Gilchrist

Examination of the Charges
maintained by Malone

AN

EXAMINATION, &c.

AN

EXAMINATION

OF

THE CHARGES

MAINTAINED BY

MESSRS. MALONE, CHALMERS, AND OTHERS,

OF

BEN JONSON'S ENMITY, &c.

TOWARDS

SHAKSPEARE.

BY

OCTAVIUS GILCHRIST.

If it be an ignorance, it is a virtuous and staid ignorance; and, next to truth, a confirmed error does well; such a one the author knows where to find. BEN JONSON.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR TAYLOR AND HESSEY, 93, FLEET STREET,

By J. Moyes, 34, Shoe Lane.

1808.

The edition of SHAKSPEARE, *referred to in the following pages, is uniformly the last of* JOHNSON *and* STEEVENS, *in twenty-one volumes octavo,* 1803.

ERRATA.

Page 22, line 11, *for* Lorezo *read* Lorenzo
—— 25 and 28, in three places, *for* Gorbodue *read* Gorboduc
—— 26, line 2, *for* 1651 *read* 1631
—— 30, note, *insert a* comma *after* Caledonia, *and the* full point *after* Reviewers
—— 31, line 4, *for* state *read* stale
—— 53, —— 14, *for* moth *read* Moth
—— 54, *note*, line 2, *after* 1612, *instead of the* comma *insert a* full point

AN

EXAMINATION, &c.

BY the desire of rendering an occasional service to a literary friend, to whom the modern stage is under considerable obligations, I was led a few weeks since to a consideration of the circumstances of Ben Jonson's life, and the inquiry naturally connected itself with Shakspeare.—The superiority of their abilities, and the similarity of their studies, were natural attractions; and they were probably associated at an earlier period than has yet been discovered. In the year 1598, we learn that Shakspeare performed in Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour;" he appears also among the actors of his tragedy of Sejanus, in 1603; and tradition has given to the former the merit of having introduced his companion to the stage. For the honour of literature, for the respect and veneration which I bear towards these great poets, I trust this tradition, so honourable to both, is founded in truth; and I am justified, by finding nothing in the writings of either, to contradict

the belief, or invalidate the presumption. A passage, moreover, in the preface to Sejanus, would lead us to suppose that Shakspeare assisted his friend in the composition of that tragedy; but when the play went to the press, Jonson forbore to print the additions, being "loath to defraud so happy a genius, by usurping his right." Further literary community has not been discovered. The spring of 1616 saw the stage deprived of its great boast and ornament; and Jonson testified his respect for the memory of his friend by writing the following eulogium on his literary remains:*—

---

* It should not be forgotten, that the first engraved portrait of Shakspeare, which is that printed in the title page of his plays in folio, 1623, has the following lines addressed to the reader, by Ben Jonson:—

This figure that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakspeare cut;
Wherein the graver had a strife
With nature, to out-do the life.
O, could he but have drawn his wit
As well in brass, as he hath hit
His face, the print would then surpass
All that was ever writ in brass;
But since he cannot, reader, look,
Not on his picture, but his book.

To the Memory of

MY BELOVED, THE AUTHOR,

Mr. WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE,

AND WHAT HE HATH LEFT US.

To draw no envy, Shakspeare, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book, and fame;
While I confess thy writings to be such,
As neither man, nor muse, can praise too much;
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage; but these ways
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise:
For seeliest ignorance on these may light,
Which, when it sounds at best, but echoes right;
Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance
The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance;
Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,
And think to ruin, where it seem'd to raise:
These are, as some infámous bawd, or whore,
Should praise a matron; what could hurt her more?
But thou art proof against them; and, indeed,
Above the ill fortune of them, or the need:
I, therefore, will begin:—Soul of the age,
The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage,
My Shakspeare, rise! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser; or bid Beaumont lie
A little further, to make thee a room:*
Thou art a monument without a tomb;

* This is an allusion to the following lines in a commendatory poem on Shakspeare by William Basse:

Renowned Spenser, lie a thought more nigh
To learned Chaucer; and rare Beaumont lie

And art alive still, while thy book doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.
That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses;
I mean, with great but disproportion'd muses:
For, if I thought my judgment were of years,
I should commit thee surely with thy peers;
And tell—how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latin, and less Greek,
From thence to honour thee, I would not seek
For names; but call forth thund'ring Æschylus,
Euripides, and Sophocles, to us,
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordoua dead,
To life again, to hear thy buskin tread
And shake a stage; or, when thy socks were on,
Leave thee alone; for the comparison
Of all that insolent Greece, or haughty Rome,
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britain! thou hast one to show,
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time;
And all the muses still were in their prime,
When like Apollo he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm.
Nature herself was proud of his designs,
And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines;
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit:
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please;

A little nearer Spenser; to make room
For Shakspeare, in your three-fold four-fold tomb.

But antiquated and deserted lie,
As they were not of Nature's family.
Yet must I not give Nature all; thy art,
My gentle Shakspeare, must enjoy a part:—
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion: and that he,
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the muses' anvil; turn the same,
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame;
Or, for the laurel, he may gain a scorn,—
For a good poet's made, as well as born:
And such wert thou. Look, how the father's face
Lives in his issue; even so the race
Of Shakspeare's mind and manners brightly shines
In his well-torned and true-filed lines;
In each of which he seems to shake a lance
As brandish'd at the eyes of ignorance.
Sweet swan of Avon, what a sight it were,
To see thee in our waters yet appear;
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza, and our James!
But stay; I see thee in the hemisphere
Advanc'd, and made a constellation there:—
Shine forth, thou star of poets; and with rage,
Or influence, chide, or cheer, the drooping stage;
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd like night,
And despairs day, but for thy volume's light!

BEN JONSON.

At the distance of two centuries, while posterity is looking towards them as the "delight and wonder of their age," and the "admiration of all time," it is grateful (to me at least) to trace these incontrovertible proofs of their friendly connexion. It were to be wished that further circumstances could be added, for who can ever know too much of Shakspeare? It is not, however, of little moment, that whatever is known of them jointly is in proof of their attachment. With these unsophisticated evidences of their generous disposition to each other, without any mixture or alloy, it might have been hoped and expected that their names would have descended to posterity, as another proof of the possibility of rival merit exciting praise instead of envy; as Horace had before borne testimony to the merit of Virgil, and Juvenal to the worth of Quintilian. But those who are acquainted with the criticisms and commentaries of the many writers on Shakspeare, know that Jonson is by them transmitted to us as an example of ingratitude, envy, and malignity, jealous of all contemporary merit, and a libeller of the friend to whom he owed his elevation. If this strong case could be made out, his writings ought to be condemned to the hands of the hangman, and his name be consigned to perpetual infamy. If, however,

it shall appear that his fair fame has been blackened, his memory traduced, and his writings perverted, for the unworthy purpose of raising a rival poet on the ruins of his reputation; and that malevolent critics may display their sagacity and acuteness in tracing passages applicable to their favourite poet; the voice of public justice, it is to be hoped, will restore to the brow of the poet his violated honours, committing to merited shame and obloquy the "viperous critics by whom they were bereaved."*

In the notes and prefaces of Theobald, Warburton, and Johnson, we find no traces of this supposed malignity:

They bear no semblance of these sable streams.

The palm of precedence must, I believe, be consigned to Rowe, who, however, soon retracted his assertions. In the first edition of his Life of Shakspeare, he had represented Jonson as naturally proud and insolent, looking with an evil eye upon any one that seemed to stand in competition with him. Further inquiry caused him to withdraw these charges, which are unsupported by contemporary proof, by his-

* Some vip'rous critic may bereave
Th' opinion of thy worth, for some defect.
Daniel's Musophilus, fol. 1601, sign. A iiii.

torical evidence, or (to borrow a phrase from the *elegant* Mr. Chalmers) by "babbling tradition."

For the various and extraordinary merits of George Steevens, I find it difficult to express the respect which I feel: he was indeed a genuine wit; an elegant, if not a profound, scholar; an acute and judicious critic; who has done more towards explaining his author than the whole herd of commentators, among whom he towers

Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.

That he should lend the weight of his name to this belief, is matter of regret; and the proofs by which he justified it, show that he had not bestowed much pains in examining its truth.

