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978-1-108-00129-8 - The Sweet Silvery Sayings of Shakespeare on the Softer Sex
William Shakespeare

Excerpt

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SWEET SILVERY SAYINGS
OF SHAKESPEARE.



KING RICHARD III.

ACT I. SCENE II.

Anne.



ET down, set down your honourable load,—
If honour may be shrouded in a hearse,—
Whilst I a while obsequiously lament
The untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster—
Poor key-cold figure of a holy king !
Pale ashes of the house of Lancaster !
Thou bloodless remnant of that royal blood !
Be it lawful that I invoke thy ghost,
To hear the lamentations of poor Anne,
Wife to thy Edward, to thy slaughter'd son,
Stabb'd by the self-same hand that made these wounds !
Lo, in these windows, that let forth thy life,
I pour the helpless balm of my poor eyes :—
O, cursed be the hand that made these holes !

B

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King Richard III.

Cursed the heart, that had the heart to do it !
 Cursed the blood, that let this blood from hence !
 More direful hap betide that hated wretch,
 That makes us wretched by the death of thee,
 Than I can wish to adders, spiders, toads,
 Or any creeping venom'd thing that lives !
 If ever he have child, abortive be it,
 Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,
 Whose ugly and unnatural aspect
 May fright the hopeful mother at the view ;
 And that be heir to his unhappiness !
 If ever he have wife, let her be made
 More miserable by the death of him,
 Than I am made by my young lord, and thee !—
 Come, now, toward Chertsey with your holy load,
 Taken from Paul's to be interred there ;
 And, still as you are weary of the weight,
 Rest you, whiles I lament King Henry's corse.

Gloster. Stay you, that bear the corse, and set it down.

Anne. What black magician conjures up this fiend,
 To stop devoted charitable deeds ?

Gloster. Villains, set down the corse ; or, by Saint Paul,
 I'll make a corse of him that disobeys.

Gentleman. My lord, stand back, and let the coffin pass.

Gloster. Unmanner'd dog ! stand thou when I command :
 Advance thy halberd higher than my breast,
 Or, by Saint Paul, I'll strike thee to my foot,
 And spurn upon thee, beggar, for thy boldness.

[*The bearers set down the coffin.*]

Anne. What, do you tremble ? are you all afraid ?
 Alas, I blame you not ; for you are mortal,
 And mortal eyes cannot endure the devil.—
 Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell !

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Thou hadst but power over his mortal body,
His soul thou canst not have ; therefore, be gone.

Gloster. Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst.

Anne. Foul devil, for God's sake, hence, and trouble
us not ;

For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,
Fill'd it with cursing cries, and deep exclaims.

If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,

Behold this pattern of thy butcheries :

O, gentlemen, see, see ! dead Henry's wounds

Open their congeal'd mouths, and bleed afresh !—

Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity ;

For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood

From cold and empty veins, where no blood dwells ;

Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural,

Provokes this deluge most unnatural.—

O God, which this blood mad'st, revenge his death !

O earth, which this blood drink'st, revenge his death !

Either, heaven, with lightning strike the murderer dead,

Or, earth, gape open wide, and eat him quick ;

As thou dost swallow up this good king's blood,

Which his hell-govern'd arm hath butchered !

* * * * *

Gloster. Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.

Anne. Would they were basilisks, to strike thee dead !

Gloster. I would they were, that I might die at once ;
For now they kill me with a living death.

Those eyes of thine from mine have drawn salt tears,

Sham'd their aspects with store of childish drops :

These eyes, which never shed remorseful tear,—

Not when my father York and Edward wept,

To hear the piteous moan that Rutland made,

When black-fac'd Clifford shook his sword at him :

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King Richard III.

Nor when thy warlike father, like a child,
Told the sad story of my father's death ;
And twenty times made pause, to sob, and weep,
That all the standers-by had wet their cheeks,
Like trees bedash'd with rain : in that sad time,
My manly eyes did scorn an humble tear ;
And what these sorrows could not thence exhale,
Thy beauty hath, and made them blind with weeping.
I never su'd to friend, nor enemy ;
My tongue could never learn sweet soothing word ;
But now thy beauty is propos'd my fee,
My proud heart sues, and prompts my tongue to speak.

[She looks scornfully at him.]

Teach not thy lip such scorn ; for it was made
For kissing, lady, not for such contempt.
If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive,
Lo ! here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword ;
Which if thou please to hide in this true breast,
And let the soul forth that adareth thee,
I lay it naked to the deadly stroke,
And humbly beg the death upon my knee.

[He lays his breast open ; she offers at it with his sword.]

Nay, do not pause ; for I did kill king Henry ;—
But 'twas thy beauty that provoked me.
Nay, now despatch ; 'twas I that stabb'd young Edward :—

[She again offers at his breast.]

But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on.

[She lets fall the sword.]

Take up the sword again, or take up me.

Anne. Arise, dissembler : though I wish thy death,
I will not be thy executioner.

Gloster. Then bid me kill myself, and I will do it.

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ACT IV. SCENE I.

Elizabeth. Go, go, poor soul, I envy not thy glory ;
To feed my humour, wish thyself no harm.

Anne. No ! why ?—When he, that is my husband now,
Came to me, as I follow'd Henry's corse ;
When scarce the blood was well wash'd from his hands,
Which issu'd from my other angel husband,
And that dead saint which then I weeping follow'd ;
O, when, I say, I look'd on Richard's face,
This was my wish,—Be thou, quoth I, accurs'd,
For making me, so young, so old a widow !
And, when thou wed'st, let sorrow haunt thy bed ;
And be thy wife (if any be so mad)
More miserable by the life of thee,
Than thou hast made me by my dear lord's death !
Lo, ere I can repeat this curse again,
Even in so short a space, my woman's heart
Grossly grew captive to his honey words,
And prov'd the subject of mine own soul's curse :
Which ever since hath held mine eyes from rest ;
For never yet one hour in his bed
Did I enjoy the golden dew of sleep,
But with his timorous dreams was still awak'd.
Besides, he hates me for my father Warwick ;
And will, no doubt, shortly be rid of me.

Elizabeth. Poor heart, adieu ; I pity thy complaining.

Anne. No more than with my soul I mourn for yours.

Dorset. Farewell, thou woful welcomer of glory !

Anne. Adieu, poor soul, that tak'st thy leave of it !

Duchess. Go thou to Richmond, and good fortune
guide thee !—

[*To Dorset.*

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King Richard III.

Go thou to Richard, and good angels tend thee!—

[*To Anne.*]

Go thou to sanctuary, and good thoughts possess thee!

[*To Q. Elizabeth.*]

I to my grave, where peace and rest lie with me!

Eighty odd years of sorrow have I seen,

And each hour's joy wreck'd with a week of teen.

Elizabeth. Stay yet; look back, with me, unto the
Tower.—

Pity, you ancient stones, those tender babes,

Whom envy hath immur'd within your walls!

Rough cradle for such little pretty ones!

Rude ragged nurse! old sullen playfellow

For tender princes, use my babies well!

So foolish sorrow bids your stones farewell.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV. SCENE IV.

Margaret. I call'd thee then, vain flourish of my fortune;
 I call'd thee then, poor shadow, painted queen;
 The presentation of but what I was,
 The flattering index of a direful pageant,
 One heav'd a high, to be hurl'd down below:
 A mother only mock'd with two fair babes;
 A dream of what thou wast; a garish flag,
 To be the aim of every dangerous shot;
 A sign of dignity, a breath, a bubble;
 A queen in jest, only to fill the scene.
 Where is thy husband now? where be thy brothers?
 Where be thy two sons? wherein dost thou joy?
 Who sues, and kneels, and says—God save the queen?
 Where be the bending peers that flatter'd thee?

