

GOING TO SLEEP.

The light is fading down the sky,
The shadows grow and multiply,
I hear the thrush's evening song;
But I have borne with toil and wrong
So long, so long!
Dim dreams my drowsy senses drown.
So, darling, kiss my eyelids down.

My life's brief spring went wasted by,
My summer ended fruitlessly;
I learned to hunger, strive, and wait.
I found you, love, Oh, happy fate!
So late, so late!
Now all my fields are turning brown.
So, darling, kiss my eyelids down!

Oh, blessed sleep! Oh, perfect rest!
Thus pillow'd on your faithful breast;
Nor life nor death is wholly dear,
Oh, tender heart, since you are here,
So dear, so dear!
Sweet love, my soul's sufficient crown,
Now, darling, kiss my eyelids down!

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A DOUBTFUL PASSAGE IN
HAMLET.

BY THOMAS D. KING.

"Now, what thanks such persons are worthy to have which do in this wise slay and defile the books of famous authors, I will not at this time reason, but truly me thinketh it a verayeseraglio. — *Preface to Emerson's Asaph's Theology*, by N. C. Uphill, 1542.

"And surely, if men, by the help of that blessed art of correcting old copies, proceed to amend, and upon private fancy do presume thus to alter public records, shortly we shall have just cause generally to esteem those copies most correct, which last have been corrected." — *Explanation of a place in Polybius, at the end of Sir H. Savile's Tacitus*, 1622.

Agreeing with the sentiments of the above passages, and believing that the writings of Shakespeare ought neither to be interpolated nor amended by any editor or author, whose sole duty is the rather to interpret and expose. Agreeing also with Horne Tooke, who insists that the folio edition is the only one worth regarding, and though he admits it has "some palpable misprints" he would have it printed *literatim*, not to risk the loss of Shakespeare's genuine text, which it assuredly contains. Again, agreeing with Alexander Dyce, one of Shakespeare's best editors, who says: "I believe that an exact reprint of the old text with its multifarious errors forms a more valuable contribution to literature than a semi-corrected text, which purged here and there of the grossest blunders, continues still, almost in every page, to offend against sense and metre." In another place he says: "I make no doubt that were the original manuscripts of Shakespeare's works miraculously to turn up we should have proof that his commentators, from Rowe downwards, had retrieved the genuine readings in a vast number of passages, which the ignorance and presumption of the actors, the somnolence of the transcribers, and the carelessness of the player-editors had conspired to ruin." Therefore I hope not to be deemed presumptuous or guilty of an unwarrantable license in offering a few remarks upon an obscure passage in *Hamlet*, Quarto B, Act I, sc. 1, lines 130 to 134, which I have put in italics. (See Steevens's last edition, 1804. Vol. 8.)

In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did speak and gibber in the Roman streets,
As, stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
Disasters in the sun, and the moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.
And even the like precursor of future events,—
As harbingers preceding still the fates,
And prologue to the open coming on,—
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen.

Most of the commentators assume that there are missing lines, or a missing line between 129 and 130. Some deprivation is manifest in the lines 130 and 131, and Rowe to connect them with what precedes, printed:—

Stars shone with trains of fire, dews of blood fell,
Disasters in the sun.

which emendation, JOHNSON, in his 1762 edition, and other editors have adopted.

Malone would, instead of As stars real *astres*, observing:—

"The disagreeable recurrence of the word *stars* in the second line (131) induces me to believe that As stars, in that which precedes, is a corruption. Perhaps, Shakespeare wrote:—

Astres with trains of fire,—
—And dews of blood,
Disasters dimm'd the sun."

Following up this hint, an ingenious correspondent (A. E. B.) of *Notes and Queries*, Vol. V., No. 117, would read:—

Astres with trains of fire and dews of blood
Disasters in the sun."

By *disasters* understanding spots or blotches. *Astres* or *astres* is an acceptable conjecture, but "we," says Howard Staunton, "conceive the cardinal error lies in 'disasters,' which conceals some verb importing the obscuration of the sun; for example:—

Astres with trains of fire and dews of blood
Disaster'd the sun."

or,

"Discoloured the sun."

Steevens says there is no authority for *astres*. But *astres* was not uncommon; *asterisk* was used for a little star, and *asterism* was used for a constellation. Hudson says, the passage in North's translation of Plutarch, "Life of Julius Caesar,"

gives no help. Payne Collier's old corrector is silent upon the subject. Malone shirks the task by saying "an intermediate verse being evidently lost, it were idle to attempt a union that never was intended. I have therefore signified the supposed deficiency by a vacant space." E. H. Seymour, author of remarks critical, conjectural and explanatory upon the plays of Shakespeare (1805) has no remark bearing on the lines, beyond the allusion to

"The moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands."

