Shakespeare's King Lear and Indian Politics

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PREFACE

THIS is not an annotated edition of a play. It is a serious study of what is probably the greatest of Shakespeare's works. It is an attempt to make the wisdom which *King Lear* admittedly contains available for practical guidance in not a few of the difficulties that beset individual, and especially social, life.

I may explain the origin of the book. In nearly every one of the last thirty years I have taught one, and often two, of Shakespeare's plays to classes in this college. Some plays I have taught repeatedly. It has been my custom, after each play has been studied in detail, to give a short course of conversational lectures upon it with the object of bringing its artistic construction and moral significance clearly into view. *King Lear* was the play studied by last year's Fourth, or Senior B.A., Class. I am not likely to teach this play again and have accordingly put the substance of what I said in lecturing on it at the end of last year (though not for the first time then) into a form that is fit for publication.

I hope that the little volume thus composed will be welcome not only to former students of this college but to those who have studied in other colleges and universities in India, and in fact to all who take an intelligent interest in the healthy progress of the Indian community. It may be of considerable value as a help to those who

feel their need of help in dealing with some problems upon the right solution of which the well-being of this country in coming years will to a large extent depend. Mock modesty does not hinder me from saying this; for though the words of the book are mine, all the thoughts in it are Shakespeare's. I claim no credit but that of making an honest attempt to show how his great thoughts may serve the permanent needs of men and the present needs of India.

I dedicate the volume to the many hundreds, indeed I may say the thousands, who have studied Shakespeare under my guidance in by-gone years and who—far apart from one another—are now doing their work in life, no doubt with very various degrees of faithfulness and success. May it help them to work more faithfully and with a greater measure of true success! I dedicate it more especially to those of this number who were members of the Fourth Class, and therefore students of *King Lear*, in the years 1880, 1888, and 1899. In them, if it do no more, it will awaken memories,—I trust not unpleasing,—of what they listened to and thought about in their college years.

I hope all my former students will look upon this dedication as a token of the lasting regard of

Their sincere Well-wisher

WILLIAM MILLER.

MADRAS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE,
November 1900.

SHAKESPEARE'S KING LEAR AND INDIAN POLITICS

FEW things are better fitted to enlarge the mind or elevate the thoughts than to come fairly under the influence of one of Shakespeare's greater plays. The student who wishes to receive this influence to the full, must give himself to earnest study along various lines. In the first place, he must read the play with attention enough to make him familiar with the outline of the story and the actions of the different personages. In the next place, he must study it scene by scene in detail. He must master peculiarities of language and learn the force of every pregnant saying. Labour is well spent which helps him to understand the exact shade of meaning in every sentence. The light also which each of the speeches throws on the character of its speaker and the development of the plot.

requires careful and constant notice. With the amount of study implied in these things, most Indian students are content. Probably too many of them are content with less.

But these things alone will not bring one fully under the influence of the play. From the height which he has reached by this preliminary labour, the real student will look back on all that has passed before him, and will try to grasp the meaning of the drama as a connected artistic whole. He will try to form such a conception of the meaning and the bearing of the entire spectacle as must have been steadily present to the author's mind when framing it. In the whole interaction of circumstance and character he must see, as it were, an illuminated portion of the whole system of things in the midst of which men find themselves on Earth,—a means accordingly of coming to understand the principles on which that system works, and of seeing with his own eyes "the very springs of the machine."

Most men, when they visit a factory, need some help before they understand the working of the

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machinery by which they find themselves surrounded. They see it as clearly as possible, but they soon discover that mere clearness of vision is not enough. What they see so clearly, is to them little better than a bewildering mass of intricate confusion until some one shows them in detail how rods and cranks and wheels co-operate, and contribute, each in its appointed way, to the common end. If explanation and guidance are thus required by those who wish to comprehend a piece of man's machinery when it is at work in clear day-light before their eyes, much more may it be expected that similar help will be required when, even in the brilliant light of a Shakespearean drama, a portion is displayed of that mighty and mysterious system amid which men play their part in life, and a portion of which they are My aim in the following pages is to give such help as a student needs when he has studied "King Lear" carefully in detail, and thereby finds himself confronted with a portion of that great world-system which is so vast, so inexplicable, and so terrible, when one attempts

to grasp its deep significance or one's own relation to it. I wish to give such aid towards the student's understanding of that portion of the scheme of things on which the genius of Shakespeare casts light in this great drama as is needed by an intelligent and inquiring visitor who sees every part of the machinery that is working in a factory and yet stands perplexed by its intricacy, and deafened besides by its clank and whirr.

With questions of textual or linguistic criticism, the present Essay takes no concern. The reader is supposed to be thoroughly familiar with "King Lear." He is supposed to have mastered every important passage that is from any cause difficult or obscure, and to remember, with tolerable exactness, what each of the personages has done or said. He is further supposed to know the little that is known about the external facts of Shakespeare's life and to have some acquaintance, at least by name and in outline, with his other works. Also, he is supposed to know and to acknowledge the position which Shakespeare holds, by the consent of all men, as the poet who,

beyond all others, has "held the mirror up to nature," and explored and explained the recesses of the human heart.' Many things like these I take for granted. Some few preliminary points, however, it may be expedient to state before I begin to expound or criticize.

The date of the composition of "King Lear" can be more exactly fixed than that of most of Shakespeare's plays For reasons which may be found in the introduction to every good edition of the drama, it is safe to say that it was begun in 1605 and finished by the summer of the following year While writing it, Shakespeare was thus in his forty-second year, in the height of his manhood and the full vigour of his powers His next production was pretty certainly "Macbeth;" which is similar in most ways to "King Lear," yet with some striking differences. Little as is known of the inward any more than of the outward history of the poet, there is ample proof that in those central years he was passing through a time of stormy thought, in which his prevailing mood was that of awe-struck

inquiry into the mysteries of life and restless endeavour to find some foothold in the midst of what seems the moral chaos of the world. There are many signs of this state of mind in both "King Lear" and "Macbeth." In the latter, however, there are indications that a calmer mood has begun to supervene. Some clue to the mighty maze appears now to have reached his hands. It is in fact the clue which the writing of "King Lear" has given him. In the works of his after years, this calmer mood prevails. In his later Roman Plays, in "Cymbeline," and especially in "The Tempest," which if not the latest is certainly among the latest of his works, he writes as one who has attained to some settled rest concerning the problems which this world presents to the thoughtful and earnest mind, — as one who has seen some way into the heart of the universe and is fairly content with what he sees. It is far from unimportant to a right understanding of "King Lear" to bear in mind that it is the utterance of a serious-minded man at the crisis of his inward experience, when he is

agitated by profound inquiries to which he is only just beginning to find a satisfying reply

It was probably the uniform, certainly the all but uniform, practice of Shakespeare to base his plays on tales, or portions of history, which were already familiar to his audience He based the present play on an old legend often told and re-told, and incorporated by Holinshed in those Chronicles on which he drew so often for his materials It is also possible that he made use of a play by an unknown author, entitled "The True Chronicle History of King Lear and His Three Daughters," which had been published in 1594 It is, however, of extremely little importance what particular version of the story he had most prominently before him In any case, it was but a rough outline that he borrowed But it is somewhat important to observe that a legendary story of the kind was one that might be dealt with very freely In dramatising the life and deeds of historical English kings, Shakespeare could depart but little from ascertained and well-known facts In dealing with the story of a

king whose very existence was but mythical, he could modify the narrative in any way that made it a fitting vehicle for his own thoughts. In particular, the old story had been told in so many fashions that he might perfectly well, without offending any one, have given it an entirely different ending. In some versions of the tale, Cordelia is made successful in her enterprise and restores her father to the throne. It was of set purpose, therefore, that Shakespeare made of his drama a tragedy with what appears to be the overpoweringly sad conclusion of Cordelia's defeat and shameful death, and of Lear's succumbing to his accumulated miseries. The bearing of this on the interpretation of the play will appear afterwards.

With the main story of the king and his daughters, Shakespeare has combined the story of Gloucester and his sons, which he manifestly borrowed from an episode in the famous "Arcadia" of Sir Philip Sidney. The subtle interweaving of the two cognate tales enables him to leave the impression that the ingratitude and hard-hearted-

ness of Goneril and Regan are no mere casual incident in the experience of a single household, but that wickedness like theirs is characteristic of the time and symptomatic of the condition of society. The importance of this to a right understanding of the whole play will also appear as we go on.

These preliminary matters being thus disposed of, let us turn to the main purpose of the present Essay. That purpose is so to criticize the play *as to see it, if possible, as an organic whole*, to see its artistic construction, to see, if one likes to put it so, its moral lesson, and to see the connection of each of its parts and characters with this main design.

So to criticize this play is peculiarly difficult. Unless it may be "Hamlet," not one of Shakespeare's works presents so many difficulties to one who tries to bring it to a focus; nor has any other of them given rise to so much diversity, and even contrariety, of opinion among its critics. The reason of this is not hard to discover. It is mainly due to the width of the canvas on which

the picture of King Lear and his age is painted. The difficulty of interpretation does not arise, as it does in "Hamlet," from the subtlety of thought or complexity of motive ascribed to any of the characters; rather, from the intricacy of the story and the number of those who have an influential share in carrying it to its tragic close. Everything is larger, broader, more involved, than in Shakespeare's other masterpieces.

Take the analogy of two buildings, equally beautiful, and equally fitted to serve the ends which their builders had in view. One of them has a plain and massive outline. If it has subordinate parts at all, their relation to the whole and to one another may be seen at a single glance. The other has projections here and what seem to be excrescences there It has portions almost unconnected. It has aisles, and passages, and wings, in what looks like perplexed confusion. The one is a Greek temple, the other a Gothic cathedral. It may be a question which of the two is the more beautiful, or which of the two demands the longer or more loving study before all the skill of its

adaptations and all the subtleties of its harmony may be mastered. But there can be no question as to which is constructed on the simpler plan Of the one, an intelligent visitor can give a fairly accurate outline and description after he has once walked round it. It needs many a visit and observation and the jotting down of many a note, before any visitor can give a rough idea of the plan or elevation of the other. Comparatively speaking, the greatest of Shakespeare's other plays, "Othello," "the Tempest," "Coriolanus," and indeed even "Macbeth," are like the Grecian temple, which, however refined in the beauty of its proportions, is massive, severe, and plain. "King Lear" is the cathedral, with all its complexity of chapels and of aisles, and its endless array of buttress and pinnacle and spire. No wonder that it is hard, on first inspection, to give a general idea of a structure so intricate and vast.

To a certain point, indeed, a critic of this play can advance with confidence in describing its general plan. Even a brief examination of the Gothic cathedral to which I have compared it.

suffices to disclose that the outline of the central mass is that of a cross, however numerous the annexes that seem to interfere with its regularity. So, two great thoughts need not be long of being discerned as underlying the whole structure of "King Lear." The one thought is that, under the government which prevails on earth, evil results in calamity and suffering for those who work it, and that this result arrives, not by arbitrary or miraculous infliction of punishment on the evil-doer, but in a manner entirely natural, that is to say, in virtue of the nature of evil itself and of the ordinary procedure that directs the world. The companion thought, which also soon reveals itself to one who makes an earnest study of the play, is that the final issue of the suffering, the punishment, which is sure to come upon all who err from the path of rectitude, depends on the character of those upon whom it comes. On some, its effects are salutary. To them, it is a blessing in disguise. In the case of others, it is hopelessly, irremediably destructive. So far, we are on safe ground. These two great thoughts,

these two well-worn moral lessons, are sufficiently prominent in the play and afford together some general idea of its plan.

