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as distinct from a high sense of honour, or a mistaken sense of duty; and lastly, and immediately, consequent on this, a spirit of selfish vindictiveness.

Act i. sc. 1—2.

·Observe the easy style of chit-chat between Camillo and Archidamus as contrasted with the elevated diction on the introduction of the kings and Hermione in the second scene: and how admirably Polixenes’ obstinate refusal to Leontes to stay—

There is no tongue that moves; none, none i’ the world
So soon as yours, could win me;—

prepares for the effect produced by his afterwards yielding to Hermione;—which is, nevertheless, perfectly natural from mere courtesy of sex, and the exhaustion of the will by former efforts of denial, and well calculated to set in nascent action the jealousy of Leontes. This, when once excited, is unconsciously increased by Hermione:—

Yet, good deed, Leontes,
I love thee not a jar o’ the clock behid
What lady she her lord;—

accompanied, as a good actress ought to represent it, by an expression and recoil of apprehension that she had gone too far.

At my request, he would not:—

The first working of the jealous fit;—

Too hot, too hot:—

The morbid tendency of Leontes to lay hold of the merest trifles, and his grossness immediately afterwards—

Paddling palms and pinching fingers;—

followed by his strange loss of self-control in his dialogue with the little boy.

Act iii. sc. 2. Paulina’s speech:

That thou betray’dest Polixenes, ’twas nothing;
That did but show thee, of a fool, inconstant,
And damnable ingrateful.—

Theobald reads ‘soul.’
I think the original word is Shakspeare’s. 1. My ear feels it to be Shakspearian; 2. The involved grammar is
Shakspearian;—‘show thee, being a fool naturally, to have improved thy folly by inconstancy;’ 3. The alteration is most flat, and un-Shakspearian. As to the grossness of the abuse—she calls him ‘gross and foolish’ a few lines below.

Act iv. sc. 2. Speech of Autolycus:—

For the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it.

Fine as this is, and delicately characteristic of one who had lived and been reared in the best society, and had been precipitated from it by dice and drabbing; yet still it strikes against my feelings as a note out of tune, and as not coalescing with that pastoral tint which gives such a charm to this act. It is too Macbeth-like in the ‘snapper up of unconsidered trifles.’

Ib. sc. 3. Perdita’s speech:—

From Dis’s waggon! daffodils.

An epithet is wanted here, not merely or chiefly for the metre, but for the balance, for the aesthetic logic. Perhaps, ‘golden’ was the word which would set off the ‘violets dim.’

Ib.

Pale primroses
That die unmarried.—

Milton’s—

And the rathe primrose that forsaken dies.

Ib. Perdita’s speech:—

Even here undone:
I was not much afear’d; for once or twice
I was about to speak, and tell him plainly,
The self-same sun, that shines upon his court,
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
Looks on alike. Wilt please you, Sir, be gone!

(To Florizel.)

I told you, what would come of this. Beseech you,
Of your own state take care: this dream of mine,
Being now awake, I’ll queen it no inch farther,
But milk my ewes, and weep.

O how more than exquisite is this whole speech!—And that profound nature of noble pride and grief venting themselves in a momentary peevishness of resentment towards Florizel:—

——Wilt please you, Sir, be gone!
Ib. Speech of Autolycus:—

Let me have no lying; it becomes none but tradesmen, and they often give us soldiers the lie; but we pay them for it in stamped coin, not stabbing steel;—therefore they do not give us the lie.

As we pay them, they, therefore, do not give it us.

NOTES ON OTHELLO.

Act i. sc. i.

Admirable is the preparation, so truly and peculiarly Shakspearean, in the introduction of Roderigo, as the dupe on whom Iago shall first exercise his art, and in so doing display his own character. Roderigo, without any fixed principle, but not without the moral notions and sympathies with honour, which his rank and connections had hung upon him, is already well fitted and predisposed for the purpose; for very want of character and strength of passion, like wind loudest in an empty house, constitute his character. The first three lines happily state the nature and foundation of the friendship between him and Iago,—the purse,—as also the contrast of Roderigo’s intemperance of mind with Iago’s coolness,—the coolness of a preconceiving experimenter. The mere language of protestation—

If ever I did dream of such a matter, abhor me,—

which falling in with the associative link, determines Roderigo’s continuation of complaint—

Thou told’st me, thou didst hold him in thy hate—

elicits at length a true feeling of Iago’s mind, the dread of contempt habitual to those, who encourage in themselves, and have their keenest pleasure in, the expression of contempt for others. Observe Iago’s high self-opinion, and the moral, that a wicked man will employ real feelings, as well as assume those most alien from his own, as instruments of his purposes:—

—And, by the faith of man,

I know my price, I am worth no worse a place.

I think Tyrwhitt’s reading of ‘life’ for ‘wife’—

A fellow almost damn’d in a fair wife—
Notes on Othello

the true one, as fitting to Iago's contempt for whatever did not display power, and that intellectual power. In what follows, let the reader feel how by and through the glass of two passions, disappointed vanity and envy, the very vices of which he is complaining, are made to act upon him as if they were so many excellences, and the more appropriately, because cunning is always admired and wished for by minds conscious of inward weakness;—but they act only by half, like music on an inattentive auditor, swelling the thoughts which prevent him from listening to it.

Ib.

Rod. What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe,
       If he can carry 't thus.

Roderigo turns off to Othello; and here comes one, if not the only, seeming justification of our blackamoor or negro Othello. Even if we supposed this an uninterrupted tradition of the theatre, and that Shakspeare himself, from want of scenes, and the experience that nothing could be made too marked for the senses of his audience, had practically sanctioned it,—would this prove aught concerning his own intention as a poet for all ages? Can we imagine him so utterly ignorant as to make a barbarous negro plead royal birth,—at a time, too, when negroes were not known except as slaves?—As for Iago's language to Brabantio, it implies merely that Othello was a Moor, that is, black. Though I think the rivalry of Roderigo sufficient to account for his wilful confusion of Moor and Negro,—yet, even if compelled to give this up, I should think it only adapted for the acting of the day, and should complain of an enormity built on a single word, in direct contradiction to Iago's 'Barbary horse.' Besides, if we could in good earnest believe Shakspeare ignorant of the distinction, still why should we adopt one disagreeable possibility instead of a ten times greater and more pleasing probability? It is a common error to mistake the epithets applied by the dramatis personae to each other, as truly descriptive of what the audience ought to see or know. No doubt Desdemona saw Othello's visage in his mind; yet, as we are constituted, and most surely as an English audience was disposed in the beginning of the seventeenth century, it would be something monstrous to conceive this beautiful Venetian girl falling in love with a veritable negro.
Notes on Othello

It would argue a disproportionateness, a want of balance, in Desdemona, which Shakspeare does not appear to have in the least contemplated.

Ib. Brabantio's speech:

This accident is not unlike my dream:

The old careful senator, being caught careless, transfers his caution to his dreaming power at least.

Ib. Iago’s speech:

—For their souls,
Another of his fathom they have not,
To lead their business:

The forced praise of Othello followed by the bitter hatred of him in this speech! And observe how Brabantio’s dream prepares for his recurrence to the notion of philtres, and how both prepare for carrying on the plot of the arraignment of Othello on this ground.

Ib. sc. 2.

Oth. 'Tis better as it is.

How well these few words impress at the outset the truth of Othello's own character of himself at the end—'that he was not easily wrought!' His self-government contradistinguishes him throughout from Leontes.

Ib. Othello’s speech:

—And my demerits
May speak, unbonneted—

The argument in Theobald’s note, where ‘and bonneted’ is suggested, goes on the assumption that Shakspeare could not use the same word differently in different places; whereas I should conclude, that as in the passage in Lear the word is employed in its direct meaning, so here it is used metaphorically; and this is confirmed by what has escaped the editors, that it is not 'l,' but 'my demerits' that may speak unbonnetted,—without the symbol of a petitioning inferior.

Ib. Othello’s speech:

So please your grace, my ancient;
A man he is of honesty and trust:
To his conveyance I assign my wife.

Compare this with the behaviour of Leontes to his true friend Camillo.
Ib. sc. 3.

_Vba._ Look to her, Moor; have a quick eye to see;
She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee.
_Oth._ My life upon her faith.

In real life, how do we look back to little speeches as presentimental of, or contrasted with, an affecting event! Even so, Shakspeare, as secure of being read over and over, of becoming a family friend, provides this passage for his readers, and leaves it to them.

Ib. _Iago's speech:_

Virtue? a fig! 'tis in ourselves, that we are thus, or thus, &c.

This speech comprises the passionless character of Iago. It is all will in intellect; and therefore he is here a bold partizan of a truth, but yet of a truth converted into a falsehood by the absence of all the necessary modifications caused by the frail nature of man. And then comes the last sentiment,—

Our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitten lusts, whereof I take this, that you call—love, to be a sect or scion!

Here is the true Iagoism of, alas! how many! Note Iago's pride of mastery in the repetition of 'Go, make money!' to his anticipated dupe, even stronger than his love of lucre: and when Roderigo is completely won—

I am chang'd. I'll go sell all my land—

when the effect has been fully produced, the repetition of triumph—

Go to; farewell; put money enough in your purse!

