

1914

Shakespeare's fools

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CLARK

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

THESIS
SHAKESPEARE'S FOOLS

Submitted by
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1914

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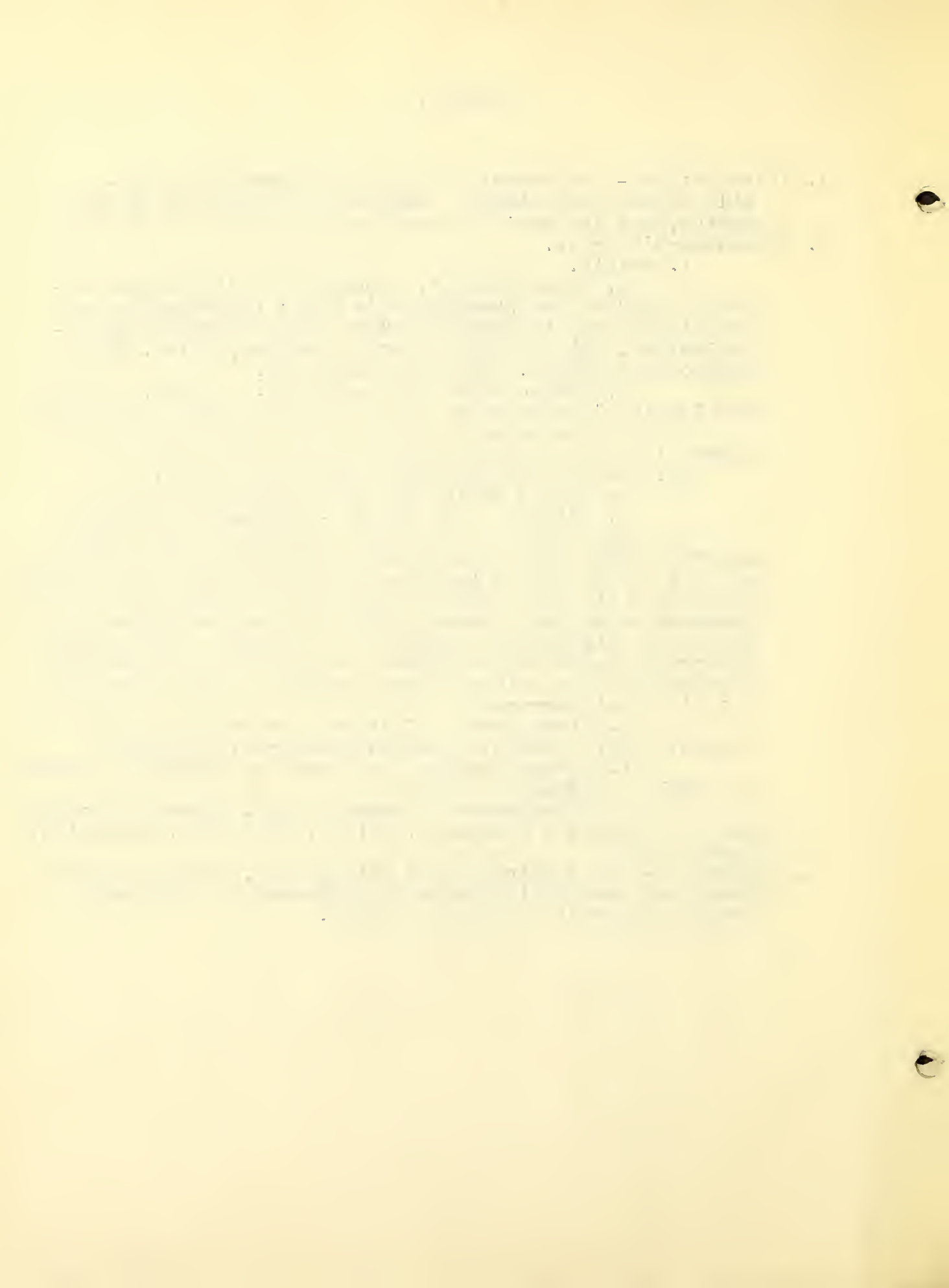


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OUTLINE.

- A. Introduction - The domestic fool of Shakespeare's day - Will Summers and others. Sketch of the history of the custom, and the position and characteristics of the fool.
- B. Shakespeare's fools.
 - I. Origin.
 - a. "Vice theory". Fundamental differences between the Vice and Shakespeare's Fool; illustrations of the Vice theory by Professor Ward and Professor Hudson - Ambidexter, Subtle Shift, Diccon, Dericke, Miles, Nano, Babulo; Merrygreek, Cacurgus, Whetstone.
 - b. Influence of the "stultus". "Pausa, et Stultus loquitur" arrangement in Marlowe and other dramatists.
 - c. Shakespeare's Fools as a combination of all three elements - domestic jester, Vice, and stultus.
 - II. Distinction between "clown" and "fool".
 - a. Hayn's definition unreliable in practice.
 - b. Idiocy in the "fool" - Townsend's article.
 - III. The Fools in the plays. Division into three groups. First group (earliest and latest plays) conventional, the center of a subordinate episode rather than related closely to the main plot, and showing a weakness for the humorous monologue. Second group, "climax as buffoon, critic, and man of the world"; keynote of the plot. Third group, the tragic Fools; use of comedy as a vital and interpretative part of the main emotional crisis". "Lear's Fool is the final achievement."
 - a. First group - Costard, the Dromios, Speed and Launce, Peter, Grumio, Lavache; Antolycus, Trinculo.
 - b. Second group - (influence of Falstaff), Launcelot Gobbo, Touchstone, Feste.
 - c. Third group - Pompey, Boult, Clowns in Othello and in Antony and Cleopatra, Yorick, Thersites, Apemantus, Lear's Fool.
- C. Conclusion - The passing of the motley fool, but the significance and lasting influence of Shakespeare's humorous ideals: humor as a reforming power.



SHAKESPEARE'S FOOLS.

"Harry, will you lend me ten pounds?"

Douce
II p.318

King Henry the Eighth smiled indulgently, although a bit nonplussed by the amount. The wants of this favorite fool of his were usually simple - "coate and cappe of green clothe with a hoode to the same, fringed with red crule and lyned with fryse" would last him a year or more - and his life was as sheltered as that of one of the king's own family. "What to do?" he asked.

"Marry to pay off some of the cardinal's creditors," quoth he, "who have been hounding me to go bond for their money."

"Nest of
Ninnies",
p. 46

Cardinal Wolsey, none too fond of this keen - sighted jester, "denied indignantly; but in the end the fool gained his point, saying "If I pay the ten pounds not where thou owest it, I'll give twenty for it." Then he gave the money to the poor at the palace gate, and justified the "debt" so as to draw a laugh from all, except perhaps the smarting cardinal.

II p.306

This was Will Sommers (Somer, Somar, Summers, or what you will), one of the most famous of a long line of court fools and jesters whose origin is lost in antiquity. Tradition has it that Democritus acted in the capacity of professional fool at the court of Darius the Persian; and the custom was probably one of the classical survivals in the Middle Ages in Europe. Douce says "there is reason to think that there were court fools in England during the Saxon period," a theory which Tennyson has followed in giving King Arthur a fool, Dagonet, who satirized his enemies and clung to him even in his last hour of defeat.

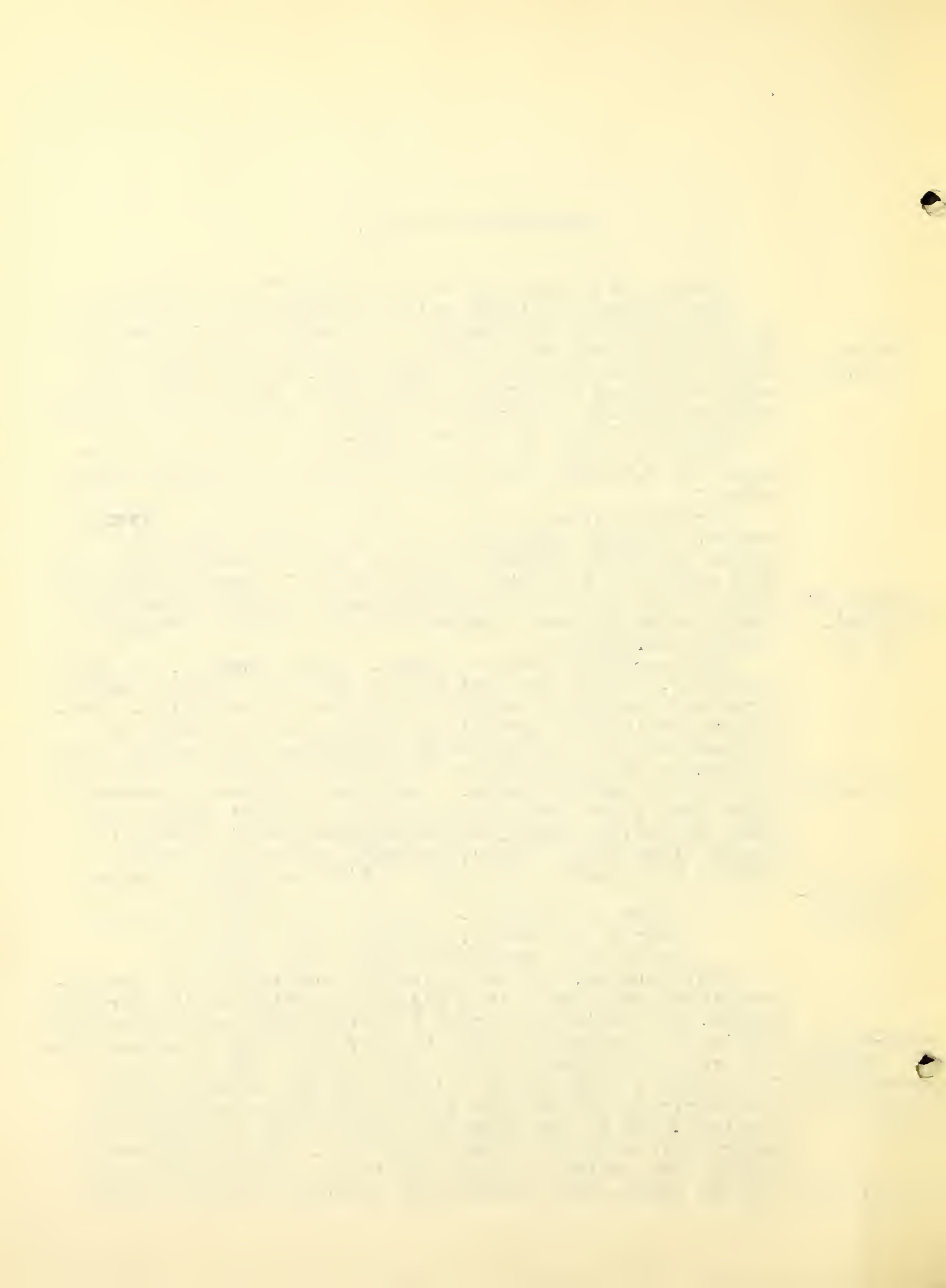
"Last Tour-
nament"

"Saying
'What art thou?' - and the voice about his feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, 'I am thy fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again'."

Wace "Roman
des ducs de
Normandie"
MS Reg. 4,
C XI.

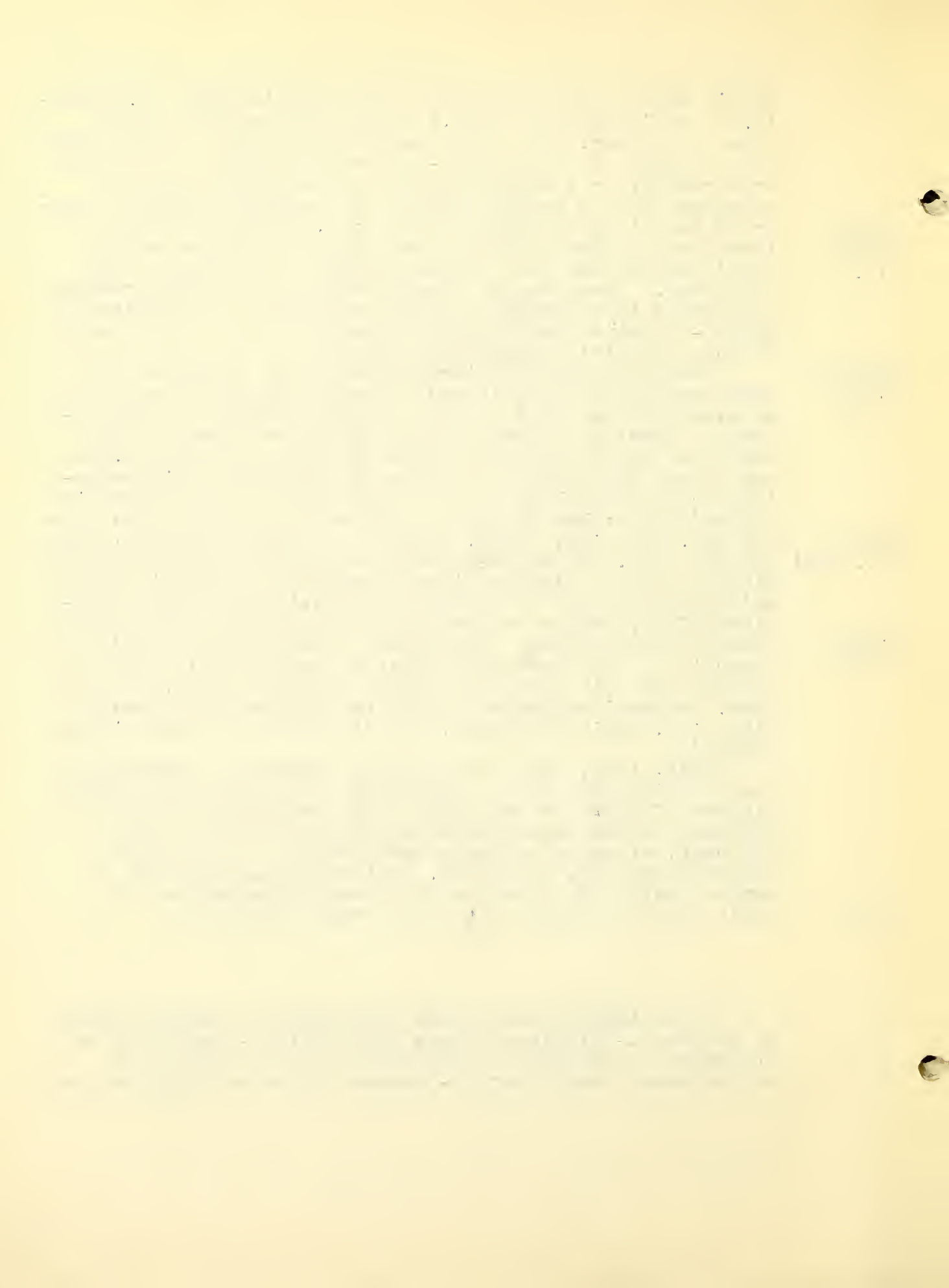
Undisputable, at least, is the fact that from 1066 onward there were fools in England, according to the European custom, for definite stories of their jests and deeds exist. William the Conqueror, when Duke of Normandy, once owed his life to the vigilance of his fool Goles. The ancient "Joculator", "scurra", or "mimus" was the holder of what were strictly two offices - that of buffoon and that of minstrel - but by the eleventh century the two duties were separated, and the fool was pure fool. He was dressed in a rotley coat, with a girdle, and bells at the skirts and elbows; Douce, who is the first authority on the subject,

II p. 317



- thinks that the hood was originally designed to imitate a monk's cowl; it was ornamented with "Ass's ears, or, usually, a cock's head and comb." Our fool carried a large purse or wallet, and a "bauble" representing a fool's head; also a weapon of some sort - either a bladder on a stick, or a rattle, or a wooden dagger. A petticoat was worn sometimes by the genuine idiot, but probably seldom or never by the witty or "artificial" fool, Feste's "I will impetico thy gratuity" to the contrary. Yellow was the fool's color; but Will Sommers appears to have worn red and green. There was no fixed custom. One other interesting detail is noticeable in some of Douce's old prints of fools - a front tooth is often blacked out, a method still in vogue of giving grotesque effects.
- Twelfth Night II, 3
- Twelfth Night I, 5
- Douce II. P311
- Dillon P 189
- P 374
- The privileges and immunities of the "allowed fool" were everywhere acknowledged. Freedom of speech was his to an extent illustrated by the stinging rebuke of Will Sommers to Cardinal Wolsey, and by the other tales of bold repartee even to Queen Elizabeth herself. Of course, he had to run the risk of incurring a whipping if his audacity became too unbounded, or happened to fit ill with his master's mood; but in general his satirical banter was unchecked, and king, queen, bishop or cardinal were all grist for his mill. An often-quoted passage from Lodge's "Wit's Miserie" (1599) gives a vigorous picture of the "immoderate and disorderly joy" that was the province of the professional fool, and we may imagine that restraint and whipping were far from common. Triboulet, a famous fool owned by François I, once complained that a certain noble had threatened to have him beaten to death. The king said, "If he does, he shall be hanged within ten minutes afterwards." "Ah, Sire," said Triboulet, "won't you make it ten minutes before!"
- Such, then, were the domestic jesters as Shakespeare was familiar with them. The jester was one of the common figures of court or city life in Shakespeare's London - not only in the household of royalty and nobility, but in the shop, attached to the tavern ménage or to the city corporation, and, above all, on the stage, where the common people went for the wholesome ridicule that the nobles had in private - the fool was everywhere.*

* The inscription on the title-page of Armin's "Nest of Ninnies", - "Stultorum plena sunt omnia", - testifies to the sweep of the fool's popularity; as does that of a contemporary French work, "-Numerus stultorum infinitus est."



