay, and dangers too.
I would I had been slower to outdo
The pranks of Mary Fytton.... You know her, sir?

THE PLAYER.

If one of my plain calling may be said
To know a maid-of-honor. [*More lightly.*] And yet more:
My heart has cause to know the lady's face.

ANNE [*blankly*].

Why, so it is.... Is't not a marvel, sir,
The way she hath? Truly, her voice is good....
And yet,--but oh, she charms; I hear it said.
A winsome gentlewoman, of a wit, too.
We are great fellows; she tells me all she does;
And, sooth, I listen till my ears be like
To grow for wonder. Whence my 'scape, to-day!
Oh, she hath daring for the pastimes here;
I would--change looks with her, to have her spirit!
Indeed, they say she charms Someone, by this.

THE PLAYER.

Someone....

ANNE. Hast heard?

Why sure my Lord of Herbert.
Ay, Pembroke's son. But there I doubt,--I doubt.
He is an eagle will not stoop for less
Than kingly prey. No bird-lime takes him.

ANNE. I will wait
A little longer, lest I meet once more
That ruffian mob or any of the dogs.
These sports are better seen from balconies.

THE PLAYER.
Will you step hither? There's an arbored walk
Sheltered and safe. Should they come by again,
You may see all, an't like you, and be hid.

ANNE.
A garden there? Come, you shall show it me.

*[They go out into the garden on the right, leaving the door shut.
Immediately enter, in great haste, MARY FYTTON and WILLIAM
HERBERT,
followed by DICKON, who looks about and, seeing no one, goes to
setting things in order.]*

MARY.
Quick, quick!... She must have seen me. Those big eyes,
How could they miss me, peering as she was
For some familiar face? She would have known,
Even before my mask was jostled off
In that wild rabble ... bears and bearish men.

HERBERT.
Why would you have me bring you?

MARY. Why? Ah, why!
Sooth, once I had a reason: now 'tis lost,--
Lost! Lost! Call out the bell-man.

DICKON [*seriously*]. Shall I so?

HERBERT.
Nay, nay; that were a merriment indeed,
To cry us through the streets! [*To MARY.*] You riddling charm.

MARY.
A riddle, yet? You almost love me, then.

HERBERT.
Almost?

MARY.
Because you cannot understand.
Alas, when all's unriddled, the charm goes.

HERBERT.
Come, you're not melancholy?

MARY. Nay, are you?
But should Nan Hughes have seen us, and spoiled all--

HERBERT.
How could she so?

MARY. I know not ... yet I know
If she had met us, she could steal To-day,
Golden To-day.

HERBERT. A kiss; and so forget her.

MARY.
Hush, hush,--the tavern-boy there.
[*To DICKON.*] Tell me, boy,--
[*To HERBERT.*] Some errand, now; a roc's egg!
Strike thy wit.

HERBERT.
What is't you miss? Why, so. The lady's lost
A very curious reason, wrought about
With diverse broidery.

MARY. Nay, 'twas a mask.

HERBERT.
A mask, arch-wit? Why will you mock yourself

And all your fine deceits? Your mask, your reason,
Your reason with a mask!

MARY. You are too merry.
[*To DICKON.*] A mask it is, and muffler finely wrought
With little amber points all hung like bells.
I lost it as I came, somewhere....

HERBERT. Somewhere
Between the Paris Gardens and the Bridge.

MARY.
Or below Bridge--or haply in the Thames!

HERBERT.
No matter where, so you do bring it back.
Fly, Mercury! Here's feathers for thy heels. [*Giving coin.*]

MARY [*aside*].
Weights, weights! [*Exit DICKON.*]

[*HERBERT looks about him, opens the door of the taproom, grows troubled. She watches him with dissatisfaction, seeming to warm her feet by the fire meanwhile.*]

HERBERT [*apart*].
I know this place. We used to come
Together, he and I ...

MARY [*apart*]. Forgot again.
O the capricious tides, the hateful calms,
And the too eager ship that would be gone
Adventuring against uncertain winds,
For some new, utmost sight of Happy Isles!
Becalmed,--becalmed ... But I will break this calm.

[*She sees the lute on the table, crosses and takes it up, running her fingers over the strings very softly. She sits.*]

HERBERT.

Ah, mermaid, is it you?

MARY. Did you sail far?

HERBERT.

