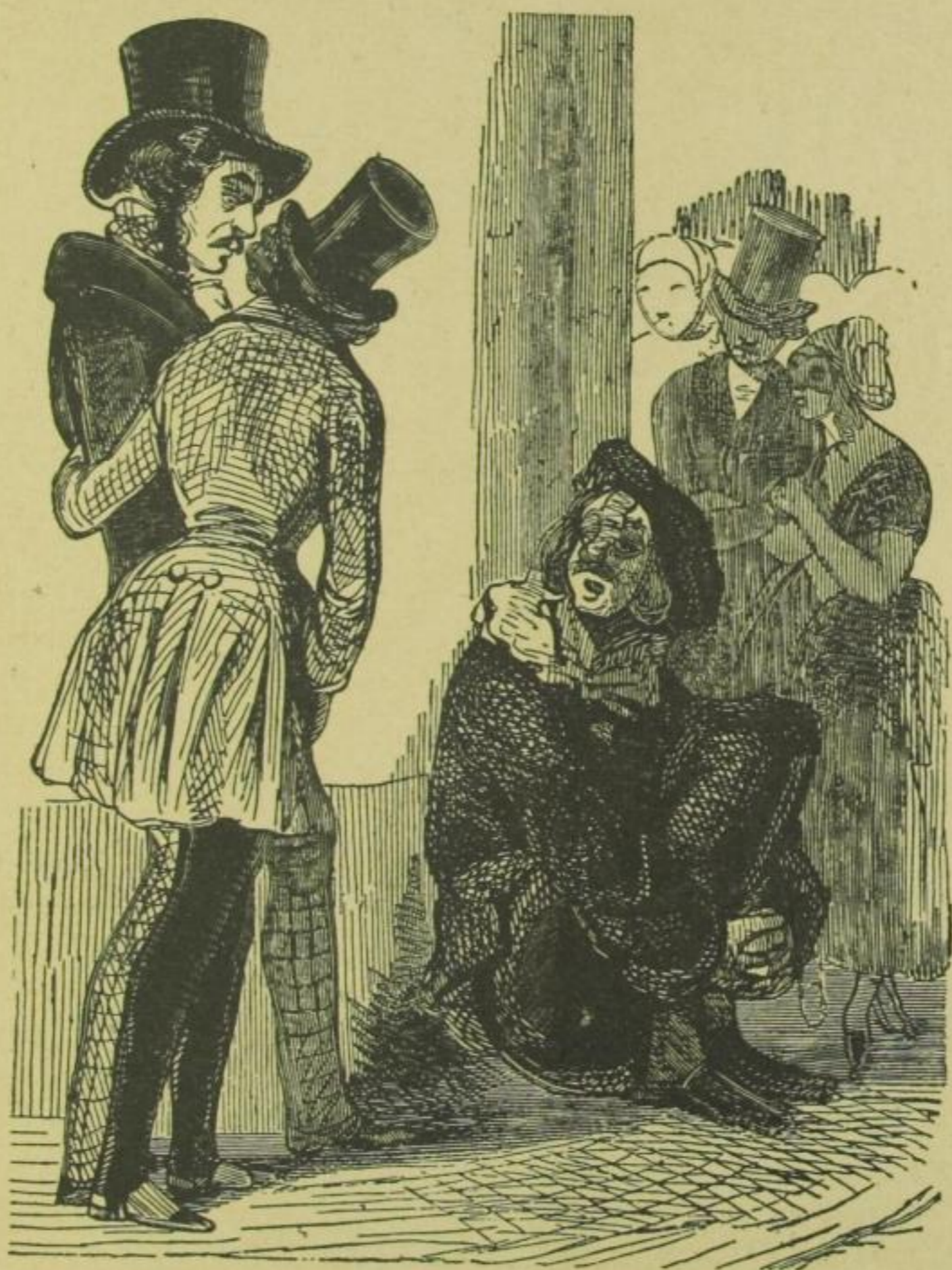


thing that a madman could devise in a fit of delirium. Towards the end of the play only six characters remain alive, and they all die a violent death. The King and the Queen are poisoned on the stage. Hamlet, after having assassinated the Lord Chamberlain and his son, dies himself of a poisoned wound: His lady-love throws herself out of the window and is drowned; the Ghost, who enlivens this farrago of horrors, was poisoned himself (in the ear).

Lest the spectators should be overcome by so many murders, the "divine" Shakespeare has given them moments of relief in the person of the Lord Chamberlain, who is a coarse buffoon, and the conversation of the grave-diggers, who, while they crack their insipid jests, dig a real grave, throw real black earth on to the stage, of the same colour and substance as that which is found in churchyards, full of real bones and real skulls. In order to give an effect of reality, there are

some large skulls and some small ones. Hamlet recognizes one as having belonged to a clown whom he knew. He seems to caress it, and to moralize over it. And these horrors, and the still more disgusting pleasantry, seemed vastly to please the upper gallery, the pit, and even the boxes. The people who were near me and behind me stood up on their seats and craned forward to look, and one man, in order to see better, lifted himself up by pulling my hair.

What strikes me most in thinking of this performance is the contrast that



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