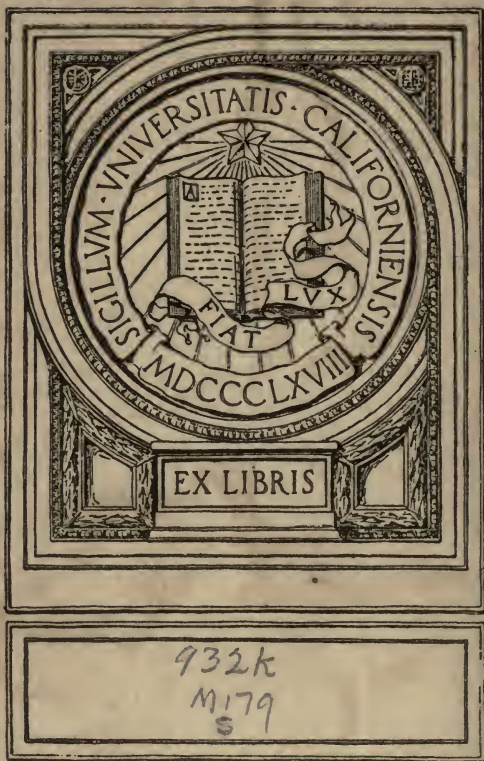


SHAKESPEARE
AND HIS FELLOWS



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SHAKESPEARE
AND HIS FELLOWS

SHAKESPEARE AND HIS FELLOWS

AN ATTEMPT TO DECIPHER
THE MAN AND HIS NATURE

BY

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SHAKESPEARE

AND HIS FELLOWS

‘ ALL that we know of Shakespeare is that he was born at Stratford-on-Avon, married, and had children there ; went to London, where he commenced actor, and wrote plays and poems ; returned to Stratford, made his will, and died.’ These words, written by Steevens, served for more than a century as a fair summary of the events in the life of Shakespeare, so far as they were then known. But the pious labours of succeeding generations have added so much to our stock of knowledge that a presentment of the life of Shakespeare is now possible, not, indeed, complete in all respects, but far in advance of earlier efforts. ‘ An investigation extending over two centuries has brought together a mass of detail which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any other contemporary professional writer.’ It is not probable that any important addition will be made in the future to our know-

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ledge of the facts of the life of Shakespeare, or that they will be presented with better effect than by Sir Sidney Lee in the great work from which these words are taken.*

Shakespeare's life was the uneventful life of a successful player and dramatist. His greatness, unlike that of a commander or statesman, did not depend on the happening of great events. But great events are not those from which we derive the clearest insight into character. The object which the Father of Biography set before him in writing the life of a great man was to 'decipher the man and his nature,' and he thus explains his omission to record some facts of historical interest: 'For the noblest deeds do not alwaies shew mens vertues and vices, but oftentimes a light occasion, a word, or some sport, makes mens naturall dispositions and maners appeare more plaine than the famous battels won, wherein are slaine ten thousand men; or the great armies, or cities won by siege or assault.'† The student of Plutarch's *Life of Alexander the Great* would not have been enabled by it to give an account of the battles of the Granicus and of Issus, or to show how these

* *A Life of William Shakespeare*, by Sir Sidney Lee. New edition, 1915.

† *Plutarch's Lives*, Sir Thomas North's version (*Life of Alexander*).

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fields were won. But he could give an answer to this question : What manner of man was he who did these great things ?

It was by following in the footsteps of the master that Boswell won the first place among his disciples. No occasion was too light, no word too trivial, no sport too insignificant to be recorded by him, and so it came to pass that Johnson, in the words of Macaulay, 'is better known to us than any other man in history.'

In Shakespeare's time biographies were not written, and the instinct to which we owe the modern interview was as yet undeveloped. We have no contemporary account of Shakespeare such as Boswell wrote of Johnson, and Lockhart of Scott. But there were among his fellows and contemporaries men greater than Boswell or Lockhart, who, with others of lesser account, wrote and spoke of Shakespeare many things which aid us in attaining to some understanding of the nature and character of a man who was well known to them.

The industry of the last half century has ransacked the plays, poems, and pamphlets of his age in search of references to Shakespeare, or to his work. The result is embodied in a goodly volume published by the New Shakespere

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Society in 1874.* From Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* in 1591 to Ben Jonson's *Discoveries* in 1641, the references collected in this volume in number exceed one hundred and twenty. They are, for the most part, notices of the writings of Shakespeare, of no special value. But some are of a more personal interest, and among those from whose writings they are collected are Shakespeare's fellow dramatists—Nash, Dekker, Peele, Greene, Drayton, Chettle and Fletcher.

Shakespeare became a member of a company of players at the most interesting period of the history of the stage. The occupation of player was just assuming the character of a profession. To the profession of actor Shakespeare was loyally constant throughout his life, and his chosen friends and associates are found among his fellow players. It is due to the overpowering interest which attaches itself to everything connected with Shakespeare, rather than to mere love of antiquarian or historical research, that we are now in possession of a mass of information, not only as to the condition of the stage

* *Shakespeare's Centurie of Prayse*; being materials for a history of opinion on Shakespeare and his works. A.D. 1591—1693, by C. M. Ingleby, LL.D. Second edition by Lucy Toulmin Smith, 1879. 'All is not "Prayse" that is celebrated in the ensuing pages: but the prevailing character of the parts may fairly be allowed to the whole.' (Forespeech to the first edition.)

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in his time, but as to the lives and characters of the individual players with whom he was more particularly connected. Some questions we should gladly ask of these players, and of the brilliant band of University wits who had prepared the way for the coming of Shakespeare. We cannot go to them, and they cannot come to us, and many questions to be asked must remain for ever unanswered. But from what has been recorded of the fellow players and fellow dramatists of Shakespeare, from their relations with him, and from what was said and written by them, some assistance may be gained towards supplying an answer to the questions which we would ask. Some things deserving of note may also be gleaned from Shakespeare's relations with his family, and with his neighbours at Stratford.

Spenser, Marlowe and Ben Jonson are the greatest names in the most interesting period of our literary history. These men were in a special sense the fellows of Shakespeare—fellow poets or fellow dramatists. These pages have been written in the hope that from a study of the lives and characters of these great men, and of their associations with Shakespeare, some aid may be obtained in deciphering the man and his nature.

The word 'fellow' in the ear of Shakespeare

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had a significance which it has since then lost. He would have understood it to mean 'one that is associated with another in habitual or temporary companionship ; a companion, associate, comrade.' This sense of the word, usual in the time of Shakespeare and the next succeeding age, is noted in the *New English Dictionary* as 'now rare.' It is in this sense that the word was used by Shakespeare in his will, and it is in this sense that the word is employed in these pages. No one of Shakespeare's contemporaries is here accounted as his fellow, unless he is shown to have been, in some manner, personally associated with him. Bacon and Burleigh were contemporaries, but no link has been discovered associating either of them with the man Shakespeare. According to Ben Jonson, the flights of the swan of Avon 'did take Eliza and our James,' and favour and patronage were extended to Shakespeare by Southampton and by the noblemen to whom the First Folio was dedicated. But patronage is not fellowship, and to find the fellows of Shakespeare we must mix with the dramatists, players and poets of the age, and with those of his family and friends among whom his life was spent, and in finding them we may find something of the man of whom we are in search.

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For our present purpose it may be noted with satisfaction that when his contemporaries speak of Shakespeare what they tell us relates to the man rather than to his writings. In their notices of Shakespeare we find nothing of the profound literary criticism, the work of Shakespearian scholars at home and abroad, by which his works have been illuminated. For the attainment of a knowledge of Shakespeare, poet and dramatist, it is not necessary to appeal to his fellows and contemporaries. Nothing more is needed than a careful and intelligent study of what he has written, in view of the literature, the history, and social condition of his age. But a true instinct, born not of mere curiosity, but of gratitude, impels us to go further, and to attempt to discover something of the man who bestowed upon humanity this priceless gift. And so attempts have been made to decipher the man Shakespeare and his nature by a study of what he has written. These attempts have ended in uncertainty, and therefore in failure. It is true that an artist must of necessity put something of himself into the works of his art. But when his work takes the form of drama, the difficulty of discovering the personality of the artist is greatest. The medium in which he works is dialogue, and

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the nearer the dialogue approaches to perfection in expressing the character of the speaker, the more effectually the personality of the artist is concealed.

Some things about Shakespeare may be known with certainty from what he has written. Bagehot, in his essay 'Shakespeare—the Man,' quoting from *Venus and Adonis* the description of the hare hunt, writes: 'It is absurd by the way to say we know nothing about the man that wrote that: we know that he had been after a hare.' We may conclude from his constant habit of attributing to the characters in his plays thoughts of field sports and horsemanship, that these things were dear to his heart. But men of the most opposite natures and characters have been fond of sport and of horses, and, beyond the exclusion of dispositions of a certain kind, we get no nearer to a knowledge of the man. We may, with Professor Dowden, follow the development of the mind and art of Shakespeare. We may at one time rest with him in the forest of Arden; at another we may note that he had bade farewell to mirth; and, after the tragic period, we may realise 'the pathetic yet august serenity of Shakespeare's final period.' It is a study of the deepest interest, and of great assistance in arriving at a full understanding of what was

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written in each of these periods. But these were varying moods of one and the same man, and we feel assured that if the question, What manner of man is this your fellow, Master Shakespeare? had been put to Ben Jonson or to Heming and Condell, the answer would have been the same throughout his varying moods, and at each stage of his intellectual development.

But Shakespeare was not only a dramatist. He was a poet whose thoughts found expression in the form of the sonnet. Here again the inquirer after the man is baffled, and from a study of the Elizabethan sonnet he may rise with the feeling that if Shakespeare's design in writing his sonnets had been the mystification of posterity, and the concealment of the identity of the writer, he could not have chosen a more effectual method of carrying out his purpose. If, distrusting his judgment, he were to have recourse to critics who by the aid of poetic instinct might have power to solve the mystery by which he has been baffled, his perplexity is not lessened when he is told by Wordsworth: 'With this key Shakespeare unlocked his heart.' For while he is considering which among the many and different kinds of hearts unlocked

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in the sonnets ought to be attributed to Shakespeare, he reads in Browning

With this same key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart 'once more.'
Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he.

In the end he may be content to accept the sober conclusion in which Sir Sidney Lee sums up the result of an exhaustive examination of the sonnets of the Elizabethan age. 'Most of Shakespeare's "sonnets" were produced under the incitement of that freakish rage for sonnet-eering which, taking its rise in Italy and sweeping over France on its way to England, absorbed for some half-dozen years in this country a greater volume of literary energy than has been applied to sonneteering within the same space of time here or elsewhere before or since. . . . Genuine emotion or the writer's personal experience inspired few Elizabethan sonnets, and no literary historian can accept the claim which has been preferred on behalf of Shakespeare's "sonnets" to be at all points a self-evident exception to the general rule. A personal note may have escaped the poet involuntarily in the sonnets in which he gives voice to a sense of melancholy and remorse, but Shakespeare's dramatic instinct never slept, and there is no

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proof that he is doing more there than produce dramatically the illusion of a personal confession.' *

The attempt to discover the man Shakespeare in what he has written is never a fruitless search, for the means by which it is prosecuted is a careful study and thorough understanding of his works. But if a definite result is to be attained, there must be called in aid such information as may be obtained from the men among whom Shakespeare lived, moved and had his being. What has been collected in these pages may be no more than, here and there, 'a light occasion, a word, or some sport,' but these things may serve to make the man's 'naturall dispositions and maners appeare more plaine than' his most famous achievements; his *Hamlet*, his *Lear*, his *Othello*, and his *As You Like It*.

* *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 229.

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SHAKESPEARE left Stratford for London in the year 1586, as is commonly supposed. The earliest reference to him that has been brought to light was written in the year 1591. It is from the pen of Edmund Spenser.

In the autumn of 1589 Spenser left his Irish home for London, where he stayed for about two years. He had come to Ireland in 1580 as secretary to Arthur Lord Grey, of Wilton. In 1588 he obtained by purchase the post of clerk of the Munster Council. He had already acquired a grant of some forfeited lands in the county of Cork, on which was the castle of Kilcolman, an ancient seat of the Desmonds. Here he settled on taking up the duties of his office.

In the autumn of 1589 Sir Walter Raleigh was living in the same county at Youghal, where the visitor may find his house, reverently preserved, and the garden where the potato first grew in Irish soil. An intimacy had sprung up between Raleigh and Spenser. Disappointed in love, and debarred from the society which he had enjoyed

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in London, and afterwards, as we shall see in Dublin, Spenser was living with a sister in the lonely castle of Kilcolman.* His relations with his neighbours, so far as we know of them, were not satisfactory. A dispute with a powerful neighbour, Maurice Viscount Roche of Fermoy, had involved him in long and harassing litigation. Raleigh brought with him a welcome gleam of hope and encouragement. He found Spenser at work on the *Faerie Queene*, of which the first three books were completed. Raleigh admired the work, and sympathised with the loneliness and desolation that had fallen to the lot of the poet. He counselled Spenser to go with him to London, where his work might be brought out under the patronage of Elizabeth. In the words of the poem in which Spenser tells the tale of his stay in London, Raleigh

Gan to cast great lyking to my lore,
And great disliking to my luckless lot
That banisht had my selfe like wight forlore
Into that waste where I was quite forgot.
The which to leave thenceforth he counseld me,
Unmeet for man in whom was aught regarded,
And wend with him his Cynthia to see ;
Whose grace was great, and bounty most rewardfull.

* Sarah Spenser married John Travers, a member of a Lancashire family, who held some office in Munster. Many of their descendants are living in County Cork, and in other parts of Ireland.

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The visit to London was successful. The first three books of the *Faerie Queene* were brought out under the patronage of Elizabeth, and, what is more to our present purpose, Spenser spent two years in the company of the most famous wits and beauties of the day, and formed at least one friendship which endured until it was closed by death.

Spenser returned to Kilcolman some time before the 27th of December, 1591, for on that day he addressed to Raleigh the 'simple pastorall,' in which he tells the story of his visit to London. In *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, the shepherds of *The Shepheards Calendar* reappear. Colin (Spenser), at the request of Hobbinol (Gabriel Harvey), describes to them what he saw and how he fared at the Court of Cynthia (Elizabeth). The Shepheard of the Ocean (Raleigh) inclined the ear of Cynthia to Colin's oaten pipe, in which she

Gan take delight
And it desired at timely houres to heare.

Colin then tells the listeners of the Shepheards who were 'in faithful service of faire Cynthia.' The poem is full of the pastoral conceits then in vogue. But there are passages of true poetic beauty, and Spenser's estimate of the poets of

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his time is intended to be taken seriously. 'I make you a present,' he writes in his dedication to Raleigh, 'of this simple Pastorall, unworthie of your higher conceipt for the meanesse of the stile, but agreeing with the truth in the circumstance and matter.'

The circumstances of his journey to London by sea and by land, and his reception by the Queen, are truthfully told, and we may accept as likewise truthful the matter of the poem; his estimate of the poets whom he had met.

Raleigh could have had no difficulty in discerning the poets disguised under the names of Harpalus, Corydon, Alcyon, Palemon, and Aryn-tas; and we need not concern ourselves with the less effectual efforts of commentators. Three or four of the Shepherds are identified beyond doubt. The 'Shepherd of the Ocean' is Raleigh. Alabaster and Daniel are mentioned by name.

Of another he writes

And there, though last not least, is Aetion;
A gentler shepherd may no where be found,
Whose Muse, full of high thoughts invention
Doth like himself heroically sound.

Shakespeare is not addressed by name, as Alabaster and Daniel are. But the reference to a name that did 'heroically sound' is unmistakable. To no other poet of the day is

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this play upon his name applicable. That Shakespeare is here described under the name of Aetion, 'a familiar Greek proper name derived from Αἰτός,' Sir Sidney Lee regards as 'hardly doubtful,' and this conclusion is now generally adopted. The temptation presented by the martial sound of Shakespeare's name was found irresistible by others than Spenser. 'The warlike sound of his surname (whence some may conjecture him of a military extraction), Hastivibrans or Shakespeare,' suggests to Fuller a comparison with Martial.* William Winstanley writes: 'In Mr. Shakespeare, the glory of the English stage, three eminent poets may seem in some sort to be compounded. Martial, in the warlike sound of his surname, Ovid, the most natural and witty of all poets, and Plautus, a very exact comedian, and yet never any scholar.' And Ben Jonson, in his lines prefixed to the First Folio, says that Shakespeare in his well-turned and true-filed lines

seemes to shake a Lance
As brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance.

It was a happy inspiration that suggested to Spenser this play on the word 'Shakespeare,' for it enables us, without question as to the identification of Aetion, to consider his estimate

* *Worthies of England.*

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of the shepherd who bore this warlike name, than whom a gentler might nowhere be found.

That Spenser, 'the greatest of Shakespeare's poetic contemporaries, was first drawn by the poems into the rank of Shakespeare's admirers' Sir Sidney Lee regards as a likelihood. Shakespeare's poems were known to his friends in manuscript for some years before they were given to the world in print. This is certainly true of his sonnets. These incomparable poems were known to Francis Meres in 1598 as circulating among Shakespeare's private friends. They were not published until 1609, when they were printed by an adventurous publisher named Thorpe, dedicated to their 'onlie begotter,' one 'Mr. W. H.,' to the mystification of many generations of curious and learned Shakespearians. *Venus and Adonis* was published in 1593. But as the poet, in the dedication to Southampton, calls it 'the first heir of my invention,' it must have been written before the production of *Love's Labour's Lost* (1591). It was therefore in manuscript at the time of Spenser's visit to London. So in all probability was *Lucrece*, which was not published until 1594.

For more than a century after the introduction of printing, works differing as widely as poems, and books of sport and horsemanship, circulated

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in manuscript, and it was by the acceptance of their works in this form that authors were encouraged to appeal to a wider circle of readers by means of print.*

Aetion was not the only one of Cynthia's shepherds who was made known to Colin Clouts by poems that were still in manuscript. William Alabaster, of whom he writes by name, was the author of a poem entitled *Eliëis*, written in Latin hexameters in praise of Elizabeth. Of this work Spenser writes

Who lives that can match that heroic song
Which he hath of that mightie princesse made ?

Notwithstanding this encouragement Alabaster never completed the poem, the first book of which is preserved in manuscript in the library of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.† Daniel also was known to Spenser by a poem then in manuscript. Of him Spenser writes

And there is a new shepheard late up sprong,
The which doth all afore him far surpasse ;
Appearing well in that well tuned song
Which late he sung unto a scornful lasse.

This is an apt description of his *Delia*, which was not published until 1592.

For Daniel, as for Aetion, Spenser desires a

* See a note to Sir Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, at p. 157.

† *Dict. Nat. Biography*, tit. 'Alabaster.'

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stronger flight, and, less happy in his augury, predicts for his trembling muse success in tragedy :

Yet doth his trembling Muse but lowly flie
As daring not too rashly mount on hight.

Addressing Daniel by name, he bids him to rouse his feathers quickly :

And to what course thou please thy selfe advance,
But most, me seemes, thy accent will excell
In tragick plaints, and passionate mischance.

Spenser may have been attracted to Shakespeare by the melody of a love poem written in discipleship to Ovid. With his friend Gabriel Harvey he may have found in *Lucrece* a 'muse full of high thoughts invention.' Harvey wrote of this poem as comparable to *Hamlet*. 'The younger sort take much delight in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, but his *Lucrece* and his tragedy of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke* have it in them to please the wiser sort.* Although Spenser may have been attracted by the melody of *Venus and Adonis*, and may have found high thoughts invention in *Lucrece*, if we could catch an echo of the heroic sound given forth by the muse of

* Written by Harvey in a copy of Speght's *Chaucer*, 1598. The volume in which this note was written passed into the collection of Bishop Burnet, whose library was burned in a fire at Northumberland House. The note had been seen by Malone and Steevens, and its authenticity has never been questioned.

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Action, we must go beyond the poems, and we need not travel far.

The first part of *King Henry VI.* was produced during Spenser's stay in London. The exact date cannot be ascertained. Malone fixes it at 1589. In Mr. Furnivall's *Trial Table of the Order of Shakespeare's Plays*, prefixed by Professor Dowden to his *Shakespeare His Mind and Art*, the supposed date is 1590-1. Professor Masson (*Shakespeare Personally*) regards it as 'a specimen of Shakespeare, about 1589 or 1590, first trying his hand in a Chronicle Play from English History.'