But this does not carry us very far. For the question rises inevitably at once: what then is the sin or error of which the natural consequence appears in the huge train of calamities which makes up this most harrowing of dramas? It is a question that is not easily answered In this respect, "King Lear" stands nearly alone among Shakespeare's tragedies If it be asked with regard to others of them what the error is which brings ruin in its train, or in other words what is the keynote of the tragedy, the answer comes at once from every critic and every student that in "Macbeth" it is *ambition*, in "Othello" *jealousy*, in "Coriolanus" *pride*, in "Hamlet" *indecision* or *weakness of will*, and in "Romeo and Juliet" *violence of passion*. Different phrases may no doubt be employed, but in substance there is agreement as to the keynote of each of these great dramas. But what is the corresponding keynote of "King Lear"?

In their attempted answers to this question critics are hopelessly divided, and many of them speak with a very uncertain sound. *Self-will* or *obstinacy*, says one. *Misconception of the nature of love*, says another. Still others will have it that the evil which is the fruitful spring of all the suffering, ought to be labelled *ingratitude*, or *unrestrained passion*, or *the selfishness that remains even in noble characters*. All these are views of men whose views deserve respect. No single word or phrase can be altogether adequate when the most competent authorities are so much at variance Much may be said in favour of each of the above expressions as the keynote of the play. Each may be taken as a standpoint from which much of its meaning may be discerned. Yet not one of them brings its full purport before the mind, or gives such unity to the conceptions it embodies as the words already referred to bestow at once upon "Macbeth," or "Coriolanus," or "Othello."

The fact is that "King Lear" agrees to a great extent, so far as its plan and purpose are concerned,

with "Cymbeline;" which is in many respects its companion and completion, and which in another connection I shall have to refer to largely. Both plays have a strong infusion of the Epic. In epic poetry, men appear rather as instruments than as in the strict sense actors. The real subject of an epic poem is the will of the powers above,—of the higher beings,—of the Supreme Being,—regarded as working out designs which the human agents but dimly comprehend. In dramatic poetry, man is the centre of the action. Attention is chiefly drawn to the will, the character, the influence upon others, of the leading personages. In epic poetry, on the other hand, the Power above the world is placed openly in the foreground. Men are recipients of the influence, they are almost the tools, of the supreme Controller, rather than centres of influence themselves. Now "Cymbeline," and in lesser degree "King Lear," though dramatic in form are to a large extent epic in their spirit. This is the reason why it is difficult to pitch upon any phrase as giving the keynote of the whole play. An

end is kept in view throughout which is above and beyond the aims, or the wills, or the comprehension, of any of the actors

All the attempts to sum up and focus the play which I have mentioned, and still others perhaps which I have not mentioned, would have to be taken into account by one who should attempt to express in detail the whole meaning of "King Lear" And yet, while admitting the inadequacy of any single key-word or point of view, one is compelled to take a definite clue to be his guide if he is to make his way through the labyrinth at all. The same thing might happen to a lover of the picturesque who intends to travel through some extensive region in which the scenery is beautiful and varied No road that he can follow will make him acquainted with all the features of the landscape. Still, he must follow *some* road If he stand hesitating for ever as to which road he is to choose, he will never see any of the beauties which he wishes to explore. Similarly, we must choose some road. We must select some leading

thought by the aid of which the play as a whole may be surveyed.

Without denying that other roads may reveal beauties which we may have to pass unnoticed, let us say that the evil and error from which proceed the sorrow and the suffering we are to study, is that of society being based on a foundation in which love is wanting To me it seems that, more than any other, this is the regulating thought by which Shakespeare was inspired in the most stirring and majestic of his dramas Let us put it thus:—The lesson of "King Lear" is the absolute need of love as an active element in healthy and progressive social life

For working out this thought, Shakespeare naturally takes an early, undeveloped, state of society. All things ought to be studied first in their rudimentary forms The student of zoology begins with the lower forms of the animal kingdom. He makes himself acquainted with how life presents itself in crustaceans and worms, before he attempts to trace its development in birds or mammals. Even the student of mathematics must acquaint

himself with the properties of triangles and squares, before he can grapple with the mysteries of the ellipse or the parabola. Thus too, one who aims at seeing and setting forth the essential principles of social life must study society in its early and simple state. For this reason, the action of "King Lear" is thrown into a time when society is not much more than formed, when rude and primitive passion has free play, when the many influences at work in an advanced and complex social frame-work take little effect on any one. Hence arises the unrestrained passion which is so characteristic of nearly all the actors that Gervinus, probably the acutest and most suggestive of Shakespeare's critics, regards it as the dominating idea of the play. It is understood that, up to the time when the action begins, Britain has been in that elementary condition in which the social bond has been simple obedience to a chief. The king's will has hitherto been law The one duty of the subject has been to obey the king's command. Not to speak of forms of rule in which the views and wishes of

the subjects count for something, there has been little approach even to those social forms in which law of some kind is binding on the ruler. It is command on the king's part, passive obedience on the subject's part, that up to this point have held society together. Yet things are at the stage when a step may be taken, and ought to be taken, towards something higher. The errors made in the taking of that step are, to my mind, the real subject of the drama.

At this point, it will be useful to call to mind how many influences are silently at work in every active society, of whatever kind it be and whatever be the influences under which it has been formed. Even if there be few definite laws, or none, there are immemorial customs, there are tacit understandings, there is a certain force of public opinion, to which all members of the society yield in some degree. They have learned, not only theoretically but in practice, that there are some points, nay many points, in regard to which they must not expect, and must not attempt, to get their own way. Even in that

very rudimentary form of distinctly developed social life which presents itself in a college or a school, how many things are silently agreed to and considered binding by all concerned! If it were not so, if each professor or teacher, each student or school-boy, held that he might decide for himself the time and place of meeting, the amount of work to be done, the order in which daily duties should proceed,—if each of them held that he had a right to decide all such points anew on each succeeding day—if there were not well-understood conventions by which all submit to be controlled, how soon would that form of society go to pieces! Yet something like this is the state of matters which is put before us in "King Lear." Hitherto the king has been passively obeyed, and by such obedience the nation has been held together. But the time when mere authority is a sufficient bond has evidently gone by Men have begun to think, and judge, and act, for themselves. When that stage is reached in any nation or society, it is no longer right, as it is also no longer possible, that there should be mere authority on

the one side and mere obedience on the other. When men determine to be no longer passively submissive, the time has come when some scope for the exercise of their wills and their judgments must be found, if the society they make up is to retain its health, or even to continue to exist. Such a time has come in Britain when the curtain rises and Lear and his contemporaries appear upon the stage.

But here lies the problem which shows itself as soon as the action of the play begins. How is society to be healthily progressive, or even to exist, when every one endeavours to get his own way, when all alike are uncontrolled and uncontrollable? For we learn erelong that this is the leading feature among good and bad alike, at least among all whose characters are fully formed when the action of the play begins. Kent, good as he is, is as uncontrollable as Goneril or Cornwall. He bursts into passion and acts with unregulated violence when every consideration of prudence and of duty ought to help him to restrain himself. Even in Cordelia, who on the

whole is a very pattern of goodness and grace, we shall see as we proceed that there is an element of sheer wilfulness. Self-will and violence are so rampant that even a servant draws upon his master, and that master a royal duke, while no one seems much shocked or even surprised at his doing so. Above all, Lear himself illustrates how little any moral or customary influence restrains the men of the time. His every whim must have instant way. Kent must be banished. Cordelia must be disinherited, simply because it is his will that they should be so. He does not so much as think of showing deference to reason, or law, or custom, in the matter. His first impulse, and the first impulse of all who are representative of the time, is to use whatever power they have for compassing their own ends and carrying into effect their own pleasure.

Lest we should fail to apprehend that this is the temper of the time, we are told, by the mouth of Gloucester, how "love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the

bond cracked, "twixt son and father." Edmund too, who wicked though he be is a good observer, speaks, with the tacit assent of his wiser as well as better brother, of such things being rife as "unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless differences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches and I know not what" How is healthy order to be educed from such a chaos? Mere force will not educe it. Plainly, not very much remains of the divinity that "doth hedge a king." An attempt on the king's part to rule by bare force would obviously be futile, neither would it be right to resort to it even if it might perhaps be superficially successful. In the Britain laid open to us in "King Lear," the stage in the development of social order has passed by in which passive obedience secures good government, even as it has passed, or is fast passing, in the India of our own day. Men have become too thoughtful, too critical, as well as too self-willed,

to give themselves up blindly into the hands of one who should try to rule them entirely from without, entirely apart from any approval or concurrence of their own.

Is there then any bond that can still knit men together into a sound, progressive, social framework? Is there any bond that may take the place of that submissiveness to external authority of which the usefulness and the possibility have alike gone by for ever? Love, says Shakespeare in the play, love alone, can henceforward be the effectual bond and basis of that healthy social order which is the soil in which all that we call virtue grows. Love, he virtually adds, springs up and is trained for effective use only in the family. If love be wanting in the family—as it is partly wanting in the families of Gloucester and the King,—you see, he seems to say, in the mirror of this tragedy how social order is destroyed, you see what vices flourish and what calamities and miseries ensue. So too, he seems to say, you see here how if there be such true love, rightly nurtured and trained, as is exemplified in Cordelia

and Edgar, it finds after patient endurance a remedy for the evils of the time, and works out a social order which if it be not perfect in the present bears yet a lively hope of better things to come.

In all this, did Shakespeare think of the signs of his own time? Could this wise observer see at this early date, what all men saw in less than a generation later, that England had reached a stage when mere authority must pass farther into the back-ground, when individual life must have freer play in political and social and religious affairs, when the nation must be more fully self-governing than had ever been the case before? Every one knows now how conflict came between those who were determined that society should progress and the impracticable ruler who was determined to maintain and make more stringent the narrowest form of personal authority. Every one knows now how the lesson of the need for healthy progress which had been taught to one obstructive king at Runnymede had to be taught at Naseby to another. It seems

far from unlikely that Shakespeare, when he wrote "King Lear," had some regard to tendencies which, though few discerned them then, he was able to see around him in their germ

However this may be, it seems to me that the central idea,—or, if one chooses to call it so, the lesson,—of "King Lear" is the one I have endeavoured to describe Bearing this along with us as our guiding thought, let us turn to see how far it gives meaning, and unity, and impressiveness to the tragedy in all its parts

It is Shakespeare's manner to make his opening scenes significant of all that is to follow The opening scene of "King Lear" is no exception to the rule Clearly and emphatically, it sets forth the purport of the play. The conduct of the king is of course the chief thing to be observed in it His conduct is strange, improbable, one is inclined to say, outrageous It is so outrageous that Dr Bucknill, in his well-known book, lays down that Lear must be regarded as mad when he first appears upon the stage This I am not disposed to admit Or rather perhaps I should

put the matter thus. In deference to Dr. Bucknill's authority, I am willing to allow that there are indications from the outset that the old king's mind is not altogether sound. But that this incipient disturbance of his mental balance is the direct cause of what he says and does, I must deny. The fact is that, while many of Dr. Bucknill's remarks are instructive and acute, he tends to see in this majestic drama little more than a careful study of a case of lunacy. It is gladly conceded that Shakespeare notes, with wonderful insight and accuracy, the nature and progress of the king's mental malady; but it is impossible to admit that the whole play turns on the single fact that its protagonist is mad.

