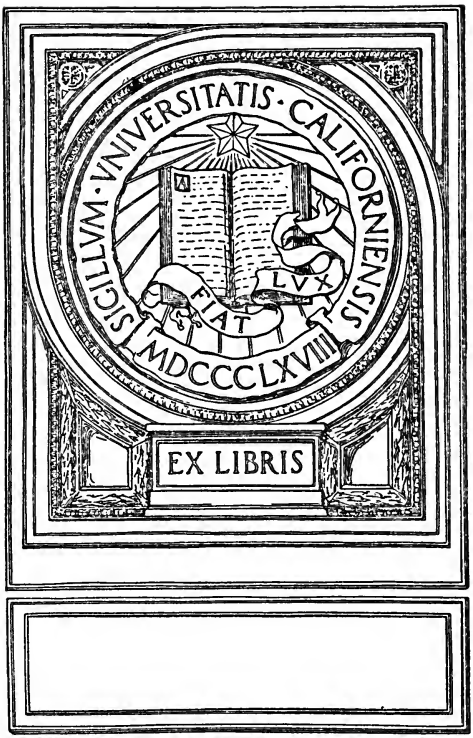
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THE
READING OF SHAKESPEARE

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THE READING OF SHAKESPEARE

ALMOST every English-speaking man with literary tastes has had, at some time in his life, a bout with Shakespeare, since this dramatist represents the highest object of his literary curiosity, and it may also be affirmed that one who possesses any virility of mind is made stronger by the study of Shakespeare; our strenuous chief magistrate, it is said, is fond of Shakespeare, and reads him for refreshment while stretched before the fire in his Montana log cabin. The subject itself of Shakespeare aids us in our reading by its very magnitude.

Nature has produced three poets who stand like mountain peaks higher than the rest—Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare. Homer delineated the "throned gods" of Olympus, and gave expression to the splendid Hellenic race; Dante, leaving the

miserable strifes of Italian factions, tracked the soul's flight into spiritual realms, following the leadings of Celestial Love; while Shakespeare interpreted to us our common humanity, and was the poet of universal humanity; which of these three poets is to be considered the greatest, depends upon our nationality, trend of studies, and sympathetic tastes.

The following brief talk on Shakespeare makes no pretense to add anything new to such a vast theme, and it originated in this wise: I spent the summer of 1903 in the country—a dreadfully rainy summer — and for recreation and instruction, I took up the reading of Shakespeare's plays; and although I had been, all my life, more or less a reader of Shakespeare in a cursory way, I continued this reading in a more regular manner, though at intervals, until the present time, giving myself to it, and enjoying the beauties of his work from a purely literary point of view, not dwelling too critically on them. In this year, 1903, and the succeeding years I went through, more or less carefully, thirty-six plays, accompanying, it is true,

the delightful task by reading Professor Lounsbury's volumes on "Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist," and "Shakespeare and Voltaire;" but leaving aside Dr. Furness's clean sweeping "Variorum Shakespeare" and other critical and philologic authors, truly rejoicing that I was born to speak English and could read Shakespeare in his own tongue. I did this, I may repeat, not only for instruction but for enjoyment. In a true work of art, be it literary or otherwise, there is always the element of joy—it gives delight because it aims for perfection; this is the meaning of æsthetics, which is pleasure derived from the contemplation of beauty in nature and art. A work of art may have in it the element of the useful and practical, but it also from its beauty awakes joy. Take any of the arts—Architecture, for example, on a College campus: while there should be as much of the ample space, air, and light of nature as possible, and the grounds should be laid out with simple taste, the buildings themselves should be of noble form drawn from sound classic principles and of essentially academic character, telling what they

are and the reason of them, so that the student who daily passes to and fro is unconsciously touched by their fitness and beauty and his mind is moved to finer issues; this is, imperceptibly, an education, not only material but spiritual. These buildings should not be merely for the inhabitation of a flitting crowd of young men or for the reception of books, needful as these are, but the edifices themselves should raise and cultivate the mind of many generations by their true and artistic qualities. Architecture, a manly art requiring accurate thought, should be studied in connection with history, as one of the regular courses in a university education.

Life and Learning.

The first glimpse I ever caught of the living Shakespeare, his actual personality, was of course at Stratford-on-Avon, and there, above all, at the old Edwardian Grammar School, where he learned "small Latin and less Greek." I will speak of the school more particularly soon.

Stratford-on-Avon was the place in the whole world for Shakespeare to be born. It is situated in a midland county in the heart of "merrie England," where its quiet rural profile is reflected in the stream of "the softly flowing Avon," in which the tall osiers and brilliant wild flowers fringe its banks; though not so sad as poor Ophelia's crown of rosemary and rue. The bright green meadows, and the silly sheep browsing on them, the elegant but small spire of Stratford church in which the poet was buried, the gently swelling green hills around, and the low, ancient, cross-timbered houses make even now a picture of the olden time, and in its almost unchanged character seeming to promise, at least, that the memory of the poet of nature would be sacredly kept till "all the breathers in the world were dead."

The antique grammar school, dating from 1482, with rugged stone gables, stands at the turn of "Scholar's Lane," and not far from the church. Its courtyard in the rear of the building is the same as when the young Shakespeare played in it at marbles and leap-frog.

I procured a key from the teacher living not many houses off, and entered the upper room, where three boys sat at their desks apparently intent on their lessons, having been kept in after school for misdemeanors. They were curly pated, sturdy little fellows, entirely equal to the occasion, and I have no doubt that they regarded the incident as an opportune diversion from their enforced task. I seated myself in the teacher's chair and questioned them about their studies; among other things, one of the boys informed me gratuitously that sometimes they were feruled—it may be when, in the language of Shakespeare's time, they had "profited nothing in their books and failed in their accidence." From some occult reason, I know not exactly what, I seemed to find here the real Shakespeare, full of life (albeit the boy, or youth) more than at Henley street where he was born, or in Shottery Cottage where he wooed Anne Hathaway; for here he started on that intellectual career which left behind him a ray of ever-expanding light.

The school-room is long and low, the ribbed

beams above are massive and black with age, the light coming through small window openings. The desks are of oak, fearfully hacked, the boys having wreaked their revenge on them for their tasks and whippings. The oldest boy of the three was a handsome little fellow, and he showed me some writing-books of school exercises, and gave me two or three of the condemned ones in the conflagration basket, and told me with a grin, when I asked him if his name were "Will Shakespeare," that there was a boy in town whose name was "Willie Shakespeare."

On my leaving, the boys said they would give back the key to the master, and I let them have it; but going down stairs it occurred to me that I ought not to deliver up the key of the fortress to the prisoners, who might use it for their escape; and so, though I hated to do it, I went back and took the key away from them, for they were smiling and gentlemanly rogues, and (though this may have been but a surmise) they nearly tricked me in regard to the key—would the boy Shakespeare have been more successful?

In regard to the controverted question of Shakespeare's learning, his education, whatever it was, was commenced at this school. Latin, or "Latinity," as it was named, was the main part of the education of this period, and how much of it and of other learning Shakespeare there acquired (for he must have remained at school until he was sixteen or seventeen years old, and such a marvelously keen youth could have learned a great deal in that time) we can hardly know. His school knowledge embraced the "humanities," as they were called, that is, Latin and Greek, using the crabbed compendiums then in vogue, like the *Sententiæ pueriles*, and he read portions of Virgil, Ovid, Plutarch, and other classic authors, learning also to speak Latin after a fashion; then he left the Stratford school and joined the Earl of Leicester's company of "Morality players," who performed in Stratford, going with them to London. In London, from small beginnings, he gradually rose, and at that period of his life he is known to have been an omnivorous reader of books, a meddler in all knowledge, which he had to be, because when

he became a manager this implied also a purveyor and provider, a writer of fresh plays, in order to meet the demands of the English stage at a time of mental ferment and growth, "the spacious times of Great Elizabeth"—a drama in itself. It was a period of discovery, when a new world was opening and new lands were found. He read the voyages of Sir Walter Raleigh, Drake, Hawkins, the Gilberts, and other sea-captains, stimulating the wildest fancies. He also read histories of European lands, from Scandinavia to Italy; stories of old Rome, before Niebuhr had swept them away; traditions of his own country and its stirring civil wars and French wars; in fact everything came to his net. His knowledge of affairs and familiarity with law terms came from his helping his father and being himself frequently in the courts; and above all, he had the art of gaining friends among the educated classes, not only among literary men, dramatists, and poets, but accomplished noblemen of high culture. There was in especial one friend, Florio, the eminent Latin, Greek, Italian, and French scholar,

translator of "Montaigne's Essays," and student of Magdalen College, Oxford, a man of great industry and learning; and it is said, though this has been disputed, that there exists a work of Florio's with Shakespeare's autograph; at least there are allusions in his plays to this scholar, which show his familiarity with Florio, so that he did not have to go to Lord Bacon for his learning, since he had those whom he could more easily consult, who could direct his reading and fill his readily assimilating mind with literary allusions and lore, while his genius appropriated all accessible wisdom. There is no fear that Lord Bacon's cryptogram will ever be found in Shakespeare's tomb.

As to Shakespeare's more intimate knowledge of nature and human life, leaving out of the question his poetic genius, he had the advantage, when at home in Stratford, of living amid natural scenes and in the immediate neighborhood of Arden Forest, in which his youthful poaching pranks led him to an early acquaintance with the intricacies of the forest and the law.

He was married and was a father before his majority. His wife, Anne Hathaway, was seven or eight years older than himself, and they were early betrothed, which in those days constituted a legal, but irregular marriage; while his wife must have had some power, good or otherwise, upon him, yet a far finer and profounder feminine influence was that which his mother, Mary Arden, exerted on him.

There is a tradition, not authenticated, that after Shakespeare's death Anne Hathaway married a second time. Mary Arden, though now fallen to a yeomanry life, might be termed a gentlewoman of old family, whose impress is seen in his poetry. From his mother he inherited his love of flowers, birds, animals, and trees, and of the solitudes and beauties of nature, and he must have felt that he had some rights in Arden Forest and its deer, since it once belonged (as well as an extensive territory in Warwickshire) to his mother's family, giving their name to this whole region, especially to the wood itself, where, wandering and musing, he laid the forms and surroundings of many plays.

He drew, too, his gentle spirit from his mother. "Gentle and honest," Ben Jonson called him, and his contemporaries speak of his gentle breeding, upright character, and refined tastes, and he gave proof of this in the select company he kept. It has indeed been affirmed that Shakespeare was an aristocrat, but if this were true, it might be said that it was born in him and was no affectation. He had the English love of lords and kings, and he walked among them like a king to the manner born, and could also scathe them for their pride and oppression with terrible words. He was nature's nobleman, and was too big a man to be an exclusive aristocrat. Ben Jonson once again wrote of him, "I loved the man, and do honor to his memory this side of idolatry. He was indeed most honest, and of an open and free nature, had an excellent phantasy, brave notions and gentle expressions." Ben Jonson's relations to Shakespeare throw strong light on the character of both. They were nearly contemporaries, Shakespeare being some eight or nine years older. They commenced their careers as writers for the stage at

about the same time. Shakespeare probably came to London in 1585, going through the different grades of stage service, while Jonson began his work for the stage in London some six years later, in his learned and famous dramas pursuing the ancient Greek forms; while Shakespeare still remained a free lover of nature.

Jonson, though critical of his own methods, looked upon Shakespeare as his superior. The judgment pronounced by John Addington Symonds, that Jonson bore no jealousy towards Shakespeare, cannot be gainsaid. Jonson's line,

"Shine forth, thou star of poets,"

sounded the keynote of his real feeling for Shakespeare. This "sweetness and light," a phrase which seems to have been invented to describe Shakespeare, came, we cannot but think, from his mother, Mary Arden; and yet his father, John Shakespeare, who by writers in the next centuries of bitter controversy about Shakespeare's dramatic art was called a "butcher" and other terms meant to be lowering, was a man of no mean stock

or reputation. He married one of old family, by name and race, at least, a lady, though living now in yeomanry degree; was himself high bailiff of Stratford, and his ancestry dated back to Saxon times. His forefathers doubtless fought at Bosworth Field near by Stratford, and in the Wars of the Roses. The martial name of Shakespeare was probably won in this way, so that his coat of arms bearing a slanting spear was no misnomer; Shakespeare himself was tenacious of this coat of arms, and took pains to have it certified in the Herald's College.

When he returned from London, to live some twenty years in Stratford-on-Avon, owing to his thrifty habits and honesty he not only helped his father in money difficulties, but he had amassed considerable wealth and built the "New House," so-called, where he entertained many of the leading dramatists and poets of the day, also men of courtly rank. This constant reference to his honesty is enough to quash any charge of forgery or double dealing in respect to his plays, a charge never mentioned or dreamed of in his lifetime or

the centuries immediately after. "Honest and gentle" indeed! Shakespeare was what his friends claimed, and what even his rivals and enemies did not gainsay. But as to his being an aristocrat, it should be remembered that he was no mere aristocrat. He rose above caste into a wider world of humanity. He merited the name of democrat in the nobler sense of that word. He loved the people and his humble neighbors, and knew and entered into their moods and merry-makings. He was of the same independent spirit with them, and in his youth even defied the lord of the manor. Voltaire, in a green fit of poisoned envy, called Shakespeare "a village buffoon who had not written two decent lines," but Voltaire was forced humbly to recede from these words, though he hated Shakespeare because he upset his own precious classic ideas of the drama.

The life of Shakespeare from 1564 to 1616, comprising fifty-two years, runs for some thirty years parallel to the reign of Elizabeth, one of the most memorable epochs of English history; and his death removed from the quiet community of Warwick-

shire its greatest figure. He was buried in Stratford church in the mid-place of honor of the chancel, under a handsome monument, on which a brass tablet is placed inscribed with the doggerel verse of blessing and cursing—which I for one do not believe Shakespeare wrote, but that it was the work of some simple-minded sexton or official, for the reason that it was then the custom to remove the remains of the dead from tombs in order to make room for other bodies. Here was set up on the wall a wooden and woodeny bust, which has almost lost what value it had by being renovated and repainted, and the original color of the hair and eyes has disappeared.

Shakespeare's business, if it may be so called, was simply that of a writer of plays for the Globe and Blackfriars theaters, of which he was an actor and partial owner; and it was a life-work of the vastness of which he was probably unconscious in regard to its influence on the public mind, renewing English historic patriotism, raising literature, cleansing the stage of many of its worst faults, reaching the government itself in its truer ideals

of thought and policy. From a low place he mounted to a high one in the estimation of the times, and was honored as a friend of the people and of the loftiest in the land.

Shakespeare's life proved, if nothing else, his own modesty, since so few facts of his life are left us. He did not talk of himself, apparently, even to his best friends, but he made the world and humanity the confidant of his thoughts. If he were an ambitious man he did not show it, for he seemed careless of his literary works and of future fame; he did not think of filling the world with his renown, but his pipe was cut from the reeds of the gentle Avon. His friend and fellow actor, Richard Burbage, spoke freely of his London career; and we know from incidental remarks that there is as true a certification of his personality as that of Ben Jonson. There was no mystery. He walked and talked among the dramatists of his day as the chief of them. He contested the prize of wit with Ben Jonson at the "Mermaid Tavern;" with Edmund Spenser, he flattered Queen Elizabeth, yet Shakespeare did so with a less artificial

and more spontaneous grace; both were men above the herd of sycophantic writers, men who could bestow immortality on monarchs.

Style.

No one better exemplified the truth of the old French adage "The style is the man" than did Shakespeare. His genius made his style what it was. He was the poet (the maker) of his own style.

I will not, at present, enlarge on the great theme of Shakespeare's imagination, which peopled earth and sky, and was so illuminating an element of his style that it made it "of imagination all compact," and gave him the power to see things that did not visibly exist as if they were real, enabling him to walk the Roman forum like one who lived in ancient Rome, and to see the bottom of the ocean as by a flash-light, revealing its hidden treasures, sunken wrecks, and ghastly sights.

Freshly reading Shakespeare's plays, I have been struck with what has been called his "matchless

use of words." In the development of the English language from Chaucer's time to the present, although the number of words has increased from the increase of learning and the introduction of foreign terms, it reached its highest point of strength and richness in King James's version of the Bible and in Shakespeare's dramas; for nothing before or since has overtopped this culmination of the English tongue, the strength of which comes in a great degree from the use of the Saxon, which, in Shakespeare, amounts to sixty per cent. and forms the substratum of his style; the English Bible has about the same. Milton has less than three per cent. Shakespeare's language is ribbed with Saxon granite. No words, for an example, can be briefer or weightier than the sentence from "Macbeth:"

"Sagg with doubt, or shake with fear."

Shakespeare has, notwithstanding, a restricted vocabulary, not exceeding fifteen thousand words. "His affluence of language," according to Mr. Marsh, "arises from the variety and combination

rather than the numerical abundance of words. He gave, more than any one, the English character to our language, but could also employ words of classical elevation to lend gravity, elegance, and majesty to the style, whether in the form of precise expression, or that of the highest soar of the imagination. There is a spiritual quality in his English expression of the history and spirit of the race, in which in all its earthliness the spiritual has predominated, and which has been handed down from northern conquerors, and that is the secret of Shakespeare's power, clothing the mysterious sympathies of the soul in living words." For myself, I believe that even so great a genius as Shakespeare could not have written one of his plays in French or Italian. It must be confessed that Shakespeare's grammar, at times, differs from Lindley Murray's, so that one can believe the assertion of Richard Grant White that English is a "grammarless tongue." The loose relation of words in Shakespeare's sentences, the non-agreement of singulars and plurals, the separation of object and subject, would be looked upon

now as faults, but his meaning is clearly conveyed except when, from its depths, we learn the thought with difficulty; so clear, indeed, is the sense, that prose and poetry are harmonized, easily tripping from the tongue, and minor grammatical inconsistencies are not considered. The meaning is of more importance than the style—the life than the form. It is, however, to be said that, to most persons, the practical use of reading Shakespeare is his English. A great many people have been inclined to regard Addison as the standard of style, but it would be far better to make Shakespeare our master and teacher in the use of the English language. A word more might be added here; while Shakespeare's relation to his native tongue was all powerful, his influence on the languages of other races and nations was important. He was the maker of English in its present form, as Dante was of Italian and Luther of German; he used English with such freedom, force, and absolute simplicity of nature that he went to the root of the English language, the *erd-form*, as a German philosopher would call it, so that his works and poetry

become a basis and nucleus, producing a constantly increasing form of assimilation and unification in all families of languages springing from the same stock. The influence of literature itself is a mighty one; it is silent, invisible, and pervasive. England's great writers and masters, especially of the earlier stronger period, constitute an ever-growing influence of character and brotherhood between England and America that is stronger than commerce or treaty.

Nature and Art.

In the deeper question of nature and art in Shakespeare's style, it might be said by way of prefatory remark that Shakespeare was the originator of the Romantic School. He was the creator of this school in literature, not only in England but in all Europe. Goethe is his child as well as Victor Hugo. He was not trained in the classical school of dramatic art, but he wrought directly from nature without art; yet it is absurd to say that Shakespeare was not an artist, for he makes

use of the terms "art" and "nature" with so keen a discrimination, that while distinguishing them, he saw their intimate relations and common source, even as he says in a passage of "Winter's Tale,"

> "This is an art
> Which does mend nature,—change it rather; but
> The art itself is nature."

Nature does not work without art, and the great artist is he who perceives and interprets the secret of nature and can "mend" nature. While we do not detect Shakespeare's art, it is so real that, like nature itself, it is ever fresh and new. His works might have been written yesterday. They do not grow obsolete, so that we are ever moved by their power. In reading Shakespeare's works we wonder at their modernness. The language is plastic in his hand, and he moulds it at his will. He is its master and it does not master him. It does not grow archaic like the language of Ben Jonson, or Beaumont, or Sir Philip Sidney, or Edmund Spenser, since he employed not the language of book but the language of everyday life; and sometimes it is even *slang*. In "King John" a person talks

of 'bounce' just as it is now applied to a pushing act or man; in "Pericles" 'dad' or 'old dad' is talked of as an irreverent boy nowadays might apply it to his father; and in "Troilus and Cressida" the word 'rich' is employed as we say jokingly—'that is rich.' Shakespeare did not speak of æsthetics, because this word was not then invented, but for what is fit he makes use of the Latin word 'incarnadine' with magnificent effect in "Macbeth." He keeps in touch with the people and with nature, so that, as he walked in the noisy Strand of London, he felt the quiet of Arden Wood, and pictured in his mind its shadowy depths. His business was, as has been said, writing plays for the London stage, and so to address the people that they understood him and roared with laughter at his jokes. His puns were execrable, and we believe in the saying that a poor pun is as good as a good one if it only makes people laugh, and that was his object—"to split the ears of the groundlings;" but this senseless play on words vanishes when he is seriously bent, and his wit, which is the product of thought, shines, as it

does, for example, in the scene of Hamlet with the actors, which is as pure subjective analysis as anything in "Quintilian's Institutes."

