

The History of King Lear

Sc.17

Enter the Earl of Kent disguised, and [First] Gentleman

KENT Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back
know you no reason?

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN

Something he left imperfect in the state
Which, since his coming forth, is thought of; which
Imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger
That his personal return was most required
And necessary.

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KENT

Who hath he left behind him general?

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN

The MareÂchal of France, Monsieur la Far.

KENT Did your letters pierce the Queen to any
demonstration of grief? 10

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN

Ay, sir. She took them, read them in my presence,
And now and then an ample tear trilled down
Her delicate cheek. It seemed she was a queen
Over her passion who, most rebel-like,
Sought to be king o'er her. 15

KENT

O, then it moved her.

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN

Not to a rage. Patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen
Sunshine and rain at once; her smiles and tears
Were like, a better way. Those happy smilets
That played on her ripe lip seemed not to know
What guests were in her eyes, which parted thence
As pearls from diamonds dropped. In brief,
Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved
If all could so become it. 20

KENT

Made she no verbal question? 25

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN

Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of 'father'
Pantingly forth as if it pressed her heart,

Cried `Sisters, sisters, shame of ladies, sisters,
Kent, father, sisters, what, i'th' storm, i'th' night,
Let piety not be believed!' There she shook 30
The holy water from her heavenly eyes
And clamour mastered, then away she started
To deal with grief alone.

KENT It is the stars,
The stars above us govern our conditions,
Else one self mate and make could not beget 35
Such different issues. You spoke not with her since?

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN No.

KENT
Was this before the King returned?

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN No, since.

KENT
Well, sir, the poor distresseÁd Lear's i'th' town,
Who sometime in his better tune remembers 40
What we are come about, and by no means
Will yield to see his daughter.

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN Why, good sir?

KENT
A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own unkindness,
That stripped her from his benediction, turned her
To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights 45
To his dog-hearted daughters±±these things sting
His mind so venomously that burning shame
Detains him from Cordelia.

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN Alack, poor gentleman!

KENT
Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN 'Tis so; they are afoot. 50

KENT
Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear,
And leave you to attend him. Some dear cause
Will in concealment wrap me up a while.
When I am known aright you shall not grieve
Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you go 55
Along with me.

Exeunt