

success it is content to rest thereon in contemplation of its own felicity. Evil is more active.

Lear is now wholly in their power. By giving them his kingdom he has placed himself on their charity; by banishing Cordelia, the only succour of his peevish age, he has thrown himself entirely upon their mercy. Before he has been with Goneril a month he begins to feel her cold hand tightening upon his heart. It is now he realizes "how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

What makes Goneril's unkindness the more detestable is that she persecutes him out of pure hate. She knows how helplessly he relies on her love and she turns it to advantage to torture him. Lear is still a king, however, and will not be treated thus. He has still a daughter left. With a curse upon the ungrateful monster, he calls his train together and goes to Regan. He cannot conceive how a daughter to whom he has given all should act thus. He never dreams of Regan doing the same. She will be, he is sure, the balm of his hurt mind by the loving tenderness her sister lacked. How this disappointed old man must have builded on the love of that only remaining daughter! When he arrives at Cornwall's castle he is dismayed to find his own messenger, the disguised Kent, set in the stocks by Regan's orders. The omen is not encouraging, yet he dares not think on what it portends. It is only when they refuse to see him that the terrible suspicion breaks full hinc. At last it has come to the worst. Regan instead of solacing his wounded dignity sides with her sister, and to his complaints gives an answer that fairly cuts the heart out of him:

"O, Sir, you are old;
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confine; you should be ruled and led
By some discretion that discerns your state
Better than yourself. Therefore I pray you
That to our sister you do make return,
Say you have wronged her, sir."

It is pitiful to see him pleading with Regan not to cast him off. When he left Goneril it was still with the imperiousness of a king, but now that Regan is his only hope, he is ready to justify anything, almost to beg for mercy. Whilst he is pleading Goneril enters and Regan takes

her by the hand. This is too much, his heart breaks with a prayer of anguish:

O, Heavens!
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
Allow obedience, if yourselves are old
Make it your cause; send down and take my part!

Behold the energy of evil here. These two she-devils delight in tossing their father's heart wantonly back and forth on the sharp tridents of their filial impiety. At length all hope is lost for Lear and he goes out into the storm no more a king but:

a poor old man
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!

and the grateful daughters whom he thought by his largesses to have confirmed solidly in his love, shut their doors against him with the complacent reflection:

to wilful men
The injuries that they themselves procure must be
their schoolmasters.

The tempest Lear goes into is a calm to the tempest that rages within his breast; he burns with the thought of his children's ingratitude.

Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to it?

So constant is the torment of this thought that he can imagine misery from no other cause, and when he sees the poor babbling Tom o' Bedlam his first thought is: "Didst thou give all to thy daughters?" Even the elements he imagines are in league against him, and his raging reveals a magnificence in his ruined reason that shows that with all his weakness his mind is still capable of intense suffering.

I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, called you children.
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this.

As Albany shrewdly remarks:

That nature which condemns its origin
Cannot be bordered certain in itself.

After their shocking unnaturalness toward their father we are not surprised to see these fiendish sisters unfaithful to their own husbands. The object upon which they turn their guilty loves is another phase of their iniquity. Were Edmund other than