But if Lear is not mad from the beginning, what is to be said about the violent improbability of his conduct? He intends to bestow the most ample third of his kingdom upon his best-loved daughter. Simply because she refuses to make large profession of a love which many bygone years have shown to be real, and which her father cannot doubt at heart, he not only deprives her of

her share but drives her dowerless into exile. Coleridge well remarks that there is no other instance in Shakespeare of such a wild improbability. No doubt, improbable enough events occur in other plays; but in no case but this is the entire action made to turn upon an event so unnatural, and indeed incredible. It is true that the improbability is found in the original story. This, however, is not a sufficient explanation. If the story in all its features had not suited Shakespeare's purpose, he was free, as has been explained above, to modify it in any way he pleased; or he would not have chosen it at all to be the groundwork of his play Here is how I regard the matter. Lear's project of dividing the kingdom must not be too closely connected with his determination to make trial of his daughters' love. The division has been resolved on before the action of the play begins Partly from an old man's weariness of the cares of state, partly from the feeling that the new age that is coming on presents problems which require to be dealt with by fresher minds, the king has resolved to abdi-

cate. His arrangements for the future government of the kingdom are determined, not only by his having three daughters, but by the feeling that the circumstances of the age require that the rulers shall come nearer to the ruled. He feels that it is an age of transition. He feels that the society which he has long directed is developing, and accordingly that the government it needs must become more complex. Something will be done to meet the difficulties of the new age if each ruler is made to rule over a smaller area, with which he can make himself more intimately acquainted and for the wants of which he can therefore more minutely care. At any rate, for whatever reason, it is fixed that the kingdom is to be divided. It is also fixed that Cordelia is to have the largest share Settled determination is shown in the form of the question put to her :

> " What can you say to draw
> A third more opulent than your sisters ? Speak."

The king feels sure of an answer which will justify the resolution he has already come to. For it is not merely an old man's freak that has

led him to make the obtaining of a share of his kingdom depend on an avowal of love. As appears so fully in the sequel, Lear is not a mere impetuous and reckless warrior. He is observant and thoughtful. In some sense, he is even wise. As his long reign has gone on, he has been learning that the system of authority on the one side and passive obedience on the other, no longer suffices. He feels that the need has come for a higher style of rule than his has ever been. He feels that of such rule the prime essential element is detachment from self, altruism, devotion to something beyond one's own feelings or one's own interests. We may call it by what name we choose. The highest name for it, and Shakespeare's name for it, is—Love. The thought strikes the old king that he will emphasize this need for love in those who rule. He will make his devolution of authority depend on an assurance that this unselfish principle is strongly at work in those who are to come after him as rulers. Thereby he hopes to teach a greatly needed lesson, and at the same time to get a good

excuse for the preference he means to show to his youngest daughter. For he has no shadow of doubt that she will best stand the test which he proposes to apply.

The old man has a grand idea, and a true one, in his mind. He feels that self-forgetful love must be an active element in any kind of government that is to be suitable to the condition of the governed and therefore fitted to promote their real welfare. So far, he is in advance of his time. He recognizes, as only wise men do, the deepest want of the coming age. It is in his method of applying his great idea to practice that he so greatly errs. His error springs from the imperious temperament that is characteristic of the man, and also characteristic of the age which ought now to pass away. He understands the absolute necessity for love. He does not understand how love can be awakened and set to work. So he snatches at what he conceives to be the readiest and quickest means of realizing his ideal. He thinks that deep principles of life can be manufactured to order. He fails to see the necessity for that

slow development, that patient waiting, which the inflexible order of the world makes an indispensable condition of any real and enduring good. It is told of a certain well-remembered schoolmaster that in endeavouring to instil good principles into his boys his method of exhortation was like this. "The Scripture says 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' You are bound to love your neighbours. If you do not love your neighbours I'll flog you. The Scripture tells you to be pure in heart If you are not pure in heart I'll flog you" It is easy to see that this schoolmaster's method was not only mistaken but absurd. Lear's plan for securing that love should be active in the rulers who came after him, is about equally absurd.

Shakespeare makes Lear's great error take this simple, outrageous, incredible, form in order that the lesson may be plain. But it is an error which, in shapes less crude, men, and even men who are earnest and in some ways wise, are constantly committing. They see that some particular thing is good, but they bestow no thought on the way

in which the order of the world allows it to be obtained. They devise ways of their own for getting it,—commonly the ways that they regard as most direct and speedy. They forget that good got in an evil way would cease to be good, even if it were possible so to get it. They forget how all things around them teach that what is precious and lasting comes only by long-continued growth. The highest of all teaching makes it prominent that the kingdom of God—that is everything that is pure, and salutary, and noble—is like the seed cast into the ground, which slowly, step by step, grows towards its perfect fruit "man knoweth not how." Every nook of history may supply illustration of how common and how fatal is the mistake of trying to run counter to this divine law. It is the mistake of those who seem to suppose it possible in a single generation, if not in a single year, to put into full operation in India those principles and forms of government which, rightly enough, they regard as in themselves the best. Shakespeare shows what this mistake results in. The false is preferred to the

true. Glib profession is honoured. Slow sincerity is rejected and despised. A welcome is given to the quick-springing seed which has fallen on the stony ground. The seed upon the good ground, from which alone there can come a harvest, is unvalued if not unnoticed. What evils follow from the preference of loud profession to that low sound which "reverbs no hollowness," this play makes clear.

The opening scene further notes for us how faults still cling to those who upon the whole are good and true. Shakespeare knew well that all human goodness has its imperfections and its stains. Neither here nor elsewhere, does he present the faultless monsters which are the delight of inferior artists, though they are unknown in real life. Cordelia, sincere and loving though she be, is yet blameworthy She cannot be acquitted of a certain self-will and obstinacy. Love for her father should have made her see the danger, both to him and to the nation, of directly thwarting him. Yet she allows herself to be provoked into most perverse speeches, and

her sullen under-statement of her love makes its own contribution to the calamities that follow. Had she adequately voiced her love, Lear, craving as he was for loud things, might still have been unsatisfied; but his passion would have had less excuse, and might have been less excessive.

Again, the opening scene serves to show that Cordelia is not the only one in whom the unselfish love is active which the age so greatly needs, and for which Lear so rightly craves. Kent also loves. His is that true love which does not shrink from reproof, from opposition, or from anger, when these are necessary for the good of the object of love; though Lear, like many others, cannot see that love which thus expresses itself is genuine. But error and lack of wisdom are still plainer in Kent than in Cordelia. His violence and passion are enough to drive any hot-tempered man, most of all a hot-tempered old king, beyond all bounds of self-control. Kent also contributes not a little to the catastrophe.

Thus the opening scene shows how in this

imperfect world even those who are good and true have real faults, and how their faults, when given way to, help to work out evil for the good themselves and for all around them. Yet, however grave their faults, those in whom there is unselfish love are the only possible source of good. From them alone, can come the correction of the evils of their time. Their influence alone can avail to bring in a better time. All this fully appears as the action of the play proceeds.

Once more, it must be noticed in this opening scene how lightly Gloucester thinks of his own violations of moral rule. He makes vulgar jests on his unfaithfulness to the marriage tie, even in the presence of the youth on whom his sin has fixed the brand of illegitimacy. When a man so good and kind in many ways as Gloucester, in whom conscience and loyalty are far from dead, can not only commit but even jest about so gross a sin, there is proof that the family life of the age is rotten to the core. It is by the moral discipline of the home, by the influence of parents upon children, of children on one another, and also of

children on their parents, that the unselfish love which is at the root of all social good is awakened, trained, and made effective. When family life is not controlled by moral laws and directed to moral ends, there is no hope of a high tone in the community at large.

At this point the further remark may be made that the wickedness, and particularly the ruthlessness, which Edmund displays, is directly connected with his father's immorality. The father will not have one with such a brand as Edmund bears continually beside him. He has therefore been away,— we know not where, but under no good influence,—for nine years, and it is intended to send him away again. Separated thus from the tender yet disciplinary influences of home, and treated as an outcaste, it is not wonderful that he has grown up regardless of everything except his own desires and interests or that he shows little care for a father who has been so careless about him. Thus does one evil ever lead on to others perhaps still more terrible than itself.

Such is the condition of matters which the

opening scene displays. Society is in an evil state. It needs reformation and restraint. Yet it has progressed. It has passed the stage when it can be healthily held together by external force. The fermentation has begun within it which makes its members judge and act for themselves. The time has come when they both will do this and ought to do it Yet the inward restraints which ought to take the place of enforced authority, are conspicuously wanting. Even a fairly good man like Gloucester is dead to some of the most elementary considerations of duty and morality He sees how bad the time is He declares it to be beyond hope of betterment :—"We have seen the best of our time; machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all mutinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves" He does not see that such conduct as he not only allows but makes a jest of in his own case, is an important cause of the disorders he laments

Meanwhile, the principle which may bring in a brighter day is at work in some. Lear feels the need of unselfish love and, in a blundering and

hasty way, tries to secure it in the future rulers and to make it the bond of society among the ruled. Such love is, moreover, the animating principle in Cordelia and in Kent. Their aims and leading principles are unselfish and high. But their unfeigned love is hindered from following its right course or having its right effect by want of prudence and defects of temper. In all three, good seed for the future has been sown; but it is growing in the midst of thorns, and the thorns, if they have not choked it, have availed to keep it back from bearing its proper fruit. Through impatience, imprudence, violence, obstinacy, and self-will, operating in different degrees in each of them, their hopes are disappointed, and, at all events for a time, their influence is set aside. Through defects in the characters of those three, of whom all are fundamentally good while one is eminently loveable, mischief gets scope to work. The evil which it might be possible to check at an early stage is now irrevocable. It must run its ruinous course before it can be cured. Through the stubborn unwisdom of King

Lear and the failure of those in whom love exists to act rightly at the critical moment, the evil personages of the drama find their opportunity. Goneril and Regan become powers at once, and open the way for others as wicked as themselves. For a time, evil is triumphant. But the triumph of evil is never lasting, provided the good consent to make efforts and sacrifices and to bear suffering in order to counterwork it.

As this great panorama of life unrolls, it is possible in all its scenes up to the tragic close to trace the first great master-thought of Shakespeare,—the thought that, in the ordinary procedure of this world, evil works out suffering, sorrow, disappointment, until it passes away in hopeless misery as it were by its own weight.

This may be outlined in the first place in the fates of *Goneril* and *Regan*. There is some slight distinction between the characters of the two unnatural daughters. Goneril is the more forward of the two and the more original in wickedness. Regan only follows suit; though, as often happens when a weaker nature has once gone wrong, she

fairly outdoes the monstrosity of her sister in the end. At the outset, however, she has distinctly greater relics of humanity. She is more yielding and more retiring. If she had not been influenced by her sister, perhaps she would have acted decently if not rightly. Her father never openly curses her as he curses Goneril. He speaks of her as more "tender-hefted" When he fancies himself sitting in judgment, he says: "Let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart" He cannot believe that her heart, whatever may be the case with Goneril's, is turned into a stone If only that which breeds about it can be cut away, it will begin to act like a heart again

But, with whatever small difference, the two monsters are on the whole alike. The thoughts of both are taken up with self alone. No shadow of a conception visits them that the power and rank that have accrued to them imply any corresponding duties The sole end of power, in their view, is to gain more power and to satisfy their own desires For this, they are ready at

the outset to be hypocrites and liars. Without a qualm, they mock the high impulse of their father by mouthing out pretences of an affection of the very nature of which they have no idea. After this first step into the stream of evil, they are carried headlong in its course. All barriers by which ordinary people are restrained are swept away. The respect for a parent which even the most abandoned ordinarily feel, and in Goneril's case the respect of a woman for her husband, count absolutely for nothing. Pity they have none. Public opinion they care for as little as for the customary canons of morality. What they conceive to be their own interest is the only thing that touches them. So, dead to every influence that makes for good, they drive onward to their ruin. The mercy that has a place in the government of the world secures that they are not left without checks and warnings. Goneril is remonstrated with by the right-thinking if slow-acting Albany. To Regan, the violent death of her husband comes as a still more emphatic warning of the danger of the path she is pursuing.