In the edition of Shakspeare before me, the first object of our notice is the verses "to the memory of his beloved, Mr. William Shakspeare, and what he has left us:" and on the subject of this tribute to the memory of Shakspeare, Dryden and Pope are at issue:* the former terms it a

* The sentiments entertained by Jonson's contemporaries of his verses to Shakspeare, may be gathered from the following lines, prefixed to the poems of the latter, 8vo. 1640:

It is not fit each humble muse should have
Thy worth his subject now thou art laid in grave;

"sparing and invidious panegyric;" which the commentators, in their zeal for the depreciation of Jonson, and the elevation of their favourite, have taken pains to obtrude, while they are careful to withhold the sentiments of Pope, who declares, that "he cannot, for his part, find any thing invidious or sparing in those verses, and wonders that Dryden was of that opinion."* The opinions of these great names, as they go not into the merits of the case before us, are comparatively of little moment: Dryden's unfavourable disposition to Ben was, however, sufficiently notorious in his time, and he is constrained to confess that some ingenious men, for whom he had a particular esteem, thought he much injured Ben Jonson, and that he has been accused of being his enemy.† In a fit and defensible cause the name and talents of Steevens would daunt a bold competitor, and I consider the weakness of his evidence on the present question as a presumption

---

No, its a flight beyond the reach of those,
Whose worthless pamphlets are not sense in prose.
Let learned Jonson sing a dirge for thee,
And fill our orb with heavenly harmony.

* Pope's preface to Shakspeare.

† Preface to Dryden's "Mock Astrologer."

in favour of the justice of the cause I have undertaken.

On the verses before us, Steevens, with his usual felicity of quotation, observes:

"————————extinctus amabitur idem."

"This observation of Horace was never more completely verified than by the posthumous applause, which Ben Jonson has bestowed on Shakspeare:—

————————The gracious Duncan
Was pitied of Macbeth:—marry, *he was dead.*

"Let us now compare the present eulogium of old *Ben* with such of his other sentiments as have reached posterity."

To this exordium, some of his other sentiments might be expected to succeed; but

This follows not:
What follows then, my lord?

Why, an empirical letter, written by a needy player, referring to an old tract, said to have been written by Ford, called "Old Ben's *light heart* made heavy by young *John's Melancholy Lover.*" *Quand les larrons s'entrebattent,* say our neighbours, *les larcins se découvrent.* The glory of triumphing over a powerful competitor overcame, for once, "the master-passion in the

breast" of Mr. Malone; and in proving,* as he has successfully, the pretended extracts to be forgeries, and the letter containing them an artful fabrication by Macklin, for the purpose of rendering his wife's benefit more profitable; he has vindicated Jonson from a wanton charge of envy, ill-nature, and ingratitude; and overthrown the monument raised by Steevens to the honour of Shakspeare, inscribed with the written shame of his friend and companion. There wanted nothing from Mr. Malone in this candid detection but a manly and open reprobation of the perpetrator of the fraud: but no! the lurking aversion of the commentator to Jonson is seen through the thin veil of justice, that shadowed it in this instance, and after successfully detecting the cheat, he terms it "a sportive, ingenious, and false invention, though not with malice aforethought;" while he boasts of having rescued Shakspeare from the hands of a bungling impostor, by proving the pretended manuscripts to be the true and genuine offspring of consummate ignorance and unparalleled audacity."† This appropriate reprobation of one

---

* Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 374.

† See Malone's Inquiry into the authenticity of the Shakspeare papers, 8vo. page 354. 1796.

fraud, and tender treatment of a similar, betray attachment to an opinion rather than a liberal zeal for truth; in cases differing but in this, that the object of the one was to overwhelm in perpetuity the moral and poetical character of one man, while the other was a frantic and superfluous endeavour to imp feathers to the wing of "the sweet swan of Avon."

The censure of Ben, which the better judgment of Rowe erased from his Life of Shakspeare, was too conformable to the opinion and wishes of Mr. Malone to be suffered to sleep in oblivion; it is therefore dragged forth in the notes on the great bard, and made the "loop or hinge" to sustain a string of criticisms and reproaches. On this occasion, however, "Love's Labour's Lost:" after traversing the records of a curious and extensive library, no trace of Jonson's malignity is met with, except in a passage of Davies's Scourge of Folly, which Mr. Malone could feel little pleasure in transcribing: some backbiting libellers had, it seems, asserted that Jonson was envious; but, says Davies, "such censurers must have corrupted hearts."* No si-

* Thou art sound in body, but some say, thy soule
Envy doth ulcer; yet *corrupted hearts*
Such censurers must have.

Davies's Scourge of Folly. Printed about 1611.

tuation can be more humiliating; the mind can picture to itself no case more mortifying, than that of the critic, after having turned with unwearied industry the ample dunghil of antiquarian defamation, to meet at last this palpable and severe reproof of his labours: it has no prototype but that of the prodigal, who, seduced by an ambiguous inscription on his father's tomb, broke open the sepulchre, and found nothing beyond dust and bones, but a bitter reprobation of his sacrilegious avarice.

"The Return from Parnassus," says Mr. Malone, "furnishes us with the earliest intimation of the quarrel between him and Shakspeare." The passage, as it is one of the few instances of the poets' names occurring together, is too curious to be suppressed: the interlocutors are Burbage and Kempe, two of the original performers in Shakspeare's plays, who are preparing to entertain the students of Cambridge with "a spice of the vanity of their art." Now says

Burbage.—"Now, Will Kempe, if we can entertain these scholars at a low rate, it will be well, they have oftentimes a good conceit in a part."

Kempe.—"It is true, indeed, honest Dick; but the slaves are somewhat proud; and, besides, its a good sport in a part to see them never speak in their walk, but at the end of the stage;

just as though in walking with a fellow, we should never speak but at a stile, a gate, or a ditch, where a man can go no further. I was once at a comedy in Cambridge, and there I saw a parasite make faces and mouths of all sorts on this fashion."

Burbage.—"A little teaching will mend these faults; and it may be, besides, they will be able to pen a part."

Kempe.—"Few of the university pen plays well; they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Juppiter. Why here's our fellow Shakspeare put them (the University poets) all down, ay, and Ben Jonson too. O, that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow; he brought up Horace, giving the poets a pill, but our fellow Shakspeare hath given him a purge that made him bewray his credit."

Burbage.—"Its a shrewd fellow indeed."*

If this passage, on which so much stress is laid, did indeed prove the enmity of the parties, it would go to show that the *gentle Shakspeare* was the aggressor; that when Jonson had vented his anger on Dekker, Shakspeare stepped in to the assistance of the latter, and assailed the

---

* This drama, which is reprinted by Hawkins, is a literary curiosity of great merit and interest.

"humorous poet" with success. "In what manner Shakspeare put Jonson down, or made him bewray his credit, does not appear;" says Mr. Malone. "His retaliation," he continues, "we may be well assured, contained no gross or illiberal abuse; and, perhaps, did not go beyond a ballad or an epigram, which may have perished with things of greater consequence."* Mr. Chalmers also infers from this passage, that "there was certainly a quarrel between the two great dramatists."†

When an object is placed too near to the eye, the vision is strained and impaired, and the object obscured or distorted: if the commentators had viewed this passage "as others use," they would have found in the numerous dramas published anterior to the above passage, the instruments by which he put Ben down; and, in their various excellence, the means by which he threw the claims of his competitor into shade. The passage has no reference to personal animosity; it was a just testimony to the superior merit of "the poet of nature" over the writings of more "learned candidates for fame;" and the

---

* Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 293.

† Chalmers's Supplemental Apology for the Believers of the Shakspeare Papers, 8vo. page 239. 1799.

well-merited compliment is very appropriately put into the mouth of Will Kempe, one of "Shakspeare's *fellows*." Mr. Malone now adds an irresistible argument, namely, that Shakspeare has sufficiently "marked his disregard for the calumniator of his fame, by not leaving him any memorial by his will!!!"

I have great respect for the industry of Mr. Malone; and, after bestowing these pages for his reformation, I hope he will not forget me in his testament!

I shall here add what Farmer, a venerable name in all that relates to Shakspeare, has advanced on this subject. "The received opinion," says he, "of the pride and malignity of Jonson, at least in the earlier part of life, is absolutely groundless." And, in a former page, he calls Ben's verses on him who wrote "*for all time*," "the warmest panegyrick that ever was written."*

"It is a singular circumstance," says Mr. Malone, "that old Ben should for near two centuries have stalked on the stilts of an artificial reputation; and that even at this day, of the very few who read his works, scarcely one in ten yet ventures to confess how little entertainment they afford. The truth is," he adds,

* Essay on the Learning of Shakspeare.