No time could have been more favourable for the presentation to the public of a stirring national and heroic drama. The patriotic fervour that had been kindled by the defeat and destruction of the Armada was at its height. The groundlings saw in Talbot, the hero of the drama, a great English champion, the scourge of France, who scorned to be exchanged for an ignoble prisoner, and they hailed with delight his heroic speech and conduct. The success of the play was extraordinary. Thomas Nash, in *Pierce Peniless His Supplication to the Divell* (1592), wrote thus in defence of 'our English Chronicles wherein our forefathers' valiant actions (that have lien long buried in rustic brasse

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and worme-eaten bookes) are revived, and they themselves rayed from the grave of oblivion':

'How would it have joyed brave *Talbot* (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyne two hundred years in his Toomb hee should triumphe againe on the Stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at severall times) who in the Tragedian that represents his person imagine they behold him fresh bleeding!'

Among the tens of thousands who daily crowded the playhouse we may surely place Spenser. He saw beyond the shouting crowd, and with the intuition of genius predicted an eagle flight for the gentle poet with the warlike name, whose muse gave forth a sound so heroical.

The enthusiastic reception accorded to this play contrasts strongly with the comments of modern critics who for the most part dismiss it with the frigid remark that it must be accepted as in some small part the work of Shakespeare, because we find it included in the authentic edition of his plays printed in 1623. The scene in the Temple Gardens is the part that has been generally accepted as justifying the inclusion of the play. Professor Dowden writes: 'Whether any portions of the first part of *Henry VI.* be from the hand of Shakespeare, and if there be,

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what those portions are, need not be here investigated. The play belongs in the main to the pre-Shakesperian school.*

Regarded as a work of art, the play deserves the condemnation that it has received at the hands of these critics. It was in the main the work of an inferior dramatist, whether Greene or Peele it is needless to inquire. But the drama, as revised by Shakespeare, strikes a heroic note, and in the recognition of this strain the groundlings are at one with Spenser, and with the greatest of later-day critics of Shakespeare, Swinburne, who by force of genius was able to catch an echo of the heroic note which struck the ear and stirred the heart of Spenser.

In his *Study of Shakespeare* Swinburne devotes himself to this play, mainly as showing the development of the art of Shakespeare, who, under the influence of Marlowe, was passing from rhyme to blank verse. He exonerates the memory of Shakespeare from the imputation of having perpetrated in its evil entirety the first part of *King Henry VI*. He had no part or share in the defamation of the Maid of Orleans. But to him, as to Spenser, the heroic strain which Shakespeare infused into a dull play, and which raised it to the level of a work of genius, was apparent.

* *Shakespere His Mind and Art.*

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‘The last battle of Talbot seems to me as undeniably the master’s work as the scene in the Temple Gardens, or the courtship of Margaret by Suffolk.’ Throughout the play he finds ‘Shakespeare at work (so to speak) with both hands—with his left hand of rhyme, and his right hand of blank verse.’ The noble scene of parting between the old hero and his son on the verge of desperate battle and certain death he regards as ‘the last and loftiest farewell note of rhyming tragedy.’

Hark, countrymen! either renew the fight
Or tear the lions out of England’s coat.

He fables not; I hear the enemy:
Out, some light horsemen, and peruse their wings.
O, negligent and heedless discipline!
How are we park’d and bounded in a pale,
A little herd of England’s timorous deer,
Mazed with a yelping kennel of French curs!
If we be English deer, be then in blood;
Not rascal-like, to fall down with a pinch,
But rather, moody-mad and desperate stags,
Turn on the bloody hounds with heads of steel
And make the cowards stand aloof at bay:
Sell every man his life as dear as mine,
And they shall find dear deer of us, my friends.
God and Saint George, Talbot and England’s right
Prosper our colours in this dangerous fight! *

* 1 *Hen. VI.*, I. v. 27; IV. ii. 42.

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Here is the heroic sound ; here is the brandishing of the spear of which Spenser thought, when from his castle of Kilcolman he wrote to Raleigh of the poets by whom Cynthia was surrounded, of whom none was more gentle than the shepherd whose muse did like his name heroically sound.

But what Spenser tells us of the man whom he knew in the year 1591, and whom he chose to call Action, is more to our purpose than his estimate of the qualities of his muse, for of these we can form our own opinion unaided. Of this man he writes : ‘ No gentler Shepheard may no where be found.’

The word ‘gentle,’ in the sense in which it was used by Spenser, has disappeared from the English language, and it has left no successor. In this sense, which is noted as archaic, it is thus defined in the *New English Dictionary* : ‘ Having the character appropriate to one of good birth : noble, generous, courteous.’ In these qualities, in the opinion of Spenser, not one of the poets whom he met in London surpassed the young actor, commenced poet and dramatist, who had come from the country town of Stratford a few years ago, to seek his fortune, in, as was reported, a very mean condition.

There was not one of Shakespeare’s fellows whose estimate of the qualities of a gentleman is

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entitled to more respect than the writer of these words. Edmund Spenser, son of a London clothmaker, took his name from a 'house of ancient fame.'* His relationship to the Spensers of Althorp was acknowledged. He dedicated poems to the daughters of Sir John Spenser, the head of that branch of the family, and in *Colin Clouts* he writes of these ladies as

The honor of the noble familie :
Of which I meanest boast myselfe to be.

And Gibbon writes: 'The nobility of the Spensers has been illustrated and enriched by the trophies of Marlborough; but I exhort them to consider the *Faerie Queen* as the most precious jewel of their coronet.'

A more worthy conception of the obligations of gentle birth—of late happily revived—held good in Tudor times than in some later years, and the poet's father, 'a gentleman,' brought no discredit on his name when he became a free journeyman in the 'art and mystery of cloth-making.'

In this business he was not successful, for his son Edmund received assistance as a poor scholar of Merchant Taylors' school, when, in 1569, he entered Pembroke Hall, now Pembroke

* *Epithalamium.*

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College, Cambridge, as a sizar. He took his degree of M.A. in 1576. His lifelong friend, Gabriel Harvey, the Hobbinol of the *Shepherds Calendar* and of *Colin Clouts*, obtained a fellowship in this college in the following year. A man of great ability and learning, he held a high position in the University, and Spenser, through his intimacy with Harvey, must have been brought into touch with the best class of students of his day. From his experience at the University, and afterwards in public life, Spenser was well qualified to form an estimate of the qualities which entitled a man to be regarded as 'gentle.'

But Spenser has still stronger claims to our attention. He was the intimate friend of Philip Sidney and of Walter Raleigh, and his great work, the *Faerie Queene*, was an allegory, of which the general end was 'to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline.' Surely commendation from Spenser is praise indeed.

It must startle a reader accustomed to the ordinary description of the 'man from Stratford,' commencing dramatist as a theatrical *fac totum*, to find one like Spenser writing of him, not only that he was 'gentle,' but that among the poets of the day no 'gentler' than he could

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be found. For there were those among the Shepherds of the Court of Cynthia to whom the term 'gentle' could have been applied with undoubted fitness. Astrophel we know to be Sir Philip Sidney, for he appears under the same title in Spenser's elegy on his death. Alabaster, educated in Westminster School, became a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Daniel left Oxford without a degree, but he became tutor to William Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke, to whom the Folio of 1623 was dedicated in recognition of the favours with which he had 'prosecuted' the author. Amyntas has, with probability, been identified with Ferdinando, Earl of Derby. The young poet, who as a gentleman compared favourably with men like these, was very different from the illiterate clown of whom we have read, the creature of the imagination of certain later-day writers.

There was really nothing in the birth or education of Shakespeare to render it improbable that one of the fortunate ones

Quibus arte benignâ
Et meliore luto finxit precordia Titan

should have possessed the qualities ascribed to him by Spenser. Something more on this subject will be found in a chapter entitled 'Family

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and Friends.' But antecedent improbability, even where it exists, must yield to the testimony of credible witnesses, a class in which Edmund Spenser may surely be placed.

That Spenser was attracted by the personality of Shakespeare appears from the terms of personal esteem in which he writes of Aetion. It was not until after the death of Spenser that Shakespeare gave expression to his feelings of regard. But what he then wrote leaves us in no doubt as to the reality and strength of the friendship that had its origin in Spenser's visit to London in 1589.

Spenser's disposition was social, and he had the genius of friendship, qualities not always united in the same individual. Throughout his life he found delight in the society of men of letters. With Philip Sidney, Sir Edward Dyer, and some other friends, he formed a literary club styled 'Areiopagus,' the meetings of which appear to have been held in the years 1578 and 1579 at Leicester House.* His correspondence with Gabriel Harvey about the same time affords evidence, not only of his literary activity, but of his constancy in friendship. His lifelong friendship with Harvey probably had its origin in kindness shown by a senior member of the

* *Dict. Nat. Biography.*

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University, of established position, to a poor and unknown sizar. Some such explanation seems to be needed, for no characters could be more unlike than the author of the *Faerie Queene*, and the arrogant and scurrilous pamphleteer whose paper warfare with Nash and Greene is an unedifying chapter of Elizabethan literature. So scandalous did it become that in 1599 it was ordered by authority 'that all Nashe's bookes and Dr. Harvey's bookes be taken wherever they may be found, and that none of the same bookes be ever printed hereafter.'* Spenser's love of Harvey was at one time a real danger to English literature. The ambition of Harvey's lifetime was to be known as the inventor of the English hexameter. He did his utmost to induce his friend to abandon rhyme for classical methods of versification, and it appears from their correspondence that he was at one time all but successful. But Spenser's true literary sense and ear for the music of words saved us from this calamity, and he found salvation in rhyme, as Shakespeare found it in blank verse.

Friendship was a necessary of life to Spenser. When he found himself in the position of secretary to the Lord Deputy of Ireland he surrounded himself with the best literary society that Dublin

* Cooper, *Athen. Cant.*

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could supply, and in Lodovick Bryskett, an Irish official, he found an intimate and congenial friend. Bryskett, who is said to have been of Italian descent, had filled the office of Clerk of the Council under Sir Henry Sidney. Becoming an intimate friend of Philip Sidney, he was his companion in a three years' tour through Germany, Italy and Poland. He was a poet, and Spenser showed his appreciation of his friend's work by including two of his poems in a collection which he published in 1595 under the title of *Astrophel*. He also addressed to Bryskett as 'Lodwick,' a sonnet included in his *Amoretti* (Sonnet xxxiii.). But Bryskett's claim to grateful remembrance rests on the introduction which he prefixed to a translation of an Italian philosophical treatise entitled *A Discourse of Civill Life containing the Ethike Part of Morall Philosophie*. The introduction to this book, addressed to Arthur Lord Grey, of Wilton, is described by Sir Sidney Lee as of unique interest in English literature. In it we find ourselves in the company of a party of friends assembled at the author's cottage, near Dublin. They were described as 'Dr. Long, Primate of Ardmagh; Sir Robert Dillon, Knight; M. Dormer, the Queenes Sollicitor; Capt. Christopher Carleil; Capt. Thomas Norreis; Capt. Warham St.

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Leger; Capt. Nicholas Dawtrey; and M. Edmond Spenser, late your Lordships Secretary; and M. Smith, apothecary.'

Bryskett, supported by the applause of the company, appealed to Spenser as 'not onely perfect in the Greek tongue, but also very well read in Philosophie both Morall and Naturall,' to spend the time which they had 'destined to familiar discourse and conversation, in declaring to them the benefits obtained by the knowledge of Moral Philosophy, and in expounding and teaching them to understand it.' Spenser asks to be excused on the ground that he had already undertaken a work tending to the same effect, 'which is in *heroical verse*, under the title of a *Faerie Queene*, to represent all the moral virtues; assigning to every *Virtue a Knight, to be the patron and defender of the same.*' The company were well satisfied, and 'shewed an extreme longing after his worke of the *Faerie Queene* whereof some parcels had bin by some of them seene,' and pressed Bryskett to produce his translation of which Spenser had spoken. Bryskett complied, and delivered his translation of the work of Giraldi, with which the company must have been well pleased, for the discussion of the book and of some questions proposed by Spenser on the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle lasted for three days.

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With our knowledge of Spenser's sociable disposition and love of literary companionship, we can understand how he bemoaned the 'luckless lot' that had banished him 'like wight forlore' to the waste in which he was forgotten, and we can realise his enjoyment of the society of the shepherds whom he celebrates in *Colin Clouts*. We are also prepared to find in his writings, as well as in those of Shakespeare, evidence that he found in Aetion what most in life he prized—a friend.

Spenser paid another visit to London towards the end of the year 1595, returning to Ireland in the beginning of 1597. Shakespeare's greatest works had not then been produced. But the author of *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard II.* and *Richard III.* had gone far in the eagle flight which Spenser six years before had predicted for Aetion. During Spenser's stay in London he produced the second part of the *Faerie Queene*, and wrote his *View of the Present State of Ireland*. There is no record of his experiences in London, such as he furnished to Raleigh in *Colin Clouts* on his return from his former visit. Spenser was in no fitting mood for telling a such like happy tale, nor would it have had prosperity in the ear of Raleigh.

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In *Prothalamion*, published in 1596, he writes of his

Sullein care
Through discontent of my long fruitlesse stay
In princes Court, and expectation vayne
Of idle hopes.

Raleigh, also, had learned from experience to put no confidence in princes, and he had severed his connection with Ireland by the sale of his estates to the Earl of Cork.

For proof of the continuation of the friendship which had its origin in Spenser's first visit to London we must turn from him to what was written by Shakespeare after the death of Spenser. But some things happened, of no particular significance in themselves, but worth noting in connection with others of greater importance. We have seen in Gabriel Harvey not only a fierce pamphleteer, but also a critical student of Shakespeare's work, attracted to him in the first instance, like Spenser, by his poems, but capable of appreciating his greatness as a dramatist. His entry into the paper warfare in which he engaged was by the publication of a pamphlet entitled '*Foure Letters and Certain Sonnets* ; especially touching Robert Greene, and other parties by him abused' (1593). The abuse was contained in Greene's *Groatsworth of*

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Wit, of which more shall be said in another chapter, and one of the parties abused by Greene and vindicated by Harvey was William Shakespeare. By this abuse the wrath of Harvey was kindled, and he thus wrote of the *Groatsworth of Wit* :

‘ If his other bookes be as holesome geere as this, no marvaile though the gay-man conceive trimlie of himself, and statelye scorn all besides Greene ; vile Greene ! would thou wearest half so honest as the worst of the foure whom thou upbraideth, or halfe so learned as the unlearnedst of the three.’

Among the sonnets printed in this pamphlet is one addressed by Spenser to Harvey in praise of his ‘ doomeful writing’ as a critic. It is addressed ‘ to the Right Worshipfull, my singular good frend Mr. Gabriel Harvey, Doctor of the Lawes,’ and it thus concludes

Like a great lord of peerelesse liberty
Lifting the good up to high Honour’s seat,
And the evil damning evermore to dy,
For life and death is in thy doomeful writing
So thy renowme lives ever by endighting.

DUBLIN, *this* 18 of July 1586

your devoted frend during life

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This sonnet was not written in view of Harvey’s vindication of Shakespeare from the attacks of

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Greene. But he was in constant communication with Spenser, and Harvey would not have added the sonnet to his pamphlet if he had not been assured of the sympathy of the writer in the cause of which he became the champion.

In the year 1599 a piratical publisher, named William Jaggard, brought out a poetical miscellany, entitled *The Passionate Pilgrim, by W. Shakespeare*, containing twenty pieces, some of which are undoubtedly Shakespeare's. Among these pieces is a sonnet addressed, as Shakespeare's sonnets were, to a private friend. The friend is a lover of music, the sonneteer a lover of sweet poetry ; but

One god is God of both, as poets feign.

To the friend ravished by a heavenly touch on the lute, the poet writes

Spenser to me, whose deepe Conceit is such,
As, passing all conceit, needs no defence.

‘ The secret of Spenser's enduring popularity with poets and lovers of poetry lies specially in this, that he excels in the poet's peculiar gift, the instinct for verbal music. Shakespeare, or the author of the sonnet usually assigned to him, felt and expressed this when he drew the parallel between “ music and sweet poetry ” ’

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Thou lovest to hear the sweet melodious sound
That Phœbus' lute, the queen of music, makes ;
And I in deep delight am chiefly drowned
Whenas himself to singing he betakes.

‘This is an early word in criticism of Spenser, and it is the last word about his prime and unquestionable excellence—a word in which all critics must agree.’* The sonnet attributed to Shakespeare by Jaggard had appeared in the preceding year in a volume entitled *Poems in diverse Humours* as the work of Richard Barnfield. Whether Barnfield had included in his *Poems* an unclaimed sonnet written by Shakespeare; or Jaggard, greatly daring, had converted to his use a sonnet which Barnfield had printed as his own, is a question which cannot be here discussed. There is a possibility that Barnfield was the private friend to whom the sonnet was addressed, and that with or without the consent of Shakespeare—to whom his sonnets were unconsidered trifles—he included it in his collection of *Poems*. ‘That he had some personal relations with Shakespeare seems almost certain, and the disputed authorship of the particular pieces mentioned above has attracted students to Barnfield’s name. It is no small honour to have written poems which everyone, until our

* *Encyclopedia Britannica*, tit. ‘Spenser.’

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own day, has been content to suppose were Shakespeare's.'*

Spenser returned to Ireland early in 1597, a broken and disappointed man. The short remainder of his life was clouded in gloom, and ended in tragedy. In the October of the following year his castle of Kilcolman was burned over his head by the followers of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone. Spenser, with his family, fled to Cork, whence he was sent to London on the 9th of December with a despatch by Sir Thomas Norris, the President of Munster. A month after his arrival in London, on the 16th of January, 1598-9, he died, in the words of Shakespeare, 'in beggary.'

The story was thus told by Ben Jonson to Drummond of Hawthornden :

'The Irish having rob'd Spenser's goods, and burnt his house and a little child new born, he and his wyfe escaped ; and, after, he died for lake of bread in King Street, and refused 20 pieces sent to him by my Lord of Essex, and said, He was sorrie he had no time to spend them.'

The exact facts of the case must have been known to Ben Jonson and to Shakespeare, and I prefer their testimony, as to a matter of fact within their knowledge, to the speculations of

* Mr. Edmund Gosse in *Dict. Nat. Biography*, tit. 'Barnfield.'

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later writers who are moved by the improbability of Spenser, a favourite at Court, a pensioner of the Crown, the bearer of an important despatch, with friends in London, being allowed to die for lack of bread. More improbable events have in fact occurred than the death of Spenser for lack of the nourishment necessary in his enfeebled condition. His death, under such circumstances, might well be described by Jonson as 'for lake of bread,' and by Shakespeare as 'in beggary.'*

That Spenser's friends were touched with remorse when they realised the consequence of their neglect adds to the pathos of the tragedy. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. Essex, whose failure to send timely aid may have been due to Spenser's unwillingness to appeal for assistance, paid the expense of the funeral. Camden tells us that his hearse was attended by poets; and mournful elegies and poems, with the pens that wrote them, were thrown into his tomb. That Shakespeare was among the mourning poets who stood by the grave of his friend we cannot doubt, for he was moved by the pity of it to depart from his wont, and to introduce

* That Spenser died in poverty was generally known. It is mentioned by Fletcher, by John Weever, and by the author of *The Returne from Pernassus*.

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into one of his plays an allusion to an event of the day.

A Midsummer Night's Dream was first printed in 1600, the year following the death of Spenser. When the strange story of the midsummer night had been told over, and the lovers had come, full of joy and mirth, Theseus asks

What masques, what dances shall we have
To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after-supper and bed-time ?*

A paper is handed to him, showing how many sports were ripe, and of these he was to make choice. Theseus rejects 'The battle with the Centaurs' and 'The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals.' He is then tendered

The thrice three muses mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary.

Of this he says—

That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

To our endless content he then makes choice of

A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth,

to be played by hard-handed men that work in Athens.

* *Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. i. 32.

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The reference to the thrice three mourning muses has been accepted as an unmistakable reference to Spenser's poem, entitled *The Teares of the Muses*, in which each of the Nine laments the decay of the branch of letters over which she presides.

There was a special propriety in the tragic death of Spenser being mourned by the thrice three muses. He was the darling of the muses, the 'poet's poet.' These words of Charles Lamb describe the position in the literary world which was held by Spenser after the publication of the first part of the *Faerie Queene*. Then by the mourning muses the scene in the Abbey is recalled when the weeping poets cast into Spenser's grave their elegies and the pens with which they were written.