All such checks are vain. Their hearts are hardened against all prickings and admonishments. They come accordingly, when their course is run, to the end appointed for those who make self supreme and thereby hand themselves over to the powers of evil. Their hopes are disappointed, their plans defeated They die despised. They die without repentance, and even without remorse. As is said of them: "they desperately are dead." Failure, ruin, desolation, sum up their history in this world and, so far as man can forecast, there is no hope for them in any other.

The deserved destruction of the unnatural daughters carries with it the destruction of those who take their part and whose characters resemble theirs. *Cornwall* perishes through the horror which his deeds arouse in one of his own retainers. *Oswald*, after a longer interval, comes to a like end, the fitting tool of an unscrupulous mistress. Like her, he has sold himself to evil; though at one point there is something in him to admire. Some solitary virtue not seldom survives

in men whose character is evil. In Oswald there is some touch of the virtue of fidelity. In spite of strong temptation, he will not betray his mistress. But that one good feature does not save him. Men are judged and their fate determined not by isolated points, not by some relics of good on the one hand or evil on the other, but by their general bent of character and will, by the path through life which they deliberately follow.

That sin brings suffering and ruin in the long run, appears most clearly of all in *Edmund* as in him also it is plainest that the root of evil is the want of that love for which the family is the natural home and place of training. In family life, when it is but decently sound, even ordinary men learn to have some regard for the feelings and the welfare of others and to set objects before them which are not, in the narrowest sense, self-regarding. In such family life Edmund has had no share. The room left vacant in his nature because no sentiments of duty or affection are elicited and nurtured in him, as they are in the

early years of most men, is usurped by self alone. Hence come the treachery, the lying, the plotting, which, in spite of his admirable energy and nimbleness of wit, weave a coil of trouble round him which nothing but his death can disentangle. And in his death there is no hope, any more than in that of the women whom he has tried to make his tools, as they have tried to make a tool of him.

It is true that before Edmund disappears he says: "Some good I mean to do despite of mine own nature" It seems, at first sight, as if he made a better end than his congeners Goneril and Regan But brief consideration shows that there is little difference. What difference there is serves chiefly to emphasize the brutality of his selfishness. The thing he means to do, to save the lives of Cordelia and Lear, is no doubt, as he calls it, good. But it is not because it is good that he means to do it Neither is there the smallest sign of repentance for the murder he has planned. Whether his intended victims are to live or die, is a matter of indifference to him. Now that he has nothing to gain by their death,

he is willing to let them live. The best that can be said of his dying scene is that it shows that he does not revel in evil for its own sake, as Shakespeare makes Iago do in the master-portrait among his villains. Edmund does evil without scruple when it suits him, but he will just as soon do what men call good when it does not hurt himself in any way. It may be doubted whether such callousness to every moral consideration does not betoken a nature as depraved even as Iago's.

But it is not on those alone who are unloving and deliberately wicked that error brings suffering, brings ruin that in some respects is irremediable. On the ruin that his faults bring down on *Lear*, despite the goodness of his heart and the nobility of his aims, it is needless to enlarge. His intolerable sorrow is the centre of the action, the point on which attention is fixed throughout. He has proved unable to distinguish the genuine from the false, and the penalty is exacted to the uttermost. In hasty ill-temper, he has put from him the love for

which he craves, the love that might have saved him. His self-will and obstinacy and violence are as certainly instrumental in his undoing as the want of natural affection in his daughters. Each reader of the play must trace the steps of this undoing for himself. It is to be felt, not to be described. Let me only point to his deep sense of the failure of all his plans both for his kingdom's good and for the quietude of his own life's evening, and to his sense that he has made himself ridiculous, a thing not to be endured by a man of a temperament so impetuous as his, and at the same time so dignified and proud. Then too, he has been wounded in his deepest affections by the supposed want of love on the part of Cordelia, while also he cannot quiet the haunting doubt that his own obtuseness and insensate violence have brought this crowning disappointment on him. A mind already weakened by the approach of age, and perhaps by the beginnings of disease, cannot but be unhinged by such things. When his last hope of resting in some quiet haven of

love and peace is shattered through the unspeakable and immoveable ingratitude of Goneril and Regan, no wonder that his mind breaks down entirely. Nor should notice be omitted of the effect of the efforts of the Fool to divert the thoughts of the king from the harrowing themes that he is dwelling on. The Fool's jests are well-intentioned. They are full of wisdom. They are pathetic in the earnestness of the love from which they spring. Yet they are ineffectual; and, because ineffectual, probably do more to aggravate than to alleviate the misery of the sufferer.

It ought further to be observed at this point that Lear's initial error is not the only cause of the suffering he has to endure. He is distinctly going further wrong as long as he is in any measure sane. He is indecently violent throughout. He exercises no prudence or self-restraint in meeting the calamities which, to a large extent, he has brought upon himself. He never tries the effect of gentle words. He makes no attempt in any way to arouse the tender feelings

which perhaps are not wholly extinguished in his daughters. On the contrary, he provokes Goneril by language which is indeed thoroughly deserved, but which it is not on that account either wise or right for a father to employ. Erelong he curses her; and plainly the curse is an expression of anger not at the evil which he sees in her, but at the indignities inflicted on himself. To Regan, he kneels in savage mockery; till, not inappropriately, she tells him that he is using "unsightly tricks." His whole treatment of his daughters, though very natural, is unmistakeably undignified and wrong.

No doubt, one may safely say that no method of treatment would have reclaimed them; but his method is one that will never reclaim any one. It is a method that, wherever it is applied, ensures that the wrong-doer will go still further wrong. The father's course of conduct only furnishes the daughters, not with any excuse or even palliation, but with a flimsy pretext for their ungrateful cruelty.

Thus, even in those who like Lear are at

bottom good, evil developes further evil and brings ever deeper and deeper misery in its train. At last, he becomes mad. The utmost calamity that can come on humanity as we know it, takes entire possession of him. Probably the point where passion, uncontrolled excitement, and incipient disease, pass into a total unseating of reason, is marked by the exclamation: "O fool! I shall go mad;" though it is not until he has the supposed Tom of Bedlam to keep him in countenance that his madness becomes undisguised and violent. But the difficulty of marking the moment when disorder of mind passes into downright madness, is itself an excellence. It is true to nature. Even if one grants that Lear's mind is not quite sound when the play begins, still, if it were not for his awful trials, he might have ended his days in dignity and honour, if not with a reputation for wisdom at least without a suspicion of his sanity. Each shock as it comes weakens the control of reason over his actions and over the sequence of his thoughts. Who shall say when the "thin par-

tition" between what men call sanity and what men call madness is completely broken down? The time comes when no one near him can doubt that Lear is mad; but in the play, as in nature, the transitions from one mental condition to another elude observation. Be this as it may, the madness of the leading personage is the fitting symbol of the confusion and the misery which evil in its natural working must produce when it is not controlled by the unselfish love which alone can effectually combat it.

It is time to turn to the other thought which regulates the construction of the play. Evil, not by arbitrary or supernatural interference but in virtue of its inherent and invincible tendency, brings suffering with it for all on whom it takes hold. That is the first regulative principle. The second is that the final issue of the suffering thus entailed depends upon the character of those who suffer and upon the way in which that character leads them to act in their time of trial.

It has been noted already how the checks and warnings that come to them, how the whole

discipline of life, takes no effect on those who deliberately make self their one concern and sell themselves to evil. Edmund, Goneril, and Regan, remain unaffected either by their own crimes or by the miseries around them. They have made up their minds to be on the side of evil and to despise all that makes for good. On them, accordingly, complete and irretrievable ruin comes. And it comes as in a moment. It comes in what they think their hour of triumph, when all their plans seem prospering and the things for which they have bartered their souls seem securely in their grasp. It is an illustration of that terrible old saying about the wicked, when they appear to be hastening towards perfect victory: "their feet shall slide *in due time*."

But the discipline of life has gentler issues for those who have not distinctly said "Evil be thou my good." For example, there is *Gloucester*. He is weak of will. He is self-indulgent and has fallen into shameful vice. He makes no protest when the forces of evil are plainly beginning to prevail. Yet there is a point beyond which he

will not go. Faith and loyalty are still more than mere words to him. When he is confronted with the extremes of unnatural ingratitude, his moral being at last awakes. Feebly, half-heartedly, yet at last unmistakeably, he ranges himself on the side of duty and of right and bears extremes of anguish rather than desert it.

The moral weakness of the man appears in the way in which he yields to each successive influence as it is brought to bear on him. Edmund easily entraps him. Though he loves the king, he makes no stand in his favour like that of the bolder Kent. In none of his changes or sufferings, is there a trace of the struggle which rends the stronger mind of Lear and increases his misery. Gloucester's tendency is to give way to everything and to allow himself to be the sport of circumstances. He yields so entirely to calamity that he determines to have recourse to the weak man's refuge of despairing suicide. If left to himself, he is certain to be hopelessly vanquished in the moral battle of life. It is only help from without that rescues

him. He comes under the influence of his ill-used son, in whom love is in full activity. The relics of good about him enable him to recognize love when it appeals to him and he yields to its appeal, as he yields to everything. Under this influence, he learns at last to look feebly upwards He comes to a good and joyful end. His heart "bursts smilingly." Such a man has in no sense *merited* such an end; but there is mercy at work on earth; and when it finds something on which it can take hold, even in those who are both weak and guilty, it sometimes does its blessed work Because love comes near him and at last is welcomed by him, the discipline of life has not been wholly in vain for Gloucester

Similar is the case of *Albany*. He is far from blameless in the tangle of evil that surrounds him. Yet there is an element in his character on which trouble works so as to result in good, —in good both for himself and for others through him By nature he is backward, inattentive, sluggish He stands inactive, whether unable to see what is right or timid about doing it, when prompt in-

terference might perhaps still keep evil within bounds. He originates nothing. He has none of the boldness, the masterfulness, the decision, which his position as a ruler calls for. It is but hesitatingly and feebly that he opposes Goneril when at last he remonstrates with her. Nevertheless, as time goes on he learns both to judge rightly and to act vigorously and wisely. He sees the clear duty of defending the kingdom against foreign foes, even when invasion has in some sense right upon its side:—"For this business, it toucheth us as France invades the land, not bolds the king" He quietly counterworks the wicked purpose of his wife At the close, in what he does towards the French, towards Edgar, towards Edmund, and in what he wishes to do towards Lear and Cordelia, he is everything that a valiant captain, a judicious ruler and a man of tender feeling ought to be.

The process of the change is not so apparent in Albany, as it is in Gloucester. The fact is characteristic. Moral changes take place obscurely in men like him, whose natures are reticent

and slow. Nevertheless, the change is real and in course of time becomes very manifest. The punishment of error, the discipline of life, has taken good effect on him. Moreover, they have taught him the need of unselfish love for securing the welfare and the progress of society. He shows this in his invitation to Kent and Edgar, conspicuous as they are for love, to be "friends of his soul," to "rule in the realm and the gor'd state sustain."

To Albany, who has thus profited by the lessons of life, comes the duty, and the honour, of taking up the work which Lear has had the credit of seeing that it is necessary to do, though perversity, passion, and self-will, have hindered him from doing it. It devolves on Albany to rule and guide the nation in its passage from the condition in which submission to authority is the social bond into the higher state in which larger freedom is not dangerous, because love has gained some place and power. It becomes his honourable task to introduce the more complex organization in which individual energy has a proper field

and contributes to the common good, without the risk of letting the powers of evil gain that ascendancy which destroys so many in the days of Lear and comes so near to destroying everything. The play ends with Albany's taking up this honourable burden with due discernment of its difficulties, and with the desire to get the best help he can in meeting them.