Relative to which, he says: "As here the moon is called a star, so perhaps, by *Dry Star* in Lycidas, Milton means, not Hesperus, but the Sun. S. W. Singer, in his note on the lines says:— "There evidently has been some corruption here. It has been conjectured that a line has been omitted, and perhaps we may read:—

"The sheeted dead
Did speak and gibber in the Roman streets;
And as the earth, so portents fill'd the sky,
Asters, with trains of fire and dews of blood,
Disasters in the sun, &c."

The poet uses disaster as a verb in the following passage in Antony and Cleopatra, Act II, Sc. 7: "To be called into a large sphere, and not to be seen to move in it, are the holes where eyes should be, which pitifully disaster the cheeks." It has therefore been conjectured that we should read *disastering* here.

Richard Grant White says:—"As, stars with trains of fire."—"This passage is sadly and hopelessly corrupt. A preceding line or more has manifestly been lost. The reader will find much fruitless conjecture with regard to it in the Variorum of 1821."

Hudson likewise says:—"There is evidently some corruption here, but it has hitherto baffled remedy, and seems to be given up as hopeless. Both the general structure of the sentence and the exigencies of the sense clearly favour the belief that as *stars* is a misprint for some word of two syllables, and disasters for some verb."

Charles Knight*** says:—"Malone, instead of 'As stars' would read *astres*. This appears to get rid of the difficulty, for we then have the recital of other prodigies, in connection with the appearance of the sheeted dead."

The editor or editors of a specimen of a new edition of Shakespeare, containing the plays of "Hamlet and 'As you like it,'" published by John Murray, London, 1819, have this note upon lines 130 to 134, "Shakespeare having told us that, as precursors of a great event, certain prodigies were seen, proceeds without anything to connect his sentence, to instance other prodigies. In usual course we should say, 'Ghosts appeared'—and there were also other fearful and preternatural appearances; and yet, as it stands, there is no difficulty in conceiving the meaning. This being so, may we not, with Shakespeare's license and title to exemption from grammatical shackles, read or understand it thus: 'The graves opened, the dead were seen abroad (spectacles such as, &c. This we must do, or with more unwarrantable license and much less probability, though with sense and consistency, read with Mr. Rowe:—

Stars shone with trains of fire, dews of blood fell
Disasters in the sun."

Upon the passage in Paradise Lost, l. 597, where 'tis said,

"—the moon
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds."

Warburton observes that *disaster* is here used in its original signification of evil conjunction of stars; and Sylvester, speaking of the planet Saturn in his "Du Bartas" says,

"His forward beams disastrous frowns," p. 86.

The Cowden Clarkes say: "It has been supposed that a line was omitted here, (between 129 and 130,) by the early printers of the play; in which case *as* is probably used elliptically to express *as for instance*. But bearing in mind that Shakespeare uses the word *as* many times with marked elliptical force, and in passages of very peculiar construction, we do not feel secure that the present one has suffered from omission."

In WINTER'S TALE, Act V., Sc. 8, we have "makes her as she lives now," elliptically expressed, means "makes her as she would have looked had she lived now." It may be here that the sentence gives to be understood, as there were stars with trains of fire and dews like blood so were there disasters in the sun."

Shakespeare and the Elizabethan authors, as Abbott† has pointed out, objected to scarcely any ellipsis, provided the deficiency could be easily supplied from the context, but I do not see how without a very strained elliptical force of the line

"As stars with trains of fire, and dews of blood,"

the sense or deficiency can be supplied by the preceding lines.

Moberly, editor of select Plays of Shakespeare, commonly called the "Rugby Edition," ‡ says: "There is some corruption here. If a line is supposed to be lost or omitted it would be better to borrow from Julius Caesar, Act II, Sc. 2, and read,

"Pierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds
As stars with trains of fire, and dews of blood;
Disasters hid the sun."

* The books of William Shakespeare by Richard Grant White, Vol. XI, page 102. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1872.

** The works of Shakespeare by Rev. H. N. Hudson, Vol. X, page 202. Boston: Nox & Holmes, & Co.

*** Pictorial Edition. London and New York: Virtue & Co.

† Shakespearean Grammar, by E. A. Abbott, D. D. MacMillan & Co., London, 1873.