For the intimate friends of Spenser the words of Shakespeare would have a special meaning. They mourned the loss, not only of a great poet, but of 'Learning late deceased.' Lodovick Bryskett, in his cottage near Dublin, appealed to Spenser to favour the company with a discourse of philosophy, 'knowing him to be not only perfect in the Greek tongue, but also very well read in Philosophie, both morall and naturall. For, of his love and kindness to me, he encouraged me long sithens to follow the reading of the

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Greeke tongue and offered me his helpe to make me understand it.'

The variety and extent of Spenser's learning, which was known to those who were admitted to his friendship, has of later years been realised, as the result of a careful study of his writings.

'Except Milton, and possibly Gray, Spenser was the most learned of English poets, and signs of his multifarious reading in the classics, and modern French and Italian literature abound in his writings.' *

What more fitting theme for a 'satire, keen and critical,' than the death in beggary of one like Spenser, the darling of the muses, the favourite of the Queen, and high in office; the pompous funeral in Westminster Abbey; the broad pieces, gifts well meant but all too late; the poets with their elegies, deploring in good set terms the loss of him whom they suffered to die—from want of thought and not of heart, we may well believe—neglected and uncared? Well might Theseus reject the theme as 'not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.'

Professor Masson, in his *Shakespeare Personally*, notes a certain respect in which Shakespeare differed from his contemporaries. 'What do

* 'Life of Spenser,' in the *Dict. Nat. Biography*, by Professor J.W. Hales and Sir Sidney Lee.

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we find them, one and all, doing—Spenser, Chapman, Drayton, Daniel, Nash, Donne, Ben Jonson, Marston, Dekker, Chettle, and other known poets and dramatists of rank, besides the small fry of professed epigrammatists, like Owen and John Davies, of Hereford? Writing verses to or about each other, commendatory poems on each other's works, mutual invectives and lampoons, in prologues to their plays or otherwise, epistles and dedications of compliment to eminent noblemen and courtiers, epitaphs on noblemen or ladies just dead, and comments in a thousand forms on the incidents of the day. In the midst of all this crossfire of epistles, epigrams, and poems of occasion, stood Shakespeare; coming in, too, for his own share of notice in them—for just a little of the invective and for a very great deal of the eulogy. But he would not be brought to return a shot. . . . From occurrence literature of any kind Shakespeare seems to have systematically shrunk.*

Even the death of Elizabeth, a theme welcomed by other poets of the day, is unmarked by a line by him. This was noted as strange by Chettle, who in *England's Mourning Garment* (1603) wrote

* *Shakespeare Personally*, by David Masson. Edited and arranged by Rosaline Masson.

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Nor doth the siluer-tonge'd *Melicert* - ^{Sh}
Drop from his honied muse one sable teare
To mourne her death that graced his desert
And to his laies opened her royal ear.

Shepherd, remember our *Elizabeth*

And sing her Rape, done by that *Tarquin*, Death.

^{but} That Shakespeare departed from his custom when he introduced into *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a reference to the death of Spenser, shows how profoundly he was moved by the personality of the man, the beauty of his poetry, the extent of his learning, and the tragedy of his death. The death of Marlowe is the occasion of one other reference to an event of the day to be found in his works. But Spenser exerted no such influence on the development of the art of Shakespeare as was due to Marlowe. There is no passage written by Shakespeare in which we catch the faintest echo of the poetry of Spenser. There is indeed one speech which, but for Spenser, would not have been written. It is a reminiscence of Spenser ; not of the poet, but of the Irish official.

Spenser was not only a great poet, he was also an Irish official, with a clear and definite Irish policy. It was the policy of his patron and friend, Arthur Lord Grey, of Wilton. Lord Grey was recalled in 1582, two years after his

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appointment as Lord Deputy; but Spenser remained constant to his political creed, and throughout his life it was his mission, with chivalrous loyalty to defend the policy and vindicate the memory of Grey. This he did in immortal verse in the fifth book of his *Faerie Queene*, and in indifferent prose in his *View of the Present State of Ireland*, written in 1587, after the death of Grey. This is the policy that Shakespeare, with his marvellous power of condensation, has expressed in four lines, put into the mouth of Richard, when departing for Ireland:

Now for our Irish wars:

We must supplant those rough rug-headed kerns
Which live like venom where no venom else
But only they have privilege to live.*

Whence did Shakespeare derive this policy: War, to be followed by the supplanting of the native Irish? And how comes he to speak of them with contempt as 'rough, rug-headed kerns,' and with hatred, as venom that had escaped expulsion at the hands of St. Patrick? Questions to be asked—for Shakespeare is wont to put into the mouths of characters in his dramas an expression of his personal feelings

* *King Richard II.*, II., i. 155.

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and experiences, and if a different explanation of this passage can be found it would be welcome.

When Spenser came to London with Raleigh in 1589 he brought with him three completed books of the *Faerie Queene*. What he calls 'his whole intention in the course of this worke' had been long since thought out, and he was then at work on the next succeeding books, the *Legends of Friendship* and of *Justice*. Spenser was always ready to take his friends into his confidence as to the literary work in which he was engaged, often far in advance of its completion. He had read the early books of his poem to Raleigh in Kilcolman castle, and 'some parcels' of the *Faerie Queene* had been seen by some of the company assembled in Bryskett's cottage near Dublin—a prelate, a lawyer, four soldiers, and 'M. Smith, apothecary.' If Spenser was willing to expound his intention to this assembly, he was not likely to be more reticent in the company of the Shepherds who served Cynthia, and when Aetion, or another, put to him a question which has been repeated throughout the centuries to succeeding generations of Irish officials on their visits to London, and asked him to give the company his view of the present state of Ireland, we know what view he presented, and if he did not show them some

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parcels of his forthcoming fifth book, what he said was understood and treasured by at least one of his hearers.

The view set forth in the treatise written in 1587 is presented in allegorical form in the fifth book of the *Faerie Queene*. The legend of Artegall, or of Justice, is the story of Arthur Lord Grey's mission to Ireland, his policy and his recall. The allegory in many parts of the poem is obscure, and the riddle is not easily solved. It is generally difficult, and often impossible, to discover the counterparts in real life of the allegorical personages of the poem. But in regard to two we are left without doubt: the Faerie Queen is Elizabeth, and Artegall, Arthur Lord Grey.

A letter from the author to Sir Walter Raleigh, 'expounding his whole intention in the course of this worke,' is prefixed to the edition of the three books published in 1581. The Faerie Queen by whose excellent beauty when seen in a vision King Arthur is ravished, and awaking sets forth to seek her, is Faerie land, is Glory. 'In that Faerie Queene I mean glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our souveraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faerie land.'

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The *Faerie Queene* was to be ‘disposed into twelve books, fashioning xii. morall vertues.’ Of each virtue a knight is the patron, whose adventures form the legend of the book. This is the general intention. The particular intention as to the *Faerie Queen* is to identify her with Elizabeth, and as to *Artegall* to identify him with Arthur Lord Grey. *Artegall* is sent by the *Faerie Queen* (Elizabeth) to rescue *Irena* (Ireland) from suffering under the power of wrong (*Grantorto*). Armed with *Chryseas*, the keen sword of Justice, and accompanied by *Talus* and the iron flail of force, *Artegall* puts an end to wrongdoing. He then abode with fair *Irena*, when his study was to deal Justice.

And day and night employ’d his busie paine
How to reform that ragged common-weale

But, ere he coulde reforme it thoroughly
He through occasion called was away
To *Faerie Court*, that of necessity
His course of Justice he was forst to stay
And *Talus* to revoke from the right way
In which he was that Realme for to redresse ;
But envie’s cloud still dimmeth vertue’s ray.
So having freed *Irena* from distresse
He tooke his leave of her then left in heavinesse.

This was the doing of ‘two old ill favour’d
Hags,’ *Envie* and *Detraction*—

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Combyned in one
And linct together against Sir Artegall

Besides, into themselves they gotten had
A monster, which the Blatant Beast they call.

Disregarding the assaults of Envie and Detraction,
and the barking and baying of the Blatant
Beast, Artegall

Still the way did hold
To Faerie Court ; when what him fell shall else
be told.

This is the story of the recall of Grey. He died in 1593, and the rest is silence.

It is not difficult to supply the explanation of the policy of Arthur which was given to the listening Shepherds, when the poet, as was his wont, explained the general and particular intention of the *Legend of Justice*. But for this we must turn to the *View*.

Spenser's Irish policy, like that of Richard II., began with war, and ended in 'supplanting.' In the *View* Eudoxus suggests that the reformation of the realm might be effected by 'making of good lawes, and establishing of new statutes, with sharpe penalties and punishments, for amending of all that is presently amisse.' Irenæus, by whom Spenser speaks, says—

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But all the realme is first to be reformed, and lawes are afterwards to be made for keeping and continuing it in the reformed estate.

Eudox. How then doe you think is the reformation thereof to be begunne, if not by lawes and ordinances ?

Iren. Even by the sword ; for all these evils must first be cut away by a strong hand, before any good can be planted.

Later on Irenæus develops his scheme of supplanting. ‘All the lands will I give unto Englishmen I will haue drawne thither, who shall haue the same with such estates as shall bee thought meete, and for such rent as shall efts-oones be rated ; and under every of those Englishmen will I place some of those Irish to be tennants for a certaine rent, according to the quantity of such land as every man shall have allotted unto him, and shalbe found able to wield, wherein this speciall regard shall be had, that in no place under any land-lord there shall be many of them placed together, but dispersed wide from their acquaintance, and scattered farre abroad thorough all the country.’

Thus would the tribal system be broken up, and the kerns could no longer ‘practice or conspire what they will.’ Rough and shag-headed they were in the eyes of Spenser, for he wrote of their ‘long glippes, which is a thicke curled

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bush of hair, hanging downe over their eyes, and monstrously disguising them, which are both very bad and hurtful.'

In the *View* Spenser recalls how when 'that good Lord Grey, after long travell and many perilous assayes, had brought things almost to this passe that the country was ready for reformation,' the Queen 'being by nature full of moving and clemency,' listened to the complaint against Grey, that 'he was a bloodie man, and minded not the life of her subjects no more than dogges,' and 'all suddenly turned topside-turvey; the noble Lord eft-soones was blamed; the wretched people pittied; and new counsells plotted, in which it was concluded that a general pardon should be sent over to all that would accept of it, upon which all former purposes were blanked, the governor at a bay, and not only all that great and long change which she had before beene at quite lost and cancelled, but also all that hope of good which was even at the doore put back and cleane frustrated.'

This is a prose version of the story of Grey's recall as it is told in the fifth book of the *Faerie Queene*.

If Shakespeare did not derive from converse with Spenser the Irish policy which he put into

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the mouth of Richard, I know not from what contemporary source it was borrowed.

But why does Richard speak with hatred of the native Irish, as the only venom which had escaped expulsion by St. Patrick? In a book well known to Spenser—for he quotes from it more than once in his *View*—Stanyhurst's *Description of Ireland*, printed in Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577), the writer, telling how 'Saint Patricke was moved to expell all the venemous wormes out of Ireland,' quotes from the *Dialogues of Alanus Copus* these words: 'Dici fortasse inde a nonnullis solet nihil esse in Hiberniâ venenati praeter ipsos homines.' Stanyhurst quotes these words with indignation. But Spenser may well have treasured them with different feelings, and repeated them to his friend. He admired the natural beauties and the abundant resources of Ireland, and found 'sweet wit and good invention' in her bardic literature, but it must be acknowledged that his feelings towards the native Irish were such as might have found expression in the saying recorded by Alanus Copus. Whether Shakespeare learned this saying from Spenser, or from Stanyhurst, whose description, with other parts of Holinshed, he had studied with care, matters not. It is not to be taken as the result of his

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own experience, but as a saying that might with dramatic propriety be attributed to Richard.

The poetic element in the character of the second Richard was noted by Coleridge and by Professor Dowden. To Sir Walter Raleigh, Richard is poetry itself. 'It is difficult to condemn Richard without taking sides against poetry. He has a delicate and prolific fancy, which flows into many dream-shapes in the prison; a wide and true imagination, which expresses itself in his great speech on the monarchy of Death; and a deep discernment of tragic issues, which gives thrilling effect to his bitterest outcry.' It may be deserving of a passing note that it is to this most poetic of kings that Shakespeare attributes the ruthless policy of warfare and supplanting which was that of his friend, the poet's poet, Spenser.

Spenser was attracted to Shakespeare by the quality in his nature, to which, in his days, the word 'gentle' was applied, not less than by the high thoughts invention, and heroic strain of a muse which gave promise of an eagle flight. It was this quality, so early apprehended by Spenser, that won for Shakespeare throughout his life the love of his fellows. By bearing this fact in mind as we trace his relations with them, strange errors and misconceptions may be

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avoided. And after his death this was the thought uppermost in the mind of Ben Jonson, when he wrote of the portrait prefixed to the folio of 1623

This figure that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut.

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SHAKESPEARE by his will left 'to my fellowes, John Hemynges, Richard Burbage, and Henry Cundell xxvj's viii d a peece to buy them ringes.' A good many years before, Burbage, with Kempe, had gloried in the triumph of 'our fellow Shakespeare' over the University pens, and over Ben Jonson too; and some years after the death of Shakespeare Ben Jonson told how the players, in their devotion to the memory of their fellow, regarded as a 'malevolent speech' one that Ben Jonson had intended as literary criticism, when he expressed a wish that Shakespeare had blotted a thousand lines.*

The pride of the players in the success of their fellow Shakespeare as a dramatist, outstripping even the great Ben Jonson, was unalloyed by any feeling of jealousy. He had become rich and famous in the literary world. He had been the subject of courtly favour and of the patronage of the great, before he retired to his native town to end his days in affluence and repute, a gentle-

* *Timber, or Discoveries made upon Men and Matter.*

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man of coat armour. But his was not a nature to be spoiled by success, and his last thoughts were not for powerful patrons or literary magnates, but for his fellow players, John Heming and Henry Condell, with Richard Burbage the impersonator of his greatest characters.

The world owes much to the good fellowship between Shakespeare and the players, which endured throughout his life. For seven years after his death *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* were published 'according to the True Originall copies' by John Heming and Henry Condell. Richard Burbage had died in 1619. In dedicating them to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, who had 'prosequuted both them, and their Authour living with so much favour,' the editors write: 'We have but collected them, an office to the dead, to procure his orphanes, guardians; without ambition either of selfe-profit, or fame; only to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend & Fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare, by humble offer of his player to your most noble patronage.'

Heming and Condell were not altogether blind to the priceless literary value of the gift that they were presenting to the world. But the thought uppermost in their minds was piety

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towards the man whom they loved. That piety was recognised as the motive by which they were impelled, we learn from verses prefixed to the First Folio, written by Leonard Digges, a fair representative of the literary world of the day,

Shakespeare, at length, thy pious fellowes give
The world thy workes.

Shakespeare had been dead for seven years, and the world of letters gave no sign. The greatest treasures of English literature, perhaps of all literature, were either tossing about in the Globe theatre, or circulating in imperfect copies surreptitiously obtained, and, for all the literary world cared, they would have so remained. And yet at that time the literary world of London included Jonson, Drayton, Camden, Fletcher, and such lesser lights as Leonard Digges and Hugh Holland, each of whom was in some way connected with Shakespeare or his works. It did not occur to Shakespeare's literary fellows that it might be worth while to edit in a collected form the plays that had been printed in pirated and inaccurate editions, or to make some inquiry about the dramas in manuscript that were at the mercy of the players at the Globe. The assistance of any one of these men would have saved

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the pious editors of the First Folio from the manifest and glaring errors which mar the text of the Folio, and have blinded the eyes of many generations of critics to the true position of that edition, and to its claims upon their attention.

There is some foundation for the suggestion that Shakespeare had intended to give his dramas to the world in a collected form, brought out with the care that he had bestowed on his poems, and that his work was cut short by death. The editors of the Folio in their dedication ask for indulgence, the author 'not having the fate, common with some, to be exequutor to his owne writings,' and in their address to 'the great variety of Readers' these words occur: 'It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liu'd to haue set forth, and overseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to haue collected and publish'd them.' These words are consistent with the supposition that Shakespeare's death, which was sudden and unexpected, cut short the work in which he was engaged of the collection and revision of his plays. But, on the other hand, there is the fact that he never interfered to prevent the

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printing of pirated and corrupt versions of his greatest works, and permitted the manuscripts to remain with the managers of the Globe Theatre, to be altered from time to time, as the exigencies of the playhouse might require; for it was as acting copies, and not as manuscripts revised and corrected for the press, that the true originals were received at the hands of the author.

However this may be, the fact remains that for the preservation and printing of these copies we are indebted to the piety of Shakespeare's fellow players, and if to carelessness about the preservation of his plays Shakespeare had added the aggressive and unlovely personality of Ben Jonson—ever ready, according to Drummond, to sacrifice a friend to a jest—it is more than probable that most, if not all of them, would have been lost to the world. Of the thirty-six plays included in the First Folio, sixteen had been published in quarto from 'diverse stolne and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of incurious impostors that expos'd them.' Among the twenty printed for the first time in the Folio are *The Tempest*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *King Henry VIII.*, *Coriolanus*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cymbeline*.

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If the literature of Shakespeare criticism could find its way to the Elysian fields, in no part would Shakespeare be more concerned than in what has been written of his fellows, Heming and Condell.

He would not quarrel with Mr. Churton Collins's criticism of the text of the First Folio—' words the restoration of which is obvious left unsupplied, unfamiliar words transliterated into gibberish; punctuation as it pleases chance; sentences with the subordinate clauses higgledy-piggledy or upside down; lines transposed; verse printed as prose, and prose as verse; speeches belonging to one character given to another; stage directions incorporated in the text; actors' names suddenly substituted for those of the *dramatis personae*; scenes and acts left unindicated or indicated wrongly—all this and more makes the text of the First Folio one of the most portentous specimens of typography and editing in existence.' *

All this is true, for two honest players, no literary aid being forthcoming, simply handed over to Isaac Haggard and Edward Blount, two honest printers, manuscripts which they knew to have been honestly come by, to put them into print as best they could. No one but the

* *Essays and Studies.*

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author is blamable for the inevitable result. And if Shakespeare, reading this criticism of their handiwork, chanced to be in the frame of mind attributed to him by Pope when he wrote

There hapless Shakespeare yet of Tibbald sore
Wish'd he had blotted for himself before,

he might well regret that he had not printed for himself before. But he would learn with righteous indignation that doubts had been cast on the honesty and good faith of his pious fellows.

‘There is no doubt,’ writes Mr. Spalding,* ‘that they could at least have enumerated Shakespeare’s works correctly; but their knowledge and design of profit did not suit each other.’ They must, he points out, be presumed to have known perfectly what works were, and what were not Shakespeare’s. But these men were ‘unscrupulous and unfair’ in their selection. Their whole conduct ‘inspires distrust,’ and justifies a critic in throwing the First Folio entirely out of view as a ‘dishonest’ and, it might be added, hypocritical ‘attempt to put down editions of about fifteen separate plays of Shakespeare, previously printed in quarto, which,

* Letter on Authorship of *Two Noble Kinsmen*.

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though in most respects more accurate than their successors, had evidently been taken from stolen copies.'

The profession of the editors of the Folio that they had done their work 'without ambition either of selfe-profit or fame' was pure hypocrisy, although, as Mr. Halliwell-Phillips pointed out,* they, 'in giving unreservedly to the public valuable literary property of which they were sole proprietors, made a sacrifice for which the profits on the sale of the Folio would not compensate them.'

The language used by the editors of the first edition of the Cambridge Shakespeare, Mr. W. G. Clarke and Mr. J. Glover, is much to the same effect. Their preface is prefixed to one of the best editions of Shakespeare's works, the Cambridge Shakespeare of 1893, edited by the late Dr. William Aldis Wright; but he is not responsible for language used by his predecessors. The editors are guilty of *suggestio falsi* in conveying to the public the idea that the Folio was printed from original manuscripts received by them at the hands of the author. If the editors were guilty of the fraudulent puffing of their own wares, coupled with 'denunciation of editions which they knew to be superior of their own,'

* *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare.*

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the plainer language used by Mr. Spalding would be fully justified.