"King Lear" tells us nothing of how far Albany succeeded or of how the nation prospered under him. Fortunately, however, we are not without the means of learning something about Shakespeare's views concerning the healthy growth of national and social life. He returned to the history of Britain when he wrote "Cymbeline," about 1609. "Cymbeline" is the Odyssey to the Iliad of "King Lear." It sets forth the state of matters when some generations have gone by, the state of matters which we may presume that Albany has been chiefly instrumental in substituting for the political and social condition which was becoming out-worn when Lear was King. In "Cymbeline," every-

thing is comparatively calm and regular. The king has still great power, but others also have their influence and take an orderly and fitting part in all affairs that touch the welfare of the community. There are laws which are understood, and to some fair extent obeyed. People have learnt, even the violent have learnt in some degree, to restrain themselves. There are villains still, but they do not get altogether their own way even for the moment. They are compelled at least to disguise their villany, and so to acknowledge the superior power of the many elements of good around them. Selfishness is still at work, as it is and will be in every land and in every social stage; but it does not rage with such unbridled fierceness nor effect such widespread havoc as in the days of Edmund and Goneril and Regan. Selfishness is not eliminated under the reign of Cymbeline, but it never gets the field to itself. It still works, but it works in fetters. Society has reached a higher stage and assumed a more complex form, and is at the same time inspired with a purer moral life.

The fact is that, by careful comparison of "King Lear" and "Cymbeline," a most instructive study might be made of the views of Shakespeare —and what must *his* views count for!—concerning the ends for which society exists and the conditions on which alone it can both shun destruction and maintain health and usefulness as it progresses from stage to stage In the present essay, however, it would be out of place to follow this line of inquiry further.

We must turn to notice how the great truth that men's own characters determine the final result of the trials which their errors cause, is illustrated in the case of *Kent* In him there is that unselfish love which is the only cure for the rampant evils of the time. There cannot be a doubt that his love is both genuine and strong; but imperfections cling to it, and to the man himself, which reduce it in practice to a mere ineffectual protest. There is little sign that Kent's love embraces anything beyond the person of the king—little sign that he even regards the king as the symbol of the nation's unity or the

instrument of securing its prosperity. His love is an unreasoned attachment, entirely honest but unmarked by any depth of insight or width of view. One thinks of it as having sprung up in his later years solely through personal intercourse with the king, as having no deep roots in thought or observation, as never having had a training in that disciplined family life which fits love to be of practical and permanent avail. At any rate, in spite of his utter forgetfulness of self and his earnest desire to help, Kent does little good He cannot lay aside the imperious violence which belongs to the temper of the age. He will not take time to think of how his loving service can best be brought to bear on the circumstances around him. His temper is ungovernable. He gives way to it when a very small infusion of wisdom might teach him to restrain it. Thus he hinders too often where he means to help, until at last he aggravates the crisis which brings the final stroke of distress on the master whom he is so anxious to serve.

Moreover, as his untrained love does not save Kent from being inappropriately violent in his own person, so he falls into the mistake of supposing that the evils of the time can be cured by violence. His is that scheme of invasion which only makes confusion worse and works out the climax of the tragedy. Shakespeare clearly recognises the truth underlying the well-worn apophthegm that "Force is no remedy." Circumstances there are in which force is valuable as preparing the way for the cure of evils, but even then it is not the cure itself. There are other circumstances in which it only aggravates the evils which it is meant to cure. In the case before us, the forcible intervention of a foreign power compels the well-meaning Albany and all the most sound-hearted in the land to act as if they were enemies to the king. The evils of the time lie far too deep to be met in the way in which Kent, out of thoughtless devotion to the merely personal interests of Lear, designs to meet them. His short-cut to the righting of what is wrong turns out to be as foolish

as Lear's short-cut to the establishment of love at the heart of the scheme of government. Kent is too honest and clear-sighted not to know that he has been a failure. In view of the calamity which he has helped to cause, he refuses Albany's invitation to join him in his attempt at reformation; an invitation, be it observed, which Edgar does not decline. Conscious that he has but marred where he has desired to mend, he feels that for him opportunity is past.

> "I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;
> My master calls me, I must not say no."

To Kent, with the sad ineffectiveness of his earnest purpose and impassioned love, there is a companion picture in *The Fool*. In him too unselfish love is active. He possesses in addition no small amount of insight and of wisdom. He means well in all he says and does. Few things in literature are so pathetic as his attempts, after the fashion that befits a jester, to divert the thoughts and alleviate the misery of the king. But deep-seated evils cannot be remedied by jests, not even though the jests show wisdom as well as

wit. And so the Fool, despite his incisive wisdom, passes away like a mist. We know not what becomes of him. We only know that he gives no real help to the master whom he loves so well. Perhaps he has only helped to madden him. It is among the sad mysteries of life that so much which is good and beautiful and appears most hopeful, should come to nothing, as does this most loveable of fools. When "out of fifty seeds," Nature "brings but one to bear," the one that succeeds has often no sounder germ within, and seems no better fitted to environment, than the many that are failures. It is a reminder of how little we see of the meaning of things, even when we see most, that a heart so tender, a purpose so sincere, and a wisdom so real, as the Fool's, should be wasted in the void.

In this respect, the Fool and Kent are obvious and intended contrasts to *Edgar*. His love is not more active, nor is it more sincere, than theirs; but it is love restrained and disciplined. It is allied with prudence and with patience. It can wisely adapt itself to what some call circum-

stances, or what others prefer to regard as the providential opportunities which life continually affords. It arrives, accordingly, at far happier issues. Edgar does not indeed accomplish all that one might wish. Gloucester dies. Lear is not rescued, nor Cordelia. The errors of all and the sins of many must bear their woeful fruit Active and loving and thoughtful though he is, Edgar cannot do everything Yet he does something If he cannot prevent, yet he alleviates misery and prepares for better days to come His father dies, but it is a happy death Edgar has the joy of doing justice and yet of being reconciled to the evil-doer whom it is right that he should punish He passes from our view going forward to the noble duty of being the right hand of the ruler in leading a nation on towards a noble destiny To this extent—and surely it is much—the love that inspires him has prevailed

Edgar's is not erratic, volcanic, love like Kent's. It has been developed and trained in early years within a household where both order and love prevailed, the one safe nursery for love that is to

learn to adapt itself to life's ever-varying necessities. For it is implied that such, in some degree, was the household in which he was brought up. Doubtless, he had brothers and sisters not altogether unlike himself. His father too, such as the play depicts him, in spite of weakness of will and much defect of character, is far from unloveable, and is one not likely to have been altogether neglectful of paternal duty Thus in Edgar there is not only love by nature's gift, but love that has been nurtured and disciplined amid favouring surroundings Therefore, when his trial comes, he is found as deft as he is sincere He has an expedient for every noble end that it becomes his duty to seek to gain As has often been remarked, he appears in no less than *six* different characters He bears himself well, and does some good, in every one of them. He has much personal suffering to endure, and still heavier than this is the sorrow that comes to him through sympathy for others But all this hard discipline does him only good. Even in the low worldly sense, he is successful; and, what is far more than

success of that kind to men like him, he finds that he is used as an instrument by that power above the world which, even in the gloom, is ever making things tend in the direction of righteousness and joy.

Nowhere does Shakespeare present his views on the discipline of life and its effects, with greater clearness than in his picture of *Cordelia*,—at least when her character and history are rightly understood. Admiration for her character when it attains its full development, tempts one to think her perfect throughout; or at all events tempts one to regard as right some parts of her conduct which the great artist who created her certainly regards as wrong. Among his creations we find no patterns of perfection, any more than we meet men or women in the flesh who are entirely without fault. In the works of Shakespeare, as sometimes in the rough walks of the common world, we meet with those in whom there are germs of every virtue, in whom the bent of feeling and of will is towards what is right and noble, and in whom life's trials develope those

germs and confirm that will until the pure gold of their goodness is set free from the ore in which it is embedded at the outset. Such a one is Cordelia. Yet in her, as in all, there are evil tendencies as well as good. Her feelings and her actions are not always either right or wise. But where she errs, she suffers; and through suffering comes to her the blessed fruit of rapidly improving character, as is wont to happen when those who are sound at heart accept that discipline of which every member of our race needs greater or smaller measure

It is true there are critics who defend the demeanour and the speeches of Cordelia in the opening scene They seem unable to comprehend that one so good upon the whole can err to any extent, or at any stage. But this is certainly not the impression that Shakespeare means to leave. Are these cold speeches of hers the best she can do at such a crisis? Grant that it is natural for her to be provoked into going to one extreme when her sisters have gone so shamefully to the other: the question is not about what it is natural, but

about what it is right, for her to do. Her love is far beyond the expression that she gives it; and if one speaks at all, one has as little right to err from truth by defect as by excess. She loves her father deeply. She knows how he craves for love. She knows how imperious he is, and how hot-headed. Ought she not to have some care for the evil that may come, not to herself alone, if the king, on so important an occasion, goes off into a fit of passion? Her own fortunes she may be excused for endangering, but the welfare both of king and kingdom has a claim for much greater thought than she bestows on it. It is her clear duty to speak the truth about her love, even if it be asked at a strange time and in a fantastic way.

The fact is that, in the opening scene, Cordelia makes plain that she inherits not a little of her father's self-will and obstinacy. Nor can we acquit her of a self-indulgent yielding to the feeling of provocation at being subjected to such a test, and at the dishonesty by help of which her sisters stand it. Let it be granted that her stub-

born pride is a fault but little heinous compared to theirs, yet in fault she is; and though her fault be small, it is enough to give her a share of responsibility for all the calamities that ensue. It is an example of the greatly-neglected truth that the errors of the good ought to be corrected with still greater care, and, if need be, with more severity, than the errors of the bad. The small errors of the good are often more widely hurtful than worse errors in those whose influence is less. The errors of the good may easily be, as they are in this case, the very thing that puts power into hands that are certain to misuse it.

It must be further said that Cordelia's behaviour, when she is confronted with Lear's fantastic test, shows that her love, though true, is by no means the deepest possible. To the deepest and most pervading love, no thought of self occurs. Instinctively, it devotes itself directly and exclusively to the welfare of its object. If Cordelia's love were perfect, her only thought, while listening to her sisters, would be how she might save her father from the pit which she clearly

sees that he is digging for himself. In that case, we should not have the self-pitying asides which are put into her mouth. In that case, when forced to break silence she would not reply with her twice repeated and most irritating "Nothing;" nor would she speak of loving her father only "according to her bond."

The impression left by all that is told us about Cordelia is that subsequent reflection, aided no doubt by the stirring of a new affection for her generous husband, quickens into fuller life that love which, though sincere, is yet not strong enough to overcome the subtle regard for self of which no child of man is free, unless it be burnt out by the discipline of life. But when the dross is thus purged away, Cordelia is ready to undertake labour, to suffer pain, to deny herself, to do anything, for her father's sake. For his sake alone, the toil of preparing the invasion is undergone. For his sake, she engages in the faintly indicated plannings and contrivings that precede it. The effort and self-denial implied in what she does is in no degree inspired or lightened by any

ambitious desires. The one thing she thinks of is to right her father's wrongs. Less effort, less self-denial, might, at one time, have averted them. Had she but spoken like a loving self-forgetting daughter when she was still beside him! Had she but used her woman's wit, as she might have used it if that access of stubborn pride had not had its way with her for the moment! But the opportunity is past. No short or easy remedy is possible any longer. If duty be neglected when the golden chance occurs, it presents itself in ever harder forms, till it is either done by vast expenditure of effort or remains undone for ever.

