

***Ye Compleate Sonnets of Shakspeare  
Recited in the Form of One Sonnet***

***Roy Lisker***

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***Preamble:***

In the winter of 1601, William Shakespeare and his principal actor, Richard Burbage, left the court in London, where they'd been acquitted of conspiracy in the rebellion of Essex, the Earl of Leicester, against Queen Elizabeth. They went immediately to the Mermaid Inn to drink numerous jugs of sack.

Bill regaled Dick with stories about his recent trip to Denmark. When in Copenhagen he'd attended an art exhibition at which etchings of Danish village life were on display. The title of the show was "Some Hamlet Prints of Denmark."

Burbage in his turn told Shakespeare that a fellow playwright had narrowly escaped imprisonment for a satire on the life of Henry the

Eighth. The title of the play: "The Merry Escapades of the King with the Leer". Both incidents impressed Bill as good material for future plays.

The conversation inevitably turned to the recent beheading of their patron, friend and fellow poet, the Earl of Essex. Dick Burbage quoted one verse of the long poem, *Passions of a Discontented Mind*, written by the unfortunate Earl while awaiting execution:

*"Ill company, the cause of many wars*

*The sugared bait, that hideth poisoned hook*

*The rock unseen that ship-wracked souls o'erthrows*

*The weeping crocodile that kills with look*

*The readiest step to ruin and decay*

*Grace's confounder and hell's nearest way."*

"He doth but speak of us!" Shakespeare commented, before revealing that he'd dedicated 154 sonnets to Essex (or it might have been Essex's step-father, the Earl of Leicester). At any rate this gave Burbage an idea.

**“Eftsoon’s Will! By my troth! What if we were to craft a poem in his honor, so skillfully wrought that the censor knoweth not what we do?”**

**“How be that, Dick?”**

**“Write down the first word of eche of your sonnet. This giveth 154 words, enough to make a sturdy sonnet all on its own. No censor will make neither head nor tail of that!”**

**Bill frowned:**

**“Forsooth! It’s the head that worries me. No matter. The fancy finds a ready welcome here. Go too, go too!” And here is the sonnet that they wrote:**

## *William Shakespeare's Sonnets in One Sonnet*

*(Note: The written text cannot do full justice  
to the effect of an inventive recitation)*

*From when, look ! Unthrifty those, then*

*.Lo !: Music is for...*

*As when ; O ...Not! When ; but Who !*

*Shall devouring a...*

*So my , as mine: Let ! Lord ! weary how*

*... when ?...When??*

*Thy ; if full ? Why ...No! Let , as how,*

*O Take!*

*Those that when ,if the mine ? Betwixt  
how? Against how?,*

*Thus! So what ! O not ! (Sweet Being ;  
that, if like...)*

*Is Sin !! Against ; When since ... Tired  
(Ah , thus ) .*

*Those that...*

*No O! that but So! why Thy' So!*

*Whilst O!*

*Or I , (I ! ) Who my, was ... Farewell !*

*When say , then?*

*Some , but so they, how . Somehow !*

*From, the where...*

*O my ! Alack ! To let, when not what's*

*O ! Alas!*

*O your , since. Or those , let accuse ...*

*Like what ?... That?*

*'Tis thy no if were't; O in how the. My*

*thou, Thine!*

*Beshrew so! Whoever , if thou ..When O be*

*in love , lo!*

*Two, those poor .. My: O canst O love!*

*In cupid; the*

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