Slicer, in the New England Magazine, notices three characteristics of the thought of the time respecting fools, which it behooves us to keep in mind: first, there was a recognized connection between madness and inspiration; second, bodily and mental deformity was universally considered fit food for mirth; third, the prevailing idea of wit seems to have been simply repartee, often of the emptiest sort. Clever bandying of words was sure to raise a laugh, all the more so if a pun happened to be a trifle on the shady side of respectability.

This brings us, then, to the first question that we must seriously consider: Where did Shakespeare get his Fools?

We have comparatively full information as to most of the Poet's sources; we know pretty well what material he had to his hand, and we know that in general it was the existing material that he utilized - for he never seemed to hanker after the fame of an originator or inventor of anything in the literary line. He contented himself with doing everything better than anyone else had ever done it. And this is just what he did with his fools; but those glorious fools of his are so very very far ahead of any previous fools, that they come near to being an innovation of Shakespeare's own, after all.

There is a well-grounded theory that the Fool in Shakespeare is a "direct descendant" of the "Vice" of the old Moralities. The longer I have considered this statement, the less significant it has seemed to me. The stock low-comedy character on the stage must, of course, retain certain points of similarity from one age to another; but I cannot seem to find any argurent for the "Vice" genealogy that much over-reaches that simple fact - a fact which applied no more to the "Vice" than to the yet older comic characters, such as the Devil in the Miracles. On the other hand, a comparison of the Shakespearian fool with the Vice reveals significant differences, the most noticeable of which is the difference in the functions of the two. The Vice in the true Morality is, first of all, the dramatic antagonist. He takes the place of the older Devil, whom he first followed onto the stage, then pestered with all possible irritating torments, and finally drove completely off the boards; and he inherits not only the comic function but also the dramatic importance of his predecessor. Shakespeare's fools, it is hardly necessary to point out, partake in no degree of this antagonistic significance; they represent in no case the forces working against the hero, or the good; and in the cases where the fool is anything more than purely comic, his relations with the plot-characters are such as to suggest the common domestic jester rather than the Vice. The second important difference between the Vice and Shakespeare's fool is that there is never any idea of idiocy connected with the former, while some flavor of wit-wandering is often, if not usually, implied in the latter. This seems an influence not only from the domestic fools of the time but also from the "stultus" of the stage, of which I will speak a little



later. These two differences, then, are such as to halt for a moment the advance of the "Vice theory", while a few of the details supposed to support it may be examined.

Professor Ward and Doctor Hudson both seem to view the history of English drama with one eye upon the "Vice theory". Let us look first at the plays and characters which Ward points out as marking the family history that, according to the best-approved principles of eugenics, began with a Vice and ended with a Fool! I think I have a full list of the references made in his "History of English Dramatic Literature" to this particular development.

I p. 112 The first is a direct parallel between Antolycus, the buffoon of the "Winter's Tale", and Ambidexter, the Vice of "King Cambyses" a transition-play between the moralities and the historical tragedies. Ambidexter has an encounter with two rustics named Hob and Lob, in which he cleverly sets them fighting with each other over his head; the scene irresistibly recalls Antolycus's meeting with the two peasants, and a comparison of the two is perfectly natural.

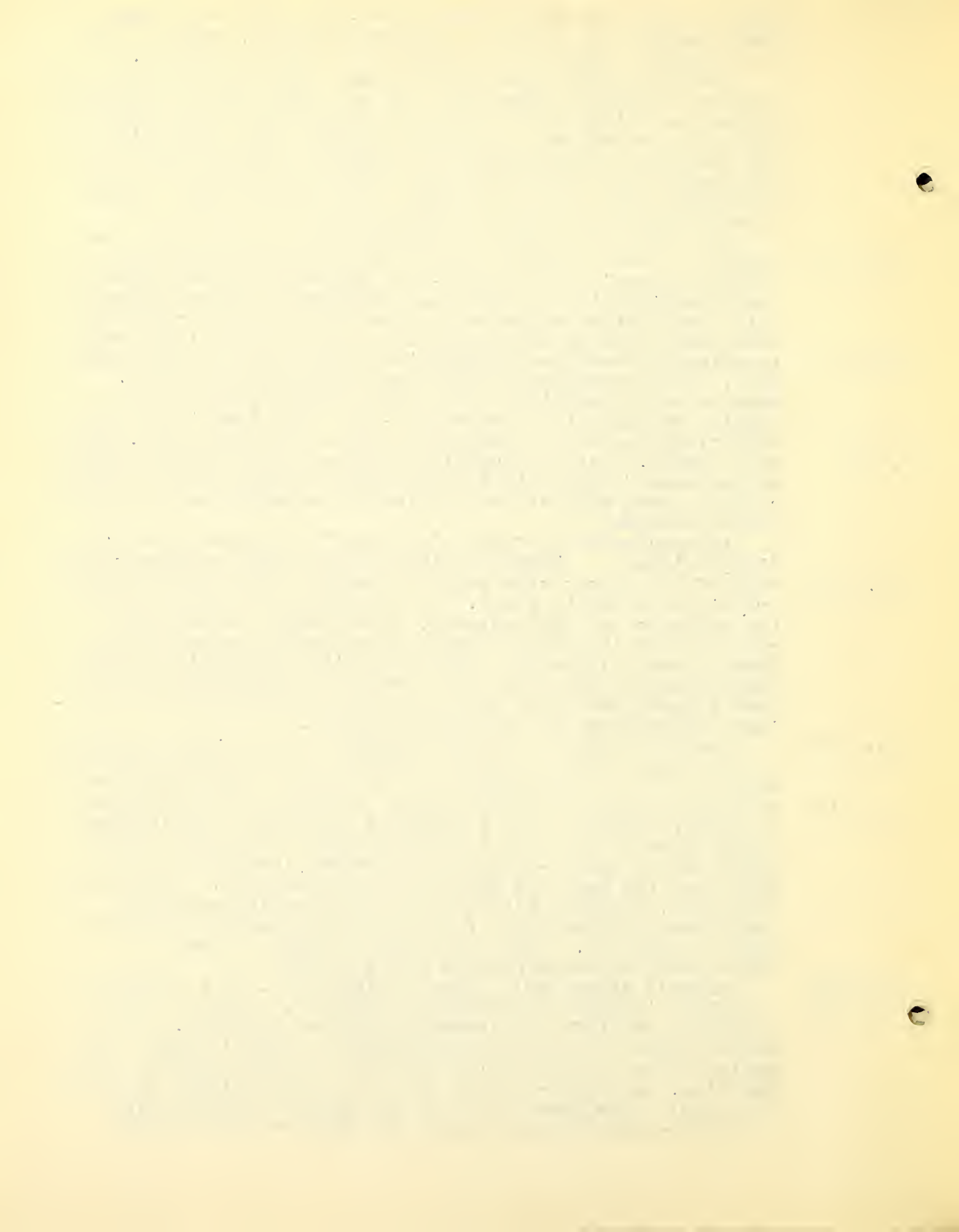
IV Sc. 3 Ward is even justified in his remark that "Antolycus is a genuine descendant of the Vice" - but that fact is far from sufficient basis for a generalisation. Tounsend says, and P. 65 with reason, that the satirical buffoonery of Feste belongs to the same family with Aristophanes and Rabelais; but what could be more absurd than to give the resemblance more than its face value?

I P. 206 An obscure play of Peele's named "Sir Clyomon and Six Clamydes" has "Subtle Shift" as the comic character and Vice of the piece; Ward says "no better illustration of the transition could be found." It is hardly an argument for the clearness of the pedigree, if no better illustration can be found than a play which is no more representative than it was well-known. But why is the combination of the comic function with the Vice a mark of "transition"? We have already seen that this very double nature was the original legacy from the miracle-play Devil.

I p. 143 Diccon in "Gammer Gurton's Needle" is cited as the Vice of the piece; he is a perfect example of the double function, since it is he that causes all the trouble, and thus serves as antagonist. In the same boat is Miles in "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay", one of Greene's two fools: his striking resemblance to the Vice is in his habit of hanging at the heels of the Devil - for Green's jaunty insouciance will drag even the poor old Devil into his comedies. But Diccon and Miles, together with all the other comic characters reminiscent of the Vice, fail to point forward at the same time to the Fool. They are similar rather to some of Shakespeare's famous rusties and dullards.

I p. 221 Green's other fool, Nano in "James IV", is a companion I p. 233 to Babulo in Chettle's "Patient Grissil", - these two are touchingly faithful followers of masters in exile, and deserve mention for their foreshadowing of Lear's Fool. But neither Nano or Babulo show the least family resemblance to the Vice, so they are of no more value than Diccon or Miles as a link. They seem to be of the domestic jester type.

Of the same domestic type, unrelated to the Vice, is



I, p 124

Dericke, the clown of the "Famous Victories of Henry V" (before 1588). As a rule, however, the chronicle-histories and the early tragedies had no comic characters at all - rather an awkward fact for the Vice genealogy; for where should its "direct descent" be traceable if not in the two types of drama that developed directly from the Moralities?

p. 73-74

Doctor Hudson quotes a passage from Ben Jonson's "Staple of News" in which the Vice is called the Fool, and yet mention is made of his wooden dagger. These marks certainly seem to identify the Vice and the Fool - but which, if either, is the ancestor? Douce says "the domestic fool was sometimes,....called the Vice", and the terms were probably somewhat obscured in colloquial use. It would seem that ignorant country wives would use the more familiar term; and thus the use of the word "Fool" would indicate that the Vice had borrowed the name of the old domestic fool, whose existence in England certainly antedated that of the Vice. An argument based on confusion of terms is, at best, unstable and treacherous.

I p, 89

Hudson calls Matthew Merrygreek the Vice of "Roister Doister"; his part in the plot is undoubtedly that of comic antagonist, and yet he is plainly modelled, not on the old Vice, but on the common classical "parasite". True enough, he does fill the vacant position of a Vice; but this hardly constitutes relationship.

I p. 90

also Ward, I, 144

Again, the drama is invaded by the domestic jester in "Misogonus", a play dating from about 1560, in which Cacurgus is a remarkably fine specimen of stage jester - in fact finished and skilful far beyond many of such later date. But did Cacurgus owe his being or characteristics to the Vice? On the contrary, his origin is betrayed by the fact that "he is usually called, both by himself and others, Will Summer; as though he were understood to model his action after the celebrated court Fool of Henry the Eighth".

I p. 97

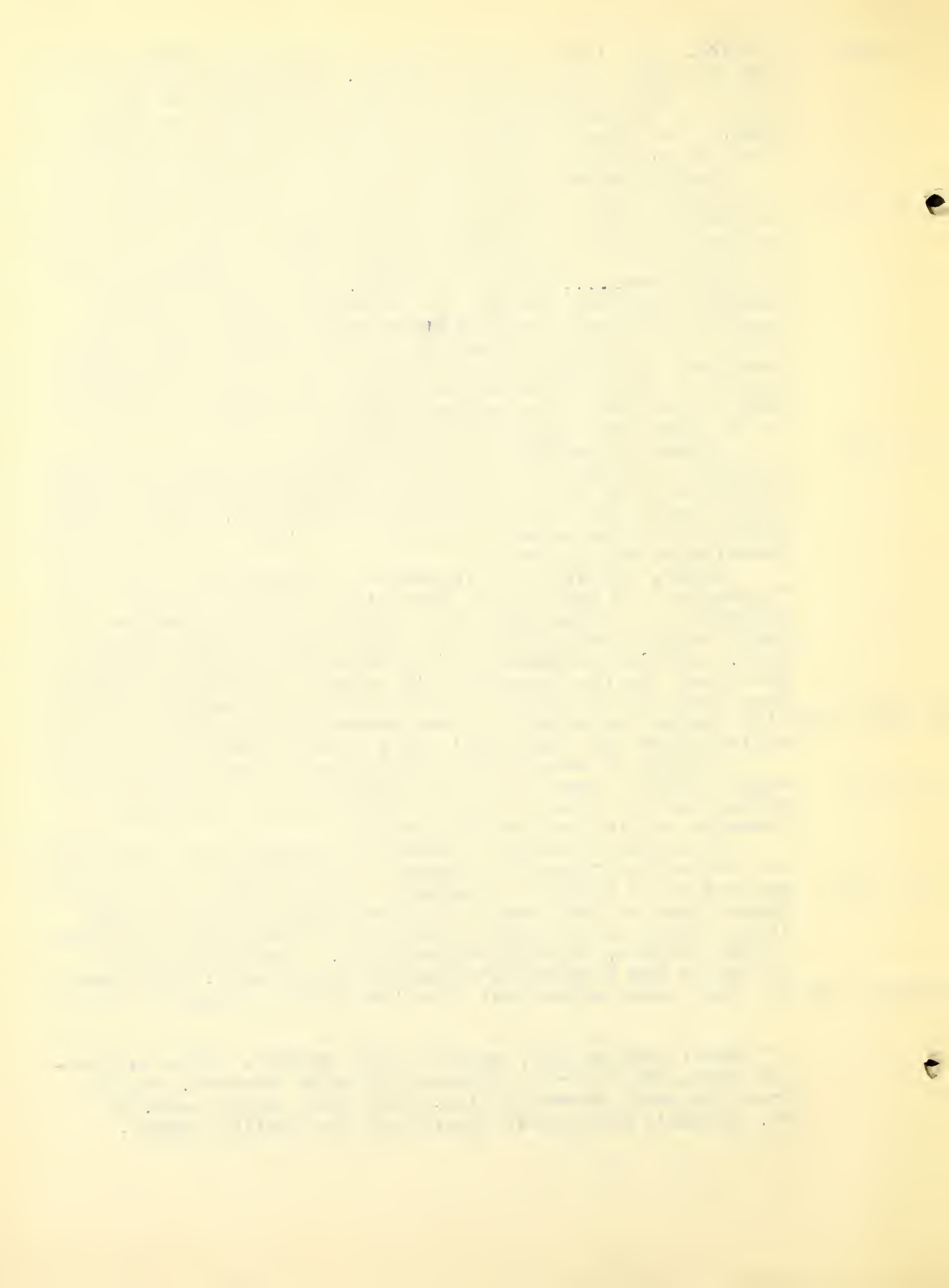
Finally, a reference in Whetstone's "Promos and Cassandra" (1578), deprecating the dramatic use of "clowns as companions to kings", would seem to hint at a similar domestic origin for the stage clown.

II p. 306

Hamlet III, 2

A slightly different variety of clown is the "stultus", an interesting figure in classical imitations. His ancestry has its roots outside of England - Douce says he "can be traced back to the Greek and Roman theatres" - but his part in the drama is typically expressed in the stage direction, "Pausa; vadant, et stultus loquitur".* Stultus loquitur - and there the playwright's responsibility ends! What wonder that comic actors got into the habit of speaking "more

* "Pause; they go out, and the Fool speaks". This particular quotation is from a Mystery of Saint Barbara, dating from the early Norman period, mentioned, Douce says, in "Mr. Malone's Historical Account of the English Stage".



than is set down for them," when improvisation had been demanded of them as coolly as this! Marlowe himself considered comic writing beneath his dignity; for an often-quoted stage direction of his reads "Exit Clown, saying anything". Probably no influence was more potent than that of the "stultus" in divorcing the comic character from the close relation to the plot that was characteristic of the old Vice. This independence from the main plot is, as will be seen, a trait of Shakespeare's earlier fools.

What shall we say, then of the ancestry of Shakespeare's fools? Simply that they were the result of observation, plus his usual interpretative power; and that their relation to the Vice is merely that of one stock low-comedy character to its predecessor on the stage- not its immediate predecessor, at that. Shakespeare drew his fools from what he saw with his eyes- that is, from three sources: the domestic or professional jesters, the stage "Vice", and the stage "stultus"; he combined characteristics of all three and made the product his own. He held ^{up} to nature the mirror of his subtle, vivifying genius that must search the hidden depths even of a poor jester's being, and show him to us as a human soul. He thought no comic speech or scene undeserving of the best efforts of his rare wit: buffoonery, irony, satire, wit, and humor flowed with equal ease from his versatile genius and were kept in harmonious proportion by his keen sense of structure and balance. Surely that glorious line of fools, some with the brilliance of the cleverest Elizabethan punsters, some with the gay recklessness and audacity of Greene's most famous heroes, and the breathtaking resourcefulness of Falstaff, some with a lyrical gift rivalling the greatest poets in England, and some with depths of personality almost as fascinating and unfathomable as Hamlet himself - surely these glorious Fools of Shakespeare are descended from the Vice only as man is descended from the ape!