The remainder—_Iago's soliloquy—the motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity—how awful it is!_ Yea, whilst he is still allowed to bear the divine image, it is too fiendish for his own steady view,—for the lonely gaze of a being next to devil, and only not quite devil,—and yet a character which Shakspeare has attempted and executed, without disgust and without scandal!

Dr. Johnson has remarked that little or nothing is wanting to render the Othello a regular tragedy, but to have opened the play with the arrival of Othello in Cyprus, and to have thrown the preceding act into the form of narration. Here then is the place to determine, whether such a change
would or would not be an improvement;—nay, (to throw
down the glove with a full challenge) whether the tragedy
would or not by such an arrangement become more regular,
—that is, more consonant with the rules dictated by
universal reason, on the true common-sense of mankind,
in its application to the particular case. For in all acts of
judgment, it can never be too often recollected, and
scarcely too often repeated, that rules are means to ends,
and, consequently, that the end must be determined and
understood before it can be known what the rules are or
ought to be. Now, from a certain species of drama, pro-
posing to itself the accomplishment of certain ends,—
these partly arising from the idea of the species itself, but
in part, likewise, forced upon the dramatist by accidental
circumstances beyond his power to remove or control,—
three rules have been abstracted;—in other words, the
means most conducive to the attainment of the proposed
ends have been generalized, and prescribed under the
names of the three unities,—the unity of time, the unity
of place, and the unity of action,—which last would,
perhaps, have been as appropriately, as well as more
intelligibly, entitled the unity of interest. With this last
the present question has no immediate concern: in fact,
its conjunction with the former two is a mere delusion of
words. It is not properly a rule, but in itself the great
end not only of the drama, but of the epic poem, the lyric
ode, of all poetry, down to the candle-flame cone of an
epigram,—nay of poesy in general, as the proper generic
term inclusive of all the fine arts as its species. But of
the unities of time and place, which alone are entitled to
the name of rules, the history of their origin will be their
best criterion. You might take the Greek chorus to a
place, but you could not bring a place to them without as
palpable an equivoque as bringing Birnam wood to
Macbeth at Dunsinane. It was the same, though in a
less degree, with regard to the unity of time:—the positive
fact, not for a moment removed from the senses, the
presence, I mean, of the same identical chorus, was a con-
tinued measure of time;—and although the imagination
may supersede perception, yet it must be granted to be an
imperfection—however easily tolerated—to place the two
in broad contradiction to each other. In truth, it is a
mere accident of terms; for the Trilogy of the Greek
Notes on Othello

Theatre was a drama in three acts, and notwithstanding this, what strange contrivances as to place there are in the Aristophanic Frogs. Besides, if the law of mere actual perception is once violated—as it repeatedly is even in the Greek tragedies—why is it more difficult to imagine three hours to be three years than to be a whole day and night?

Act ii. sc. 1.

Observe in how many ways Othello is made, first, our acquaintance, then our friend, then the object of our anxiety, before the deeper interest is to be approached!

Ib.

Mont. But, good lieutenant, is your general wiv'd?

Cas. Most fortunately: he hath achiev'd a maid

That paragons description, and wild fame;

One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens,

And, in the essential vesture of creation,

Does bear all excellency.

Here is Cassio's warm-hearted, yet perfectly disengaged, praise of Desdemona, and sympathy with the 'most fortunately' wived Othello;—and yet Cassio is an enthusiastic admirer, almost a worshipper, of Desdemona. O, that detestable code that excellence cannot be loved in any form that is female, but it must needs be selfish! Observe Othello's 'honest,' and Cassio's 'bold' Iago, and Cassio's full guileless-hearted wishes for the safety and love raptures of Othello and 'the divine Desdemona.' And also note the exquisite circumstance of Cassio's kissing Iago's wife, as if it ought to be impossible that the dullest auditor should not feel Cassio's religious love of Desdemona's purity. Iago's answers are the sneers which a proud bad intellect feels towards women, and expresses to a wife. Surely it ought to be considered a very exalted compliment to women, that all the sarcasms on them in Shakspeare are put in the mouths of villains.

Ib.

Des. I am not merry; but I do beguile, &c.

The struggle of courtesy in Desdemona to abstract her attention.

Ib.

(Iago aside). He takes her by the palm: Ay, well said, whisper; with as little a web as this, will I en-marc as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do, &c.
Notes on Othello

The importance given to trifles, and made fertile by the villany of the observer.

Ib. Iago’s dialogue with Roderigo:
This is the rehearsal on the dupe of the traitor’s intentions on Othello.

Ib. Iago’s soliloquy:

But partly led to diet my revenge,
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leap’d into my seat.

This thought, originally by Iago’s own confession a mere suspicion, is now ripening, and gnaws his base nature as his own ‘poisonous mineral’ is about to gnaw the noble heart of his general.

Ib. sc. 3. Othello’s speech:

I know, Iago,
Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,
Making it light to Cassio.

Honesty and love! Ay, and who but the reader of the play could think otherwise?

Ib. Iago’s soliloquy:

And what’s he then that says—I play the villain?
When this advice is free I give, and honest,
Probable to thinking, and, indeed, the course
To win the Moor again.

He is not, you see, an absolute fiend; or, at least, he wishes to think himself not so.

Act iii. sc. 3.

Des. Before Emilia here,
I give the warrant of thy place.

The over-zeal of innocence in Desdemona.

Ib.

Enter Desdemona and Emilia.

Oth. If she be false, O, then, heaven mocks itself!
I’ll not believe it.

Divine! The effect of innocence and the better genius!

Act iv. sc. 3.

Fem. Why, the wrong is but a wrong i’ the world; and having the world for your labour, ’tis a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right.

Warburton’s note.
What any other man, who had learning enough, might
have quoted as a playful and witty illustration of his remarks against the Calvinistic thesis, Warburton gravey attributes to Shakspeare as intentional; and this, too, in the mouth of a lady's woman!

Act v. last scene. Othello's speech:—

—Of one, whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe, &c.

Theobald's note from Warburton.
Thus it is for no-poets to comment on the greatest of poets! To make Othello say that he, who had killed his wife, was like Herod who killed Mariamne!—O, how many beauties, in this one line, were impenetrable to the ever thought-swarming, but ideless, Warburton! Othello wishes to excuse himself on the score of ignorance, and yet not to excuse himself,—to excuse himself by accusing. This struggle of feeling is finely conveyed in the word 'base,' which is applied to the rude Indian, not in his own character, but as the momentary representative of Othello's 'Indian'—for I retain the old reading—means American, a savage in genere.

Finally, let me repeat that Othello does not kill Desdemona in jealousy, but in a conviction forced upon him by the almost superhuman art of Iago, such a conviction as any man would and must have entertained who had believed Iago's honesty as Othello did. We, the audience, know that Iago is a villain from the beginning; but in considering the essence of the Shakspearian Othello, we must perseveringly place ourselves in his situation, and under his circumstances. Then we shall immediately feel the fundamental difference between the solemn agony of the noble Moor, and the wretched fishing jealousies of Leontes, and the morbid suspiciousness of Leonatus, who is, in other respects, a fine character. Othello had no life but in Desdemona:—the belief that she, his angel, had fallen from the heaven of her native innocence, wrought a civil war in his heart. She is his counterpart; and, like him, is almost sanctified in our eyes by her absolute unsuspicuousness, and holy entireness of love. As the curtain drops, which do we pity the most?

*Extremum hunc* ————. There are three powers:—
Notes on Ben Jonson

Wit, which discovers partial likeness hidden in general diversity; subtlety, which discovers the diversity concealed in general apparent sameness;—and profundity, which discovers an essential unity under all the semblances of difference.

Give to a subtle man fancy, and he is a wit; to a deep man imagination, and he is a philosopher. Add, again, pleasurable sensibility in the threefold form of sympathy with the interesting in morals, the impressive in form, and the harmonious in sound,—and you have the poet.

But combine all,—wit, subtlety, and fancy, with profundity, imagination, and moral and physical susceptibility of the pleasurable,—and let the object of action be man universal; and we shall have—O, rash prophecy! I say, rather, we have—a SHAKESPEARE!

NOTES ON BEN JONSON.

It would be amusing to collect out of our dramatists from Elizabeth to Charles I. proofs of the manners of the times. One striking symptom of general coarseness of manners, which may co-exist with great refinement of morals, as, alas! vice versa, is to be seen in the very frequent allusions to the olfactories with their most disgusting stimulants, and these, too, in the conversation of virtuous ladies. This would not appear so strange to one who had been on terms of familiarity with Sicilian and Italian women of rank: and bad as they may, too many of them, actually be, yet I doubt not that the extreme grossness of their language has impressed many an Englishman of the present era with far darker notions than the same language would have produced in the mind of one of Elizabeth’s or James’s courtiers. Those who have read Shakspeare only, complain of occasional grossness in his plays; but compare him with his contemporaries, and the inevitable conviction, is that of the exquisite purity of his imagination.