" that his pieces, when first performed, were so far from being applauded by the people, that they were scarcely endured, and many of them were actually *damned.*"*

If Ben has indeed stalked for " two centuries on an artificial reputation," it must be acknowledged a strange anomaly in literature: a critic, to the full as judicious as Mr. Malone, has told us,

Est vetus atque probus, centum qui perficit annos.†

Leaving this question to other decisions, I may be permitted to doubt that Mr. Malone's acquirements are such as qualify him for deciding on the merits of the " learned bard;" at the same time it may be questioned whether he has read Ben with sufficient interest for that purpose; or whether he has not examined Jonson, as he confesses he travelled through Massinger,‡ merely with the view of obtaining verbal illustrations of his favourite Shakspeare. But, be this as it may, in the face of Mr. Malone's decision I shall venture to assert, that a finer drama than the Alchemist, more characteristic

---

* See Mr. Malone's note (to the extent of *six pages*), Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 68, et seq.

† Horace, Epist. lib. ii.

‡ See Gifford's Massinger, vol. i. p. 61, note 9.

in its design and conduct, more perfect in all its parts, and supported throughout with a more uniform display of unabated excellence, will not be found in the whole compass of English literature. That some of his plays were "actually *damned*," is beyond all question; how far this corresponds with an assertion of Mr. Malone in another place, that the plays of Jonson were preferred to those of Shakspeare after the death of the latter, I shall not stop to inquire; the commentator should have added, however, that one of these was the delightful comedy of "The Silent Woman!" enough to show that Jonson had in his own time critics as injudicious and tasteless as Mr. Malone or Mr. Chalmers.

As we have seen in the case of Mr. Malone towards Steevens, so, notwithstanding his opposition to the former, on the chronological arrangement of Shakspeare's dramas, Mr. Chalmers yields to none of his predecessors in unrelenting hostility to Ben, whom he never views but with a "torve and tetrick countenance,"*

* This is not altogether the place for notes on Milton, but it will be interesting to those who are fond of tracing literary coincidences to compare the following passages:

> ——————Aside the Devil turn'd
> For envy; but with jealous leer malign
> Ey'd them askance. *Par. Lost*, book iv.

maligning his "butcherly druggery;" and his reasons for this dislike are "so sharp and sententious; so pleasant without scurrility; witty without affection; audacious without impudency, and learned without opinion;" that it is impossible not to recognise in Commissioner Chalmers (ὁ πολυμαθης και κριτικος) a flattering representation of the illustrious Holofernes. If in the course of these pages I shall not, however, be persuaded to yield to all his deductions, but shall venture to question the validity of some of his positions, and, rejecting all pugilistic argumentation and dogmatizing criticism, endeavour to rival the more than quakerly moderation of my gentle competitors:—"We'll have no knock-me-down doings in my house—there comes no swaggerers here!"—

The indifference manifested by Shakspeare towards the offspring of his great mind, which posterity still contemplates with increased wonder and delight, has left us in perfect igno-

---

When Fuller is explaining the proverb, "he looks as the Devil over Lincoln," he says, "the Devil is the map of malice, and his *envy* (as God's mercy) is over all his works. On which account he is supposed to have overlooked this church, when first finished, with a *torve and tetrick* countenance *maligning* men's costly devotion, and that they should be so expensive in God's service.

Worthies, folio, p. 153. 1662.

rance as to the earliest period of the representation of the greater number of his plays. To discover this desideratum from minute internal evidence, and trifling allusions scattered sparingly in his dramas and in the writings of contemporary authors, opened a new field for "commentating zeal," and Mr. Malone sallied forth upon the arduous adventure.—Ω χαιρε Βοιωτιδιον.* Happy were it for Jonson if his progress had been as harmless as that of the windmill assailant; but, alas! the course of this knight of the woeful countenance has been as ruinous to the reputation of Ben, as the progress of a celebrated knight over roses and tulips, when in eager pursuit of the emperor of Morocco.

To ascertain the chronological order of these celebrated dramas, from such slender circumstances, must be acknowledged difficult, but some arrangement was resolved on, and of course every passage bearing a reference or a supposed reference, would be brought to support the theory. As Shakspeare's contemporary, Jonson would not, naturally, be overlooked. To illustrate their poet, and degrade Jonson, were objects alike desirable; and to unite these attainments was a double purpose. In order to

* Aristophanes *in Achar.*

this, every passage that can by any forced construction or shadow of resemblance be supposed to be levelled at Shakspeare, has been ferretted out by these industrious supervisors; and, instead of first establishing the dates of the plays at which these insulated passages are imagined to be directed, the passages themselves are brought forward with great critical pomp, to bolster up the theory, at the same time that some of them bear not the slightest resemblance to the objects, they are asserted to deride.

The first play in Mr. Malone's arrangement,* to which this novel and accommodating species of logic is applied, in order to establish the charge of malignity on the part of Ben, is the tragedy of Hamlet; which is supposed to be sneered at in the following line of "The Case is altered."† Angelo says,

> "But first I'll play the ghost; I'll call him out."

Without grounding my defence of Ben upon the fact of their having been a play upon the same subject anterior to that of Shakspeare, I may be permitted to ask Mr. Malone, whether he considers the introduction of a ghost as only to be found in Shakspeare? and in what part of Hamlet the ghost "calls any one out?" The

* Shakspeare, vol. ii. page 279.

† Ben Jonson's Works, Whalley's edition, vol. vii. p. 362.

commentator must know well, that the introduction of this supernatural agent is *not* peculiar to Shakspeare; and he might have remembered, that in "The Spanish Tragedie," the common butt of Shakspeare, Jonson, Fletcher, Massinger, and all contemporary wits, the ghost of Andrea "calls forth" Revenge, a person of the drama, in the following words:

> Awake! Revenge, if love, as love hath had,
> Have yet the power or prevalence in hell:
> Hieronimo with Lorezo is joined in league,
> And intercepts our passage to revenge:
> Awake! Revenge, or we are woe-begone.*

It is equally probable that the subject of Jonson's allusion was the ghost of Dyonisius, in the tragedy of Hero and Leander; the undisguised subject of his ridicule in Bartholomew fair.†

The declaration of Dr. Farmer, that "Tom Nash, in the preface to Greene's Arcadia,‡ hath a lash at some vaine-glorious tragedians, and

---

* Reed's old plays, 8vo. vol. iii. page 213. 1780.

† Whalley's Ben Jonson, 8vo. vol. ii. p. 392, et seq. 1756.

‡ In the above quotation from Farmer's Essay on the learning of Shakspeare, Steevens has substituted Greene for Nash; not aware, perhaps, that the letter, which is addressed to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, was written by the latter and prefixed to Greene's Menaphon, 1589, which, in the edition of 1634, is called Arcadia.

Robert Greene was presented to the vicarage of Tollesbury, in Essex, the 19th June, 1584, which he resigned the following year.

very plainly at Shakspeare in particular," is much of the same value with Mr. Malone's reference above. Nash's letter alludes to Kydd's old play of Hamlet, and was published in 1589, quarto, some years before Shakspeare appeared as a writer for the stage.

The *prologue* to Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour," which, because it was not prefixed to the printed copy of that comedy in 1601, Mr. Malone concludes was written subsequent to that period, is said to contain several malignant attacks on the favourite bard. It has been observed, that Jonson is said to have been introduced to the stage by Shakspeare, and Mr. Malone presumes that "Every Man in his Humour" was the very play, which was brought on the stage by the good offices of the latter. "Malignant and envious as Ben appears to have been," continues Mr. Malone, "he hardly would have ridiculed his benefactor at the very time he was so essentially obliged to him." In this opinion of the commentator I perfectly agree: but the following lines seem clearly to allude to Henry the Fifth:

> He rather prays, you would be pleas'd to see
> One such, to-day, as other plays should be;
> *Where neither chorus wafts you o'er the seas,*
> Nor creaking throne comes down the boys to please,
> Nor nimble squib is seen to make afeared
> The gentlewomen, &c.

To convert this passage, or rather the line printed in italics, into "a clumsy sarcasm" on Shakspeare, Mr. Malone supposes that Ben concealed his hatred for a time, and that "some years afterwards his jealousy broke out, and vented itself in this prologue, which first appeared in the folio edition of Jonson's works, published in 1616."