Shakespeare's art, vilified during the two succeeding centuries in the battle of critics, is now regarded as the highest. He broke the bonds of classic art, but it is especially because he did not observe the "unities," and for this cause he was set down to be without art, and no true dramatist. Æschylus and Sophocles he did not regard, but, great poets as they were, why should they give rules to a greater poet?

I have been impressed with Shakespeare's unity of aim, a unity springing not from outward form but from inner purpose. No matter what historians have to say about "Richard III." it is Shakespeare's "Richard III." for all time, and he teaches what he means to teach. Everything bends to his object, no matter what stands in the way. In "Julius Cæsar" the character of Cæsar is interpreted by the poet, who is evidently more interested in Brutus than in Cæsar, and the hero of the play is Brutus and not Cæsar. The lesson

is the adamantine patriotic conscience of Brutus, and not the imperial will of Cæsar. Compared with such inner unity of purpose and design, the outer unities of mere time, place, and circumstance, so carefully observed by Racine and Voltaire, are small things. In "Antony and Cleopatra," a scene laid in Alexandria is followed in the next act by a scene laid in Rome; but what matter, if Shakespeare has taught his lesson of a world's empire lost through illicit love? He has put a new stamp on the coin. He develops a conception in the play which gives it an original value that makes it differ from the work of any other dramatist, and this is art that outdoes nature.

Morality.

The morality of Shakespeare cannot be reduced to a philosophical system either of ethics or psychology, for it was dynamic and spontaneous; for, to illustrate this in pure art, Pheidias did not work on ethical lines or rules when he made the statue of "Olympian Zeus" representing the supreme ruler in Hellenic mythology, nor did Michael

Angelo when he carved the "Moses" embodying his conception of moral law, but these geniuses wrought from a deeper insight and instinctive sense of the true as Shakespeare did. His humor also sprang warm from his heart, and because it had to do with man it was moral. Of such genial humor old Thomas Fuller said, "it hath no teeth or nails to tear or devour thy brother." It was a quick sense of the ludicrous kept in bounds by a loving heart that went out to all humanity, not censorious or mean, but helpful to enable man to bear the ills of life, an inestimable quality that carries one over the hard places more easily, like a wagon with good springs, and following the Greek law of "moderation"—moderation in judgment and act; and if a man has no touch of this humor we might say of him, "Let me fall into the hand of God and not into the hand of man."

In regard to Shakespeare's morality in the ordinary sense of the term, he was not untrue to the principle of right. He was too great not to recognize this universal law of righteousness, and in his plays he almost vehemently upholds virtue.

In Stratford, after his youthful days (if the story of deer stalking has any truth), his character and reputation were good. He undoubtedly felt the moral influence of the beginnings of the Reformation in England, and contrary to the narrow judgment of Carlyle in this instance, he was more of a Protestant than a Catholic. The historical plays of "King John" and "Richard III." are full of the newly awakened spirit of resistance to Papal authority, policy, and doctrine. "The Reformation," says the author of "English Past and Present," "was commencing to throw off the everlasting pupilage in which Rome would have held the nations, an assertion that they had come of age, and that not through the church but directly through Christ, they would address themselves to God." Shakespeare's allusions to Christ, which are not few, are always tender and devout, and his citations manifest his familiarity with the Bible, in whose heights and depths his soul had sympathy. Goethe says of him, "You would think while reading his plays that you stood before the enclosed awful books of fate, while the

wind of most impassioned life was howling through the leaves, tossing them freely to and fro."

Shakespeare, in his most furious moods, will be found maintaining the moral law implanted in the mind; he makes wicked men wear the mask of virtue and do homage to their own nature, being created in God's image.

> "There is no vice so simple but assumes
> Some mark of virtue on his outward parts."

Shakespeare knew what sin and its consequences were. Ulrici, the German critic, says, "It is a wonder that a man who possessed such depths of passion and knowledge of sin could have so controlled his life that he seems to have been, after his youthful period, respected and beloved." Ulrici adds support to what has been said respecting Shakespeare's idea of God and man, and that he was decidedly Protestant.

In Shakespeare's development of character in a play which brings on the stage all vile plots and actions, the honesty of his mind appears, although Shakespeare is without doubt open to the charge

of coarse language, such as now could not be tolerated. He does not, however, deal in innuendo, and he makes his lewd characters plainly what they are in a way that befits them, bringing them into derision and contempt. It was a coarse age. Queen Elizabeth sometimes swore like a trooper; but this fact of its being a rough and gross age does not excuse him, and yet no one but an essentially clean-minded man could have drawn female characters like Cordelia, Ophelia, Miranda, Desdemona, and the daughter of King Cymbeline, in whom a singular purity shines, clothing them in angelic garments; while on the other hand, Cleopatra, serpent of the Nile in subtle grace, and immeasurably the superior of the others in intellect, shows a luxurious spirit that could wantonly destroy Antony, "third pillar of Rome," while waiting for other Cæsars to ruin. Vice gains nothing by Cleopatra's allurements, but her sensuality is stripped bare, and no one but Shakespeare could have made her at once so lovely and so vile.

Yet Shakespeare does not exhaust a character,

nor does he assume the part of omniscience. He sometimes goes contrary to our natural expectation or to our views, as man judges fragmentarily and short-sightedly. Shakespeare judges more as the Bible does, which book he studied, and which is the true transcript of human nature, because man's spirit is a great deep, a blending of good and evil, of wisdom and folly, strength and weakness, swayed now by this motive and now by that; capable of vast effort, but perishing before the moth; a creature of heaven and earth, higher than the angels and sometimes lower than the brutes, a being of passions and affections as well as of rational judgments, and as diversified and unaccountable as the nature he lives in. In a word, morality is at the foundation of Shakespeare's greatness as a dramatic author. It is the quality which discerns the true in things and is at the same time genial and just, springing from the heart; as Goethe says in Faust,

"Gefühl ist alles."

There is one fact about Shakespeare's morality

which should not be forgotten, and that is, in the period of dramatic art which followed Shakespeare, or the age of the Charleses, of Dryden, Congreve, and Wycherley, the drama allied itself to the profligacy of the times, to the forces of temptation and evil, while Shakespeare's plays did not do so. He was not a seducer to vice, and his corruption, if it might be so called, does not corrupt. It did not stick and smutch, and we pass over the ribald speeches of "the fat knight" and do not remember them, since they are the reflections of a gross time rather than emanations of his mind. Often he suddenly rises from earth and its baseness, and in a moment we are lifted into the clear empyrean of most delicate poetry, like Ariel's song, heard above the cries of drunken seamen, and touched by rainbow tints and the breath of flowers. Even the bestial Caliban, when freedom comes to him, grows poetic and sings of the deep secrets of nature that he has learned from his witchdam Sycorax. Shakespeare says :

> "A golden mind
> Stoops not to shows of dross."

Shakespeare is now not so much played as he is read, and this shows progress in the appreciation of his literary genius, but he surely should be read with a broad and generous mind, for he believed in the greatness of man's spirit, and that every human being is based on the moral law in the constitution of his nature, so that "the whole is mirrored in the individual."

The chief object of this little book is intended to be my own impressions, especially of Shakespeare's plays, one and several, and in these introductory remarks thus far, I will allude to but one play, as it has a bearing on what has been already said in regard to the moral aim of Shakespeare—**OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE.** This play has a deep moral; it is drawn from a story found in an Italian novel of the same title, by one Giraldi Cinthio, it being Shakespeare's lordly way of seizing on the stories and plots of other authors and making them new, no matter how often these had been used by dramatists, as, for illustration, there were three Parthenons on the Acropolis before the Parthenon of Iktinos was reared out of

their ruins. Othello is not the central figure. He is a Saracen soldier, and should be represented with the finely-cut features, manly figure, tall, powerful form of that Arab race, specimens of which are now to be seen in Arabia and Egypt, who with resistless force conquered Northern Africa and the southern provinces of Spain, rising superior to their Christian neighbors in the arts of civilization, but enervated by centuries of peace were driven out of Spain. Othello was a brave soldier, laconic and proud, but capable of true affection. He was absorbed in his love of Desdemona, and talked to her freely of his stirring and perilous life. It is not, however, Othello who forms the central character of this play, since amid all the splendid and changing scenes of this drama there is one other figure on whom the mind of the reader becomes fixed. He is not only everywhere, but his personality is the occasion and cause of the action of others. He grows terribly fascinating. His presence, imperturbable, sometimes smiling, polite in his address, looks out from every scene, whether at Venice or Cyprus, in the council hall,

the midnight revel, the chamber of love, and the chamber of death. Iago pulls the string that moves each tongue and arm. He points Roderigo's sword at his friend's breast; he prompts the intemperate fury of Cassio; he brings tears into the undimmed eyes of Desdemona; he unsettles the steady mind of Othello, and "the tragic loading of the bed" is his work. He is a man without humanity, a polished intellect without a ray of intellectual elevation. When Richard III. cries out on Bosworth Field,

"A thousand hearts are great within my bosom,"

we almost forget the tyrant and murderer, and wish him a soldier's grave; when the usurping king of Denmark soliloquizes pathetically about his crime and kneels to ask heaven's forgiveness, we yield him a kind of pity and feel that though a deep offender he has some feeling; but Iago has no such "compunctious visitings," and he scoffs at the present and the future. While he does not profess to be an atheist, for the reason that that would be a blunder to his exquisite sense of evil,

he undermines God's throne by making everything honest, pure, lovely, and of good report, the object of his wicked wit. He has been compared to the Mephistopheles of Goethe, but the incomparable superiority of Shakespeare is seen in his discarding the supernatural; for while Mephistopheles amuses by his preternatural tricks, and we marvel at his cleverness, we tremble at Iago, and draw a long breath when he is put out of the world.

The seeming want of motive in Iago has been observed, which Coleridge has called his "motiveless malignity." A hint or so that Iago himself lets drop regarding disappointed ambition and an undefined suspicion of his wife's honesty are the only intangible causes to account for his conduct. He did not set motive squarely over against action, as is done in psychology or mechanics, but in this way Shakespeare shows his profound knowledge of human nature, which is too obscure to be analyzed in a court of law or confined to a system of philosophy. It was enough for a nature like Iago's to have a nobler nature like Othello's before him to rouse "the cruel devil of his will."

The two moral features of Iago's character, as I read them, are entire selfishness and constitutional hypocrisy. In a conversation with Roderigo, to whom in his contempt he was not afraid to expose himself somewhat, he says:

> "Were I the Moor I would not be Iago:
> In following him, I follow but myself."

While outwardly subservient to others, he serves no one but himself. In his advice to Roderigo, he remarks:

"I have looked upon the world for four times seven years; and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found a man that knew how to love himself."

His hypocrisy is the only thing he does naturally, and he blurts out:

> "I am not what I am."

He sneeringly says:

> "Though I do hate him as I do hell pains,
> Yet for necessity of present life,
> I must show out a flag and sign of love,
> Which is indeed but sign."

He is hail-fellow with the youthful drunkard Cas-

sio, and yet with entire grace he plays the saint, and tells Othello:

"I lack iniquity sometimes to do me service."

Othello calls him to the last "honest Iago" and "my just friend."

The chief intellectual characteristic of Iago is his insight, or his analytic perception of character, penetrating to the concealed causes of men's actions. He discovers human weaknesses, and takes advantage of this discovery by adapting himself to the disposition of every person with whom he has to deal and plying him with baits that may prove successful to his overthrow.

He turns to account the smallest circumstances, finding that men are ill-balanced, and moved not by earthquakes, but shadows and sunshine; by never neglecting these small things, and in the cautious way in which he uses them to plant suspicion in the mind of Othello—the mysterious tone, the abstracted repetition, the obscure meaning, the indefinite hint—he winds up the agonized curiosity of the man to a pitch of excitement in

which calm judgment is confused; in such methods are seen his consummate knowledge of human life; and, indeed, Iago's practical philosophy would, in a good man, be worthy of imitation, but he has no corresponding faith to save and to sanctify his human will; he entirely ignores the divine will and love, and regards himself as maker of himself:

"'T is in ourselves that we are thus and thus."

He brings every thought and passion under the control of an iron determination, and, assaulting the most divine of human qualities, he exclaims:

"It is merely a lust of the blood, and a permission of the will."

This, in fact, is the secret of Iago's control over other minds, to lead them at his pleasure, and none can doubt that the character of this consummate villain is a tremendous sermon of the fearful capacities for evil in a human soul that throws off a higher rule over its actions.

Historical Plays.

Goethe, though a great poet, showed nevertheless his personal and national limitations, as, for

example, in his Italian and classical dramas there is a Teutonic subjectivity of thought which makes his characters talk and act like Germans; in a similar manner Homer himself describes Greeks, the Greek type of race, fierce, sensuous, eloquent, loving beauty, art, and song. On the other hand, Shakespeare's personages are not English solely, but are beings who might have lived in any period or land, and, in this respect, he passed beyond the limitations of race and nation, reaching the deeper elements of common humanity, depicting living men as they are in childhood, youth, or old age, the high and low, the good and bad. They are real men and women, whose various costumes and speech still cover a nature with common wants and passions, happy or sorrowful, loving or hating, base or pure; yet while dealing thus with life wherever found, it is evident that Shakespeare loves England. As most of what are called Shakespeare's Historical Plays are laid in England and belong originally to the more youthful period of authorship, I will speak first of these, although some of them may not be wholly Shakespeare's in

their plot. Of the first two plays, "**KING JOHN**" and "**RICHARD II.**," I will say but a few words; but what were the history of England without Shakespeare's plays to give the color, form, and pressure of those earlier times? Other modern histories of England are more like academic essays after the style of Thucydides and Sallust, with the author's own philosophic generalizations. I would except the great history of Gibbon, flowing like a majestic river through a thousand years, bearing on its tide all characters and events, great and small; but medieval England, with its gorgeous pageants, the "Field of the Cloth of Gold," its chivalry and fightings, its fierce "Wars of the Roses" that drenched England with blood, and stubborn British valor on the fields of France—this England was illuminated by the vivid light of Shakespeare's genius.

Great personages walked over the scene as if alive. These plays were not political essays on the government of the times, as the marvelous pen of Lord Bacon might have written, though they give penetrating glimpses into England's political his-

tory. The reader becomes one in time with these scenes, and is an absorbed looker-on.

KING JOHN.

The first of the historical plays in point of time is "King John." This play with that of "Richard II." is of less importance than the rest. "King John" was an earlier work, recast in 1591 and completed in 1595. This king himself, as is known, was a weak and treacherous tyrant. He was no hero, and there was no trace in him of the greatness of the Norman line, except, perhaps, his physical beauty, at least if he is truly represented in the bronze monument in Gloucester Cathedral.

The inimitable pathos of the conversation between the "little Prince" Arthur and Hubert, the dreadful display of red-hot irons to burn out the eyes, the boyish pleadings from the heart, are fitted to totally overcome Hubert's stern resolve. What could be more winningly touching than the words of Arthur? The dialogue, so simple in language and of almost childlike tenderness, yet so

wonderfully qualified to move the most iron will! This scene is as fine as anything in the great poet's own works:

Arthur—"Good morrow, Hubert."

Hubert—"Good morrow, little prince."

Arthur—"As little prince, having so great a title to be more prince, as may be. You are sad."

Hubert—"Indeed, I have been merrier."

Arthur—"Mercy on me!

Methinks nobody should be sad but I:
Yet, I remember, when I was in France,
Young gentlemen would be as sad as night,
Only from wantonness. By my christendom,
So I were out of prison and kept sheep,
I should be as merry as the day is long;
And so I would be here, but that I doubt
My uncle practises more harm to me:
He is afraid of me and I of him:
Is it my fault that I was Geffrey's son?
No, indeed, is't not; and I would to heaven
I were your son, so you would love me, Hubert."

Hubert—[*Aside*] "If I talk to him, with his innocent prate
He will awake my mercy which lies dead:
Therefore I will be sudden and dispatch."

Arthur—"Are you sick, Hubert? you look pale to-day:
In sooth, I would you were a little sick,

That I might sit all night and watch with you :
I warrant I love you more than you do me."

Hubert—[*Aside*] "His words do take possession of my bosom.

Read here, young Arthur. [*Showing a paper*]
[*Aside*] How now, foolish rheum !
Turning dispiteous torture out of door !
I must be brief, lest resolution drop
Out at mine eyes in tender womanish tears.
Can you not read it ? is it not fair writ ? "

Arthur—"Too fairly, Hubert, for so foul effect :
Must you with hot irons burn out both mine eyes ? "

Hubert—"Young boy, I must."

Arthur—"And will you ? "

Hubert—"And I will."

Arthur—"Have you the heart ? When your head did but ache,

I knit my handkerchief about your brows,
The best I had, a princess wrought it me,
And I did never ask it you again :
And with my hand at midnight held your head,
And, like the watchful minutes to the hour,
Still and anon cheer'd up the heavy time,
Saying, 'What lack you ?' and 'Where lies your grief ?'
Or, 'What good love may I perform for you ?'
Many a poor man's son would have lain still
And ne'er have spoke a loving word to you ;

But you at your sick service had a prince,
Nay, but you may think my love was crafty love,
And call it cunning: do, and if you will:
If heaven be pleased that you must use me ill,
Why then you must. Will you put out mine eyes?
These eyes that never did nor never shall
So much as frown on you."

Hubert—"I have sworn to do it;
And with hot irons must I burn them out."

Arthur—"Ah, none but in this iron age would do it!
The iron of itself, though heat red-hot
Approaching near these eyes, would drink my tears
And quench his fiery indignation
Even in the matter of mine innocence,
Nay, after that, consume away in rust,
But for containing fire to harm mine eye.
Are you more stubborn—hard than hammer'd iron?
An if an angel should have come to me
And told me Hubert should put out mine eyes,
I would not have believed him,—no tongue but Hubert's."

Hubert—"Come forth."

[*Re-enter attendants with cord, irons, etc.*]

"Do as I bid you do."

Arthur—"O, save me, Hubert, save me! my eyes are out
Even with the fierce looks of these bloody men."

Hubert.—"Give me the iron, I say, and bind him here."

[*Stamps.*

Arthur.—"Alas, what need you be so boisterous—rough?
I will not struggle, I will stand stone-still.
For heaven's sake, Hubert, let me not be bound!
Nay, hear me, Hubert, drive these men away,
And I will sit as quiet as a lamb;
I will not stir, nor wince, nor speak a word,
Nor look upon the iron angerly;
Thrust but these men away, and I'll forgive you,
Whatever torment you do put me to."

Hubert—"Go, stand within; let me alone with him."

1st Attend.—"I am best pleased to be from such a deed."

[*Exeunt Attendants.*]

Arthur—"Alas, I then have chid away my friend!
He hath a stern look, but a gentle heart:
Let him come back, that his compassion may
Give life to yours."

Hubert—"Come, boy, prepare yourself."

Arthur—"Is there no remedy?"

Hubert—"None, but to lose your eyes."

Arthur—"O heaven, that there were but a mote in yours,
A grain, a dust, a gnat, a wandering hair,
Any annoyance in that precious sense!
Then, feeling what small things are boisterous there,
Your vile intent must needs seem horrible."

Hubert—"Is this your promise? go to, hold your tongue."

Arthur—"Hubert, the utterance of a brace of tongues
Must needs want pleading for a pair of eyes:
Let me not hold my tongue, let me not, Hubert;
Or, Hubert, if you will, cut out my tongue,
So may I keep mine eyes. O, spare mine eyes!
Though to no use but still to look on you!
Lo, by my troth, the instrument is cold
And would not harm me."

Hubert—"I can heat it, boy."

Arthur—"No, in good sooth; the fire is dead with grief,
Being create for comfort, to be used
In undeserved extremes: See else yourself;
There is no malice in this burning coal;
The breath of heaven hath blown his spirit out
And strew'd repentant ashes on his head."

Hubert—"But with my breath I can revive it, boy."

Arthur—"An if you do, you will but make it blush
And glow with shame of your proceedings, Hubert:
Nay, it perchance will sparkle in your eyes;
And like a dog that is compell'd to fight,
Snatch at his master that doth tarre him on.
All things that you should use to do me wrong
Deny their office: only you do lack
That mercy which fierce fire and iron extends,
Creatures of note for mercy-lacking uses."