The observation I have prefixed to the Volpone is the key to the faint interest which these noble efforts of intellectual power excite, with the exception of the fragment of the Sad Shepherd; because in that piece only is there any character with whom you can morally sympathize. On the other hand, Measure for Measure is the only play
of Shakspeare’s in which there are not some one or more
characters, generally many, whom you follow with affec-
tonate feeling. For I confess that Isabella, of all Shaks-
peare’s female characters, pleases me the least; and
Measure for Measure is, indeed, the only one of his genuine
works, which is painful to me.

Let me not conclude this remark, however, without a
thankful acknowledgment to the manes of Ben Jonson,
that the more I study his writings, I the more admire
them; and the more my study of him resembles that of
an ancient classic, in the minutiae of his rhythm, metre,
choice of words, forms of connection, and so forth, the
more numerous have the points of my admiration become.
I may add, too, that both the study and the admiration
cannot but be disinterested, for to expect therefrom any
advantage to the present drama would be ignorance.
The latter is utterly heterogeneous from the drama of the
Shakspearian age, with a diverse object and contrary
principle. The one was to present a model by imitation
of real life, taking from real life all that in it which it ought
to be, and supplying the rest;—the other is to copy what
is, and as it is,—at best a tolerable, but most frequently
a blundering, copy. In the former the difference was an
essential element; in the latter an involuntary defect.
We should think it strange, if a tale in dance were an-
nounced, and the actors did not dance at all;—and yet
such is modern comedy.

WHALLEY’S PREFACE.

But Jonson was soon sensible, how inconsistent this medley of
names and manners was in reason and nature; and with how little
propriety it could ever have a place in a legitimate and just picture
of real life.

But did Jonson reflect that the very essence of a play,
the very language in which it is written, is a fiction to
which all the parts must conform? Surely, Greek manners
in English should be a still grosser improbability than a
Greek name transferred to English manners. Ben’s per-
sone are too often not characters, but derangements;—
the hopeless patients of a mad-doctor rather,—exhibitions
of folly betraying itself in spite of existing reason and
prudence. He not poetically, but painfully exaggerates every trait; that is, not by the drollery of the circumstance, but by the excess of the originating feeling.

But to this we might reply, that far from being thought to build his characters upon abstract ideas, he was really accused of representing particular persons then existing; and that even those characters which appear to be the most exaggerated, are said to have had their respective archetypes in nature and life.

This degrades Jonson into a libeller, instead of justifying him as a dramatic poet. *Non quod verum est, sed quod verisimile*, is the dramatist's rule. At all events, the poet who chooses transitory manners, ought to content himself with transitory praise. If his object be reputation, he ought not to expect fame. The utmost he can look forwards to, is to be quoted by, and to enliven the writings of, an antiquarian. Pistol, Nym and *id genus omne*, do not please us as characters, but are endured as fantastic creations, foils to the native wit of Falstaff.—I say wit emphatically; for this character so often extolled as the masterpiece of humour, neither contains, nor was meant to contain, any humour at all.

**WHALLEY'S LIFE OF JONSON.**

It is to the honour of Jonson's judgment, that *the greatest poet of our nation* had the same opinion of Donne's genius and wit; and hath preserved part of him from perishing, by putting his thoughts and satire into modern verse.

*Videlicet Pope!*

He said further to Drummond, Shakspeare wanted art, and sometimes sense; for in one of his plays he brought in a number of men, saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where is no sea near by a hundred miles.

I have often thought Shakspeare justified in this seeming anachronism. In Pagan times a single name of a German kingdom might well be supposed to comprise a hundred miles more than at present. The truth is, these notes of Drummond's are more disgraceful to himself than to Jonson. It would be easy to conjecture how grossly Jonson must have been misunderstood, and what he had said in jest, as of Hippocrates, interpreted in earnest.
Notes on Ben Jonson

But this is characteristic of a Scotchman; he has no notion of a jest, unless you tell him—'This is a joke!'—and still less of that finer shade of feeling, the half-and-half, in which Englishmen naturally delight.

EVERY MAN OUT OF HIS HUMOUR.

Epilogue.

The throat of war be stopt within her land,
And turtle-footed peace dance fairie rings
About her court.

Turtle-footed is a pretty word, a very pretty word: pray, what does it mean? Doves, I presume, are not dancers; and the other sort of turtle, land or sea, green-fat or hawksbill, would, I should suppose, succeed better in slow minuets than in the brisk rondillo. In one sense, to be sure, pigeons and ring-doves could not dance but with éclat—a claw?

POETASTER.

Introduction.

Light! I salute thee, but with wounded nerves,
Wishing thy golden splendour pitchy darkness.

There is no reason to suppose Satan's address to the sun in the Paradise Lost, more than a mere coincidence with these lines; but were it otherwise, it would be a fine instance, what usurious interest a great genius pays in borrowing. It would not be difficult to give a detailed psychological proof from these constant outbursts of anxious self-assertion, that Jonson was not a genius, a creative power. Subtract that one thing, and you may safely accumulate on his name all other excellences of a capacious, vigorous, agile, and richly-stored intellect.

Act i. sc. i.

Ovid. While slaves be false, fathers hard, and bawds be whorish—
The roughness noticed by Theobald and Whalley, may be cured by a simple transposition:—

While fathers hard, slaves false, and bawds be whorish.
Notes on Ben Jonson

Act iv. sc. 3.

O—conscious.

It would form an interesting essay, or rather series of essays, in a periodical work, were all the attempts to ridicule new phrases brought together, the proportion observed of words ridiculed which have been adopted, and are now common, such as strenuous, conscious, &c., and a trial made how far any grounds can be detected, so that one might determine beforehand whether a word was invented under the conditions of assimilability to our language or not. Thus much is certain, that the ridiculers were as often wrong as right; and Shakspeare himself could not prevent the naturalization of accommodation, remuneration, &c.; or Swift the gross abuse even of the word idea.

FALL OF SEJANUS.

Act i.

Arruntius. The name Tiberius,
I hope, will keep, how'e'er he hath foregone
The dignity and power.
Silius. Sure, while he lives.
Arr. And dead, it comes to Drusus. Should he fail,
To the brave issue of Germanicus;
And they are three: too many (ha?) for him
To have a plot upon?
Sil. I do not know
The heart of his designs; but, sure, their face
Looks farther than the present.
Arr. By the gods,
If I could guess he had but such a thought,
My sword should cleave him down, &c.

The anachronic mixture in this Arruntius of the Roman republican, to whom Tiberius must have appeared as much a tyrant as Sejanus with his James-and-Charles-the-First zeal for legitimacy of descent, in this passage, is amusing. Of our great names Milton was, I think, the first who could properly be called a republican. My recollections of Buchanan’s works are too faint to enable me to judge whether the historian is not a fair exception.
Notes on Ben Jonson

Act ii. Speech of Sejanus:—

Adultery! it is the lightest ill
I will commit. A race of wicked acts
Shall flow out of my anger, and o'erspread
The world's wide face, which no posterity
Shall e'er approve, nor yet keep silent, &c.

The more we reflect and examine, examine and reflect, the more astonished we shall be at the immense superiority of Shakspeare over his contemporaries:—and yet what contemporaries!—giant minds indeed! Think of Jonson's erudition, and the force of learned authority in that age; and yet in no genuine part of Shakspeare's works is there to be found such an absurd rant and ventriloquism as this, and too, too many other passages ferruminated by Jonson from Seneca's tragedies and the writings of the later Romans. I call it ventriloquism, because Sejanus is a puppet, out of which the poet makes his own voice appear to come.

Act v. Scene of the sacrifice to Fortune. This scene is unspeakably irrational. To believe, and yet to scoff at, a present miracle is little less than impossible. Sejanus should have been made to suspect priestcraft and a secret conspiracy against him.

VOLPONE.

This admirable, indeed, but yet more wonderful than admirable, play is from the fertility and vigour of invention, character, language, and sentiment the strongest proof, how impossible it is to keep up any pleasurable interest in a tale, in which there is no goodness of heart in any of the prominent characters. After the third act, this play becomes not a dead, but a painful, weight on the feelings. Zeluco is an instance of the same truth. Bonario and Celia should have been made in some way or other principals in the plot; which they might have been, and the objects of interest, without having been made characters. In novels, the person, in whose fate you are most interested, is often the least marked character of the whole.

If it were possible to lessen the paramountcy of Volpone himself, a most delightful comedy might be produced, by
Notes on Ben Jonson

making Celia the ward or niece of Corvino, instead of his wife, and Bonario her lover.

EPICÆNE.

This is to my feelings the most entertaining of old Ben's comedies, and, more than any other, would admit of being brought out anew, if under the management of a judicious and stage-understanding play-wright; and an actor, who had studied Morose, might make his fortune.

Act i. sc. i. Clerimont's speech:—

He would have hanged a pewterer's 'prentice once on a Shrove Tuesday's riot, for being o' that trade, when the rest were quiet.

The old copies read quit, i.e. discharged from working, and gone to divert themselves. Whalley's note.

It should be quit, no doubt; but not meaning 'discharged from working,' &c.—but quit, that is, acquitted. The pewterer was at his holiday diversion as well as the other apprentices, and they as forward in the riot as he. But he alone was punished under pretext of the riot, but in fact for his trade.

Act ii. sc. i.