Not I; no, sooth. [*Crossing to her.*]

Mermaid, I would not think.

But you--

MARY.

I think not. I remember nothing.

There's nothing in the world but you and me;

All else is dust. Thou shalt not question me;

Or if,--but as a sphinx in woman-shape:

And when thou fail'st at answer, I shall turn,

And rend thy heart and cast thee from the cliff.

[*She leans her head back against him, and he kisses her.*]

So perish all who guess not what I am!...

Oh, but I know you: you are April-Days.

Nothing is sure, but all is beautiful!

[*She runs her fingers up the strings, one by one, and listens, speaking to the lute.*]

Is it not so? Come, answer. Is it true?

Speak, sweeting, since I love thee best of late,

And have forsook my virginals for thee.

All's beautiful indeed and all unsure?

"Ay" ... (Did you hear?) *He's fair and faithless? "Ay."*

[*Speaking with the lute.*]

HERBERT.

Poor oracle, with only one reply!--

Wherein 'tis unlike thee.

MARY. *Can he love aught*

So well as his own image in the brook,

Having once seen it?

HERBERT. Ay!

MARY. The lute saith "No." ...
O dullard! Here were tidings, would you mark.
What said I? *Oracle, can he love aught*
So dear as his own image in the brook,
Having once looked?... No, truly.
[*With sudden abandon.*] Nor can I!

HERBERT.
O leave this game of words, you thousand-tongued.
Sing, sing to me. So shall I be all yours
Forever;--or at least till you be mute!...
I used to wonder he should be thy slave:
I wonder now no more. Your ways are wonders;
You have a charm to make a man forget
His past and yours, and everything but you.

MARY [*speaking*].
"When daisies pied and violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver-white"--
How now?

HERBERT.
"How now?" That song ... thou wilt sing that?

MARY.
Marry, what mars the song?

HERBERT. Have you forgot
Who made it?

MARY. Soft, what idleness! So fine?
So rude? And bid me sing! You get but silence;
Or, if I sing,--beshrew me, it shall be
A dole of song, a little starveling breath
As near to silence as a song can be.

[*She sings under-breath, fantastically.*]

*Say how many kisses be
Lent and lost twixt you and me?
'Can I tell when they begun?'
Nay, but this were prodigal:
Let us learn to count withal.
Since no ending is to spending,
Sum our riches, one by one.
'You shall keep the reckoning,
Count each kiss while I do sing.'*

HERBERT.

Oh, not these little wounds. You vex my heart;
Heal it again with singing,--come, sweet, come.
Into the garden! None shall trouble us.
This place has memories and conscience too:
Drown all, my mermaid. Wind them in your hair
And drown them, drown them all.

*[He swings open the garden-door for her. At the same moment
ANNE's
voice is heard approaching.]*

ANNE [*without*]. Some music there?

HERBERT.

Perdition! Quick--behind me, love.

[Swinging the door shut again, and looking through the crack.]

MARY.

'Tis she--

Nan Hughes, 'tis she! How came she here? By heaven,
She crosses us to-day. Nan Hughes lights here
In a Bank tavern! Nay, I'll not be seen.
Sooner or later it must mean the wreck
Of both ... should the Queen know.

HERBERT. The spite of chance!
She talks with someone in the arbor there

Whose face I see not. Come, here's doors at least.

[*They cross hastily. MARY opens the door on the left and looks within.*]

MARY.

Too thick.... I shall be penned. But guard you this
And tell me when they're gone. Stay, stay;--mend all.
If she have seen me,--swear it was not I.
Heaven speed her home, with her new body-guard!

[*Exit, closing door. HERBERT looks out into the garden.*]

HERBERT.

By all accursèd chances,--none but he!

[*Retires up to stand beside the door, looking out of casement.
Re-enter from the garden, ANNE, followed by THE PLAYER.*]

ANNE.

No, 'twas some magic in my ears, I think.
There's no one here. [*Seeing HERBERT.*]
But yes, there's someone here:--
The inn-keeper. Are you--
Saint Catherine's bones!
My Lord of Herbert. Sir, you could not look
More opportune. But for this gentleman--

HERBERT [*bowing*].

My friend, this long time since,--

ANNE.

Marry, your friend?

THE PLAYER [*regarding HERBERT searchingly*].

This long time since.

