

is not held in obloquy; for instance, the brother of Dr. Dodd succeeded to his living on the recommendation of Lord Chesterfield.

Now to return to the playhouse and *Hamlet*. How is it that a people which abhors bloodshed in general, which fears murder, to whom poison and assassination are unknown, and which carries, regard even towards the criminal to the extent I have described, can take pleasure in theatrical spectacles as barbarous and revolting as their own? The executions at London seem but games. The tragedies of the playhouse, on the other hand, are butcheries, causing even such spectators as are familiar with bloodshed to shudder.

It is only fair to say that those Englishmen who have read and travelled are slightly embarrassed when a foreigner, who has heard the extravagant praises paid to the "divine" Shakespeare, comes to London to see for himself the works of this genius. They tell us that the populace are the lords of the English stage, and that they must needs be pleased. It is their depraved taste, we are told, which maintains these spectacles which would empty the theatres in any other country. I am quite ready to believe it; but then it is only drunken sailors who should be asked to admire Shakespeare, since it is only by drunken sailors that his altars are supported.

On the other hand, I cannot help adding that educated society shares to a certain extent the prejudice of the rabble, since it shares their pleasures. The boxes are always full when Shakespeare is on the bill, and last night the play was well received; the disgusting jokes and the extravagant ravings duly listened to and applauded by men, women, lawyers, merchants, lords, and sailors. One and all they seemed to breathe with delight the obnoxious vapours of that earth which is made up of the remains of corpses. Compare this deliberate brutality, which educated men have tried to justify in books, with the mildness of the penal laws and the real executions, and explain it if you can! As for me, I will not visit the playhouse again until the question is solved.

— (Mit Genehmigung des Verlages William Heinemann Ltd. London.)



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Figur aus dem Hamlet der Cranach-Presse