Before we enter upon the individual study of the gallery of fools, there is one more question that arises for brief discussion. Hayn, with characteristic German scientific accuracy, attends to settling, before he allows himself to leave the first page of his scholarly monograph, the matter of the distinction between the terms "clown" and "fool." Technically, the difference is as Hayn states it -

p. 3

* Mr. Collier, in his introduction to the "Nest of Ninnies," says, "There can be no doubt that the dramatic clowns and fools in the plays of Shakespeare originated in the common practice of entertaining domestic fools by the nobility and gentry." He later admits the influence of the Vice.

a clown is a rustic, unconsciously humorous, as circumstances make him so; while a fool is a professional, artificially witty, as he makes himself so. But it is a great mistake to read the strict meaning into the use of either word, in Elizabethan, or indeed in modern, English; hence the distinction is valueless. The looseness in the use of the two words is well shown - to bring up just one instance - when Rosalind refers to Touchstone as "the clownish Fool". Not even the most careless reader of the play would charge Touchstone with so much as the faintest touch of rusticity!

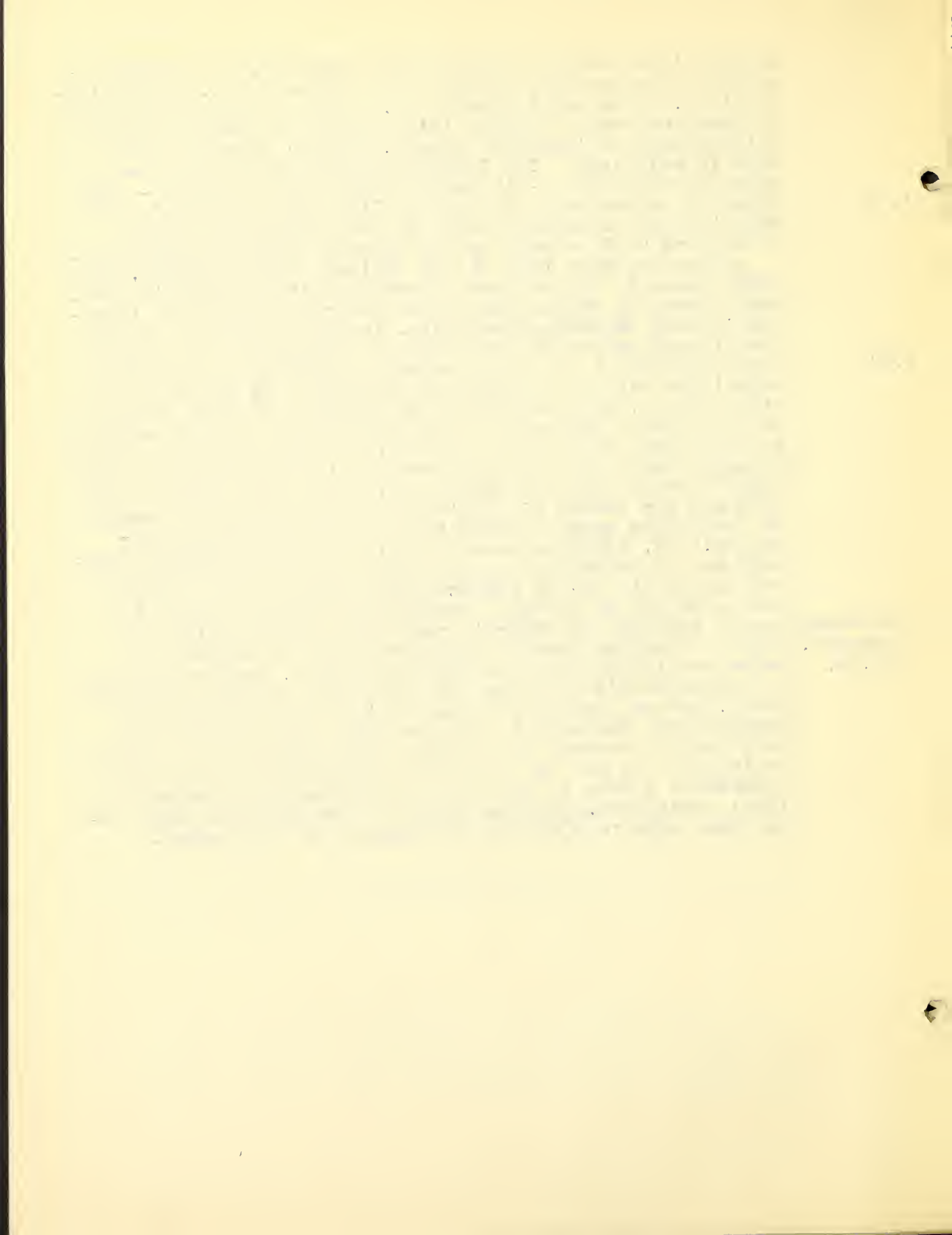
As for the fact that "fool" implied genuine idiocy, that usage seems to be far from predominant in Elizabeth's time. Some flavor of madness does seem nevertheless, to be inherent in many Shakespearian fools. In this connection an interesting question is propounded by Townsend, in the Canadian Magazine; "If, as is certain, Shakespeare was well acquainted with the nature and profession of the court or stage jester, why, as is equally certain, does he generally make his other characters consider the Fool really wanting in intellect, or in some way abnormal?" His answer is astonishingly unsatisfactory- he ascribes it to the alleged fact that "in this age of fighting, hard work, and brawn,...the idle man who earned his living by his wits was an anomaly: in the Middle ages all eccentricity was labelled as insanity!" Mr. Townsend seems to forget that Shakespeare himself was an example of a perfectly respectable "idle" man who earned his living unmistakably by his wits, and was never, so far as we know, suspected of mental aberration.

One is reminded of Cicero's maxim that it is better to leave a question frankly unanswered than to resort to a senseless invention to save your own skin. The explanation of Shakespeare's attitude may lie in the ancient status of fools, before London was overrun with the artificial and professional jesters: it may have been more or less conventional to pretend to consider imbecility still a factor, as it formerly had been: for even Elizabethan writers considered it a duty to look back to "the good old days" for ideal conditions. Looking back to "the good old days" began when Adam took up his life outside of the Garden.

I, 3

P.61

"De Natura
Deorum",
I, 30, 84.

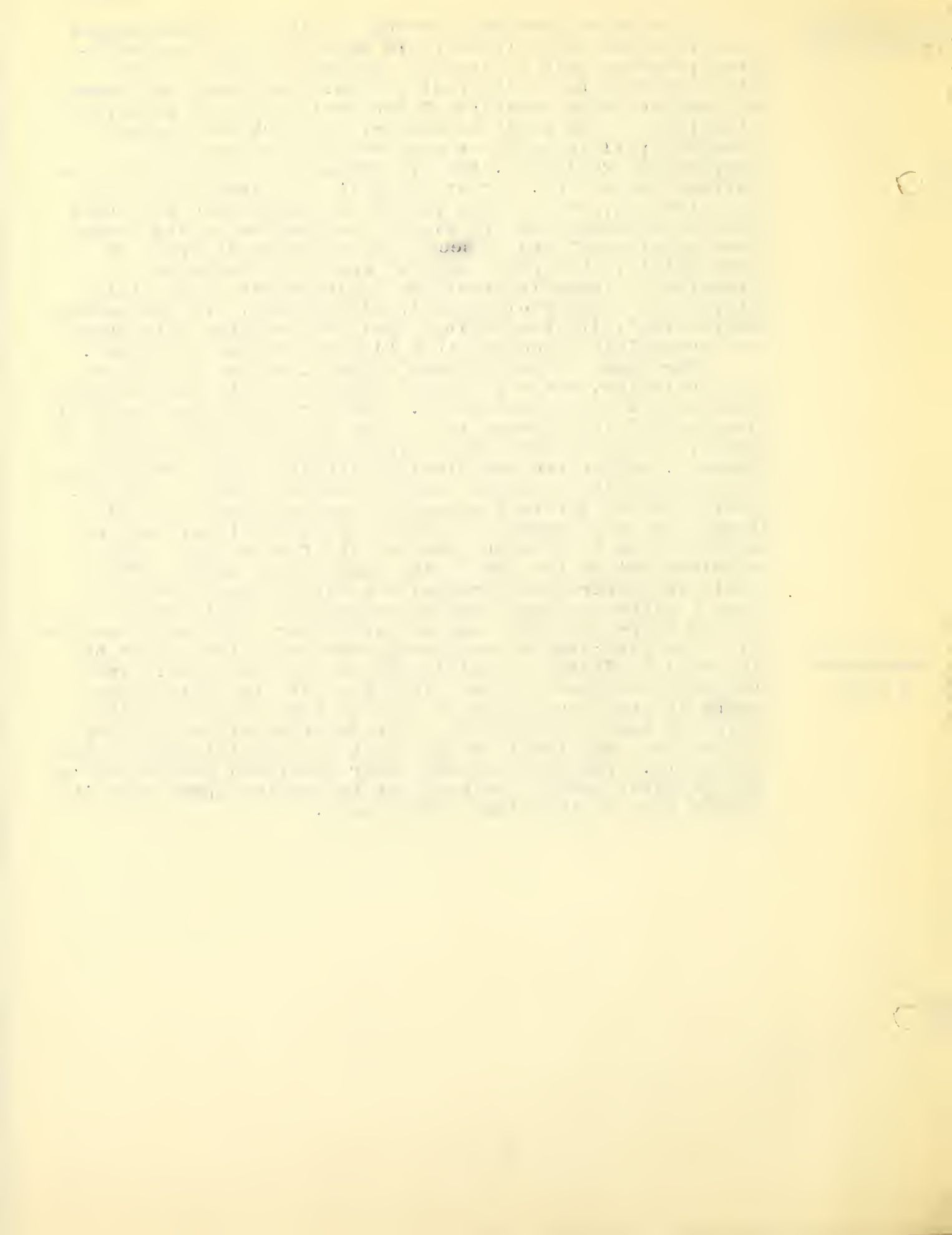


Shakespeare
Primer, 1875

Ever since Professor Dowden led the way, Shakespeare criticism has had a tendency to swing into the now well-worn primrose path of tracing, in four or five stages, the development of the poet's mind. The truth and power of such an interpretation of the Poet's work is inexpressibly great; the cycle of dramas, in which the author's changing philosophy is so wonderfully, pathetically, inspiringly reflected, has all the sweep and symmetry of a perfect human life. By studying the imaginary world he has given us, we can come partly to "comprehend the great soul which exercised the wizard imagination in its countless creations," and we see that by the magic spell of personality, this great body of work is a "psychic organism." There is something so impressive about this stupendous self-revelation, in its breadth, its intensity, and, withal, its simplicity, that the feelings with which we contemplate it amount to a kind of awe and reverence.

The study of Shakespeare's humor, and of his fools in particular, has often been outlined on the same basis as that of his works as a whole. The period of his "youthful joyousness" is followed in turn by all the other phases of humor, deepening into irony, then shading into pathetic fantasy, and at the end glowing with the sunset brightness of returned joy in life. Partly for the sake of variety, partly in the interest of greater compactness, I shall treat the fools under a stricter classification, but one which will not, I think, obscure the four or five stage development to the eye of the Shakespeare lover. The fools fall into three groups: the first being those who show a rather conventional treatment, the influence of common stage clownery, and no particular depth or connection with the plot; the second group represents the climax of the fool as "buffoon, critic and man of the world," and usually connected in some vital way with the main plot; while in the third stage we come to the fullest possibilities of humor, developed, by an interpretative relation to the main emotional crisis, into an almost insupportable intensity. The fools of the later Stratford period belong to the first group, and need not be treated apart from it. Lear's Fool is the final achievement.

Scholderer
p 203



In order to understand the fools of the first group, we must keep in mind the character of the common Elizabethan low comedy. "Shakespeare found the fool coarse, dull, and disreputable;" the attitude of the playwright and litterateur to comic scenes is suggested by the "stultus loquitur" arrangement, and stated unmistakably by several writers, among them Heywood himself. He justifies clownery in "sad and grave histories" by saying that he is obliged to please the less capable, "who grow weary of "serious courses, weighty and material". Sir Philip Sidney deprecated the intrusion of low-comedy; it is commonly allowed that Marlowe's "comic stuff", when written at all, was supplied by some crude hand willing to stoop to such work; and we have already seen that the "stultus" ordinarily spoke largely extempore, embroidering his part with songs, jests, and gags "at his discretion"- the discretion usually being conspicuous by its absence. Most of Tarlton's famous jest-book fairly defies quotation- and he was overwhelmingly the favorite comedian of the time. In short, clownery had been a necessary but reluctant concession from the level of art to the level of the groundlings- "a sop to the mob!" Never before Shakespeare had it been an integral part of the literary drama.

The fools of the first group, including the earliest and latest plays, have a slight flavor of the "stultus" about them, although they are immensely above their predecessors, both as comedians and as artists. The fool is drawn with well-marked individuality, eccentric (our old friend Douce to the contrary,* but with no particular depth of character or philosophy. He is almost unrelated to the main action, but is the center of a subordinate episode of some kind; he often ridicules or comments on incidents of the plot, and still oftener, acts as an unconscious parody on them, but Hodell says "not one of these can be said to stand out dominantly in his own play." His best speeches are often in the form of monologue, where he gets the audience to himself quite in the manner of the "stultus!" His wit is a game of banter and repartee; he is a sophist and what Feste calls a "corrupter of words." Withal, he is an ingenious, spontaneous fun-lover, "speaking an infinite deal of nothing" in a most charming way.

Twelfth
Night III, 1

Merchant of
Venice I.

* " Someone has said that 'Shakespeare has most judiciously varied and discriminated his fools! Without doubting his ability to do so, it remains to be proved that he has- and sometimes his sketches are left so imperfect as to be hard to comprehend." Douce- II p, 299.



Douce says "the clown in 'Love's Labor's Lost' is a mere country fellow", with "not simplicity enough for a natural fool and not wit enough for an artificial one". As a matter of fact, it seems to me that the character of Costard is one of the greatest miracles in Shakespeare.* The lords and ladies in the play might have stepped out of one of the contemporary romances - if, indeed, they had stepped through some miraculous elixir of life on the way - and the plot is wonderful only for a general closeness of texture where other dramatists left loose threads, and a vivid humanness where others followed too closely the classical symmetry of structure. But Costard is so great an advance on any previous work in clownery, that the wonder is how the Shakespearean Fool could have sprung so nearly half-grown, if not as yet fully armed, from the brow of the mighty creator.

Costard's wit is largely of the "blundering foolery" type, but not infrequently a flash of something appears which is lucid and full of meaning. He is distinctly not a master of repartee, although he tries to be, and is called by others "pure wit". His title of "the rhyming fool", given him by Douce, and often quoted, is, I think, unearned. Occasionally, as in the last part of Act IV, Scene 1, he sustains his part of a dialogue by clapping a rhyme to every line of the other speaker's; but the rhymed stichomythia is no more striking in Act IV, Scene 1, than in many other passages throughout the play, of which Costard is innocent, and in general Costard's speech stands out from that of the lords and courtiers by being in prose instead of in verse. In short, Costard is anything but literary. He is a rustic - "a rational hind" - giving a humorous touch to the play by a certain elfish drollery which colors his view of the strange situation in which he finds himself.

The circumstances under which Costard first appears give a hint as to his connection with the plot. He is the first transgressor against the laws of the community of woman-haters, takes his punishment philosophically, - and goes back to Jaquenetta; thus proving in epitome the futility of laboring against love, and acting as a sort of parody on the main action. Dowden says that in the early period "the clown and the lover... reflect certain lights one upon the other... they do not as yet interpenetrate" - and Costard and his successor Launce are perfect examples of this relation. The fact that it is Costard who mixes up the letters

* Victor Scholderer, in his article in the "Library", calls Costard and Launce "among the most original of Shakespeare's comic characters".

V, 2

I, 2

"Mind and Art"
p. 360

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entrusted to him, so as to bring about the denouement of the play, is an incidental, but not the fundamental, basis of his connection with the plot. "His shrewd, untutored rusticity burlesques the don, the curate, the pedant"; his love for Jaquenetta (which he proves as gallantly as ever cavalier did) burlesques the unruly passions of his betters; and, all in all, the play would be thin and empty without him.

V, 2

"Folly in fools bears not so strong a note

As foolery in the wise, when wit doth dote;" but it is an excellent mirror for the latter, nevertheless.

