

**From *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* by Mary Cowden Clarke,  
London, 1851.**

On one occasion, [Polonius] called [Ophelia and Laertes] and commended them highly for never having been into a certain gallery...

Seeing a look of surprise on their faces, he added: "Ah, you marvel how I came to know so certainly that you never went in. But I have methods deep and sure, - a little bird, or my little finger..."

"But we did go in;" said Ophelia.

"What, child? Pooh, impossible! Come to me; look me full in the face." Not that she looked down, or aside, or anything but straight at him; but he always used this phrase conventionally, when he conducted an examination. "I tell you, you never went into that gallery ... I should have discovered it, had you gone into that room without my permission."

"I never knew you forbade it?" said Laertes. "If we had known you had any objection, neither Ophelia nor I would have -"

"I never forbade it, certainly," interrupted his father; "but I had strong reasons for wishing that you should not go into the room till the pictures were hung. No, no; I know better than to let heedless children play there; so I took means to prevent you entering the gallery without my knowledge."

"But we did play there, every day, father;" said Laertes.

"Yes;" said Ophelia.

"And I tell you impossible! Listen to me; I fastened a hair across the entrance. The invisible barrier is yet unbroken. So that you see, you could not have passed through the door without my knowledge."

"But we didn't go through the door, papa; we got in at the window!" exclaimed both the children. "We didn't know you wished us not to play there; so, finding a space which the builders had left, in one of the windows that look into the garden, we used to creep in there, and amuse ourselves with looking at the new pictures. We did no harm; only admired."