Hubert—"Well, see to live; I will not touch thine eye

For all the treasure that thy uncle owes:
Yet am I sworn and I did purpose, boy,
With this same iron to burn them out."

Arthur—"O, now you look like Hubert! all this while
You were disguised."

Hubert—"Peace; no more. Adieu.
Your uncle must not know but you are dead;
I'll fill these dogged spies with false reports:
And, pretty child, sleep doubtless and secure,
That Hubert, for the wealth of all the world,
Will not offend thee."

Arthur—"O heaven! I thank you, Hubert."

Hubert—"Silence; no more: go closely in with me:
Much danger do I undergo for thee."

[*Exeunt.*

KING RICHARD II.

This play has been held to be, as a general rule, tame and dull, but for myself I find something interesting in the dignity of King Richard II. at his dethronement, when he is awaiting a cruel death by the hands of assassins. Feudal England was then more under the rule of the fierce nobles than of the king or the people, as was also the case in France at that period.

All the early editions of this play ascribe it to Shakespeare's authorship of about the date of 1593, receiving new additions later from his pen, perhaps for political reasons, after the death of Elizabeth. The king's meditations in the dungeon of Pomfret, on thoughts and music and other things sometimes loftier, are interesting, such as

"Mount, mount, my soul! thy seat is up on high;
Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die,"

the blood of the Plantagenet showing itself in this *fainéant* king—

"As full of valour, as of royal blood."

At the fight between Bolingbroke and Norfolk, which was to have come off but was stopped by King Richard, the speeches are long-winded and repetitiously boastful, like Homer's heroes before their fights.

The proud Bolingbroke's demeanor when he returns from exile, in England, is to be contrasted with his smooth-tongued, popular addresses to the "common people." He saw a source of power in the democracy, as he did more and more afterwards when he became King Henry IV.

The arch conspirators, York, Northumberland, and Harry Percy, the last "but tender, raw, and young," here first appear in their characteristic speeches. Notice the common expressions even now in use, such as the familiar phrase of sixes and sevens:

"Every thing is left at six and seven,"

and also of the contemptuous phrase of a "row of pins." Phrases in Shakespeare's plays, I would again remark, are often repeated, showing the hand of the same master, as in the phrase,

"I have a thousand spirits in one breast."

The good Bishop Carlisle prophesies the bloody "Wars of the Roses" which would spring up after the death of Richard II.

Bolingbroke alludes to his son, afterwards Henry V., while looking for him in London taverns, as "a lawless youth."

The wonderful description of England by "Old John of Gaunt, time-honored Lancaster," cannot be passed over:

"This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,

This other Eden, demi-paradise;
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war;
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive of a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Fear'd by their breed and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
For Christian service and true chivalry,
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son;
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leased out, I die pronouncing it,
Like to a tenement or pelting farm:
England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds:
That England, that was wont to conquer others,
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.
Ah, would the scandal vanish with my life,
How happy then were my ensuing death!"

KING RICHARD III.

The play of "Richard III." follows Hollinshed pretty closely. Richard III. clove his way to the throne by his strong mind and iron mace, beating down all before it. He was powerful, but pitilessly ambitious. Marlowe had also before this written a play on Richard III. He was a dramatist of great vigor, but another had arisen to take his sceptre, and after Shakespeare's play of "Richard III." he grew discouraged and nearly came to an end as a dramatic writer and poet.

An old chronicler says that Richard III. "was no euill captain in war," but Shakespeare gives him besides strong intellectual qualities and a subtle wit, as is exhibited in the scene with the Princess Anne.

He had a moral nature, but his devouring ambition swallowed it up.

The scene in the midnight tent before the battle brings out the dread action of Conscience and the fearful revenge of a vigorous but abused nature; but his warlike spirit was unconquered to the last.

Richard III. is one of those characters, transformed by Shakespeare's genius from a mere fighter to a thinking man, whose wicked ambitions knew no bounds.

KING HENRY IV.

The first part of this play of "Henry IV." was entered on the Stationers' Register under date of 1597–8. Many quartos were issued between 1597–1639. The title of the play in the folio is, "The first part of Henry the Fourth, with the Life and Death of Henry, surnamed Hotspur." The second part was first published in quarto in 1600, calling it, "The second part of Henry the Fourth continuing to his death and coronation of Henry the Fifth, with the humours of Sir John Falstaffe and swaggering Pistol." Ben Jonson makes this allusion in "Every Man out of his Humour" with the words, "You may in time make lean Macilente as fat as Sir John Falstaff."

The play of "Henry IV.," who earlier was simply Bolingbroke, bears the same formally dramatic relationship to "Richard II.," "King

John," and "Richard III.," as "The Merchant of Venice" does to earlier comedies, such as "Love's Labour's Lost," "Comedy of Errors," and some other plays. The second part of "Henry IV." was certainly written in 1598–99. The play was derived from Hall's and Hollinshed's Chronicles, and from an old play acted before 1588.

Shakespeare changed historical facts in the case of Hotspur and the Prince, making them exact contemporaries fighting on Shrewsbury field, which could not have occurred. "Henry IV.," in two parts, is by far the most important of these historical plays. This monarch was one of England's great kings. His life was a life of constant conflict with the formidable powers of York, Northumberland, and Scotland. Scotland had proved herself in warlike qualities superior to England, but not so in the reign of Henry IV., who was a fighting king. He was brave, and sometimes cruel, with murder stains on his hands while he was yet Bolingbroke. He was wise but crafty, yet while battling for the maintenance of his own throne, he was at the same time not unmindful of the rights and

liberties of the English people. Shakespeare represents him as a broad-minded monarch and patriotic in his political character; he was even religious, as piety went in those days.

In the very beginning of the play the king says:

"Whose soldier now, under whose blessed cross
We are impressed and engaged to fight,
Forthwith a power of English shall we levy;
Whose arms were moulded in their mothers' womb
To chase these pagans in those holy fields
Over whose acres walk'd those blessed feet
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nail'd
For our advantage on the bitter cross."

He had an eye to England's welfare, not so much expressed in the technical terms of political administration as in potential speeches and acts.

Henry IV. died in 1413, and the tradition that he died in the Jerusalem Chamber may have been used by Shakespeare for dramatic effect, as well as the temporary removal of the crown by the prince and his father's solemn admonition.

The character of Hotspur, the English Achilles, hard and implacable, forms a brilliant episode in

this play. Hotspur's life is in the flash-light of swords. His contempt of bedizened aristocracy is shown in his description of the frivolous nobleman who meets him to deliver a message on the field of battle, commencing with :

"But I remember, when the fight was done."

His other blunt, soldierly speeches are of a similar kind :

"To pluck bright honour from the pale-fac'd moon."

"Tell truth, and shame the devil."

His wife whom he loved was second to the love of arms. The *oestrus* of battle was in him.

Hotspur—"How now, Kate! I must leave you within these two hours."

Lady Percy—"O my good lord, why are you thus alone?"

"Tell me, sweet lord, what is 't that takes from thee"

"Thy golden sleep?"

"In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watch'd,
And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars;
Speak terms of manage to thy bounding steed;
Cry 'Courage! to the field!' And thou hast talk'd
Of sallies and retires, of trenches, tents,
Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets,
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,

Of prisoners' ransom, and of soldiers slain,
And all the currents of a heady fight.
Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war
And thus hath so bestirr'd thee in thy sleep,
That beads of sweat hath stood upon thy brow,
Like bubbles in a late-disturbed stream;
And in thy face strange motions hath appear'd,
Such as we see when men restrain their breath
On some great sudden hest. O, what portents are these?
Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,
And I must know it, else he loves me not."

Hotspur—"What, ho!"

Lady Percy—"In faith, I'll break thy little finger, Harry,
An if thou wilt not tell me all things true."

Hotspur—"God's me, my horse!"

It is a great leap in one play from Hotspur to Falstaff. This light and shade give, however, an opportunity for the practice of *chiaroscuro*, as in Rembrandt's pictures, and also as it sometimes occurs in nature and the mind, though it requires a consummate artist to make use of this bold contrast in literature; a large part of the historic play of "Henry IV." is taken up with the "humours of Falstaff." The name, Sir John Falstaff, was evidently drawn from Sir John Falstoffe, who was a

real character, a Lollard, and a man of honorable reputation, though a rebel and executed in the wars of the times.

Shakespeare did not mean to defame or drag down the name of "Oldcastle," another name of this same character, to whom he alludes in the Prologue; but he probably took the name at random, as a well-known one, yet it is unfortunate that by this name he seemed to cast a slur upon a worthy personage.

Shakespeare was the exact contemporary of Cervantes, and the suspicion is aroused that as Cervantes delineates with such exquisite humor the demented but noble, melancholy-visaged Spanish knight, Don Quixote, in order to satirize the decadence of Spanish chivalry, so Shakespeare might have drawn the fat knight, Sir John Falstaff, to throw contempt on some of the growing falsities and vulgarities of English chivalry and knighthood; in all probability this is not true, for both authors were too original to take one character from the other.

Falstaff is an immoral, lying old rascal, but has

no end of wit. The scene of his representation of the king, with his cushion for a crown and his dagger for a sceptre, who delivers a grave reprimand to the prince, instances his rapid seizure of the situation. His comments on his wondrously spectral squad of conscripts, such as—"Mouldy, Cobweb, Shadow, Wart, Feeble, and Bullcalf," are philosophical:

Falstaff—"Good enough to toss; food for powder, food for powder; they'll fill a pit as well as better."

Falstaff—"Go thy ways, old Jack; die when thou wilt, if manhood, good manhood, be not forgot upon the face of the earth, then am I a shotten herring. There lives not three good men unhanged in England; and one of them is fat, and grows old: God help the while! a bad world, I say. I would I were a weaver; I could sing psalms or anything. A plague of all cowards, I say still.'

Falstaff—"But to say I know more harm in him than in myself, were to say more than I know. That he is old, the more the pity, his white hairs do witness it; but that he is, saving your reverence, a whoremaster, that I utterly deny. If sack and sugar be a fault, God help the wicked! if to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host that I know is damned: if to be fat be to be hated, then Pharaoh's lean kine are to be loved. No, my good lord; banish Peto,

banish Bardolph, banish Poins: but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant, being, as he is, old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry's company, banish not him thy Harry's company: banish plump Jack, and banish all the world."

How rapidly the men in buckram suits grew in number:

Falstaff—"Two rogues in buckram suits."

"Four rogues in buckram let drive at me."

Falstaff will last as long as Hamlet, and is immortal.

This foul-mouthed, wicked old rogue is the exponent or expression of the material nature, with the infusion of a keen intellectual element turned to baseness. Its humor saves it from obscenity that corrupts. Its good-natured coarseness doubtless appealed to the gross English palate of the age. In Falstaff the English mind saw its own abominations, and the electric lightning of his wit seemed to cleanse the foul marsh, and to make it a subject for ridicule and contempt.

Speaking to the prince's very face, he says:

"It is certain that either wise bearing or ignorant carriage is caught, as men take diseases, one of another; therefore, let men take heed of their company."

The famous line descriptive of the death of Falstaff—"a' babbled of green fields," does not seem to me to exhibit a poetic thought, but rather a flitting reminiscence of England's green meadows and of a country inn, with unlimited "sack."

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

This roistering play was, according to an unauthenticated tradition, written in 1602 at the command of Queen Elizabeth, who required Shakespeare to write a play of Sir John Falstaff in love. It was finished in two weeks, and composed after "Henry V.," but in point of successive time comes between the plays of "Henry IV." and "Henry V.," and one of the characters is supposed to be identical with Sir Thomas Lucy of the deer-poaching affair. The real Thomas Lucy died in 1600. The scene is laid partly in Windsor Forest, but is more like Arden Wood, which touches dear Warwickshire scenery, and runs through so many of Shakespeare's plays.

Herne's oak, around which the midnight revels ran, existed until modern times.

Shallow says, reminding us of Sir Thomas Lucy:

"You have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge."

Slender—"If I be drunk, I'll be drunk with those that have a fear of God, and not with drunken knaves."

Pistol—"'Convey,' the wise call it. 'Steal!' foh! a fico for the phrase."

Pistol—"Why, then the world's mine oyster,
Which I with sword will open."

Sweet Anne Page is a pretty and simple maiden, and Shallow's lackadaisical nature is suddenly immersed in a sort of scared love. The whole is a rude and boorish, but picturesque, old English village scene.

"The Merry Wives" are merry wives indeed, and they cunningly plot against the old knight to lure him on to utter overthrow, with a mirth-loving looseness of behavior. Falstaff himself walks in this play in his most glorious pomp of libertine excess. In his words with Pistol and his talks with the disreputable woman who keeps the inn, and in other scenes, he is the same scurrilous, wicked old man, presuming somewhat on his knighthood, but low to the depths in character.

The examination of the boy in his "accidence" has some allusion to Shakespeare's school-boy days at Stratford. The ribald knight gets fairly punished at Herne's oak. The play must have been an uproarious one, and set the queen, her grave counsellors, the nobility, and the common people into fits of laughter.

The scene may even now be imagined by one walking at moonlight in the glades and amid the oaks of Windsor Park.

KING HENRY V.

The play of "Henry V." was probably first brought out in 1599, and written in that golden period of the poet's life. It was contemporary with the "Merry Wives of Windsor."

There is no positive historical confirmation of the lawless character of the "mad-cap prince" before his own coronation, but there may have been a tradition of this in the old chronicles, some of the wild pranks of youth, which Shakespeare seized upon for the dramatic effect.

Henry V. has come down to us in history as a noble prince. Even before he came to the throne he assisted his father in war and government, and gave promise of being himself the great monarch that he afterwards became. He represented the best qualities of British chivalry and heroic valor.

He who has not read Shakespeare's play of "Henry V." has lost the most dazzling page of England's medieval period; when great personages walked over the scene clad in gleaming steel; when her arms beat down into absolute submission the French monarchy and annexed the fields of sunny France.

Henry V. was a brave and sagacious king, but as a Roman Catholic ruler he was sometimes cruel in persecution. He finally quelled all revolutionary efforts at home, even the fierce attacks of Scotland, as Henry V. himself said:

"For you shall read that my great-grandfather,
Never went with his forces into France,
But that the Scot on his unfurnish'd kingdom
Came pouring, like the tide into a breach."

He sailed for France with banners flying over a

small but invincible host. Canterbury said of the army :

"Full fifteen earls and fifteen hundred knights,
Six thousand and two hundred good esquires."

The central point of the whole play is the battle of Agincourt, which took place after hard toil and fighting in France. Just before the battle took place, the constable of France described the British half-starved forces in these words :

"Do but behold yon poor and starved band,
And your fair show shall suck away their souls,
Leaving them but the shales and husks of men.
There is not work enough for all our hands ;
Scarce blood enough in all their sickly veins
To give each naked curtle-axe a stain,
That our French gallants shall to-day draw out,
And sheathe for lack of sport."

The deepest portions in the play consist of Henry V.'s utterances and soliloquies the night before the battle, showing a burdened but indomitable spirit. He says to Gloucester :

"Gloucester, 'tis true that we are in great danger ;
The greater therefore should our courage be."

"God Almighty!
There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out."

"'Tis good for men to love their present pains
Upon example; so the spirit is eased:
And when the mind is quicken'd, out of doubt,
The organs, though defunct and dead before,
Break up their drowsy grave and newly move,
With casted slough and fresh legerity."

He walked unrecognized through his camp and talked with his soldiers in words that show his humanity. One of the soldiers says to him while he was unknown:

Bates—"He hath not told his thought to the king?"

King Henry—"No; nor it is not meet he should. For, though I speak it to you, I think the king is but a man as I am: the violet smells to him as it doth to me; the element shows to him as it doth to me; all his senses have but human conditions: his ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man; and though his affections are higher mounted than ours, yet, when they stoop, they stoop with the like wing."

He soliloquizes:

King—"Not all these, laid in bed majestical,
Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave,

Who with a body fill'd and vacant mind
Gets him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread."

"And, but for ceremony, such a wretch
Winding up day with toil, and nights with sleep,
Had the fore-hand and vantage of a king."

"O God of battles! steel my soldiers' hearts;
Possess them not with fear; take from them now
The sense of reckoning, if the opposed numbers
Pluck their hearts from them. Not to-day, O Lord."

"More will I do;
Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence comes after all,
Imploring pardon."

"This day is call'd the feast of Crispian:
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian."

"Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,
And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'"

This is a speech of the heroic English epic, and shows the poet's own manliness. The glittering ranks of France fell before the long ash-tree bows of England. Crécy and Agincourt gave British valor the domination in France, down even to the battle of Waterloo.

King Henry's gay and half French talk with Katharine lights up the grim features of war, and makes the play end in jocund peace, when all difficulties are dispelled and all foes overcome, and Henry returns with his French bride to the shores of merrie England.

HENRY VI.

The authorship of the play of "Henry VI." in three parts, or the most of it, has been so fully and even fiercely discussed that the part Shakespeare played in it still remains greatly in doubt, but this critical discussion is not my present aim. It has been thoroughly done by other earlier and modern writers, and still is a central pivot of stormy controversy and is well worth our study; whether he composed the whole of it or composed no part of it, but merely arranged it for the Globe Theatre, is a difficult question. He doubtless had in some way a hand in it, but the plot and composition look more to Marlowe's or Greene's authorship. The entire reversals of historic fact and the shocking ill-treatment, for example, of the lofty and mystic

character of Joan of Arc, would seem to be entirely opposed to the spirit of the truthful and "gentle Will," but it is possible that in his youthful eagerness to push on the success of the Globe Theatre, he yielded to the pressure of the royal and courtly party and the stern censorship of the stage at that period. It may be he could not well face the clamorous position of the British public in the matter of English courage in France; at any rate, the whole is beneath the standard of the other historical plays.

It is without loftiness, and is painful and sad.

King Henry VI., only child of Henry V., was a gentle and pure-minded man, but no hero. He was never quite a king, and in his long regency he was the prey of furious factions. His armies in France gradually lost all that Henry V. had won, and his own death gave immediate rise to the sanguinary "Wars of the Roses." There would seem to be a few touches of Shakespearean power in this drama. The whole death scene of Cardinal Beaufort is striking:

Henry VI—"How fares my lord? speak, Beaufort, to thy sovereign."

Cardinal—"If thou be'st death, I'll give thee England's treasure,
Enough to purchase such another island,
So thou wilt let me live, and feel no pain."

Henry VI—"Ah, what a sign it is of evil life,
Where death's approach is seen so terrible!"

Cardinal—"Bring me unto my trial when you will.
Died he not in his bed? where should he die?
Can I make men live, whether they will or no?
O, torture me no more! I will confess.
Alive again? then show me where he is:
I'll give a thousand pounds to look upon him.
He hath no eyes, the dust hath blinded them.
Comb down his hair; look, look! it stands upright,
Like lime-twigs set to catch my winged soul.
Give me some drink; and bid the apothecary
Bring the strong poison that I bought of him."

King—"O thou eternal mover of the heavens,
Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch!
O, beat away the busy meddling fiend
That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul,
And from his bosom purge this black despair!"

Warwick—"See, how the pangs of death do make him grin!"

Salisbury—"Disturb him not; let him pass peaceably."

King—"Peace to his soul, if God's good pleasure be!
Lord cardinal, if thou think'st on heaven's bliss,
Hold up thy hand, make signal of thy hope.
He dies, and makes no sign. O God, forgive him!"

HENRY VIII.

This is a rich, spectacular drama, written near the end of the poet's life, and portraying the decline of British chivalry of the more showy and less warlike period, the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and also of the decline of the "pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war."

There are two theories in regard to the date of this play; one is, that it was composed in the time of Queen Elizabeth to defend the character of her mother, Anne Boleyn, and another, that it was brought out in the reign of James I. and founded on a previous drama.

The proud figure of Cardinal Wolsey and his solemn words of repentance for his sin of serving

two masters—God and the world, God and the king—still powerfully reverberate in men's deepest consciousness.

These historical plays, written from a heart full of the patriotism of a truly British soul, were evidently thrown off originally in his youthful days for the stage, and had their plot, it may be, in some instances from previous plays, but in them all there are traces of Shakespeare's revision and inimitable genius. These touches or marks of Shakespearean genius are plainly discernible wherever they occur, and I have sometimes exemplified this to myself by a homely illustration, which would apply both to Shakespeare and Homer.