Criticism is foreign to these pages, but they are conversant with Shakespeare's relations with his fellows, and it is satisfactory to note that he has been acquitted by more enlightened critics of having bestowed his love—testified, as was then the custom, by the gift of mourning rings—upon a pair of fraudulent knaves. The attitude of modern editors towards the Folio is totally different. Sir Sidney Lee writes: 'Whatever be the First Folio's typographical and editorial imperfections, it is the fountain-head of knowledge of Shakespeare's complete achievement.'* Mr. Grant White, in his historical sketch of the text of Shakespeare prefixed to the edition of his works edited by him (Boston, 1865), writes: 'Indeed, such is the authority given to this volume by the auspices under which it appeared, that had it been thoroughly prepared for the press and printed with care, there would have been no appeal from its text, and editorial labour upon Shakespeare's plays, except that of an historical or exegetical nature, would have been not only without justification, but without opportunity.' The text of the late Mr. Horace Furness's monumental *Variorum Shakespeare* is the First

* *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 557.

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Folio the spelling of which he retains. An edition of the plays by Charlotte Porter and H. A. Clarke, with a general introduction by Mr. Churton Collins, has been published, in which the text of the Folio, with the original spelling, is adopted, with no more than necessary corrections. Sir Walter Raleigh, in a suggestive and interesting volume on Shakespeare contributed to the *English Men of Letters* series, writes : ' There is no escape from the Folio ; for twenty of the plays it is one sole authority ; for most of the remainder it is the best authority that we shall ever know.'

Shakespeare's fellowship with the players of his day dated from shortly after his advent to London, and endured to the day of his death. They had rescued him from the mean condition to which he had fallen, and they took pride in his success. What manner of men these players were is an inquiry the answer to which may aid us, in some degree, in understanding the character of their associate and friend.

The players who were most closely associated with Shakespeare were Heming, Burbage and Condell. Their names are associated with his in the licences granted to the players at the Globe theatre, and they are all remembered by him in his will.

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With Burbage, the impersonator of his greatest creations in tragedy—Hamlet, Lear and Othello—he appears to have been most intimately associated. A merry tale, of a kind that is often current about play-actors, in which their names are connected, is recorded in Manningham's *Diary* of the date of the 13th of March, 1601. And after Shakespeare had settled in Stratford we find him, in one of his visits to London, engaged with Burbage in devising for the Earl of Portland the kind of emblematic decoration known as *impresa*, for his equipment at a tournament to be held at Whitehall.

We owe it to the pious care of Malone, followed by Sir Sidney Lee and the late Mr. Joseph Knight, that we have been granted some insight into the character of the men who were, in a special sense, the fellows and friends of Shakespeare.

Heming died in 1630 in his house in St. Mary's, Aldenbury, where he and his wife had lived together for thirty years, and where he served as churchwarden in 1608. He left a large family, for whom he made provision by his will, and that he gave them a good education is evident, for his ninth son, William, who is also noticed in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, was educated at Westminster School, whence in 1621 he was

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elected a King's scholar at Christ Church, Oxford.

Condell also lived in the parish of St. Mary, in good repute, as we must infer from the fact that he was sidesman in 1606, and churchwarden in 1618. He died in his country house at Fulham in 1627, having by his will, in which he styles himself 'gentleman,' disposed of considerable property, in addition to shares in the Blackfriars and Globe theatres.

Of Burbage, the most famous actor of his own, or perhaps of any age, Sir Sidney Lee has been able to collect more full information in his interesting biography in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The estimation in which he was held appears from the many poems written to his memory, and from his 'occasional introduction into plays in his own person, and in no assumed character. . . . In a petition addressed by his wife and son William to the lord Chamberlain in 1635, relative to the shares in the Blackfriars and Globe playhouses, they speak of Richard Burbage as "one who for thirty yeares' paines, cost and labour made meanes to leave his wife and children some estate," which implies that he died a rich man.' He had some reputation as a painter, and a tradition recorded by Oldys attributes to him the Chandos portrait

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of Shakespeare, which became the property of Sir William Davenant.

The reader of the biographies of these players must be struck by the respectability of their lives, compared with the sad tale that must be told of the University pens of the day. Shakespeare's most intimate friends appear to have been estimable family men, who took an interest in Church matters, put some money together, as he did, and provided well for their families.

The most prosperous of the players of the day was Edward Alleyn. He was a famous actor, and accumulated great wealth, part of which he expended in the foundation and endowment of the college at Dulwich. In 1600 he built, in conjunction with Henslowe, the Fortune theatre in Cripplegate. We do not read of him in connection with any of Shakespeare's plays. Great as he undoubtedly was as an actor, it is not uncharitable to attribute his extraordinary financial success not so much to the legitimate drama as to a speculation in which Shakespeare would have taken no interest,* for in 1594 he acquired

* Shakespeare had no respect for the patrons of the bear garden. 'You'll leave your noise anon, ye rascals: do you take the Court for Paris-garden? ye rude slaves, leave your gaping' (*Henry VIII.*, V. iv. 2). The lovers and haunTERS of bear-baiting and such like sports are Autolycus (*Winter's Tale*, IV. iii. 108), Abraham Slender (*Merry Wives*, I. i. 302), Sir Andrew Aguecheek (*Twelfth Night*, I. iii. 97), Sir Toby Belch (*ib.*, II. v. 8), Richard III. (2 *Henry*

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an interest in the baiting-house at Paris Garden, and he and Henslowe obtained the office of 'Master of the Royal Game of bears bulls and Mastiff dogs.' 'On special occasions he seems to have directed the sport in person, and a graphic but revolting account of his baiting a lion before James I. at the Tower is given in *Stow's Chronicle*, ed. 1631, p. 835.*

It is interesting to pass from the swollen wealth of this ungentle Master Baiter, turned philanthropist, to the modest fortunes of one of Shakespeare's friends, and to his kindly thought for his fellow players.

Augustine Phillips was, with Shakespeare, an original shareholder of the Globe theatre. He died in 1605, leaving by his will "to my fellowe William Shakespeare a thirty shilling peece in gould." . . . Phillips died in affluent circumstances, and remembered many of his fellow actors in his will, leaving to his "fellow," Henry Condell, and to his theatrical servant, Christopher Beeston, like sums as to Shakespeare. He also bequeathed "twenty shillings in gould" to each of the actors Lawrence Fletcher, Robert Armin, Richard Cowley, Alexander Cash, Nicholas

VI., V. i. 151), Thersites (*Troilus and Cressida*, V. vii. 12), and Aaron (*Titus Andronicus*, V. i. 101).

* *Dict. Nat. Biography.*

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Tooley, together with forty shillings and clothes, or musical instruments to two theatrical apprentices Samuel Gilborne and James Sands. Five pounds were further to be equally distributed amongst "the hired men of the company." Of four executors, three were the actors John Heminges, Richard Burbage and William Ely, who each received a silver bowl of the value of five pounds.' *

The will of Augustine Phillips is an interesting document, for by its aid we can discern in the profession of player, from its very infancy, the good fellowship and readiness to succour the less successful members, by which it has been always honourably distinguished.

The position of the players, at the time when Shakespeare was admitted to the fellowship, was a strange one. At law, unless he had obtained a licence for the exercise of his functions under a statute passed in 1572 from a peer of the realm or other honourable personage of greater degree, he was liable to the punishment inflicted by magistrates on rogues, vagabonds, or sturdy beggars.† By a fiction of law the licensed players were considered to be retained as the 'household servants daylie waytors,' of

* *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 453, note 1.

† 14 Eliz. c. 5, re-enacted 39 Eliz. c. 4.

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the great nobleman. They craved no further stipend or benefit at his hands but their liveries, and 'also your honors Licence to certifiye that we are your household Servaunts when we shall have occasion to travayle amongst our frendes.' *

The legal fiction by which the player escaped whipping as a vagabond by enrolling himself as a servant had, like most others, its origin in historical fact. The fellowships of players may be traced to the vast number of servants and retainers which was, up to the early years of the sixteenth century, attached to the house of a great nobleman. It was part of their office to afford entertainment on festive occasions, such as a marriage. The servants were often called upon to entertain their masters and his guests by a dramatic performance of some kind.

Play-acting was in the air in the reign of Elizabeth. The miracle plays and moralities of the Middle Ages were becoming out of date, and the drama was in course of development. We find it in a rudimentary form when 'three carters, three shepherds, three neat herds, three swine-herds, that have made themselves all men of hair,' have a dance 'which the wenches say is a gallimaufry of gambols because they are not in it.' † More

* *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 47, note 1.

† *Winter's Tale*, IV. iv. 331.

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ambitious was the presentation of the *Nine Worthies*, in which the village Curate, Sir Nathaniel, 'a foolish mild man, an honest man look you, and soon dashed, though a marvellous good neighbour 'faith, and a very good bowler,' was, when cast for the part of Alexander, somewhat o'er-parted. The servants of Duke Theseus of Athens were ready, under the master of the revels, to provide a masque or play to wear away a tedious hour. The Duke inquires of Philostrate

What masques, what dances shall we have,
To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after-supper and bed-time ?
Where is our usual manager of mirth ?
What revels are in hand ? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour ? *

It so happened that Philostrate, the master of the revels, had seen rehearsed a play, as brief as he had known a play, wherewith

Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never labour'd in their minds till now,
had made ready against their lord's nuptial,

Which when I saw rehearsed, I must confess
Made mine eyes water ; but more merry teares
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

* *Midsummer Nighi's Dream*, V. i. 32.

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To the master of the revels this was 'nothing, nothing in the world.' But the magnanimous Theseus would see the play :

For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in.

The conversion of the feudal retinue of a great nobleman into a company of players connected with his name was due to the action of several causes. The nobleman was no longer able to bear the expense of the upkeep of a great feudal retinue, except by the sale of a portion of his inheritance, to which some had recourse, and the national passion for the drama afforded the means of maintaining at the expense of the public a company of servants with which his name was honourably associated.

The travelling companies in the time of Elizabeth differed widely in importance. In the old play upon which *The Taming of the Shrew* is founded, we find this stage direction : 'Enter player with a pack.' The company that visited Elsinore was of a different class.

Rosencrantz tells Hamlet that he and his companion had 'coted * them on the way, and hither are they coming to offer you service.'

* In coursing language a greyhound outstripping his competitor is said to have *coted* him. The players were travelling slowly with the wardrobes and properties.

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Ham. He that plays the King shall be welcome : his majesty shall have tribute of me ; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target ; the lover shall not sigh gratis ; the humorous man shall end his part in peace ; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickled o' the sere ; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't. What players are they ?

Ros. Even those you were wont to take delight in, the tragedians of the city.

Ham. How chances it they travel ? Their residence both in reputation and profit was better both ways.

It is then explained that since a late innovation they do not hold the same estimation, and are not so followed as when Hamlet was in the city. It is not their fault, for 'their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace.' But companies of children—'an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't—are now the fashion.' † Hamlet has some pertinent remarks to make on this new fashion, which show that he was on the side of the tragedians in whom he was wont to take delight. The players arrive and are received

* *Hamlet*, II. ii. 330.

† The eyass was a hawk taken and trained as a nestling. It was not so highly esteemed by falconers as the wild hawk or haggard, when reclaimed, 'Eyeasses are tedious and do use to cry very much in their feedings, they are troublesome and payfull to be entered.' Turbervile, *Booke of Faulconrie*, 1575.

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with a friendly courtesy, removed alike from offensive patronage and undue familiarity.

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. O my old friend! thy face is valanced since I saw thee last; comest thou to beard me in Denmark? What my young lady and mistress! By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine.

The coming of the tragedians of the city to Elsinore, and their reception by the Prince of Denmark, are reminiscences of a visit made by the company of which Shakespeare was a member to a great house, such as Wilton, and of the favour with which, in the language of the editors of the First Folio, he was 'prosecuted' by its owner; and it may be that the original of Hamlet was found in some young nobleman capable of great things, but through lack of decision throwing away his life and opportunities; distinguished nevertheless from the idlers who occupied seats on the stage of the Globe and passed jests to the actors, by genuine interest in the drama, and by an understanding of the true principles of the player's art. With suchlike visitor to the Globe theatre Shakespeare would hold converse, such as that of the First Player with the Prince of Denmark.

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In the year 1602 a curious satirical medley was produced in the University of Cambridge. Although it was an academical production, and full of classical quotations and allusions, it excited sufficient general interest to lead to its publication in 1606, by the title of *The Returne from Pernassus, or the Scourge of Simony, as it was publickly acted by the Students in St. John's College, Cambridge.* 'It is a very singular, a very ingenious, and, as I think, a very interesting performance. It contains criticisms on contemporary authors, strictures on living manners, and the earliest denunciation (I know of) of the miseries and unprofitableness of a scholar's life.'* The piece has no dramatic merit. The plot is a slender thread on which are strung a number of good things, in prose and in verse; satire, literary criticism, and reference to the men and topics of the day; a foretaste of the society journalism of the present day.

When we find among the men, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Burbage, and among the topics, the position and reputation of the play-actor, and of the university playwright, with a critical estimate of the poets and dramatists of the day, the relevance of the piece to the present inquiry becomes apparent.

* *Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, W. Hazlitt.

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The burden of the play is the little respect that is paid to learning and worth, and the failure of the highest academic merit to attain success in life. It tells of the ill-fortune that befell certain students who left the university to seek their fortunes in the world, and who were compelled to return from Parnassus to humbler pursuits.

The second title, the *Scourge of Simony*, indicates that the piece contains a castigation of the corrupt practices by which the deserving Academico was deprived of presentation to a living which was sold by a patron from whom he had expectations to the father of an unlettered boor. There is good comedy in the description of the devices by which this ignoramus manages to pass the necessary examination. But the part of the piece in which we are interested is that which relates to the fortunes of playwrights and players.

The man of genius, Ingenioso, writes plays, for which he is, somehow, prosecuted. 'To be brief Academico,' he says, 'writts are out for me to apprehend me for my playes, and now I am bound for the Ile of Doggs.'

Two students, Philomusus and Studioso, having tried medicine and acting, become fiddlers. Finally leaving the 'baser fidling trade,' they make choice of 'a shepheards poor secure

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contented life' and are content to end their days on the Kentish downs.

True mirth we may enjoy in thacked stall
Not hoping higher rise, nor fearing lower fall.

In the fourth act we are introduced to a travelling company of players, who have visited Cambridge. They are represented by Burbage and by Kempe, who filled the leading parts in tragedy and in comedy. It is the company of which Shakespeare was at this time a member. Burbage had often noticed among the scholars an aptitude for the stage, and suggests that they could probably be engaged at a low rate. With their experience of their fellow Shakespeare present to his mind he suggests that they might also be able to pen a part. Accordingly, the players appointed to meet Philomusus and Studioso, in order to make test of their quality. The students keep the players waiting so long that when they at length arrive the merry Kemp addresses Studioso as Otioso. In the meantime the players converse :

Bur. Now, Will Kempe, if we can intertaine these schollers at a low rate, it will be well, they have oftentimes a good conceite in a part.

Kempe. Its true indeede, honest Dick, but the slaves are somewhat proud, and besides, it is a good sport in a part, to see them never speake in their walke, but at the

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end of the stage, iust as though in walking with a fellow we should never speake but at a stile, a gate, or a ditch, where a man can go no further. I was once at a Comedie in Cambridge, and there I saw a parasite make faces and mouths of all sorts in this fashion.

Bur. A little teaching will mend these faults, and it may bee beside they will be able to pen a part.

Kemp. Few of the vniversity pen plaies will, they smell too much of that writer *Ouid*, and that writer *Metamorphosis*, and talke too much of *Proserpina* and *Iuppiter*. Why heres our fellow *Shakespeare* puts them all downe. I and *Ben Ionson* too. O that *Ben Ionson* is a pestilent fellow, he brought up *Horace* giuing the poets a pill, but our fellow *Shakespeare* hath giuen him a purge that made him beray his credit.

Bur. Its a shrewd fellow indeed: I wonder these schollers stay so long, they appointed to be here presently that we might try them; Oh here they come.

Studioso and *Philomusus* enter, and after some pleasantry, they are tried. *Kempe* thinks that *Studioso* should belong to his tuition. 'Your face me thinkes would be good for a foolish Mayre or a foolish justice of peace.'

Bur. (to *Philomusus*). I like your face, and the proportion of your body for *Richard the 3*. I pray *M. Phil.* let me see you act a little of it.

Phil. Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by the sonne of *York*.

Bur. Very well I assure you, well *M. Phil.* and *M. Stud.* wee see what ability you are of; I pray walke with us to our fellows, and weele agree presently.

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Notwithstanding this promising beginning, nothing came of the project. The terms offered by the thrifty players were too low, for in the next scene Phil. and Stud. appear as fiddlers, with their consort.

Stud. Better it is mongst fidlers to be chiefe
Then at plaiers trencher beg reliefe,
But ist not strange this mimick apes should prize
Unhappy schollers at a hireling rate.
Vile word, that lifts them vp to hye degree,
And treads vs downe in groueling misery.
England affordes these glorious vagabonds,
That carried earst their fardels on their backes
Coursers to rid on through the gazing streetes,
Sooping it in their glaring Satten sutes,
And Pages to attend their maisterships ;
With mouthing words that better wits have made
They purchase lands, and now Esquieres are made.

About three years before the representation of *The Returne from Pernassus* Shakespeare had by the purchase of New Place, in the words of Sir Sidney Lee, inaugurated the building up at Stratford of a large landed estate. The owner of the largest house in Stratford, who had applied for a grant of arms to his father, may well have appeared to the envious student as having attained to the estate of esquire, and that Shakespeare (when his means allowed of it, but no sooner) was seen riding through the streets

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on a courser, on which passers by stopped to gaze, cannot be doubted. It is the 'roan Barbary' which carried Henry Bolingbroke, when he rode into London

Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed
Which his aspiring rider seem'd to know.*

It is the red roan courser 'of the colour of the nutmeg and of the heat of ginger,' in whose praise the Dauphin wrote a sonnet which began thus: 'Wonder of Nature.' †

At some time of his life the fiery courage and elastic tread of the Eastern horse came as a revelation to one accustomed to the somewhat wooden paces of the thickset, straight-pasterned home-bred English horse of the early days when *Venus and Adonis* was written. And thenceforth Shakespeare would say in the words of Hotspur, this 'roan shall be my throne.'

Can we wonder that a prosperous player—a glorious vagabond—seated on this throne, honoured and wealthy, should have excited the envy of Studioso, at his wits' end to turn to profitable use the learning of St. John's College? Or that he should have consoled himself with the reflection that after all the players did no

* *Richard II.*, V. ii. 8.

† *Henry V.*, III. vii. 20.

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more than speak 'words that better wits had made'?

A curious tractate of about the year 1605, of which there was an unique copy in the Althorpe library, was reprinted by the New Shakespere Society.* A player is advised to betake himself to London. 'There thou shalt learne to be frugall (for players were never so thriftie as they are now about London) & to feed upon all men, to let none feede upon thee; to make thy hand a stranger to thy pocket, thy hart slow to performe thy tongues promise: and when thou feelest thy purse well lined, buy thee some place of Lordship in the Country, that growing weary of playing, thy mony may there bring thee to dignitie and reputation. . . . Sir, I thanke thee (quoth the player) for this good counsell, I promise you I will make use of it, for, I have heard indeede of some that have gone to London very meanly, and have come in time to be exceeding wealthy.'

From *The Returne from Pernassus* we can understand the envy that was excited in the university wits by the wealth and prosperity of the successful players, but fully to realise the feelings of the university pen, put down, in the words of Kempe, by one of these players,

* *Ratseis Ghost.*

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commencing dramatist, we must look elsewhere.

It may be that Shakespeare at the height of his prosperity was regarded as the type of the thrifty and successful player, and there are allusions in the speech of *Studioso* and in *Ratseis Ghost* which may well be applied to him. But the players about London were noted as generally thrifty, and some of Shakespeare's fellows, as we have seen, acquired substantial property.

