

Now it is coming to be seen that, even if Shakespeare did not, as Mr. Frank Harris contends, portray himself in various disguises in many of his characters, we get at least some glimpses of "the man Shakespeare" in the plays. One example of this is the habit of brooding on death, of which there are many examples. In most of us there is what may be called a subsoil water of thought, or it may be feeling, into which the mind, when not occupied with other things, is apt to fall. Long ago it was pointed out by Professor David Masson that when the soul of Shakespeare "swooned into itself" the thought of the sleep of death and what dreams might come in it would rise to the surface. It is scarcely within our province to discuss the supposed self-revelations of the dramatist, but we may be allowed to call attention to a thing on which he dwells with such insistence that we cannot help thinking he gives expression to a personal experience. This is sleep. What poet has described insomnia as Shakespeare has done, not once but over and over again? There is the famous soliloquy of Henry IV. beginning—

How many thousand of my poorest subjects
Are at this hour asleep! O sleep, O gentle sleep!
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frightened thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?

When troubles gather round Macbeth, his wife says to him:

You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

Then there is Macbeth's terrible sob of remorse after the murder:

Methought I heard a voice cry, Sleep no more!
Macbeth doth murder sleep, the innocent sleep;
Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second course;
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

Then like the wail of a lost soul:

Still it cried, Sleep no more to all the house.
Glamis hath murdered sleep and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more.

Iago, when his poison is working in Othello's spirit, says exultingly: