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 the Time of Shakespeare: Volume 1
 Edited by Charles Lamb
 Excerpt
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SPECIMENS
 OF
 ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS.

GORBODUC, A TRAGEDY. BY THOMAS SACKVILLE,
 LORD BUCKHURST, AFTERWARDS EARL OF DOR-
 SET; AND THOMAS NORTON.

*Whilst king Gorboduc in the presence of his councillors laments
 the death of his eldest son, Ferrex, whom Porrex, the younger
 son, has slain; Marcella, a court lady, enters and relates the
 miserable end of Porrex, stabbed by his mother in his bed.*

GORBODUC, AROSTUS, EUBULUS, *and others.*

Gorb. What cruel destiny,
 What froward fate hath sorted us this chance?
 That even in those where we should comfort find,
 Where our delight now in our aged days
 Should rest and be, even there our only grief
 And deepest sorrows to abridge our life,
 Most pining cares and deadly thoughts do grave.

Arost. Your grace should now, in these grave years of
 yours,
 Have found ere this the price of mortal joys,

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B

How full of change, how brittle our estate,
 How short they be, how fading here in earth,
 Of nothing sure, save only of the death,
 To whom both man and all the world doth owe
 Their end at last ; neither should nature's power
 In other sort against your heart prevail,
 Than as the naked hand whose stroke assays
 The armed breast where force doth light in vain.

Gorb. Many can yield right grave and sage advice
 Of patient sprite to others wrapt in woe,
 And can in speech both rule and conquer kind *,
 Who, if by proof they might feel nature's force,
 Would shew themselves men as they are indeed,
 Which now will needs be gods : but what doth mean
 The sorry cheer of her that here doth come ?

MARCELLA enters.

Marc. Oh where is ruth? or where is pity now?
 Whither is gentle heart and mercy fled?
 Are they exil'd out of our stony breasts,
 Never to make return? is all the world
 Drowned in blood, and sunk in cruelty?
 If not in women mercy may be found,
 If not (alas) within the mother's breast
 To her own child, to her own flesh and blood;
 If ruth be banisht thence, if pity there
 May have no place, if there no gentle heart
 Do live and dwell, where should we seek it then?

Gorb. Madam (alas) what means your woful tale?

Marc. O silly woman I, why to this hour
 Have kind and fortune thus deferr'd my breath,
 That I should live to see this doleful day?
 Will ever wight believe that such hard heart
 Could rest within the cruel mother's breast,

* Nature; natural affection.

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GORBODUC.

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With her own hand to slay her only son?
 But out (alas) these eyes beheld the same,
 They saw the dreary sight, and are become
 Most ruthful records of the bloody fact.
 Porrex, alas, is by his mother slain,
 And with her hand, a woful thing to tell,
 While slumb'ring on his careful bed he rests,
 His heart stabb'd in with knife is reft of life.

Gorb. O Eubulus, oh draw this sword of ours,
 And pierce this heart with speed. O hateful light,
 O loathsome life, O sweet and welcome death.
 Dear Eubulus, work this we thee beseech.

Eub. Patient your grace, perhaps he liveth yet,
 With wound receiv'd but not of certain death.

Gorb. O let us then repair unto the place,
 And see if that Porrex live, or thus be slain. [*Exit.*

Marc. Alas he liveth not, it is too true,
 That with these eyes, of him a peerless prince,
 Son to a king, and in the flower of youth,
 Even with a twink* a senseless stock I saw.

Arost. O damned deed!

Marc. But hear his ruthful end.
 The noble prince, pierced with the sudden wounds,
 Out of his wretched slumber hastily start†,
 Whose strength now failing, straight he overthrew,
 When in the fall his eyes ev'n now unclosed,
 Beheld the queen, and cried to her for help;
 We then, alas, the ladies which that time
 Did there attend, seeing that heinous deed
 And hearing him oft call the wretched name
 Of mother, and to cry to her for aid,
 Whose direful hand gave him the mortal wound,
 Pitying alas (for nought else could we do)
 His rueful end, ran to the woful bed,

* Twinkling of the eye.

† Started.

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GORBODUC.

Despoiled streight his breast, and all we might
 Wiped in vain with napkins next at hand
 The sudden streams of blood, that flushed fast
 Out of the gaping wound: O what a look,
 O what a ruthful stedfast eye methought
 He fixt upon my face, which to my death
 Will never part from me,—wherewith abraid*
 A deep fetch'd sigh he gave, and therewithal
 Claspings his hands, to heaven he cast his sight;
 And streight, pale death pressing within his face,
 The flying ghost his mortal corps forsook.

Arost. Never did age bring forth so vile a fact.