The precise date at which Shakespeare was admitted to the fellowship of players is unknown. It is generally believed that he left Stratford for London in the year 1586, and, according to Rowe, 'he was received into the company then in being, at first in a very mean rank.' According to Davenant, his earliest connection with the theatre was of a still humbler kind. It was that of holding the horses of visitors to the theatres. The story is thus told by Dr. Johnson. When Shakespeare fled to London 'his first expedient was to wait at the door of the playhouse, and hold the horses of those that had no servants, that they might be ready again after the performance. In this office he became so conspicuous for his care and readiness, that in a short time every man as he alighted called

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for Will. Shakespeare, and scarcely any other waiter was trusted with a horse while Will. Shakespeare could be had. This was the first dawn of better fortune. Shakespeare finding more horses put into his hand than he could hold, hired boys to wait under his inspection, who, when Will. Shakespeare was summoned, were immediately to present themselves, "I am Shakespeare's boy, Sir." In time Shakespeare found higher employment, but as long as the practice of riding to the playhouse continued, the waiters that held the horses retained the appellation of Shakespeare's boys.' Malone, though he discredits the story, writes: 'The genealogy of this story it must be acknowledged is very correctly deduced.' It first appeared in print in *The Lives of the English Poets*, published in 1753 by Cibber, according to whom Sir William Davenant told it to Betterton, who told it to Rowe. Although Rowe told the story to Pope, he did not include it in his *Life*. The reason why it was discredited by Rowe was probably that which was thus stated, a few years later, by Steevens: 'the most popular of the Theatres were on the Bankside; and we are told by the satirical writers of the time that the usual mode of conveyance to these places was by water; but not a single writer so much

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hints at the custom of riding to them, or at the practice of having horses held during the time of the exhibition.' To Rowe, as to Steevens, the idea of riding to theatres on the Bankside naturally seemed absurd. That Rowe discarded a story which seemed to him to be so improbable shows the carefulness with which he sifted the information which was supplied to him. But by a plain tale the criticism of Steevens and the scepticism of Rowe and Malone are put down.

When Shakespeare came to London there were only two theatres, the 'Theatre' and the 'Curtain,' to one of which he must have been attached. These theatres were in the fields within half a mile of the city wall, and we now know that it was the custom to approach them on horseback. Sir John Davies, in an epigram written before 1599, wrote

Faustus, nor lord, nor knight, nor wise, nor old
To every place about the town doth ride ;
He rides into the fields, plays to behold ;
He rides to take boat at the waterside.

Later on, the Globe, and the Rose, the popular theatres, were on Bankside, and approached by water, and for more than one hundred years before Rowe wrote no one had spoken of riding to the play. Recent research shows that there is no reason why Davenant's

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story should be discredited. It must have had its origin in the days of riding to the theatre. It is accepted by Mr. Elton, and Sir Sidney Lee sees no improbability of the main drift of the strange tale.

The tradition that Shakespeare in extremity of need turned to horses as a means of earning his bread, and in some employment connected with their care made a name which others thought worth pirating, gains some confirmation from the constant and needless occurrence in his plays of the language of the groom, the farrier and the horse master ; and still more from his use of familiar corruptions and cant phrases current in the stable and in the blacksmith's shop.*

The story is interesting, not only as an incident in the life of Shakespeare, but because it brings into strong relief one side of his character. In it we find the beginning of the qualities by the use of which, in the words of Professor Dowden, he came at the age of thirty-three 'posessor

* Over one hundred and fifty phrases and terms of art connected with horses and horsemanship have been collected from the works of Shakespeare. Among them are the following corruptions current in the stable: "The fives" for "vives"; "springhalt" for "stringhalt"; "mosing" for "mourning" of the chine. "Farcy" is, according to Gervase Markham (*Maister-peece*) "of our ignorant smiths called the fashions." The word "fashions" used by Shakespeare must have been picked up by him in some ignorant blacksmith's forge in Stratford.

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of New Place at Stratford, and from year to year added to his worldly dignity and wealth. Such material advancement, argues a power of understanding, and adapting oneself to the facts of the material world.'

All places that the eye of heaven visits
Are to the wise man ports and happy havens.

In this spirit Shakespeare, fallen on evil days, turned to practical use his love of horses, and the practical knowledge of their care which he had somehow acquired. Realising with Cassius that 'men at some time are masters of their fate,' and that the fault is not 'in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings,' he applied himself to the work that came to hand with an understanding of the facts of the material world, and a determination to be master of his fate, which ensured success.

Some of the most interesting accounts of the early years of Shakespeare's life have been traced, through a respectable pedigree, to Sir William Davenant. It is therefore important to consider how far he ought to be regarded as a trustworthy authority. Davenant was the son of a well-known citizen of Oxford, Mr. John D'Avenant (so the name was written), the owner of a tavern afterwards known as the

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‘Crown.’ He was, according to Anthony à Wood, a grave and discreet man, ‘yet an admirer and lover of plays and play writers, especially Shakespeare, who frequented his house in his journeys between Warwickshire and London.’* Mrs. D’Avenant was ‘a very beautiful woman of good wit and understanding.’ Shakespeare was on terms of intimacy with the family. William, the second son, was his godchild. Another son, Robert, became a Fellow of St. John’s College, and a Doctor of Divinity. Aubrey may be believed, when in his account of Shakespeare he writes: ‘I have heard parson Robert say that Mr. Wm. Shakespeare having given him a hundred kisses.’ An ancient scandal retailed by Aubrey is only to our present purpose inasmuch as it is founded on the well-known intimacy of Shakespeare with the D’Avenant family. Shakespeare manifested a special affection for his godchild which was certainly returned. William was only ten years of age when his godfather died, but from an early age he was devoted to his memory, for at the age of twelve he composed an ‘Ode in remembrance of Master Shakespeare,’ which was published in the year 1638.

Davenant’s devotion to the memory of Shake-

* *Athen. Oxon.*

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speare continued throughout his life. At his death he was the owner of a portrait which, from its subsequent history, became known as the Chandos portrait, and which became the property of the actor Betterton.

Dryden, in his preface to *The Tempest*, altered by him in collaboration with Davenant, writes : ' I do not set any value on anything in this play, but out of gratitude to the memory of Sir William Davenant, who did me the honour to join me with him in the alteration of it. It was originally Shakespeare's, a poet for whom he had particularly a high veneration, and whom he first taught me to admire.'

Mr. Elton writes : ' If we could evoke some shadow of the living Shakespeare, it could only be with the help of Davenant's recollections. We shall find little help from painting or sculpture ; but we can compare what was said by those who knew the poet, or had talked with his friends.' Aubrey and Betterton had talked with Davenant. Rowe received the story of the organising of the brigade of ' Shakespeare's Boys ' from Betterton, who had it directly from Sir William Davenant. The leading facts of the early life of an intimate friend who had become so famous must have been treasured in the memories of the D'Avenant family ; and the

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struggles of his younger days were recalled with pride, in the light of the success that he had attained. Sir William's devotion to the memory of his godfather would have led him to collect the facts with pious care. A story that descends from Davenant through a respectable pedigree ought to be received with respect, and we now know that men did in fact ride from town to the theatre at the time when Shakespeare took refuge in London.

We do not know how it came to be found out by the players that Shakespeare's wits could be turned to better account than in holding the horses of the playgoers, and speculation on this subject is idle. His admission to a company of players was the first step of the ladder which led him to the summit of his fame as a dramatist, and the success of his plays, when presented on the stage, is in great measure due to the practical acquaintance with stagecraft which he had acquired when working in the theatre. 'Poet as he was and philosopher and psychologist, Shakespeare was first of all a playwright, composing plays to be performed by actors in a theatre, before his audience.' *

Shakespeare was successful as an actor, although he did not attain to the highest emi-

* *Shakespeare as a Playwright*, by Brander Matthew (Preface).

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nence. Five or six years after his advent to London Chettle writes of him as 'exelent in the qualitie he professes.'* And the prominent place occupied by his name in the licences granted to the companies with which he was connected is evidence of the position which he held in the theatre. Tradition assigns to him the parts of the Ghost in his *Hamlet*, the top of his performance according to Rowe, and of Adam in *As You Like It*. His name is not associated with any great part. His heart was not in his profession.† 'His highest ambitions lay, it is true, elsewhere than in acting or theatrical management, and at an early period of his histrionic career he undertook, with triumphant success, the labours of a playwright. It was in dramatic poetry that his genius found its goal. But he pursued the profession of an actor, and fulfilled all the obligations of a theatrical shareholder loyally and uninterruptedly until very near the date of his death.'‡

From Shakespeare's relations with the players we learn that he was a man who inspired his

* *Kind Harts Dream* (Preface). "Quality, in Elizabethan English, was the technical term for the actor's profession" (*Life of Shakespeare*, p. 86, note 3). Hamlet used the word in this technical meaning when he said to the players, "Come, give us a taste of your quality."

† See *Sonnets*, cx. and cxl.

‡ *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 89.

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fellows with feelings of affection as well as respect. His was a sympathetic nature. The players were proud of his success, and indignant when they thought that his reputation was malevolently attacked. They collected and published his plays to keep alive the memory of 'so worthy a friend.' Shakespeare was a worthy friend. In his prosperity he was loyal to players by whom he had been raised from the mean rank to which he had fallen, and in his last hours, when making his will, his thoughts turned, not to powerful patrons or literary magnates, but to his fellows, Heming and Condell. It is to his rare 'gentleness' towards his fellows, and to their appreciation of it, that we owe the gift that they bestowed upon humanity.

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AMONG the tens of thousands who daily heard brave Talbot 'triumph again on the stage,' there was one in whose ears the heroic strain sounded as a death knell. He was the author of the dull and lifeless historical drama which had been redeemed from failure by an upstart player, who dared to suppose that he could 'bombast out' a blank verse with the best of the university pens.

The first part of *Henry VI.* in its original form has not survived, and no record of its production has been found. Whether it was in fact presented to the public before the revision of the piece by Shakespeare, and the introduction of the Talbot scenes had ensured its enthusiastical reception by a patriotic audience, is a matter of uncertainty. The second and third parts of *Henry VI.*, as they stood before the final revision by Shakespeare, are extant.* The theory that

* In *The first part of the contention betwixt the two famous houses of York and Lancaster*, published in 1594, and *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of Yorke, and the death of good King Henry the Sixth, as it was sundrie times acted by the Earl of Pembroke, his servants,* published in the following year.

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Greene and Peele, possibly with the assistance of Marlowe, produced the original draft of the three parts of *Henry VI.* may be accepted. That they were finally revised by Shakespeare, that they assumed the form in which they were printed in the First Folio, is certain. The authorship, in whole or in part, of Greene is supported by stronger evidence than similarity of workmanship.

Robert Greene may be taken as representative of a class with whom Shakespeare was brought into literary fellowship when he commenced dramatist. They were known as the university pens.

In the early part of the reign of Elizabeth the spread of the New Learning, and a wider outlook on life, inspired the youth of the nation with a desire to seek out new fields for the exercise of the powers of which they were conscious. 'Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits,' was a modern instance from the lips of one of the 'two gentlemen of Verona.'

It was a time in which

Men of slender reputation

Put forth their sons to seek preferment out ;

Some to the wars, to try their fortune there ;

Some to discover islands far away ;

Some to the studious Universities.*

* *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I. iii. 6.

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But the university is not the end of life, and the studious youth who had been sent thither by his father to seek out preferment had no sooner attained his degree than he found him confronted with the problem of how he was to earn his bread. The study of university life from which we have quoted enables us to realise the struggle for existence which awaited those students who had made the best use of their time at the university; for the names under which we know *Studioso*, *Philomusus*, and *Ingenioso* indicate that they are intended to represent this class.*

The Civil Service, the various branches of which at home and abroad offer such a wide field of useful and profitable employment, had not come into existence.

According to the author of *The Returne from Pernassus*, the Church was suffering under the scourge of simony, and it is apparent that he regarded the law as suitable only to a student of ample means, for the student who is intended for the law is the son of a man of property, the owner of the advowson of the living that was the victim of the scourge of simony.

Ingenioso, if he had lived at the present day, would have found an exercise for his powers, and

* *The Returne from Pernassus*, ante, p. 74.

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an immediate source of income, in writing for the press. Failing any other resource, he joins the fellowship of the university pens.

Robert Greene, born about 1560, matriculated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and obtained the degree of M.A. in 1588. If, as is stated, he was incorporated at Oxford in 1588, he was closely connected with university life. In the course of a short and miserable life, as dramatist, poet and pamphleteer, he produced works sufficiently voluminous to be published in fifteen volumes in the Huth Library (1881-6). He was a protagonist in the war of pamphleteers, in which Gabriel Harvey and Nash took part, a curious feature of the Elizabethan age, which has been already noticed. It is, however, as a dramatist that he is brought into relationship with Shakespeare. His position among the university playwrights is thus estimated by Sir A. W. Ward: 'Greene's dramatic genius has nothing in it of the intensity of Marlowe's tragic muse; nor perhaps does he ever equal Peele at his best. On the other hand, his dramatic poetry is occasionally animated with the breezy freshness which no artifice can simulate. He had considerable constructive skill, but he has created no character of commanding power—unless Ateukin be excepted; but his personages

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are living men and women, and marked out from one another with a vigorous, but far from rude, hand. His comic humour is undeniable, and he had the gift of light and graceful dialogue. His diction is overloaded with classical ornament, but his versification is easy and fluent, and its cadence is at times singularly sweet. He creates his best effects by the simplest means, and he is indisputably one of the most attractive of early English dramatic authors.*

His dramas have now no interest for any but professed students of English literature. But the story of his life may be profitably studied, for it throws some light upon his relations with Shakespeare, and in it we find, in an exaggerated form, the character and experiences of many members of the fellowship of dramatists at the time when they were joined by Shakespeare.

Greene died in the year 1582, and on his deathbed wrote the one of the thirty-five prose tracts ascribed to his pen which has secured for him an unenviable immortality. It is one of three pamphlets which were published after the author's death. They are all more or less autobiographical in their character, but that which is of special interest was edited by Henry Chettle, and published in 1582 under the

* *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed.

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title of 'Greens Groats-worth of Wit, bought with a Million of Repentance, describing the follie of youth, the falshoode of makeshift flatterers, the miserie of the negligent, and mischiefes of deceiuing courtizans, written before his death, and published at his dying request.'

Greene having come to a pass at which 'sickness, riot, incontinence, have at once shown their extremitie,' sends a message to his readers; 'the last I have writ; and I fear me the last I shall write.' Greene was, indeed, in sore distress. He was dependent for his support on a poor shoemaker and his wife. He gave a bond for ten pounds to his host, and wrote on the day before his death these pitiful lines to his deserted wife: 'Doll, I charge thee by the love of our youth and by my soules rest that thou wilt see this man paide for if hee and his wife had not succoured me I had died in the streetes.'*

In this tractate the story is told of a young man named Roberto. The part which deals with the parentage and early history of Roberto and his wealthy brother is a moral tale which has no relation to the life history of Greene. The autobiographical part of the tract is easily separable from the moral tale. Roberto, as he lay on the ground in distress, is accosted by a

* "Life," by A. H. Bullen, in *Dict. Nat. Biography*.

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stranger who has overheard his lamentation. He offers to 'endeauour to doe the best, that either may procure your profit or bring you pleasure; the rather for that I suppose you are a scholar, and pittie it is men of learning should liue in lacke.' Employment may easily be obtained, 'for men of my profession get by scholars their whole living. What is your profession sayd Roberto? Truely sir, said he, "I am a player." "A player," quoth Roberto, "I took you rather for a gentleman of great liuing; for if by outward habit men should be censured, I tell you, you would be taken for a substantiall man. So am I where I dwell (quoth the player) reputed able at my proper cost to build a Windmill, what though the worlde once went hard with mee, when I was faine to carrie my playing Fardle a footebacke; *Tempora mutantur*; I know you know the meaning of it better than I, but I thus conster it, it is otherwise now; for my very share in playing apparrell will not be solde for two hundred pounds.'" Roberto asks: 'How meane you to use mee? Why, sir, in making playes, said the other, for which you shall be well paied if you will take the paines.' Roberto went with the player, and became 'famozed for an Archplaimaking poet, his prose like the sea sometime

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sweled, anon like the same sea fell to a low ebbe, yet seldom he wanted, his labors were so well esteemed.' The story of the bad company into which Roberto fell, and the ill treatment of his wife, is unhappily true of Greene, for a pathetic letter was found among his papers after his death addressed to his wife from 'thy repentent husband for his disloyaltie Robert Greene.'

It is at this point in the narrative that Greene intervenes in his proper person. 'Heere (Gentlemen) breake I off Roberto's speech; whose life in most part agreeing with mine, found one selfe punished as I haue doone. Hereafter suppose me the said Roberto, and I will goe on with that hee promised: Greene will send you new his groatsworth of wit, that never showed a mites-worth in his life; and though no man now be by, to doe me good, yet ere I die, I will by my repentance indeuour to doe all men good.'

Greene in some fine verses bids farewell to the

Deceiuing world, that with alluring toyes,
Hast made my life the subject of thy scorne.

Having delivered himself of some moral maxims, he directs a few lines to his 'fellowe schollers about this cittie' addressed 'to those gentle-

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men, his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making Plaies, R. G. wisheth a better exercise, and wisdome to preuent his extremities.'

To the playwrights generally, Greene offers the advice that they should be employed in more profitable courses than in writing plays for the benefit of the actors, of whom he writes with contempt as 'those Puppits that speake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours, . . . for it is pitie men of such rare wits, should be subject to the pleasures of such rude groomes.' This is the point of view of the students of Greene's old college, St. John's. According to Studioso, the wealth by which the players are enabled to purchase lands and attain to dignity are 'mouthing words that better wits have framed.' Trust not these men, is his advice, for the playwright to whom they are beholden for the words by the speaking of which they attain to wealth and fame will be allowed by them to perish for want of comfort. 'Is it not strange that I to whom they al haue been beholding; is it not like that you to whom they all haue been beholding, shall (were ye in that case that I am now) be both at once of them forsaken?'

To each of three players, his quondam

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acquaintance, Greene addresses a special warning. One, the 'famous gracer of Tragedians,' who has said in his heart there is no God, should now 'give glorie vnto his greatness.' That Marlowe is here intended has never been doubted. Another, 'Young Juuenall, that byting satyrist, that lastlie with mee together writ a Comedie,' is advised not to get many enemies by bitter words. As to a third who is 'no lesse deseruing than the other two, in some things rarer, in nothing inferiour; driuen (as my selfe) to extreme shifts; a little have I to say to thee.' That little seems to be not to depend 'on so meane a stay' as playwriting. The 'byting satyrist' has been identified as Nash, and the third playwright as Peele.

Greene then goes on to write: 'Yes, trust them not; for there is an vpstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide*, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you; and being an absolute *Iohannes factotum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a Countrie.'

That this outburst of spleen refers to Shakespeare cannot be doubted, the line 'O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide' is found in the third part of *Henry VI.* (I. iv. 137), and

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also in the older version *The True Tragedie*, and the play on Shakespeare's name is unmistakable.

When we remember that these words were written by Greene on his deathbed, forsaken of all but a kindly and devoted hostess who after his death crowned his head with a garland of bays, we can understand the bitterness of heart with which he thought of the prosperity of the players for whom he had written, whose fortunes he had made, and who had forgotten him in his necessity; and his jealousy of one who, a mere literary *fac totum*, had suddenly sprung into fame as the most popular playwright of the day. It was hard for Greene to think that the drama which daily filled the playhouse with tens of thousands, and made the fortunes of the managers, was his *Henry VI.*; and he may be forgiven if the heroic strain to which it owed its vitality and success presented itself to his mind as mere 'shake-scene' bombast.

The *Groateworth of Wit* was among the papers left by Robert Greene in the hands of sundry booksellers. The manuscript was copied by Henry Chettle, who some years afterwards became a dramatist. He was at that time what would now be called a publisher. 'Greene's hand was none of the best; licensed it must be,

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ere it could be printed, which could neuer be if it might not be read.'

Chettle in the preface to *Kind Harts Dream*, a kind of social satire published by him shortly after the death of Greene, explains the part that he had taken in regard to the *Groatsworth of Wit*. He exonerates Nash from having any share in the production. For himself, he says: 'I put something out, but in the whole booke not a worde in.'

Some such explanation was called for. The 'Groatsworth of wit, in which a letter written to diuers play-makers is offensiuely by one or two of them taken; and because on the dead they cannot be auenged, they wilfully forge in their conceites a liuing Author; and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy, but it must light on me.' As Chettle had during all the time of his 'conuersing in printing hindred the bitter inueying against schollers,' he is naturally hurt by the supposition that he was party to so scandalous a production.

'With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted and with one of them I care not if I neuer be.'

Those who took offence were Marlowe and Shakespeare—one had been accused of a capital offence, and the other had been lampooned—for to no others was offence offered.

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It is easy to understand why Chettle should have dissociated himself from Marlowe, for he was regarded as an atheist, and shortly before his death in the following year a warrant was issued from the Star Chamber for his arrest to answer the charge of atheism. In a subsequent part of the preface he recurs to the 'first whose learning I reverence,' and states that in the perusing of Greene's book, he 'stroke out what then in conscience I thought he in some displeasure writ ; or had it beene true, yet to publish it, was intolerable.'

Of Shakespeare he writes : 'The other, whome at that time I did not so much spare, as since I wish I had, for that as I haue moderated the heate of liuing writers, and might haue used my owne discretion (especially in such a case) the Author being dead, that I did not, I am as sory as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because my selfe haue seene his demeanor no less ciuill than he excelent in the qualitie he professes ; Besides diuers of worship have reported his uprightnes of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writting, that approoves his Art.'

The earliest in date of the references to Shakespeare that have been discovered is by Spenser. The next is by Greene, followed by the

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explanation and apology of Chettle. Spencer and Chettle both speak of Shakespeare from personal knowledge and each of them affords to us a glimpse of the personality of the man whom they knew. It is but a glimpse, but the aspect of his nature revealed in poetic phrase by Spenser, and in plain prose by Chettle, is one and the same. To Spenser it appeared that 'no gentler shepherd could no where be found.' When Chettle came to know Shakespeare he found his demeanour so civil, that he was as sorry for having published Greene's attack, as if the original fault had been his own. Moreover, Shakespeare had become known to gentlemen of position by the uprightness of his dealing as a man of honour, and they were ready to testify to the character that he bore; that is to say, he was possessed of the essential qualities which were implied in the word 'gentle' in the sense in which it was used by Spenser.

When Shakespeare commenced dramatist the university pens held the field. 'Midway between Lyly and his successful practice of the drama, which for the most cultivated men and women of his day, maintained and developed standards supplied to him, at least in part, by his university, and Thomas Lodge, who put the drama

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aside as beneath a cultivated man of manifold activities, stand Nashe, Peele and Greene. Nashe feeling the attraction of a popular and financially alluring form, shows no special fitness for it, and gives it relatively little attention. Peele, properly endowed for his best expression in another field, spends his strength in the drama, because, at the time, it is the easiest source of revenue, and turns from the drama of the cultivated to the drama of the less cultivated or the uncultivated. Greene from the first, is the facile, adaptive purveyor of wares to which he is helped by his university experience, but to which he gives a highly popular presentation. Through Nashe and Lodge the drama gains nothing. Passing through the hands of Lyly, Greene, and even Peele, it comes to Shakespeare something quite different from what it was before they wrote.

‘University-bred, one and all, these five men were proud of their breeding. However severe from time to time might be their censures of their intellectual mother, they were always ready to take arms against the unwarranted assumption, as it seemed to them, of certain dramatists who lacked their university training, and to confuse them by the sallies of their wit. One and all, they demonstrated their right

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to the title bestowed on them—"University wits."* * *

The debt which literature owes to these men is best realised by comparing the drama in the form in which they presented it with the work of their predecessors, lifeless dramas in the manner of Seneca, bloody tragedies, and rude comedies like *Ralph Roister Doister*. They had prepared the way for the advent of Shakespeare. Greene and the three specially addressed by him, Marlowe, Nash and Peele, were in the foremost rank of the university pens. The greatness of Marlowe and his influence on the life work of Shakespeare place him in a class by himself, and his relations with Shakespeare form the subject of a separate chapter. Passing him by for the present, it may be noted that no trace can be found of cordial relations between Shakespeare and the university pens, such as existed throughout his life with his fellow players.

The lives and characters of such representative players as Burbage, Heming and Condell stand out in strong contrast to those of Greene, Peele and Nash. George Peele, like Robert Greene, was a typical representative of the class. He was a student at Christ Church, Oxford, and

* *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. V., Ch. VI. (Professor G. P. Baker).

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graduated M.A. in 1579. While at the university he was noted as a poet, and the performance of his translation of a play of *Euripides* was celebrated in two Latin poems, in one of which the social gaieties as well as the academical success of his Oxford career are mentioned. Like Greene he was a successful playwright, and he also resembled him in the course of dissipation in which his great powers were wasted. We have seen how Greene, in the *Groatsworth of Wit*, appealed to him, as one who had been, like the writer, driven to 'extreme shifts,' to mend his way. He died at about the age of thirty-nine, and after his death a tract appeared, entitled *Merry conceited jests of George Peele, some time a Student in Oxford*, a collection of *facetiae*, which had no doubt a foundation in fact.*

Thomas Nash matriculated as a sizar at St. John's College, Cambridge, of which he writes as the 'sweetest nurse of knowledge in all that University.' He graduated B.A., and wrote: 'It is well known I might have been a fellow if I had would.' He also died at an early age—thirty-four. 'Till his death he suffered the keenest pangs of poverty, and was (he confesses) often so reduced as to pen unedifying "toyes for

* *Dict. Nat. Biography.*

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gentlemen," by which he probably meant licentious songs.' *

There was little in common between these erratic men of genius and the thrifty players who were the lifelong fellows and friends of Shakespeare. Besides their reckless Bohemianism, there was another characteristic of these university pens which did not commend itself to Shakespeare. It has been said that England in the time of Elizabeth was a nest of singing birds. Unhappily the inmates of this nest, so far from agreeing, wasted their time and talents in libellous recrimination and ungentle pamphleteering. 'The bitter inueying against schollers' was not to the taste of the publisher Chettle; and Shakespeare's concurrence in his opinion may well have been part of the civil demeanour by which he was impressed. Certain it is that Shakespeare stood outside the wordy warfare in which Lodge and Nash, and at a later time Jonson, Dekker and Marston, delighted.

Chettle began to write for the stage some time before the year 1598, for in that year he is mentioned by Meres in *Palladis Tamia* as one of 'the best for Comedy among us.' He did not attain the success which these words seem to imply. That he was highly regarded is shown by the

* *Dict. Nat. Biography* (Sir Sidney Lee).

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readiness of Henslow, as appears by his *Diary*, to assist him in his pecuniary troubles. His *England's Mourning Garland*, published in 1603, after the death of Elizabeth, was well received. It contains an interesting passage which suggests the possibility that his acquaintance with Shakespeare, beginning in 1592, may have ripened into friendship. Chettle addresses himself 'to all true Louers of the right gracious Queene Elizabeth in her life,' and in particular, to the poets of the day, complaining that they had not celebrated in verse the memory of the great Queen. Amongst those appealed to are Sidney, Spenser and Chapman. Chettle's appeal to Shakespeare, 'the siluer tonged Melicert,' is printed elsewhere (p. 43). It met with no response.

Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton have been brought into close personal relations with Shakespeare by trustworthy testimony. At the time when Shakespeare contracted the fever of which he died Drayton and Jonson were with him in Stratford. This we have on the authority of the Rev. John Ward, who became Vicar of Stratford in 1662. The character and history of Drayton are well known, and when they are studied in connection with the pitiful story of the university pens, we can understand why Drayton,

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and not they, is found among the associates and friends of Shakespeare.

✓ Drayton was a native of Warwickshire. In after life he was a constant visitor at Clifford Chambers, a manor-house in the neighbourhood of Stratford, the residence of Sir Henry and Lady Rainsford. 'Their lifelong patronage of Michael Drayton, another Warwickshire poet and Shakespeare's friend, gives them an honoured place in literary history. . . .'* Lady Rainsford before her marriage was the adored mistress of Drayton's youthful muse, and in the days of his maturity Drayton, who was always an enthusiastic lover of his native country, was the guest for many months each year of her husband and herself at Clifford Chambers, which, as he wrote in his *Polyolbion*, had been many a time the Muses' quiet port.

'Drayton's host found at Stratford and its environment his closest friends, and several of his intimacies were freely shared by Shakespeare. Shakespeare's son-in-law, John Hall, a medical practitioner of Stratford, reckoned Lady Rainsford among his early patients from the first years of the century, and Drayton himself, while a guest at Clifford Chambers, came under Hall's professional care. The dramatist's son-

* *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 468.

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in-law cured Drayton of a "tertian" by the administration of "syrup of violets," and described him in his casebook as an "excellent poet."'

Drayton had written in his *Legend of Mathilda*, published in 1594,

Lucrece, of whom proude Rome hath boasted long,
Lately reviv'd to live another age;

and some years after the death of Shakespeare he thus wrote in his *Elegies* :

Shakespeare, thou hadst as smooth a Comicke vaine
Fitting the socke, and in thy natural braine
As strong conception and as cleere a rage
As any one that trafiqu'd with the stage.

Drayton in his life and character presents a marked contrast to Greene and to the 'quondam acquaintances' whom he addresses. Sir Sidney Lee truly says: 'Bohemian ideals and modes of life had no dominant attraction for Shakespeare.' His chosen associates are the thrifty players, and among the playwrights, Ben Jonson and Drayton. Ben Jonson, on his own showing, was not morally perfect, but his errors did not lead him into Bohemia, and for many years he held a position in the literary world of London comparable to that held in after ages by Dryden

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and by another Johnson. Of Drayton it was written : ' His moral character was unassailable, and he was regarded by his contemporaries as a model of virtue.' * ' As Aulus Persius,' writes Meres, ' is reputed among all writers to be of an honest life and upright conversation, so Michael Drayton (*quem toties honoris et amoris causa nomino*) among schollers, souldiers, poets, and all sorts of people is helde for a man of vertuous 'disposition, honest conversation, and well-governed carriage.' † Izaak Walton, in his *Compleat Angler*, quotes a passage from the *Polyolbion* ' of Michael Drayton, my honest old friend.' Such was the character of Shakespeare's friend.

Like Shakespeare, Drayton attached more importance to his poems than to his plays ; but unlike Shakespeare, he did not attain to eminence as a dramatist, and the book by which he is best known is his *Polyolbion*. It is what he calls a chorographical description of the rivers, mountains, forests, and other geographical features of Great Britain. It was published in 1613, and is a really great work, containing many passages of true poetical beauty, among which may be noted his description of the forest of Arden. This is

* *Dict. Nat. Biography* (A. H. Bullen).

† *Palladis Tamia*, 1598.

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the man whom we find associated with Ben Jonson in the last days of the life of Shakespeare, but Jonson's relations with Shakespeare were so intimate and so instructive that they must form the subject of a separate chapter.

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IF Ben Jonson was not the greatest of the fellow poets and dramatists of Shakespeare—a place which is Marlowe's of right—he held the foremost position in the eyes of the public of his day. This was inevitable. He was, in the words of Swinburne, a giant, but not of the gods, and giants are more easily discerned by unaided vision than gods. 'If poets may be divided into two exhaustive but not exclusive classes—the gods of harmony and creation, the giants of energy and invention—the supremacy of Shakespeare among the gods of English verse is not more unquestionable than the supremacy of Jonson among its giants.'

If Scotland had furnished this earlier and greater Johnson with another Boswell, the world would have had a richer entertainment than the scanty crumbs picked up by Drummond of Hawthornden, when Jonson visited him in his home near Edinburgh, and conversed with him for many days. Drummond preserved a record of Jonson's conversation in a paper entitled

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‘Certain Informations and Maners of Ben Johnson to W. Drummond,’ printed by the Shakespeare Society in the year 1842. The ‘conversations,’ with footnotes, fill forty-one pages of the volume published by the Society. In all these pages the name of Shakespeare appears twice. Jonson said of him that ‘in a play, he brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, wher ther is no sea neer by some 100 miles.’ Jonson’s ‘censure’ of Shakespeare is comprised in four words: ‘that Shakspeer wanted arte.’ This was probably conclusive with Drummond, who is described by Sir Sidney Lee as a ‘learned poet.’* Happily we are not dependent for our knowledge of Jonson’s appreciation of the genius of Shakespeare, and his affection for the man, to Drummond’s notes of his conversations. Drummond felt no interest in Shakespeare, but he has at the end of the ‘conversations’ given an estimate of the character of Jonson which is of value in considering his relations with Shakespeare. ‘He is a great lover and praiser of himself; a contemnor and scorner of others; given rather to losse a friend than a jest: jealous of every word and action of those about him (especiallie after drink, which is one of the

* *Dict. Nat. Biography.*

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elements in which he liveth); a dissembler of ill parts which raigne in him, a bragger of some good that he wanteth; thinketh nothing well but what either he himself or some of his friends and countrymen hath said or done; he is passionately kynde and angry; careless either to gaine or keep; vindictive, but if he be well answered, at himself. For any religion, as being versed in both. Interpreteth best sayings and deeds often to the worst.'

This is a picture drawn in bold outline and with striking contrasts of light and shade. 'Passionately kynde and angry'—in these four words we have a key to the understanding of what was written by Jonson of a successful rival whom he regarded with mingled feelings of jealousy and affection.

↓ Jonson was born, probably, in the year 1573. He laid the foundation of his vast classical learning in Westminster Grammar School. He was 'taken from school and put to a trade,' and the degrees which he held in Oxford and in Cambridge were 'by their favour, not his studie.' So he told Drummond. His experiences during the next few years include a campaign in Flanders; a duel with a fellow actor, whom he killed, escaping the gallows by claiming benefit of clergy; and a change of religion, an experience

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which he repeated in later years. He began to write for the stage about the year 1595. His earliest efforts were in tragedy, and in 1598 we find him included by Francis Meres * with Shakespeare among the poets who are best for tragedy.

His first extant comedy, *Every Man in his Humour*, was successfully produced at the Globe in 1598, Shakespeare taking a part. According to a tradition of respectable antiquity recorded by Rowe, the play when presented for acceptance to the Lord Chamberlain's servants was at first rejected, and was afterwards accepted on the recommendation of Shakespeare. A tradition of the stage accepted by Rowe should not be lightly regarded, for, as we shall see hereafter, he had trustworthy sources of information at his command, and he exercised a wise discretion in making use of them. In a man of Jonson's temperament a sense of obligation due to the kindness of a successful rival goes far to account for the conflict between jealousy of a rival, love of the man, and admiration of his genius, to which this extraordinary man gave varying expression during his lifetime. It was not until after the death of Shakespeare that feelings of love and admiration finally prevailed.

* *Palladis Tamia*.

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Such evidence as we have of the relations of Jonson with Shakespeare during his lifetime suggest that they were friendly. A story which was current not many years after the death of Shakespeare was included by Sir Nicholas L'Estrange, an industrious collector of anecdotes, among *Merry Passages and Jests*, a compilation from which a selection were printed by the Camden Society. Sir Nicholas had the story from 'Mr. Dun,' and if he was, as is supposed, the poet Dr. John Donne, a contemporary of Shakespeare, there could be no better authority. At all events the story bears the impress of truth. It is as follows: 'Shake-speare was Godfather to one of Ben: Johnson's children and after the christning being in a deepe study, Johnson came to cheere him up, and askt him why he was so Melancholy? "No faith Ben; (sayes he) not I, but I have beene considering a great while what should be the fittest gift for me to bestow upon my God-child, and I have resolv'd at last; I pry' the what, sayes he? I faith Ben: I'll e'en give him a douzen good Lattin* Spoones and thou shalt translate them.'" If Dr. Donne had preserved for us the ponderous jest at the expense of Shakespeare's small Latin to which this

* Latten was composition, something like brass, cf. *Merry Wives*, I. i. 165.

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was the retort courteous we could, in some sort, realise the wit-combats of which Fuller writes—

‘Many were the *wit-combates* betwixt him and Ben Johnson ; which two I behold like a *Spanish great Gallion* and an *English man of War* : Master *Johnson* (like the former) was built far higher in Learning : *solid*, but *slow* in his performances. *Shake-spear*, with the *English man of war*, lesser in *bulk*, but lighter in *sailing*, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his Wit and Invention.’ *

Fuller was born in the lifetime of Shakespeare, and he must have received an account of these wit-combats from those who were actually present, for there was present to his mind’s eye such a living image that he writes of them as if he himself had been the eyewitness.

These were the merry meetings of which Francis Beaumont wrote,

What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid ? Heard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whence they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolved to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life.

* *Worthies of England*, 1662.”

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The friendship which had its origin in an act of kindness on the part of Shakespeare continued to the end, notwithstanding their rivalry as popular playwrights. This rivalry is reflected in the literature of the day, and of the next succeeding age. It is the eternal rivalry between what are commonly known as Nature and Art. So it was regarded by Milton when he wrote,

Then to the well-trod stage anon
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood notes wild.

Comedy, not tragedy, was present to the mind of Shakespeare when, in *L'Allegro*, he wrote thus of Shakespeare: not *Hamlet*, but *As You Like It*, and the forest of Arden. In *Il Penseroso* he writes in a different strain:

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy,
In sceptred pall, come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine;
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.

The noble *Epitaph on the admirable dramaticke poet, W. Shakespeare*, prefixed to the second folio edition, published in 1632, leaves us in no doubt as to the tragedies by which the buskined

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stage had been of later age, all too rarely, ennobled.

Dear Sonne of Memory, great Heire of *Fame*,
What needst thou such dull witsse of thy Name ?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thy selfe a lasting Monument :
For whil'st to th' shame of slow-endeavouring Art
Thy easie numbers flow.

Milton, a strict Puritan, when he wrote these words of a dramatic poet, and allowed his verse to be prefixed to a collection of his plays, showed how profoundly he had been affected by the work of Shakespeare. The study of his poetry created in the mind of Milton a sense of personal attachment to Shakespeare. He is 'My Shakespeare,' 'Sweetest Shakespeare,' and 'dear Sonne of Memory.' His 'wood notes wild' are contrasted with the 'learned sock' of Jonson, and in tragedy his easy numbers flow to the shame of slow-endeavouring Art.

Milton wrote thus of Shakespeare in the lifetime of Jonson, at a time when the rivalry between the works of the two great dramatists was at its height. That this rivalry continued to be the talk of the town, and that the verdict of the ordinary playgoer, like Milton's, was for Shakespeare and Nature, may be learned from verses by Leonard Digges, prefixed to the Folio

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of 1640. Digges was a member of a family distinguished in science as well as in literature. His father was a celebrated mathematician, who had a seat in the Parliament of 1572. Other members of the family were sufficiently distinguished to find places in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Leonard Digges was a good classical scholar, well acquainted with Spanish and French. He was a poet, and published in 1617 a verse translation from Claudian. He may be accepted as a representative of the intelligent literary criticisms of the day. Verses by Digges were prefixed to the Folio of 1623, and a more elaborate composition to the edition of 1640. Of him Sir Sidney Lee writes: 'Few contemporaries wrote more sympathetically of Shakespeare's greatness.'

Digges and Kempe are of one mind in holding that Shakespeare had outstripped the 'needy Poetasters of the age'—the university pens—and even such a competitor as Ben Jonson.

Tis the fate
Of richer veines, prime judgements that have far'd
The worse, with this deceased man compar'd
So have I seene, when Cesar would appeare,
And on the Stage at halfe-sword parley were,
Brutus and *Cassius* : oh how the Audience
Were ravish'd, with what wonder they went thence,

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When some new day they would not brooke a line,
Of tedious (though well laboured) *Catiline* ;
Sejanus too was irkesome, they priz'de more
Honest Iago, or the jealous Moore.
And though the Fox and subtill Alchemist,
Long intermitted could not quite be mist,
Though these have sham'd all the Ancients, and night
raise,
Their Authours merit with a crowne of Bayes.
Yet these sometimes, even at a friends desire
Acted, have scarce defrai'd the Seacoale fire
And doore-keepers ; when let but *Falstaffe* come,
Hall, *Poines*, the rest, you scarce shall have a roome.
All is so pester'd ; let but *Beatrice*
And *Benedicke* be seene, loe in a trice
The Cockpit, Galleries, Boxes, all are full
To hear *Malvoglio* that crosse gartered gull.

This was the drastic purge administered by Shakespeare, of which Kempe spoke in *The Returne from Pernassus* ; houses so badly filled that, even when a favourite play was bespoken, the money would scarce defray the cost of sea-coal fire and doorkeepers, while *Henry IV.*, *Much Ado* and *Twelfth Night* drew such crowds that a seat might hardly be found, and the reason assigned by Digges is the same as that noted by Milton ; *Catiline* is tedious, though well laboured, while Shakespeare's work is

The patterne of all wit
Art without Art, unparalel'd as yet.

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So drastic was the purge that, according to Kempe, it made Ben Jonson 'beray his credit,' that is to say, 'show the true nature of the character with which he was credited.' This is the nearest approach that can be made, with the aid of the *New English Dictionary*, to this phrase. Jonson, in the opinion of the players, bewrayed his credit, and showed himself in his true character of an envious detractor when he expressed a wish that Shakespeare had blotted a thousand lines.

Much allowance should be made for Jonson, when, suffering under the effects of Shakespeare's purge, he, now and then, indulged in a sneer at a successful rival, who was so far without art as to ignore the unities of time, place and action. In such a mood he tells the audience in the Prologue to *Every Man in his Humour* that he will not purchase their delight

At such a rate

As, for it, he himself must justly hate :

To make a child, now swaddled, to proceede

Man, and then shoote up, in one beard and
weede,

Past threescore years : or, with three rustie swords,

And helpe of some foot-and-halfe-foote words,

Fight over *Yorke*, and *Lancaster's* long jarres ;

And in the tyring-house, bring wounds, to scarres.