If the practice has not greatly varied in the lapse of time, it will, I fancy, be found that the prologue is always written to introduce a play on its first representation; and if the subject of the drama is somewhat novel, to apologize or justify the author's deviation from the general custom. Why recourse should be had to the formality of a conciliatory address after a play had been represented some years with success, I leave to Mr. Malone to inform us. Jonson's design in this prologue was clearly to ridicule the tricks and stratagems, the phantasmagoria, and Sadler's-wells' antics, by which his contemporaries engaged the frequenters of the stage in that early age of theatrical representation, and to win them by ridicule from buffoonery, bombast, and empty machinery,

> To deeds, and language, such as men do use:
> And persons such as comedy would chuse
> When she would shew an image of the times;
> And sport with human follies, not with crimes:

—the legal and genuine purpose of dramatic representation, and such appears to have been Jonson's general object. For " the chorus," thus acutely converted into " a clumsy sarcasm" on the great bard, one might be tempted to suppose that Mr. Malone would have us conclude, that the introduction of it in Henry the Fifth is the only example of its adoption on the English stage; or why must Jonson's reprobation of the practice be construed into a sneer at Shakspeare? Why, but for the purpose of encouraging an opinion, founded on falsehood, and fostered by misrepresentation? The fact is, that Jonson, with all his fondness for the ancients, thought the chorus, borrowed from the Greek tragedies, an incumbrance, and openly reprobated it; as Shakspeare had before ridiculed the " dombe shewe" of his predecessors. But the chorus on the English stage is coeval with the first tragedy, Gorbodue; was the common appendage of the drama during his life, as may be seen in many instances among the old plays edited by the late Isaac Reed; and, though declining, continued in use long after Shakspeare had made his exit from the scene of life. That it was displeasing, Shakspeare was conscious, by his apologies for its introduction in the case of Henry the Fifth, and his omission of it on all other occasions. Heywood, also, who

has adopted it, in his "Fair Maid of the West," quarto, 1651, seems to have been sensible of the absurdity, when he introduces a chorus saying,

> Our stage so lamely can express a sea,
> That we are forc'd by chorus to discourse
> What should have been in action.

What, then, is there in the line quoted by Mr. Malone, that is not applicable to fifty others as well as Shakspeare? and what is there to justify his charges of "clumsy sarcasm, and malevolent reflection?"

> Discite justitiam moniti, et non spernere verum.

But other passages in the prologue to "Every Man in his Humour" have given offence; indeed the whole of this unfortunate production appears to have put every commentator out of his humour. To give a clear idea of the writer's purpose, it will be better to transcribe a few of the lines.

> Though need make many poets, and some such
> As art or nature have not mended much,
> Yet ours for want hath not so lov'd the stage
> As he dare serve th' ill customs of the age,
> Or purchase your delight at such a rate
> As for it he himself must justly hate.
> To make a child now swaddled to proceed
> Man, and then shoot up, in one beard and weed,
> Past threescore years; or with three rusty swords,
> And help of some few foot and half-foot words,
> Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars,
> And in the tyring-house bring wounds to scars, &c.

The same eagerness of research for finding attacks on Shakspeare, exhibited in preceding examples, has been employed to discover a sneer at him in this passage of the foregoing extract:

> To make a child now swaddled to proceed
> Man, and then shoot up, in one beard and weed,
> Past threescore years.

This is considered "a palpable hit" at the beautiful drama, "The Winter's Tale:" than which inference nothing can be more unnecessary. Certainly in none of Shakspeare's plays are the unities of time and place more disregarded than in the present; but this neglect or contempt was not peculiar to the bard of Avon; similar and even greater licenses are found in Lilly's Endimion, in 1591, and Patient Grissel, performed as early as 1599. Nor was the practice confined to these; George Whetstones, in an epistle prefixed to his Promos and Cassandra, 1578, speaking of the absurdities and offences committed against the laws of the drama by various nations, says, "the Englishman in this quallitie is most vain, indiscreet, and out of order. He first grounds his work on impossibilities: then in three hours runnes he over the worlde: marryis, gets children, makes children men, men to conquer kingdomes, murder monsters, and bringeth goddes from heaven,

and fetcheth devills from hell, &c." And Sir Philip Sidney, in his "Defense of Poesie, 1589; when complaining of Gorbodue* as "faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions;" adds, "but if it be so in Gorbodue, how much more in all the rest? where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Africa of the other, and so many other under kingdoms, that the player, when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now you shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By-and-by, we hear news of a shipwreck in the same place; then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave; while, in the meantime, two armies flie in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then, what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?

"Now of time they are much more liberal: for ordinary it is, that two young princes fall in love; after many traverses she is got with child; delivered of a faire boy, he is lost, groweth a

---

* How comes it that Warton, in his "History of English Poetry," invariably writes this Gordobue?

man, falleth in love, and is ready to get another child; and all this in two hours space; which, how absurd it is in sense, even sense may imagine."

These extracts, while they are irresistible proofs of the generality of Jonson's satire on the present case, may suggest to the calumniators of Ben the probability of other passages being equally so; and his "taxing may like a wild-goose fly, unclaimed of any man."

This unfortunate prologue still haunts us!—Mr. Chalmers charges Ben with "a peculiar repugnance to every thing which was properly popular," because he had complained "that needy poets, not bettered much by art or nature,"

> With three rusty swords
> And help of some few foot and half-foot words,
> Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars,
> And in the tyring-house brought wounds to scars.

Mr. Chalmers is, indeed, a great critic! and but that, as Sir Toby well observes, "it is not for gravity to play at cherry-pit with Satan," I might observe to him, that the "propriety of the popularity" of these historical dramas has been questioned by judges to whose decisions some respect is thought due. Sir Philip Sidney exclaims, "Do not poets know, that a tragedy is bound to the laws of poesie, and not of history?" And, as to the representation of the long

fights of York and Lancaster, the same writer speaks in terms of poignant ridicule of "two armies flying in, represented with four swords and bucklers (Ben says *three*); and then, what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?" Shakspeare, himself, says Dr. Samuel Johnson, from one of the lines in the chorus to Henry the Fifth, was fully sensible of the absurdity of showing battle on the theatre, which, indeed, is never done, but tragedy becomes farce. Nothing can be represented to the eye, but by something like it, and, *within a wooden O*, nothing very like a battle can be exhibited.

Nash had observed, some years before Jonson wrote, that the subjects of plays were for the most part taken out of the English chronicles,* and it was to the abuse, joined with the inartificial conduct and bombast phraseology of the dialogue, that Jonson levelled his satire, rather than to the use of historical subjects altogether. The multitude of historical dramas, (if Nash's assertion is

---

* Mr. Chalmers, who is a corrector of commas and letters in the writings of others, has made some of the same ingenious alterations in the quotation from Nash ("Supplemental Apology," page 290) as are found in his "Caledonia." According to the observations of the Critical Reviewers, Mr. Chalmers has, in the compass of two lines, substituted "all," instead of "for the most part;" and "reviewed," for "revived." See *Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Diuell*, 4to. 1592.—Sign. H.

to be credited,) which must have perished, prove how worthless and miserable they were, and justify the satire of Ben to the very letter.

I will not "state this further," even to convince Mr. Chalmers. To use the words of Sir Philip Sidney once more, "it needs no farther to be enlarged; the dullest wit may conceive it." But who does not envy the disciples of such penetrating commentators as Messrs. Chalmers and Malone!— μαχαριος αυτος, μαλλον δε μακαριτας ειναι φημι, ΤΟΙΑΥΤΑΣ ΔΕΙΞΕΙΣ των διδασκαλων ποιεμενων.*

The beauties of "The Tempest," according to Mr. Steevens,† could not secure it from the criticisms of Ben Jonson, "whose malignity," he adds, "seems to have been more than equal to his wit." The passage, which caused the offence, is thus given by the critic from the induction to Bartholomew fair, and part of it is supposed also to ridicule "The Winter's Tale."—"If there be never a *servant-monster* in the fair, who can help it," he says, "nor a nest of *antiques?* He is loath to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget *Tales*, *Tempests*, and such like drolleries."

Whether the typographical assistance of *italics* and capitals, thus liberally afforded to aid the appearance of a gird at Shakspeare, be founded in candour and justice, may be fairly doubted:

---

* Athenæus Casaub. fol. 113.

† Shakspeare, vol. iv. p. 2.

and whether giving half a passage and suppressing the context be honest or honourable, is less than doubtful:* it is, however, of a piece with the general conduct of the commentators in supporting their opinions. In aid of Steevens's charge, Mr. Malone says, that "in the induction to Bartholomew fair, Jonson has endeavoured to depreciate the Tempest by calling it *a foolery*.†—

> Is it so nominated in the bond?
> I cannot find it:—'tis not in the bond.—

With the resolution, on the part of the accusers, thus to leave no artifice, nor even falsehood, unemployed against their foe, it is not to be wondered that Ben is believed, by those who confide in the charges of the commentators, to have been a compound of ingratitude, envy,

---

* "If it be plainly seen in the nature of a transaction," says Chief Baron Gilbert, "that there is some more evidence that doth not appear, the very not producing it is a presumption that it would have detected something more than appears already." *Law of Evidence.*—Such will be found the case of Jonson.