Marc. O hard and cruel hap that thus assign'd
 Unto so worthy wight so wretched end:
 But most hard cruel heart that could consent,
 To lend the hateful destinies that hand,
 By which, alas, so heinous crime was wrought;—
 O queen of adamant, O marble breast,
 If not the favour of his comely face,
 If not his princely chear and countenance,
 His valiant active arms, his manly breast,
 If not his fair and seemly personage;
 His noble limbs, in such proportion cast,
 As would have rapt a silly woman's thought;
 If this might not have mov'd the bloody heart,
 And that most cruel hand the wretched weapon
 Even to let fall, and kist him in the face,
 With tears, for ruth to reave such one by death;
 Should nature yet consent to slay her son?
 O mother, thou to murder thus thy child!
 Even Jove with justice must with light'ning flames
 From heaven send down some strange revenge on thee.
 Ah noble prince, how oft have I beheld
 Thee mounted on thy fierce and trampling steed,

* Awaked; raised up.

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GORBODUC.

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Shining in armour bright before the tilt,
 And with thy mistress' sleeve tied on thy helm,
 There charge thy staff, to please thy lady's eye,
 That bow'd the head piece of thy friendly foe!
 How oft in arms on horse to bend the mace,
 How oft in arms on foot to break the sword,
 Which never now these eyes may see again.

Arost. Madam, alas, in vain these plaints are shed.
 Rather with me depart, and help to assuage
 The thoughtful griefs, that in the aged king
 Must needs by nature grow, by death of this
 His only son, whom he did hold so dear.

Marc. What wight is that which saw that I did see,
 And could refrain to wail with plaint and tears?
 Not I, alas, that heart is not in me;
 But let us go, for I am griev'd anew,
 To call to mind the wretched father's woe. [*Exeunt.*]

Chorus of aged men. When greedy lust in royal seat
 to reign

Hath reft all care of gods and eke of men;
 And cruel heart, wrath, treason, and disdain,
 Within th' ambitious breast are lodged, then
 Behold how mischief wide herself displays,
 And with the brother's hand the brother slays.

When blood thus shed doth stain this heaven's face,
 Crying to Jove for vengeance of the deed,
 The mighty God even moveth from his place
 With wrath to wreak; then sends he forth with speed
 The dreadful Furies, daughters of the night,
 With serpents girt, carrying the whip of ire,
 With hair of stinging snakes, and shining bright
 With flames and blood, and with a brand of fire:
 These, for revenge of wretched murder done,
 Doth cause the mother kill her only son.

Blood asketh blood, and death must death requit;

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6 THE SPANISH TRAGEDY.

Jove by his just and everlasting doom
 Justly hath ever so requited it.
 This times before record and times to come
 Shall find it true, and so doth present proof
 Present before our eyes for our behoof.

O happy wight that suffers not the snare
 Of murderous mind to tangle him in blood :
 And happy he that can in time beware
 By others harms, and turn it to his good :
 But woe to him that fearing not to offend,
 Doth serve his lust, and will not see the end.

[The style of this old play is stiff and cumbersome, like the dresses of its times. There may be flesh and blood underneath, but we cannot get at it. Sir Philip Sidney has praised it for its morality. One of its authors might easily furnish that. Norton was an associate to Hopkins, Sternhold, and Robert Wisdom, in the Singing Psalms. I am willing to believe that Lord Buckhurst supplied the more vital parts. The chief beauty in the extract is of a secret nature. Marcella obscurely intimates that the murdered prince Porrex and she had been lovers.]

THE SPANISH TRAGEDY: OR HIERONIMO IS MAD
 AGAIN. A TRAGEDY BY THOMAS KYD.

Horatio, the son of Hieronimo, is murdered while he is sitting with his mistress Belimperia by night in an arbour in his father's garden. The murderers (Balthazar, his rival, and Lorenzo, the brother of Belimperia) hang his body on a tree. Hieronimo is awakened by the cries of Belimperia, and coming out into his garden, discovers by the light of a torch, that the murdered man is his son. Upon this he goes distracted.

HIERONIMO mad.

Hier. My son ! and what's a son ?
 A thing begot within a pair of minutes, there about :

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THE SPANISH TRAGEDY.

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A lump bred up in darkness, and doth serve
 To balance those light creatures we call women ;
 And at the nine months' end creeps forth to light.
 What is there yet in a son,
 To make a father doat, rave or run mad ?
 Being born, it pouts, cries, and breeds teeth.
 What is there yet in a son ?
 He must be fed, be taught to go, and speak.
 Ay, or yet ? why might not a man love a calf as well ?
 Or melt in passion o'er a frisking kid, as for a son ?
 Methinks a young bacon,
 Or a fine little smooth horse colt,
 Should move a man as much as doth a son ;
 For one of these, in very little time,
 Will grow to some good use ; whereas a son
 The more he grows in stature and in years,
 The more unsquar'd, unlevell'd he appears ;
 Reckons his parents among the rank of fools,
 Strikes cares upon their heads with his mad riots,
 Makes them look old before they meet with age ;
 This is a son ; and what a loss is this, consider'd truly !
 Oh, but my Horatio grew out of reach of those
 Insatiate humours : he lov'd his loving parents :
 He was my comfort, and his mother's joy,
 The very arm that did hold up our house—
 Our hopes were stored up in him,
 None but a damned murderer could hate him.
 He had not seen the back of nineteen years,
 When his strong arm unhors'd the proud prince Bal-
 thazar ;
 And his great mind, too full of honour, took
 To mercy that valiant but ignoble Portuguese.
 Well heaven is heaven still !
 And there is Nemesis, and furies,
 And things call'd whips,

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THE SPANISH TRAGEDY.