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Here and there traces can be found of the intermittent action of this purge. *The New Inn* produced in 1629 failed to fill the playhouses, and Jonson wrote in some lines prefixed to the play when published in 1631,

No doubt some mouldy tale,
Like *Pericles*, and stale
As the shrieve's crusts, and nasty as his fish
scraps, out of every dish
Throwne forth, and rak't into the common tub,
May keepe up the *Play-club*.

In the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* the Stagekeeper, introducing the piece, says: 'If there be never a *servant-monster* in the *Fayre*, who can helpe it, he says; nor a nest of *Antiques?*' He is loth to make Nature afraid in his *Playes*, 'like those that beget *Tales*, *Tempests* and such like *Drolleries*, to mixe his head with other mens heeles.' And throughout his life a line which he attributes to Julius Caesar, but which, as he quotes it, is not to be found in any printed copy of the play, was to him a source of genuine delight. In the Prologue to the *Staple of News* this passage occurs:

Expectation. I can doe that too if I have cause.

Prologue. Cry you mercy, you never did wrong but with just cause.

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That Jonson could be 'angry' is true; but that, at the bottom of his heart, in his feelings towards Shakespeare he was 'passionately kynde' will presently appear.

Many were the quarrels of Ben Jonson, in which he bore himself like a giant. We are only concerned with one; the famous literary warfare carried on for years by Marston, Dekker and Jonson. Shakespeare took no part in this rather unseemly conflict. He cared for none of those things. But as his name was introduced into a play in which the fight is mentioned, and as an attempt has been made by some critics to implicate him in the quarrel, it ought not to be overlooked.

The origin of the quarrel was described by Jonson in his conversations with Drummond. He had many quarrels with Marston, 'beat him, and took his pistol from him, wrote his *poetaster* on him; the beginning of them were that Marston represented him on the stage in his youth given to venery.' The origin of his quarrel with Dekker is obscure. In 1629 Jonson told Drummond that Dekker was a knave. This was a reminiscence of the old quarrel which took a literary form in *Cynthia's Revels* produced in 1600, in which Dekker and Marston were satirised in the characters of Hedon and

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Anaides. Marston and Dekker were engaged in the preparation of a joint attack on Jonson. Meanwhile, Jonson forestalled them by the *Poetaster* (1601), in which he demolished with his giant's club not only Marston and Dekker, but lawyers, soldiers and actors. The quarrels and reconciliation of the rival dramatists is a curious, and not edifying, chapter in the literary history of the Elizabethan age. Some Shakespearian commentators have exercised their ingenuity in interpreting certain passages in the works of Shakespeare as references to this quarrel, but happily without success. It would have been more to the purpose to note with satisfaction that Shakespeare stood outside the wordy strife.

Two of the plays which had their origin in this contest are deserving of attention. The *Poetaster* is possessed of literary merit. There is a fine passage in praise of Virgil, who is exalted as the chief of the Latin poets. It is supposed by some that by Virgil Shakespeare has been intended, and that he was introduced into the piece by way of contrast to Marston and Dekker. If this were so, the play would, indeed, be deserving of note as regards the relations of Jonson and Shakespeare.

The central idea of the *Poetaster* is the arraign-

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ment on the prosecution of Horace, of Crispinus, 'my brisk Poetaster' and Demetrius, 'his poor Journeyman.' Marston is Crispinus; Dekker, Demetrius; and Horace, of course, Ben Jonson. The indictment, drawn by Tibullus, is under the Statute of Calumny, *Lex Ruminia*. The offence is, that the prisoners, not having the fear of Phoebus, or his shafts, before their eyes, contrary to the peace of their liege lord, Augustus Caesar, maliciously went about to deprave and calumniate the person and writings of Quintus Horatius Flaccus, poet and priest to the Muses, who is Ben Jonson. The prisoners are convicted on the evidence of their own writings, and sentenced by Virgil to suitable punishment.

In the first scene Ovid is caught by his father, Ovid, senior, in the act of composing a poem which we know as *El. 15, Amor., Lib. 1*, of which Jonson gives his version in English. He is warned of the approach of his father, Ovid, senior, and hastily puts on the gown and cap of a student. His father intends him to be a lawyer, and is indignant to find him a poet and playmaker. 'Name me a profest poet,' he says to his son, 'that his poetry did ever afford him so much as a competency.' He leaves, telling his son to keep his chamber and fall to his

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studies. Ovid, junior, is at work when Tibullus comes in, but at 'law cases in verse.'

Troth if I live I will new dress the law
In sprightly Poesy's habiliments.

The whole of this act is excellent comedy, with amusing attacks on the law and lawyers. The succeeding acts do not, regarded from this point of view, come up to the same level. Jonson's objects were twofold. To cover Marston and Dekker with ridicule, in the characters of Crispinus and Demetrius, and to associate himself, in the character of Horace, with the great poets of the Augustan age, and in particular with Ovid, Tibullus and Virgil.

The kind of classical medley which was adopted had the incidental advantage that it admitted of the introduction of translations in verse of well-known passages from these poets. Jonson valued himself specially on his translations: 'As for his translations he was perfectly incorrigible there; for he maintained to the last that they were the best part of his works.'* He succeeded in impressing this view on Drummond, who writes in *Conversations*: 'above all he excelleth in a Translation.' Virgil was to Jonson the King of Latin poets. He writes of

* *Works*, Ed. Gifford, Vol. II., p. 474.

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him as 'the incomparable Virgil.' He is placed at the right hand of Caesar. His address consists of a rhyming translation of some lines from the fourth book of the *Aeneid*. Jonson was justly proud of his version of the lines beginning *Fama malum, quo non aliud velocius ullum*, for it compares favourably with Dryden's. To suggest that Shakespeare is presented in the character of Virgil is not in accordance with the purpose of the drama. There is no reason to suppose that the *Poetaster* was written in praise of any of Jonson's contemporaries. The primary object was the castigation of Marston and Dekker; a subordinate one, the glorification of Virgil, and of Jonson, his translator. In the acutest phase of the rivalry between Jonson and Shakespeare, it is not likely that he would have taken occasion to exalt his rival above all his contemporaries. The lines spoken by Horace in praise of Virgil might have been written of Shakespeare, and also of other great poets. But if Jonson were to write in praise of Shakespeare, he would hardly have selected his learning for special commendation.

Hor. His learning savours not the school-like
gloss,
That most consists in echoing words and terms
And soonest wins a man an empty name;

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Nor any long or far-fetched circumstance
Wrap'd in the curious generalities of arts ;
But a direct and analytic sum
Of all the worth and first effects of arts.

The Returne from Pernassus was produced while the *Poetaster* was the talk of the town. His *Poetaster* was the pill which Ben Jonson 'brought up Horace giving the poets,' according to Kempe. The significance of the piece was thoroughly understood at the time. The intelligent author of the *Returne*, so far from interpreting the *Poetaster* as a glorification of Shakespeare, represents the players as taking part in the rivalry between Shakespeare and Jonson. They were, of course, on the side of Shakespeare, and gloried in the purge of empty houses, by the administration of which the pestilent Jonson met with his desert at the hands of their fellow Shakespeare ; a shrewd fellow, indeed.

It was not until after the death of Shakespeare that Jonson revealed the side of his nature which Drummond noted as 'passionately kynde.' In the year of Shakespeare's death he had published in a folio volume a collection of his plays, under the title of his *Works*, a title which brought upon him a certain amount of ridicule, as plays were not then regarded as literature deserving of so pretentious a name. These plays

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were carefully edited. It may not have occurred to Jonson that the work of collecting and editing the works of Shakespeare would have been better done by a man of letters than by his fellow players. At all events, the task was not undertaken by him, and a volume published in 1623 under the modest title of *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, presents a marked contrast in pretension, as well as in editing, to the *Works* of 1616. But when Jonson took up his pen at the request of the players and wrote some lines 'to the memory of my beloued, the Avthor, Mr. William Shakespeare and what he has left us,' all feelings of rivalry and jealousy disappeared, and the better side of his nature found expression in words which share the immortality of him of whom they were written :

Soule of the Age
The Applause ! delight ! the wonder of our stage !

In these lines and in the following where he would tell

how farre thou didst our Lily out-shine
Or sporting Kid, or Marlowes mighty line,

we have his true estimate of the greatness of Shakespeare.

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He was not of an age, but for all time.

This noble line will be quoted at each recurring centenary so long as the English language is spoken.

Then his thoughts turn from contemplation of the poet to the constant friend, and perhaps with a regretful remembrance of some things that he had said of Shakespeare's neglect of the unities and of certain other artificial canons of dramatic art, he adds

Yet must I not giue Nature all : Thy Art
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part,

and in the address to the reader prefixed to the Folio, recurring to the personal characteristics expressed by the word 'gentle' he writes

This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut.

Five-and-twenty years after the death of Shakespeare, a collection of essays, which had been written by Jonson, was published under the title *Timber, or Discoveries made upon Men and Matter*, in which some of the finest examples of the prose of the age are to be found. What he writes of his relations with Shakespeare is intended as an *apologia*, addressed to posterity :

'I remember the Players have often mentioned it as an honour to *Shakespeare* that in his

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writing (whatsoever he penn'd) hee never blotted out line. My answer hath beene, would he had blotted a thousand, which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted. And to justifie mine owne candor (for I loved the man, and doe honour his memory (on this side idolatry) as much as any). Hee was (indeed) honest and of an open and free nature: had an excellent *Phantsie*; brave notions and gentle expressions; wherein he flow'd with that facility, that sometimes it was necessary that he should be stop'd; *Sufflaminandus erat*; as *Augustus* said of *Haterius*. His wit was in his owne power; would the rule of it had beene so. Many times hee fell into those things, could not escape laughter. As when hee said in the person of *Caesar*, one speaking to him; *Caesar thou dost me wrong*. Hee replyed, *Caesar never did wrong but with just cause*; and such like; which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his vertues. There was even more in him to be praysed, than to be pardoned.*

The concluding words, in which he finds in Shakespeare more to be praisd than to be

* *Timber, or Discoveries made upon Men and Matter. Works, 1641.*

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pardoned, read strangely. They were perhaps prompted by memory of the 'purge,' and they should be overlooked for the sake of the noble words in which Jonson does honour to the memory of the man.

'Honest and of an open and free nature,' these are the qualities which Henry Chettle found in the man who had been traduced by Greene, and they are essential parts of the character and nature which Spenser had, many years before, discerned in Aetion. The influence which Shakespeare had obtained over an intellect of the giant force of Jonson's reveals to us a different aspect of his nature from that which is suggested by his relations with Spenser or with the players. The indomitable force of will by which Shakespeare gained mastery over a fate which at one time seemed to be invincible accords with the character which compelled the honour, on this side idolatry, paid to him by a man so great, and little given to worship as Jonson, 'a great lover and praiser of himself; a contemnor and scorner of others.'

We have no evidence of affectionate regard for Jonson, such as is afforded by his gift of mourning rings to his fellow players, and his tributes to the memory of Spenser and of Marlowe. If Drummond's sketch of the character

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of Jonson approaches the truth, his nature and Shakespeare's were not sympathetic. But they lived on terms of friendship. They took part in the witcombats at the Mermaid tavern, and in family gatherings, and Jonson, with Drayton, was with Shakespeare at the time when he contracted the fever of which he died.

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✓ MARLOWE stands by himself among the fellows and contemporaries of Shakespeare, for of him alone can it be said that he was the Master of Shakespeare. 'He first, and he alone, guided Shakespeare into the right way of work; his music, in which there is no echo of any man's before him, found its own echo in the more prolonged, but hardly more exalted, harmony of Milton. He is the greatest discoverer, the most daring and inspired pioneer in all our poetic literature. Before him there was neither genuine blank verse nor a genuine tragedy in our language. After his arrival the way was prepared, the paths made straight, for Shakespeare.' *

Christopher, or Kit, Marlowe as he was familiarly known, is one of whose life and character trustworthy information is to be desired, not only on account of his greatness as a poet, but by reason of the influence which he exerted on one whose name is among the greatest, if not the greatest in all literature.

✓ He was born in Canterbury in 1564. He

* A. C. Swinburne, *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

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matriculated as a pensioner in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and graduated as B.A. in 1583, and M.A. in 1587. His earliest play, *Tamburlaine*, was licensed on the 14th of August, 1590, and published in the same year. Of the early years of his life we have no certain knowledge. It has been suggested that on leaving the university he joined a company of players, and also that he saw some military service in the Low Countries. But there is no contemporary evidence in support of either suggestion. In a book entitled *The Theatre of God's Judgments*, published in 1597, four years after the death of Marlowe, he is described as 'by profession a scholler, brought up from his youth in the universitie of Cambridge, but by practice a play-maker and a poet of scurrilitie.' The author, Thomas Beard, a Puritan divine, was the school-master of Oliver Cromwell at Huntingdon. He was educated at Cambridge, and held the degree of D.D. This book contains the earliest account of the tragical death of Marlowe, which the author regarded as a judgment brought upon him by his atheistical opinions. The account here given of the death of Marlowe is utterly untrustworthy, but what is said by Beard to the credit of Marlowe may be accepted as probably true. What is meant by the words 'by

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profession a scholler ' is uncertain. It may mean that, like Beard, he lived by teaching, and in this way made a profession of his scholarship. More probably, it was a statement of the reputation as a scholar which he had in the University of Cambridge, of which Beard was a graduate. ' While a student Marlowe mainly confined himself to the Latin classics, and probably before leaving Cambridge he translated Ovid's *Amores* into English heroic verse. His rendering, which was not published until after his death, does full justice to the sensuous warmth of the original. He is also credited at the same period with a translation of Colathon's *Rape of Helen*, but this is no longer extant.' His unfinished paraphrase of the ' *Hero and Leander* of Musaeus, when completed by George Chapman, had a popularity comparable to the first heir of Shakespeare's invention. Marlowe's translation of *The First Book of Lucan's Pharsalia* into epic blank verse was published in 1600, and reprinted by Percy in his specimens of blank verse before Milton.'* After his arrival in London we find him among the men of letters of all classes and tastes who were associated with Sir Walter Raleigh, and it was probably in this society that he became a freethinker in regard to religion.

* *Dict. Nat. Biography* (Sir Sidney Lee).

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‘Although he [Raleigh] did not personally adopt the scepticism in matters of religion which was avowed by many Elizabethan authors, it attracted his speculative cast of mind, and he sought among the sceptics his closest companions. . . . With Christopher Marlowe, whose religious views were equally heterodox, he was in equally confidential relations. Izaak Walton testifies that he wrote the well-known answer to Marlowe’s familiar lyric, *Come live with me and be my love.*’*

Marlowe was on terms of intimate friendship with George Chapman, one of the most interesting characters of the Elizabethan age. Chapman did not hold the degree of either of the universities, and his life and character differed widely from those of the university pens. Wood (*Athen. Oxon.*) describes Chapman as ‘a person of most revered aspect, religious and temperate, qualities rarely meeting in a poet.’ Of all the English dramatists, Charles Lamb thought that Chapman approached nearest to Shakespeare in descriptive and didactic passages. His translation of Homer, with many defects, has somewhat of the spirit of the original, and among the admirers of this fine old version are Dryden, Pope, Coleridge, and Charles Lamb. But Chap-

* *Dict. Nat. Biography*, tit. ‘Raleigh.’

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man's name is best known to the present generation by Keat's fine sonnet written 'on first looking into Chapman's *Homer*' :

Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne ;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.

Marlowe's beautiful poem, *Hero and Leander*, unfinished at his death, was published in 1598. It was afterwards completed by Chapman, and published in this form in the same year. Chapman says that Marlowe 'drunk to me half this Musaeon story,' which implies that he had been shown the unfinished tale. From some words in Chapman's addition it appears to have been completed at the 'late desires' of Marlowe.

A career so full of promise and of early performance had a tragical ending. The burial register of the church of St. Nicholas, Deptford, contains this entry : 'Christopher Marlow, slain by Francis Archer the 1 of June 1593.' Marlowe was then in the thirtieth year of his age. Nothing more is known with certainty.

Cut in the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burnèd is Apollo's laurel bough. *

* *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, Sc. XVI.

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The earliest notice of the death of Marlowe is in the book already referred to by Thomas Beard, published in 1597. The Puritan divine, in his desire to improve the occasion, gives an account of dying blasphemies of Marlowe, leading to the conclusion that his death was 'not only a manifest signe of God's Judgment, but also a horrible and fearefull to all that beheld him.' This account would be read with pain by every lover of Marlowe, if it were not obviously a tissue of lies. Marlowe 'not onely in word blasphemed the Trinitie, but also (as is credibly reported) wrote bookes against it, affirming our Saviour to be but a deceiver.' Other things were said which need not be recorded, as the existence of any such book is a pure fabrication. Beard's account of the occurrence is equally devoid of truth. According to him it took place in 'London streets,' Marlowe dying from a wound inflicted by himself. That Marlowe died on the spot with an oath on his lips to the terror of the beholders is a palpable falsehood, for he survived the fatal blow long enough to convey to Chapman his 'late desires,' which were carried out by the completion of his *Hero and Leander*.

The respectable author of *Palladis Tamia* (1598), Francis Meres, had received a different version of the occurrence, and, yielding to his

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love of antithesis, wrote: 'As the poet Lycophron was shot to death by a certain rival of his, so Christopher Marlowe was stabd to death by a bawdy serving man, a rival of his in his lewde love.' A few years later Vaughan, in his *Golden Grove* (1600), gave another account, according to which Marlowe meant to stab a man named Ingram, with whom he was playing at tables, but Ingram avoided the thrust, and, drawing his dagger, stabbed Marlowe into the brain through the eye, so that he shortly after died. This is noted as the execution of Divine justice upon Marlowe, 'who as is reported about 14 yeres agoe wrote, a Booke against the Trinitie.' Marlowe had written no such book, and the man's name as recorded in the Church register was Archer, not Ingram.

The occurrence in which Marlowe lost his life has been described by some recent writers as a 'drunken brawl.' It may have had its origin in a quarrel or brawl, although the only account of the event which is entitled to respect as a historical document—the entry in the parish register—records nothing but violence at the hands of Archer. Drunkenness is not hinted at as the origin of the quarrel in any one of the contemporary accounts. It forms no part of the lurid picture which we owe to the imagination

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of the Puritan divine, Thomas Beard. The statement that Marlowe lived an irregular and vicious life is a not unnatural conclusion from the manner in which he met his death. But against this conclusion should be set the purity of his writings; the exemplary character of Chapman, his intimate friend; and his association with men like Raleigh and Sir Thomas Walsingham. Edward Blount, the publisher, in dedicating *Hero and Leander* to Sir Thomas Walsingham, writes of Marlowe as a man that had been dear to them. The book is dedicated to Walsingham in these words: 'Knowing that in his lifetime you bestowed many kind favours, entertaining the parts of reckoning and worth which you found in him with good countenance and liberal affection.' To these names may be added that of Shakespeare.

An event had occurred shortly before the death of Marlowe which made a certain class of writers ready to accept any story to the discredit of Marlowe, without inquiry as to its truth, and to draw from the unfortunate circumstances of his death the most unfavourable inferences as to his life and character.

On the 18th of May, 1593, the Privy Council had issued 'a warrant to Henry Mander, one of the messengers of Her Majesties Chamber, to

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repair to the house of Mr. Thomas Walsingham, in Kent, or to anie other place where he shall understand Christopher Marlow to be remaying, and by virtue hereof to apprehend and bring him to the Court in his companie, and in case of need to require ayd. . . . Some weeks earlier (19th March) similar proceedings had been taken by the council against Richard Cholmley and Richard Strange: the former is known to have been concerned with Marlowe in disseminating irreligious doctrines (*Privy Council Reg.*, p. 288).^{*} A document entitled 'a note,' and headed as 'Contayninge the opinion of one Christofer Marly concernynge his damnable opinions and judgment of relygion and scorne of Gods worde,' is printed, in so far as this could be done with propriety, in the edition of Marlowe's works edited by Mr. Bullen (Vol. III., App. III.). The substance of the charge is that Marlowe was not only an atheist himself, 'but almost in every company he commeth persuadest man to Athiesme.' It is alleged 'that one Richard Cholmelei hath confessed that he was persuaded by Marloes reason to become an Athieste,' and a warrant was issued from the Star Chamber for the arrest of Cholmeley.