I have traced other garbling of passages by Steevens for the purpose of proving a point. In a note on Hamlet, he has cited a passage in "Shirley's Chances," to show that *jigs* were sometimes ludicrous dialogues, not dances: and, by dividing the context, has obtained his purpose; whereas in the two following lines Shirley expressly calls his *jigs, footing-dances.* See *The Chances of Love in a Maze,* 4to. 1632.

† Shakspeare, vol. ii. page 366.

and malignity. It happens in this, as it frequently happens in cases where men judge of others from the passions influencing their own minds under similar circumstances; they judge unwisely. Envy and jealousy are the base and grovelling passions of low and little minds, not the concomitants of conscious merit, and transcendant genius: they may inhabit the breasts of critics and commentators, but have no place among the Shakspeares and the Jonsons.

——————— Ces basses jalousies,
Des vulgaires ésprits malignes phrénesies:
Un sublime ecrivain n'en peut etre infecté:
C'est un vice qui suit la médiocrité.

To form a correct opinion of the probability of Jonson's intent to ridicule "The Tempest" and "The Winter's Tale," it will be necessary to take into view the design of the author in the composition of his comedy, and to carry our minds back to the period when it was composed. Ben was professedly a representer of men and manners;* and to a poet possessing a strong vein of original humour, the amusements

* Si foret in terris, rideret Democritus, seu
Diversum confusa genus panthera camelo,
Sive elephas albus vulgi converteret ora:
Spectaret populum ludis attentius ipsis.
Hor. ep. i. lib. 2.

of Bartholomew fair promised a fertile subject for the display of this peculiar talent.

Part of the amusements of this carnival in the time of Jonson consisted of a spurious sort of theatrical representation, under the title of motions or puppet-plays, of which the most celebrated possessors were, it should seem, Pod and Cokely. These exhibitions, which consisted of vulgar dialogues, known by the name of Enterludes, assisted by mummery and pantomimic gesture, with jigs and dances, were the delight of the vulgar; and, from their extreme popularity, were thought worthy of Jonson's satire. To give a stimulus to the curiosity of the ignorant, tutored animals lent their assistance; and monsters, natural or artificial, composed a medley irresistibly attractive. The more barbarous and extravagant the nature of these scenic representations were, by so much the more delightful would they be to their unlettered spectators: it is not therefore to be wondered, that lions roaring, or whales spouting, on the stage, composed the majority of their subjects, and were the prominent objects of their admiration and delight.*

---

* Steevens observes, in a note on "The Tempest," that "it was very common to exhibit fishes on the stage." In Jasper Mayne's "City Match," 1638, Roseclap enters hanging out the picture of a strange fish: and observes

These were the objects of Jonson's censure, not of his imitation. "It is covenanted and agreed," he says, in the induction to his Bartholomew fair, "between the spectators and hearers on the one side, and the author on the other, that how great soever the expectation be, no person here is to expect more than he knows, or better ware than a fair will afford; neither to look back to the sword and buckler age of Smithfield, but content himself with the present. Instead of a little Davy to take toll of the bawds, the author doth promise a strutting horse-courser, with a leer drunkard, two or three to attend him, in as good equipage as you would wish. And then, for Kind-heart the tooth-drawer, a fine oily pig-woman, with her tapster to bid you welcome; and a consort of roarers for musick. A wise justice-of-peace meditant, instead of a juggler with an ape; a civil cut-purse searchant; a sweet singer of new ballads allurant; and as fresh an hypocrite as ever was broached rampant. If there be never a servant-monster in the

---

This is the fifth fish
That he hath shown thus:

speaking of Quartfield.

In the same comedy, Mrs. Holland, the sempstress, is eager to know "when will the fish begin?" To which Bright replies, "Heart! she makes him a puppet-play."

Old Plays, ver. 9, 320. 8vo. 1780.

fair, who can help it, he says, nor a nest of antiques? He is loth to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget Tales, Tempests, and such like drolleries, to mix his head with other men's heels; let the concupiscence of jigs and dances reign as strong as it will amongst you; yet if the puppets will please any body, they shall be entreated to come in."

Stripped of italics and capitals, and accompanied with its context, this passage contains nothing offensive towards Shakspeare, and the objects of the author's satire* are sufficiently in-

---

* Notwithstanding Jonson himself boasts of his freedom from individual censure, the critics, either through perverseness, or ignorance of the poet's character, contend that his satire is perpetually personal. In the dedication of *The Fox* (1605) to the two Universities, he boldly asks, "Where have I been particular? Where personal? except to a mimick, cheater, bawd, buffon, creatures (for their insolencies) worthy to be taxed?"

The conscious integrity, on which this challenge was founded, has been confirmed by Cartwright in these manly lines:

> Thy models yet are not so framed that we
> May call them libels and not imagery;
> No name, on any basis; 'tis thy skill
> To strike the vice, but spare the person still:
> As he, who, when he saw the serpent wreathed
> About his sleeping son, and, as he breathed,
> Drink in his soul, did so the shot contrive
> To kill the beast, but keep the child alive:

telligible. But lest any doubt should exist as to the objects of his ridicule, he has openly named the exhibitions at which his shafts were directed, in the fifth act of his comedy.

"O the motions that I, Lanthorn Leatherhead, have given light to in my time, since my master Pod died! Jerusalem was a stately thing, and so was *Nenivch*, and the city of Norwich, and Sodom and Gomorrah; with the rising of the prentices, and pulling down the bawdy-houses there upon Shrove Tuesday; but the gun-powder-plot, there was a get-penny! I presented that to an eighteen or twenty-pence audience, nine times in an afternoon."

These excrescences of the histrionic art are not more the object of Jonson's than of Shakspeare's satire. The critic must be blind indeed, who does not discover in Bottom, the weaver, a poignant ridicule of the "enactors" of these drolls, and in the preposterous devices of Pyramus and Thisbe; talking through the chink, and kissing through the cranny; with the speaking-

---

So dost thou aim thy darts, which, even when
They kill the poisons, do but wake the men.

Jonsonus Virbius. 4to. 1638.

Against this belt Mr. Chalmers may throw his javelin, and share the fate of Iphidamas—ΜΟΛΙΒΟΣ ὡς, στρατὸν αἰχμη.—Against such authority, Mr. Malone, "*heavy lightness, serious vanity!*" cannot prevail.

lion and moonshine; the most exquisite burlesque of these scenic absurdities. In chastising these follies, Jonson has apparently seized on the most popular specimen, and which would probably present all the features of the offensive passage in the induction to Bartholomew fair. "Of all the sights that ever were in London since I was married," says the citizen's wife in 'The Knight of the Burning Pestle,'* "methinks the child that was so fair grown about the members was the prettiest; that and the hermaphrodite."

"Nay, by your leave, Nell," replies the citizen, "Ninive was better."

Wife. "Ninive? O, that was the story of Jonah and the Whale, was it not, George?"

"Yes, lamb;" answers the husband.

It is scarcely necessary to suggest that the *Tale* of Jonah's voyage to Niniveh would be naturally abundant in *tempests, monsters, and such like drolleries.* Nor were these exhibitions confined to the booths of Bartholomew fair; the story of Harry Goldingham;† appearing

* Beaumont and Fletcher's Works, vol. vi. p. 473. 1778.