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Where be the thronging troops that follow'd thee?
 Decline all this, and see what now thou art.
 For happy wife, a most distressed widow;
 For joyful mother, one that wails the name;
 For one being sued to, one that humbly sues;
 For queen, a very caitiff crown'd with care;
 For one that scorn'd at me, now scorn'd of me;
 For one being fear'd of all, now fearing one;
 For one commanding all, obey'd of none.
 Thus hath the course of justice wheel'd about,
 And left thee but a very prey to time;
 Having no more but thought of what thou wert,
 To torture thee the more, being what thou art.
 Thou didst usurp my place; and dost thou not
 Usurp the just proportion of my sorrow?
 Now thy proud neck bears half my burden'd yoke;
 From which even here I slip my wearied head,
 And leave the burden of it all on thee.
 Farewell, York's wife,—and queen of sad mischance,—
 These English woes shall make me smile in France.

Elizabeth. O thou well skill'd in curses, stay a while,
 And teach me how to curse mine enemies.

Margaret. Forbear to sleep the night, and fast the day;
 Compare dead happiness with living woe;
 Think that thy babes were fairer than they were,
 And he, that slew them, fouler than he is:
 Bettering thy loss makes the bad-causer worse;
 Revolving this will teach thee how to curse.

* * * * *

Duchess. I pr'ythee, hear me speak.

Richard. You speak too bitterly.

Duchess. Hear me a word;
 For I shall never speak to thee again.

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*King Richard III.**Richard.* So.

Duchess. Either thou wilt die, by God's just ordinance
 Ere from this war thou turn a conqueror ;
 Or I with grief and extreme age shall perish,
 And never look upon thy face again.
 Therefore, take with thee my most heavy curse ;
 Which, in the day of battle, tire thee more,
 Than all the complete armour that thou wear'st !
 My prayers on the adverse party fight ;
 And there the little souls of Edward's children
 Whisper the spirits of thine enemies,
 And promise them success and victory.
 Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end ;
 Shame serves thy life, and doth thy death attend.

* * * * *

Elizabeth. By nothing ; for this is no oath.
 Thy George, profan'd, hath lost his holy honour ;
 Thy garter, blemish'd, pawn'd his knightly virtue ;
 Thy crown, usurp'd, disgrac'd his kingly glory :
 If something thou would'st swear to be believ'd,
 Swear then by something that thou hast not wrong'd.

Richard. Now by the world,—*Elizabeth.* 'Tis full of thy foul wrongs.*Richard.* My father's death,—*Elizabeth.* Thy life hath that dishonour'd.*Richard.* Then, by myself,—*Elizabeth.* Thyself is self—mis-us'd.*Richard.* Why then, by God,—*Elizabeth.* God's wrong is most of all.

If thou hadst fear'd to break an oath by him,
 The unity, the king thy brother made,
 Had not been broken, nor my brother slain.
 If thou hadst fear'd to break an oath by him,

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The imperial metal, circling now thy head,
Had grac'd the tender temples of my child ;
And both the princes had been breathing here,
Which now, two tender bed-fellows for dust,
Thy broken faith hath made a prey for worms.
What canst thou swear by now ?

ACT V. SCENE IV.

Richmond. What men of note are slain on either side ?

Stanley. John Duke of Norfolk, Walter Lord Ferrers,
Sir Robert Brakenbury, and Sir William Brandon.

Richmond. Inter their bodies as becomes their births.
Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled,
That in submission will return to us ;
And then, as we have ta'en the sacrament,
We will unite the white rose with the red :—
Smile heaven upon this fair conjunction,
That long hath frown'd upon their enmity !—
What traitor hears me, and says not,—Amen ?
England hath long been mad, and scarr'd herself ;
The brother blindly shed the brother's blood,
The father rashly slaughter'd his own son,
The son, compell'd, been butcher to the sire ;
All this divided York and Lancaster,
Divided, in their dire division.—
O, now, let Richmond and Elizabeth,
The true succeeders of each royal house,
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together !
And let their heirs (God, if thy will be so)
Enrich the time to come with smooth-fac'd peace
With smiling plenty, and fair prosperous days !
Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord,

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King Richard III.

That would reduce these bloody days again,
And make poor England weep in streams of blood !
Let them not live to taste this land's increase,
That would with treason wound this fair land's peace !
Now civil wounds are stopp'd, peace lives again ;
That she may long live here, God say—Amen !