ANNE. Nay, is it so, indeed?

[*To HERBERT.*] My day's fulfilled of blunders! O sweet sir,
How can I tell you? But I'll tell you all

If you'll but bear me escort from this place
Where none of us belongs. Yours is the first
Familiar face I've seen this afternoon!

HERBERT [*apart*].

A sweet assurance.

[*Aloud.*] But you seek ... you need
Some rest--some cheer, some--Will you step within?

[*Indicating tap-room.*]

The tavern is deserted, but--

ANNE. Not here!
I've been here quite an hour. Come, citywards,
To Whitehall! I have had enough of bears
To quench my longing till next Whitsuntide.
Down to the river, pray you.

HERBERT. Sooth, at once?

ANNE.

At once, at once.

[*To THE PLAYER.*] I crave your pardon, sir,
For sundering your friendships. I've heard say
A woman always comes between two men
To their confusion. You shall drink amends
Some other day. I must be safely home.

THE PLAYER [*reassured by HERBERT's reluctance to go.*]

It joys me that your trials have found an end;
And for the rest, I wish you prosperous voyage;
Which needs not, with such halcyon weather toward.

HERBERT [*apart*].

It cuts: and yet he knows not. Can it pass?

[*To him.*] Let us meet soon. I have--I know not what
To say--nay, no import; but chance has parted
Our several ways too long. To leave you thus,
Without a word--

ANNE. You are in haste, my lord!
By the true faith, here are two friends indeed!
Two lovers crossed: and I,--'tis I that bar them.
Pray tarry, sir. I doubt not I may light
Upon some link-boy to attend me home
Or else a drunken prentice with a club,
Or that patched keeper strolling from the Garden
With all his dogs along; or failing them,
A pony with a monkey on his back,
Or, failing that, a bear! Some escort, sure,
Such as the Borough offers! I shall look
Part of a pageant from the Lady Fair,
And boast for three full moons, "Such sights I saw!"
Truly, 'tis new to me: but I doubt not
I shall trick out a mind for strange adventure,
As high as--Mistress Fytton!

HERBERT. Say no more,
Dear lady! I entreat you pardon me
The lameness of my wit. I'm stark adream;
You lighted here so suddenly, unlooked for
Vision in Bankside.... Let me hasten you,
Now that I see I dream not. It grows late.

ANNE.
And can you grant me such a length of time?

HERBERT.
Length? Say Illusion! Time? Alas, 'twill be
Only a poor half-hour [*loudly*], a poor half-hour!
[*Apart.*] Did she hear that, I wonder?

THE PLAYER [*bowing over ANNE's hand*]. Not so, madam;
A little gold of largess, fallen to me
By chance.

HERBERT [*to him*].
A word with you--
[*Apart.*] O, I am gagged!

ANNE [*to THE PLAYER*].
You go with us, sir?

[*He moves towards door with them.*]

THE PLAYER. No, I do but play
Your inn-keeper.

HERBERT [*apart, despairingly*].
The eagle is gone blind.

[*Exeunt, leaving doors open. They are seen to go down the walk together. At the street they pause, THE PLAYER, bowing slowly, then turning back towards the inn; ANNE holding HERBERT's arm. Within, the door on the left opens slightly, then MARY appears.*]

MARY.
'Tis true. My ears caught silence, if no more.
They're gone....

[*She comes out of her hiding-place and opens the left-hand casement to see ANNE disappearing with HERBERT.*]

She takes him with her! He'll return?
Gone, gone, without a word; and I was caged,--
And deaf as well. O, spite of everything!
She's so unlike.... How long shall I be here
To wait and wonder? He with her--with her!

[*THE PLAYER, having come slowly back to the door, hears her voice. MARY darts towards the entrance to look after HERBERT and ANNE. She sees him and recoils. She falls back step by step, while he stands holding the door-posts with his hands, impassive.*]

You!...

THE PLAYER.

Yes.... [*After a pause.*] And you.

MARY. Do you not ask me why
I'm here?

THE PLAYER.
I am not wont to shun the truth:
But yet I think the reason you could give
Were too uncomely.

MARY. Nay;--

THE PLAYER. If it were truth;
If it were truth! Although that likelihood
Scarce threatens.

MARY. So. Condemned without a trial.

