

quiet touch seems to complete the perfection of Cordelia's character, evidently the poet's best loved creation, his type of the ideal Englishwoman. Her voice was the outward signature of her graciously tempered nature. Burke's description of his wife is a master's variation on Shakespeare's theme: "Her eyes have a mild light, but they awe you when she pleases; they command, like a good man out of office, not by authority, but by virtue. Her smiles are inexpressible. Her voice is a soft, low music, not formed to rule in public assemblies, but to charm those who can distinguish a company from a crowd. It has this advantage, you must be close to her to hear it."

424. Lines 276, 277:

*I have seen the day, with my good bidding fatchion
I would have made them skip.*

Compare Merry Wives of Windsor, ii. 1. 235-237: "I have seen the time, with my long sword I would have made you four tall fellows skip like ruts." See, too, Othello, v. 2. 261-264, for a precisely similar touch.—A. W. V.

425. Line 281: *One of them we behold*.—So Qq, and Fl. *Jennens* changed *we* to *you*; some editors read *ye*.

426. Line 282: *This is a dull sight*.—Jennens and Collier's Corrector have *light*, which Grant White also adopts.

427. Line 284: *He's a good fellow*.—"Lear's mind is again off its balance" (Wright). Theobald, not seeing this, chang'd *He's* to *'Twas*, and *He'll* in the next line to *He'd*.

428. Line 290: *Nor no man else*.—There seems to be no satisfactory explanation of this except Capell's "Welcome, alas! here's no welcome for me or any one." It is natural at first to connect the words with Kent's last speech; but it would be false, as the Fool had also followed Lear from the first.

429. Line 297: *this great decay*.—Referring, probably, to "the collective misfortunes which this scene reveals;" (Delius, followed by Furness and Rolfe). Capell and Steevens think it refers to Lear—"this piece of decayed royalty, this ruined majesty."

430. Line 304: *O, see, see!*—These words are occasioned by seeing Lear again embrace the body of Cordelia (Capell).

431. Line 305: *And my poor fool is hang'd!*—As Steevens was the first to point out, the *fool* is Cordelia, not the Fool who went to bed at noon. *Poor fool* is found elsewhere as a term of pity or endearment. See Two Gentlemen of Verona, iv. 4. 98; Twelfth Night, v. 1. 377:

111. Henry VI. ii. 5. 36; Winter's Tale, ii. 1. 118; As You Like It, ii. 1. 22; &c. The editors, with the exception of Knight and one or two others, agree in this interpretation here. Furness, at the end of three pages of notes on the subject, says: "Very reluctantly I have come to the conviction that this refers to Cordelia." Rolfe adds: "We sympathize fully with his regret that it cannot be referred to Lear's 'poor fool and knave' (ii. 2. 72), but to our mind the context settles the question beyond a doubt. There is no room for a divided sorrow here; Lear's thoughts can never wander more from his dead daughter."

432. Line 309: *Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir*.—The Quarterly Review for April, 1833 (p. 177), remarks: "Scarcely have the spectators of this august anguish had time to mark and express to each other their conviction of the extinction of his mind, when some physical alteration, made dreadfully visible, urges Albany to cry out, 'O, see, see!' The intense excitement which Lear had undergone, and which lent for a time a supposititious life to his enfeebled frame, gives place to the exhaustion of despair. But even here, where any other mind would have confined itself to the single passion of parental despair, Shakespeare contrives to indicate by a gesture the very train of internal physical changes which are causing death. The blood gathering about the heart can no longer be propelled by its enfeebled impulse. Lear, too weak to relieve the impediments of his dress, which he imagines cause the sense of suffocation, asks a bystander to 'undo this button.'"

433. Line 314: *this tough world*.—It has been asserted that some copies of Q. 2 have *rough* (as Q. 3 has); but, as Furness has satisfied himself, the supposed *r* is a broken *t*. Pope and sundry others read *rough*. Dyce said in his Remarks (p. 232): "Read, by all means, as Pope did, *rough*; but when he came to edit the play he adhered to the old text."

434. Lines 323-326: *The weight of this sad time . . . nor lies so long*.—The Fl. (with Rowe, Delius, Schmidt, and Furness) give this speech to Edgar, though Schmidt thinks that the last two lines may be Albany's. Jennens called these last two lines "stilly and false." Dyce says that the last line is "certainly obscure." Moberly remarks: "Age and fulness of sorrows have been the same thing to the unhappy Lear; his life has been prolonged into times so dark in their misery and so fierce in their unparalleled ingratitude and reckless passion, that even if we live as long as he has (which will hardly be), our existence will never light on days as evil as those which he has seen."