‡ Published by Rivingtons, London. 1872.

rather than indulge their genius as some editors have done by coining a line. I cannot imagine fierce fiery warriors fighting as, or similar to, stars with trains of fire, without indulging one's genius. If a line is to be borrowed, Julius Caesar would be the most fitting play, under the circumstances, to borrow from; for, as Craik says, "it is evident that the character and history of Julius Caesar had taken a strong hold of Shakespeare's imagination." There is no other historical character who is so repeatedly alluded to throughout his Plays. Again, as Gervinus remarks, "the manifold allusions in Hamlet to Julius Caesar would lead us to believe that Shakespeare's last revision of Hamlet occurred at the same time as the Roman historical play." Therefore, although I object to interpolations, yet with all deference to Moberly, I would suggest, in the stead of the one he has selected, a line from Act I, Sc. 3, used by Cassius, which, with a slight alteration would read thus:—

"There was a strange impatience of the heavens,
As stars with trains of fire; and dews of blood;
Disasters in the sky; and the moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick as if 'twere Doomsday with eclipse."

If the conjecture of Rowe, adopted by Johnson and others, and that of Singer may be permitted in the absence of the supposed lost line, and with the obvious false reading of lines 130 to 134, I venture to suggest that the whole can be intelligibly rendered without the aid of the missing line, or the substitution of another, or others, thus:—

"Stars shone with trains of fire; rain fell like blood,
Disasters dimm'd the sky; and the moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick as if 'twere Doomsday with eclipse."

Such a reading gets rid of the ellipse; and the iteration of the past tense of the verbs gives force and correctness to the lines:—"The graves stood tenantless; the dead did speak; the stars shone; rain fell disasters dimm'd the sky; and the moist star was sick."

I will now review my position and that of the commentators and emendators. I cannot see how meteors or shooting stars, asters or asters with trains of fire, could either dis Temper, or discolour, or disaster the sun, as shooting stars are rarely, if ever, visible in the day time. A dew of blood dis Tempering or discolouring the sun is absurd, admitting that the dew, upon the occasion, was of a blood red colour, dew being caused by the condensation of atmospheric vapour on substances sufficiently cooled during the night by radiation, or the loss of heat through the air, the sun must necessarily have been below the horizon, therefore could not have been dis Tempered or discoloured either by the shooting stars or the "dews of blood." In Shakespeare's time the phenomenon of dew was not fully known. A learned philosopher, A. D. 1600, says: "Dew differs from rain, only in the paucity of matter, the place where it is bred, and the weaker heat whereby it is condensed. Dew never falls but in the early morning and in the evening, for in the day time it is consumed by the sun's heat."

Milton following the then popular idea that dew fell from heaven has in Paradise Lost Book IV, Line 614.

"—and the timely dew of sleep
Now falling with soft slumberous weight inclines
Our eye-lids."

"Stars shone with trains of fire," or "There was a strange impatience of the heavens as stars with trains of fire," this is natural. Pliny, who probably gives it as reported by Roman rustics, records: "A. M. 351st, appeared a fearful meteor, the whole heavens seemed in a flame." "A. M. 3774 In Tuscany. The Heavens appeared in a flame of fire." "A. M. 3791. In Etruria the heavens seemed to open with a great black chasm." Later, A. D. 788-793 "Strange fiery meteors in the air in England." "Terrible prodigies in Northumberland—fiery dragons flying—great blasts, or streamers." A. D. 1098. On the 5th of the calends of October, the heavens appeared all night in a flame." A. D. 1568. "In clear nights were seen in several places of Germany, two armies in battalia, brandishing their glittering pikes as if they were ready for a charge." Probably Shakespeare was familiar with these stories, as we find in Julius Caesar Act I, Sc. 3.

"But never till to-night, never till now,
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire."

And in Act II, Sc. 2.

"Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds
In ranks and squadrons, and right form of war,
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol."

Cassius says: "Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man most like this dreadful night"—"these apparent prodigies, the unaccustom'd terror of this night may hold Caesar from the Capitol." Cinna says: "What a fearful night is this!"

These quotations are sufficient to show that the omens which preceded the fall of "the mightiest Julius," took place at night, when the sun could not have been dis Tempered, discoloured, or discoloured; therefore I suggest for disasters in the sun, "disasters dimm'd the sky;" preferring the word *dimm'd* to *veil*. In Spenser's Fairy Queen we have:—

"As where the Almighty's lightning brand does light
It dimes the dazed eyes, and dunts the senses quite."

In the Shepherds Calendar:—

"The sunne of all the world is dimme and dark."

And in another place:—

"A ship that through the ocean wide
By conduct of some star, doth make her way
When a storm hath dimm'd her trusty guide
Out of her course doth wander far away."

In the Ancient Mariner we have:—

"The stars were dim, and thick the night"

In Paradise Lost, Book XI Line 212:

"And carnal fear that day dimm'd Adam's eye."