The explorer in the dark forest of mid-Africa comes across a spring of pure water, which wild beasts visit at night to quench their thirst. All kinds, small and great, come; on the sandy marge of the spring or pond are innumerable tracks of these nightly visitants, but across them all are great prints, effacing the smaller ones, which are the marks of the lion alone, unmistakable and awe-inspiring.

COMEDIES.

CYMBELINE.

Comedy is usually a play where the ludicrous or, better, the humorous element is prominently set forth in opposition to tragedy, which stirs deeper emotions; but in the older classic and Italian use of the word, as in Dante's "Divina Commedia," it is applied to the Middle Style, admitting, indeed, the elegant and poetic, but running usually in the common form of dialogue, both high and low.

The play I now take up, "Cymbeline," is an instance of this. It is neither comedy nor tragedy, but may be classed under the form of comedy according to the definition of this term which has just been given.

It is laid on British soil in an ancient period, whether real or fictitious, and like "King Lear," "Macbeth," and all Shakespeare's dramas, wherever their scene is laid, has, as I have said, a smack of Warwickshire and Arden Forest; yet in spite of this, there is no merely local type of character exclusively evolved, either Greek or Roman,

Italian, French, or English, but a pure humanity as the basis of all. There is, however, in some of the poet's dramas, as in one character, at least, in this play of "Cymbeline," a certain profound subjectivity of thought.

This play, which has been sometimes supposed to belong to a more youthful stage of Shakespeare's works, is, by more thoughtful critics, assigned to the period of his later dramas, such as "Hamlet" and "Othello." Its style is too serious for my definition of comedy, and though it does not exhibit traces of exalted poetry, it is clear and simple in its prose.

It reminds one both of barbarism and civilization, and if its figures are dressed in British tunics or Roman brazen armor, this is of little consequence.

None of Shakespeare's women, or those of any other dramatist, equal Imogen's feminine perfection of womanly purity that springs from the central principle of feminine nature. It is genuine and unconscious—one lustrous immaculate pearl. It is the essence of love, natural, gentle, patient, enduring, thinking no evil.

Imogen forgives her most treacherous enemies,

and seems to harbor no revenge, is ready to obey her husband's letter that she be killed, is true to his love, is unchanging in her patience, unswerving in her affection. This is the deep lesson of the drama.

Imogen's character needs no ornament; it is born of perfect love—innate, spiritual, and divine. No female personage of Shakespeare's plays sinks more quietly, more indelibly into the mind of the reader.

It is strange that few plays contain more Homeric and classical allusions fitly applied than "Cymbeline."

Shakespeare must have read the Iliad, it may be of Chapman's translation, aided by what of the Greek language he knew. Shakespeare was an educated man. He had the culture that was comprehended in his age. If modern science had then existed he would have delighted in its wonderful progress, as his marvelous guesses in respect to the circulation of the blood, the electric currents in the atmosphere, and the law of evolution in "The Tempest" show. Sir Thomas Brown's observations on

the dew-claws of dogs and the left-footedness of parrots betoken original scientific observation, but Shakespeare, as one who reached the inner spirit beneath the fact, thus linking nature with the human soul, and saw the divine beauty of the starry firmament—the prophet poet—was the greater genius ; but I believe his calm reason looking before and after would have led him in the advancement of science to something like conservatism.

Another striking figure in "Cymbeline," that forms a strong contrast to Imogen, is the Queen, who is a British Medea of masculine barbarity as well as intelligence. She supplements her weaker husband. Her description of England, though not exactly scientific, is wonderfully true :

Queen—"Remember, sir, my liege,
The kings your ancestors, together with
The natural bravery of your isle, which stands
As Neptune's park, ribbed and paled in
With rocks unscaleable and roaring waters,
With sands that will not bear your enemies' boats,
But suck them up to the topmast. A kind of conquest
Cæsar made here ; but made not here his brag

Of 'came, and saw, and overcame:' with shame—
The first that ever touch'd him—he was carried
From our coast, twice beaten; and his shipping—
Poor ignorant baubles!—on our terrible seas,
Like egg-shells moved upon their surges, crack'd
As easily 'gainst our rocks."

It is strange that in such an oppressive drama, dragging the mind downward by its expectant ill, there could have sprung up the most beautiful golden lyric that exists; most musical, singing itself, thus beginning:

"Hark, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phœbus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies."

This lovely expression of "chaliced flowers" is one of the many illustrations that showed Shakespeare's genuine love of flowers. He observes their peculiarities of form and color, symbolic meaning, and poetic expression. I would not, for one, have the Shakespearean garden changed into a botanic *hortus siccus*, invaluable as it is to the advancement of scientific knowledge. For in turning over

those withered leaves, I would not forget that this dried flower, for example, may have nodded in its beautiful blue color from the icy summit of an Alpine cliff, or that this one grew in a savage western wilderness and formed its only ornament, or that this dead lily rested in life on the broad waters of the Amazon, or that this, the desert eremite, too small even for fragrance, has cheered the heart of the weary traveller over the burning sands of Arabia, saying to him, "up heart, there is still hope for thee!" So nature seemed to open its secrets to the poet. Nature is beautiful in its own forms, and organic nature runs in curvilinear, not straight, lines; ever aspiring, like the vine, to climb in spirals higher and higher into the free air. This seemed to be Shakespeare's view of it in the life of flowers.

The two speakers who open the first act of the play talk naturally, explaining the circumstances of the drama. There is rarely a coarse phrase. The Latin pun on *mulier* near the end is, to say the least, amusingly elaborate.

AS YOU LIKE IT

This is a rich comedy in the best sense of the word, full of genial humor, sparkling wit, and pleasing nature. The scene of this glorious open-air play is, to be sure, placed in Bordeaux and the Forest of Ardennes in France, but is really laid in English Warwickshire, and in close touch with Sherwood Forest and the ballad poetry.

In this very play it is said:

"They say he is already in the Forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England: they say many young men flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world."

Shakespeare loved his native land, and built up his visionary on the real. We are, in the play, in a great shadowy forest, with oaks here and there, sunny green spots, and a group of foresters in Lincoln green, with long yew bows, spears, and bugles, such as the outlaws of English legend bore.

Orlando, banished, had gone to them, who though exiled, was a brave man, capable of love. He shows his courage in slaying the lioness that

"with udders all drawn dry,
Lay couching, head on ground, with catlike watch,
When that the sleeping man should stir; for 'tis
The royal disposition of that beast
To prey on nothing that doth seem as dead."

Orlando sends his bloody handkerchief to Rosalind. The plot is a story illustrating three degrees of love, a charming comedy, perhaps more popularly read than any other, in which Shakespeare recalls his romantic youth of careless pleasure mingled with some serious thoughts of misspent time that awake upbraidings of conscience. He speaks in the words of the whilom courtier, "the melancholy Jaques."

Jaques is not a bitter satirist of life, and his reflections are softened by the solitude of nature and the pensive reflections of an amiable humor. There is a laugh at the bottom of his contempt and a charity for human faults. The wounded stag gives him his allegory, in which pathos is mixed with scorn, pity for the poor animal, and contempt for the shams of life. The philosophic mind in the poet is awakened, and the thoughts of an earnest

spirit well up from deeper springs. The world shut out, conscience speaks in the calmer eventime.

Jaques is called a "fool," as well as Touchstone; the folly consists in carrying the contemplative spirit beyond its bounds, and becoming critic instead of actor, throwing up the fight; but Jaques is at heart good and kindly, whom life has somewhat saddened and disgusted. It has been said truly that the only blot in this delightful comedy is in betrothing Celia to Oliver instead of to Jaques.

Rosalind is the sparkling gem, the heroine, though the question is not settled which of the two maids is the taller. Rosalind has a witty mind, and remains arch and tricksome to the last, even in the epilogue. She is a bit mannish, like a lively boy playing both sexes, delightful to the end as a beauteous woodlawn sprite.

It is life under the greenwood tree. Shakespeare enters the region of romance, takes down the bars, and lets us into the broad fields of the imagination, where we rejoice to wander released from all care and restlessness.

The style is easy and that of the common life, not of the inflated romance taken from Spain and France of that day. Shakespeare, as mentioned, was the contemporary of Cervantes, and both of them as reformers returned to their country's idiomatic speech.

Homely words, as in these examples:

"Let the world slide."

"He drew a dial from his poke,"

the old Norman French for pocket.

The pun where "goats" and "Goths" are interchanged is likewise an illustration of this ordinary speech. The man who said he liked Shakespeare because he was so full of quotations might find much in "As You Like It" to confirm his opinion, as in the words:

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players."

"Whoever loves that loved not at first sight."

"Sweet are the uses of adversity."

"Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones and good in everything."

Gay, bright, and changing, it is Shakespeare's thoughts out of the fullness of youth, and of his growing philosophy. The times are mirrored in his play, when the poet talks of "South Sea bubble," and the common contrast of forces, organic and inorganic, when he speaks of "breaking his shins against it."

A noble contrast is drawn between Fortune and Nature, the former giving only "the world's gifts," the other showing us the eternal lineaments of the permanent and divine.

Swearing by his honor who had no Fortune, reigns in gifts of the world, not in the lineaments of Nature.

No more healthful and happy counsel for a temperate life, packed in a few words, could have been devised than the speech of old Adam :

"Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty;
For in my youth I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood,
Nor did not with unbashful forehead woo
The means of weakness and debility;
Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty, but kindly."

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

This play appeared in the first folio edition of Shakespeare's works, and was written probably about 1574. It was undoubtedly adapted from Marlowe, but what was Shakespeare's bears his own stamp.

A beautiful young woman with a vixenish temper, whose

> "tongue will tell the anger of [her] heart,
> Or else [her] heart concealing it will break,"

and a lover and husband determined to have his way, no matter how rough-shod, and we have the plot. A big man with a hunter's whip snapping, and louder language, is not the modern means of settling love disputes, or of bringing about harmony in marital relations, though it may have better suited Shakespeare's times.

"The Inception," so called, was possibly taken from the story in "Arabian Nights" of "Abu-Hassan, the wag, in the Caliph's palace," and the play is one within a play, a device used more than once by the dramatist.

The comedy begins when Katharine enters on the scene. She makes matters lively; she treats her gentle sister like a slave, but the "shrew" meets a rock. The masculine will conquers even by brutal impertinence and affected cruelty, while the better element is radical and really prevails.

The scriptural precept that the wife should obey her husband is acknowledged and confirmed in Kate's speech at the end:

"A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;
And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it.
Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
And for thy maintenance commits his body
To painful labour both by sea and land,
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;
And craves no other tribute at thy hands
But love, fair looks and true obedience."

It is to be supposed that some unconscious sense of love is awakened in both. But praise for thy sweet humility, brave Kate!

The lofty spiritual height of St. Paul's doctrine concerning the marriage state and its unity, its likeness to heavenly things, was not reached.

The true equality of the sexes and the freedom of woman are not realized in this conception; but the rough lesson taught is not a bad one, even in this present time of so many mercenary marriages and shameful divorces.

Petruchio and Katharine are strong Shakespearean characters that will live. They are Shakespeare at play, the lion free in his gamboling. Petruchio is a masculine figure, strong and rude, but loves his wife while abusing her. He meets fire with fire; "kills her in her own humour." He woos her in his love speeches shown in his outrageous behavior. He denies her reason. He makes her to say the sun is the moon and the moon the sun, as he lists. This is abominable, but it effects his purpose; drastic, but Kate was made over as Lucretia Borgia was made over, by a good marriage.

Something in the rugged strength of Petruchio is said to have aroused the playwright Greene's

jealous spite, as if Shakespeare had robbed him or overtopped his own play, and gave rise to his pamphlet, and scornful saying that "he thought himself the only Shakescene in the country."

The play is pure comedy, and the scene is laid in Padua, Italy. Many things might lead us to believe the tradition that Shakespeare once visited the land of

> "fruitful Lombardy
> The pleasant garden of great Italy;"

and

> "fair Padua, nursery of arts."

Perhaps he stood inside the many-domed church of San Giustiniani, and looked at Giotto's frescoes in the Arena Chapel. He describes Italian costume, especially women's dresses, with minuteness, and makes use of Latin words and Italian expressions such as the people used, so that it would seem as if these came by personal observation.

It is curious to see brought out a custom in the legal profession that continues, if I mistake not, to this day:

> "And do as adversaries do in law,
> Strive mightly, but eat and drink as friends."

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

This play, though called a comedy, leaves out the comic element and is of sterner ethical fibre, entering more deeply into humanity.

Its central figure is Angelo, whom the Duke of Vienna, in his absence for a considerable period, makes his deputy, endowing him with absolute authority, having apparently the most unbounded confidence in the man :

Duke of Vienna— "Angelo,
There is a kind of character in thy life,
That to th' observer doth thy history
Fully unfold. Thyself and thy belongings
Are not thine own so proper, as to waste
Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee.
Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for ourselves ; for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd
But to fine issues ; nor Nature never lends
The smallest scruple of her excellence,
But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines
Herself the glory of a creditor,
Both thanks and use."

Angelo is a "public creature." He is a born ruler; he has a talent for the administration of public affairs; he is "a man of law." His "solid will" is the great governing wheel that turns the machinery of state. He is a man of precedents, of outward form but not of inward spirit, and the conception of justice as one form of love—the love of others, when applied to the regulation of men in groups and companies for their common good and happiness, and the spiritual law of righteousness to guide one's own conduct, were outside his thinking. He is a cold and unrelenting ruler; he applies the law mercilessly to all but himself; he condemns in others, sins of which he is guilty. He is hypocritical and base as well as cruel; on the outside awe-inspiring, he is like a tall pine of the Apennines, buttressed by the slow forces of time and opposing winds, but rotten at the core and ready to fall with a crash.

Isabella, who is a lofty type of the Shakespearean woman, sees through Angelo, and is bold enough to charge him with crime:

Isabella—"'Tis not impossible
But one, the wicked'st caitiff on the ground,
May seem as shy, as grave, as just, as absolute
As Angelo; even so may Angelo,
In all his dressings, characts, titles, forms,
Be an arch-villain; believe it, royal prince:
If he be less, he's nothing; but he's more."

Yet it is this Isabella who at the last asks for his life, and with a touch of angelic mercy says to the Duke:

"Most bounteous sir,
Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd,
As if my brother lived: I partly think
A due sincerity govern'd his deeds,
Till he did look on me: since it is so,
Let him not die."

Angelo is reprieved with the rest. He, the chief offender, escapes, but he shows no repentance; to the last is unmoved. He is remarried to Mariana, his long betrothed and wronged wife. This has been thought to be the one blot upon a strong play; but Shakespeare cannot be lightly amended. He makes his lesson of charity's victory complete. The sinner is in the hand of God to

repent or suffer. God will rule over him in the infinite spaces of eternity.

The Duke of Vienna plays an important part in his disguise as an observer of character, and in his easy nature it is not unlikely that Shakespeare may have shadowed forth the character of that Solomon, James I., and the happy-go-lucky, disorderly condition of public affairs in the government of England.

Claudio, the condemned man, though amiable, is not so strong as his sister Isabella. He fears death:

"Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling:—'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed worldly life

That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise
To what we fear of death."

There is a slight reminder in these words both of Homer and of Dante, though Shakespeare needed not to go to either for inspiration.

Those who are accustomed in their daily talk to use the devil's name needlessly, whatever this spirit of evil may be, have no support in Shakespeare, and find themselves rebuked in the Duke's words :

" Respect to your great place ! and let the devil
Be sometime honour'd for his burning throne ! "

COMEDY OF ERRORS.

The present comedy is upon a somewhat lower plane, and turns upon the simple fact of a strong physical resemblance between two actors in the comedy, leading to confused and amusing scenes, some of them quite serious, as brawls, rages, accusations of dishonesty, estranging of husband and wife, and imprisonments.

It is entertaining, and if acted skillfully might be greatly so.

The art shown is to keep the actors apart, so that their identity may remain doubtful, and this of course limits the time and makes the play comparatively short. There is no poetic elevation, but the humor of Shakespeare shines out at times unmistakably.

Of all places, that Ephesus should be chosen for such juggling and pranks! Poor Antipholus of Ephesus is the hardest used, he comes near to losing his reputation and liberty. Perhaps the play would not be considered very ludicrous now, but doubtless was so in its day. Parts of the play run easily from prose into rhyme. America and the Indies are treated as being about identical. Shrewd phrases, now familiar, are spoken:

"Marry, he must have a long spoon that must eat
with the devil."

So close is the resemblance that at the denouement the Duke says:

"Stay, stand apart; I know not which is which."

"One of these men is Genius to the other."

"Methinks you are my glass, and not my brother:"

incredible, but supposedly plausible. The play is genuine comedy, and stage action is brought about smoothly without overdrawn demonstration.

The plot is taken from Plautus ("Mercator"), the Shakespeare of Latin comedy.

One would have thought that twins separated by accident and brought up in cities so distant from each other would lose, when men, their physical resemblance to each other, and more and more lessen the confusion of personal identity; but the plot was good enough for the poet to use in a jocose and offhand way.

TWELFTH NIGHT.

Here is a play fitted to be acted during Twelfth Night's season of festivities. With "All's Well that Ends Well," it is printed in the folio edition of 1623. They are about the last of Shakespeare's comedies. In "Twelfth Night" are some allusions that may serve to mark the date, as, for instance, there is one sentence which is clearly written in defence of Sir Walter Raleigh.

"The Romance literature of Europe was a com-

mon property, from which Elizabethan writers of every grade drew material for their own performances, using them with all possible variety of adaptation.

"Italy was the fountain head of these fictions; although they might have traveled thither from the East, and gradually assumed European shapes and character."

The scheme of this play comes from this source, or from one of those medieval fictions from which English playwrights freely drew. The real comedy and poetry, however, were Shakespeare's, and his thought and style refine the original play.

The scene was laid in Illyria and the sea coast near it. Orsino, duke of the country, whose deep-phrased love is fixed upon Olivia, thus speaks:

"If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! it had a dying fall:
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour! Enough; no more:
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.

O spirit of love, how quick and fresh thou art!
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute! so full of shapes is fancy,
That it alone is high fantastical."

Viola, a king's daughter, shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria, mourns the probable destruction of her brother, but is assured by the captain that he saw him lashed to a spar and safely riding the waves. Viola, brought up as a simple shepherdess, becomes a servant of Orsino, Duke of Illyria, and serves him as a page disguised in masculine attire; she falls ardently in love with him, but is sent as a messenger to Olivia, whom the Duke loves, and who lives in solitariness for her brother's death.

Sir Toby, uncle to Olivia, here introduced, seems more like a rough English squire than an eastern European. He cries:

"And so be these boots too: and they be not,
let them hang themselves in their own straps."

"He is drunk nightly" with Sir Andrew Ague-cheek, who also resembles an occidental character,

who capers about, and is "a great eater of beef" that "does harm to his wits"—doubtless very comic to the audience of that period.

The Clown, too, makes good sport and sings "mellifluous songs."

Sir Toby's use of "sack" seems to link the play with "Merry Wives of Windsor."

Malvolio, a vain fool, with his "yellow cross-gartered leggins," is one of Shakespeare's characters that lives. He says of Viola, disguised as a man:

"Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy; as a squash is before 'tis a peascod, or a codling when 'tis almost an apple: 'tis with him in standing water, between boy and man. He is very well-favoured and he speaks very shrewishly; one would think his mother's milk were scarce out of him."

Malvolio is a prosaic, orderly coxcomb, a kind of steward of Olivia's household, who aspires egregiously even to Olivia.

Maria, the maid, hits off thus Malvolio's character:

Sometimes he is a sort of puritan, "or anything constantly but a time-pleaser; an affectioned ass, that cons state without book and utters it by great swarths: the best persuaded

of himself, so crammed, as he thinks, with excellencies, that it is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him ; and on that vice in him will my revenge find notable cause to work."

"I will drop in his way some obscure epistles of love ; wherein, by the colour of his beard, the shape of his leg, the manner of his gait, the expressure of his eye, forehead, and complexion, he shall find himself most feelingly personated. I can write very like my lady your niece : on a forgotten matter we can hardly make distinction of our hands."

All this she skillfully does, and Malvolio becomes a more self-bespangled ass than ever. His self-complacency, thinking no one sees or hears, is hugely comic, and he minces along most ludicrously.

In the letter, which Maria feigns as coming from Lady Olivia, occur the familiar words :

"But be not afraid of greatness : some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em."

Malvolio comes in smirkingly,

"his face into more lines than is in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies,"

a contemporaneous fact that had just occurred.

Maria speaks of this latter as if it were in the author's thought to further its success.