Morose. Cannot I, yet, find out a more compendious method, than by this trunk, to save my servants the labour of speech, and mine ears the discord of sounds?

What does 'trunk' mean here and in the 1st scene of the 1st act? Is it a large ear-trumpet?—or rather a tube, such as passes from parlour to kitchen, instead of a bell?

Whalley's note at the end.

Some critics of the last age imagined the character of Morose to be wholly out of nature. But to vindicate our poet, Mr. Dryden tells us from tradition, and we may venture to take his word, that Jonson was really acquainted with a person of this whimsical turn of mind: and as humour is a personal quality, the poet is acquitted from the charge of exhibiting a monster, or an extravagant unnatural caricatura.

If Dryden had not made all additional proof superfluous by his own plays, this very vindication would evince that he had formed a false and vulgar conception of the nature
Notes on Ben Jonson

and conditions of the drama and dramatic personation. Ben Jonson would himself have rejected such a plea:—

For he knew, poet never credit gain'd
By writing truths, but things, like truths, well feign'd.

By 'truths' he means 'facts.' Caricatures are not less so, because they are found existing in real life. Comedy demands characters, and leaves caricatures to farce. The safest and truest defence of old Ben would be to call the Epicæne the best of farces. The defect in Morose, as in other of Jonson's dramatis personæ, lies in this;—that the accident is not a prominence growing out of, and nourished by, the character which still circulates in it, but that the character, such as it is, rises out of, or,. rather, consists in, the accident. Shakspeare's comic personages have exquisitely characteristic features; however awry, disproportionate, and laughable they may be, still, like Bardolph's nose, they are features. But Jonson's are either a man with a huge wen, having a circulation of its own, and which we might conceive amputated, and the patient thereby losing all his character; or they are mere wens themselves instead of men,—wens personified, or with eyes, nose, and mouth cut out, mandrake-fashion.

Nota bene. All the above, and much more, will have justly been said, if, and whenever, the drama of Jonson is brought into comparisons of rivalry with the Shakspearian. But this should not be. Let its inferiority to the Shakspearian be at once fairly owned,—but at the same time as the inferiority of an altogether different genus of the drama. On this ground, old Ben would still maintain his proud height. He, no less than Shakspeare, stands on the summit of his hill, and looks round him like a master,—though his be Lattrig and Shakspeare's Skiddaw.

THE ALCHEMIST.

Act i. sc. 2. Face's speech:—

Will take his oath o' the Greek Xenophon,
If need be, in his pocket.

Another reading is 'Testament.'

Probably, the meaning is—that intending to give false evidence, he carried a Greek Xenophon to pass it off for
Notes on Ben Jonson

a Greek Testament, and so avoid perjury—as the Irish do, by contriving to kiss their thumb-nails instead of the book.

Act ii. sc. 2. Mammon's speech:

"I will have all my beds blown up; not stuff:
Down is too hard.

Thus the air-cushions, though perhaps only lately brought into use, were invented in idea in the seventeenth century!

CATILINE'S CONSPIRACY.

A FONDNESS for judging one work by comparison with others, perhaps altogether of a different class, argues a vulgar taste. Yet it is chiefly on this principle that the Catiline has been rated so low. Take it and Sejanus, as compositions of a particular kind, namely, as a mode of relating great historical events in the liveliest and most interesting manner, and I cannot help wishing that we had whole volumes of such plays. We might as rationally expect the excitement of the Vicar of Wakefield from Goldsmith's History of England, as that of Lear, Othello, &c. from the Sejanus or Catiline.

Act i. sc. 4.

Cat. Sirrah, what ail you?

(He spies one of his boys not answer.)

Pag. Nothing.

Best. Somewhat modest.

Cat. Slave, I will strike your soul out with my foot, &c.

This is either an unintelligible, or, in every sense, a most unnatural, passage,—improbable, if not impossible, at the moment of signing and swearing such a conspiracy, to the most libidinous satyr. The very presence of the boys is an outrage to probability. I suspect that these lines down to the words 'throat opens,' should be removed back so as to follow the words 'on this part of the house,' in the speech of Catiline soon after the entry of the conspirators. A total erasure, however, would be the best, or, rather, the only possible, amendment.

Act ii. sc. 2. Sempronia's speech:

—He is but a new fellow,
An inmate here in Rome, as Catiline calls him—
A 'lodger' would have been a happier imitation of the inquilinus of Sallust.

Act iv. sc. 6. Speech of Cethegus:—

Can these or such be any aids to us, &c.

What a strange notion Ben must have formed of a determined, remorseless, all-daring, fool-hardiness, to have represented it in such a mouthing Tamburlane, and bombastic tonguebullly as this Cethegus of his!

BARTHOLOMEW FAIR.

Induction. Scrivener's speech:—

If there be never a servant-monster i' the Fair, who can help it, he says, nor a nest of antiques?

The best excuse that can be made for Jonson, and in a somewhat less degree for Beaumont and Fletcher, in respect of these base and silly sneers at Shakspeare, is, that his plays were present to men's minds chiefly as acted. They had not a neat edition of them, as we have, so as, by comparing the one with the other, to form a just notion of the mighty mind that produced the whole. At all events, and in every point of view, Jonson stands far higher in a moral light than Beaumont and Fletcher. He was a fair contemporary, and in his way, and as far as Shakspeare is concerned, an original. But Beaumont and Fletcher were always imitators of, and often borrowers from, him, and yet sneer at him with a spite far more malignant than Jonson, who, besides, has made noble compensation by his praises.

Act ii. sc. 3.

_Just_. I mean a child of the horn-thumb, a babe of booty, boy, a cut purse.

Does not this confirm, what the passage itself cannot but suggest, the propriety of substituting 'booty' for 'beauty' in Falstaff's speech, Henry IV. Pt. I. act ii. sc. 2. 'Let not us, &c. ?'

It is not often that old Ben condescends to imitate a modern author; but Master Dan. Knockhum Jordan and his vapours are manifest reflexes of Nym and Pistol.
Notes on Ben Jonson

Ib. sc. 5.

Quar. She'll make excellent geer for the coachmakers here in Smithfield, to anoint wheels and axletrees with.

Good! but yet it falls short of the speech of a Mr. Johnes, M.P., in the Common Council, on the invasion intended by Buonaparte: 'Houses plundered—then burnt;—sons conscribed—wives and daughters ravished,' &c., &c.
—'But as for you, you luxurious Aldermen! with your fat will he grease the wheels of his triumphant chariot!'

Ib. sc. 6.

Cok. Avoid i' your satin doublet, Numps.

This reminds me of Shakspeare's 'Aroint thee, witch!' I find in several books of that age the words aloigne and eloigne—that is, 'keep your distance!' or 'off with you!' Perhaps 'aroint' was a corruption of 'aloigne' by the vulgar. The common etymology from ronger to gnaw seems unsatisfactory.

Act iii. sc. 4.

Quar. How now, Numps! almost tired i' your protectorship? overparted?

An odd sort of propheticallity in this Numps and old Noll!

Ib. sc. 6. Knockhum's speech:

He eats with his eyes, as well as his teeth.

A good motto for the Parson in Hogarth's Election Dinner,—who shows how easily he might be reconciled to the Church of Rome, for he worships what he eats.

Act v. sc. 5.

Pup. Di. It is not prophane.

Ian. It is not prophan, he says.

Boy. It is prophane.

Pup. It is not prophan.

Boy. It is prophane.

Pup. It is not prophane.

Lan. Well said, confute him with Not, still.

An imitation of the quarrel between Bacchus and the Frogs in Aristophanes:

Χορός.

άλλα μην κεκρατήμεσθά γ',

οίκεσαν ἢ φάρυγκαν ἡμῶν
Notes on Ben Jonson

χαμάνυ, δι' ἡμέρας,
βρεκεκεκτέ, κόδε, κοά.
Δίδυμος.
τοιτω γὰρ ὑμὶς ἴκονετε.
Χορός.
οὔδε μὴν ἡμᾶς σὺ πάντως.
Δίδυμος.
oúdê múv ûméis ye dh µ' oudêpote.

THE DEVIL IS AN ASS.

Act i. sc. 1.

Pug. Why any: Fraud,
Or Covetousness, or lady Vanity,
Or old Iniquity, I'll call him hither.

The words in italics should probably be given to the master-devil, Satan. Whalley's note.

THAT is, against all probability, and with a (for Jonson) impossible violation of character. The words plainly belong to Pug, and mark at once his simpleness and his impatience.

Ib. sc. 4. Fitz-dottrel's soliloquy:—

Compare this exquisite piece of sense, satire, and sound philosophy in 1616 with Sir M. Hale's speech from the bench in a trial of a witch many years afterwards.¹

Act ii. sc. 1. Meercraft's speech:—

Sir, money's a whore, a bawd, a drudge.—

I doubt not that 'money' was the first word of the line, and has dropped out:—

Money! Sir, money's a, &c.

THE STAPLE OF NEWS.

Act iv. sc. 3. Pecunia's speech:—

No, he would ha' done,
That lay not in his power: he had the use
Of your bodies, Band and Wax, and sometimes Statute's.

Read (1815),

—he had the use of
Your bodies, &c.

