

at all times characterize his conversations with his friend Horatio. When, on the other hand, he converses with old Polonius he betrays an altogether different disposition. He seems to regard the old gentleman as a target against which to direct all his remarks of scorn and wit. In short, he regards him with the utmost contempt.

When again he converses with the king and queen, both of whom he considers guilty of his father's death, he strives to point the "barbed arrows of conviction" to their very souls, and therefore on all occasions assumes such a disposition as is most likely to accomplish this end.

His actions toward Ophelia in the earlier parts of the play lead us to conclude that he really loved this honest, truthful, and beautiful girl. Afterwards he acts towards her in a very different manner; and, although on one occasion he tells her that he never loved her, we are forced to conclude that he was moved by some such feelings when he penned her the tender words:—

"Doubt thou the stars are fire;  
Doubt that the sun does move;  
Doubt truth to be a liar;  
But never doubt I love."

So that although his feelings of love and admiration towards her have changed into those of a different character, we must remember that he was a man of human passions, subject to such change; and that these feelings were naturally increased by the bitter experiences which he was called upon to undergo, and also by the hatred which he had contracted for her father Polonius.

3. Hamlet's keen perception proves that he is not really mad. When the king and Polonius plan the meeting between him and Ophelia in order to confirm their suspicions as to the cause of his madness, he immediately perceives the object of the meeting; and the words which he gives expression to in his conversation with Ophelia are especially intended to sting the eavesdroppers, whose presence he has detected. In several other instances this trait of intellect is shown; and it suggests to us a mind strong, clear and active, rather than that of a madman, as some are pleased to regard Hamlet.

4. The ghost has enjoined a very difficult task upon Hamlet; and he has to accomplish it in such a way as to justify his course of action to the public mind, and also to prove that his revenge is just. The accomplishment of this task would require a mind fixed in purpose and fertile in resources. This Hamlet shows that he possesses in no small degree by the manner in which he proceeds to "trap the conscience of the king."

He must have exercised a great deal of patience and strength of mind in restraining his natural inclination of sweeping to his revenge as soon as the ghost had finished its story. But as such