And they sometimes do meet with murderers :
 They do not always 'scape, that's some comfort.
 Ay, ay, ay, and then time steals on, and steals, and steals,
 Till violence leaps forth, like thunder
 Wrapt in a ball of fire,
 And so doth bring confusion to them all.

[*Exit.*]JAQUES *and* PEDRO, *servants.*

Jaq. I wonder, Pedro, why our master thus
 At midnight sends us with our torches light,
 When man and bird and beast are all at rest,
 Save those that watch for rape and bloody murder.

Ped. O Jaques, know thou that our master's mind
 Is much distract since his Horatio died :
 And, now his aged years should sleep in rest,
 His heart in quiet, like a desperate man
 Grows lunatic and childish for his son :
 Sometimes as he doth at his table sit,
 He speaks as if Horatio stood by him.
 Then starting in a rage, falls on the earth,
 Cries out Horatio, where is my Horatio ?
 So that with extreme grief, and cutting sorrow,
 There is not left in him one inch of man :
 See here he comes.

HIERONIMO *enters.*

Hier. I pry thro' every crevice of each wall,
 Look at each tree, and search thro' every brake,
 Beat on the bushes, stamp our grandame earth,
 Dive in the water, and stare up to heaven :
 Yet cannot I behold my son Horatio.
 How now, who's there, sprights, sprights ?

Ped. We are your servants that attend you, sir.

Hier. What make you with your torches in the dark ?

THE SPANISH TRAGEDY.

9

Ped. You bid us light them, and attend you here.

Hier. No, no, you are deceiv'd, not I, you are deceiv'd:

Was I so mad to bid you light your torches now?
 Light me your torches at the mid of noon,
 When as the sun god rides in all his glory;
 Light me your torches then.

Ped. Then we burn day light.

Hier. Let it be burnt; night is a murd'rous slut,
 That would not have her treasons to be seen:
 And yonder pale fac'd Hecate there, the moon,
 Doth give consent to that is done in darkness.
 And all those stars that gaze upon her face,
 Are aglets* on her sleeve, pins on her train:
 And those that should be powerful and divine,
 Do sleep in darkness when they most should shine.

Ped. Provoke them not, fair sir, with tempting words,
 The heavens are gracious; and your miseries
 And sorrow make you speak you know not what.

Hier. Villain thou lyeest, and thou doest nought
 But tell me I am mad: thou lyeest, I am not mad:
 I know thee to be Pedro, and he Jaques.
 I'll prove it to thee; and were I mad, how could I?
 Where was she the same night, when my Horatio was
 murder'd?

She should have shone: search thou the book:
 Had the moon shone in my boy's face, there was a kind
 of grace,
 That I know, nay I do know had the murd'rer seen him,
 His weapon would have fallen, and cut the earth,
 Had he been fram'd of nought but blood and death;
 Alack, when mischief doth it knows not what,
 What shall we say to mischief?

* Tags of points.

ISABELLA *his wife, enters.*

Isa. Dear Hieronimo, come in a doors,
 O seek not means to increase thy sorrow.

Hier. Indeed Isabella we do nothing here;
 I do not cry, ask Pedro and Jaques:
 Not I indeed, we are very merry, very merry.

Isa. How? be merry here, be merry here?
 Is not this the place, and this the very tree,
 Where my Horatio died, where he was murder'd?

Hier. Was, do not say what: let her weep it out.
 This was the tree, I set it of a kernel;
 And when our hot Spain could not let it grow,
 But that the infant and the human sap
 Began to wither, duly twice a morning
 Would I be sprinkling it with fountain water:
 At last it grew and grew, and bore and bore:
 Till at length it grew a gallows, and did bear our son.
 It bore thy fruit and mine. O wicked, wicked plant.
 See who knocks there. (*One knocks within at the door.*)

Ped. It is a painter, sir.

Hier. Bid him come in, and paint some comfort,
 For surely there's none lives but painted comfort.
 Let him come in, one knows not what may chance.
 God's will that I should set this tree! but even so
 Masters ungrateful servants rear from nought,
 And then they hate them that did bring them up.

The Painter enters.

Pain. God bless you, sir,

Hier. Wherefore? why, thou scornful villain?
 How, where, or by what means should I be blest?

Isa. What wouldst thou have, good fellow?

Pain. Justice, madam.

Hier. O ambitious beggar, wouldst thou have that