Now, however, I doubt the legitimacy of my transposition of the 'of' from the beginning of this latter line to the end

¹ In 1664, at Bury St. Edmonds on the trial of Rose Cullender and Amy Duny. Ed.
of the one preceding;—for though it facilitates the metre
and reading of the latter line, and is frequent in Massinger,
this disjunction of the preposition from its case seems to
have been disallowed by Jonson. Perhaps the better
reading is—

O' your bodies, &c.—

the two syllables being slurred into one, or rather snatched,
or sucked, up into the emphasized 'your.' In all points
of view, therefore, Ben's judgment is just; for in this way,
the line cannot be read, as metre, without that strong and
quick emphasis on 'your' which the sense requires;—and
had not the sense required an emphasis on 'your,' the
timesis of the sign of its cases 'of,' 'to,' &c. would destroy
almost all boundary between the dramatic verse and
prose in comedy:—a lesson not to be rash in conjectural
amendments. 1818.
Ib. sc. 4.

P. pun. I love all men of virtue, frommy Princess.—

'Frommy,' fromme, pious, dutiful, &c.
Act v. sc. 4. Penny-boy sen. and Porter:—
I dare not, will not, think that honest Ben had Lear in
his mind in this mock mad scene.

THE NEW INN.

Act i. sc. i. Host's speech:—

A heavy purse, and then two turtles, makes.—

'Makes,' frequent in old books, and even now used in
some counties for mates, or pairs.
Ib. sc. 3. Host's speech:—

—And for a leap
O' the vaulting horse, to play the vaulting house.—

Instead of reading with Whalley 'ply' for 'play,' I
would suggest 'horse' for 'house.' The meaning would
then be obvious and pertinent. The punlet, or pun-
maggot, or pun intentional, 'horse and house,' is below
Jonson. The jeu-de-mots just below—
had a learned smack in it to season its insipidity.

Ib. sc. 6. Lovel’s speech:—

Then shower’d his bounties on me, like the Hours,
That open-handed sit upon the clouds,
And press the liberality of heaven
Down to the laps of thankful men!

Like many other similar passages in Jonson, this is ἡδος καλαπτόν ἰδεῖ—a sight which it is difficult to make one’s self see,—a picture my fancy cannot copy detached from the words.

Act ii. sc. 5. Though it was hard upon old Ben, yet Felton, it must be confessed, was in the right in considering the Fly, Tipto, Bat Burst, &c. of this play mere dotages. Such a scene as this was enough to damn a new play; and Nick Stuff is worse still,—most abominable stuff indeed!

Act iii. sc. 2. Lovel’s speech:—

So knowledge first begets benevolence,
Benevolence breeds friendship, friendship love.—

Jonson has elsewhere proceeded thus far; but the part most difficult and delicate, yet, perhaps, not the least capable of being both morally and poetically treated, is the union itself, and what, even in this life, it can be.

NOTES ON BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

Seward’s Preface. 1750.

The King And No King, too, is extremely spirited in all its characters; Arbaces holds up a mirror to all men of virtuous principles but violent passions. Hence he is, as it were, at once magnanimity and pride, patience and fury, gentleness and rigour, chastity and incest, and is one of the finest mixtures of virtues and vices that any poet has drawn, &c.

These are among the endless instances of the abject state to which psycology had sunk from the reign of Charles I. to the middle of the present reign of George III.; and even now it is but just awaking.
Beaumont and Fletcher

Ib. Seward’s comparison of Julia’s speech in the Two Gentlemen of Verona, act iv. last scene—

Madam, ’twas Ariadne passioning, &c.

with Aspatia’s speech in the Maid’s Tragedy—

I stand upon the sea-beach now, &c. Act ii.

and preference of the latter.

It is strange to take an incidental passage of one writer; intended only for a subordinate part, and compare it with the same thought in another writer, who had chosen it for a prominent and principal figure.

Ib. Seward’s preference of Alphonso’s poisoning in A Wife for a Month, act i. sc. 1, to the passage in King John, act v. sc. 7,—

Poison’d, ill fare! dead, forsook, cast off!

Mr. Seward! Mr. Seward! you may be, and I trust you are, an angel; but you were an ass.

Ib.

Every reader of taste will see how superior this is to the quotation from Shakspeare.

Of what taste?

Ib. Seward’s classification of the plays:—

Surely Monsieur Thomas, the Chances, Beggar’s Bush, and the Pilgrim, should have been placed in the very first class! But the whole attempt ends in a woful failure.

HARRIS’S COMMENDATORY POEM ON FLETCHER.

I’d have a state of wit convok’d, which hath
A power to take up on common faith:—

This is an instance of that modifying of quantity by emphasis, without which our elder poets cannot be scanned. ‘Power,’ here, instead of being one long syllable—pow’r—must be sounded, not indeed as a spondee, nor yet as a trochee; but as —’o;—the first syllable is \( \text{r}_2 \).

We can, indeed, never expect an authentic edition of our elder dramatic poets (for in those times a drama was a poem), until some man undertakes the work, who has studied the philosophy of metre. This has been found
the main torch of sound restoration in the Greek dramatists
by Bentley, Porson, and their followers;—how much more,
then, in writers in our own language! It is true that
quantity, an almost iron law with the Greek, is in English
rather a subject for a peculiarly fine ear, than any law or
even rule; but, then, instead of it, we have, first, accent;
secondly, emphasis; and lastly, retardation, and acceler-
ation of the times of syllables according to the meaning of
the words, the passion that accompanies them, and even
the character of the person that uses them. With due
attention to these,—above all, to that, which requires the
most attention and the finest taste, the character, Mass-
inger, for example, might be reduced to a rich and yet
regular metre. But then the regulae must be first known;
—or I will venture to say, that he who does not find
a line (not corrupted) of Massinger’s flow to the time total
of a trimeter catalectic iambic verse, has not read it aright.
But by virtue of the last principle—the retardation or
acceleration of time—we have the proceleusmatic foot
ο ο ω ο, and the dispondeus — — — —, not to mention
the choriambus, the ionics, paeons, and epitrites. Since
Dryden, the metre of our poets leads to the sense: in our
elder and more genuine bards, the sense, including the
passion, leads to the metre. Read even Donne’s satires
as he meant them to be read, and as the sense and passion
demand, and you will find in the lines a manly harmony.

LIFE OF FLETCHER IN STOCKDALE’S
EDITION. 1811.

In general their plots are more regular than Shakspeare’s.
This is true, if true at all, only before a court of crit-
icism, which judges one scheme by the laws of another as
or diverse one. Shakspeare’s plots have their own law,
regulae, and according to these they are regular.

MAID’S TRAGEDY.

Act i. The metrical arrangement is most
throughout.

Strat. As well as masque can be, &c.
Beaumont and Fletcher

and all that follows to 'who is return'd'—is plainly blank verse, and falls easily into it.

Ib. Speech of Melantius:—

These soft and silken wars are not for me:
The music must be shrill, and all confus'd,
That stirs my blood; and then I dance with arms.

What strange self-trumpeters and tongue-bullies all the brave soldiers of Beaumont and Fletcher are! Yet I am inclined to think it was the fashion of the age from the Soldier's speech in the Counter Scuffle; and deeper than the fashion B. and F. did not fathom.

Ib. Speech of Lysippus:—

Yes, but this lady
Walks discontented, with her wat'ry eyes
Bent on the earth, &c.

Opulent as Shakspeare was, and of his opulence prodigal, he yet would not have put this exquisite piece of poetry in the mouth of a no-character, or as addressed to a Melantius. I wish that B. and F. had written poems instead of tragedies.

Ib. Mel. I might run fiercely, not more hastily,
Upon my foe.

Read

I might rûn more fiercely, not more hastily.—

Ib. Speech of Calianax:—

Office! I would I could put it off! I am sure I sweat quite through my office!

The syllable off reminds the testy statesman of his robe, and he carries on the image.

Ib. Speech of Melantius:—

—Would that blood,
That sea of blood, that I have lost in fight, &c.

All B. and F.'s generals are pugilists, or cudgel-fighters, that boast of their bottom and of the claret they have shed.

Ib. The Masque:—Cinthia's speech:—

"But I will give a greater state and glory,
And raise to time a noble memory
Of what these lovers are.

I suspect that 'nobler,' pronounced as 'nobilier' — ɔ —, ɡ
was the poet’s word, and that the accent is to be placed on the penultimate of ‘memory.’ As to the passage—

Yet, while our reign lasts, let us stretch our power, &c.

removed from the text of Cinthia’s speech by these foolish editors as unworthy of B. and F.—the first eight lines are not worse, and the last couplet incomparably better, than the stanza retained.

Act ii. Amintor’s speech:

Oh, thou hast nam’d a word, that wipes away
All thoughts revengeful! In that sacred name,
‘The king,’ there lies a terror.

It is worth noticing that of the three greatest tragedians, Massinger was a democrat, Beaumont and Fletcher the most servile *jure divino* royalist, and Shakspeare a philosopher;—if aught personal, an aristocrat.

**A KING AND NO KING.**

Act iv. Speech of Tigranes:

She, that forgat the greatness of her grief
And miseries, that must follow such mad passions,
Endless and wild as women! &c.

