

all but Horatio, who is ever his devoted friend. He was without doubt keenly alive to every act of those around him and closely watched and studied their motives, especially those of the king. Absorbed in the one agonizing thought of his father's death and of the vengeance which he meditates, he more readily discovers the motives of those on whom his thoughts are directly concentrated. The perfidy of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is instantly detected; he probes them to the very quick, they cannot deceive him, he is too watchful, and feels no compunction in settling their fate at a later day. The plan by which he deceived the king and queen, wrought out in its full completeness displays a mind of no ordinary depth. He possessed an affectionate heart which was the origin of the deep purpose which overshadowed and affected his life. Is there not a touch of irony in his eulogy on man, piercing as he does the very soul of Claudius, Polonius, and those who are confessedly his friends?

On hearing of the arrival of the players an idea suggests itself to Hamlet, and he tests these players to see how his plan will work. Finding he can use them for his purpose, he not only thinks quick but decides and acts quick. When again alone his feelings have full vent; he reproaches himself for dallying with his revenge; he who has a design, a deep cause within spurring him to action, still waits and does comparatively nothing. This self-upbraiding naturally leads to the thought of his uncle and his hate reaches a climax. The thought seems to madden him and he again breaks forth against himself. Finally having decided to use the players to determine the truth of the ghost's revelations, every circumstance is arranged with careful forethought and his plan is successful. The king is the only one who discerns in the least the bias of Hamlet's mind, and is sufficiently shrewd to know that he is sane enough to cause him some injury.

Hamlet's soul revolts from the performance of this deed, and he reasons as to whether it is better to endure wrongs or to commit suicide. The latter is not safe since the life after death may be less desirable than the present one. It may be that in killing the king his own life would be endangered, and for that reason he has hesitated, thinking that after death his existence may be worse than it now is. He catches the king alone praying and does not kill him, because

at that time he would go to heaven, but if slain during the performance of some wicked deed, he would be eternally destroyed and this would be the very quintessence of revenge.

In the interview with his mother, all Hamlet's bitterness pours itself out upon her. He uncovers her offence so plainly that she would fain cry out for mercy, but he will not spare her, and she is forced to acknowledge her guilt and seared conscience. She beseeches him to stop but he continues, painting the black character of his uncle. The appearance of the ghost interrupts this tirade, and he advises his mother to be a better woman telling her that in order to be kind he must be cruel, that this is only the beginning of evils, and that he is mad only when it suits his purpose. Truly he has cut her to the heart, but he never forgets that she is his mother, and the finer and softer feelings of his nature are manifested at the close of the interview.

Censuring himself for his dalliance, Hamlet cannot determine whether its cause is forgetfulness or reluctance resulting from constant meditation upon the deed. It often happens that a great purpose dwelt on too much becomes weakened. However, rousing himself, he resolves to let all feelings of mercy give way to those of revenge.

He displays a good deal of feeling upon learning that one of the skulls thrown up by the grave-digger is that of the court jester, and is quite sane when he leaps into the grave with Laertes exclaiming, "It is I, Hamlet the Dane." He readily consents to play with Laertes, and before engaging in the encounter frankly acknowledges the wrong he has done him and asks his forgiveness, affirming that he was mad when he did it—mad probably in the sense of being stung or goaded on to madness merely for the time being, yet not insane as we understand it. In his relations with Laertes, Hamlet's nobility of soul is conspicuous, and this appears to be the only time that he does not read the secret motives of Claudius. Himself the very soul of honour he does not perceive that Laertes has permitted himself to become the fool of the king. Hamlet wounded is aroused when he discovers the treachery by which the queen is poisoned, and with his last breath crying out for vengeance he stabs the king. He feels the ban under which circumstances have placed him and desires Horatio, true to the end, to live and clear his name.