The verb to *ern* signifies to grieve, occurs no less than six times in Shakespeare, but has never yet been either rightly spelt (except in the First Folio), or properly accounted for; though it has always, thanks to the numerous uses of it, been rightly understood.

I proceed to cite the passages, all correctly given by Dr. Schmidt, s. v. *Yern*, with the remark that the old definitions have also the spelling *ern* or *erne*, which I shall show to be perfectly right.

In three passages the verb is transitive, and means to grieve, to afflict, to vex:

(1) "Well, she laments, sir, for it that would *ern* [First Fol. *yern*] your heart to see it."—*M. Wines*, III, v., 45.
(2) "Oh, how it *ernd* [First Fol. *yerd*] my heart, when I behold,"—*Richard II*, v., 76.
(3) "I *ern* [First Fol. *verne*] me not when men my garments wear."—*Hen. V.*, ii., 26.

In three others, it is intransitive, and means to grieve, sorrow, mourn:

(4) "No, for my many heart doth *ernd* [First Fol. *vernd*],"—*Richard III*, i., 27.
(5) "For Falstaff, he is dead, and we must *ernd* [First Fol. *vernd*] therefore,"—*Ed. 1. 6.
(6) The heart of Brutus *ern* [First Fol. *vernd*] to think upon and weep."—*Titus Andronicus*, i., 129.

It is a little curious that, in the three first instances, the verb is *yern*, with an initial *y*; in the three last, it is properly spelt *ern*. This is not quite an accident, perhaps, but a very strong show of rather more importance to observe that in four out of the six passages the word *heart* occurs; in two cases we are told that "a heart *erns*"; in two others, that "it *erns* one’s heart.".

I have, too, that when the verb is transitive, it is also intransitive.

Also, that it has almost the opposite sense to the modern Eng. *yern*. "My heart *erns*" means "my heart grieves, or sorrows;" but "my heart *yerns*" is as if it were almost met with a sense, or at least a presage, of gladness.

Again, the verb to *yern*, to desire, wish for, does not occur in Shakespeare once, either in his plays or in his poems; he expresses the idea by *long* or *yearn*, a word which occurs a vast number of times.

On account of the prefixed initial *y*, due to the occasional pronunciation of the word as *vernd* (exactly analogous to that in often spelt *yern*), with its substantive *verning*, also *yeeming*, the lexicographers have mixed up the two words in a most puzzling manner. However, I think the following additional instances, taken from Richardson, are tolerably clear:

(1) "Cavs mercy and pity, with grievous prayers and lamentations, bewailing their hard state and woful case; in such case that the people’s hearts..."