Seward’s note and suggestion of ‘in.’

It would be amusing to learn from some existing friend of Mr. Seward what he meant, or rather dreamed, in this note. It is certainly a difficult passage, of which there are two solutions,—one, that the writer was somewhat more injudicious than usual;—the other, that he was very, very much more profound and Shakspearian than usual. Seward’s emendation, at all events, is right and obvious. Were it a passage of Shakspeare, I should not hesitate to interpret it as characteristic of Tigranes’ state of mind, disliking the very virtues, and therefore half-consciously representing them as mere products of the violence of the sex in general in all their whims, and yet forced to admire, and to feel and to express gratitude for, the exertion in his own instance. The inconsistency of the passage would be the consistency of the author. But this is above Beaumont and Fletcher.
THE SCORNFUL LADY.

Act ii. Sir Roger's speech:—

Did I for this consume my quarters in meditations, vows, and woo'd her in heroicall epistles? Did I expound the Owl, and undertake, with labour and expense, the recollection of those thousand pieces, consum'd in cellars and tobacco-shops, of that our honour'd Englishman, Nic. Broughton? &c.

STRANGE, that neither Mr. Theobald, nor Mr. Seward, should have seen that this mock heroic speech is in full-mouthed blank verse! Had they seen this, they would have seen that 'quarters' is a substitution of the players for 'quires' or 'squares,' (that is) of paper:—

Consume my quires in meditations, vows,  
And woo'd her in heroicall epistles.

They ought, likewise, to have seen that the abbreviated 'Ni. Br.' of the text was properly 'Mi. Dr.'—and that Michael Drayton, not Nicholas Broughton, is here ridiculed for his poem The Owl and his Heroical Epistles.

Ib. Speech of Younger Loveless:—

Fill him some wine. Thou dost not see me mov'd, &c.

These Editors ought to have learnt, that scarce an instance occurs in B. and F. of a long speech not in metre. This is plain staring blank verse.

THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY.

I CANNOT but think that in a country conquered by a nobler race than the natives, and in which the latter became villeins and bondsmen, this custom, lex mercetria, may have been introduced for wise purposes,—as of improving the breed, lessening the antipathy of different races, and producing a new bond of relationship between the lord and the tenant, who, as the eldest born, would, at least, have a chance of being, and a probability of being thought, the lord's child. In the West Indies it cannot have these effects, because the mulatto is marked by nature different from the father, and because there is no bond, no law, no custom, but of mere debauchery. 1815.
Notes on

Act i. sc. 1. Rutilio's speech:

Yet if you play not fair play, &c.

Evidently to be transposed and read thus:

Yet if you play not fair, above-board too,
I'll tell you what—
I've a foolish engine here:—I say no more—
But if your Honour's guts are not enchanted—

Licentious as the comic metre of B. and F. is,—a far more lawless, and yet far less happy, imitation of the rhythm of animated talk in real life than Massinger's—still it is made worse than it really is by ignorance of the halves, thirds, and two-thirds of a line which B. and F. adopted from the Italian and Spanish dramatists. Thus in Rutilio's speech:

Though I confess
Any man would desire to have her, and by any means, &c.

Correct the whole passage—

Though I confess
Any man would
Desire to have her, and by any means,
At any rate too, yet this common hangman
That hath whipt off a thousand maid's heads already—
That he should glean the harvest, sticks in my stomach!

In all comic metres the gulping of short syllables, and the abbreviation of syllables ordinarily long by the rapid pronunciation of eagerness and vehemence, are not so much a license, as a law,—a faithful copy of nature, and let them be read characteristically, the times will be found nearly equal. Thus the three words marked above make a choriambus—οοο, or perhaps a paon primus—οοο; a dactyl, by virtue of comic rapidity, being only equal to an iambus when distinctly pronounced. I have no doubt that all B. and F.'s works might be safely corrected by attention to this rule, and that the editor is entitled to transpositions of all kinds, and to not a few omissions. For the rule of the metre once lost—what was to restrain the actors from interpolation?
Beaumont and Fletcher

THE ELDER BROTHER.

Act i. sc. 2. Charles’s speech:

—For what concerns tillage,
Who better can deliver it than Virgil
In his Georgicks? and to cure your herds,
His Bucolicks is a master-piece.

FLETCHER was too good a scholar to fall into so gross a blunder, as Messrs. Sympson and Colman suppose. I read the passage thus:

—For what concerns tillage,
Who better can deliver it than Virgil,
In his Georgicks, or to cure your herds;
(His Bucolicks are a master-piece.) But when, &c.

Jealous of Virgil’s honour, he is afraid lest, by referring to the Georgics alone, he might be understood as undervaluing the preceding work. ‘Not that I do not admire the Bucolics, too, in their way:—But when, &c.’

Act iii. sc. 3. Charles’s speech:

—She has a face looks like a story:
The story of the heavens looks very like her.

Seward reads ‘glory;’ and Theobald quotes from Philaster—

That reads the story of a woman’s face.—

I can make sense of this passage as little as Mr. Seward;—the passage from Philaster is nothing to the purpose. Instead of ‘a story,’ I have sometimes thought of proposing ‘Astræa.’

Ib. Angellina’s speech:

—You’re old and dim, Sir,
And the shadow of the earth eclips’d your judgment.

Inappropriate to Angellina, but one of the finest lines in our language.

Act iv. sc. 3. Charles’s speech:

And lets the serious part of life run by
As thin neglected sand, whiteness of name.
You must be mine, &c.

Seward’s note, and reading—

—Whiteness of name,
You must be mine!
Notes on

Nonsense! 'Whiteness of name' is in apposition to 'the serious part of life,' and means a deservedly pure reputation. The following line—'You must be mine!' means—'Though I do not enjoy you to-day, I shall here-after, and without reproach.'

THE SPANISH CURATE.

Act iv. sc. 7. Amaranta's speech:—

And still I push'd him on, as he had been coming.

Perhaps the true word is 'conning,' that is, learning, or reading, and therefore inattentive.

WIT WITHOUT MONEY.

Act i. Valentine's speech:—

One without substance, &c.

The present text, and that proposed by Seward, are equally vile. I have endeavoured to make the lines sense, though the whole is, I suspect, incurable except by bold conjectural reformation. I would read thus:—

One without substance of herself, that's woman;
Without the pleasure of her life, that's wanton;
Tho' she be young, forgetting it; tho' fair,
Making her glass the eyes of honest men,
Not her own admiration.

'That's wanton,' or, 'that is to say, wantonness.'

Act ii. Valentine's speech:—

Of half-a-crown a week for pins and puppets—

As there is a syllable wanting in the measure here. Seward.

A syllable wanting! Had this Seward neither ears nor fingers? The line is a more than usually regular iambic hendecasyllable.

Ib.

With one man satisfied, with one rein guided;
With one faith, one content, one bed;
Aged, she makes the wife, preserves the fame and issue;
A widow is, &c.
Beaumont and Fletcher

Is 'apaid'—contented—too obsolete for B. and F.? If not, we might read it thus:

Content with one faith, with one bed apaid,
She makes the wife, preserves the fame and issue:—

Or it may be—

—with one breed apaid—

that is, satisfied with one set of children, in opposition to—

A widow is a Christmas-box, &c.

Colman's note on Seward's attempt to put this play into metre.

The editors, and their contemporaries in general, were ignorant of any but the regular iambic verse. A study of the Aristophanic and Plautine metres would have enabled them to reduce B. and F. throughout into metre, except where prose is really intended.

THE HUMOROUS LIEUTENANT.

Act i. sc. 1. Second Ambassador's speech:—

—When your angers,
Like so many brother billows, rose together,
And, curling up your foaming crests, defied, &c.

This worse than superfluous 'like' is very like an interpolation of some matter of fact critic—all pus, prose atque venenum. The 'your' in the next line, instead of 'their,' is likewise yours, Mr. Critic!

Act ii. sc. i. Timon's speech:—

Another of a new way will be look'd at.—

We must suspect the poets wrote, 'of a new day.' So immediately after,

—Time may
For all his wisdom, yet give us a day.

Seward's Note.

For this very reason I more than suspect the contrary.

Ib. sc. 3. Speech of Leucippe:—

I'll put her into action for a wastcoat.—

What we call a riding-habit,—some mannish dress.
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THE MAD LOVER.

Act iv. Masque of beasts:—

—This goodly tree,
An usher that still grew before his lady,
Wither'd at root: this, for he could not woo,
A grumbling lawyer: &c.

Here must have been omitted a line rhyming to 'tree;'
and the words of the next line have been transposed:—

—This goodly tree,
Which leafless, and obscur'd with moss you see,
An usher this, that 'fore his lady grew,
Wither'd at root: this, for he could not woo, &c.

THE LOYAL SUBJECT.