THE PLAYER.
O, speak the lie now. Let there be no chance
For my unsightly love, bound head and foot,
Stark, full of wounds and horrible,--to find
Escape from out its charnel-house; to rise
Unwelcome before eyes that had forgot,
And say it died not truly. It should die.
Play no imposture: leave it,--it is dead.
I have been weak in that I tried to pour
The wine through plague-struck veins. It came to life
Over and over, drew sharp breath again
In torture such as't may be to be born,
If a poor babe could tell. Over and over,
I tell you, it has suffered resurrection,
Cheating its pain with hope, only to die
Over and over;--die more deaths than men
The meanest, most forlorn, are made to die
By tyranny or nature.... Now I see all
Clear. And I say, it shall not rise again.
I am as safe from you as I were dead.
I know you.

MARY. Herbert--

THE PLAYER. Do not touch his name.
Leave that; I saw.

MARY. You saw? Nay, what?

THE PLAYER. The whole
Clear story. Not at first. While you were hid,
I took some comfort, drop by drop, and minute
By minute. (Dullard!) Yet there was a maze
Of circumstance that showed even then to me
Perplext and strange. You here unravel it.
All's clear: you are the clue. [*Turning away.*]

MARY [*going to the casement*].
[*Apart.*] Caged, caged!
Does he know all? Why were those walls so dense?
[*To him.*] Nan Hughes hath seized the time to tune your mind
To some light gossip. Say, how came she here?

THE PLAYER.
All emulation, thinking to match you
In high adventure:--liked it not, poor lady!
And is gone home, attended.

[*Re-enter DICKON.*]

DICKON [*to MARY*] They be lost!--
Thy mask and muffler;--'tis no help to search.
Some hooker would 'a' swallowed 'em, be sure,
As the whale swallows Jonas, in the show.

MARY.
'Tis nought: I care not.

DICKON [*looking at the fire*].
Hey, it wants a log.

[While he mends the fire, humming, THE PLAYER stands taking thought.

MARY speaks apart, going to casement again to look out.]

MARY [*apart*].

I will have what he knows. To cast me off:--
Not thus, not thus. Peace, I can blind him yet,
Or he'll despise me. Nay, I will not be
Thrust out at door like this. I will not go
But by mine own free will. There is no power
Can say what he might do to ruin us,
To win Will Herbert from me,--almost mine,
And I all his, all his--O April-Days!--
Well, friendship against love? I know who wins.
He is grown dread.... But yet he is a man.

[Exit DICKON into tap-room.]

[To THE PLAYER, suavely.] Well, headsman?

[He does not turn.]

Mind your office: I am judged.
Guilty, was it not so?... What is to do,
Do quickly.... Do you wait for some reprieve?
Guilty, you said. Nay, do you turn your face
To give me some small leeway of escape?
And yet, I will not go ...

[Coming down slowly.]

Well, headsman?..
You ask not why I came here, Clouded Brow,
Will you not ask me why I stay? No word?
O blind, come lead the blind! For I, I too
Lack sight and every sense to linger here
And make me an intruder where I once
Was welcome, oh most welcome, as I dreamed.
Look on me, then. I do confess, I have
Too often preened my feathers in the sun

And thought to rule a little, by my wit.
I have been spendthrift with men's offerings
To use them like a nosegay,--tear apart,
Petal by petal, leaf by leaf, until
I found the heart all bare, the curious heart
I longed to see for once, and cast away.
And so, at first, with you.... Ah, now I think
You're wise. There's nought so fair, so ... curious.
So precious-rare to find as honesty.
'Twas all a child's play then, a counting-off
Of petals. Now I know.... But ask me why
I come unheralded, and in a mist
Of circumstance and strangeness. Listen, love;
Well then, dead love, if you will have it so.
I have been cunning, cruel,--what you will:
And yet the days of late have seemed too long
Even for summer! Something called me here.
And so I flung my pride away and came,
A very woman for my foolishness,
To say once more,--to say ...

THE PLAYER. Nay, I'll not ask.
What lacks? I need no more, you have done well.
'Tis rare. There is no man I ever saw
But you could school him. Women should be players.
You are sovran in the art: feigning and truth
Are so commingled in you. Sure, to you
Nature's a simpleton hath never seen
Her own face in the well. Is there aught else?
To ask of my poor calling?