Viola, with woman's wit and subtle ingenuity, displaces the image of Olivia from the Duke's mind and fastens his love at last upon herself. In her arguments she uses the well-known words:

"She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud
Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought;
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?"

In this amusing comedy, the plot of the whole is this: Malvolio is badly punished for his vanity, but his penance is short, being not at heart a bad fellow. Viola, by her wit and genuine love for the Duke, takes the place of Olivia in his affections, Olivia becoming the wife of Sebastian, the brother of Viola, saved from perishing in the sea; so all ends well.

The comedy is a bright one, worth reading on rainy days and fair days, though the Clown sings at last:

"For the rain it raineth every day."

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

Shakespeare "held the many-coloured mirror up to nature," and this comedy is another phase of Love, but it is begun in affectation. The very scene of it is in an artificial court and French park, not in a free wildwood:

> "Our court shall be a little Academe,
> Still and contemplative in living art."

This was one of the nineteen plays published during Shakespeare's life, and although it has been charged by critics, and not unjustly, as bearing the marks of juvenility, it is notably amusing, admirable reading for dull weather, and it contains some passages worthy of the poet.

The freakish young King of Navarre conceives the plan to bind himself and three of his courtiers by a solemn oath to confine themselves for a space of three years to the pursuits of philosophy and other high studies, during which period they should abjure all society of men and women, eat but one meal a day, fast entirely one day in the week, and sleep but three hours at night.

> "The mind shall banquet, though the body pine."

These hard conditions are broken in upon by the unlooked-for coming of the King of France's daughter and three of her ladies on a political embassy, who, by their beauty and wit, scatter to the winds the King of Navarre's fine scheme of study, and nature resumes her sway.

In the discussions of Navarre with his companions, and those of the French ladies, the chief speaker, himself inly hostile to the King's plan, is the young Biron, who has a mocking spirit, though he sometimes rises into higher thoughts with a touch of "painted rhetoric," as thus when he pleads the cause of Love :

"Love," "lives not alone immured in the brain ;
But, with the motion of all elements,
Courses as swift as thought in every power,
And gives to every power a double power,
Above their functions and their offices.
It adds a precious seeing to the eye ;
A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind ;
A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound,"

"For valour, is not Love a Hercules,
Still climbing trees in the Hesperides?
Subtle as Sphinx ; as sweet and musical
As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair ;"

"Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,
Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.
It is religion to be thus forsworn,
For charity itself fulfils the law."

Biron says vehemently:

"Study is like the heaven's glorious sun,
That will not be deep-search'd with saucy looks."

He gives a sling at study:

"Small have continual plodders ever won,
Save base authority from others' books."

The introduction into the play of a fantastic Spanish knight, named Don Adriano de Armado, exhibits Shakespeare's command, when he chose to exercise it, of the language of pedantry, "taffeta phrases," as the custom was in Queen Elizabeth's age, and even in the writings of Sir Philip Sidney, to toss these "silken terms" as a bull tosses red rags. Shakespeare could play at that with boys' delight. This phraseology served as a foil to his plain speech. Hyperbolic phrases of pseudo-learning, long rustling words which travel on many feet and are tricked off with false colors of rhetoric, were an object of his lively wit. Lan-

guage to him was simply an instrument to thought and of secondary value. His influence on English literature will be ever most powerful.

To read Shakespeare would seem to be the duty of our public men. When the teacher of right goes out to instruct and guide men, let him lock up his study and his books in it, deny and sacrifice his ambition to be regarded as a deep thinker, a great scholar, and speak in the plain language of ordinary men, without coarseness, but from a simple, true heart. The lawyer should throw off his professional robes and drive for the right, content to lose causes, if may be, though in the end he will grow in power and popularity, and would build up the foundations of law and good government; statesmen, political orators, preachers, lecturers, essayists, journalists, authors, even poets, should speak only what they know and feel from the bases of fact and nature, with Shakespeare's real knowledge; and though they might not become Shakespeares, they would come nearer to him in the plain path he led and nearer to truth and sources of power.

This play, which is elegant, like the finer ambitious language of a young man, is nevertheless not without a sprinkling of the commonest words and phrases, such as "loggerhead," "work-a-day world," and there is one passage from which Goldsmith might have caught the idea of the familiar phrase, "Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise," which in Shakespeare is thus expressed:

"Were my lord so, his ignorance were wise,
Where now his knowledge must prove ignorance."

In the contest of the sexes, the women won a complete victory, and the king and his courtiers are assigned for a year before the renewal of agreeable relations, to perform useful tasks of life. Biron in especial, who is not bad at heart, to chasten his mocking spirit, is required to superintend a hospital for the sick.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

The title of the play has been much commented upon and it has been supposed that its early title was "Love's Labour's Won," and that it was the counterpart of "Love's Labour's Lost," for which

there is the shadow of a reason; yet the title "All's Well that Ends Well" fits it equally, and in the last words spoken this title is almost given word for word. In the play itself the labor of love is truly great and difficult, but the end happily attained.

The heroine of the play is a rare type of woman in Shakespeare's multifarious characterizations; she unites in herself some contrary elements, the greatest of which are love and ambition. Helena is the true heroine with—

"youth, beauty, wisdom, courage."

Her will is bold—it might indeed be thought at times, hard, calculating, and unfeminine; she is the daughter of a great physician and wise man, but has set her heart on one higher in rank, Bertram, Count of Rousillon; here the selfish is planted in the unselfish, and the explanation is left to the thoughtful mind of the reader. Helena's life is a constant struggle between honest affection and strong ambition, and the wonderful force of the character is shown in really attaining the object of

both these desires and reconciling them. Some of her words at times in this mental contest are difficult to understand from their depth, while others are more simple and pathetic. She says :

" Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven : the fated sky
Gives us free scope ; only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.
What power is it which mounts my love so high ;
That makes me see, and cannot feed mine eye ?
The mightiest space in fortune nature brings
To join like likes."

She is thoughtfully philosophic, reasons subjectively of things, and maintains the inward conflict on a calm and level line of reason by an intense will; sometimes she is more simple and natural. She says :

" My friends were poor but honest ; so's my love :
Be not offended ; for it hurts not him
That he is loved of me : I follow him not
By any token of presumptuous suit ;
Nor would I have him till I do deserve him."

" There's something in 't
More than my father's skill, which was the great'st

Of his profession, that his good receipt
Shall for my legacy be sanctified
By the luckiest stars in heaven."

She confesses her secret to the Countess, Bertram's mother, and wins her love, and she also obtains the firm favor of the King of France by curing him with her father's prescriptions; at length by parental and royal command she is married to Bertram. He, feeling that he has been forced into this marriage and that she is of lower rank, departs that same day for Italy, where he is afterwards followed by Helena under disguise as a pilgrim; and in the wars of the Duke of Florence he gains military renown.

The three older characters, Lafeu, Parolles, "a very tainted fellow and full of wickedness," and the Clown, who like nearly all of Shakespeare's clowns conceals under his fool's-cap much practical wisdom and likewise makes nonsense of words, such as:

"To say nothing, to do nothing, to know nothing and to have nothing, is to be a great part of your title; which is within a very little of nothing."

—these make up the few ludicrous features of a strong comedy. Bajazet is true history.

The play is like the First Lord's words:

"The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair, if they were not cherished by our virtues."

I leave the end of this vigorous drama to the reader. It is approached by "the inaudible and noiseless foot of time," but it is drawn out, some might possibly say, to an almost painful expectancy, yet it is hard to amend Shakespeare. Helena and Bertram are reunited in happy marriage bonds.

King—"All yet seems well; and if the end so meet,
The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet."

Greek Plays.

This title of Greek plays, as well as the titles that follow of Roman Tragedies and Italian plays, have no real significance, but are here used by me only for convenience in classification, since the plays are not strictly classical.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

This drama pursues closely the story of the Iliad and it constitutes a fable for critics. It is a complex work and is of lower tone and style than Shakespeare's other plays. I do not think that Shakespeare, consciously or unconsciously, set himself to rival Homer on the same field but from Chapman's Homer or Florio's translations or his own knowledge of Greek, he was acquainted with Homer's Iliad and in this play of "Troilus and Cressida," if he indeed had a hand in it, he freely introduces the Homeric characters of Hector, Paris, Helen, Æneas, as well as on the Greek side Nestor, Agamemnon, Achilles, Menelaus, Patroclus, Diomedes, and Thersites.

Thersites is made to say of himself,

"I am a rascal;"

he is witty but hardly with the wit and point of Shakespeare's other characters of the same stamp.

Achilles, instead of eating out his soul in Homeric anger, is humorous, lying in his tent in inactivity, jerking out his blunt invectives against Agamemnon and the war.

Ulysses is the "foxy Ulysses." Ajax is made a dancing bear. Agamemnon has an imperious strut, but now and then says a strong thing, as:

"He that is proud eats up himself; pride is his own glass, his own trumpet, his own chronicle; and whatever praises itself but in the deed, devours the deed in the praise."

On the Trojan side Hector almost alone sustains his Homeric dignity and nobility. Homer puts into the mouth of Hector the noble reply to Polydamas in the battle with the Greeks:

"The best of omens is our country's cause."

(εἷς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος, ἀ μύ νεσ Θαε περὶ πάς ρης.)

Shakespeare makes Hector say to Cassandra who urges him not to go into the fight:

"The end crowns all,
And that old common arbitrator, Time,
Will one day end it."

"Life every man holds dear; but the dear man
Holds honour far more precious-dear than life."

Shakespeare's Helen does not talk like the high-born dame, and Cassandra, instead of being the awful and fiery prophetess, is but a "demented superstitious girl."

The play is given in the folio edition of 1609 with other Shakespearean plays, but was doubtless made up for the stage from an earlier composition. If Shakespeare wrote it or fitted it for stage performance, it was the work of youth and, though following in a measure the story of the Iliad, seems to me almost like a piece of boyish fun, making sport of the personages of that epic.

The love of Troilus and Cressida, the hero and heroine, if they may so be called, is on a low level, especially Cressida's, who ends as a wanton in the Greek camp, but who, nevertheless, is made to speak words of love. The biggest and wickedest rascal of all is the oily-tongued wicked old uncle of Cressida, Pandarus, his ribald song of "Ha, Ha, Ha!" is not equal to Shakespeare's other songs. Yet in this whole uncanny farrago of evil lawlessness there is now and then what may be well regarded as flashes of Shakespeare's power, as in the sweet familiar line:

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

This play comes actually in the authorized order of Shakespeare's plays after "Pericles" and

"Timon of Athens;" it is neither comedy nor tragedy, but a historic *refauché* of an immortal story, yet Shakespeare in this play was in a cycle of comedy. It never rises to the usual easy flowing inspiration of the poet, but is labored and dry. Even fierce Achilles, when at last aroused to arms, gives mean orders to his myrmidons and slays Hector when he is sitting unarmed.

TIMON OF ATHENS.

This drama, as well as that of "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," has Greece and the Orient for back-ground, and, as has been already said, they are classic in name only.

The story of "Timon" is found in Plutarch. Timon is the millionaire of Athens; as another actor in the play says of him:

> "If I want gold, steal but a beggar's dog
> And give it Timon, why, the dog coins gold."

Timon was naturally a loving, generous man, who trusted his friends with unbounded confidence; he entrusts the disposition of his enormous wealth to his treasurer Flavius; he says to him:

"To think I shall lack friends? Secure thy heart;
If I would broach the vessels of my love,
And try the argument of hearts by borrowing,
Men and men's fortunes could I frankly use."

"And in some sort these wants of mine are crown'd,
That I account them blessings; for by these
Shall I try friends; you shall perceive how you
Mistake my fortunes; I am wealthy in my friends."

So he lavishes his gold upon his friends and all who servilely court him. He feasts his clients in a princely manner, buys their pictures or poems, whether good or bad, he makes them large loans, he pours his wealth into their extended hands; but he is no Carnegie, to do real good to men with his riches; he seeks only his and their vain gratification.

He finds them false to their promises, dishonest sycophants, and his kindness changes to hate. He seeks a solitary place by the seashore. He had done with man. He utters truths pressed out of his burning heart against human selfishness and dishonesty. It is odd to see Shakespeare in the rôle of pessimist, and it somehow does not seem to

sit well on him; yet as the interpreter of humanity he regards the bad as well as the good.

The lesson of "Timon of Athens" is money. Money, like life, beauty, and power, is a gift; it is not a toy to be thrown about as Timon did for his own pleasure or that of his friends. It is the "love of money," not money itself, which Scripture calls the root of all evil and which is noxious and destructive; this wholesome admonition was never more needed than at the present; the gospel of money is preached from one end of the land to the other; it enters into all. Godliness is gain. Public institutions are run on the narrow gauge of trade. Political systems and economists base their final arguments on financial prosperity. Life itself is reckoned to a nicety solely in its money relations. There are some fathers who send their sons to the university, not to discipline and broaden their minds in studies which require mental concentration, but to make them sharper for a business life so as to be foremost in the race for gain. It would be easy for the student, thus intellectually equipped, when he leaves college and

enters the professional school or business life, to master the practical, to conquer the difficulties, and learn the methods of business, citizenship, and politics; college is the place for thorough study, to lay deep the foundation principles of truth. In literary studies it is better to obtain a genuine knowledge of one great subject or author, such as Plato or Aristotle, than all the minor classics or the Greek logomachies of the Byzantine period, with the exception, perhaps, of Chrysostom and Origen. It is better to sit under the shadow of the great oak of Dante than to wander aimlessly through the decayed luxuriant garden of Italian letters. It is better to know Shakespeare than a hundred English authors and poets. This may be combined in the university course with the pursuit of the noble advancement of modern scientific thought. But a long leap has been made from money to education, and above all from poor disillusioned Timon of Athens, in whose eyes the yellow glare of gold has become sickening and deadly. Money is the moral of the play. Some doubtless have felt the force of Charles Lamb's rather strongly expressed words :

"O money, money, how blindly thou hast been worshipped, and how stupidly abused! Thou art health and liberty and strength; and he that has thee may rustle his pockets at the foul fiend."

Money is good if gotten in clean ways. This brighter side of money ought by no means to be lost sight of; magnificent examples are found, and none more than in our own country, of some rich men who use their wealth or portions of it for the promotion of civilization, so that these democratic wealthy men cast kings and nobles behind their backs, in making themselves benefactors of their race.

Timon did not understand this, he retired from the society of men.

Alcibiades was his friend, who when a youth was a disciple of Socrates, but afterwards turned out to be a libertine and traitor to his country. Alcibiades, with his train of courtesans, comes also to Timon to solicit gold, and Timon flings his gold with curses at their heads. He retreats to the sea-shore, lives in a cave, and digs his grave by the sea, so that its waves would roll over his bones and

dispose of them at last in its hidden depths, as if he would carry his hatred of man into the eternal abyss.

Timon—"Come not to me again : but say to Athens,
Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
Upon the beached verge of the salt flood ;
Who once a day with his embossed froth
The turbulent surge shall cover."

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

This delightful comedy is likewise laid in Greece, but is of an airy, playful tone. The bars are let down and the mind enters the enchanted fields of the imagination, where love undergoes strange changes, mingling human with fairy folk that sport in the moonbeams, and whose light footprints leave little green circles in the grass :

"To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,"

and vanish at the coming of the dawn. If much of the play be made of moonbeams, they

"are of imagination all compact."

It is a court drama played before Queen Elizabeth in all her pomp, and probably at the marriage

of some high personages, so that it seems to be composed with peculiar care and elegance, with a flattery at once delicate and loftily poetic, as in the words of Oberon to Puck :

" That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd : a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts :
But I might see Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell :
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower ; the herb I shew'd thee once :
The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid
Will make a man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb ; and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league."

The play blends mature thought with youthful

fire as in "Love's Labour's Lost," written in the last years of the sixteenth century, and abounds in classic allusions.

The scene is in Athens in the legendary time of Theseus, and Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons, whose figures and costumes are like those carved on the friezes of the temple of Theseus and the Parthenon, so that there is a touch of the Greek heroic, as when Theseus says to his queen Hippolyta:

"I woo'd thee with my sword."

Love plays its part on the stage, a triple or fourfold actor; and the scene is Shakespeare's favorite one of a vista in a forest.

The author, as we have seen, made much use of Plutarch's histories. The language of this play, however, is pure English, and both its poetry and prose flow like music.

The fairy folk are a Shakespearean creation and like no other in English or German. They are superior fairies. They are made of air and moonbeams, yet endowed with a bright intelligence. They love and hate, they have control over certain

natural forces, they ply between nature and humanity.

Oberon—' But we are spirits of another sort:
I with the morning's love have oft made sport;
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams."

Oberon, king of the fairies, can endure something of the daylight and rejoices in nature's beauties. He is a pure emanation from nature, yet with a superior touch, gifted with a playful and sometimes mischievous humor, though on the whole not unfriendly to man.

The fairies are the "scene-shifters" in dreams and ply between nature and humanity. Puck, the business sprite, who boasts of putting "a girdle round the earth in forty minutes," much prefers to sport with the birds and butterflies or to nestle in a bed of violets; yet he causes immense trouble to human pairs who are wandering bewildered in the vast forest.

The fairies change the affections of the lovers to

their opposites, so that the sweet-hearted Hermia compares sudden transformations to the direst things.

Lysander prophesies beforehand sorrow and woe, and says:

"War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold'!
The jaws of darkness do devour it up."

"Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth."

But all comes out happily and the tricksy fairies sing the marriage song.

During the nuptial festivities of Theseus and Hippolyta and the other pairs of lovers, there is introduced a comic by-play gotten up by peasants, of "Pyramus and Thisbe," which, if it accomplishes nothing more, brings to notice "bully Bottom" with his supreme confidence in himself, as the asinine-headed sweetheart of Titania, ordering about

the little fays, Peas-blossom, Cobweb, Mustard-seed, and is also ready to act Lion, Wall, or Mortar; he speaks his opinion to Theseus in the Ercles vein, a rude clod, but, touched by Shakespeare's genius, as individual and immortal as the most important characters. Shakespeare's close observation of nature and life is seen in such passages, where in Titania's language he describes with realistic minuteness "the dreadful English winter" that the poet himself had witnessed:

"Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land,
Have every pelting river made so proud,
That they have overborne their continents:
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat; and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard:
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud;
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,
For lack of tread, are undistinguishable;
The human mortals want their winter here;
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,

That rheumatic diseases do abound:
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
And on old Hiems' chin, and icy crown
An ordorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set."

Shakespeare's facts, as before said, give him a base for his poetry, and the ideal builds itself on the actual. In the play of "The Tempest," for example, how bare and grim the realism of the passage,

"They hurried us aboard a bark,"
A rotten carcass of a butt, not rigg'd
Nor tackle, sail, nor mast; the very rats
Instinctively have quit it."

Little escapes the poet's eye. He writes just what he sees and feels. He makes Theseus in this play good-naturedly excuse the slips of memory in the boorish minds of the actors, by referring to the stage-fright of "great clerks" or learned men who addressed him, suggested, perhaps, to the poet by his recollections of Burleigh, or even, it may be, of the wonderfully wise Lord Bacon:

"Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practised accent in their fears,
And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off."

We may possibly be reminded of a fine line in Keble's hymns, when we read poor distracted Helena's words:

"It is not night when I do see your face."

As noticed in other plays, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is pervaded by the scent of wild flowers, as in Oberon's speech to Puck:

"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows;
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,"
"There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers."

To hear this sportive play on the German stage, accompanied by Mendelssohn's fairy-music, is something not to be forgotten.

THE WINTER'S TALE.

This seems to be one of the latest of Shakespeare's dramas, dating about the year 1611. It

consists apparently of two plays. It is pure romance, audaciously breaking all bounds of time, place, and circumstance; it is full of errors of fact, as in the well-known illustration of identifying Bohemia, which has no coast line, with Sicily, which has one; it mixes up ancient and modern things, introducing then as living the Italian Renaissance painter, Giulio Romano, and has a burial conducted after a Christian form. It mixes up classical demi-gods, such as Hercules and Theseus, with Christian saints.

Its style is finished, but somewhat studied and involved, yet it has a great charm. Its morality is pure and lofty, and its end is joyous and serene; as I have quoted already from this play in relation to Shakespeare's conception of Nature and Art, I will not dwell upon this theme.

It was written to be acted before the Court of Elizabeth.

There could be no more enjoyable reading, about the fireside of a stormy winter's night, when tempestuous blasts of wind and snow dash against the windows, than this tale, which is purely of the

imagination and belongs to the Shakespearean beginning of the English romantic school of literature.