It is well worthy of notice, and yet has not been, I believe,
noticed hitherto, what a marked difference there exists in
the dramatic writers of the Elizabetho-Jacobæan age—
(Mercy on me! what a phrase for 'the writers during the
reigns of Elizabeth and James I. !')—in respect of their
political opinions. Shakspeare, in this as in all other
things, himself and alone, gives the permanent politics of
human nature, and the only predilection, which appears,
shews itself in his contempt of mobs and the populace.
Massinger is a decided Whig;—Beaumont and Fletcher
high-flying, passive-obedience Tories. The Spanish dra-
matists furnished them with this, as with many other
ingredients. By the by, an accurate and familiar acquaint-
ance with all the productions of the Spanish stage pre-
viously to 1620, is an indispensable qualification for an
editor of B. and F.;—and with this qualification a most
interesting and instructive edition might be given. This
edition of Colman's (Stockdale 1811,) is below criticism.

In metre, B. and F. are inferior to Shakspeare, on the
one hand, as expressing the poetic part of the drama, and
to Massinger, on the other, in the art of reconciling, metre
with the natural rhythm of conversation,—in which,
indeed, Massinger is unrivalled. Read him aright, and
measure by time, not syllables, and no lines can be more
legitimate,—none in which the substitution of equipollent
Beaumont and Fletcher

feet, and the modifications by emphasis, are managed with such exquisite judgment. B. and F. are fond of the twelve syllable (not Alexandrine) line, as—

Too many fears 'tis thought too: and to nourish those—

This has, often, a good effect, and is one of the varieties most common in Shakspeare.

RULE A WIFE AND HAVE A WIFE.

Act iii. Old Woman’s speech:—

—I fear he will knock my
Brains out for lying.

Mr. Seward discards the words ‘for lying,’ because ‘most of the things spoke of Estifania are true, with only a little exaggeration, and because they destroy all appearance of measure.’ Colman’s note.

Mr. Seward had his brains out. The humour lies in Estifania’s having ordered the Old Woman to tell these tales of her; for though an intriguer, she is not represented as other than chaste; and as to the metre, it is perfectly correct.

Ib.

Marg. As you love me, give way.
Leon. It shall be better, I will give none, madam, &c.

The meaning is: ‘It shall be a better way, first;—as it is, I will not give it, or any that you in your present mood would wish.’

THE LAWS OF CANDY.

Act i. Speech of Melitus:—

Whose insolence and never yet match’d pride
Can by no character be well express’d,
But in her only name, the proud Erota.

Colman’s note.
The poet intended no allusion to the word ‘Erota’ itself; but says that her very name, ‘the proud Erota,’

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became a character and adage; as we say, a Quixote or a Brutus: so to say an 'Erotas,' expressed female pride and insolence of beauty.

Ib. Speech of Antinous:—

Of my peculiar honours, not deriv'd
From successary, but purchas'd with my blood.—

The poet doubtless wrote 'successry,' which, though not adopted in our language, would be, on many occasions, as here, a much more significant phrase than ancestry.

THE LITTLE FRENCH LAWYER.

Act i. sc. i. Dinant's speech:—

Are you become a patron too? 'Tis a new one,
No more on't, &c.

Seward reads:—

Are you become a patron too? How long
Have you been conning this speech? 'Tis a new one, &c.

If conjectural emendation, like this, be allowed, we might venture to read:—

Are you become a patron to a new tune?

or,

Are you become a patron? 'Tis a new tune.

Ib.

Din. Thou wouldst not willingly
Live a protested coward, or be call'd one?
Cler. Words are but words.

, Din. Nor wouldst thou take a blow?

Seward's note.

O miserable! Dinant sees through Cleremont's gravity, and the actor is to explain it. 'Words are but words,' is the last struggle of affected morality.

VALENTINIAN.

Act i. sc. 3.

It is a real trial of charity to read this scene with tolerable temper towards Fletcher. So very slavish—so reptile—
are the feelings and sentiments represented as duties. And yet remember he was a bishop’s son, and the duty to God was the supposed basis.

Personals, including body, house, home, and religion; —property, subordination, and inter-community; —these are the fundamentals of society. I mean here, religion negatively taken,—so that the person be not compelled to do or utter, in relation of the soul to God, what would be, in that person, a lie; —such as to force a man to go to church, or to swear that he believes what he does not believe. Religion, positively taken, may be a great and useful privilege, but cannot be a right,—were it for this only that it cannot be pre-defined. The ground of this distinction between negative and positive religion, as a social right, is plain. No one of my fellow-citizens is encroached on by my not declaring to him what I believe respecting the super-sensual; but should every man be entitled to preach against the preacher, who could hear any preacher? Now it is different in respect of loyalty. There we have positive rights, but not negative rights; —for every pretended negative would be in effect a positive; —as if a soldier had a right to keep to himself, whether he would, or would not, fight. Now, no one of these fundamentals can be rightfully attacked, except when the guardian of it has abused it to subvert one or more of the rest. The reason is, that the guardian, as a fluent, is less than the permanent which he is to guard. He is the temporary and mutable mean, and derives his whole value from the end. In short, as robbery is not high treason, so neither is every unjust act of a king the converse. All must be attacked and endangered. Why? Because the king, as a to A., is a mean to A. or subordination, in a far higher sense than a proprietor, as b. to B. is a mean to B. or property.

Act ii. sc. 2. Claudia’s speech:

Chimney-pieces! &c.

The whole of this speech seems corrupt; and if accurately printed,—that is, if the same in all the prior editions, irremediably but by bold conjecture. ‘Till my tackle, should be, I think, while, &c.

Act iii. sc. 1. B. and F. always write as if virtue or goodness were a sort of talisman, or strange something,
that might be lost without the least fault on the part of the owner. In short their chaste ladies value their chastity as a material thing,—not as an act or state of being; and this mere thing being imaginary, no wonder that all their women are represented with the minds of strumpets, except a few irrational humorists, far less capable of exciting our sympathy than a Hindoo, who has had a bason of cow-broth thrown over him;—for this, though a debasing superstition, is still real, and we might pity the poor wretch, though we cannot help despising him. But B. and F.'s Lucinas are clumsy fictions. It is too plain that the authors had no one idea of chastity as a virtue, but only such a conception as a blind man might have of the power of seeing, by handling an ox's eye. In The Queen of Corinth, indeed, they talk differently; but it is all talk, and nothing is real in it but the dread of losing a reputation. Hence the frightful contrast between their women (even those who are meant for virtuous) and Shakspere's. So, for instance, The Maid in the Mill:—a woman must not merely have grown old in brothels, but have chuckled over every abomination committed in them with a rampant sympathy of imagination, to have had her fancy so drunk with the minutiae of lechery as this icy chaste virgin evinces hers to have been.

It would be worth while to note how many of these plays are founded on rapes,—how many on incestuous passions, and how many on mere lunacies. Then their virtuous women are either crazy superstitions of a merely bodily negation of having been acted on, or strumpets in their imaginations and wishes, or, as in this Maid in the Mill, both at the same time. In the men, the love is merely lust in one direction,—exclusive preference of one object. The tyrant's speeches are mostly taken from the mouths of indignant denouncers of the tyrant's character, with the substitution of 'I' for 'he,' and the omission of the prefatory 'he acts as if he thought' so and so. The only feelings they can possibly excite are disgust at the Aeciuses, if regarded as sane loyalists, or compassion, if considered as Bedlamites. So much for their tragedies. But even their comedies are, most of them, disturbed by the fantasticalness, or gross caricature, of the persons or incidents. There are few characters that you can really like,—(even though you should have erased from your mind all the
filth which bespatters the most likeable of them, as Piniero in *The Island Princess* for instance,)—scarcely one whom you can love. How different this from Shakspeare, who makes one have a sort of sneaking affection even for his Barnardines;—whose very Iagos and Richards are awful, and, by the counteracting power of profound intellects, rendered fearful rather than hateful;—and even the exceptions, as Goneril and Regan, are proofs of superlative judgment and the finest moral tact, in being left utter monsters, *nulla virtute redemptae*, and in being kept out of sight as much as possible,—they being, indeed, only means for the excitement and deepening of noblest emotions towards the Lear, Cordelia, &c. and employed with the severest economy! But even Shakspeare’s grossness—that which is really so, independently of the increase in modern times of vicious associations with things indifferent—for there is a state of manners conceivable so pure, that the language of Hamlet at Ophelia’s feet might be a harmless rallying, or playful teasing, of a shame that would exist in Paradise)—at the worst, how diverse in kind is it from Beaumont and Fletcher’s! In Shakspeare it is the mere generalities of sex, mere words for the most part, seldom or never distinct images, all head-work, and fancy-drolleries; there is no sensation supposed in the speaker. I need not proceed to contrast this with B. and F.

**ROLLO.**

This is, perhaps, the most energetic of Fletcher’s tragedies. He evidently aimed at a new Richard III. in Rollo;—but as in all his other imitations of Shakspeare, he was not philosopher enough to bottom his original. Thus, in Rollo, he has produced a mere personification of outrageous wickedness, with no fundamental characteristic impulses to make either the tyrant’s words or actions philosophically intelligible. Hence the most pathetic situations border on the horrible, and what he meant for the terrible, is either hateful, *τὸ μισητὲν*, or ludicrous. The scene of Baldwin's sentence in the third act is probably the grandest working of passion in all B. and F.'s dramas;—but the very magnificence of filial affection given to Edith, in this
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noble scene, renders the after scene—(in imitation of one of the least Shakspearian of all Shakspeare's works, if it be his, the scene between Richard and Lady Anne,)—in which Edith is yielding to a few words and tears, not only unnatural, but disgusting. In Shakspeare, Lady Anne is described as a weak, vain, very woman throughout.