III, 2

In the Comedy of Errors, the two Dromios furnish the low - comedy element, but it is hardly worth mention among the representative Shakespearian clownery. Some slight difference may be detected between them; the Ephesian is a bit sharper of wit, although Antipholus of Ephesus is the simpler and more straightforward of the two masters. But the two servants are nearly as much alike in wit as in figure. They gambol about in high animal spirits, undisturbed by the perplexing situations, except when they take the form of a beating or two; never omitting a chance of slipping a stray pun into a conversation; taking a childish pleasure in the grotesque surprises which alone give body to the play. The description that the Syracusan gives his master of the map as found on the globe - shaped body of his twin's portly wife is a good illustration of his own coarser, rather dull jesting, while his twin's neatness of speech is beautifully shown in the quip "respice finem - beware the rope's-end".

IV, 4

Boas p.196

How stale, flat, and unprofitable do the puppet-like Dromios seem beside the two who next claim our attention! Speed and Launce, the servants of the two gentlemen of Verona whose affairs became so sadly tangled in Milan, "introduce for the first time the Shakespearian clown in the stricter sense", and are the rarest examples of the first group at its best. They give us farce of the cleverest sort, mockery and banter of the most piquant, pure fun and playfulness of the most uproarious - without being in the least necessary to plot, they are absolutely indispensable to the play.

In this play, as in the case of the two Dromios, the quicker-witted servant is allotted to the slower, more credulous master. Speed's flashes of wit, bold word-quibbling, and gay snatches of doggerel contrast sharply with Valentine's modest unselfishness and plain dealing; while Launce's half-droll, half-blundering single-mindedness is a perfect foil to the unscrupulous keenness of Proteus. Except for occasional carryings of a love-letter or two, neither servant has any mechanical connection with the plot - an improvement upon the way in which Costard, by being made the instrument of chance, is dragged into undue and unmeaning prominence. But the adventures of Valentine and Proteus are reflected more or less clearly in those of Speed and Launce, while the main theme of the play depends largely upon the comic characters for its emphasis. Fidelity - and the lack

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of it - is the essence of the story; Launce is the essence of fidelity; and the dog Crab, one of the proverbially faithful animals, is inseparably linked to him. A greater depth of meaning is thus given to the more simple, unconscious clown than is the professional wit.

- II. 11 How strikingly Speed's description of his master in love foreshadows Rosalind! "You were wont, when you laughed," he says, "to crow like a cock; when you walked, to walk like one o'the lions; when you fasted, it was presently after dinner: when you looked sadly, it was for want of money; and now you are metamorphosed with a mistress, that when I look on you, I can hardly think you my master!" Speed is the one who spies Silvia's glove, left not without purpose in Valentine's path; he is also the one who sees through the dainty little trick by which she half-unveils her love for her too unassuming suitor; and he jeers his master well for his modest dullness.

II,1

"Oh jest unseen, inscrutable, invisible,
As a nose on a man's face, or a weathercock on a steeple!"

In an encounter with Launce, Speed's sophisticated wit is often more than matched by his fellow-servant's drollery, which sometimes leaves the irresistible impression that the latter is by no means such a fool as he seems.

II,5.

"Speed-But tell me true, will't be a match?
Launce-Ask my dog; if he say ay, it will; if he say no, it will; if he shake his tail and say nothing, it will.
Speed-The conclusion is then, that it will.

Launce-Thou shalt never get such a secret from me but by a parable."

Such simplicity cannot be wholly artless, although its rarest effectiveness depends upon its seeming to be so. In the episode at the end of Act III, Scene 1, where Speed earns a beating by thrusting himself into Launce's love secrets and thus delaying his master's departure, the upper hand is more openly with Launce. No quotation can give an adequate idea of the whole inimitable scene; but from the first words-

III,1

"Speed- What news, then in your paper?

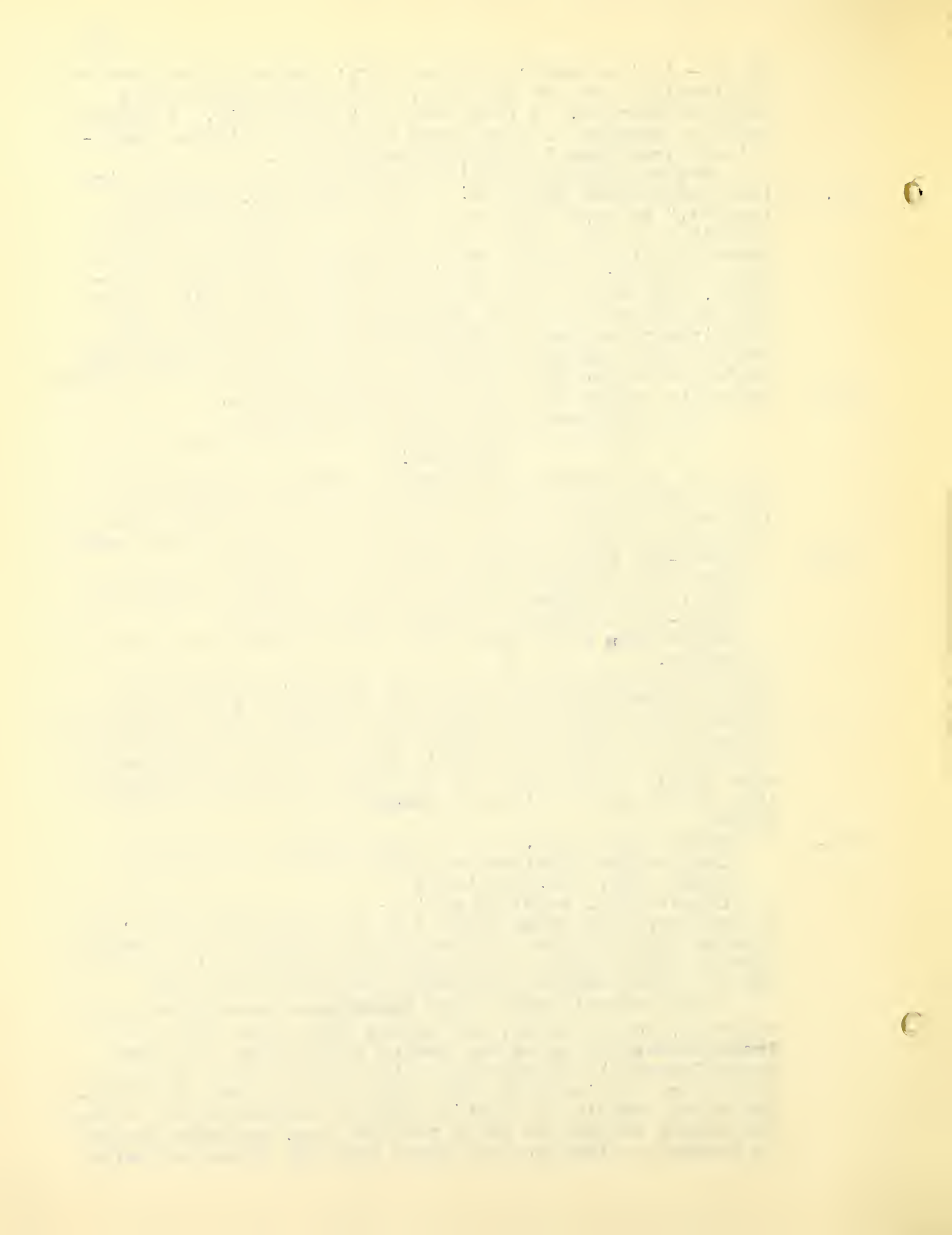
Launce- The blackest news that ever thou heardest.

Speed- Why, man, how black?

Launce- Why, as black as ink-"

to the end, when Speed is at last told that his master has been waiting for him all through this interminable list of "Items" and comments, it is evident that Launce's innocence has his nimble-witted adversary completely outfaced.

But Launce's best-known scenes are those where he is attended, not by Speed, but by his famous dog Crab. It is incomprehensible to me how Dowden could think that pure farce "wearies" Shakespeare in the face of such broad love of fun as, for instance, the third scene of Act II. Still, the double meaning of Crab's parting, reflecting as it does the silent parting of Julia from Proteus, may have seemed to Dowden to vindicate the scene from the charge of being



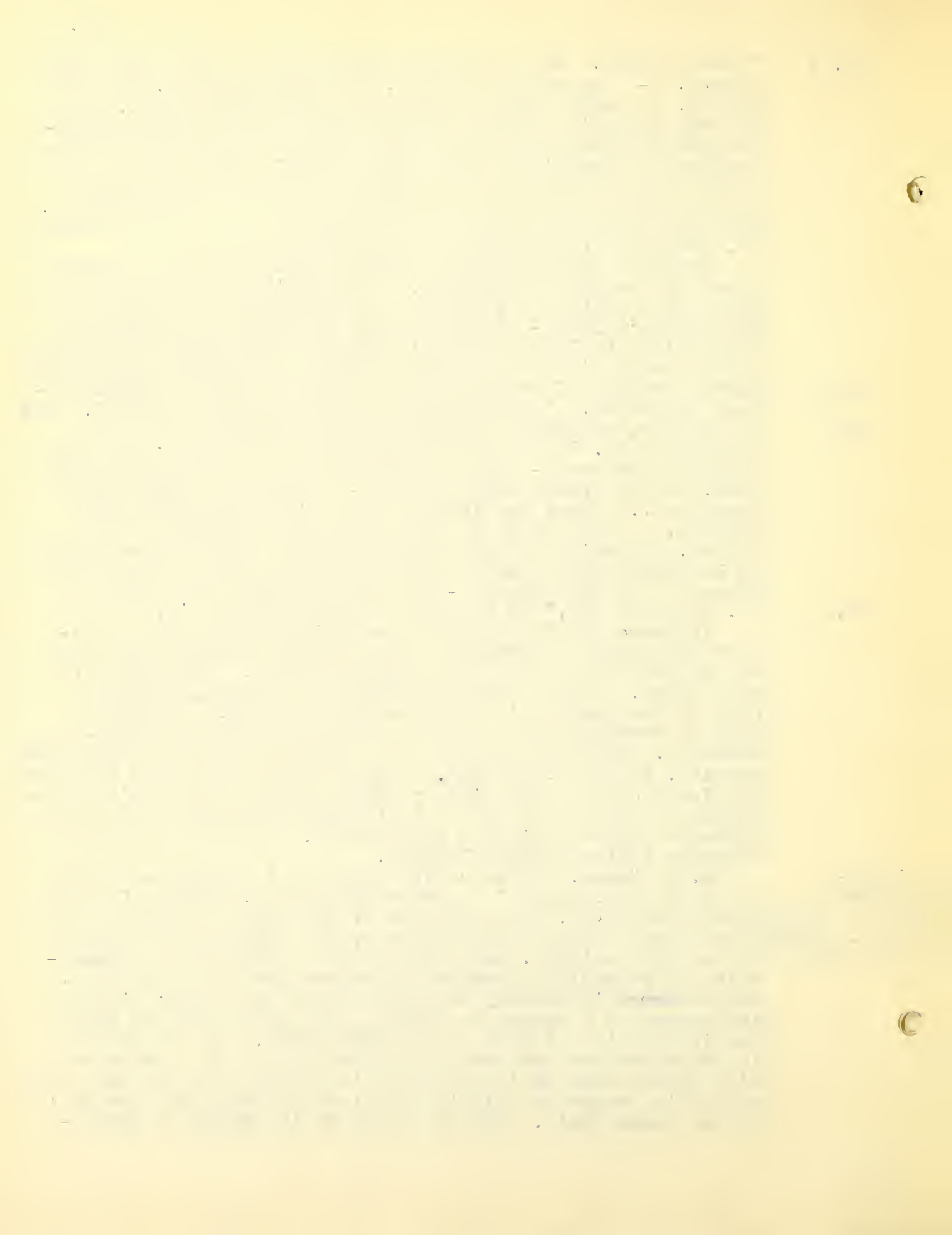
II, 3 "pure farce". How recklessly ridiculous is the whole monologue! - "my mother weening, my father wailing, my sister crying, our maid howling, our cat wringing her hands, and all our house in a great perplexity, yet did not this cruel-hearted cur shed one tear. He is stone, a very pebble stone, and has no more pity in him than a dog"! - and then the pantomime representation of the Launce family, when the shoe that stands for the father "cannot speak a word for weeping," and the "shoe with a hole in it" plays the part of the mother, even to "her breath up and down."

II, 6 The full significance of Crab is bound up in the central theme of the play - fidelity. If Julia's silent farewell is parodied in Launce's pantomime and Proteus's intrusion into his friend's love - affair shines through the adventure of Speed with the "black news" in Launce's itemized love-letter, - still more vital is the inter-relation between the selfish double-dealing of Proteus and the straightforward unselfishness of Launce. "I to myself am dearer than a friend", says

IV, 2 the master, and plans treachery to his friend and to his promised love. "One that I brought up of a puppy"; says the untutored peasant - for the faithfulness is on his side for Crab, not on Crab's part for him - "one that I saved from drowning... I have sat in the stocks for puddings he hath stolen... I have stood on the pillory for geese he hath killed, otherwise he had suffered for't." And the magnitude of his sacrifice in offering the beloved Crab to Silvia in place of the lost poodle - at least it shows his heart to be, like his dog," as big as ten of" his master's.

IV, 2 In Romeo and Juliet occurs a comic passage that is almost universally condemned - the fooling between Peter and the musicians in the fifth scene of Act IV. Peter is, in very truth, a sorry enough specimen of a clown, serving only as the lowest kind of low-comedy relief, and acting only in company with a choice circle of Capulet kitchen-servants. The musicians who were engaged to play for Juliet's wedding, and stay, instead, to her funeral, are in a position to play a comic scene with an effect akin to Ophelia's Grave-diggers; but this attempt and the more mature one ought hardly to be mentioned in the same breath, so enormous is the distance that stretches between.

Gilden-
"Remarks" in of Comedy in Tragedy " in Sewanee Magazine, admits, for the
"Works of Shake sake of argument, the soundness of the strict classical rule
speare", volVII, that "there is no place in tragedy for anything but grave
p, 404 (1710) and serious action", and manages very ingeniously to recon-
cile all offending passages in Shakespeare with this rule.
Comic scenes in tragedy he finds are of two kinds: either
the comedy is " placed so early in the play that the fatal
termination is not seen to be inevitable", and the context
is therefore not yet tragic; or the passage is so charged
with pathos through its contrast to the main crisis that the
effect is rather to heighten the tragic intensity than to be
in any sense comic. The one scene in the whole of Shakes-



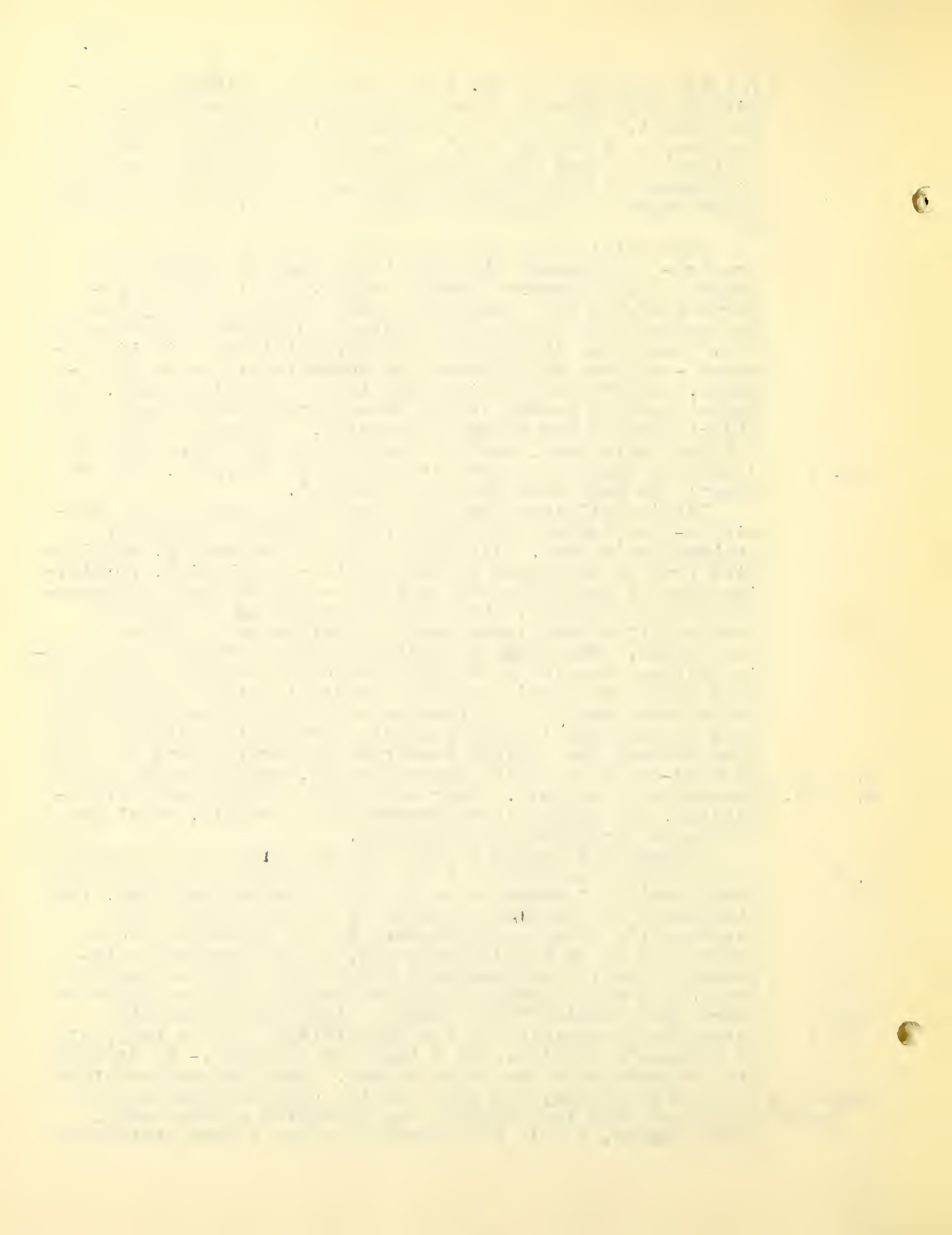
pearian tragedy that Mr. Nason refuses to attempt to justify is this passage between Peter and the musicians. "The result," he says, "is inartistic; the jesting does not relieve, - it merely jars". The use of comedy in such a setting is a task that requires the highest power and sensitiveness of a finished master, and no lesser artist than Shakespeare in his perfect development could hope to achieve it.