† "There was a spectacle presented to Queen Elizabeth upon the water; and, among others, Harry Goldingham was to represent Arion upon the dolphin's back; but finding his voice to be very hoarse and unpleasant, when he came to perform it, he tears off his disguise, and swears he was none of Arion,

upon a dolphin, in a masque presented before Elizabeth, and throwing off his disguise, swearing he was none of Arion, not he, but only honest Harry Goldingham; is an additional instance of the inartificial nature of the devises by which our forefathers were amused. Add to this, so great a favourite was the subject of Jonah, and so strict was the regard paid to the history of his voyage, that in "Greene and Lodge's Looking-glass for London and England," 'nature is made afraid in their play,' to use the words of Ben, by the appearance of the whale, and the monster is brought forward releasing Jonah from his durance by casting him on the stage. These examples of the extravagant nature of theatrical representation, in the early state of the drama, may be thought sufficient justification of Jonson's satire on general grounds: to those, however, who object that *sea-monsters* are not *servant-monsters*, Ben shall answer for himself: when in the passage already quoted from the induction, he says, "if there be no little Davy in the fair to take toll of the bawds; no tooth-drawer; no cut-purse; no bal-

---

not he, but even honest Harry Goldingham; which blunt discovery pleased the Queen better than if it had gone through in the right way: yet he could order his voice to an instrument exceeding well." *Mery Passages and Jeastes. Harl. MS.* 6395. *Shakspeare*, 4—394.

lad-singer, allurant; no hypocrite, rampant; *nor a servant-monster;* he is merely recapitulating the objections he had before supposed would be taken to their omission; and in the original passage he has explained his *servant-monster* in terms too clear to be misunderstood, and too express to admit of misconstruction. The stage-keeper is introduced complaining that the poet "has not hit the humours, he does not know 'em; he has not conversed with the Bartholomew birds, as they say; he has never a sword and buckler-man in his fair; nor a little Davy, to take toll of the bawds there, as in my time; nor a Kind-heart, if any body's tooth should chance to ake in his play; *nor a juggler with a well-educated ape, to come over the chain for a king of England, and back again for the prince, and sit still on his arse*" (saving your modesties) *for the pope and the king of Spain!* None of these fine sights." The "Welcome's familiar" of Bishop Corbet* has not yet been explained, or it would probably be found one of Jonson's servant-monsters.

It is worthy of remark, that Ben seems to have anticipated the discoveries of the sharp-

---

* Why doth not Welcome rather purchase her,
And bear about this rare familiar?

Corbet's Poems. 1807.

sighted critics in his own day, who would find something short of treason in the characters of his drama; and the text is so palpable, that one can be at no loss to discover a commentary among "the politic picklocks of the scene" in our own. "It is finally agreed by the aforesaid hearers and spectators, that they neither in themselves conceal, nor suffer by them to be concealed, any state decipherer or politic picklock of the scene, so solemnly ridiculous as to search out who was meant by the ginger-bread woman; who, by the hobby-horse man; who, by the costar-monger; who, by their wares; and so of the rest. But that such person or persons, so found, be left discovered to the mercy of the author, as a forfeiture to the stage, and your laughter aforesaid."

To the sources already described, we might, perhaps, without danger of correction, refer *the nest of antiques*, in which the commentators suppose the satyrs in "The Winter's Tale" are sneered at. But when it is remembered, that in Lanthorn Leatherhead, the motion-master, Jonson intended to satirize Inigo Jones, the great machinist of the masques and pageants of that period, I cannot forbear thinking that Ben, by a natural association, has assimilated the drolls and mummeries of Bartholomew fair, with the

more romantic and artificial subjects of Jones's labours.

If Shakspeare had been the object of the commentators' research instead of Jonson, it is inconceivable what a profusion of learning and industry would have been lavished on the reader, in producing proof of the frequency of such exhibitions. Indeed there was no city procession, no nuptial masque or May-day pageant, but exhibited groupes of these fantastic masqueraders; even the Christmas gambols of the Lord of Misrule were composed of *servant-monsters, nests of antiques, and such like drolleries.* This mock-monarch "chooseth forth," says Stubbs,* "twenty, forty, threescore, or an hundred lustie guttes, like to himself, to wait upon his lordly majestie, and to guard his noble person. These he investeth in various liveries of green, yellow, or such like colours. This done, they tie about either legge twentie or fortie belles, with riche handkerchiefs in their hands, and sometimes laide acrosse over their shoulders, and neckes, borrowed, for the most part, of their pretie mopsies and loving Bessies. Thus all things set in order, they have their *hobby-horses, their dragons, and other antiques,* together with

* Stubbs's "Anatomie of Abuses." 1595.

their baudie pipers, and *thundring drummers*,* to strike up the devil's dance with-all."

Such is the sanctimonious anatomist's account of the entertainments of the vulgar; but these grotesque Robin-Goodfellows were not confined to their circle, they formed part of the royal entertainment at Oxford, in 1605. "The comedy began between nine and ten, and ended at one; the name of it was Albas, whereof, says an eye-witness,† I never saw reason. In the acting thereof, *they brought in five or six men nearly naked, which were much disliked by the queen and ladies*, and also many rusticale songs and dances, which made it very tedious."

At these, as palpably as at Shakspeare, the *nest of antiques* in Jonson might be aimed. If, however, any singular reference must be made, where most probably only the general practice

---

* Mr. Malone thinks Ben meant to sneer at "The Tempest," (which he supposes was written in 1612,) in the prologue to "Every Man in his Humour:

——————— nor *tempestuous drum*
Rumble to tell you when the *storm* will come.

"Every Man in his Humour," it is certain, was written in 1598; to admit that the prologue was composed at the same time, would be overturning some of the commentators' most ingenious theories.

† Leyland's "Collectanea," vol. ii. p. 637. 8vo. 1774.

was in view, it will more rationally allude to a recent than a distant example; to something passing in immediate review, than to "The Winter's Tale;" produced, according to Mr. Malone, in 1604; according to Mr. Chalmers' chronology, as early as 1601. Upon the marriage of the princess Elizabeth with the elector-palatine of the Rhine, in 1612-13, the gentlemen of the inns of court presented a masque, more splendid than any preceding, the expenses of which, according to Dugdale,* amounted to one thousand and eighty-six pounds eight shillings and eleven pence; the poetry of which was composed by Chapman, and the machinery by Inigo Jones. This masque, which was printed the year following, I have not seen; but the nature and personages of the show are sufficiently intelligible in the following account, by the continuator of Stowe: "First rode fiftie choyce gentlemen richly attyred, and as gallantly mounted, with every one his footman. These rode very stately like a vauntgard. Next after with fit distance, *marched an antique, or mock masque of baboons, attired like fantastique travaillers, in very strange and confused manner, ryding upon asses, or dwarf jades, using all apeish and mocking tricks to the people, moving much*

* Origines Juridiciales, page 346, folio. 1671.

laughter as they past, with torches on either side to shew their state to be as ridiculous as the rest was noble."* In Beaumont's masque, presented on the same occasion, a he-baboon, and a she-baboon, are ushered in by a he-fool and a she-fool;† and of such extravagant and heterogeneous materials were the stage exhibitions of Jonson's age compounded. With so many examples before us, surely it is not necessary to illustrate the "servant-monsters, antiques, and such like drolleries" of Ben, by a reference to Shakspeare; and, least of all, for the purpose of making invidious deductions. The erroneous inferences, which Mr. Malone confesses to have drawn respecting other plays, should have taught that commentator the uncertainty of conclusions derived from such ambiguous sources. "You have *lurched* your friends of the better half *of the garland*," Mr. Malone considered a sneer at Cominius's panegyrick on Coriolanus—

He *lurch'd* all swords *of the garland*—

till he found the phrase in Nash: Steevens so misapplied a passage in "The Alchemist:" but Mitis, in Jonson's "Every Man out of his Hu-

---

* Stowe's Annales, by Howes, page 1006, folio. 1631.

† Beaumont and Fletcher's Works, vol. x. page 499. edit. 8vo. 1778.

mour," minutely ridicules the conduct of Shakspeare's "Twelfth Night," thus:—"the argument of his comedy might have been of some other nature, as of a duke to be in love with a countess, and that countess to be in love with the duke's son, and the son to love the lady's waiting-maid; some such cross wooing, with a clown to their serving-man; better to be thus near, and familiarly allied to the time."*—So striking an outline of Shakspeare's plot could not escape the commentators—unfortunately for them, however, the lampoon preceded the subject ridiculed fourteen or fifteen years!

A few supplementary "sneers" are introduced without much confidence by Mr. Malone in a note;† but they are too futile for formal examination:—"Chaff and bran, chaff and bran, Cressida!—porridge after meat!"

Rejecting all personal applications of general satire, and standing upon the open ground of undisguised and liberal criticism, I may be permitted to inquire whether the reproof of Jonson is properly founded, and whether the objects at which his shafts were levelled were fair subjects for ridicule and literary chastisement. If a "juggler, with well educated apes," hobby-horses,

---

* Whalley's Ben Jonson, vol. i. page 218. 8vo. 1756.

