

a parricide he would not have been congenial. He has caste, however, and has as many crimes at his back as they have. It is a fitting end to their career, that having been leagued so long in iniquity they now turn tooth and nail against each other and sink down the most wretched victims of the bloody catastrophe they themselves have wrought.

So ends the tragedy. Edmund dead by the hand of his much-wronged brother ; Goneril and Regan dead, self-destroyed ; Cordelia dead, and innocent ; Lear dead of a broken heart.

What desolation ! Blood and death everywhere. Some dead in their iniquities, others the innocent victims of iniquity. We cannot resist the feeling of the presence of the supernatural here. Here is the battle-ground where there has been not a struggle between men but between the principles of good and evil. We are reminded of that great battle on the plains of Heaven when the archangel defeated the hosts of Hell. For a time it seemed as though evil would conquer. Such mountains of crime—hate, jealousy, hypocrisy, pride, unnaturalness between parent and child, unfaithfulness to husbands, treachery and parricide all thrive most discouragingly. But at last the avenging sword falls and justice is restored by the fearful destruction of the workers of iniquity. But what of the good, has it received its reward ? Some critics accuse Shakespeare of outraging justice in the ending of this play by the death of Cordelia and Lear. This is a very inferior view of justice and not at all that of Shakespeare. The author of this great tragedy, like Aristotle, conceives the noble art as "a purifying of the passions of the soul through the agency of terror and pity," and it is noticeable in all his great tragedies that suffering virtue does not survive to enjoy worldly happiness. And

rightly so. It only makes the horror of evil greater that the good suffer death by it, and the power and glory of virtue more transcendent that its reward is left to the hereafter, instead of being mocked by the toyish consolations of a still troublesome world. Why should we wish Cordelia to remain in a world that is not worthy of her ? And what else is left for Lear to do with his four-score years and all his sufferings but to die ? To restore him to the throne would be to depreciate his sufferings and to mock justice. The tragedy surely has a most noble ending ; the wicked have received their punishment and the good have gone to a reward greater than this world could give. It is in this very ending Shakespeare has shown himself most magnificently a moralist, in giving the work a spiritual significance by pointing us upward for the consummation. Therein lies the grandeur of it, that, like the Gothic arch, it raises our hearts above the lowly things of earth to the eternal empire above, where alone good receives its true and adequate reward. How can anyone conceive happiness in this world for Lear after that last heart-rending scene where he brings in Cordelia dead in his arms, crying wildly :

Howl, howl, howl, howl ! O you are men of stone !
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone
forever !

I know when one is dead, and when one lives ;
She's dead as earth.

As Victor Hugo feelingly expressed it :
"for pity's sake then let the poor deserted, old father die. Life would be but a chastisement, death is deliverance. Why detain him when his heart is with Cordelia above."

Oh let him pass ! He hates him
That would upon the rack of this rough world
Stretch him out longer.

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