III, 2 The fool in "The Taming of the Shrew" is played by Grumio - a character in which it is hard to discern any traces of Shakespeare's comic genius. He is the body-servant of the bold Petruchio, and appears in fully half the scenes that show us his master; in several other scenes, too, he acts as interpreter of Petruchio's will in his absence - as when he inspects the servants at the country-house, or refuses to bring food to the starving Shrew. The keynote of his comedy in all three circumstances seems to be abject fear of his blustering master. But his "lines" are dull and pointless, and the laughs that he raises may be judged by such an attempt at foolery as "Ay, sir, they be ready; the oats have eaten the horses".

p, 8 IV, 5 "All's Well that Ends Well" may be regarded as a transition-play between the first period and the second of Shakespeare's work. Although it is a true comedy, still we miss from it the broad comedy spirit - the boyish, roystering love of fun of the early plays - and we feel the introduction of a somber, threatening background of dreadful possibilities that looms over the action up to the very last scene. When next Shakespeare wrote comedy with a tragic setting, weaving a brilliant Venetian pageant against the dark story of a Jew's revenge, he did it with a surer hand and a truer mastery of chiaroscuro; but in this first venture the balance is less perfect. The comic relief is divided between the insipid knaveries of Parolles and the empty word-quibbles of the clown Lavache, whose foolery is as coarse as it is dull. Hayn calls him citified and sophisticated, and notes his reference to his bauble, which proves him to be a regular domestic fool.

I, 3 Dowden has chosen a motto for the play out of Lavache's mouth - "That man should be at woman's command, and yet no hurt done!" It seems to me that in a deeper way also, the atmosphere of the play is embodied in the clown. The marriage tie under circumstances and in adventures so unnatural as to be fairly grotesque, is the prevailing impression; and, from Lavache's first appearance to beg for

I, 3 freedom to marry Isbel, a fellow-servant, to his change of heart after seeing "your Isbel o' the court", and his III, 2 disgusting exposition of his adaptibility as "a fool, sir, IV, 5 at a woman's service, and a knave at a man's", - he strikes this keynote to a wearisome extent. Gervinus remarks that Bunnett's in this play "only the comic parts, such as Parolles and trans. the clown, are the property and invention of the poet", while Hammer, in his introduction, takes a more charitable



Warner p 88 view of such comic passages as he finds distinctly unsatisfactory. "A clown is introduced quibbling in a miserable manner... though such trash is frequently interspersed in his writings, it would be unjust to cast it as an imputation upon his taste and judgment as a writer". It is interesting Warner p 43 in this connection that Pope claims to have seen a stage MS. with parts of clown scenes added written in the margin, "which were afterwards included in the First Folio".

Such criticism as this would be allowable if it were an article of our belief that Shakespeare is a sort of super-human master-artist, who must at all costs be proved infallible and above reproach. But since we have learned not only to see the differences between his early and later work, but to trace his growth toward artistic perfection, play by play and period by period, it is no longer necessary to cancel from the Shakespeare canon all that we cannot sanction with our approval. As a matter of fact, pert as he is, word-picker as he is, dull - even coarse as he is, I venture to say that Lavache seems, to me at least, Shakesperian to the core. He is an indispensable link between Launce and Touchstone, between Costard and Feste. It is merely a difference in artistic handling that reconciles us to Touchstone's wooing of Audrey and leaves us repulsed by Lavache's adventures. In Feste's mouth, the nonsense ballad about Helen of Troy -

I, 3

"Was this fair face the cause, quoth she,
Why the Grecians sacked Troy?"

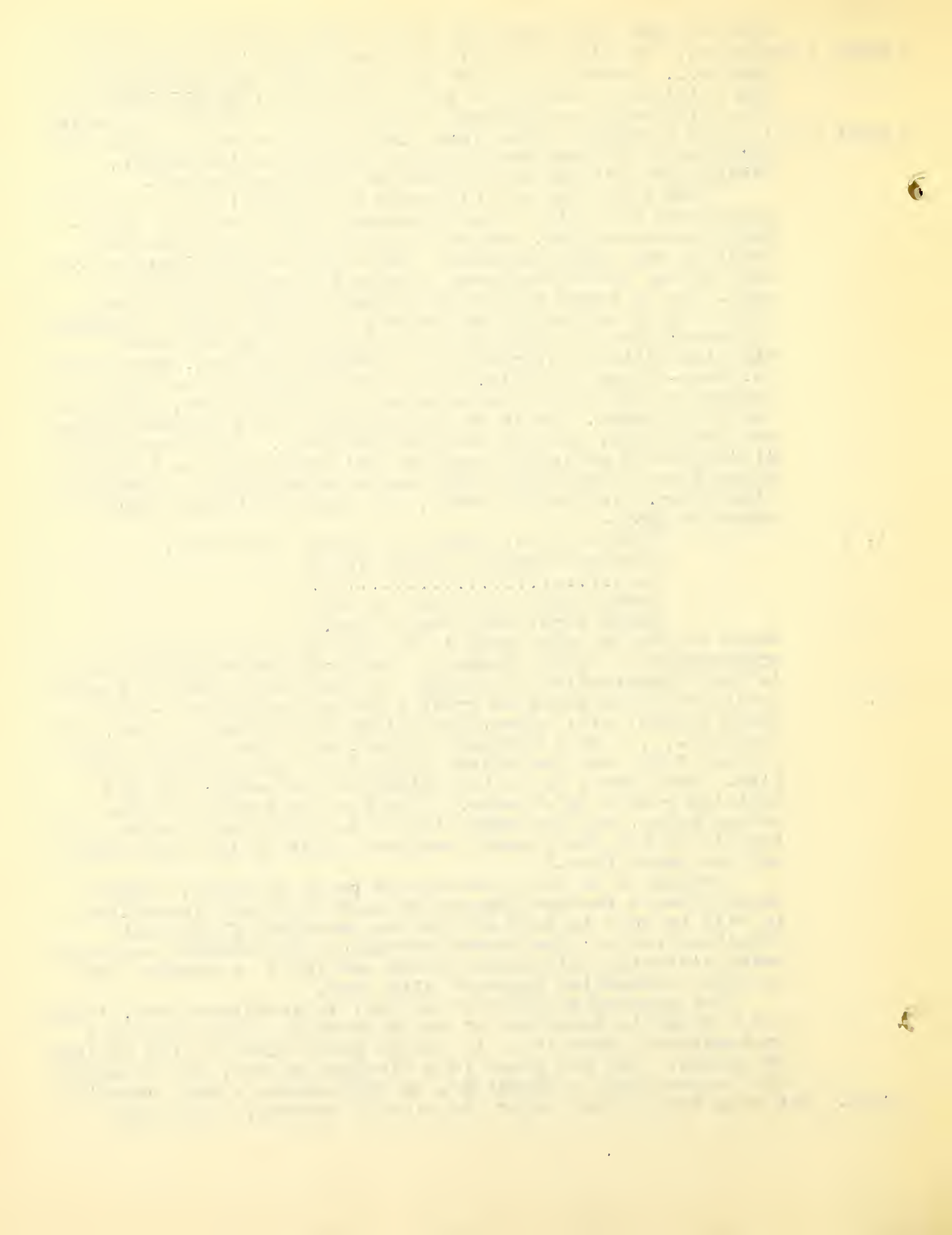
.....
Among nine bad if one be good,
There's yet one good in ten:"

IV, 5

would be better known than it is; but Lavache is Feste's predecessor in lyric clownery. And most unmistakable of all is the Shakespearian philosophy in the passage where Lavache declares "I can serve as great a prince as you are - the black prince, sir; alias, the prince of darkness: alias, the devil."....."I am a woodland fellow, sir, that always loved a great fire; and the master I speak of ever keeps a good fire. But, sure, he is the prince of the world: let his nobility remain in's court. I am for the house with the narrow gate...but the many will be too chill and tender, and they'll be for the flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire."

Before we go on to the second group of plays, toward which Lavache reaches forward as such a perfect transition, it will be well to look at the two comedies of the last Stratford period; the clowns Antolycus and Trinculo are by no means distantly related to Launce and Peter or Grumio, and are best classified together with them.

The greatest of these, of course, is Antolycus: who, though not a domestic dependent of any household, is so clearly a professional humorist as to assure him a place in the gallery of clowns. And his place is a distinctive one, for he stands out, second only to Falstaff, as Shakespeare's most charring rogue. Not only was he born under the sign of Mercury, god of all



IV, 2 thieves and liars, but his very name is the name of Mercury's own son, thus giving him a double birthright as "a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles". Free as air, gay and wild as a gypsy, full of song and chatter as a thieving little sparrow, he roves in and out of the Bohemian scenes, giving a spicy touch to the idyllic pastoral of the sheer-shearing. He is a pedlar, catering to the trade of the vain, finery-loving shepherdesses; his stock-in-trade is well described in his own words - "I have sold all my trumpery; not a counterfeit stone, not a riband, glass, pomander, brooch, table-book, ballad, knife, tape, glove, shoe-tie, bracelet, horn-ring, to keep my pack from fasting". But the income from his trade is evidently more than topped by that from what he calls his "profession" - knavery. He is a perfect wizard of a pick-pocket, and an expert confidence man: and is not above that roguery which smacks so refreshingly of the modern vagrant-stealing sheets that are put out to dry. Our first glimpse of him is when he "enters, singing" an irish spring song-

IV, 2 "When daffodils begin to peer,-
With, heigh! the doxy over the dale,-"

in which

"The white sheet bleaching on the Hedge".
is mentioned as one of the most welcome signs of the season.

IV, 3 The stage direction "Enter Antolycus, singing" is the usual way of introducing the tuneful wretch; he has a different song for every occasion - "he hath songs for man or woman, of all sizes; no milliner can so fit his customers with gloves...he hath ribands of all colors...why, he sings them over, as they were gods or goddesses". Antolycus is a proof positive that Shakespeare's musical fools had been a complete success, for here we find the musical side so developed and emphasized as to be perhaps the distinguishing mark of the character. Eleanor Prescott Hammond, in the Atlantic, traces the growth of music in the plays to the entrance of an unknown boy singer into Shakespeare's company near the end of his first series of comedies. At any rate, in some way or other Shakespeare found out that lyric snatches were enormously popular, and consequently gave them generously to his public; most generously of all in these last two comedies, in which Antolycus and Ariel leave echoes incongruous and yet whimsically enchanting, in the air.

IV, 3 We must mention Antolycus's connection with the plot of The Winter's Tale. He is thrust into some importance, for it is by his agency that the old shepherd coaxes to tell the king of the secret of Perdita's birth; but he is made the instrument of chance much more skilfully and consistently than was Costard, at the opposite extremity of Shakespeare's artistic development. First of all, Antolycus overhears the plans for Florizel's elopement to Sicilia with the fair shepherdess whom he little guesses to be Sicilia's lost princess. He does not know what use to make of this "juicy bit"-"If I thought it were a piece of honesty to acquaint the king withal, I would not do it: I hold it the more knavery to conceal it, and therein am I constant to my profession" - and this very reflection is interrupted by the

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IV, 3 two shepherds from whom the witty scamp easily elicits the information which later proves Ferdita's identity. Characteristic to perfection is his next droll soliloquy - "If I had a mind to be honest, I see, Fortune would not suffer me: she drops booties in my mouth...a means to do the prince my good- who knows how that may turn back to my advancement?... To him will I present them; there may be matter in it."

V, 2 What a sad, colorless anticlimax is the picture of Antolycus converted! How it grates upon our finer sensibilities, strung to the elfish key of scapegrace gypsy warblings, to hear our beloved scamp chanting repentance! Let us at least hope that Antolycus is winking his left eye atrociously at the audience as he says-

"I humbly beseech you, sir, to pardon me all the faults I have committed to your worship, and to give me your good report to the prince my master"- and as to the shepherd's

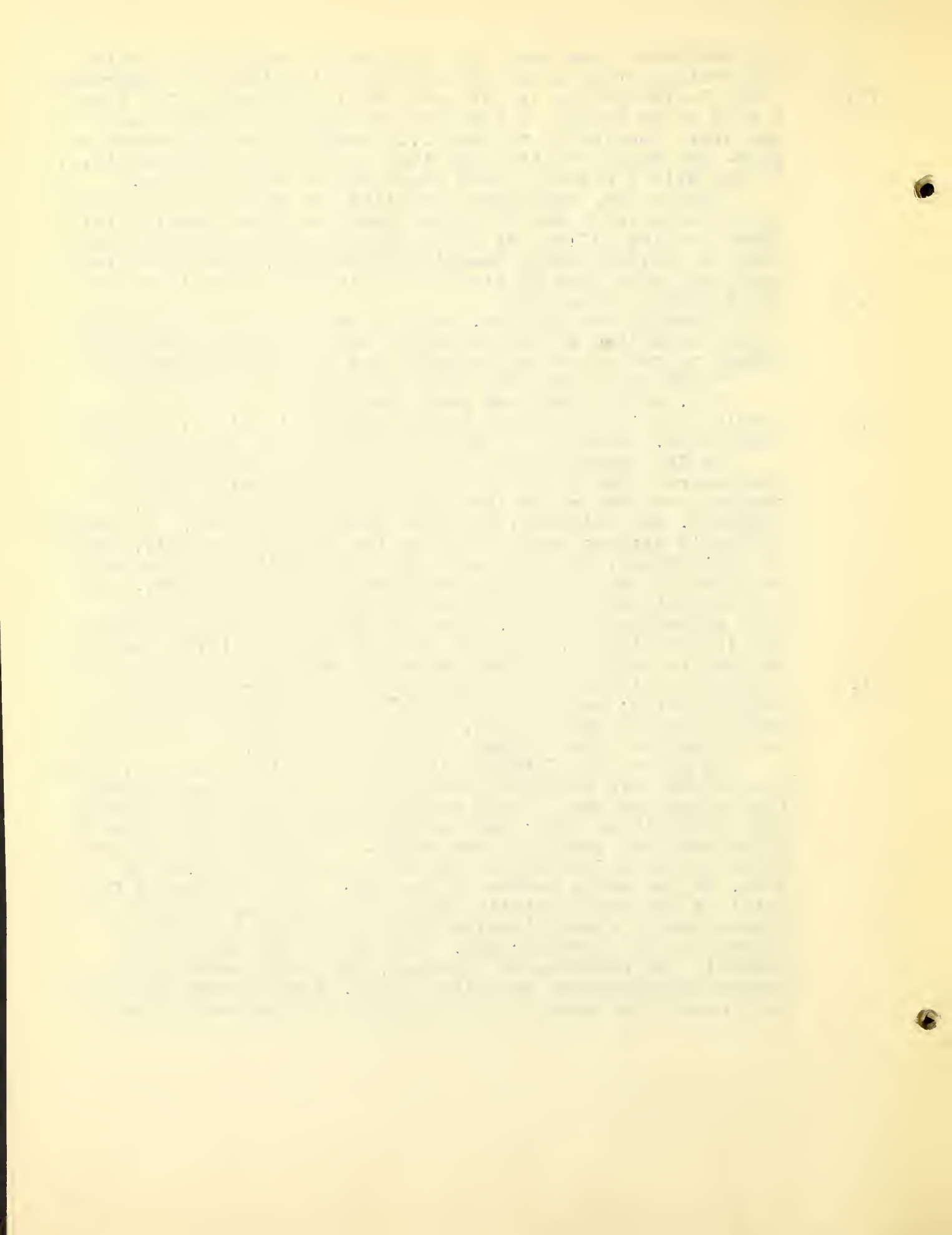
"Thou wilt amend thy life? he answers submissively,

"Ay, an it like your good worship."

V, 2 Surely this is more doing "good against his will", not real repentance! Surely, oh surely, Antolycus is incorrigible!