† Shakspeare, vol. ii. page 294.

puppets, whales, and lions, usurp the scene of rational theatric representation, and Jonson smack the lash of satire to drive them from the stage, must his interference needs proceed from envy? If land-monsters and sea-monsters,

> ———Men fishes
> Or ocean Centaurs, begot between a Siren
> And a he-stock-fish,*

be exhibited in dialogue on the boards, and Shakspeare sanction the practice by his great example, must his adoption sanctify the absurdity, and every impugner of the custom be accused of envy? When Shakspeare laughed to scorn the hyperbolical grief of Jeronimo, and the bombast of Tamburlane, who but a fool would accuse him of jealousy? and yet Kydd and Marlowe could boast, in the dawning of Shakspeare's fame, unrivalled reputation. Those, who deny to Ben, wit, genius, and taste, will not object to him want of learning, art, and judgment; these are attainments indispensable to a critic; why then is Jonson only to be denied the exercise of his acknowledged qualifications—

> Quid vetat et nosmet Lucili scripta legentes
> Quærere?

---

* Jasper Mayne's "City Match." 1638.

After manifesting some uneasiness at the superior sagacity of the commentators, in discovering instances of Ben's enmity, Mr. Chalmers is resolved to "out-Herod Herod," and finds that Jonson's fifty-sixth epigram, "on Poet-Ape," was intended as a lampoon on Shakspeare. Thus:—

Poor *Poet-Ape*, that *would be thought our chief*,
Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,
From brokage is become so bold a thief,
As we, the robb'd, leave rage, and pity it.
At first, he made low shifts, would pick, and glean;
By the reversion of old plays, now grown
Into a *little wealth*, and credit in the scene,
He takes up all, makes each man's wit his own.
And, told of this, he slights it. Tut! such crimes
The sluggish gaping auditor devours;
He marks not whose 'twas first; and after-times
May judge it to be his, as well as ours.
Fool, as if half-eyes will not know a fleece
From locks of wool, or shreds from the whole piece.

With much self-complacency, Mr. Chalmers observes on these verses, "the eye must be blind indeed, if it do not see, that Shakspeare was the Poet-Ape of Ben Jonson."

If Mr. Chalmers really does perceive the resemblance, he must, I think,

Have eyes, where other folks are blind,
As pigs are said to see the wind.

I have marked the passages according to the distinction used by the apologist, and we shall see how he makes the application. Where the modest Shakspeare expressed a wish to "*be thought our chief*," he has not cared to show. But, "*in order to decide what we ought to believe, in these matters, as *things certain*, we must look back upon the early management of our theatres. The papers of Henslowe, the well-known manager of so many companies, throw many flashes of light on this obscure subject. It is apparent, from these manuscripts, that the poets of the days of Elizabeth, and James, supplied the stage with dramas, more for profit than reputation. If we except Ben Jonson, perhaps, there were none of the dramatists, including Shakspeare, specifically, who cared for literary reputation. The managers of the theatres who paid their money for plays, considered these plays as so much their own, that they could either curtail them, or make *addycions* to them: in fact, they often paid one set of poets, to alter the dramas of another set, without considering the literary reputation of the original author."†

That none of the dramatists, excepting Jonson, cared for literary reputation, is an error

---

* Supplemental Apology, page 237, 8vo. 1799.

† Steevens's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 444—489.

abundantly proved by the multitude of plays with dedications by their authors: and the fact, stated by Mr. Chalmers, of their selling their works to the players, is a reason why all but the names of many are lost, more convincing than the alleged oscitancy of the poets.—But this is not the object of my present inquiry.

To the practice of curtailing and making additions to plays I accede, and from this very circumstance I infer, that the poet-ape of Jonson was any body but Shakspeare. Jonson could not attack Shakspeare as wishing "to be his chief," before the former was introduced to the stage; and the MS. to which Mr. Chalmers refers begins in 1597. Among the alterers and repairers of decayed dramas, we find the names of Dekker, Drayton, Chettle, Anthony Munday, Heywood, and a long et cætera of poets, the memorials of whose lives have, perhaps, undeservedly perished;* but among these entries not once does the name of "our beloved Shakspeare" occur. That Shakspeare wrote on subjects already dramatized by inferior authors, is not to

---

* Vixêre fortes ante Agamemnona
Multi: sed omnes illacrymabiles
Urgentur ignotique longâ
Nocte, carent quia vate sacro.

Hor. Od. 9, lib. iv.

be denied; but that he lived "by the brokage of others' wit," or that he altered plays for his theatre, is not proved in a solitary instance; that he *ever* did, is barely possible; but that he did not, after Jonson became a retainer to the stage, seems proved by the absence of his name in the MS. of Henslowe. It cannot be too much to require of Mr. Chalmers, who has given us two sisterly octavos crying proof! proof!* something approaching to evidence of the truth of his assertions.

That the works of Shakspeare are "e'en the frippery of wit," Mr. Chalmers proves in his "Apology," by citing Marston's description of a fop† in his day; who (like many fops of our own) being play-mad, spoke of nothing but plays and

---

* The horse-leech hath two daughters crying give, give.
Proverbs, xxx. 15.

† Luscus, what's play'd to-day? fayth now I know
I set my lips abroach, from whence doth flow
Nought but pure Juliet and Romeo.
Say; who acts best? Drusus or Roscio?
Now I have him, that ne're of ought did speake,
But when of players he did treate.
H'ath made a common-place-book out of plays,
And speakes in print, at least, whate're he saye
Is warranted by certain plaudities.
If e're you heard him courting Lesbia's eyes;
Say (courteous sir), speakes he not movingly
From out some new pathetique tragedie?

players, whose conversation was of the newest and most popular tragedy, from which he courted his Lesbia most pathetically, and from which he borrowed all his jests and raillery. In this coxcomb of antiquity Mr. Chalmers recognises the features of Shakspeare, and boasts of his discovery in the following terms: "We now perceive, that Shakspeare's table-talk turned chiefly on his profession; that he ne'er of ought did speak but when of playes or players he did treate. We at length perceive, that Shakspeare

---

He writes, he railes, he jests, he courts, what not;
And all from out his huge long scraped stock
Of well-penn'd plays.

Marston's Sat. 10. 1599.

In the 34th of Elizabeth's reign, John Marston was chosen reader of the Inner Temple; and among the Oxford verses on the death of that princess, there is a copy signed John Marston *ex æde Christi.* O. G.

"It is a fact, which cannot be disputed, that Marston was, in 1599, very intimately connected with Ben Jonson, who was then at variance with Shakspeare: Marston and Jonson afterwards quarrelled; as such poets could not long be friends: Marston again parodied Shakspeare in his "What you Wish," 1607, wherein he says; "Look yee, I speak play scrapes."—Supplemental Apology, 231, note i.

Here are five positions in the course of as many lines, some of which are utterly erroneous, and not one of which can Mr. Chalmers prove; unless he has some secret evidence, not yet before the public. I am aware of the notice of Marston in Drummond's conversation with Jonson.

had discernment enough to know the value of a common-place-book to a professed writer: he made a common-place-book out of plays: he writes, he rails, he jests, he courts, what not; and all from out his huge long-scraped stock of well-penn'd plays. This is such a delineation of our dramatist as his admirers have never seen before."—No; I'll be sworn! and, as Costard says, "an I had but a penny in the world, thou shouldst have it to buy gingerbread," for the discovery. No one before Mr. Chalmers, I am well persuaded, ever contemplated the great poet, "of imagination all compact," as the Lazarus of literature; like his own moth living on the alms-basket of words, and, at a great feast of plays, as stealing the scraps: but since this discovery has been made, I am confident that the author of "The Rambler" has satirized Shakspeare under the wit Papilius, subsisting a week upon an expression, of which he, who dropped it, did not know the value.—"*Go by, Jeronimo.*" —If this be the consequence of seeking the *ancient mother;* if the study of those, who wrote "*i' th' olden time,*" thus brighten the wit, inform the mind, and improve the judgment, let us e'en join chorus with Timotheus Milesius—

Ουκ αειδω τα παλαια,
Καινα γαρ ἀμα κρειττω—
Απιλω Μουσα παλαια.

For this degradation of Shakspeare, Mr. Chalmers received the merited chastisement of the "British Critic;"* but in the "Supplemental Apology" he returns to the charge, and thinks he proves the fact of Shakspeare's common-place collections in the following quotation:

"I will repeat what I have already said, and prove what is plainly demonstrable; viz. that Shakspeare was a diligent reader, and *copious collector.* The contemporary of Shakspeare, Webster,† who knew him perfectly, says, in the preface to the "White Devil," what the commentators, and critics, would do well to profit by: *Detraction is the sworn friend to ignorance.*‡ For mine own part, I have ever truly cherished my good opinion of other men's worthy labours, especially of that free and heightened style of Master Chapman: the laboured and understanding works of Master Jonson: the no less worthy composures of the both worthily excellent Master Beaumont, and Master Fletcher: and, lastly,

---

* Vol. ix. page 512. 1797.