MARY. I deserved it
In other days. Hear how I can be meek.
I am come back, a foot-worn runaway,
Like any braggart boy. Let me sit down
And take Love's horn-book in my hands again
And learn from the beginning;--by the rod,
If you will scourge me, love. Come, come, forgive.
I am not wont to sue: and yet to-day
I am your suppliant, I am your servant,

Your link-boy, ay, your minstrel: ay,--wilt hear?

[*Takes up the lute, and gives a last look out of the casement.*]

The tumult in the streets is all apart
With the discordant past. The hour that is
Shall be the only thing in all the world.
[*Apart.*] I will be safe. He'll not win Herbert from me!

[*Crossing to him.*]

Will you have music, good my lord?

THE PLAYER [*catching the lute from her.*] Not that.
Not that! By heaven, you shall not.... Nevermore.

MARY.
So ... But you speak at last. You are, forsooth,
A man: and you shall use me as my due;--
A woman, not the wind about your ears;
A woman whom you loved.

THE PLAYER [*half-apart, still holding the lute*].
Why were you not
That beauty that you seemed?... But had you been,
'Tis true, you would have had no word for me,--
No looks of love!

MARY. The man reproaches me?

THE PLAYER.
Not I--not I... Will Herbert, what am I
To lay this broken trust to you,--to you,
Young, free, and tempted: April on his way,
Whom all hands reach for, and this woman here
Had set her heart upon!

MARY. What fantasy!
Surely he must have been from town of late,
To see the gude-folks! And how fare they, sir?

Reverend yeoman, say, how thrive the sheep?
What did the harvest yield you?--Did you count
The cabbage heads? and find how like ... nay, nay!
But our gude-wife, did she bid in the neighbors
To prove them that her husband was no myth?
Some Puritan preacher, nay, some journeyman,
To make you sup the sweeter with long prayers?
This were a rare conversion, by my soul!
From sonnets unto sermons:--eminent!

THE PLAYER.

Oh, yes, your scorn bites truly: sermons next.
There is so much to say. But it must be learned,
And I require hard schooling, dream too much
On what I would men were,--but women most.
I need the cudgel of the task-master
To make me con the truth. Yes, blind, you called me,
And 'tis my shame I bandaged mine own eyes
And held them dark. Now, by the grace of God,
Or haply because the devil tries too far,
I tear the blindfold off, and I see all.
I see you as you are; and in your heart
The secret love sprung up for one I loved,
A reckless boy who has trodden on my soul--
But that's a thing apart, concerns not you.
I know that you will stake your heaven and earth
To fool me,--fool us both.

MARY [*with idle interest*].

Why were you not
So stern a long time since? You're not so wise
As I have heard them say.

THE PLAYER [*standing by the chimney*].

Wise? Oh, not I.
Who was so witless as to call me wise?
Sure he had never bade me a good-day
And seen me take the cheer....

I was your fool
Too long.... I am no longer anything.

Speak: what are you?

MARY [*after a pause*].

The foolishest of women:

A heart that should have been adventurer
On the high seas; a seeker in new lands,
To dare all and to lose. But I was made
A woman.

Oh, you see!--could you see all.
What if I say ... the truth is not so far,

[*Watching him.*]

Yet farther than you dream. If I confess ...
He charmed my fancy ... for the moment,--ay
The shine of his fortunes too, the very name
Of Pembroke?... Dear my judge,--ay, clouded brow
And darkened fortune, be not black to me!
I'd try for my escape; the window's wide,
No one forbids, and yet I stay--I stay.

Oh, I was niggard, once, unkind--I know,
Untrusty: loved, unloved you, day by day:
A little and a little,--why, I knew not,
And more, and wondered why;--then not at all:
Drank up the dew from out your very heart,
Like the extortionate sun, to leave you parched
Till, with as little grace, I flung all back
In gusts of angry rain! I have been cruel.
But the spell works; yea, love, the spell, the spell
Fed by your fasting, by your subtlety
Past all men's knowledge.... There is something rare
About you that I long to flee and cannot:--
Some mastery ... that's more my will than I.

[*She laughs softly. He listens, looking straight ahead, not at her, immobile, but suffering evidently. She watches his face and speaks with greater intensity. Here she crosses nearer and falls on her knees.*]

then wavers; makes an effort, unable to look away, to lift her arms towards his neck; they falter and fall at her side. The two stand spellbound by mutual recognition. Then she speaks in a low voice.]