II, 2 In *The Tempest*, there are two groups of detestable characters - the first is Sebastian and Antonio, who plot against the king of Naples, and the second is Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, who plot against Prospero. Of course Caliban's attempt never rises to the level of tragedy, even of seriousness, but acts as a sort of amplifying episode in bringing out the absolute invulnerability of Prospero, and the completeness with which the island is in his power. This subordinate action, then, is the one in which Trinculo the jester figures, and even here he plays no hero's part. Caliban is made an ally and slave by means of a taste of the "celestial liquor" that Stephano always takes care to be supplied with; and his adoration is consequently poured fourth upon Stephano alone, while he has nothing but abuse for Trinculo. The drunken butler is his god.

We do not see Trinculo in the king's train at all, which may explain his plentiful lack of wit - for it is possible that a professional jester was saving of his efforts except when actually on duty; and yet this ought not to be true of a professional jester on the stage. I do not think Trinculo makes a single joke which may even charitably be called a joke, in the whole course of the play. As a matter of fact, Ariel is the representative Fool of the piece, although of course such a classification would be taking too great liberties with nomenclature. But Ariel, the bright and tuneful, the favorite of Prospero, the instrument of all benign and wholesome practical jokes, surely seems to strike more nearly the keynote of the typical Shakespearian Fool.



Lavache, we have seen, forms a perfect link between the first division of fools - the more conventional type, acting in a subordinate episode rather than in the main plot, and having frequent monologues of the "stultus loquitor" color - and the second division, where the jester reaches his highest triumph. But the three peerless comedies, Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, and Twelfth Night, did not spring as uneventfully from the earlier foolery as a cabbage from its stalk or a pea-pod from its vine. The burst of gay clownery that illuminates the years 1597 to 1600 was the result of a distinct venture and a spectacular step forward in the realm of comedy - that was the creation of Falstaff.

It is mere sophistry to say that Falstaff "played the fool to Prince Hal," and to try to include him in the list of Fools on the strength of an extension of terms such as that; and yet he has a place in any treatment of the subject. Up to this time Shakespeare had never put absolute faith in pure comedy as an essential to the drama. He had a lingering distrust, born of the wide-spread contempt for clownery among the "high-brow" literary dramatists of the time - Kit Marlowe, Sir Philip Sidney, and the others whose scornful words have been quoted earlier in this paper. Once in a while he had let himself go and launched out joyously on a strain of pure farce, as in the "Pyramus and Thisbe" rehearsals, or Launce's monologues, or parts of the "Taming of the Shrew". But he was always at bottom conservative, and much of his best fun, in the early plays, is not only spontaneous and unconscious, but almost against his own best judgment as an artist.

I Hen. IV

It was "the inimitable Falstaff" that made the great change in Shakespeare's altitude. The play in which he made his appearance had more editions printed in Shakespeare's life-time than any other play; the public roared with laughter and came again; Queen Elizabeth, after seeing him in three plays, begged for more. The fat knight was the craze of the hour - and from that time on there were no doubts in the author's mind as to the desirability of the purely ludicrous element in drama. "In Falstaff, humour has acquired clear consciousness of itself and become free" - "a conception hardly less complex, hardly less wonderful, than Hamlet".

Dowden
p 361

This was the Declaration of Independence of Shakespeare's native love of fun. No longer is the clown kept in a subordinate group of characters or given only an occasional or episodic prominence. The great clowns of the second division - Launcelot, Feste, and Touchstone - have wormed their way deep into the confidence and sympathies of their masters and mistresses; they are treated more like human beings and shown to us with deeper insight; their connection with the plot is vital, their wit is true-aimed and pregnant - "bright, tender, and gracious, not conscious cleverness like the first period. It was now that Shakespeare's mirth was the freest for disport - comedy is disengaged from history and not yet

DOWDEN
p 360

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under the shadow of tragedy."

III,5 II,6 Launcelot Gobbo is difficult to pigeonhole as a genuine domestic clown. He is called "the fool" and "the patch", but Shylock is not the kind of man likely to keep a jester as such. Possibly his service to Bassanio was of this kind; II,2 Bassanio orders for him "a livery more guarded than his fellows", which suggests to some commentators a motley suit, but which does not seem to justify that interpretation. Launcelot's wit seems to me to be of an independent sort, III, 5 springing rather from his self-conceit and love of "a tricky word" than from his duties as a domestic fool. He lets slip no opportunity, nevertheless, of making a well-timed joke serve his turn; as when he earns a word of commendation from Bassanio, his future master, by the quip, II, 2 "The old proverb is very well parted between my master Shylock and you, sir; you have the grace of God, sir, and he hath enough".

Launcelot's character, which is portrayed as vividly and searchingly as many of his betters, is all compact of conceit, greediness, and good nature. He has not the sort of wit, or the disposition, to do harm to any living creature; his chief intellectual characteristic is a tireless imagination. Much fault has been found with the scene where he figuratively cuts circles around his poor old II, 2 "high-gravel-blind" father, teasing him first to use the title "Master Launcelot" then playing him with news of Launcelot's death, and at last making use of the old man's "dish of doves" to buy preferment with Bassanio, Scholderer Library '09 p. 14 calls the scene "a disagreeable discord". Hayn says it "does not belong in this place, nor in the play at all".* I can see how some tender-hearted spectators, from motives of humanity, might object to the tormenting of the poor old man; although even Shylock thinks "the patch is kind enough"; II, 6 but I fail to feel any discord in the presence of the scene in the play, or in this part of the play. It is a bit of unrestrained, mirth-provoking farce, whose effect on the stage I have observed to be most contagious and successful; and its charm springs from its very absurdity. A delicious idiot like Launcelot is surely free from ordinary rules of conduct, even if his treatment of old Gobbo bordered more nearly than it does upon real cruelty. His attitude is merely that of a perfectly ridiculous reversal of the usual II, 2 father-and-son relations, expressed in the words-"this is my true-begotten father", and "it is a wise father that knows his own child"; and in this ludicrous incongruity lies the humor. Indeed, it would seem that old Gobbo is not the only one who is "more than sand-blind" in his view of Launcelot!

The high-water-mark of pure fun from the boy's lips is struck in his first soliloquy-the dialogue between fiend and conscience as to running away from the Jew; which would more than repay quotation in full, were it not so well-known. To this creative height he never again quite rises. His puns are execrable, but his manner of making them irresistible - so complete is his satisfaction with himself.

*"Die Scene II,2 mit seinem blinden Vater, die weder an diese Stelle, noch überhaupt in das Stück gehört, muss unangenehm berühren" are his words.

The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the war. It is followed by a detailed account of the military operations in the West, including the Battle of Arras and the Battle of Cambrai. The report also discusses the situation in the East, particularly the Russian front, and the impact of the war on the home front. The final part of the report contains a summary of the achievements of the British forces and a forecast for the future of the war.

The report is written in a clear and concise style, and it provides a comprehensive overview of the military situation in 1917. It is a valuable document for anyone interested in the history of the First World War.

Hudson
I 285

"The poverty of his wit is thus enriched by his complacency in dealing it out." After an encounter with him, we lean back breathless from excess of nonsense, exclaiming with Lorenzo,

"Oh dear discretion, how his words are suited!"

It is in his relations with Jessica that Launcelot has his real dramatic importance, although this is too often emphasized at the expense of his own personality. Jessica is in a position which makes it easy to misunderstand her motives and underestimate her character. She must be kept subordinate in the play, ^{a fact} which precludes a close and careful delineation. It is important that she be judged correctly, for our estimate of Shylock is materially influenced by our sympathy, or lack of sympathy, with Jessica. It is in this dilemma that Shakespeare illumines the "beautiful pagan" with a piercing, lucid flash from the side of her life in Shylock's home - and this flash of light is the fool Launcelot.

II 3

In *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, the Poet has become completely alive to the romantic and dramatic possibilities that lie in the motley coat, and he gives the fool the prominence that his masterpieces of fool-craft deserve. The romantic appeal of the fool is due to the flavor of Medievalism that clings about him when portrayed strictly as a court dependent; and as for dramatic possibilities - what instinctive dramatist but whose lungs would "begin to crow like chanticler" at the discovery of a character who

As You Like It
II,7

"must have liberty

II,7

Withal, as large a charter as the wind,
To blow on whom I please, for so fools have;
And they that most are galled with my folly
They most must laugh."

Both of these plays abound in references to the position and privileges of the fool, and show that now Shakespeare's attention was consciously directed toward him as rich and promising stage type.

I III,3

Touchstone is a middle-aged, cynical, rather self-important man of the world, distinctive, in a romantic fantasy like *As You Like It*, for his commonsense and clear head - "a material fool" rather than one whose buffoonery has no solid rational foundation. He is a man of resource, of quick perception and unbiassed judgments, a cool reasoner and a master of satire. "Is this not a rare fellow, my lord? - he's as good at anything, and yet a fool."

V,4

There are two phases of his character, one a little more obvious than the other, but both well brought out. One is his substantial manliness, and the other is his habit of satire. The human manliness of him is largely responsible for the fascination felt always and everywhere by those who come under Touchstone's spell, for it is that that gives the genial, wholesome note to his cynicism, and saves him from being in any sense a misanthrope. It is this note that is struck by his first step into prominence, when Rosalind and Celia think of him first of all as a helpful companion in their exile - "a comfort to our travel", and Celia testifies

I, 3

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to his devotion to herself in the words "He'll go along o'er the wide world with me." But his generous heart has been shown before this. Monsieur Le Beau, a soulless, mincing-mouthed pimp like Hamlet's Osric, comes to tell the princesses of the "good sport" they have lost, and proceeds to describe in great detail the havoc wrought by the duke's wrestler among the three sons of an old man. Touchstone dryly remarks "Thus men grow wiser every day. It is the first time ever I heard breaking of ribs was sport for ladies."

I, 2

In the forest, the jester's professional vicer is somewhat worn off, and his professional artificiality more or less undermined. The spirit of Arden is in his veins-not, of course, as dominantly as in the younger and more impressionable bloods, but still perceptibly; and his love for Audrey is, I think, a still stream that "runs deep" under the surface of banter and condescension. The free air of the forest awakens in him longings to be a man among men. It is the glorying in his triumphant manhood that goes to his head like an intoxicant in his whirlwind scene with Audrey's old lover, and culminates in the fearsome threat - "I will kill thee a hundred and fifty ways; therefore tremble, and depart!" And it is the futile protest of these stirrings of manhood against his honorless calling, that speaks in the only really bitter words from his lips -

V, 1

V, 4

"Duke Senior-By my faith, he is very swift and
sententious.

Touchstone - According to the fool's bolt, sir."

His ever-present genius for satire is his most obvious characteristic. He shows his well-balanced impartiality, not by approving of everything equally, but by satirizing everything that comes within range of his shrewd eyes. By means of Touchstone's racy wit, Shakespeare keeps the air of his pastoral from too unadulterated Arcadian sweetness. A dainty little pastoral lyric is promptly dismissed with a sniff - "Truly, young gentlemen, though there was no great matter in the ditty, yet the note was very untuneable-----I count it but time lost to hear such a foolish song". Jaques's artistic melancholy is burlesqued to his very face, and so exquisitely as to take in the victim himself. Let Jaques tell it -

V, 3

II, 7

"And then he drew a dial from his poke,
And looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says very wisely, 'It is ten o'clock:---
'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
And after one hour more 'twill be eleven"- and so
on.

III, 3

III, 2

The sophisticated jester openly patronizes everything rustic, in a hundred different ways, likening himself to Ovid among the Goths, and consigning Corin straight to damnation, "like an ill-roasted egg, all on one side," for never having been at court. Yet could any bigoted pastoral-fanatic utter a more stinging jeer than Touchstone's proof that he was a courtier?

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V, 4

"I have trod a measure; I have flattered a lady: I have been politic with my friend, smooth with mine enemy; I have undone three tailors; I have had four quarrels, and like to have fought one... but... I durst go no further than the 'Lie Circumstantial,' nor he durst not give me the 'Lie Direct;' so we measured swords, and parted."

I, 2

Last and boldest of all, his swift irony seeks out the weak spots in the worn-out cant of chivalry, in his tale "of a certain knight, that swore by his honour they were good pancakes, and...the mustard was naught; now...the pancakes were naught and the mustard was good, and yet was not the knight forsworn,...swearing by his honour, for he never had any; or, if he had, he had sworn it away before ever he say those pancakes or that mustard." And of a piece with this audacity is his ridicule of love itself, which he confesses "grows something stale with me."

II, 4

III, 2

He laughs at Orlando's "false gallop of verses" rhyming Rosalind's name, which he parodies in a sublime strain of nonsense; "I'll rhyme you so eight years together, dinners and suppers and sleeping hours excepted," he grins. "I remember when I was in love," he rambles on in a droll reminiscent mood, telling how he fought with a stone, most disastrously, in defense of Jane Smiles; and gave her two peascods, saying "with weeping tears, 'Wear these for my sake.' We that are true lovers run into strange capers," he sighs, little guessing how soon he is himself to prove the statement! It is a hard question whether his love

II, 4

Weiss
p.116

affair with Audrey is serious, or whether "he brings in his wife with a pleased sense that she is his best joke." "A poor virgin, sir, an all-favoured thing, sir, but mine own; a poor humour of mine, sir, to take that no man else will." My own opinion is that, if this is a joke, Touchstone has for once lost his balance and carried a joke too far—a fault I do not like to charge him with; and I would rather picture him as drawing from the enchanted forest a breath of something that awakens the human emotions grown "stale" in him.

V, 4.

Touchstone is representative of the most perfect development of wit in Shakespeare—clearer and brighter than the earlier attempts, human and hearty, complex and many-sided. His companion-clown, Feste, has the same characteristics, but is distinguished by a difference in temperament; his youth is never lost sight of, and a certain fineness of texture is evident in his thought and in his wit, that makes him seem truly "fancy's child!" Like Touchstone, Feste has a cool, level head, and keen perception, which with him amount to intuitions; like Touchstone, too, he stands somewhat aloof, "out of reach both of chance and of the passions which are at work throughout the play." Finally, Feste is like Touchstone and Launcelot in the part he bears in the plot,— that is the part typical of the fools of this period. The fool's importance in the plot is not a mechanical device making him the carrier of a missent letter, or anything of the sort; but it consists in the vital interpretative relation in which he stands to the plot characters, and the philosophic insight which he has into their lives.

Milton "Il Penseroso"

Gervinus
I, 437

Faint, illegible text covering the majority of the page, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side.

100

101

102

103

104

105

The characters of Malvolio, Toby, and Sir Andrew are shown first in their right light through Feste, and the hidden weaknesses of no less persons than Olivia and the Duke are unerringly pricked by the delicate rapier of his wit. Duke Orsino, the melancholy but all too fickle lover, pines for the music that is "the food of love", and so Feste gives him, first a song after his mood-

"Come away, come away, Death,...

I am slain by a fair cruel maid!"-

and then a bit of wholesome truth- "Now, the melancholy god protect thee; and the tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal!" And as for Olivia, her reckless young buffoon touches a no less sensitive spot than her morbid, exaggerated mourning for her brother, in a bit of word-play that brought him out of disfavour into her approval again. Olivia is clearly fastidious as to the quality of her fool's wit, and when he grows "dry" she will none of him.

"Olivia- Take the fool away, gentlemen.

Clown- Lady, cucullus non facit monachum: that's as much to say as, I wear not motley in my brain. Good madonna, give me leave to prove you a fool.... Good madonna, why mourn'st thou?

Olivia- Good fool, for my brother's death.

Clown- I think his soul is in hell, madonna.

Olivia- I know his soul is in heaven, fool!

Clown- The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven.- Take away the fool, gentlemen!"

The character of Feste is at once normal and inspired. His motives are those of a perfectly rational man; Mr. Townsend proves him "the only perfectly sane person in the play, with the possible exception of Antonio;" but there is a certain transcendent quality about his whimsical wit and tender poetry that lifts him beyond the level even of an intellectual genius. His wholesome sanity is proved no less by his brilliant part in the joke on Malvolio than by his helping the unfortunate steward to freedom when the joke had gone far enough. It is noticeable in Shakespeare that the Fools are never the ones who carry a joke too far. Then, too, his very fooling, when artistically done, "craves a kind of wit;

He must observe their mood on whom he jests...
And, like the haggard, check at every feather
That comes before his eye. This is a practice
As full of labor as a wise man's art."