The play was published in the first folio of Shakespeare's works and it has been called the last of his comedies, but was written in the fullness of his strength. The story seems to have sprung from a mass of fables and "extant stories" in the Elizabethan times, with which the people amused their leisure hours; but what Shakespeare touched carried with it something real and vital. It is also of the "Middle Style" or a mingling of higher drama with common life and the language of the people.

"The Winter's Tale" is in one sense comedy, dealing with human woes and joys. It is pure fiction, but in regard to the Bohemian sea-coast, Greene, a geographer contemporary with Shakespeare, affirms the same fact on his map. This may show how little the country of Bohemia was known of in England at that time, though it appears incredible from the fact that but a century and a half before, John Huss, the Bohemian re-

former, was burned, and Shakespeare may have alluded to this in the line :

"It is an heretic that makes the fire."

But is not another explanation admissible, that, in the freedom of poetic license, Shakespeare, to add romance to his tale, takes the name of Bohemia, as good as any other strange land, to be that of a distant and almost unknown country ?

What mattered it to the poet what name of country he employed ?

Imogen in "Cymbeline" was the typical daughter, so Hermione was the typical wife. Hermione is the central character of "The Winter's Tale," her constancy, patience, unfailing love, and steadfast faith, burning unquenchably bright in the most trying conditions.

King Leontes was a jealous tyrant, who wrongs his wife, but in his youth he loved her. The words of Polixenes, King of Bohemia, which he applied to Leontes, might be the origin of the words which has been bestowed on Shelley of an "eternal child :"

Polixenes—"We were, fair queen,
Two lads that thought there was no more behind,
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,
And to be boy eternal."

The Chorus, Time, sweeps away the lapse of years and with his scythe cuts the drama into two parts, and in the second introduces Perdita, who from a babe in the wilderness, exposed to death, grows up

"A Shepherd's daughter"

in her blooming womanhood in Bohemia, and her maidenly words are characteristically simple, pure, and wise.

The play is brought back again to comedy by the rogue Autolycus, who changes his clothes, but not his vagabondish character; he sings:

"Jog on, jog on, the foot-path way,
And merrily hent the stile-a:
A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a."

There is no more beautiful scene than Hermione's awakening, when the sculptor's marble melts into life, and the power of art is seen to be triumphant.

PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE.

The play of "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," may be symbolized as a white lily, growing in the black mud of a swamp.

The pure spirit of the heroine, who is perhaps its principal character, saves the drama from corruption and exhales the sweetness of innocence.

The drama is undoubtedly Shakespeare's in point and passages, but not probably in its whole web and woof. The time of its authorship is judged to be 1609.

It also contravenes all classical rules; the reader is whisked from Antioch to Tyre, then to Ephesus, Tarsus, and Mitylene, as by magic bounds. The style is an even steady pace, though it passes through deep valleys of shame and humiliation. Yet its end is happy and its moral tone, on the whole, rises about its foul corruption.

It is Greek in one respect, it has a Chorus; oddly enough it is English in the fact that the Chorus is none other than "ancient Gower."

> "To sing a song that old was sung,
> From ashes ancient Gower is come."

Roman Tragedies.

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

This is the poorest of what I have denominated the Roman tragedies, but I will mention it first. In this play we reach the most disputable of Shakespeare's dramas.

If Shakespeare indeed composed it, his part was like a graft on a crabbed tree, or it may be he wrote it originally in his youthful days to make his audience sup full on horrors, as was the fashion of the times. His own genius was so strong that he comprehended all the elements and human conditions of passions.

He who could stand in sunshine on the clear mountain summit commercing with the skies could descend into the poisonous valley where loathsome things grow and move.

In this play the scene is laid in Rome, with the forum in the background, yet there is nothing of antique Roman nobleness, but a most degenerate baseness of the decline of the empire. The charac-

ters are not even historic, nor are they grand. The emperor, Saturninus, is weak; the empress, Tamora, is a foul fiend.

Titus Andronicus boasts of his warlike achievements, but shows no vigor in an emergency. The younger men are lewd fellows; poor Lavinia with her bleeding stumps of arms somehow is not pathetic. The dusky Aaron is a devil incarnate; only Lucius Andronicus shows manliness, and proves that Shakespeare was a democrat in the true sense of that word, recognizing the rights and freedom of the people.

The play is barbarous, bloody, and disgusting. Were it not for some delicate similes of flowers, birds, and nature, in which the poet is seen, it would be a wide waste of terrible crime.

The author speaks of "popish tricks" and "God and St. Stephen" in these old Roman days, yet his knowledge discriminating between the Greek and Roman gods and his frequent allusions to Ovid's metamorphoses, and quotations from Virgil and Horace, show a familiarity with these Latin authors.

The recurrence of Shakespearean phrases is to be observed, as in the words:

> "She is a woman, therefore may be wooed,
> She is a woman, therefore may be won,"

which brings to mind the wooing scene in Richard III.

I have come myself to believe in the Shakespearean authorship of this play, as bearing internal and external proof of this.

It has as good a claim as any in this respect. It appeared in the quarto of 1600 under the title "The Lamentable Roman Tragedy of Titus Andronicus." In London it was printed for Edward White in company with other undoubted Shakespearean dramas, but it was evidently written in no high mood of thought.

CORIOLANUS.

We come in this play to the genuine Roman of the olden time, hard and grand, where Shakespeare's genius seems to find a more sympathetic and firm ground; but Shakespeare, as has been more than once said, was at home in humanity,

and created new and lasting types. His clown is always a "clown," his hero, "a hero;" the fighter is set before us in Roman form both legendary and historic. Coriolanus was a precursor of that inflexible valor which led Rome to the conquest of the world.

The little town, Roma, seated on her seven hills, often assailed and sometimes captured, was never annihilated, and itself finally overcame the fierce Volsci and Etruscans represented in the play, and became the ruling power of Italy and of the world. It was of the period when a Roman demos had begun to make its appearance, and the majestic shadow also of the Roman mother is seen.

Coriolanus may never have done the marvelous warlike deeds, except in imagination, but the lesson of the tragedy is Pride, a passion working in a brave and haughty nature, invading and overthrowing its noble qualities, creating that unforgiving spirit which brought about a tragic end.

The play probably belongs to the beginning of the 17th century, and the later period of Shakespeare's life. It would seem to have been thrown

off rapidly, inspired by the story in "Plutarch's Histories," but putting new life into prosaic details.

Coriolanus is a Roman Achilles, a great figure, but without the beauty of the Greek. The only soft spot in his hard nature is his love for his mother, Volumnia, by whose entreaties and those of his wife, Virgilia, he magnanimously, in the first instance, spares Rome; yet he is no politician stooping to little things, but strives to ingratiate himself with the people, to unify them under his leadership. He, like Achilles, seems to do the fighting, and to make the whole host of his enemies flee before him. He defends his patrician views with rough and haughty force, but in the political field he fails to attain popularity, as is readily seen in his address to the people:

Coriolanus—"The people are abused; set on.
This paltering
Becomes not Rome; nor has Coriolanus
Deserved this so dishonour'd rub, laid falsely
I' the plain way of his merit."
"Tell me of corn!
This was my speech, and I will speak 't again"—
"Now, as I live, I will. My nobler friends,

I crave their pardons:
For the mutable, rank-scented many, let them
Regard me as I do not flatter, and
Therein behold themselves: I say again,
In soothing them, we nourish 'gainst our senate
The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition, [ter'd,
Which we ourselves have plough'd for, sow'd and scat-
By mingling them with us, the honour'd number;
Who lack not virtue, no, nor power, but that
Which they have given to beggars.

"How! no more!
As for my country I have shed my blood,"
" By Jove, 'twould be my mind!"
" Be not as common fools:"
' They chose their magistrate;
And such a one as he, who puts his 'shall,'
His popular 'shall,' against a graver bench
Than ever frown'd in Greece. By Jove himself,
It makes the consuls base!"

The pathetic point of the drama is where Coriolanus stands a suppliant in the market place before the altar of the Volsci, at Corioli, not in the braggadocio style, when he proclaims himself:

"My name is Caius Marcius,"
"My surname, Coriolanus;"

grim words to his hearers, but not boastful. Yet he breaks out once in a flame, when the Volscian General, Aufidius, who hates him for his superiority in warlike fame, called him a boy:

"Cut me to pieces, Volsces; men and lads,
Stain all your edges on me. 'Boy!' false hound!
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli;
Alone I did it. 'Boy!'"

Old Aufidius, his chief foe, again says of him:

"Thy country's strength and weakness."

Weakness, indeed, because selfish.

Coriolanus fell under many blows. The sacred Alban Mount and the sunny hilltops still are there under the clear blue sky of Italy, where Corioli and the ancient Latin cities stood; but the worshipers and fighters who regarded Rome as their mightiest foe are now but silent shadows.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

We have at last reached historic ground, but as has been already suggested, Shakespeare, for his

own purposes, sometimes swerves from history, though still true to life, and in this noble tragedy Brutus is evidently his hero. In such a stern, pure character and lover of his country as Brutus was, his killing of Cæsar was an act of savage grandeur and untaught paganism—he drew from deep instincts of native self-sacrifice wholly untrained by the higher law of Christianity. It is strange after so long a time of the teaching of Christianity, when almost the whole world has been reached by its mild divine truths, that even in Christian nations the pagan belief of Brutus should be re-erected into a kind of religion; what is violent cannot last. It seems sometimes as if permanent peace made progress by occasional retrogression; in zigzags, not in straight lines, that history repeats itself, and that even in Christian lands pagan ideas should be revived as if there had been no advance in civilization. Cæsar's greatness is recognized in this and other plays—his vast organizing ability and warlike, conquering energy —but in a spiritual sense he is not the adorable, nor is he Shakespeare's own highest conception of

greatness. He has been held to be the greatest man the world has ever seen—in force of mind and will, perhaps so—yet in the highest traits of moral character, like Napoleon, who comes nearest to him, he fails. He is the embodiment of power, which men worship. It is true, if he had lived longer he might have done even more as a constructor of a broad system of government, a lawgiver, a patron of letters, a political builder of empire, which would have become world-wide, as the world then was. To the last he was an ambitious man, working for self and power, the originator of Cæsarism, whose portentous shadow has since then overspread the world and entered every system—political, moral, and even religious. It was a kingdom of force opposed to that of righteousness. Cæsar was a subject worthy of Shakespeare's genius; he took hold of it in a simple, natural way. He is not taken off his feet by the greatness of his subject, nor does he create a demigod.

Cæsar crushed the factions of Sulla, Caius Marius, and the worthier contention of Pompey,

and gathered the reins of power into his own hand. He looked to the rulership of all—hence, the Roman empire—he drove over freedom and the popular rights. There was a call for the conspiracy of Brutus in the fact of Cæsar's ambition. Brutus saw in it that which menaced liberty, crushing the republic. Doubtless Cæsar's views were broad, and his system of government wonderfully calculated for the conquest and unification of the nations; himself, in one sense, was the beginning of Roman civilization in law, political science, art, and letters.

The excuse for absolutism in the conception of a more orderly form of government was proved in the line of most of his successors to be unjust and detestable—Cæsarism means war, righteousness means peace. Shakespeare seemed to have had a deep conception of this. In his poetic eye he saw a day in old Rome, the capitol, the senate, the forum, the splendid Julian Basilica, filled with officers and clients, the narrow streets tramped by many feet, and the market places also filled with crowds discussing political affairs, and the great

turn in the tide of them. He saw, too, the scene of Brutus and Mark Antony's speeches over the dead body of Cæsar, now so familiarly declaimed by schoolboys,—but is this an argument against them? What other speeches of ancient or modern times are like these for boys to declaim? They are models of forcible address, surpassing the speeches of Cicero, and the ages have caught them up.

Shakespeare does not entirely follow Plutarch's life of Cæsar; he had his own interpretation of the characters of Cæsar and Brutus; he came into the wide field of true dramatic motive. These persons become men instead of the forms and opinions of historians and essayists. Evidently the life of Cæsar made a deep impression on Shakespeare, as is instanced in other plays, calling him, for example in "Hamlet," "Mighty Cæsar," yet he makes Brutus, who truly loved Cæsar, say:

"Cæsar was ambitious."

Brutus was afraid of Cæsar's ambition. He knew Cæsar's power and feared for freedom. The scene of the conspirators' plot in Brutus's house, with

closed doors, and shadows, and the critical discussion of the characters of those to be chosen or omitted, is deeply impressive. The speeches of Brutus, Mark Antony, and Cassius, after the murder in the forum, marvelously differentiated, are characteristic. We might imagine Brutus ascending the rostrum in simple dignity, wrapped in his toga, and without a gesture. He is laconic, frank, and stately, but with loftier ideas than the rest—the highest pagan, though not Christian, ideas.

Brutus—"If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Cæsar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to Cæsar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Cæsar, this is my answer: not that I loved Cæsar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Cæsar were living, and die all slaves, than that Cæsar were dead, to live all freemen? As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love; joy for his fortune; honour for his valour; and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is

here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak; for him have I offended? I pause for a reply."

Cassius' speech is plausible and political, seeking to lower the estimation of "the great Cæsar," but Mark Antony's reveals the highest art of eloquence. He leads his audience along on one way, winningly pathetic and masterful. Then he turns with the fury of hot passion, carrying all like a lava stream before him. From thinly concealed sarcasm he suddenly shows his deeper design to stir the people to rise in rebellion:

Antony—"But yesterday the word of Cæsar might
Have stood against the world: now lies he there,
And none so poor to do him reverence.
O masters, if I were disposed to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong and Cassius wrong,
Who, you all know, are honourable men:
I will not do them wrong; I rather choose
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,
Than I will wrong such honourable men."

"I am no orator, as Brutus is;
But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man,
That love my friend; and that they know full well

That gave me public leave to speak of him :
For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,
To stir men's blood : I only speak right on ;
I tell you that which you yourselves do know ; [mouths,
Show you sweet Cæsar's wounds, poor, poor dumb
And bid them speak for me : for were I Brutus,
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue
In every wound of Cæsar's, that should move
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny."

The weird death of Brutus at Philippi ends the tragedy :

"For Brutus only overcame himself."

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

"Antony and Cleopatra" is great because the characters are great. It is a magnificent drama, and the consistency of the character of Antony throughout these, the last Roman plays—"Julius Cæsar" and "Antony and Cleopatra," is marvelous in the qualities of Antony, the most brilliant of the triumvirate of Rome. The same moving orator, the victorious general at Philippi, the hus-

band of Octavia, threw away all for his love of Cleopatra, but with the exception of his infatuated words of passion, he still is noble and magnanimous.

Antony cast aside duty and power for pleasure, and did it deliberately; but he fell on his sword, Roman-like, at the last. He walks the scene right royally; he was strong, but not so strong in wicked will as Cleopatra. She was a flower of wondrous beauty sprung from the slime of the Nile, entrancing and mysterious. Antony's love for her was the rift in the towering cliff that finally brought it to ruins. Antony was the same man who made the fiery speech over Cæsar's dead body, rousing the Roman people, turning the tide against the revolutionists, and really setting forth the first conception of the Roman empire. Antony knows himself with utmost perspicacity, and confesses his moral weakness. He also has imagination that sees beneath the surface of things to the true motives of actions.

The style of the play is simple and vigorous; it seems to have mingled the Saxon naturalness and

the Latin terseness of expression. In all this, Shakespeare's poetic genius vitalizes the commonplace. Such sentences as these are illustrative of the style of this martial play, as far as it has to do with the Roman soldier and politician.

Antony speaks of Octavius:

"He shall to Parthia. Be it art or hap,
He hath spoken true; the very dice obey him,
And in our sports my better cunning faints
Under his chance; if we draw lots, he speeds;
His cocks do win the battle still of mine
When it is all to naught, and his quails ever
Beat mine, in hoofed at odds, I will to Egypt:
And though I make this marriage for my peace,
I' the east my pleasure lies."

Antony, a keen observer, mixes scientific fact with poetry:

Antony—"Thus do they, sir: they take the flow o' the Nile
By certain scales i' the pyramid; they know,
By the height, the lowness, or the mean, if dearth
Or foison follow: the higher Nilus swells,
The more it promises: as it ebbs, the seedsman
Upon the slime and ooze scatters the grain,
And shortly comes to harvest."

Antony's character is set forth by Agrippa when in Rome, and by a rude Roman soldier :

Agrippa— "'Tis a noble Lepidus,"

Enobarbus—"A very fine one : O, how he loves Cæsar ! "

Agr.—"Nay, but how dearly he adores Mark Antony ! "

Eno.—"Cæsar? why, he's the Jupiter of men."

Agr.—"What's Antony? the god of Jupiter."

Eno.—"Spake you of Cæsar ? How ! the nonpareil ! "

Agr.—O, Antony ! O thou Arabian bird ! "

Eno.—"Would you praise Cæsar, say 'Cæsar;' go no further."

Agr.—"Indeed, he plied them both with excellent praises."

Agrippa—"Nay, but how dearly he adores Mark Antony :"

Enobarbus—"But he loves Cæsar best; yet he loves Antony :

Ho ! hearts, tongues, figures, scribes, bards, poets, cannot
Think, speak, cast, write, sing, number—ho !
His love to Antony. But as for Cæsar,
Kneel down, kneel down, and wonder."

Antony refers, lover-like, to Cleopatra :

"The April's in her eyes : it is love's spring,
And these the showers to bring it on. Be cheerful."

Agrippa brings his testimony as to Antony's emotional nature :

Agr.—(*aside to Eno.*) "Why, Enobarbus,
When Antony found Julius Cæsar dead,
He cried almost to roaring ; and he wept
When at Philippi he found Brutus slain."

Cæsar himself says to Antony :

"Adieu ; be happy !
Lepidus—Let all the number of the stars give light
To thy fair way ! "

Cæsar— "You praise yourself
By laying defects of judgment to me ; but
You patched up your excuses."

But how simple, graceful, and fitting are these words :

Agr.—"To hold you in perpetual amity,
To make you brothers and to knit your hearts
With an unslipping knot, take Antony
Octavia to his wife ; whose beauty claims
No worse a husband than the best of men ;
Whose virtues and whose general graces speak
That which none else can utter. By this marriage
All little jealousies which now seem great,
And all great fears which now impart their dangers,
Would then be nothing : truths would be tales,

Where now half tales be truths: her love to both
Would each to other and all loves to both
Draw after her."

The author breaks through the course of this martial play in a picture of inimitable beauty and effulgence, in which the galley bearing Cleopatra burns on the mirroring bosom of the Orontes:

Eno.—"I will tell you.
The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burn'd on the water; the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that [silver,
The winds were lovesick with them; the oars were
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd all description: she did lie
In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold of tissue,
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature: on each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did."

The description of this beautiful sorceress mingles the intellectual element with the material.

In the following passages there is a simple but perfectly expressed, though subtle, thought:

Menas—"I think the policy of that purpose made more in the marriage than the love of the parties."

Eno.—"I see men's judgments are
A parcel of their fortunes, and things outward
Do draw the inward quality after them,
To suffer all alike."

But the poet represents Antony as a hero; invincible by land, yet not so strong at sea; this failure Cæsar took advantage of. Enobarbus says to Antony:

Eno.—"Most worthy, sir, you therein throw away
The absolute soldiership you have by land,
Distract your army, which doth most consist
Of war-marked footmen, leave unexecuted
Your own renowned knowledge, quite forego
The way which promises assurance, and
Give up yourself merely to chance and hazard,
From firm security."

Antony—"How now, worthy soldier?"

Soldier—"O noble emperor, do not fight by sea:
Trust not to rotten planks. Do you misdoubt
This sword and these my wounds? Let the Egyptians
And the Phœnicians go a-ducking: we

Have used to conquer, standing on the earth
And fighting foot to foot."

Eno.—"Antony only, that would make his will
Lord of his reason. What though you fled
From that great face of war, whose several ranges
Frighted each other, why should he follow?
The itch of his affection should not then
Have nick'd his captainship: at such a point,
When half to half the world opposed, he being
The mered question; 'twas a shame no less
Than was his loss, to course your flying flags
And leave his navy gazing."

As before indicated, the unity of Antony's character is surprisingly kept throughout—from beginning to end Shakespeare has the same conception of it. He makes its subjective features immortal, *torus et teres.*

Plutarch's rough sketch of Antony has been filled out and transformed by the dramatist, making a complex character, kept down by an enslavement to his lower nature that forbids its rising to a lofty height except at intervals.

There is the warrior in gleaming arms, driving back, single handed, the advancing enemy, and

there is the weak Antony, captured by a woman's wiles. Nevertheless, Shakespeare has lifted him above ordinary men, as a leader, one of the brilliant heroes of the world, but powerless through unworthy passion.