Act i. sc. 1.

Gis. He is indeed the perfect character
Of a good man, and so his actions speak him.

This character of Aubrey, and the whole spirit of this and several other plays of the same authors, are interesting as traits of the morals which it was fashionable to teach in the reigns of James I. and his successor, who died a martyr to them. Stage, pulpit, law, fashion,—all conspired to enslave the realm. Massinger's plays breathe the opposite spirit; Shakspeare's the spirit of wisdom which is for all ages. By the by, the Spanish dramatists—Calderon, in particular,—had some influence in this respect, of romantic loyalty to the greatest monsters, as well as in the busy intrigues of B. and F.'s plays.

THE WILDOGOOSE CHASE.

Act ii. sc. 1. Belleur's speech:—

—That wench, methinks,
If I were but well set on, for she is a fable,
If I were but hounded right, and one to teach me.

SYMPSON reads 'affable,' which Colman rejects, and says, 'the next line seems to enforce' the reading in the text.

Pity, that the editor did not explain wherein the sense, 'seemingly enforced by the next line,' consists. May the true word be 'a sable,' that is, a black fox, hunted for its precious fur? Or 'at-able,'—as we now say,—'she is come-at-able?'
Beaumont and Fletcher

A WIFE FOR A MONTH.

Act iv. sc. 1. Alphonso's speech:—

Betwixt the cold bear and the raging lion
Lies my safe way.

Seward's note and alteration to—

'Twixt the cold bears, far from the raging lion—

This Mr. Seward is a blockhead of the provoking species.
In his itch for correction, he forgot the words—'lies my
safe way!' The Bear is the extreme pole, and thither
he would travel over the space contained between it and
'the raging lion.'

THE PILGRIM.

Act iv. sc. 2.

Alinda's interview with her father is lively, and happily
n't off; but this scene with Roderigo is truly excellent.
Altogether, indeed, this play holds the first place in B. and
F.'s romantic entertainments, Lustspiele, which collectively
are their happiest performances, and are only inferior to the
romance of Shakspeare in the As You Like It, Twelfth
Night, &c.

Ib.

Ahn. To-day you shall wed Sorrow,
And Repentance will come to-morrow.

Read 'Pentience,' or else—

Repentance, she will come to-morrow.

THE QUEEN OF CORINTH.

Act ii. sc. 1.

Merione's speech. Had the scene of this tragi-comedy
been laid in Hindostan instead of Corinth, and the gods
here addressed been the Veeshnoo and Co. of the Indian
Pantheon, this rant would not have been much amiss.
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In respect of style and versification, this play and the following of Bonduca may be taken as the best, and yet as characteristic, specimens of Beaumont and Fletcher's dramas. I particularly instance the first scene of the Bonduca. Take Shakspeare's Richard II., and having selected some one scene of about the same number of lines, and consisting mostly of long speeches, compare it with the first scene in Bonduca,—not for the idle purpose of finding out which is the better, but in order to see and understand the difference. The latter, that of B. and F., you will find a well arranged bed of flowers, each having its separate root, and its position determined aforehand by the will of the gardener,—each fresh plant a fresh volition. In the former you see an Indian figtree, as described by Milton;—all is growth, evolution, γένεσις;—each line, each word almost, begets the following, and the will of the writer is an interfusion, a continuous agency, and not a series of separate acts. Shakspeare is the height, breadth, and depth of Genius: Beaumont and Fletcher the excellent mechanism, in juxta-position and succession, of talent.

THE NOBLE GENTLEMAN.

Why have the dramatists of the times of Elizabeth, James I. and the first Charles become almost obsolete, with the exception of Shakspeare? Why do they no longer belong to the English, being once so popular? And why is Shakspeare an exception?—One thing, among fifty, necessary to the full solution is, that they all employed poetry and poetic diction on unpoetic subjects, both characters and situations, especially in their comedy. Now Shakspeare is all, all ideal,—of no time, and therefore for all times. Read, for instance, Marine's panegyric in the first scene of this play:—

Know
The eminent court, to them that can be wise,
And fasten on her blessings, is a sun, &c.

What can be more unnatural and inappropriate,—(not only is, but must be felt as such)—than such poetry in the mouth of a silly dupe? In short, the scenes are mock dialogues, in which the poet solus plays the ventriloquist, but cannot keep down his own way of expressing himself.
Beaumont and Fletcher

Heavy complaints have been made respecting the transposing of the old plays by Cibber; but it never occurred to these critics to ask, how it came that no one ever attempted to transpose a comedy of Shakspeare's.

THE CORONATION.

Act i. Speech of Seleucus:—

Altho' he be my enemy, should any
Of the gay flies that buzz about the court.
Sit to catch trouts i' the summer, tell me so,
I durst, &c.

Colman's note.

Pshaw! 'Sit' is either a misprint for 'set,' or the old and still provincial word for 'set,' as the participle passive of 'seat' or 'set.' I have heard an old Somersetshire gardener say:—'Look, Sir! I set these plants here; those yonder I sit yesterday.'

Act ii. Speech of Arcadius:—

Nay, some will swear they love their mistress,
Would hazard lives and fortunes, &c.

Read thus:—

Nay, some will swear they love their mistress so,
They would hazard lives and fortunes to preserve
One of her hairs brighter than Berenice's,
Or young Apollo's; and yet, after this, &c.

'They would hazard'—furnishes an anapest for an iambus.
'And yet,' which must be read, aynēt, is an instance of the enclitic force in an accented monosyllable. 'Aynēt,' is a complete iambus; but anyet is, like spirit, a dibracch o o, trocheized, however, by the arsis or first accent damping, though not extinguishing, the second.

WIT AT SEVERAL WEAPONS.

Act 4. Oldcraft's speech:

I'm arm'd at all points, &c.

It would be very easy to restore all this passage to metre, by supplying a sentence of four syllables, which the reason-
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Reading almost demands, and by correcting the grammar. Read thus:—

Arm'd at all points 'gainst treachery, I hold
My humour firm. If, living, I can see thee
Thrive by thy wits, I shall have the more courage,
Dying, to trust thee with my lands. If not,
The best wit, I can hear of, carries them.
For since so many in my time and knowledge,
Rich children of the city, have concluded
For lack of wit in beggary, I'd rather
Make a wise stranger my executor,
Than a fool son my heir, and have my lands call'd
After my wit than name: and that's my nature!

Ib. Oldcraft's speech:—

To prevent which I have sought out a match for her.—

Read

Which to prevent I've sought a match out for her.

Ib. Sir Gregory's speech:—

——Do you think
I'll have any of the wits hang upon me after I am married once?

Read it thus:—

Do you think
That I'll have any of the wits to hang
Upon me after I am married once?

and afterwards—

Is it a fashion in London

To marry a woman, and to never see her?

The superfluous 'to' gives it the Sir Andrew Ague-cheek character.

THE FAIR MAID OF THE INN.

Act ii. Speech of Albertus:—

But, Sir,

By my life, I vow to take assurance from you,
That right hand never more shall strike my son,

Chop his hand off!

In this (as, indeed, in all other respects; but most in this)

it is that Shakspeare is so incomparably superior to Fletcher.
Beaumont and Fletcher and his friend,—in judgment! What can be conceived more unnatural and motiveless than this brutal resolve? How is it possible to feel the least interest in Albertus afterwards? or in Cesario after his conduct?

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN.

On comparing the prison scene of Palamon and Arcite, Act ii. sc. 2, with the dialogue between the same speakers, Act i. sc. 2, I can scarcely retain a doubt as to the first act's having been written by Shakspeare. Assuredly it was not written by B. and F. I hold Jonson more probable than either of these two.

The main presumption, however, for Shakspeare's share in this play rests on a point, to which the sturdy critics of this edition (and indeed all before them) were blind,—that is, the construction of the blank verse, which proves beyond all doubt an intentional imitation, if not the proper hand, of Shakspeare. Now, whatever improbability there is in the former, (which supposes Fletcher conscious of the inferiority, the too poetical minus-dramatic nature, of his versification, and of which there is neither proof, nor likelihood), adds so much to the probability of the latter. On the other hand, the harshness of many of these very passages, a harshness unrelieved by any lyrical inter-breathings, and still more the want of profundity in the thoughts, keep me from an absolute decision.

Act i. sc. 3. Emilia's speech:—

—-Since his depart, his sports,
Tho' craving seriousness and skill, &c.

I conjecture 'imports,' that is, duties or offices of importance. The flow of the versification in this speech seems to demand the trochaic ending — o; while the text blends jingle and kisses to the annoyance of less sensitive ears than Fletcher's—not to say, Shakspeare's.
THE WOMAN HATER.

Act i. sc. 2.

This scene from the beginning is prose printed as blank verse, down to the line—

E'en all the valiant stomachs in the court—

where the verse recommences. This transition from the prose to the verse enhances, and indeed forms, the comic effect. Lazarillo concludes his soliloquy with a hymn to the goddess of plenty.