Feste's wit is of the rarest and most inimitable charm. It shows less reasoning power than Touchstone's, but it is more artless, exquisite, and graceful. His comical, childish begging, his gay camaraderie with the revelers, his fearless satire, his scintillating banter and whimsical buffoonery - from such a quip as "Many a good

- III, 1 hanging prevents a bad marriage," or "Dost thou live by thy
 tabor? - No, sir, I live by the church," to a brilliant
 piece of audacity like his impersonation of Sir Topas the
 curate, administering comfort in hog-Latin to Malvolio and
 then ceremoniously bidding himself goodbye in Malvolio's
 hearing, his fund of humor is inexhaustible and of "in-
 finite variety-" And when this genius is surrounded by the
 soft light of lyric fervour, and becomes poet as well as
 philosopher, pouring forth with equal sympathy a rollicking
 "catch," a heart-rending love moan, or a dainty youth -
 and- love carol in his golden tenor voice, - then, in
 truth, he becomes well-nigh irresistible! Passionless,
 fanciful, exquisite, he dances through the "riot of mad
 mirth," a figure of inexpressible charm.
- Ant. & Cleo.
 II, 2
- II, 3 " What is love? 'tis not hereafter;
 Present mirth hath present laughter:
 What's to come is still unsure;
 In delay there lies no plenty,
 Then come kiss me, sweet-and twenty,-
 Youth's a stuff will not endure!"

When we turn to the Fools in tragedy, we find that several of them are much less important than we might expect, judging from the high point of perfection which they have reached in the latest comedies. Pompey, in "Measure for Measure", is a petty villain of the most shameless type, engaged as a debased tool in the only profession so low that the hangman's trade, to which Pompey turns at last, is preferable to it, and aiding in the drama merely as an expression of the monstrous immorality in which the city is reeking. His mirth-provoking quality, such as it is, lies more in blundering clownery, as in the telling of his side of Elbow's story, than in anything like wit. The term "Iniquity", used by Escalus to Pompey in this scene, is, I think hardly as valuable a support of the Vice theory of descent as has been often claimed. Such detached quotations as this, may, like Feste's "I will impeticoes thy gratility", become quite clear when read in their context, and may exonerate Shakespeare from the responsibility of many so-called deep and obscure allusions. The words of Escalus in the first scene of Act II are "Which is wiser here - Justice, or Iniquity?" and the personifications are both natural references to the professions represented in Elbow, the constable, and Pompey himself.

II, 1

II, 3

Boult, in "Pericles", is another character from Pompey's own underworld, who is in no way worthy of the title "Fool", or of being included in the same gallery even with the meanest of these others. Pompey does at least show himself passably comic in two scenes in his play, and is absolutely harmless all the way through: but Boult combines with utter dullness, a sinister aspect that is quite unparalleled in any of Shakespeare's characters of his kind. To me, there is no stronger argument against the authenticity of this whole unskilful play than the utterly un-Shakespearean figure of Boult.

III, 1

III, 4

In "Othello", in "Antony and Cleopatra" and in "Hamlet", the fool appears as a mere glimpse, always with a value depending on emotional and interpretative effect. None of them has any connection with the plot that can be analysed, but the presence of each of them, for his brief flash of time, is strongly felt. Othello's attendant clown appears only twice, once to help the unlucky Cassio to see Desdemona, and once to help Desdemona to an interview with Cassio: a curious parallelism that, in view of the fatal significance of both meetings, cannot have unintended by the poet. In "Antony and Cleopatra", the "Clown" - a country bumpkin with a blundering unconscious wit - brings to Cleopatra the "pretty worm of Nilus" that is her instrument of suicide. "His biting", says the clown, "is immortal: those that do die of it do seldom or never recover." In "Hamlet", the mention of the Fool is similarly juxtaposed to the tragic climax, for it is in the famous Gravediggers' Scene, between the pathetic death and melodramatic funeral of Ophelia, that the melancholy Prince of Denmark mourns over the remains of his childhood's friend, "the king's jester".

V, 2

V, 1

- "Alas, poor Yorick! - I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of



infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times... Here hung those lips, that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table in a roar?"-

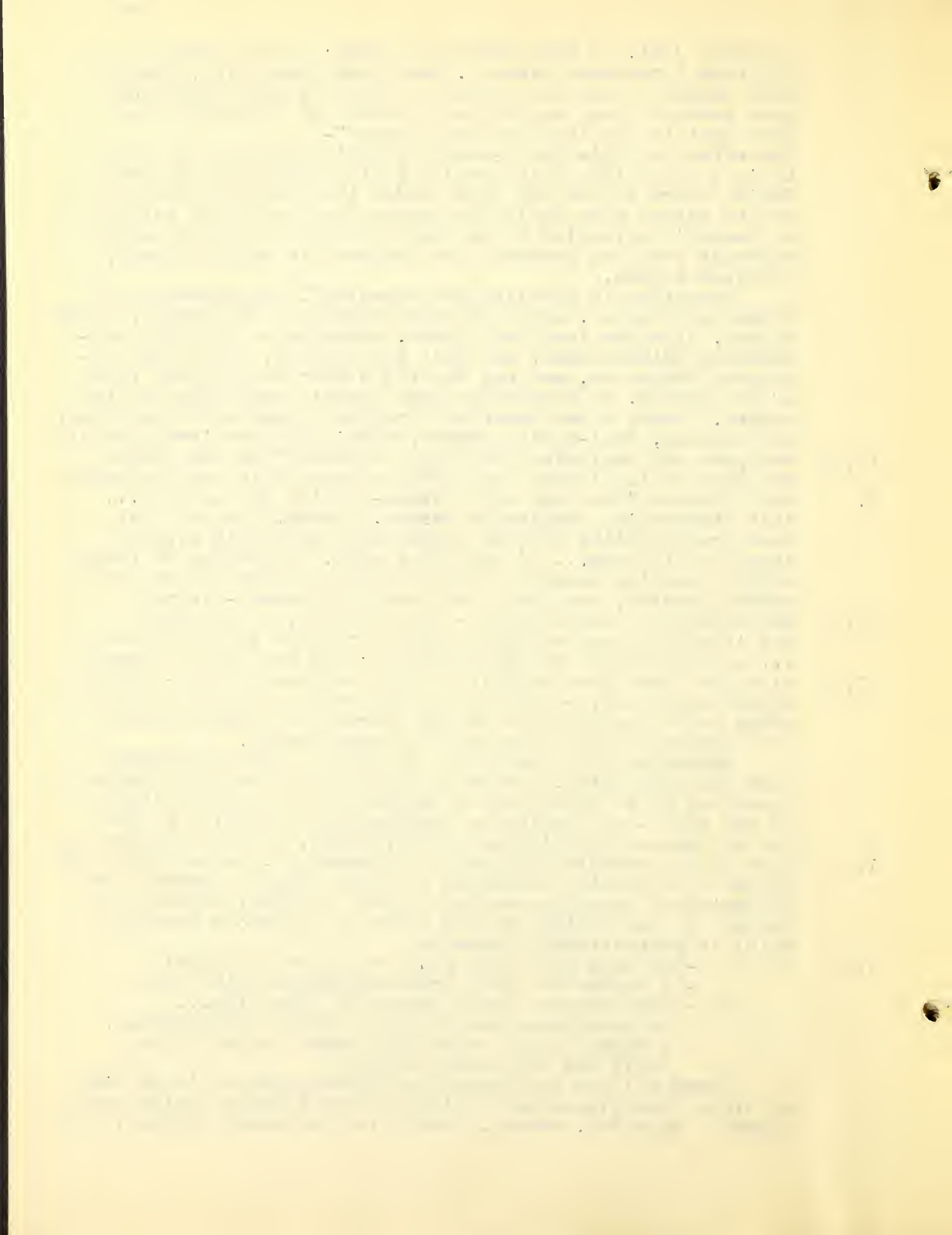
The effect of this heart-touching reminiscence is to bring up in a flash the whole homely, genial atmosphere of the Danish court in the old days, under the wise and kindly rule of the father that Hamlet so adores; and the chief pathos of Hamlet's situation is in that dead past, and the terrible contrast with the present, that leaves him such a lonely, helpless figure.

Thersites in "Troilus and Cressida", and Apemantus in "Timon of Athens", are in a sense companion characters. They do not, like the last few clowns, surprise us by their comparative unimportance, but just the reverse. They are constantly before us, and may be said almost to play the part of the Chorus, by commenting upon almost every stage of the action. Scene after scene of "Troilus" opens with Thersites, the crooked, foul-mouthed dwarf, hurling coarse invective at everyone and analysing the "whole argument" of the Trojan war down to its lowest terms with unanswerable and repulsive definiteness "Now they are clapper-clawing one another... that dissembling abominable varlet, Diomed, has got that same scurry doting foolish young knave of Troy's sleeve there in his helm... O' the other side, the policy of those crafty swearing rascals, - that stale old nouse-eaten dry cheese, Nestor, and that same dog-fox Ulysses - is not proved worth a blackberry" - and so forth, ad nauseam. His intentions are evidently good, from his words, "I shall ...rail thee into wit and holiness"; and his fool's immunities are clear from Achilles's calm defense of him - "He is a privileged man. - Proceed, Thersites". - although Achilles seems to be the only one of the "heroes" who has self-control enough to abide the dwarf's sharp tongue.

Apemantus is a snarler of a slightly less unpleasant type than Thersites, for he is distinctly a would-be reformer, possessed of an idea - which happens also to be the theme of the play - and losing no opportunity of jeering at the gay hollowness by which he is surrounded. Like a spectre he sits at the banquet, "opposite to humanity", interlarding the chorus of adulation and mirth with his caustic comments on the criminal senselessness of it all. Bitter, brutal, and vulgar, he yet strikes at the heart of the whole parasitic whirl in such stinging words as

I, 2 -"So many dip their meat in one man's blood;"
 -"I wonder men dare trust themselves with men:"
 or -"Like madness is the glory of this life....
 We make ourselves fools to disport ourselves...
 I should fear, those that dance before me now
 Would one day stamp upon me."

These all are the product of Shakespeare's bitter time of life. The clowns are typical of the plays in which they appear - scornful, brutal, ironic is the breath of them, and



the jesting in them is coarse and strong with the strength of a rough, ugly, disgusting, but perfectly honest brute. It is only because of the greater poetic quality of the whole handling of "King Lear" that the Fool in that play is not a second Thersites or Apemantus. The divine touch that transfigured Feste rests now upon a purely tragic Fool.

en.V, II, 3

The death of Falstaff, with his heart "killed" by the king, was the first real mingling of humor and pathos achieved by Shakespeare, and although the effect extended only through a few speeches and one episode, it was wonderfully telling. That mingling is now embodied in the Fool of "Lear" - an entire character of humorous-pathetic elements - an experiment in dramatic irony developed to its most intense pitch. There is something super-natural and symbolic about him; we would be shocked to see him joking with grooms in the court-yard; he seems to be a spirit with a mission, a voice direct from the Creative Purpose of the play. "Just because the fool is not fully understood by any of his fellow-actors, he is essential to the full comprehension of the play by the audience; and the burden of tragic irony thus laid upon him singles him out for a peculiar position among Shakespeare's fools."

Scholderer

Like Apemantus, this Fool is possessed by one idea, glorified beyond the level of a mere conviction by the personal devotion by which it is inspired. To Lear and to the kind Cordelia the poor jester clings with utter absorption; so that he is actually broken down in health by their fatal quarrel; so that he harps feverishly on the one string of regret for the loss of her: so that he follows the unhappy king to the very gates of madness and death, translating with keen-eyed ferocity every threatening omen into a song or jest that throbs with its burden of warning. Bitter, merciless truth lies under his desperate jesting, and the element of retribution that constitutes the play's poetic justice is made clear to us from his lips.

A pretty theory that the Fool is Cordelia in disguise is undoubtedly an outgrowth of the feeling that the heroine is otherwise too little before us on the stage, aided by the fact that the Fool appears only after the lady's departure, and disappears before she returns, so that the disguise would be mechanically possible. The latter arrangement is possibly due to the prosaic exigencies of the acting force at Shakespeare's command - that is, simply a device by which both parts might be acted by the same sweet-voiced lad; while the first-mentioned objection is itself too prosaic for the poetic heights on which we are journeying. Cordelia's presence throughout the play is none the less real because her body is in France - she breathes to us in the inspired warblings of her beloved Fool, and gazes at us out of the dumb, honest eyes of Kent, and we feel continually the closeness of her spirit to Lear's tortured mind. When he groans suddenly, "I did her wrong" - although he has been speaking of Regan, and although the Fool swiftly changes the subject with a shaft of random nonsense that has no answer - "Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?" -

I, 5

yet what one of us but knows with stabbing certainty that he means Cordelia?

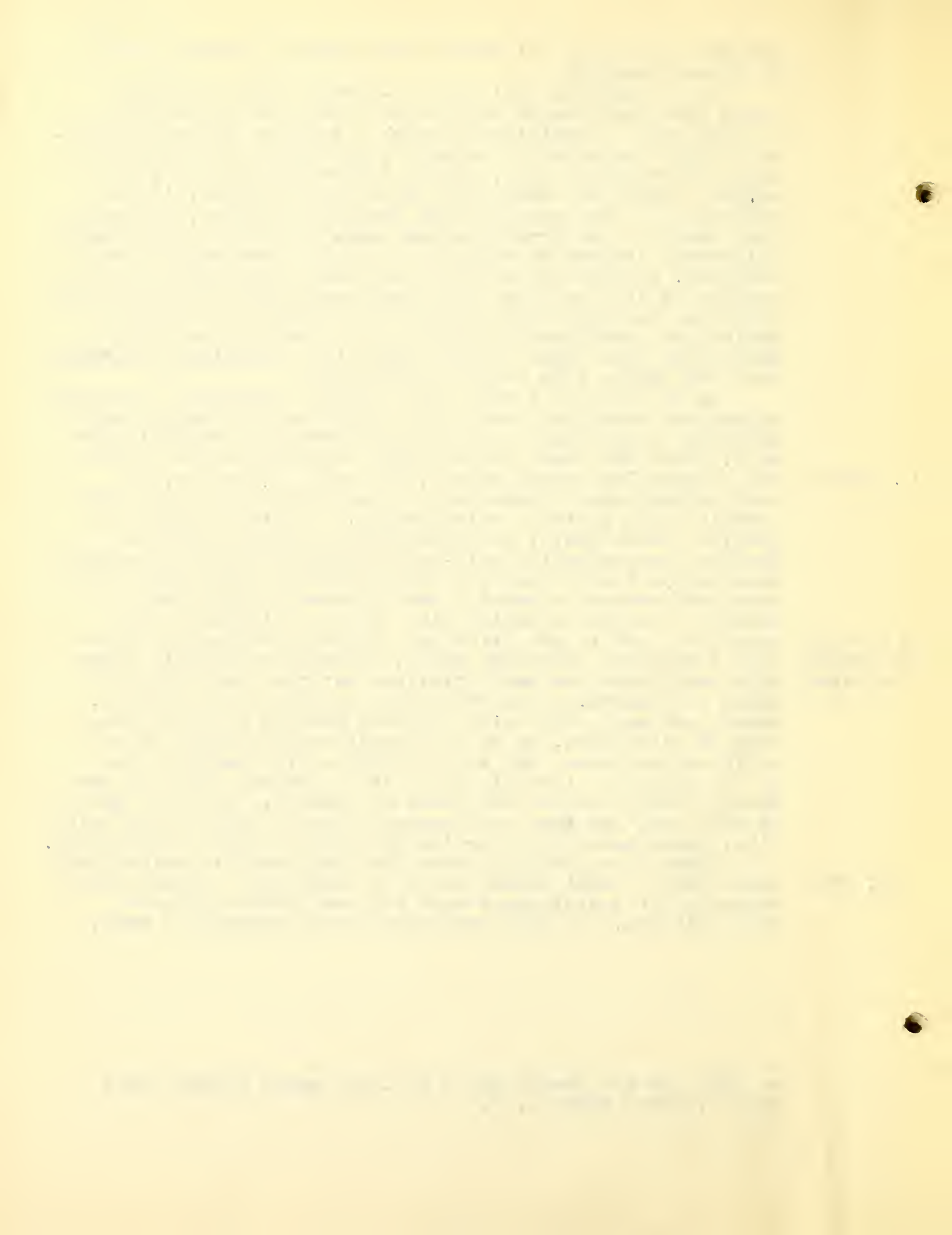
It is unlikely that the new-wedded Queen of France could have been spared so long, or that her husband would let her risk a repetition of such a scene as he had witnessed at the "love-test". Moreover, she could gain nothing by such a spectacular play, except information of the king's welfare, which she would have acted upon earlier, if she had had it. She was a girl of action, not words, and would have sent for her troops before Lear's mind was completely dethroned, instead of harping on the sore subjects in song and jest, and hastening the ruin. Again, the difficulty is doubled by the fact that she must pass herself off as a fool whom Lear has long known and loved - a task for a "make-up artist" of considerable ability. No, the Fool is not a good fairy with power in his hands; he is helpless and grief-stricken before this terrible disaster.