And again, errors, at least of judgment, must be admitted in Cordelia long after the opening scene. She falls in too readily with Kent's ill-considered plans. She fails to see that the evil state of matters cannot be set right by force. She forgets how invasion by France will set up a conflict of duties in her native land. She forgets that it both will make and ought to make many oppose the king who at heart are on his side.

We have no call to settle what better course

Cordelia can choose, or whether indeed a better course is any longer possible. She judges honestly, even if mistakenly, that duty lies for her in the forcible rescue and restoration of her father, and every trace of self-regard has vanished as she sets herself resolutely to do what she regards as duty. The difficulty of her task, the danger to herself, especially when she is left by her husband with forces which are probably insufficient, do not suggest themselves to her mind. In love completely purified, she does all that she sees it possible to do towards curing the evils of which her self-willed coldness has been in part the cause, and of causing which she no doubt now regards herself as far more guilty than she has really been. She fails in her attempt. In one sense, the sentence of "too late" is passed upon her efforts. And yet, in the highest sense, her efforts are not made in vain. They win the best of all success, alike for herself and for her father. About their issue for her father, I shall speak immediately. As regards herself, the result of the discipline of life and of her

manner of receiving it is that she is enlivened, strengthened, purified, to every corner of her moral nature;—that she becomes a pattern of all that a daughter ought to be, and grows before our eyes into the highest presentation in all literature of tender-hearted womanhood.

In proof of this, I can but refer to the gentleman's account of her receiving the letter in the camp near Dover, to her conduct and her speeches when the king awakes into restored though feeble sanity, to the patient gentleness with which when fortune has decided against her she meets its utmost frown A critic must not dwell on such scenes They are too delicate to be roughly handled, too pulsating with tender life to be dissected by exposition The reader must dwell on them till he feels himself a spectator and grows one with the Cordelia whose purified and perfected nature they reveal. The effect is heightened by our being allowed to see that even now, when love has done its work, she is human, not angelic. She has not laid aside the vein of scornful humour which

keeps her still in touch with ordinary humanity. "Shall we not,"— they are the last words we hear from her—"shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?"

Thus while the discipline of life brings Goneril and Regan, who have made self their aim, to moral ruin and a hopeless end, it results for Cordelia in a character made "perfect through suffering." She has failed of the end which she has sacrificed herself to gain, but there are higher successes than can be won in the field of worldly circumstance.

I must close this line of remark by turning to observe how *Lear* bears the discipline of life The unreflecting impetuosity and whimsical self-will with which he has sought to gain a noble end, have brought evil on him. They have resulted in the punishment which it is the nature of such errors to entail. For a time, his pride forbids him to admit even to himself that he has erred. "I have perceived a most faint neglect of late; which I have rather blamed as my own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence and purpose of

unkindness." He shuts his eyes as long as he can; but soon it becomes too plain that power has passed into unloving hands, and that what he meant for good has turned out to be for direful evil. How is he to deal with the state of matters which at last he is forced to recognize? Three ways of dealing with it may be conceived. He may bear misfortune patiently, feeling that he ought to reap what he has sown, trusting also perhaps that some higher power may somehow save his people from the trouble his mistake has brought upon them. Or, he may seek refuge in the grave. To do so is Gloucester's impulse when fault and folly have brought him into like condition. Or again, he may try to undo the arrangements that have turned out so badly. He has means to make such an attempt, and perhaps it may succeed. The King's name is a tower of strength. Kent and Gloucester are probably not the only nobles who have kindly feelings to their lawful lord. His hundred kinghts, each with squire and men-at-arms to follow him, are an ample nucleus for a rising. They will

protect him till the loyal throughout the land have time to rally round him. Each of these three courses is open to the king. We are allowed to see that thoughts of the first at one time, and of the third at another, are entertained by him for a moment. But too hot and proud for meek endurance, too brave and strong to flee from life's ills by suicide, he yet cannot consent to undo his work and confess himself defeated, or to surrender his ideal of a government in which the motive power is love. What is good and what is less than good in him, unite to shut every door by which escape is possible.

A question may be raised as to which of these courses is the right one, in the abstract, for Lear to follow But in truth he has come to such a pass that no possible course of action is any longer right.

If only it were allowable that he should think of himself alone, the following of the first of these three courses might be regarded as his duty. To submit to, and even to be thankful for personal suffering that has been caused by error

and may cure it, is no doubt the duty of the wrong-doer. But how if the suffering be more than personal,—if it extend to those for whose welfare one is bound to care? The man Lear might patiently endure. But he is still the lawful king. He possesses no little power and is able to increase it if he chooses. Can it be right for him to stand idly by while hardened selfishness on the throne is corrupting the country's life and blasting every hope of its welfare and its progress? It is an impressive sermon on the text of lost opportunity. For Lear, the time is past when any course is positively good. For him, as for all who let the ripe season pass unused, the question at its best can only be as to which of all possible courses is least wrong, or likely to be least fatal From doing anything distinctly right, he is now debarred for ever

The sense of all this, the impossibility of seeing what he ought to do or can do, is the final strain under which his mind gives way. It need not be denied that his mind is already somewhat weakened. And, certainly, the heartless

and contemptuous ingratitude of his own flesh and blood is an unspeakable trial to one who, whatever his other faults, is a true and tender father. But it is the suspense, the doubt, the agitated questioning whether this, or that, or anything, can be done, that does most to tear and agonize his mind. Much sorrow, and very intense sorrow, may be borne without the faculties being thrown from their poise; even as a frail fabric will sometimes bear a heavy weight if the pressure it exerts be straight and steady. It is indecision, conflict, tossing to and fro, that does most to unhinge and craze. When such inward struggle is added to the pangs of outraged affection and the sense of foolish failure in a proud man, of whom it is truly enough said that "the best of his time has been but rash," no wonder that complete loss of reason is the result. Thus the last and greatest of earthly calamities has come on Lear. Love finds him in the midst of this final ordeal. Its touch begins to heal. In ways that elude observation, it makes its way into his soul. Tentatively, obstruct-

edly, feebly, his faculties resume their healthy working. Attention must be given to what he says and does after this last ordeal is passed through, if one would estimate the effect on him of all that he has suffered. In other words, from the line of thought and feeling into which he settles when he is himself once more, it is possible to see what life's discipline has taught him, and to see accordingly what, amidst all faults, mistakes, and weaknesses, is his essential character.

Lear's speeches after his restoration to sanity are but few. Yet they are enough to show what manner of spirit he is of at last One has but to dwell upon those speeches until the tone that underlies them has been caught. in order to be assured that he has so passed through life's trials, and so received their impression, that they have strengthened and established whatever there was of good in him and killed whatever there was of evil. The man who was self-willed and violent has become meek and gentle. Impetuous haste has given place to submissive patience. Not that he has become inert or stupid :—

"I killed the slave that was a hanging thee"
"'Tis true, my lord, he did."

Above all, he has learnt the true nature of love and craves for love as what is precious beyond all things. The confused dim notion of love and of its power for good, has grown into full, entrancing, satisfying, vision. So he dies, purified, ennobled, and rendered wise by what he has endured. He has learnt life's highest lessons; too late, it is true, to practise them among men on earth, but, as we see him die, we are prompted not only to exclaim with Kent:

"O let him pass! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this rude world,
Stretch him out longer,"

but to add the thought, which the play suggests though it does not express:

"I know transplanted human worth
Will bloom to profit otherwhere."

Thus, tragic though the fate of Lear and Cordelia be, it is not wholly sad when looked upon through Shakespeare's eyes. Life has served for both of them its highest purpose. Nay, there is also more. Through what they have suffered, love has taken its place as an active force in the

community. They pass, but the work that they have done abides.

When the curtain rises, society has reached the stage at which it ought to be transmuted into a higher form. But there is no inward combining influence to leaven it. Lear feels the need for the only influence that will meet the crying want. He has, however, but the crudest notion of its nature, and is hopelessly unable to set it working. In the absence of any influence to mould society from within, everything grows fierce and uncontrollable. The danger is imminent that power will pass to the unscrupulous and the wholly selfish, and that in their fierce contendings society will be dissolved, so that all the high ends for which it exists will be defeated. But a healing power comes in. Love—love indeed imperfect and unpurified as in Cordelia, imprudent and unregulated as in Kent, timid and sluggish as in Albany,—nevertheless love that is real, begins to play its part. Through calamity and suffering for every one, it holds on its course, till, after the halting and obstructed

fashion in which good gets itself established in this inexplicable world, it wins a measure of success. The "gor'd state" is "sustained" by the power of that love for which Lear has longed, and which has its seat of action and fullest exemplification in Cordelia and Edgar. So, the people pass into the healthily advanced, if by no means perfect, state which, as has been said already, Shakespeare afterwards delineated in his "Cymbeline."

Cordelia and Lear have sorrowed and have failed; but their sorrow and failure are not in vain, even so far as concerns this visible scene of mortal doings. From the stage of earth they pass, fitted for what they may have to do in that further state of being into which it is not given us to follow them. Love has done its work in them, and it has also worked with some effect through them; and, whatever be its issue as regards worldly success or worldly honour, yet "love never faileth." So truly speaks one who, though the verses he wrote were multitudinous, has in these lines alone proved that he pos-

sessed some spark of the purest poetic fire.

"They sin who tell us love can die,
With life all other passions fly,
All others are but vanity!
In Heaven Ambition cannot dwell,
Nor Avarice in the vaults of Hell;
Earthly these passions of the earth,
They perish where they have their birth;
But Love is indestructible.
Its holy flame for ever burneth;
From Heaven it came, to Heaven returneth.
Too oft on earth a troubled guest,
At times deceived, at times oppressed,
It here is tried and purified,
Then hath in Heaven its perfect rest:
It soweth here with toil and care,
But the harvest-time of Love is there."*

Such are the two main thoughts in this great drama, the thoughts round which all others may be seen to range themselves in real though not mechanical order: that evil works out punishment by its own intrinsic nature, but that the final issue of such punishment depends upon the character of those whose faults have brought it on them. These two great principles are shown to go some way to provide a clue by the help of which it is possible to explore and understand the mysteries of life.

Not that those principles or any others will

* Southey in *The Curse of Kehama*.

make all things plain Not that the main benefit of coming under Shakespeare's influence in the sublimest of his dramas, lies in the extent to which it "justifies the ways of God to men." The mystery remains; and the benefit lies, not in dispelling it, but in setting it before us in its awe-inspiring majesty. In the words of one of the best Shakespearean critics of the day:—

"We guess at the spiritual significance of the great tragic facts of the world, but after our guessing their mysteriousness remains

.. Of the tragedy of King Lear a critic wishes to say as little as may be; for in the case of this play, words are more than ordinarily inadequate to express or describe its true impression A tempest or a dawn will not be analysed in words; we must feel the shattering fury of the gale, we must watch the calm light broadening And the sensation experienced by the reader of King Lear resembles that produced by some grand natural phenomenon The effect cannot be received at second hand; it cannot be described; it can hardly be suggested"*

* Dowden, *Shakespeare His Mind and Art* p 273

The great thing that Shakespeare does for us in his greatest plays, and most of all in this one, is not to explain any problem but to bring us into the presence of the facts of life, so that they are no longer shrouded for us in the mists of customary trivialities,—so that their terrible significance takes hold on us, – so that an impression abides with us of the awful import of all that is done, or said, or experienced by men, on "this bank and shoal of time"

Yet it is also much to have even a suggestion of the spiritual significance of any part of the mighty maze which the facts of life present. It is well to see clearly that there is some purpose in some portions of that maze, and to see how that purpose stretches from age to age, linking the things that are with things that are yet to find embodiment in this every-day common world, and pointing forward to unconceived developments in stages of being that lie beyond it To see this, even for a moment, awakens the inspiring hope that there is loving purpose in what remains concealed to man's dim eye and

broken view, and that, in some sense beyond the scope of our imaginings, there is some

> "One far-off divine event
> To which the whole creation moves."

