

25 But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degree
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may;
Then lest he may, prevent.¹⁰ And, since the quarrel
Will bear no color¹¹ for the thing he is,
30 Fashion it¹² thus: that what he is, augmented
Would run to these and these extremities;¹³
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
Which hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.

[Enter LUCIUS.]

35 LUCIUS. The taper burneth in your closet,¹⁴ sir.
Searching the window for a flint,¹⁵ I found
This paper thus sealed up, and I am sure
It did not lie there when I went to bed. [Gives him the letter]

BRUTUS. Get you to bed again; it is not day.
40 Is not tomorrow, boy, the ides of March?

LUCIUS. I know not, sir.

BRUTUS. Look in the calendar and bring me word.

LUCIUS. I will, sir.

[Exit]

BRUTUS. The exhalations¹⁶ whizzing in the air
45 Give so much light that I may read by them.

[Opens the letter and reads]

"Brutus, thou sleep'st; awake, and see thyself.
Shall Rome, &c.¹⁷ Speak, strike, redress.
Brutus, thou sleep'st; awake."

Such instigations¹⁸ have been often dropped
50 Where I have took them up.
"Shall Rome, &c." Thus must I piece it out:¹⁹
Shall Rome stand under one man's awe?²⁰ What, Rome?
My ancestors did from the streets of Rome
The Tarquin²¹ drive, when he was called a king.
55 "Speak, strike, redress." Am I entreated
To speak and strike? O Rome, I make thee promise,
If the redress will follow, thou receivest
Thy full petition at the hand of²² Brutus!

[Enter LUCIUS.]

LUCIUS. Sir, March is wasted fifteen days. [Knock within]

60 BRUTUS. 'Tis good. Go to the gate; somebody knocks. [Exit LUCIUS.]

What does
the letter
say?

9. base degrees low steps
or people in lower positions.

10. lest . . . prevent in case
he may, we must stop him.

11. the quarrel . . . no color
our complaint cannot be just-
fied in view of what he now is.
augmented (ôg ment' id) v.
made greater

12. Fashion it state the case.

13. extremities (ek strem' e
tēz) n. extremes (of tyranny).

14. closet study.

15. flint stone used to
start a fire.

16. exhalations (eks' ha
lā' shēnz) n. meteors.

17. & c. et cetera, Latin
for "and so forth."

18. instigations (in' stē gā
shēnz) n. urgings, incite-
ments, or spurs to act.

19. piece it out figure
out the meaning.

20. under one man's awe in
fearful reverence of one man.

entreated (en trēt' id) v.
begged; pleaded with

21. Tarquin (tār' kwīn) king
of Rome driven out by
Lucius Junius Brutus,
Brutus' ancestor.

22. Thy full . . . hand of
all you ask from.