Cleopatra is set before us as a queenly spirit; she does love Antony as much as such a hard, selfish nature could love anything out of itself. Some of her haughty words are:

Cleopatra—"These hands do lack nobility, that they strike
A meaner than myself; since I myself
Have given myself the cause."

"Most kind messenger,
Say to great Cæsar this: in deputation
I kiss his conquering hand; tell him, I'm prompt
To lay my crown at's feet, and there to kneel:
Tell him, from his all-obeying breath I hear
The doom of Egypt."

"Noblest of men, woo't die?
Hast thou no care of me? shall I abide
In this dull world, which in thy absence is
No better than a sty? O, see, my women,
The crown of the earth doth melt. My Lord!

O, wither'd is the garland of the war,
The soldier's pole is fall'n : young boys and girls
Are level now with men ; the odds is gone,
And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon."

" No more, but e'en a woman, and commanded
By such poor passion as the maid that milks
And does the meanest chares. It were for me
To throw my sceptre at the injurious gods,
To tell them that this world did equal theirs
All's but naught ;"

" Patience is sottish, and impatience does
Become a dog that's mad : then is it sin
To rush into the secret house of death,
Ere death dare come to us? How do you, women?
What, what ! good cheer ! Why, how now, Charmain !
My noble girls ! Ah, women, women, look,
Our lamp is spent, it's out ! Good sirs, take heart ;
We'll bury him ; and then, what's brave, what's noble,
Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,
And make death proud to take us. Come, away :
This case of that huge spirit now is cold :
Ah, women, women ! Come : we have no friend
But resolution and the briefest end."

" Where art thou, death?
Come hither, come ! come, come, and take a queen

With many babes and beggars!"

"Sir, I will eat no meat, I'll not drink, sir;
If idle talk will once be necessary,
I'll not sleep neither: this mortal house I'll ruin,
Do Cæsar what he can. Know, sir, that I
Will not wait pinion'd at your master's court,
Nor once be chastised with the sober eye
Of dull Octavia. Shall they hoist me up,
And show me to the shouting varletry
Of censuring Rome? Rather a ditch in Egypt
Be gentle grave unto me! rather on Nile's mud
Lay me stark naked, and let the water-flies
Blow me into abhorring! rather make
My country's high pyramids my gibbet,
And hang me up in chains."

"But when he meant to quail and shake the orb;
He was as rattling thunder."

"Or I shall show the cinders of my spirits
Through the ashes of my chance: wert thou a man,
Thou wouldst have mercy on me."

Then comes Antony, convulsed by the false report of Cleopatra's death which she had sent. He says to Eros:

Antony— "Since Cleopatra died
I have lived in such dishonour that the gods

Detest my baseness. I, that with my sword
Quarter'd the world, and o'er green Neptune's back
With ships made cities, condemn myself to lack
The courage of a woman ; less noble minded
Than she which by her death our Cæsar tells
I am conqueror of myself. 'Thou are sworn, Eros,'
That, when the exigent should come—which now
Is come indeed—when I should see behind me
The inevitable prosecution of
Disgrace and horror, that, on my command,
Thou then would'st kill me : do't ; the time is come.
Thou strik'st not me, 'tis Cæsar thou defeat'st.
Put colour in thy cheek."

Eros— "My dear master,
My captain, and my emperor, let me say,
Before I strike this bloody stroke, farewell!"

"Why, there then ; thus I do escape the sorrow
Of Antony's death."

(*kills himself*)

(*Antony falls on his sword*)

Antony— "Peace!
Not Cæsar's valour hath o'erthrown Antony,
But Antony's hath triumph'd on itself."

"The miserable change now at my end
Lament nor sorrow at ; but please your thoughts
In feeding them with those my former fortunes,

Wherein I lived, the greatest prince of the world,
The noblest, and do now not basely die,
Nor cowardly put off my helmet to
My countrymen, a Roman by a Roman
Valiantly vanquish'd. Now my spirit is going;
I can no more."

Then Cæsar, entering the room, says:

Cæsar— "O, Antony!
I have follow'd thee to this. But we do lance
Diseases in our bodies: I must perforce
Have shown to thee such a declining day,
Or look'd on thine; we could not stall together
In the whole world: but yet let me lament,
With tears as sovereign as the blood of hearts,
That thou, my brother, my competitor
In top of all design, my mate in empire,
Friend and companion in the front of war,
The arm of mine own body and the heart
Where mine his thoughts did kindle, that our stars
Unreconcilable should divide
Our equalness to this. Hear me, good friends."

Cleopatra is a wonder of wonders—she is Greek, not Egyptian. Her portrait on the walls of the Temple of Denderah show an Egyptian artist's

attempt to depict Greek beauty under an Egyptian type, but not very successfully. Shakespeare, it is likely, never had seen a woman just like her in all points, and no one else has before or since, but he made up her varied traits into a whole from imagination. There are words in this play which I could quote, but which, I would almost say, I dare not, for it is Shakespeare alone who could use them. His powerful genius is like a winged Mercury that flies lightly over the abyss. Cleopatra's beauty, strength of will, and surpassingly bright intelligence make her the romantic and even historic symbol to the world of a temptress to evil. Shakespeare has mainly created this. She destroys whatever stands in her ruthless and ruinous path. She exults in her wicked conquest of a noble character.

Her own imaginary sepulchre on the banks of the Nile, to herself and Antony, grand and gorgeous, casts its shadow with the pyramids and the Sphinx on the river where the white sails appear and disappear like spectres.

"Antony, Antony, Antony,"

was not a cry of affection which lasts after death, but the loss of an earthly lover.

She was Egypt's proud queen still, and killed herself, not from love to share death with Antony, but because she would not suffer herself to be made a Roman spectacle in Cæsar's triumph.

Italian Plays.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

The scene of the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" is laid for the most part in Verona with its ancient amphitheatre, its bridges, and the stately palace of Can Grande Scala, above all its memories of Dante and those illustrious exiles who sought here a home.

It is an Italian love story, and Valentine talks with the free vigor of a young man, gay measure and the caprices of the master passion, in which woman plays a gentle and refined part. The old Elizabethan drama, like the plays of Æschylus and Sophocles, needs the stage to set it off, and living persons to carry out its action. The Eliza-

bethan drama is at the present day displaced by the novel, but whether the novel teaches us manners and morals, and influences these as strongly as the drama, is a question. Certainly the description of nature in the novel is often artificial, conventional, and empty, compared with the lively dialogue of real persons, the nimble wit, and the rounded action awakening poetic emotion. This is hardly made up by the critical analysis of character in the novel. Assuredly nothing in succeeding fictitious literature has left such a vivid impression of personality as Rosalind, Portia, Falstaff, and Hamlet in the Shakespearean drama. They live and will ever live; on the stage or in the closet they are equally vivid.

In the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" the dialogue is graceful, easy and natural, with wonderful rhythm and poetic smoothness. Valentine says:

> "Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits."

Julia, beloved of Proteus, enters into an encounter with her smart-witted waiting woman, Lucetta, and says:

Julia— "Your reason?"

Lucetta—"I have no other but a woman's reason;
I think him so, because I think him so."

Proteus is the more romantic and ardent of the two, and Valentine the more worldly, though a little more inclined to coarseness; but there is a good deal in the play that makes it a drama of friendship. Shakespeare's own youth and friendship may be interwoven in it, though in modern fiction the author might draw his facts from the stock exchange.

Romance retires with shy step; the past has vanished; the actor is the newspaper chronicler, not the poet. But time changes, the age has grown scientific and prosaic, actual fact and the primitive emotions in poetry have vanished, and even Tennyson cannot bring them back.

The two gentlemen of Verona talk to each other in an easy, natural way. Valentine tries to persuade his friend to travel and see the world. They were true friends; they confided their deepest secrets to one another; they aided each other's schemes in peace or war. They overlooked petty

differences of opinion; but Proteus was the more ardent lover and had the most difficult road to travel to escape on account of the temper and rank of the Duke of Milan, Silvia's father.

Proteus felt more keenly the changes and disappointments of love's contest. He says, fiery and poetic:

> "O, how this spring of love resembleth
> The uncertain glory of an April day,
> Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
> And by and by a cloud takes all away."

In contrast to this flight, Speed, Valentine's man, says:

"Though the chameleon Love can feed on the air, I am one that am nourished by my victuals, and would fain have meat."

Launce, a shy dog, makes pure comedy:

"I think Crab my dog be the sourest-natured dog that lives: my mother weeping, my father wailing, my sister crying, our maid howling, our cat wringing her hands, and all our house in a great perplexity, yet did not this cruel-hearted cur shed one tear: he is a stone, a very pebble stone, and has no more pity in him than a dog."

Speed, the true wag, describing his master Valentine's signs of love, says :

Valentine—"Why, how know you that I am in love?"

Speed—"Marry, by these special marks : first, you have learned, like Sir Proteus, to wreathe your arms, like a malcontent ; to relish a love-song, like a robin-redbreast ; to walk alone, like one that had the pestilence ; to sigh, like a school-boy that had lost his A B C ; to weep, like a young wench that had buried her grandam ; to fast, like one that takes diet ; to watch, like one that fears robbing ; to speak puling, like a beggar at Hallowmass. You were wont, when you laughed, to crow like a cock ; when you walked, to walk like one of the lions ; when you fasted, it was presently after dinner ; when you looked sadly, it was for want of money : and now you are metamorphosed with a mistress, that, when I look on you, I can hardly think you my master."

But after all, the love of Valentine was more true than that of Proteus, and he perhaps the nobler gentleman. Carried away by the new passion for Silvia, Proteus, like his name, changes his love, while Julia remains loyal to him and speaks a soul full of poetic calm :

Julia—"The current that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopp'd, impatiently doth rage ;

> But when his fair course is not hinderèd,
> He makes sweet music with th' enamell'd stones,
> Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
> He overtaketh in his pilgrimage;
> And so by many winding nooks he strays,
> With willing sport, to the wide ocean."

Silvia, whom Valentine loves, is the Duke of Milan's daughter. Valentine is banished and goes through many troubles and perils, in which outlaws mingle on the border-land forest of Mantua—an Italian plot of masks, disguises, escapes, and intrigues in a forest reminding one of Arden Wood, in which a comparison is made with Robin Hood's outlaws; and Friar Lauena, who meets Silvia, is like the priest who in Arden Forest, tradition says, married or betrothed Shakespeare to Anne Hathaway.

At length the denouement takes place when Proteus comes near and appears to Silvia, who is attended by Valentine. Julia is present in boys' clothes as page to Proteus. The disgrace of Proteus and his repentance are rather too artificial to seem genuine, but Valentine takes him to his

friendship again, pronouncing these solemn words:

"Who by repentance is not satisfied
Is nor of heaven nor earth; for these are pleas'd,
By penitence th' Eternal's wrath's appeas'd."

The one who neglects to read "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" passes by a play which is full of music and harmony, with melodious flow, simple and natural in style, and with but a few coarse blots. It is a song from beginning to end, like the brief poem,

"Silvia, and where is Silvia?"

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

This play is really two plays in one. Its plan probably follows that of the original story which suggested it. It wants unity, but Shakespeare's hand is everywhere in it. It would seem as if he himself must have been one of the "strangers in Venice" who stood in the motley mart and mused on the Rialto. There were two quarto editions published in 1600; it is said by critics that the earliest positive allusion to the play was in 1596, a prolific period of Shakespeare's literary life. The

play or plot is doubtless from some original story. The shining point of the play is the figure of Portia. She seems a creation that would unite the seriousness and dignity of the English with the bright intelligence and high spirit of the American maiden. Her famous sentence regarding the pound of flesh, which saves the life of Antonio, would not be regarded as legal authority or strong enough to "hold water" in modern jurisprudence, but rather as an ingenious device to satisfy the conditions of the play.

Shylock the Jew, whose moving forces of action are avarice and revenge, is still a man, and his speech in court in defence of his humanity has a dynamic force and will always have its influence to mitigate the injustice of the world towards this long-enduring race. It is pleasant to think that our own country, America, is the only one of professed Christian nations that has not legally oppressed the Jew, and that they have in this land with other American citizens perfect freedom to think, speak, and act, to display their law-abiding character, rare talent for trade, often their

haute finance, and their love of the musical art. Their civic and religious freedom is here perfectly secured, and they may, possibly hereafter, form, without going back to Palestine flying "on the shoulders of the Philistines," a conservative and orderly element in our western political life.

The elopement of Shylock's daughter Jessica, carrying with her her father's ducats and jewels, throws an almost gay and amusing light on the fierce and lurid personality of Shylock. Love is truly the subtle thief that melts the flinty heart and conquers all.

Books might be and have been written on this drama. It belongs to Shakespeare's great plays, though not the greatest. The characters of Portia and Shylock, one a type of justice mingled with mercy and the other of race mingled with revenge, will live as long as the English language.

Antonio, the merchant prince, ready to share his wealth with his friends, patient under adversity and brave to face the most deadly peril, but proud and contemptuous to the Jew, standing as he does in Shylock's way by aiding those who had been

crushed by Shylock's methods, paying their forfeitures and bonds which had been imposed upon them, is a pleasing personage, a modest figure in whom all our sympathies combine.

The mart of Venice and the Rialto did not form the only scene of action in this complex play, but the great house at Belmont, of which Portia was mistress, also witnessed the beginning and ending of the drama.

Bassanio—"In Belmont is a lady richly left;
And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages:
Her name is Portia; nothing undervalued
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia:
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth;
For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors: and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece;
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strand,
And many Jasons come in quest of her."

The young nobleman lover says this to his wealthy friend. His rivals are rich and powerful. Portia and her maid Nerissa discuss these suitors

at Belmont, but it is early seen where Portia's preference lies, notwithstanding her dead father's stern requisition regarding the three caskets. Bassanio, "the soldier and the scholar," has caught both her fancy and reason. In this love story the caskets play a part, and manifest the poet's view of the momentous character of Choice. What infinite events truly hang on this word, which means the will, the heart, the deepest spirit of man taking its final action.

The beginning or weaving of this love story into the darker tragedy of the Bond, so wide apart, shows the power of only the greatest dramatist. Yet they at length glide together like the head waters of the divided Rhine.

Before the final trial another lesser love story is wrought out—that of Lorenzo and Jessica. Jessica is a beautiful Jewess, loyally loving, but still racial in her fondness for gold, yet her love leads her to be a true woman and give up all.

Lorenzo is full of romantic passion rising into the loftiest poetry. He says to Jessica :

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

This takes all of earthliness out of passion, and makes it ethereal and heavenly, higher than nature.

The plot of this drama may have arisen from the ballad in "Percy's Reliques," or far more likely from a story in the Italian "*The Gesta Romanorum*," but in Shylock it is refined by Shakespeare's genius above the common conception of the Jew, when he was treated like a dog and held to be as having no rights. Shakespeare may have known of the place of the Jew in medieval history, but his just and gentle nature revolted at this although he knew the race stamp was so

deep as to be almost ineffaceable. Still the Jew represented the idea of religion. He is chosen to maintain the fundamental truth of monotheism. The invention of the "pound of flesh" is found mainly in the old stories, and has no place in legalized justice, but as has already been said, it is pure fiction that served the author's purpose in his drama.

The scenery of Venice, its canals, the Rialto and the Ducal Palace stand before us in their strong and mystical colors. The very costumes of Shakespeare's day in Venice, the gold and silver robes of the Doges, the embroidered dresses of the knights and officials wrapped in the spoils of the luxurious East, the marine coloring, and the very atmosphere of Venice seem to have been caught.

The medieval scorn and contempt of the Jew continued to be held in Shakespeare's day, so that Shylock's speech is a proof of the poet's liberalism and humanity. Shylock for the moment rose above even his avarice and revenge, asserting the essential brotherhood of the human race. The trial scene is solemn and powerful; life and death

are in its issues. The address of Shylock pours like a lava stream from his burning soul, fierce and terse, in which the woes and revenges of a thousand years are condensed. Sir Henry Irving, great artistic genius as he was, was not quite able to express the full force of the language. The whetting of the knife is not all. Irving's rendering, according to my recollection, was studied, but failed in intellectual vital energy.

Shylock—"To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what 's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what

should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute; and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction."

His raucous voice is heard through the silent court room:

"I'll have my bond."

Then Portia's exquisite apostrophe to mercy, running like a silver strain of music through the angry tempest of the play, incomparable, rises into the loftiest spheres of the heavenly and divine:

Portia—"The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,

That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation : we do pray for mercy ;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy. I have spoken thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea ;
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there."

ROMEO AND JULIET

In Verona once more lies the scene of one of Shakespeare's greatest plays. John Ruskin said he could not make Venice to be Italy, that it was Italy and Venice, but this could never be said of Verona, "fair Verona," with its view of the Alps and encircling hills and its Roman Amphitheatre. Its local atmosphere is pure Italian.

The independent rulers of the great Italian cities, such as Florence, Milan, Pisa, Genoa, and Verona, founded those aristocratic governments that, as earlier in Athens, prepared the Italian race for a future, more popular rule. Classes, castes, armed retainers, mobs, fierce quarrels, and the all overcoming love, which did away with these lines of separation, existed, making it not impossible

that two such great houses as those of Montague and Capulet should find their ardent affiliations, as well as fierce antagonisms.

This play of "Romeo and Juliet" is the very efflorescence, the bright flower of Shakespeare's dramas of romantic love, which absorbs all else; breaking bonds and limits, changing life, sudden, brief and sweet, but with a tragic ending. It is a flood of accidents and surprises. The play has the intrigue, the masked figures of Italian romance, the fire, the brief joy, and often death of young love. We search in vain for the tomb of Romeo and Juliet, but what matters if Achilles and Helen never lived, or Troy was never besieged, the poet has made them real.

Romeo, the young Montague, is the hero of the play and no weakling. He is of manly presence, strong in love, fiery in action, his imagination kindled into poetic glow by the master passion; "good," too, as acknowledged by Capulet, head of the hostile faction; and yet Romeo is not the only individuality, but there is Mercutio, one of Shakespeare's inimitable creations, and who though

occupying but a brief space on the stage, seems to me more as Shakespeare was himself when unbent and free, full of finest humor and subtle wit. He could be gay and he could be stern, as when Mercutio describes Queen Mab as the ruler of dreams:

"O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep:
Her waggon-spokes made of long spinner's legs;
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers;
Her traces, of the smallest spider's web;
Her collars, of the moonshine's watery beams;
Her whip, of cricket's bone; the lash, of film;
Her waggoner, a small grey-coated gnat,"

"Her chariot is an empty hazel nut,
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on court'sies straight;
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees;

O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues,
Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are;
Sometimes she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit;
And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail
Tickling a parson's nose as a' lies asleep,
Then dreams he of another benefice;
Sometimes she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,
Of healths five fathom deep; and then anon
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes,
And being thus frighted swears a prayer or two,
And sleeps again."

"King Cophetua loved a beggar maid."

At the masked ball, Capulet says to another old noble:

"For you and I are past our dancing days."

Verona brags of Romeo to be a virtuous and well-governed youth. At the ball in Capulet's house Romeo first sees Juliet. In Capulet's orchard Romeo says:

"I fear, too early: for my mind misgives
Some consequences, yet hanging in the stars,

Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels, and expire the term
Of a despised life closed in my breast,
By some vile forfeit of untimely death."

In Juliet's garden Romeo speaks:

"But soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,"

"It is my lady; O, it is my love!"

This is poetry which blinds the sense of right and overleaps all bounds. Juliet's wayward prattlings, she not knowing she is overheard, are natural and almost childlike:

"O, Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
O, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet."

"Tis but thy name that is my enemy."

Mercutio dies to shield his friend Romeo, and Romeo avenges his death on Tybalt. The tragedy deepens and draws towards its end. In their interview in the good Friar Laurence's cell, Romeo and Juliet are wed with the friar's solemn parting words.

Romeo is exiled, and on his sudden return to Verona comes the parting dialogue between the lovers:

Juliet—"Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day:
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;
Nightly she sings on yond pomegranate-tree:
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale."

Romeo—"It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale: look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east:
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops:
I must be gone and live, or stay and die."

Juliet—"Yond light is not day-light, I know it, I:
It is some meteor that the sun exhales,
To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,
And light thee on thy way to Mantua:
Therefore stay yet; thou need'st not to be gone."

Romeo—"Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death;
I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
I'll say yon grey is not the morning's eye,
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow;
Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat
The vaulty heaven so high above our heads:

I have more care to stay than will to go:
Come, death, and welcome! Juliet wills it so.
How is't, my soul? let's talk: it is not day."