MARY.

Oh, let me go!

[She turns her head with an effort,--gathers her cloak about her, then hastens out as if from some terror.]

[THE PLAYER is alone beside the chimney-piece. The street outside is darkening with twilight through the casements and upper door. There is a sound of rough-throated singing that comes by and is softened with distance. It breaks the spell.]

THE PLAYER.

So; it is over ... now. *[He looks into the fire.]*

*"Fair, kind, and true." And true!... My golden Friend.
Those two ... together.... He was ill at ease.
But that he should betray me with a kiss!*

By this preposterous world ... I am in need.
Shall there be no faith left? Nothing but names?
Then he's a fool who steers his life by such.
Why not the body-comfort of this herd
Of creatures huddled here to keep them warm?--
Trying to drown out with enforced laughter
The query of the winds ... unanswered winds
That vex the soul with a perpetual doubt.
What holds me?... Bah, that were a Cause, indeed!
To prove your soul one truth, by being it,--
Against the foul dishonor of the world!
How else prove aught?...

I talk into the air.

And at my feet, my honor full of wounds.
Honor? Whose honor? For I knew my sin,
And she ... had none. There's nothing to avenge.

[He speaks with more and more passion, too distraught to notice interruptions. Enter DICKON, with a tallow-dip. He regards THE PLAYER with half-open mouth from the corner; then stands by the casement, leaning up against it and yawning now and then.]

I had no right: that I could call her mine
So none should steal her from me, and die for't.
There's nothing to avenge ... Brave beggary!
How fit to lodge me in this home of Shows,
With all the ruffian life, the empty mirth,
The gross imposture of humanity,
Strutting in virtues it knows not to wear,
Knave in a stolen garment--all the same--
Until it grows enamored of a life
It was not born to,--falls a-dream, poor cheat,
In the midst of its native shams,--the thieves and bears
And ballad-mongers all!... Of such am I.

[Re-enter TOBIAS and one or two TAVERNERS. TOBIAS regards THE PLAYER, who does not notice anyone,--then leads off DICKON by the ear. Exeunt into taproom. THE PLAYER goes to the casement, pushes it wide open, and gazes out at the sky.]

Is there naught else?... I could make shift to bind
My heart up and put on my mail again,
To cheat myself and death with one fight more,
If I could think there were some worldly use
For bitter wisdom.

But I'm no general,
That my own hand-to-hand with evil days
Should cheer my doubting thousands....

I'm no more
Than one man lost among a multitude;
And in the end dust swallows them--and me,
And the good sweat that won our victories.
Who sees? Or seeing, cares? Who follows on?

Then why should my dishonor trouble me,
Or broken faith in him? *What is it suffers?*
And why? Now that the moon is turned to blood.

[He turns towards the door with involuntary longing, and seems to listen.]

No ... no, he will not come. Well, I have naught
To do but pluck from me my bitter heart,
And live without it.

[Re-enter DICKON with a tankard and a cup. He sets them down on a small table; this he pushes towards THE PLAYER, who turns at the noise.]

So...? Is it for me?

DICKON.

Ay, on the score! I had good sight o' the bear.
Look, here's a sprig was stuck on him with pitch;--

[Rubbing the sprig on his sleeve.]

I caught it up,--from Lambeth marsh, belike.
Such grow there, and I've seen thee cherish such.

THE PLAYER.

Give us thy posy.

[He comes back to the fire and sits in the chair near by. DICKON gets out the iron lantern from the corner.]

DICKON. Hey! It wants a light.

[THE PLAYER seems to listen once more, his face turned towards the door. He lifts his hand as if to hush DICKON, lets it fall, and looks back at the fire. DICKON regards him with shy curiosity and draws nearer.]

DICKON.

Thou wilt be always minding of the fire ...
Wilt thou not?

THE PLAYER. Ay.

DICKON. It likes me, too.

THE PLAYER. So?

DICKON. Ay....
I would I knew what thou art thinking on
When thou dost mind the fire....

THE PLAYER. Wouldst thou?

DICKON. Ay.

[Sound of footsteps outside. A group approaches the door.]

Oh, here he is, come back!

THE PLAYER *[rising with passionate eagerness]*.
Brave lad--brave lad!

DICKON *[singing]*.
Hang out your lanthorns, trim your lights
To save your days from knavish nights!