It is like the view from some mountain summit of the river which winds its distant way through a labyrinth of hill and plain. Here and there its course can be clearly traced, but for the most part it is hid by lofty banks or gloomy forests. Yet the beholder does not doubt that, even where it is thus concealed, the river flows on as continuously and steadily as in the reaches which sparkle most brightly to the sunlight. He does not doubt, though he cannot discern or entirely prove, that what he sees and what he does not see are connected portions of one great stream, which is doing its appointed work of bearing beauty and fertility to the whole of the land through which it flows.

At this point the attempted exposition of this great drama might naturally close. But what has been taken as its keynote, or central idea,

has so direct a bearing on the present condition of India, and what has been said in illustration of that central idea suggests so many of the present wants of India, that it would be inexcusable to conclude an essay which is intended for Indian students without an attempt to point for their particular use some of the morals with which "King Lear" abounds.

There are things which India has to teach the world. There is much in her past which admits of being regarded as affording to her sons legitimate ground of pride. So much it is fitting at this point distinctly to acknowledge. For among the things which India has to teach mankind, it is impossible to include anything connected with the higher forms of political life, or with the progressive development of society. In regard to such things, India must consent to be not a teacher but a learner.

Probably few among Indian students are likely to deny this. Perhaps the tendency among them is rather to the extreme of regarding everything social and political in their country's past as

worthless ; of supposing that there must be reconstruction of everything, down to the deepest foundations of society. It by no means follows, however, that there can be nothing sound where growth is stunted or development arrested. The separate cells in the lower forms of organic life may serve their purpose as admirably as the cells in the very highest. The village life in the countless Kelambakams* of India may be as good an example of the social instinct, and may afford as good material for admiring and instructive study, as any that the world can show.

But be this as it may, it is beyond doubt or question that in India the social cells have not hitherto been combined in vigorous life upon a large scale, and that the first steps are still untaken by which India, or any part of it, is to become a social or political organism of a healthily progressive kind. Such far-extending political association as there has hitherto been in India, has been wholly of the kind which Shakespeare represents as coming to

* See *Life in an Indian Village* —T Ramakrishna, B A.

an end in the days of his imaginary King Lear. Force met by obedience, has been the bond that has held such societies together. This has manifestly been the case in every political organism within the bounds of India of which there is any clearly discernible trace in history. It is manifestly the case with every remaining social organism which, like any given caste, embraces a somewhat extensive area. An authority wholly external to the will or the desires of the individuals bound together, determines everything. For each single member, passive obedience is the condition of his membership.

It is not a contradiction to this broad statement to point to the India of the half-legendary age, or to Mogul, Mahratta, or other governments of comparatively recent times, in which some lines of action were made imperative by immemorial custom, while there were also counsellors and nobles whom the ruler had more or less to reckon with. Absolutely unmitigated despotism has never existed anywhere. We are free to suppose that Lear also was not

without advisers to whom he sometimes listened, and that custom had established some rules which he never dared to break. Rude germs, from which higher developments may come in course of time, exist in every social organism. But with such limitations as are implied in every universal statement upon any subject, it is broadly true of India hitherto, as of the Britain set before us in this drama, that the bond of society has been bare authority on the one side and unreasoning obedience on the other. I do not expect the statement to be seriously contested by my readers.

Nor do I expect them to contest my further statement that the time has come in India, as Shakespeare represents it as having come in the days of Lear, when this condition of society must give place to a better and a higher. Those must be strangely ignorant of the forces which are at work, and which ought to be at work, in the India of our day, who can imagine it to be either possible or right that the inmost principle of rule for the generations next

to come should be that on which countless bygone generations have been governed. As plainly as in the days of Lear, the time is upon us when if there be not such transition as he felt to be required, there will be such phenomena as were rising round him, "in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason;...machinations, hollowness, treachery and all ruinous disorders," until society becomes rotten to the core and ends in dissolution In the pages that remain, it will be my endeavour to set forth, in unadorned simplicity, the principles which, in Shakespeare's view,—if the interpretation given to this drama be correct,—must regulate this indispensable transition

The first, the broadest, the most important, of those principles is that the possibility of the transition being made without ruin depends on those moral forces being at work within society which this play sums up under the comprehensive name of "love" If those moral forces have not an effective influence on the life of the body politic, calamity of every kind is sure to come

as soon as bare authority begins to be withdrawn, or begins to be unwelcome to the ruled and accordingly to be resisted by them. Let me call in the evidence of the second-greatest of English poets to enforce the lesson which the greatest teaches in "King Lear," after the fashion that befits the stage * "It is of no small consequence, O my countrymen, whether for the acquisition or retention of Liberty, what sort of persons you are yourselves

Unless by true and sincere piety towards God and men, not vain and wordy, but efficacious and active, you drive from your souls all superstitions sprung from ignorance of true and solid religion, you will always have those who will make you their beasts of burden and sit upon your backs and necks, they will put you up for sale as their easily gotten booty, all your victories in war notwithstanding, and make a rich income out of your ignorance and superstition Unless

* From *Joannis Miltoni Angli pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda* The translation is that of Professor Masson in his *Life of Milton in connexion with the History of his Time*, Vol IV, p 609

you expel avarice, ambition, luxury, from your minds, ay and luxurious living also from your families, then the tyrant you thought you had to seek externally in the battle-field you will find in your own home, you will find within yourselves, a still harder task-master; nay there will sprout daily out of your own vitals a numerous brood of intolerable tyrants. ...

Were you fallen into such an abyss of easy self-corruption, no one, not Cromwell himself, nor a whole host of Brutuses, if they could come to life again, could deliver you if they would, or would deliver you if they could For why should any one then assert for you the right of free suffrage, or the power of electing whom you will to the Parliament? Is it that you should be able, each of you, to elect in the cities men of your faction, or that person in the burghs, however unworthy who may have treated yourselves most sumptuously, or treated the country people and boors to the greatest quantity of drink?

Should one entrust

the commonwealth to those to whom nobody would entrust a matter of private business? .... Know that, as to be free is the same thing exactly as to be pious, wise, just, temperate, self-providing, abstinent from the property of other people, and, in fine, magnanimous and brave, so to be the opposite of all this is the same as being a slave; and by the customary judgment of God, and a thoroughly just law of retribution, it comes to pass that a nation that cannot rule and govern itself, but has surrendered itself in slavery to its own lusts, is surrendered also to other masters, whom it does not like, and made a slave not only with its will but against its will. It is a thing ratified by law and nature herself that whosoever cannot manage himself, whosoever through imbecility or phrenzy of mind cannot rightly administer his own affairs, should not be in his own power, but should be given over as a minor to the government of others."

The passage breathes no doubt of all the lofty idealism of Milton. There never was a people

yet so permeated by lofty purpose, so free from mean admixture, as he demands that the people of England should become. Yet when the reign of bare authority begins to pass away, the people from which it passes must bear some resemblance to this glowing picture of a people that is worthy to be free If there be no such resemblance, then, by a law as inflexible as any other law of nature, society has no fate before it but either to come under the dominion of bare force once more, or to grow corrupt and be dissolved.

Nay, does not the story of England in Milton's time give ample emphasis to the lesson which he tried in vain to teach? There were some, there were many, round him whose spirit was as pure and their aims as lofty as his own. But they did not impregnate the mass of their countrymen with their temper They had to face, or thought they had to face, the alternative of surrendering their ideal or resorting to force to secure its realization. The latter was their choice. That their force might be the greater, they admitted aid from men who had ends of their own to serve.

Mistakes were made. Dissension crept in. The structure they hoped to raise crumbled to pieces in their hands, and the forecast of the words that have been quoted was fulfilled to the direful uttermost. Because the men of England on the whole were not in that age "pious, wise, just, temperate,..... ..and in fine magnanimous and brave," in other words because "love" was not at work among them with sufficient power, the next succeeding age was the basest that English history records. Power passed to the hands of those who were as regardless of private honour or public good as Edmund, as grovelling as Oswald, and as ruthless as Goneril and Regan. True, there were those who retained a hold on the higher life and who, amid suffering, and with defects and errors of their own, endeavoured, like Cordelia and Kent, like Albany and Edgar, to apply it to the evils of their time. So freedom revived once more, and by slow unsteady steps has been carrying on the social and political life of those who speak the English tongue towards a glorious but still distant goal like that

for which Milton longed. Yes, the failure of the Commonwealth and the lapse of England into the moral anarchy, the social degradation, and the political enslavement that came after it, is an example, to those who can read history aright, of the absolute need there is that 'love' should have deep and widespread influence if any community is to pass safely through the stage at which it is right that unreasoning obedience should cease, and that bare authority should no longer reign. It is an example equally of the danger of haste in effecting the transition from the lower to the higher stage In the play, the attempt of the king to introduce the reign of love at a single stroke, with the consequent preference of the pretence of love to the reality, is largely responsible for the tragical result. In historical fact, the attempt to reduce to practice the grand ideals of the English Commonwealth before the mass of those who made up the social organism could so much as understand them, was to no small extent the cause of the collapse of everything good and true which marked the Restoration.

Great things may often be best understood by seeing how their principles work in small things. Students ought to appreciate an illustration at which others perhaps will smile. In a familiar small thing, they may see both the need that any society in which the dominion of bare authority is ending should be under the dominion of salutary inward forces, and also the need that time should be allowed for those inward forces to take effect, not only on one here and there but on the mass of those of whom the society consists.

There is no particular risk in a professor delivering a lecture to a class of a hundred, or it may be two hundred, students of the average type and the ordinary age. But let the students imagine that the two hundred listeners are not themselves as they now are, but themselves as they were when some seven or eight years younger. Or let them imagine that the hundreds assembled for the lecture are their younger brothers, and cousins, and acquaintances, who are being taught in the third form or the second. They know what pulling of hair there would be in one corner,

what kicking of shins under the benches in another, and what chattering everywhere. They know what unearthly sounds would proceed from every bench whose occupants believed themselves safe from notice. Of course the lecture would be useless, and the meeting might perhaps break up "in most admired disorder." The whole foolish scene could be properly wound up only by widely distributed chastisement of the unruly.

Why is there no such scene when two hundred students are addressed? Certainly it is not because they have much of the spirit of passive obedience in them Nor is it because they are in deadly fear that force will be applied to them. It is simply because, in the years that have slowly passed since they were mischievous little school-boys, most of them have come to be animated by feelings of duty and self-respect. It is because they really wish that the objects aimed at by the professor should be gained, and because they are as anxious as he that whatever is necessary for gaining them should be done. Inward forces have taken the place of the outward

constraint for which, in their case, the fitting season has gone by.

The principles exemplified in this rudimentary form must regulate everything if there is to be healthy growth, or even continued life, in any social or political organism in which full-grown men co-operate. Public spirit, unselfish desire for the common good, in fact all the principles of action which Shakespeare sums up in the one term 'love,' must do as much to restrain and guide as once was done by fear of force or respect for authority. If not, the tragedy of "King Lear" depicts the consequence.

