

Cuttings.

THE following exquisite love letter, taken from the Book LOVER, is to be found in the works of one William Shakespeare, who flourished in the 16th century :

MY LOVE, MY WIFE¹—I have here received letters² to the which as yet there is no answer made.³ I may be negligent, foolish and fearful; in every one of these no man is free, but⁴ I pray thee chide not; condemn the fault and not the actor of it;⁵ to my unfolding lend a gracious ear; I would I could quit all offences with as clear excuse.⁶

My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!⁷ I have this while with leaden thoughts been press'd;⁸ there's nothing in this world can make me joy; life is as tedious as a twice told tale, vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man;⁹ I am wrapp'd in dismal thinkings,¹⁰ have of late lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercises.¹¹ The main grief springs from the loss of a beloved daughter and a wife,¹² therefore am I found so much unsettled; this drives me to entreat you that presently you take your way for home.¹³ You must not marvel, Helen, at my course;¹⁴ my love admits no qualifying cross, no more my grief in such a precious loss.¹⁵ Sweet above thought I love thee;¹⁶ love me and leave me not;¹⁷ take me with you, take me with you, wife.¹⁸ Sweet lady, you have given me life, and¹⁹ you take my life when you do take the means whereby I live.²⁰ Vouchsafe to show the sunshine of your face.²¹ I spy life peering; but I dare not say how near the tidings of our comfort is.²² The business is for Helen to come hither.²³ Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that and manage it against despairing thought. Thy letters may be here, thou, thou art hence.²⁴ O thou that dost inhabit in my breast, leave not the mansion so long tenantless, lest, growing ruinous, the building fall, and leave no memory of what it was! Repair me with thy presence,²⁵ Helen, I love thee, by my life I do.²⁶ That kiss I carried from thee, dear, and my true lip hath virgin'd it e'er since.²⁷

O, Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!²⁸ if I should swear by Jove's great attributes I loved you dearly, would you believe my oaths?²⁹ for you in my respect are all the world,³⁰ and I as rich in having such a jewel as twenty seas, if all their sands were pearl, the water nectar, and the rocks pure gold.³¹ Little Helen, farewell,³² farewell my wife!³³ I cannot be mine own, nor anything to any, if I be not thine.³⁴

I am your husband.³⁵

¹Romeo and Juliet, Act v., Scene iii.

²Julius Caesar, Act iv., Scene iii.

³King Henry V., Act v., Scene ii.

⁴Winter's Tale, Act i., Scene ii.

⁵Romeo and Juliet, Act ii., Scene iii.

⁶Measure for Measure, Act ii., Scene ii.

⁷Othello, Act i., Scene iii.

⁸King Henry IV., Part i., Act iii., Scene ii.

⁹Midsummer Night's Dream, Act iii., Scene ii.

¹⁰Othello, Act iii., Scene iv.

¹¹King John, Act iii., Scene iv.

¹²All's Well That Ends Well, Act v., Scene iii.

¹³Hamlet, Act ii., Scene ii.

¹⁴Pericles, Act v., Scene i.

¹⁵All's Well That Ends Well, Act ii., Scene v.

¹⁶All's Well That Ends Well, Act ii., Scene v.

¹⁷Troilus and Cressida, Act iv., Scene iv.

¹⁸Troilus and Cressida, Act iii., Scene i.

¹⁹Merchant of Venice, Act iv., Scene i.

²⁰Romeo and Juliet, Act iii., Scene v.

²¹Merchant of Venice, Act v., Scene i.

²²Merchant of Venice, Act iv., Scene i.

²³Love's Labor Lost, Act v., Scene ii.

²⁴King Richard II., Act i., Scene i.

²⁵All's Well That Ends Well, Act i., Scene iii.

²⁶Two Gentlemen of Verona, Act iii., Scene i.

²⁷Two Gentlemen of Verona, Act v., Scene iv.

²⁸Midsummer Night's Dream, Act iii., Scene ii.

²⁹Coriolanus, Act v., Scene iii.

³⁰Midsummer Night's Dream, Act iii., Scene ii.

³¹All's Well That Ends Well, Act i., Scene iii.

³²Midsummer Night's Dream, Act ii., Scene i.

³³Two Gentlemen of Verona, Act ii., Scene iv.

³⁴All's Well That Ends Well, Act i., Scene i.

³⁵Tempest, Act i., Scene i.

³⁶Winter's Tale, Act v., Scene iii.

³⁷Much Ado About Nothing, Act v., Scene iv.

LITERATURE.

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