† To the reader of his "Vittoria Corombona," 4to. 1612, Webster obtained his freedom of the Merchant Taylors' Company, by servitude to Henry Clinkard, the 17th Nov. 1617, as I am informed by G. V. Neunburg, Esq. the present master of that company. O. G.

‡ We may say to Mr. Chalmers—Medice, cura teipsum!

(without wrong last to be named,) the right happie and *copious industrie* of M. Shakspeare, M. Dekker, and M. Heywood; wishing what I write may be read by their light."

Such is Webster's declaration; and if Mr. Chalmers infers Shakspeare's use of a common-place-book from this passage, he deceives nobody but himself: the meaning of Webster's *copious industrie* is sufficiently explained by the company in which he has placed Shakspeare; namely, with Dekker and Heywood. The former had before 1612, according to the apologist's own arrangement, produced thirty-one dramas; Dekker, a still greater number, jointly and separately, including those entered in Henslowe's MSS.; Heywood, or as Mr. Chalmers emphatically calls him, "much-writing Heywood," perhaps, even more:* can Mr. Chalmers produce an example of contemporaneous *industry* equally *copious?*—It is pleasant to hear Mr. Chalmers talk of "such scribblers as Dekker and Heywood!" Assuming the fact of Shakspeare's being a "copious collector of common-

* Thomas Heywood was a writer for the stage as early as 1596; and, in an address to the reader, prefixed to "The English Traveller," 4to. 1633, he says he had written, either in part or the whole, no less than two hundred and twenty dramatic pieces.

place scraps," the apologist confidently demands, "Now, what dramatic poet, in that age, grew to a little wealth and credit in the scene, except Shakspeare?" Not construing *wealth and credit in the scene* to mean literally *money*, I think it hardly necessary to point out to Mr. Chalmers, amidst the great constellation of wits that adorned the age in which Shakspeare flourished, and among which he shone the brightest, an instance of a poet gaining credit in the scene. If Mr. Chalmers's memory will not serve him on this occasion, why, "God comfort his capacity, I say," with goodman Dull. The open and avowed quarrel of Jonson with Dekker might have suggested the probability of its being levelled at him, and have incited inquiry into the resemblance from internal evidence; but the truth is, Mr. Chalmers had not read "The Poetaster" of Ben, or he would have found in the prologue to that satire, that Dekker was the *poet-ape* of Jonson;* and a perusal of the drama would have confirmed the fact past question. The epigram in question seems to have irritated Crispinus

---

* Are there no players here? *no poet-apes,*
That come with basilisk's eyes, whose forked tongues
Are steeped in venom, as their hearts in gall?

Prologue to Jonson's Poetaster.

not a little: numberless allusions to epigrams, made by Jonson on Dekker, occur in the Satiromastix of the latter, and he appears to have smarted severely under the lash. To put that on "poet-ape" completely out of doubt, as far as concerns Shakspeare, it is only necessary, once for all, to observe, that so severely was Dekker stung by this very epigram, that he could not conceal the pain which it inflicted; and the last speech of Crispinus in Satiromastix thus manifests the poet's throes from these unfortunate lines:

> That fearful wreath, this honour is your due,
> *All poets shall be poet-apes but you.*

As in all his other charges against Ben, Mr. Chalmers is merely an echo of preceding commentators, and as he evidently made a strenuous effort at originality on the present occasion, it is not without emotions of pity that I rescue the old bard from the well-intended blow of "*the leaden mace.*"

When Dekker published his "Satiromastix," Jonson was new to the stage, and had few claims to the applause of the theatre: when he had produced his "Volpone," "The Silent Woman," and, above all, "The Alchemist," perhaps Dekker would not have thought him an object for scorn to point his finger at. These, with his

beautiful masques, some of his smaller poems, and even the scintillations sparkling through "Cynthia's Revels," "Every Man in his Humour," and "Every Man out of his Humour," might have demanded a smile of favour, or at least have conciliated the repulsive disposition of the *apologist*:—but Mr. Chalmers has no sympathy with "humorous poets"—τα ὑπερ ἡμας, ουδεν προς ἡμας.

My task draws to a close; and the cause is before a competent tribunal.—Jonson has been accused of heavy crimes upon fictitious and imaginary foundations. How hard it is to prove a negative need not be shown: but the testimony in his favour does not rest here: we have incontrovertible evidences of their friendly attachment; to which should be added the uncommon zeal, with which Jonson cherished the literary reliques of his friend.—We have seen that he composed an elegy on his death; that he inscribed his resemblance with his praise; and Mr. Malone thinks that he wrote the preface to the first collection of his works. Nor did time diminish Jonson's regard, or efface the remembrance of his companion from his mind. Many years after Shakspeare's death, Ben with warmth exclaimed, "I loved the man, and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as

any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasie, brave notions, and gentle expressions; wherein he flowed with that facility, that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped: *sufflaminandus erat,* as Augustus said of Harterius."

One circumstance in the history of Jonson's life is too illustrative of his friendly ardour to be omitted here. When in his fifty-seventh year, he undertook a journey on foot into Scotland, for the express purpose of visiting the poet of Hawthornden. Ben appears to have dwelt with fond remembrance on the occurrences of this excursion, and had formed them into a narrative, which unfortunately perished by fire; I say unfortunately; for, had it been preserved, we could then have contrasted the rough and manly generosity of Ben towards Drummond with the posthumous libel with which that testy sonneteer has disgraced himself and traduced the memory of his friend. In their conversations Drummond drew from the blunt and unreserved mind of Ben his censure of the poets his contemporaries; which he gave with candour, and which are for the most part just; not suspecting that Drummond (" the acute and amiable Drummond," as Mr. Chalmers calls him, who was any thing but acute, and here any thing

but amiable*), was treasuring these overflowings of the poet's mind for the unworthy purpose of slandering the memory of Ben when he was numbered with the dead:—to his own eternal shame, and the reproach of hospitality.

These conversations are found in a worthless edition of Drummond's works, printed at Edinburgh, in folio, in 1711; and if the relation is genuine, it will leave an indelible stamp of disgrace on the reputation of the recorder. Those who remember the remarks of Dr. Johnson on the publication of the posthumous works of the demagogue Lord Bolingbroke, by Mallett, will not fail to apply them on the present occasion.

I have now little to add. If the memory of men, honourable in their generation, deserve our respect and reverence; if the writings of poets, who have bequeathed their works as legacies to posterity, have any claim upon our re-

---

* A contemporary, who knew Drummond a little better than Mr. Chalmers, calls him "Testy Drummond;" in a defense of poesie, appended to "The most pleasante Historie of Albino and Bellama," 8vo. 1639.

Mr. Chalmers seems frequently to speak of Jonson, Drummond, and others, to persuade us that he "knows something of them;" as he published his "Apology" to convince the late George Steevens that he "knew something about Shakspeare."

gard; if truth, whoever and whatever the subject, be worth attaining; the present pages may be endured. For these purposes they are written; and it is hoped, with diffidence, that by them truth will be elicited. No example can be instanced in literary history of a poet of Jonson's extraordinary merit so unworthily and ungratefully treated. An invidious position is asserted, without the slightest proof from historical testimony, and his writings are tortured and perverted to support the fallacious theory. Years have passed in this disgraceful warfare, and no lover of literature has hitherto stepped in, to refute the charges, and check the progress of malicious dulness. If I have undertaken the cause of the poet, it has not been without a perfect conviction of my inability to do full justice to the task; nor should I have engaged in it, but from the most decided confidence in the justice of the cause. My motive has been, to rescue a venerable bard, who has many substantial claims upon our gratitude, from charges founded on error and fostered by misrepresentation. If Jonson is unfortunate in his advocate, I shall have my reward if this imperfect essay shall excite some abler pen to undertake the office. That there are ample means of defence, I am fully persuaded from the examples

adduced, the result of a few days' casual and interrupted study. It is not necessary for Jonson to perish, that Shakspeare may flourish; *his* fame is fixed on a foundation "as broad and general as the casing air;" and the commentator, or critic, injures the fame of the "gentle Shakspeare," who would raise him a phœnix from the ashes of another.

FINIS.

Printed by J. Moyes, 34, Shoe Lane, Fleet Street.