Thus the question rises of the time at which in any given society –the India of our own day for example –the principle of correlated authority and obedience may fall into the background, and when forces at work within the society itself may be safely trusted to. On both sides there is danger. Fatal disorganization is the sure result if force be withdrawn before 'love' has gained sufficient power. The foolish will clamour for full and immediate introduction of

that self-government which the wise recognize to be a higher stage, and which they wish society to reach as soon as possible. The true ruler will withstand the clamour, and the wise will support him in withstanding it, until there is reason to believe that moral forces are at least strong enough to secure that the withdrawal of authority will not be equivalent to the dissolution of society

But fatal disorganization is the equally sure result if the dominion of bare authority be maintained too long. In a country situated as India is at present, this is the side on which there is the greater practical temptation to err. When long established custom tends in the same direction as that regard for self and desire of prominence which is strong in nearly all men, too prolonged clinging to authority is more probable than its premature abandonment. When rulers are men of ordinary calibre and but ordinary insight, there is pressing danger that they will be extremely slow to transfer any of their power to others, or rather perhaps that, while laying

aside some of it in appearance, they will struggle to retain every particle of it in reality. It is given to but few who have become habituated to rule, as it was given to Lear, to see when the time has come for the regime of "love" taking the place of the regime of authority. Nay, there is the further danger, which also did not escape Shakespeare's observation, that even those in whom "love" is strong, and who have no personal ends to serve, may be tempted to fall back on outward force for the cure of evils which force can no longer cure. It is the deeply injurious mistake of the noble and true-hearted Kent. To steer between the Scylla of too soon and the Charybdis of too late in effecting the transition from the lower to the higher stage of social and political organization, will be the perilous but honourable task of those in charge of the destinies of India in the years immediately before us.

I do not undertake to define the safe channel between these opposing dangers, any more than Shakespeare undertakes to show by what well-

ordered course Lear might have shunned the sufferings that came upon himself and the calamities that he brought upon his people. The play does but mark the fell consequence of mistake, if thus perchance those who have to steer the ship of state through a channel crowded thick with dangers may be induced to pay earnest heed to every landmark in their view. Nevertheless a suggestion on the one side and a suggestion also on the other arise naturally from an intelligent study of this play

Those who see, as Lear saw in his kingdom, that the time has come when India must be ruled on principles different from the principles that have been supreme till now,—those who rightly see that India needs to be transformed into an organism far more self-directed, and affording far more scope for individual energy, are not to suppose that no condition of society is healthy or satisfactory except the most fully developed that is exemplified anywhere in the world. It is slowly, it is only when generations have gone by, that the transformation effected by Albany

and Edgar brings round the age of Cymbeline. Moreover, those who examine that age, as delineated by Shakespeare in his later play, will find it enormously less developed in the direction of self-government and individual freedom than society as it exists in Britain or the United States to-day. Yet when it is compared with the age of Lear, everything is seen to be both free and healthy; and at the same time the best ends of government are being quietly gained.

The fact is that, as no stage of social or political development is final, so none is without its special excellence, provided it be seasonable. Even the lowest stage of all, where the word of the chieftain is supreme and the clansman's sole thought is to obey, may have a beauty that is all its own No stage of society has furnished better examples of all that kindles admiration and makes the heart beat fast and high, whether the examples that occur to one come from the rock-begirt vales of Coorg or Rajputana or from those northern hills of Scotland which were once the home of "that supreme devotion which the South-

ern never knew." Things go wrong only when there is an attempt to maintain methods and principles of rule after the time for which they are fitted has gone by, or when methods and principles are introduced before the time which they befit has come. Those who desire that, in matters of government, India should be even as Britain, are not to be disappointed when it grows clear to them that there can be full consummation of their hopes only in a distant future. Every step on the way to that consummation, if only it fits the time, will be beautiful and healthy,—far better and more beautiful than any portion of the way will be if progress is pressed prematurely on. There is fitness and therefore beauty, and there ought to be supreme satisfaction to the onlooker, in every stage of the life-history of a plant,—in its green upspringing, in its branching and its leafage, in its tender unopened buds, quite as much as in its flower, or in the fruit which it produces when decay and death are near. This is the warning which a review of "King Lear" suggests to those who, in regard to Indian politics, are

in danger of rushing on the Scylla of *too fast*.

"King Lear" affords this other warning for those who tend to be overwhelmed in the opposite Charybdis of *too slow*. The indispensable transformation of the principle of rule must not be delayed for ever on the pretext that preparation for it is insufficient, and that inward moral forces are still too weak. Perfect preparation for anything whatever, there will never be in this world. When Albany, helped by Edgar, proceeds with cautious steps to sustain the gor'd state by a higher than the outworn kind of government, "love" is far from having mastered every one. Only, the supreme exemplification of it in Cordelia, and the terrible effects of the want of it in others, have had such effect that the community, under the leaders whom it is so fortunate as to find, is adequately, though not perfectly, prepared for the higher stage into which it passes. The successful result is seen in "Cymbeline."

Students ought easily to grasp this distinction between preparation that is adequate and pre-

paration that is perfect. Classes are not perfect in their old studies when it is right, and even necessary, that they should begin new ones. The teacher decides when the time for advance has come. Doubtless he may easily make the advance too soon; but if he waits till all his pupils are perfect in all that has been taught them, it will never be made at all. Many members of the class may be far from as expert as they ought to be in fractions or the rule of three Some of them it might be possible to puzzle even in the multiplication table Yet it may be perfectly right that the class should begin to study algebra

It is the same in greater things. What is needed is that those on whom the responsibility rests should have discernment to know when what Shakespeare calls "love" is present in sufficient force to bear the community through the dangers of transition, and that they should have the strength of will to choose the time that is neither too early nor too late Of course those who have the wit and the decision so to act will reap little popularity They will be

denounced on the one side as demagogues and firebrands, at the very moment when they are being denounced on the other as time-servers, reactionaries, and cowards. If they are men of 'love,' the amount of suffering implied in this abuse from both sides will not be too hard for them to bear. If at the same time they are men of strength, the abuse may lighten their task by affording them amusement. Men gifted thus with power to discern their time and bear its burdens—gifted with that constructive statesmanship of which the dearth is lamentably conspicuous—are the crying want of India as regards its social and political concerns. By the measurement which history applies to time, the ruin of India is not distant if men are not forthcoming among her leaders and her rulers who—to use the words of Tennyson with but slight and merely grammatical variation—

"Know the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet
By shaping some august decree
To keep the throne unshaken still,
Broad-based upon the people's will."

Such, then, is the first broad and fundamental principle that is disclosed by applying the thoughts of Shakespeare in "King Lear" to the political and social condition of this great land. It is that the transition from the first stage of civilized society to that which ought to develope out of it, can be safely made only when that public spirit, that postponement of self to the common good, that devotion to the great ends that society subserves which Shakespeare sets forth as 'love,' has place and power in the every-day machinery of the community.

Such remaining lessons as I mean to state may be discussed more briefly. They are all fitted for the guidance of those in whom 'love' is really at work.

Prominent among them is the lesson that such men must give free play to whatever of this 'love' they have. Nothing must be allowed to withhold them from any action that the time demands. They may be tempted to keep in the background by disgust at the malignity of others, or by some fit of temper. This is what

is seen in Cordelia. Or they may yield to such slowness or timidity of nature as holds Albany in subjection for a time. A hundred evil tendencies, perhaps in the disguise of modesty, may restrain them. But if those who are sound at heart are silent when they ought to speak, or inactive when deeds are called for, behold the inevitable result! The neglected opportunity will be seized by the Gonerils and Regans of the hour. Power will pass to those who will use it for wholly selfish ends. These will soon find Oswalds to be their tools, Edmunds to bring energy and talents to their aid, and perhaps Cornwalls to emulate their atrocities. In times of trial and transition, the self-effacement, upon any plea, of those in whom there are real desires for the common good, may drive back some, as it drove Kent and Cordelia, to the hopeless remedy of force; and it must give rise to evils which, if cured at all, can be cured only at the expense of great suffering and lasting loss.

But for those who, from pure motives, desire to help in bestowing a larger life and a freer rule

on India, it is not enough to see what the time requires and what opportunities it affords; nor yet is it enough that they be willing, at whatever sacrifice of ease and popularity, to speak the right and do it. It is further needed that in regard to everything, and chiefly in regard to patience, they conform to the laws by which this whole frame of things is governed. Edgar, not Lear, must be their model. It has been shown that the old King's grasping after the immediate attainment of his ends is the direct occasion of all the ruin. His ends are altogether excellent. He fails to gain them because he takes his own hasty way instead of following the patient path by which alone it is possible to reach them. Those who wish to bring on a brighter political and social day in India must try no short-cuts. They must learn from history how the good things they desire can really be got. They must be as ready to act on the laws which history reveals as the cultivator is ready to act on the laws which, after long digging, and manuring, and watering,

and tending, provide for him the harvest that he longs for. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." Those who will not toil and be patient, like the husbandman, may profess what they like but are no true labourers in the cause of India's progress

Again, there is the cognate lesson of the need of self-restraint in those who would play a useful part in effecting the great transition. The benefit of the power to control passion, even when passion is most natural, appears in Edgar His self-restraint is prominent among the qualities which fit him for the great work which he begins to do when he passes from our sight. The evils of the want of self-restraint appear on all sides in the drama Every new outburst of Lear's ungovernable passion serves only to draw the coil of misery tighter round all the sufferers. The noble Kent fails upon the whole because he fails at this point. In those who are at work along with others for a great and distant end, an

uncontrolled outburst for an hour, perhaps not by any means excuseless, may work more evil than years of honest labour will effect of good.

Let me close with one more lesson which Shakespeare's line of thought appears to press upon those who would have India pass into a new stage of political and social life, and thus take higher rank among the peoples of the world. Those who are to give effective help in that transition must be prepared to pay the price not only of loss of popularity,—that is but a small thing,—but of real trouble and real suffering They will suffer for mistakes which they are sure to make themselves. They will suffer for the mistakes of others They will suffer from the hatred which their very devotion to unselfish ends is certain to inspire in those whose motive is self-interest, or love of applause, or love of power It is only by treading the path of suffering that "love" can combat the evils of its time and vanquish them. Men may shut their eyes to this law, or may complain of it. It is useless to do either, for this is the unalterable condition

on which enduring good is ever done. To its heroes and benefactors, the world always "gives the cross where it owes the crown." Their suffering may pass in course of time, as it does with Edgar; or it may end only when life ends, as with Cordelia. But without pain and self-sacrifice and trial to those who achieve, there cannot, in this world, be achievement that is worth the name.

Whether those who toil for great ends are to have any of the praise of men or not, whether they are to see in life any of the fruit of their labours and rejoice in it or not,—these things are decided on principles which are at present hid from us. What we know is that, according to the plan of the world, questions like these are quite subsidiary They must be accepted as subsidiary by those who mean to be the instruments of any lofty purpose Happiness, success, prosperity, is not the aim of life Those who make it so thereby set themselves aside from taking any part in effecting salutary change for their age, their country, or their race The doing of

the deed, whatever be the consequence to the doer, is the supreme and only purpose of those in whom "love" prevails. By the help of those, and none but those, who face these facts and are not deterred by them, can the transformation take place which it is only right that all sons of India should earnestly desire

These are by no means all the thoughts applicable to the needs of the hour which the foregoing interpretation and comments are fitted to suggest They are only some of the most obvious. But if my readers will study this great drama once more, bearing in mind the common but all-important morals which I have tried to point for present use, it may not be in vain for India, any more than for themselves, that they have come under the influence of "King Lear."

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