Juliet—"It is, it is; hie hence, be gone, away!
It is the lark that sings so out of tune,
Straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps.
Some say the lark makes sweet division;
This doth not so, for she divideth us:
Some say the lark and loathed toad change eyes;
O, now I would they had changed voices too!
Since arm from arm that voice doth us affray,
Hunting thee hence with hunts-up to the day.
O, now be gone: more light and light it grows."

Romeo—"More light and light: more dark and dark our woes."

The return of Romeo, the fatal mistake, the finding of Juliet, supposed by him to be dead, but lying in a trance at the Capulet tomb in the churchyard; Romeo's piercing and mad words addressed to Death, and his death and that of Juliet end this pathetic tragedy.

Romeo— "O, my love! my wife!
Death, that hath sucked the honey of the breath,
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty;
Thou art not conquer'd; beauty's ensign yet

Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And death's pale flag is not advanced there."

"Here's to my love! O true apothecary!
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die."

It is now needful for me regretfully to say that, as is the case sometimes with age, and in my case of an age extending far beyond the allotted period of three score and ten, that my eyesight has so failed that it is impossible for me to read a word, and this perhaps may go to excuse errors. I had naturally reserved for the last a more critical and extended treatment of a few of Shakespeare's greatest plays, and of Shakespeare himself as a dramatic author; but I am now obliged to give up the plan and only speak briefly of some great plays that remain.

Some Last Great Plays.

THE TEMPEST.

Prospero's Island still firmly stands, while the lost Atlantis has vanished. The majestic figure of Prospero differs entirely from the other persons

of the play, and there may be a shadow of a reason held by some, that in his soliloquy it is Shakespeare himself who speaks, as prophetic of his end. This I think is groundless; the words belong consistently to the character of the magician Prospero, who says:

"Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves;
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid—
Weak masters though ye be—I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar; graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let them forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure; and, when I have required

Some heavenly music,—which even now I do,—
To work mine end upon their senses, that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book."

The island with its valleys and promontories is of the imagination built on clouds, tempest, and sunshine; here Romance rides upon the wings of the poetic fancy. The exquisite song of Ariel is made of sun and air, and the sprite swings lightly as he sings from the petal of a delicate flower—a song of obedience to a higher power; but at the same time with a breath and aspiration after freedom:

"Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry,
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough."

The beastly monster, Caliban, has in him a touch of humanity that also seeks for freedom

while he snarls and creeps on the earth under "his burden of wood." His knowledge of some of the subtle laws of nature makes him at times a philosopher, even a poet. His poetry is "of the earth earthy," and never soars above material nature. Prospero lighted in him an intellectual spark.

Caliban—"This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou takest from me. When thou camest first,
Thou strokedst me, and madest much of me: wouldst give me
Water with berries in't; and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night: and then I loved thee,
And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile:
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king: and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o' th' island."

"You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!"

"No, pray thee.
(*Aside*) I must obey: his art is of such power
It would control my dam's god, Setebos,
And make a vassal of him."

When the drunken sailors, Stephano and Trinculo, reeled on the scene, Caliban says to Trinculo:

"Hast thou not dropp'd from heaven?"

"I'll show thee every fertile inch o' th' island;
And I will kiss thy foot: I prithee, be my god."

'I'll kiss thy foot; I'll swear myself the subject."

"I'll show thee the best springs: I'll pluck thee berries;
I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough.
A plague upon the tyrant that I serve."

"Be not afeared; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again."

Caliban, though a creature of the imagination,

is worth study by the scientist as Shakespeare's conception of the connecting link between beast and man; in this case at their worst.

At last compelled to recognize Prospero's power and virtue, Caliban says:

> "Ay, that I will: and I'll be wise hereafter
> And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
> Was I, to take this drunkard for a god,
> And worship this dull fool."

The only real humanities in the play are Miranda and Ferdinand. They love each other with a sweet and natural affection, although disciplined by the heavy burdens put upon them. Miranda is a lovely child of nature, and one of Shakespeare's purely feminine creations. When Miranda asks Ferdinand who he is, Ferdinand, thinking his father had perished in the shipwreck, says with aristocratic spirit:

> "I am Naples."

The play ends in joy and happiness, the tempestuous clouds clear away, and the island that never existed, but will immortally live, comes forth once

more in its beauty under a serenely blue Italian sky.

MACBETH.

Macbeth's character is not to be judged rashly, for it is a mixed character. He was not a thorough-going ruffian or tyrant; his moral nature was not constitutionally bad, nay, in some things human and good. He was met by a most violent temptation presented to his ambitious nature, to be great, to be a king. He shrank at first from this temptation, but was overcome chiefly by the will of his wife, who towered above him in her own wicked ambition.

The date of the play of "Macbeth" was ascribed by Malone to 1606, but the proof of this is unsatisfactory. It undoubtedly belonged to the last ten years of Shakespeare's life, between the dates of "Julius Cæsar" and "Hamlet." There is strong proof that it was written after the conjunction of England and Scotland, under the reign of James I.

The scene is laid in that picturesque and rugged land of mountains and vales, deep lakes, and unconquerable men, made familiar in the pages of

Walter Scott, who drew his inspiration from the grander genius of Shakespeare.

The story of "Macbeth" is found in the older chronicles, whose truth or fiction it is now hard to discover, but there may have been some ground for the tradition in the ancient history of Scotland; at all events, it suits those stormy skies and wilder times. The opening scene of the witches on the "blasted heath,"

"Hovering through the fog and filthy air,"

seems to signify the first false promises of unhallowed ambition to the soul of Macbeth, paltering with the spirits of evil. Their three words, weird, bold, and broken:

"Hail to thee, thane of Glamis?"

"Hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!"

"All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!"

These words seem to rise like the barren scenery around, cliff above cliff into the sky, and are lost. They are indeed portentous dreams:

"The earth hath bubbles as the water has,
And these are of them."

Yet these "instruments of darkness" speak some truths in the perilous story. We go on:

"Time and the hour runs through the roughest day."

Macbeth attains the first two titles, but the last involves his own choice and criminal destruction:

"Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Cawdor's death is marked in memorable words by Malcolm, who says to the King, his father:

Malcolm— "But I have spoke
With one that saw him die: who did report
That very frankly he confess'd his treasons,
Implored your highness' pardon and set forth
A deep repentance: nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it; he died
As one that had been studied in his death,
To throw away the dearest thing he owed,
As 'twere a careless trifle."

Macbeth speaks loyally when he meets the king, and it is difficult to see that he is not for the moment sincere.

Lady Macbeth receives her husband's letter telling of the witches' prophecy of Macbeth being made king. Reading that letter, she exclaims:

"Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature:
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it; what thou wouldst highly
That wouldst thou holily: wouldst not play false
And yet wouldst wrongly win; thou'dst have, great Glamis,
That which cries, 'Thus thou must do, if thou have it:
And that which rather thou dost fear to do
Than wishest should be undone.' Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crown'd withal."

This curious use of the word "metaphysical" as applied here to the spiritual foes that impede Macbeth's grasp of the "golden round," looks as if Lady Macbeth were genuinely Scotch in her philosophy.

The approach of Duncan to the castle of Inverness is of exquisite realness, Nature above and around shining in the crystal morning light. Duncan speaks :

"This castle hath a pleasant seat ; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses."

Banquo— "This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve
By his loved mansionry that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here : no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle :
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed
The air is delicate."

The sparkling brightness of the morning air, the medieval castle with its arched, carved doorway and lofty towers, the peace of all things indicate little of the somber terrors that wait within the walls. Lady Macbeth's smooth and courtly welcome all bespeaks peace, and Macbeth, coming home to Inverness, says to his wife, who urges him to the deed, in low tones, and half to himself :

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly: if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,
With his surcease, success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'ld jump the life to come."

"This even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips."
"Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off."

Lady Macbeth still plies him, appealing to his courage as a man.

Macbeth—"We will proceed no further in this
He hath honour'd me of late;" [business:

Lady Macbeth— "Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would?'"

Macbeth— "Prithee, peace:
I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more is none."

Lady Macbeth— "What beast was't, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from its boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this."

In another scene Macbeth, alone, apostrophizes the airy dagger:

"Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses
Or else worth all the rest: I see thee still;
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep."

The motives of the horrid deed to be done work fast, like poison, and reason is thrown to the winds. The crafty preparation for the murder, the drugged grooms, the watch slain, the deep gloom lighted only by a feeble lamp; the silence so great that the softest footstep can be heard in the long corridor, the screech of the midnight owl after the deed was done, the whispered talk between Macbeth and his wife in which he already shrinks from his dreadful deed, and the voice that cried:

"Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep,"

The innocent sleep,

"Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast,"

smearing of the sleepy grooms with blood; these only can be told by Shakespeare.

Macbeth's description of the murdered king, half true, half false, follows:

Macbeth— "Here lay Duncan,
His silver skin laced with his golden blood,
And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature
For ruin's wasteful entrance."

A cunning, devilish policy lays the crime on Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, who have fled. The plot thickens, and murderous peril threatens Banquo and Fleance. Then comes the gloomy banquet scene in the hall, where Macbeth sees the procession of ghostly visions, that raise him to his feet staring, which only can be dis-

pelled by Lady Macbeth's overmastering will. The ghost of Banquo coming, Macbeth exclaims:

"Thou canst not say I did it: never shake
Thy gory locks at me."

The supper ends in terror and confusion.

Hecate, in a thunder storm on the heath, interferes with the witches' plan, and speaks:

"Upon the corner of the moon
There hangs a vaporous drop profound;
I'll catch it ere it come to ground:
And that distill'd by magic sleights
Shall raise such artificial sprites
As by the strength of their illusion
Shall draw him on to his confusion."

Again the witches meet around the boiling cauldron and sing their weird song:

"Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble."

The supernatural breaks into the steady whirl of nature's laws of retribution. Macbeth, coming into their circle in a storm, demands:

"Though you untie the winds and let them fight
Against the churches: though the yesty waves

Confound and swallow navigation up:
Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down;
Though castles topple on their warders' heads:
Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations: though the treasure
Of nature's germens tumble all together,
Even till destruction sicken: answer me
To what I ask you."

Tremendous storms like this one rage about Scotland and England's rocky coast. I have seen, without the aid of the supernatural, such a storm rage around the southern end of England. The scene of the apparitions ends with the last false prophecy:

Sec. App.—"Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!"
Third App.—"Macbeth shall never vanquished be
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill [until
Shall come against him,"

and the witches themselves

"Come like shadows, so depart."

The terrible exhibition of his feigned inward self by Malcolm, the heir, to Macduff, is a powerful Shakespearean touch:

Malcolm—"But I have none: the king-becoming graces,
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,
I have no relish of them, but abound
In the division of each several crime,
Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should
Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,
Uproar the universal peace, confound
All unity on earth."

Macduff—"O Scotland, Scotland!"

Malcolm—"If such a one be fit to govern, speak: I am as I have spoken."

In showing the poet's deeper insight of the human soul, by a truer impulse Malcolm takes back these false self-accusations and is himself again.

Then comes the scene in Dunsinane Castle, when Lady Macbeth's imperious will breaks down at last under the terrors of conscience.

Lady Macbeth in her sleep walking, witnessed by the Doctor and her nurse:

Doctor—"Look, how she rubs her hands."

Gentlewoman—"It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour."

Lady M.—"Yet here's a spot."

Doctor—"Hark! she speaks: I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly."

Lady M.—"Out, damned spot! out, I say! One: two: why, then 'tis time to do't. Hell is murky. Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?"

Doctor—"Do you mark that?"

Lady M.—"The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now? What, will these hands ne'er be clean? No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting."

Doctor—"Go to, go to: you have known what you should not."

Gentlewoman—"She has spoken what she should not, I am sure of that: heaven knows what she has known."

Lady M.—"Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!"

Doctor—"What a sigh is there! the heart is sorely charged."

Gentlewoman—"I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body."

Doctor—"This disease is beyond my practice: yet I have

known those which have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds."

Lady M.—"Wash your hands, put on your nightgown; look not so pale: I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he cannot come out on's grave."

Doctor—"Even so."

Lady M.—"To bed, to bed; there's knocking at the gate; come, come, come, come, give me your hand: what's done cannot be undone: to bed, to bed, to bed."

Doctor—"Will she go now to bed?"

Gentlewoman—"Directly."

Doctor—"Foul whisperings are abroad: unnatural deeds

Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets:
More needs she the divine than the physician.
God, God forgive us all! Look after her:
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,
And still keep eyes upon her. So, good night:
My mind she has mated and amazed my sight:
I think, but dare not speak."

Gentlewoman—"Good night, good doctor."

To delay now no longer the end, Macbeth, the warlike king, issues from his castle; his fears have vanished, his soldier's courage has returned to

him; he rushes fearlessly into the fight with Macduff and is slain. Justice triumphs.

The drama deals with deep things of the soul: Temptation, Sin, and Death. Its lesson is the yielding of the spirit to the temptation to be great, to an unhallowed ambition that passes the bounds of that natural ambition implanted in the mind to stimulate it to do and be good.

The play is better suited, I think, for the silent room of the reader than for the stage. The reader closes his book with the words:

> *Macbeth*—"Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time."

One then appreciates with solemn awe what an old and true critic calls

> "The pleasing terrors of Tragedy."

KING LEAR.

This play is pure paganism. It deals with elemental powers and reminds the reader of those gigantic forms that loom up in the pages of Æschylus,—pagan throughout.

The grand old king, made mad by the unloving and treacherous conduct of his daughters, goes forth into the fierce storm. He and the human forms accompanying him seem strange and antique, and even in the scene of the last words and hours of King Lear, the faithful and lovely Cordelia shows a touch of hardness in her nature, like a beautiful Greek sculpture. But the scene is laid on British soil, and the path traversed during the howling tempest by Lear and his group of followers was familiar to Shakespeare, as it is now to those of us who have walked over chalky Dover cliff, and looked off towards France on the waters of the English Channel. Gloucester says in his talk with Edgar:

"There is a cliff whose high and bending head
Looks fearfully in the confined deep:
Bring me but to the very brim of it,
And I'll repair the misery thou does bear
With something rich about me: from that place
I shall no leading need."

Edgar—"Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful

And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eye so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark
Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight: the murmuring surge
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong."

Shakespeare in this great play seems to free himself from all the forms that had gone before in literature and from all traditions of Christian drama, and to fling himself freely into the wild play of nature's forces and passions.

There followed after Lear the singular company of the sturdy English Kent, who said:

"Be Kent unmannerly, when Lear is mad;"

the blind Earl of Gloucester, the loving, faithful Edgar, the smooth-faced bastard Edmund, the Fool shivering in his rags, a motley group of good

and bad, high and low, fortuitously brought together to breast the storm.

There is a sense of wild power when the poet "revelled in his strength," the more so, perhaps, of any of his dramas.

Lear asks his daughter:

"Which of you shall we say doth love us most?"

The speeches of Goneril and Regan, the two elder sisters, are crammed with protestations of false affection, so full indeed that Cordelia says, aside:

"What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be silent."

"Then poor Cordelia!
And yet not so, since I am sure my love's
More ponderous than my tongue."

Lear turns to Cordelia, who has yet said nothing. He asks:

Lear—"Nothing!"

Again,

Lear—"Nothing will come of nothing: speak again."

Cordelia answers:

"Good, my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
Return these duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty:
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all."

He casts himself with the treacherous sisters.

The old fiery-hearted king, who lived now solely in and for the affection of his children, was not satisfied with this reticent truthfulness of Cordelia. It might indeed awake a subtle discussion in the euphemistic style of noble Sir Philip Sidney, whether love should be expressed or hidden. The love itself is infinitely better than its expression; the love of parent and child, husband and wife, friend and neighbor—which last term embraces the whole brotherhood of man,—whether good or bad, worthy or unworthy, Christian or heathen, if expressed only in general phrases, without real kindness, or an energetic disposition to do good,

would be sheer hypocrisy. If the expression of love were relegated entirely to the future life and to the intercourse of spiritual beings, this world would be left desolate and become a cold and barren place, and the scientific prophecy of the coming reign of the earth's final refrigeration would have already commenced.

In "King Lear" there is an expression of Shakespeare's mightiest strength, and the play is a block cut out of rock, hard and jagged, without any softening feature of art or Christianity. The author casts away all classic rules and precedence, and speaks as though inspired by his own bold original genius.

HAMLET.

Going from the rugged Lear, in his concentrated storm of passion, to the polished Hamlet, representing the sphere of universal ideas, it is indeed a tame word to say that the Prince of Denmark is a gentleman; but this term I would use in its true sense.

Hamlet is a cultivated man. He is inclined to meditative thought; he loves to look into his own mind, and to analyze the springs and motives of character in other minds; he would wish to penetrate human life in all its bearings; he belongs, in a ruder age, to the modern school of thought and universal philosophy. He is quiet, and grows stout, and has a streak of indolence, but this is combined with other qualities unknown to himself; with a kind heart, with genial wit, with a power of friendship and love, with energies for practical activity when aroused; these are manifest in his talk with his student friend Horatio, and his keen address to the players, showing his thoughtful knowledge of the principles of art.

In his witty speech to the old courtier Polonius, leading him whithersoever he wills, and in his kindly words, though with a touch of cynicism, addressed to the skull of Yorick:

Hamlet—"O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: but, by'r lady, he must build

churches then ; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is, 'For, O, for O, the hobby-horse is forgot.'"

These more energetic qualities unconsciously, perhaps, are surprisingly developed when awaked to vigorous action by the appearance of his father's ghost, and the enormous burden of responsibility suddenly laid upon him to revenge his father's murder and set to rights the rotten state of Denmark. He starts up, unites in himself all other characters, interests, and events, and walks the scene in the terrible step and form of avenger. His madness is assumed as a shield for his deeper, craftier plan. In his interview with Ophelia, one reads between the lines his love, and Ophelia's last moments lend infinite pathos to the drama.

Her mind breaks down, but its sweetness is not lost. Her gift of flowers, so thoughtful and fitted to every one to whom she gives them, touches the most stoic heart.

The snatches of her strange, loose song show the strain of the disordered fancies in a pure and innocent nature ; her interview and clinging love for

Hamlet, and her maidenly tribute to him when her true heart speaks out, are exquisitely fitting:

Ophelia—"O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword:
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstacy: O, woe is me,
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!"

Hamlet's burning words to his mother, coming straight from a hot heart that had been cheated in its natural and deepest affections, show the most painful moment of the tremendous trial through which he is now passing.

The craftily arranged play within a play, the slaying of the king, the death of his mother, the exchange of the poisoned rapier in his duel with Laertes, in the explosion of that world of wickedness and deceit in which his own life was lost, are a fitting end to this immortal tragedy.

I have heard the greatest actor of Germany, Emil Devrient, personate this character, but I am still of the opinion that Hamlet is better suited for the silent room of the reader than for the stage. It is above all the scholar's play. The oftener it is read the more it will awake earnest thought on human life, both present and the future.

Shakespeare, as I have just said, speaks in this play of Hamlet to the mind of the student and thoughtful educated man.

Shakespeare's many portraits, whether authentic or unauthentic, form an argument by themselves of his greatness.

I cannot give the copy of a photograph picked up in Stratford-on-Avon, nor do I know who was the artist of the original picture. It is evidently modern and too smooth and idealized, lacking even the life-like robustness of the Stratford bust, but it belongs like other portraits to the highest historic type of humanity — an imperial face, serenely strong, betokening a harmony of nature which

combines gentleness and power. It impressed me as a face that comprehends the traits of other portraits, showing in its imagined results the thoughtful and true conception of a courtly man of the highest education and culture.

Shakespeare was by no means a perfect man. He had his faults, arising partly, doubtless, from the rude British coarseness of the period, and from his own exuberant vitality. While his head was in the clouds, his feet walked on the solid earth, and were sometimes, it may be, in the mud and mire. When he returned to Stratford in the later years of his life, he showed a shrewd Anglo-Saxon instinct towards the amassing of property, which would not now be regarded as an unreasonable trait. But it should not be forgotten by the earnest reader of Shakespeare, that when his plays are considered, there is to be observed a decided progress in his maturer nature; an elevation of thought, growing more purely intellectual and philosophic, not less genial, but more refined in his

loving and sweet-hearted humor, loftier in his spirit and imagination, more free from the merely earthly and sensuous, more broad in his love of universal humanity and of man's brotherhood, more powerful in his expression of the deep things of life, death, and eternity, more firm in his belief in the principles of right, justice, and truth, and of that higher divine order which enters into, shapes, and directs all.