

Shakespeare, "King Lear," IV, vi, 70-72

Author(s): Walter W. Skeat

Source: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Apr., 1911), pp. 209-210

Published by: Modern Humanities Research Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3713398>

Accessed: 21-04-2016 17:40 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*Modern Humanities Research Association* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Modern Language Review*

Moreover, the *succeeding* context has its interest. The third 'passion,' which begins with the descriptive lines in question, ends as follows :

*So might I but live to bee,  
Where I might but sit to see,  
Once a day, or all day long,  
The sweet subiect of my song :  
In Aglaia's onely eyes,  
All my worldly paradise<sup>1</sup>.*

Compare, this time, not only the close of *L'Allegro*—

These delights, if thou canst give,  
Mirth with thee, I mean to *live*—

but also that of *Il Penseroso* :

*Where I may sit and rightly spell...  
These pleasures Melancholy give,  
And I with thee will choose to live.*

In a word, it is obvious that the descriptive lines under consideration occur in a *setting* which also offers manifest parallels with the setting of the corresponding passage in *L'Allegro*<sup>2</sup>.

I do not mean to suggest that in the lines from *The Passionate Shepherd* we have necessarily the *fons et origo* of *L'Allegro*. That would be too large a claim. But it does seem to be entirely clear that Breton's lines, with their authentic freshness and charm, clung to Milton's memory, and that, to a larger degree (it would seem) than any one other influence, they left in *L'Allegro* their stamp upon his own expression. If that be true, our debt to Nicholas Breton is no small one.

JOHN LIVINGSTON LOWES.

SAINT LOUIS, U.S.A.

SHAKESPEARE, 'KING LEAR,' IV, vi, 70—72.

May I be allowed to say that the note on this passage by Mr W. H. Williams was anticipated by me? Whoever will kindly refer to the new edition of my *Etymological Dictionary* issued last year will find at p. 710, s.v. *Welk* (1), the following note. 'Hence prob. *welked*,

<sup>1</sup> *P. S.*, p. 7, col. 1.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to compare with Milton's 'Where more is meant then meets the ear' (*Il Penseroso*, l. 120) Breton's line : 'Dante's *best obscur'd intention*' in the following 'passion' (p. 7, col. 2). But I do not wish to lay too much stress on this—nor on the equally interesting phrasing of a couplet in the second of the so-called 'sonnets' which immediately follow the four 'passions' :

Her necke should seeme a *pillar* fit,  
For to vpholde the state of wit (p. 11, col. 1).

*K. Lear*, iv. 6. 71, spelt *wealk'd*, i.e., convoluted, in the first folio; cf. "welked horns" in Golding's *Ovid*, pp. 60 b, 107 b, 122 b.' Mr Williams refers to only one passage in Golding, the first of these; but the expression occurs at least thrice.

WALTER W. SKEAT.

CAMBRIDGE.

#### THE ETYMOLOGY OF 'DISMAL.'

As the reviewer of the new edition of my *Etymological Dictionary* in the January number of the *Modern Language Review* especially mentions the etymology of 'dismal' as one of my discoveries, perhaps I may be allowed to mention that the discovery in this case was due to Mr Paget Toynbee, who communicated to me the facts, from an Old French source, nearly twenty years ago. The theory that the derivation of 'dismal' is from O.F. *dis mal*, was offered by me *as a guess* on Nov. 4, 1887, in a paper printed for the Philological Society in 1888 and reprinted in my *Notes on English Etymology*, pp. 69, 70. I explained at that date (1887) Chaucer's use of 'in the dismalle,' and I said that it represented O.F. *dis mal* = Lat. *dies mali*. But I had no proof; and the proof was supplied by Mr Toynbee in 1891, and communicated by me to the *Academy* at that date. When, however, I printed my *Notes* in 1901, ten years later, I had forgotten this fact, and I find, to my deep regret, that I *then* appended a few lines, at p. 70, to this effect. 'Add—This conjecture turned out to be correct. Shortly afterwards I observed the occurrence of A.F. *dis mal*,' etc. So I did; but it must have been wholly due to the fact that Mr Toynbee supplied the reference. Of course this misled your reviewer. I beg leave to apologise for this oversight, which will, I trust, be ascribed to my forgetfulness. I have received so much assistance from so many kind friends that I fail to remember whence my ideas have come. May I say, once for all, that I claim to be no better than a compiler; and though some of the contributions have come from my own stores, I cannot always say which they are.

WALTER W. SKEAT.

CAMBRIDGE.