I, 4:III 2 Is he a boy or a man? Oh, science, science! - to apply psychology tests and search the syllables of speeches upon speeches to discover the age of a disembodied spirit! Very well, then; but first let us count out such extracts from the play as "my pretty knave", "my boy", and so on, for such conventional phrases are no more basis for proof than "nuncle" is a claim of relationship. If the Fool must be put into human shape, his breadth of sympathy, depth of feeling, and unfailing self-forgetfulness could only spring, rationally, from a long and perhaps bitter experience. But some transcendent element - some glimmer of the supernatural - cannot be denied him. He is a kinsman to the lightning, and to the "wind and the rain" of heaven. Perhaps a strange, sensitive youth, inspired beyond his years with keen intuition and a pitiless wit that can burn, in hopes of healing, a wounded heart; or else a man in mind, heart, and soul, with will and body dwarfed by long exercise of wits alone, so as to be practically incapable of efficient action.* But why explain? - why analyze? Let us be willing to take him as he is, - straight into our own hearts, not by way of the "seat of reason", - love him while we have him, and when he disappears with a jest on his pale lips, never have the impertinence to ask whither he has gone.

III, 2 (& Tw. Night epilogue) There is a timidity about him that sets him aside from other Fools - what Hudson calls "a shrinking, velvet-footed delicacy" in everything except his one theme of Lear's fatal mistake. He does not ever mention Cordelia's name,

II, 381

* "Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy" - Twelfth Night I, 5.

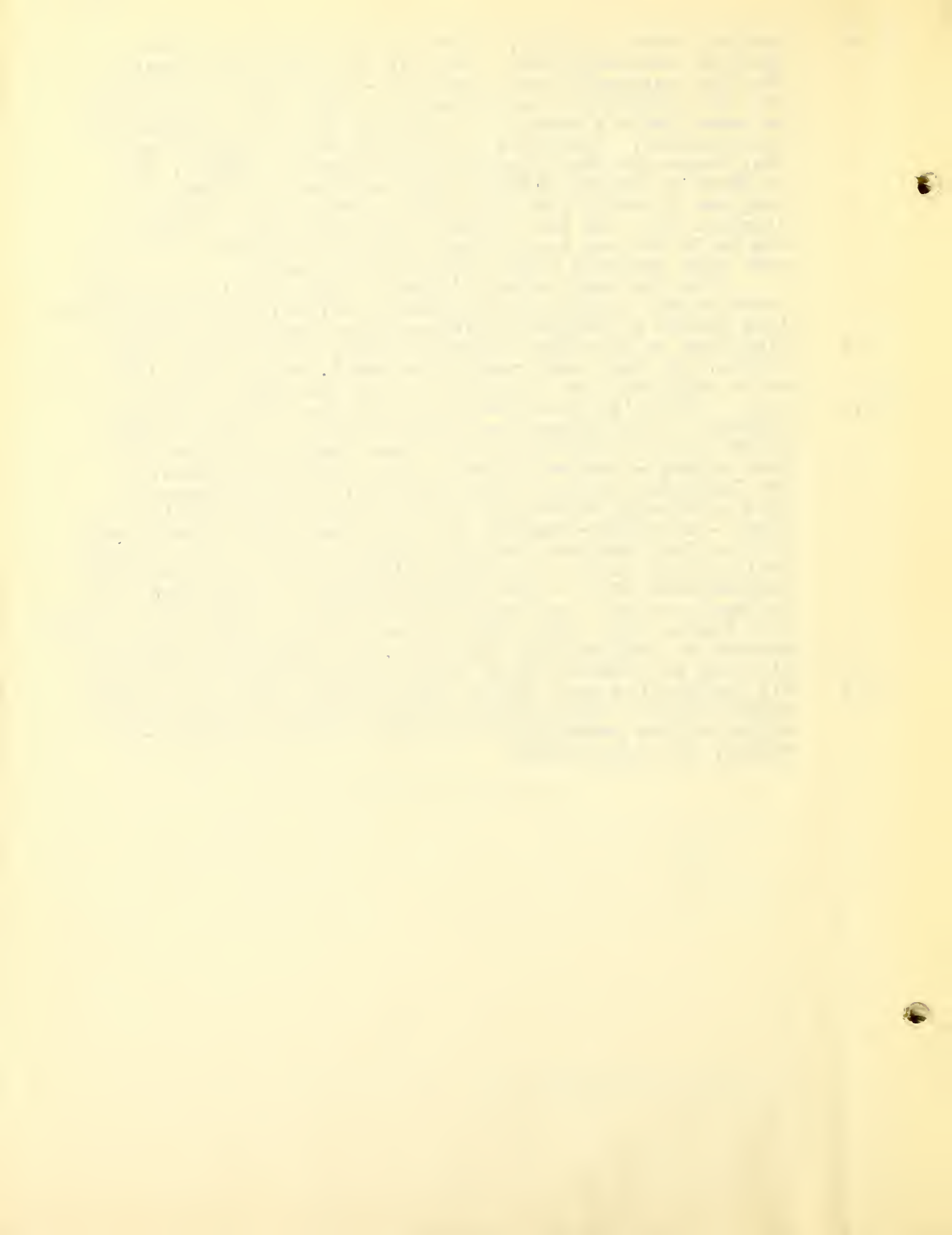


I, 4 and only once, I think, refers to her at all, as "the third of his daughters". He does not even come in until the king expressly sends for him, - we do not see him warning Lear beforehand, as Apemantus crudely does, and hence he never drops a word of "I told you so", the one insufferable offence. His jests do probably add to the burden that bears the king's sanity down under its weight, just as Edgar's feigned madness does; and thus he injures the very one he would give his life to save; but I think silence, too, and the evident forced restraint of Kent, who would not say a word when he could not speak his mind, must have unhinged Lear's mind just as surely.

I, 4 But the real *raison d'etre* of this Fool is the sheer overpowering pathos of the dramatic effect, and the irresistible floods of sympathy which his hand controls, from the time when we hear that "since my young lady's going into France, the fool hath much pined away", to his last jest, as he realizes that the world is too much awry for any hope - "And I'll go to bed at noon." How infinitely more poignant is the picture of Lear followed by this poorest of his former train than would have been the picture of Lear alone! - how very near is our laughter to tears, and the "climbing sorrow" in our throats, at the efforts of this poor being to be all in all to the proud, passionate king! - how heart-breaking are his brave little jests, each with a timid truth striving to make its way to the clouding brain of his master! And most pitiful of all is the utter hopelessness of it - the ineffectualness of this poor Fool. He does nothing, less than nothing; his most dauntless efforts only hasten that very ruin that he toils to avert. He is the essence of unquestioning devotion, of futile self-sacrifice. His life is crushed out as carelessly as that of a butterfly beating its poor little wings against the bars of "this tough world". He disappears, and is never mentioned again - and after the passing of his spirit the play is no more pathos, but pure horror.

III, 6

V, 3



After Shakespeare, the real fool, in cap and bells and motley, disappeared from the stage; Beaumont and Fletcher never used him, Massinger never. Ben Jonson only occasionally and without distinction. But this does not mean that he had been proved a failure. The zenith of the fool's popularity in real life had passed, long before Shakespeare dropped him from "dramatis personae"; the type of fool that was common in town-hall and tavern was a figure of no such romantic appeal as the court jester of the older days, and even those later classes of domestic fools were becoming constantly more rare. The passing of the stage fool, then, did not mean that humor was unappreciated, or that people were going back to the old idea that pure comedy was a kind of writing to which the serious literary artist must not stoop. It meant simply that the "motley fool" was yielding his place to other comic characters, and that stage humor was undergoing a process of development.

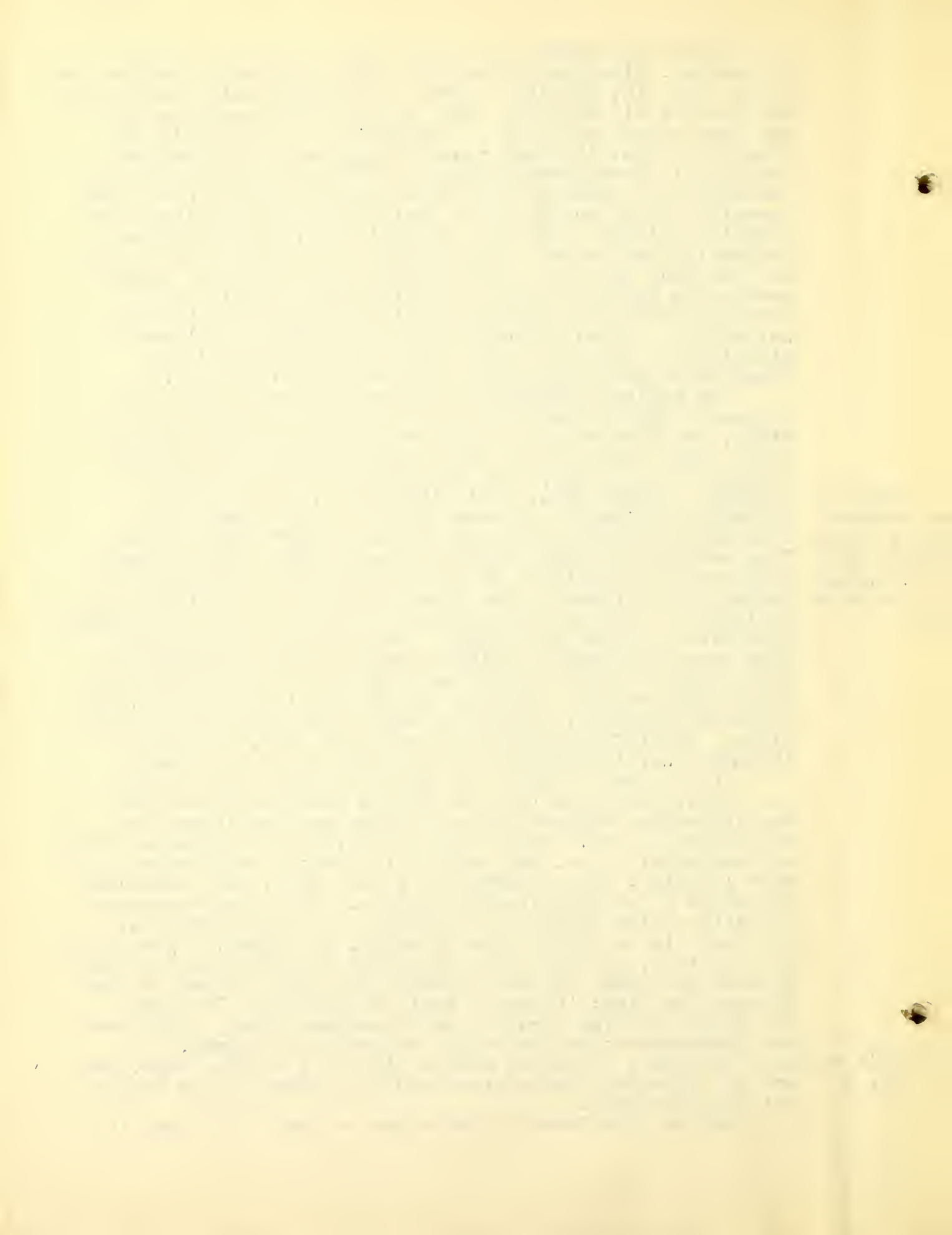
The Fools of Shakespeare are embodiments of the most wholesome type of humor that had yet made its way onto the stage, and have paved the way for all stage comedy since their time. To be sure, some eighteenth-century critics, like Rowe and Gildon, have lamented his use of comedy in tragedy - Gildon says, "this Absurdity...is what our Shakespeare himself has been guilty of...for want of a thorough Knowledge of the Art of the Stage". Rowe says "the severer Critiques among us cannot bear it": and Theobald tries to attribute it to "the reigning Barbarism of Shakespeare's times"! But these words do not indicate the attitude of the real theatre-going public, as the "Critiques" themselves confess with grief. It is only a question of time when the dramatic critics attain to the clearness of vision that resides in the "gallery-gods". Then the plays of Shakespeare are "restored" to their original beauty, the Fools are replaced, and the triumph over classicism is complete. The influence of Shakespeare is thus, in spite of interruptions, the predominant one down to our very day.

It has been said "man is the only animal that laughs and weeps, for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between things as they are and things as they ought to be". Thus the reformer, with his eye on things as they ought to be, may work in two ways - with tears or with laughter, with a sermon or with a jest, with merciless didactics or with wholesome ridicule. It is not necessary to decide which method is in general the more effective, for there is no question as to which, if either, may succeed on the stage, and thus make the drama an influence for good. If ever the drama was an influence for good, it was in the Elizabethan time; if ever a poet and dramatist "followed the gleam" of high morality and steadfast ideals, that poet was Shakespeare; and he worked not only with tears, but with laughter. "The web of our life is a mingled yarn, good and ill together; our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not".

And so, the Fools of the stage are still with us, in

"Works of Shakespeare" VII, p. ix-x. Article pub. 1702, quoted but inaccessible.

All's well IV, 3



some form or other, - still holding the mirror up to nature with good-natured buffoonery. There we may see ourselves as others see us, with our passions, our weaknesses, our affectations, our prejudices, all mimicked in the guise of Folly; and "the stage will ever continue to be enriched by suggestions from life, for folly will never cease". This, too, is as it should be - although Jaques has visions of success as a reformer in cap and bells -

Helbig

"Open Court"

Dec. 22, 1887

As You Like It

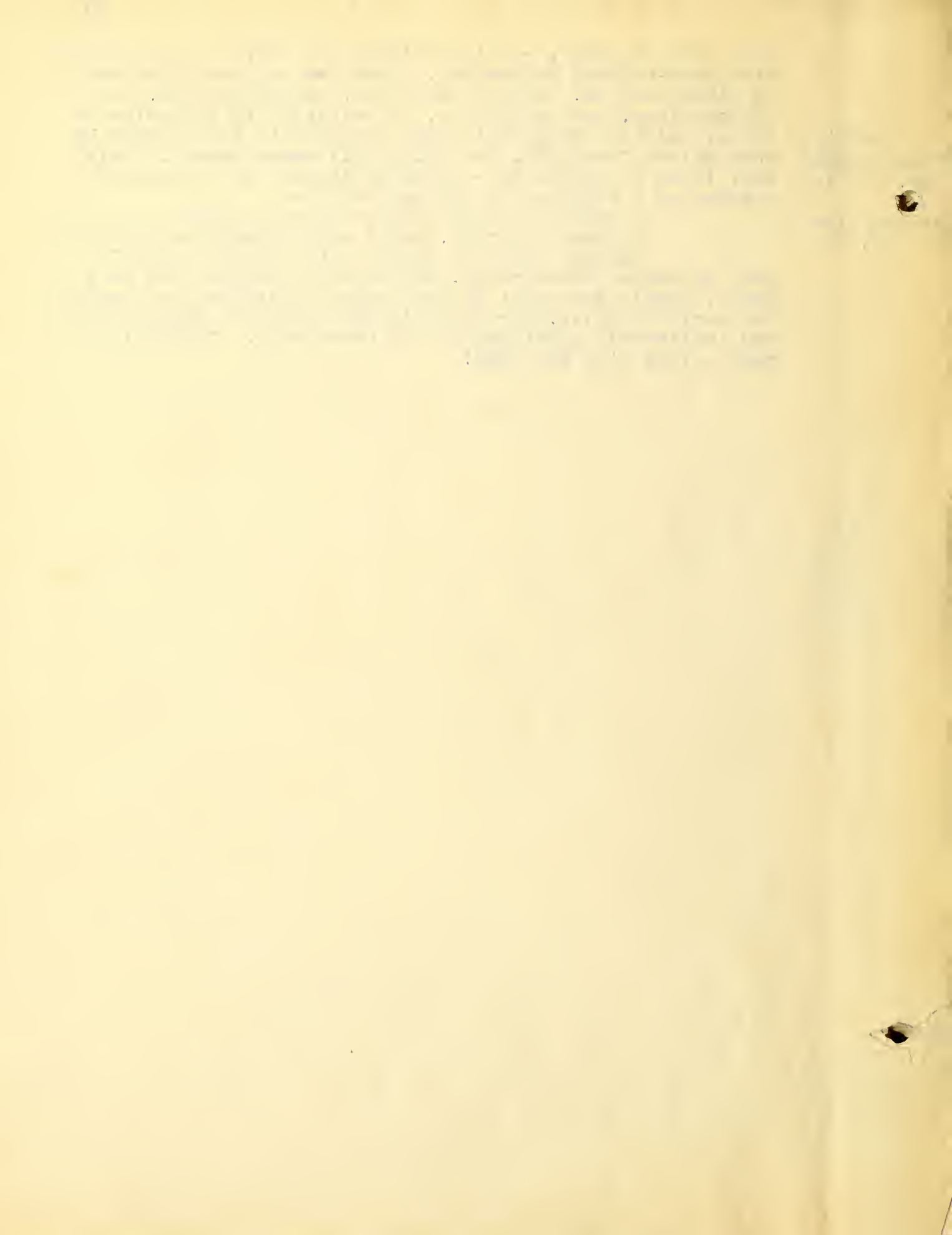
II, 7

"Invest me in my motley; give me leave

To speak my mind, and I will through and through

Cleanse the foul body of the infected world"-

yet the master Shakespeare, seeing life steadily and as a whole, surely seems not to have hoped or desired to cleanse the world of folly, for folly is the enduring characteristic and inalienable privilege of the human race. The Fool is dead - long live the Fool!



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