[He plunges, with his lantern, through the doorway, stumbling against WAT BURROW, who enters, a sorry figure, the worse for wear.]

WAT *[sourly]*.
Be the times soft, that you must try to cleave
Way through my ribs as tho' I was the moon?--
And you the man-wi-'the-lanthorn, or his dog?--
You bean!...

[Exit DICKON. WAT shambles in and sees THE PLAYER.]

What, you sir, here?

THE PLAYER.

Ay, here, good Wat.

[While WAT crosses to the table and gets himself a chair, THE PLAYER

looks at him as if with a new consciousness of the surroundings. After a time he sits as before. Re-enter DICKON and curls up on the floor, at his feet.]

WAT.

O give me comfort, sir. This cursèd day,--
A wry, damned ... noisome.... Ay, poor Nick, poor Nick!
He's all to mend--Poor Nick! He's sorely maimed,
More than we'd baited him with forty dogs.
'Od's body! Said I not, sir, he would fight?
Never before had he, in leading-chain,
Walked out to take the air and show his parts....
'Went to his noddle like some greenest gull's
That's new come up to town.... The prentices
Squeaking along like Bedlam, he breaks loose
And prances me a hey,--I dancing counter!
Then such a cawing 'mongst the women! Next,
The chain did clatter and enrage him more;--
You would 'a' sworn a bear grew on each link,
And after each a prentice with a cudgel,--
Leaving him scarce an eye! So, howling all,
We run a pretty pace ... and Nick, poor Nick,
He catches on a useless, stumbling fry
That needed not be born,--and bites into him.
And then ... the Constable ... And now, no show!

THE PLAYER.

Poor Wat!... Thou wentest scattering misadventure
Like comfits from thy horn of plenty, Wat.

WAT.

Ay, thank your worship. You be best to comfort.

[He pours a mug of ale.]

No show to-morrow! Minnow Constable....
I'm a jack-rabbit strung up by my heels
For every knave to pinch as he goes by!
Alas, poor Nick, bear Nick ... oh, think on Nick.

THE PLAYER.

With all his fortunes darkened for a day,--
And the eye o' his reason, sweet intelligencer,
Under a beggarly patch.... I pledge thee, Nick.

WAT.

Oh, you have seen hard times, sir, with us all.
Your eyes lack luster, too, this day. What say you?
No jesting.... What? I've heard of marvels there
In the New Country. There would be a knop-hole
For thee and me. There be few Constables
And such unhallowed fry.... An thou wouldst lay
Thy wit to mine--what is't we could not do?
Wilt turn't about?

[Leans towards him in cordial confidence.]

Nay, you there, sirrah boy,
Leave us together; as 'tis said in the play,
'Come, leave us, Boy!'

[DICKON does not move. He gives a sigh and leans his head against THE PLAYER's knee, his arms around his legs. He sleeps. THE PLAYER gazes sternly into the fire, while WAT rambles on, growing drowsy.]

WAT.

The cub there snores good counsel. When all's done,
What a bubble is ambition!... When all's done....
What's yet to do?... Why, sleep.... Yet even now
I was on fire to see myself and you
Off for the Colony with Raleigh's men.
I've been beholden to 'ee.... Why, for thee
I could make shift to suffer plays o' Thursday.

Thou'rt the best man among them, o' my word.
There's other trades and crafts and qualities
Could serve ... an thou wouldst lay thy wit to mine.
Us two!... us two!...

THE PLAYER [*apart, to the fire*].
"Fair, kind, and true."...

WAT. ... Poor Nick!

[*He nods over his ale. There is muffled noise in the taproom. Someone opens the door a second, letting in a stave of a song, then slams the door shut. THE PLAYER, who has turned, gloomily, starts to rise. DICKON moves in his sleep, sighs heavily, and settles his cheek against THE PLAYER's shoes. THE PLAYER looks down for a moment. Then he sits again, looking now at the fire, now at the boy, whose hair he touches.*]

THE PLAYER.
So, heavy-head. You bid me think my thought
Twice over; keep me by, a heavy heart,
As ballast for thy dream. Well, I will watch ...
Like slandered Providence. Nay, I'll not be
The prop to fail thy trust untenderly,
After a troubled day....
 Nay, rest you here.

[THE CURTAIN.]