Shakespeare, himself, often uses the words *dimm'd*, *dimm'd*, and *dimm'd*—for instance:—"Dimm'd with death's black veil." 3rd Henry VI, Act V, Sc. 2. "Never saw the heavens so dim." Winter's Tale, Act III, Sc. 1. "Not Erichius itself were dim enough." Julius Caesar, Act II, Sc. 1. "Is the sun dimm'd that gnats do fly in it." Titus Andronicus, Act IV, Sc. 4. "To wait the dimming of our shining star." Richard III, Act II, Sc. 2.

"Rain fell like blood." Plutarch speaks of showers of blood after battles. Homer in his Iliad refers to showers of "blood rain." Gregory of Tours relates that in A. D. 582 a shower of blood fell over the district about Paris. Kaswini, El Hazen and other savans of the Middle Ages relate that about the middle of the ninth century there fell a red powder and a matter resembling congealed blood. Darwin describes a shower of "blood rain" near Cape Verde covering an area of a million square miles. Reddish snow sometimes appears on the Alps. According to Dana, the zone in which these showers of "blood rain" occur covers Southern Europe and Northern Africa.

"—and the moist star
Upon whose influence Neptune's Empire stands
Was sick as if 'twere Doomsday with eclipse."

In Winter's Tale Act I, Sc. 1, we have "nine changes of the watery star;" in Richard III, Act II, Sc. 2, occurs "the watery moon;" in the Midsummer Night's Dream Act II, Sc. 1, we find "the chaste beams of the watery moon;" in Marlow's Hero and Leander the moon is called "that night-wandering pale and watery star."

In Milton, Paradise Lost, Book X, line 412, we read:

"—the blasted stars lookt wan
And planets, planet-struck, real eclipses
Then suffer'd."

It is hardly necessary to allude to the effect the "Watery Moon" has upon the Spring and Neap tides in the Ocean rivers of "Neptune's Empire," unless it is to show forth Shakespeare's special knowledge in the Natural Sciences. To wit his observation in Julius Caesar Act III, Sc. 1, of the distinct locality of the Pole star, in which he manifests his knowledge of the changes in the position of the stars, through the effect of the rotation of the earth; and his distinctly defining the principle of gravitation, long before Sir Isaac Newton was born, see Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Sc. 3.

"But the strong base and bounding of my love
Is, at the very centre of the earth
Drawing all things to it."

Writers on Natural Philosophy and the Physical Sciences, in Shakespeare's time, taught that the sea waters do follow the moon, and that they are suspended thereby as the iron by the loadstone. "And herein," says Dr. Daniel Sennertus, of the University of Wittenberg, 1602, "most authors are agreed that the motion of the sea's ebb and flow depends on the Moon, and that it is terminated in twelve hours, and that because the moon does not always rise in the same place, nor is also always at the same time carried above the horizon, therefore the ebbing and flowing doth not observe the same time. Now that this motion depends on the Moon, besides what has been said, this seems also to be a sign, viz:—That the Flood comes every day an hour later; because the moon returns to the same place in about the space of every twenty five hours." Our Modern Philosophers tell us that the Moon is assigned the task of raising the tides of the Ocean. Twice every day she flushes with sea water in abundance the rivers upon which our maritime towns and cities are built and keeps them comparatively pure. Again by her mechanical power she bears ships on the crest of the tidal wave deep into the heart of the country where the centres of commerce are often found. Insignificant streams are thus rendered navigable, and cities brought into immediate connexion with the Ocean, Neptune's Kingdom or Empire.

The moon when surrounded by a halo may be said to be sick with eclipse. Again, there have been brilliant auroras in the heavens, reddish in hue, spreading through the sky from East to West, eclipsing the moon, dimming her brightness, obscuring her light; and she has often been made to look pale and sickly by storms similar to one said to have passed over Châtillon-sur-Seine in 1695, when the air seemed to be on fire, and the spectators who saw it believed the neighbouring villages were being burnt. "Sick as if 'twere Doomsday, with eclipse." In Julius Caesar, Act III, Sc. 1, we have:—

"Men, wives, and children, stare, cry out and run
As it were Doomsday."

Therefore I consider the meaning of the passage (as found in the Quarto,) "sick almost to Doomsday with eclipse," to be sick with eclipse as if it were Doomsday be sick almost to death or extinction; Doomsday being the period of Nature's dissolution, the Doomsday in the which, according to St. Peter, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat"—precursors of fierce or terrible or portentous events, and prodigies or forerunners or foretokens of violent events. These "stars with trains of fire" and "rains of blood," were, in a superstitious age, dire omens, ominous appearances; events to ominate ill to the "mightiest Julius;" ominous omens prior to "the deep damnation of his taking off."