The charge against Marlowe was not supported

^{*} *Dict. Nat. Biography*, tit. 'Marlowe.'

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by sworn testimony. The informant by whom the note was signed was a man of infamous character, and it is not possible to avoid sympathising with Mr. Bullen when he writes: 'It is a comfort to know that the ruffian who drew up the charges, a certain "Rychard Bame," was hanged at Tyburn on 6th December 1594.' One of the charges in the note signed by this malefactor is that Marlowe, having learned the art of coining from one Poole, a prisoner in Newgate, 'ment through help of a connyng stampe-maker, to coyne french crownes pistolettes and english shillings.' The manifest absurdity of this statement and the infamous character of the informant would justify us in discrediting the scandalous part of the charges in the note. The substance of the accusation which Marlowe had to meet was that he was an avowed atheist, of an aggressive character. The proceedings were cut short by the death of Marlowe, but the general acceptance of the charge of atheism by the writers of the day leaves no doubt that it was well founded.

Marlowe's views on religious matters had been for some time known to his fellows. Greene, in his *Groatsworth of Wit*, appeals to Marlowe with evident sincerity, as one who, with himself, had said, 'like the foole in his heart, There is no

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God,' to 'now give glorie unto his greatnesse.' He warns him, addressing him as a friend, not to follow his example in deferring 'till this last point of extremitie; for little knowest thou how in the end thou shalt be visited.' These words were 'offensively taken' by Marlowe, for profession of atheism was an offence punishable by death. In the year 1589 a clergyman named Kett had been executed for heresy, which did not merit so strong a name. Chettle, dissociating himself from Marlowe probably on this ground, simply expresses regret that he had been the means of making the charge public (*ante*, p. 103).

A charge of this kind made against one so beloved as Marlowe would not have been readily accepted if it were not well founded. The contemporary notices of Marlowe's fall are written more in sorrow than in anger. In a poem in manuscript written in 1600, signed S.M., quoted by Halliwell-Phillips in his *Life of Shakespeare*, the writer speaks of 'Kynde Kit Marloe.' The 'biting satirist' Nash in the epistle to the reader prefixed to the second edition of *Christes Teares over Jerusalem* writes of 'poore deceased Kit Marlowe.' He was still called 'Kit' when his success as a poet seemed to call for a more respectful address. So thought Heywood when, in his *Hierarchie of the Blessed* (1635), he wrote

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Marlo renowned for his rare art and wit
Could ne'er attain beyond the name of Kit,
Although his Hero and Leander did
Merit addition rather.

He was 'Kit' to Izaak Walton when, years afterwards, he wrote lovingly of a ditty fitted for a voice like the note of a nightingale: 'twas that smooth song, which was made by Kit. Marlow now at least fifty years ago; and the Milk-maid's mother sung an answer to it, which was made by Walter Raleigh in his younger days. They were old fashioned poetry, but choicely good. I think much better than the strong lines that are now in fashion in this critical age.'

Marlowe was happy in his buskin'd Muse—
Alas, unhappy in his life and end.

Thus in sorrow wrote the author of *The Returne from Pernassus*, and Peele, shortly after the death of Marlowe, thus gave expression to his admiration and regret:

Unhappy in thine end
Marley, the Muses' darling, for thy verse,
Fit to write passions for the souls below
If any wretched souls in passion speak.*

Greene's dying appeal to the 'famous gracer of Tragedians' to abandon his atheism was prompted by affection for a friend. Drayton,

* Prologue to *Honour of the Garter*, 1593.

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the friend of Shakespeare, bestowed on him worthy praise when he wrote—

Marlowe, bathèd in the Thespian springs,
Had in him those brave translunary things
That the first poets had ; his raptures were
All air and fire, which made his verses clear ;
For that fine madness still he did retain
Which rightly should possess a poet's brain.

But the noblest tribute of affectionate regard to the memory of Marlowe was that paid by Shakespeare. It has been noted that he was moved by the tragedy of Spenser, 'late deceased in beggary,' to depart from his wont, and to introduce into one of his plays a reference to an event of the day. The pitiful death of a still nearer friend, his master, led him to break silence, and he wrote these words :

Dead Shepherd, now I find thy saw of might
Who ever loved that loved not at first sight ? *

The line quoted by Shakespeare occurs in *Hero and Leander*. There is an unmistakable note of affectionate regret in these words. 'Shepherd' was in those days a not unusual word to denote a poet. Cynthia's Shepherds in *Colin Clouts* were the poets by whom Elizabeth was surrounded. But there was a special significance in the word 'Shepherd' as applied by

* *As You Like It*, III. v. 82.

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Shakespeare to Marlowe. Dramatists were often known among their friends by the name of one of their characters, and we know that Marlowe was known to his friends as Tamburlaine, the Shepherd King, the hero of the drama by which he was best known.

Fragments of the poetry of Marlowe, and reminiscences of his work, are to be found here and there throughout the writings of Shakespeare. Sir Hugh Evans trolled snatches from the smooth song beloved by Izaak Walton,

‘Pless my soul, how full of chollors I am,
and trempling of mind,’ says Sir Hugh Evans,
and he relieves his mind by singing

To shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sings madrigals ;
There will we make our peds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies,
To shallow—

Mercy on me! I have a great dispositions to cry
[sings]

Melodious birds sing madrigals—
When as I sat in Pabylon—
And a thousand vagram posies.
To shallow, &c.*

When Helen was presented to Doctor Faustus by Mephistophiles, in obedience to his demand, he exclaims—

* *Merry Wives*, III. i. 11.

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Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Iliam ?

These matchless lines were present to the mind of
Shakespeare when he wrote of Helen

Why, she is a pearl
Whose price hath launch'd above a thousand ships.*

And there is an echo of the music when the
Countess's call for Helena, by the name of Helen,
provokes the clown's song—

Was this fair face the cause, quoth she,
Why the Grecians sacked Troy ? †

and a fainter echo, when Richard, beholding his
features in a glass, exclaims—

Was this face the face
That every day under his household roof
Did keep ten thousand men ? was this the face
That, like the sun, did make beholders wink ? ‡

The greatness of Marlowe's influence on the
work and character of Shakespeare cannot be
measured by quotations from their works, or by
a consideration of the extent to which they may
have worked in collaboration. There is no more
interesting chapter in the history of literature
than that which tells of the work done by Shake-

* *Troilus and Cressida*, II. ii. 81.

† *All's Well*, I. iii. 75.

‡ *King Richard II.*, IV. i. 281.

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speare in discipleship to Marlowe. To what extent they worked together is uncertain, and to discuss the question would transcend the purpose with which these pages have been written. It may be profitably studied with Sir Sidney Lee in his *Life of Shakespeare* and with Dr. Brandes in *William Shakespeare, a Critical Study*. It is sufficient here to note that collaboration, to the extent which is admitted by all critics, involves personal relations between the workers, and an intimacy which may be expected to exert an influence on character and opinions other than those which are merely literary.

The abiding influence of Marlowe on the work of Shakespeare, and his strongest claim to our gratitude, is due to his discovery that the resources of the English language were equal to the creation of a mighty line, an unrhymed measure, comparable in strength and beauty to the finest metres of Greece or Rome, and adapted alike to the uses of the noblest tragic and epic poetry.

‘When Christopher Marlowe came up to London from Cambridge, a boy in years, a man in genius, and a god in ambition, he found the stage, which he was born to transfigure and re-create by the might and masterdom of his genius, encumbered with a litter of rude rhyming

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farces and tragedies which the first wave of his imperial hand swept so utterly out of sight and hearing that hardly by piecing together such fragments of that buried rubbish as it is now possible to unearth can we rebuild in imagination so much of the rough and crumbling wall that fell before the trumpet-blast of *Tamburlaine*, as may give us some conception of the rabble of dynasty of rhymers whom he overthrew—of the citadel of dramatic barbarism which was stormed and sacked at the first charge of the young conqueror who came to lead English audiences and to deliver English poetry

From jiggling veins of rhyming mother-wits
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,*

The trumpet-blast was blown in the prologue to *Tamburlaine* from which these lines are taken. Of this play, Swinburne writes: 'It is the first poem ever written in English blank verse, as distinguished from mere rhymeless decasyllables; and it contains one of the noblest passages, perhaps indeed the noblest, in the literature of the world ever written by one of the greatest masters of poetry in loving praise of the glorious delights and sublime submission to the everlasting limits of his art': †

* *A Study of Shakespeare.*

† *Encyclopedia Britannica.*

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If all the pens that ever poets held
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,
And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
Their minds, and muses on admirèd themes ;
If all the heavenly quintessence they still
From their immortal flowers of poesy,
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
The highest reaches of a human wit ;
If these had made one poem's period,
And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
Yet should there hover in their restless heads
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least
Which into words no virtue can digest.*

Tamburlaine has many and obvious faults. In some parts it descends to the level of mere bombast.† But of the character of *Tamburlaine*, the Shepherd King, we may say, as Goethe said of *Doctor Faustus*, 'How grandly it is all planned!' and in many passages, in this his earliest drama, we find Marlowe's mighty line at its best.

It was no part of Marlowe's design to banish rhyme from lyrical or descriptive poetry. It had

* First part, V. i. 161.

† For example, in *Tamburlaine's* address to the captured Kings :
'Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia.'

Shakespeare's love of Marlowe did not restrain him from joining in the chorus of laughter which this line evoked, for Pistol speaks of pack-horses

'and hollow pampered jades of Asia

Which cannot go but thirty mile a-day.'

2 *Hen. IV.*, II. iv. 177.

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no place in the measure which he created for tragedy or epic poetry. He was indeed a master of rhyme, as unrivalled as of blank verse. His *Passionate Pilgrim* contains the lyric beloved by Izaak Walton and by Sir Hugh Evans, and a fragment of descriptive poetry of extraordinary beauty. Of these, writes one who has brought to perfection the charm of rhyme: 'One of the most faultless lyrics, and one of the loveliest fragments in the whole range of descriptive and fanciful poetry would have secured a place for Marlowe among the memorable men of his epoch, even if his plays had perished with himself. His *Passionate Pilgrim* remains ever since unrivalled in its way—a way of pure fancy and radiant melody without break or lapse'; and of *Hero and Leander* Swinburne writes: 'It is doubtful whether the heroic couplet has ever been more finely handled.'

Shakespeare, in discipleship to Marlowe, abandoned the use of rhyming couplets which is to be found in his earlier plays, and he also followed the example of his master in retaining the melody of rhyme in his lyrics, of which, perhaps the most beautiful are those in his latest plays.

When Swinburne's glorious description of the advent of Marlowe has been reduced to pedestrian prose, it tells of the coming into the life of

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Shakespeare of a personality by which it was profoundly affected. The manner in which his work as an artist was affected was the infusion into it of the spirit of the classical Renaissance, or of the New Learning, as it was more accurately termed in its relation to England. The outward and visible sign of the infusion of this new spirit was the gradual abandonment by Shakespeare of rhyme in the composition of his plays. The story of Shakespeare's conversion from rhyme to blank verse can best be studied in the glowing pages of Swinburne.* Shakespeare 'was naturally addicted to rhyme. . . . But in his very first plays, comic or tragic or historic, we can see the collision and conflict of the two influences ; his evil angel rhyme, yielding step by step to the strong advance of that better genius who came to lead him into the loftier path of Marlowe.' Rhyme in *King Richard II.* and *Romeo and Juliet*, 'struggles for awhile to keep its footing, but now more visibly in vain. The rhymed scenes in these plays are too plainly the survivals of a ruder and feebler stage of work. . . . In two scenes we may say that the whole heart or spirit of *Romeo and Juliet* is summed up and distilled into perfect and pure expression ; and these two are written in blank verse of equable and blame-

* *A Study of Shakespeare.*

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less melody.' A passage in *Richard II.* 'must be regarded as the last hysterical struggle of rhyme to maintain its place in tragedy.'

The effect of the New Learning upon the work of Shakespeare, under the influence of Marlowe, cannot be fully appreciated without a glance at the condition of the vernacular literature of England at the beginning of the century in which he was born. Hallam fixes the year 1400 as the beginning of a national literature written in English, a language that was then growing into literary existence. This was the year of the death of Chaucer. The vernacular literature which showed such promise in Chaucer, made no progress in the century and a half between his death and the accession of Elizabeth. The only book written in England in those years which holds a first-class position in literature, More's *Utopia*, was written in Latin. Then had come the great intellectual movement known as the Classical Renaissance, which reached England in the early years of the sixteenth century. St. Paul's School was founded by Dean Colet, and William Lily, a famous grammarian, who had studied Greek and Latin in Italy, was appointed High Master in 1512. The grammar school at Stratford held a high position, and was one of the first in which Greek was taught, and

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by the teaching of that school Shakespeare was made ready for discipleship to Marlowe. Dull and long-forgotten plays after the manner of Seneca had no effect on the development of the national drama. *Ralph Roister Doister*, written in 1550, may be taken as the precursor of the Elizabethan national drama, the first fruit of the Classical Renaissance. The author, Nicholas Udall, was headmaster at Eton, and a famous classical scholar. The play is founded on the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus, and is in the form of a Latin comedy. But it is written in rhyming doggerel verse. Only thirty-seven years intervened between the writing of this play and the production of *Tamburlaine*. The greatness of the revolution worked by the genius of Marlowe can best be realised by a comparison of his line with the jigging vein of the rhyming mother wit which found expression in *Ralph Roister Doister*.

It was by the spirit and not the letter of the ancient learning that Marlowe was inspired. The difference between the letter and the spirit of this influence is illustrated by a comparison of the work of Marlowe with the efforts of a school of pedants who with Gabriel Harvey and William Webbe * were engaged in a fruitless endeavour to 'reform' English versification by forcing it

* *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586).

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into the metres of Latin poetry. It is also seen by a comparison of Shakespeare's Roman plays with Jonson's. Jonson's plays are 'well laboured.' His characters 'are made to speak according to the very words of Tacitus and Suetonius; but they are not living men'; and we know from Leonard Digges how the audience was ravished when Shakespeare's *Caesar* would appear on the stage. Such was the mighty influence which, mainly through the instrumentality of Marlowe, was brought to bear upon Shakespeare's work as a dramatist.

Professor Dowden, in writing of Shakespeare, devotes himself to a 'critical study of his mind and art.' It is in regard to the art of Shakespeare that the influence of Marlowe has been, for the most part, considered. But no less real was his influence upon the mind of Shakespeare, upon his outlook on life, upon the character of the man, and upon his office as teacher.

While Marlowe was engaged in his great work of literary pioneer and discoverer he had undertaken a mission of a different kind. The charge of atheism which Marlowe was called upon to answer was never tried, or, indeed, exactly formulated. The word was, in those days, applied to deviations from orthodoxy of different degrees. It was applied to the freethinking of

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Raleigh and his literary circle. It is evident from Greene's friendly expostulation that he used the term, in its application to Marlowe, in its literal sense. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Marlowe towards the end of his life had become the apostle of a kind of unorthodoxy, to which the word 'atheism' was regarded as applicable by friends as well as foes. Marlowe had an influential friend and patron in Sir Thomas Walsingham, who is said to have been nearly related to Elizabeth's famous minister. Chapman was his intimate friend, and, as we have seen, he was beloved as well as admired by his literary brethren, who would have been moved by the tragedy of his death to clear his memory of so odious a charge, if it had been possible so to do.

Association with Marlowe had not the influence on the mind of Shakespeare which it was said, probably with truth, to have exerted on weaker intellects. Shakespeare remained unshaken in his hold of the great truths of religion, and three centuries having elapsed, the anniversary of his death will be celebrated, with gratitude for his teaching, in services of the church of which he was a member.

But although Shakespeare emerged unscathed from the fiery trial of his faith to which intimate

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association with one like Marlowe must have exposed him, the influence of Marlowe on his religious belief, as well as on his work as an artist, is clearly discernible. No question has been oftener asked in regard to Shakespeare than this : What was his creed ? It is a question that can be easily answered with regard to other great men of the Elizabethan age. But as to Shakespeare it has not been answered yet ; or, rather, it has been answered so differently by various earnest students of his work as to lead to the conclusion that the problem is insoluble. Charles Butler, in *Historical Memoirs of English Catholics*, claims him as a Roman Catholic ; and a French man of letters, A. J. Rio, in his *Shakespeare*, arrives without doubt at the same conclusion. He has been described as an atheist, and as a deist, and Charles Wordsworth, Bishop of St. Andrews, claims him as a faithful son of the English Church of the Reformation.

Many of us in our passage through life have come across a young man of exceptionally brilliant intellect, who, under the influence of a friend of a masterful personality, was led to abandon for agnosticism the religion in which he was brought up. After a time such a one 'like him who travels' may return again. But he returns a different man. Should he become

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a divine, his theological teaching will be characterised by a spirit of tolerance, and by an understanding of forms of belief and unbelief to which he would otherwise have been a stranger. If he should become a dramatist or novelist, there will be found in his work the characteristics which have baffled inquirers after the creed of Shakespeare; a firm grasp of eternal verities, with an indifference to the forms and dogmas of any particular Church.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy.*

With words like these he may close a discussion on religious subjects, relegating, with Milton, reasoning high

Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute

to spirits of another sort, in another place.

A firm religious faith is consistent in a man like Shakespeare, with easy-going toleration, and even with occasional indulgence in an unseemly jest. Some such thought was present to his mind when he put these words into the mouth of Don Pedro:

* *Hamlet*, I. v. 167. The 'our' of the Folio has been needlessly altered to 'your.' Hamlet and Horatio had been fellow students in Wittenberg.

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The man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him by some large jests he will make.*

Large jests were in vogue in Shakespeare's day, and even his Beatrice indulged in a kind of pleasantry that has been long since banished from the servants' hall. But there is no irreverence in Shakespeare's jests. He never calls evil good, or good, evil. He did not love a Puritan, and he had no taste for frequent churchgoing. 'An honest, willing, kind fellow,' says Mistress Quickly of Rugby, 'as ever servant shall come in house withal, and, I warrant you, no tell-tale nor no breed-bate; his worst fault is that he is given to prayer; he is something peevish that way; but nobody but has his fault; but let that pass.' † At times, under special provocation, he might be of the mind of Sir Andrew Aguecheek:

Mar. Marry, sir, sometimes he is a kind of puritan.

Sir And. O, if I thought that I'd beat him like a dog!

Sir To. What, for being a puritan? Thy exquisite reason, dear knight?

Sir And. I have no exquisite reason for't, but I have reason good enough. ‡

But more often his mood would be that of the good-humoured indifference underlying the cha-

* *Much Ado*, II. iii. 204.

† *Merry Wives*, I. iv. 10.

‡ *Twelfth Night*, II. iii. 151.

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racteristic language of a certain clown: 'Young Charbon the puritan and old Poysam the papist, howsome'er their hearts are severed in religion, their heads are both one; they may joul horns together, like any deer i' the herd.' *

We are certain that he received with 'gentle' courtesy the preacher whose entertainment at New Place has been recorded. If another such visit had been paid when Shakespeare was writing *Cymbeline*, we can understand how when the worthy man departed his host could contain himself no longer, and relieved his feelings by writing some things of which Sir Sidney Lee says: 'Although most of the scenes of *Cymbeline* are laid in Britain in the first century before the Christian era, there is no pretence of historical vraisemblance. With an almost ludicrous inappropriateness the British King's courtiers make merry with technical terms peculiar to Calvinistic theology, like "grace" and "election." In I. i. 136-7 Imogen is described as "past grace" in the theological sense. In I. ii. 30-31 the Second Lord remarks: "If it be a sin to make a true election, she is damned." †

A report regarding Shakespeare that 'he dyed a papist' reached the Rev. Richard Davies,

* *All's Well*, I. iii. 55.

† *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 424, and note 1.

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Rector of Sapperton, who inserted it in some brief notes respecting Shakespeare which are in the library of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Davies died in 1708, and the report probably had its origin towards the end of the seventeenth century. Although it was not founded in fact, it is easy to understand how it came to be said of Shakespeare by the Puritans among whom his lot was cast. He had heard in his youth from old people of the beauty of the old services, and the sweet singing of the monks. With this in his mind, when he thought of the fair proportions of some abbey church, dismantled and going to ruin, he wrote these words :

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.*

If the passages in his writings by which learned and thoughtful readers have been led to conclude that he was a Roman Catholic had a counterpart in his daily converse at Stratford, his Protestantism would certainly have been called in question by the good folk of that town, and the story would go abroad that he was reconciled to the old faith before his death.

‘ Bishop Charles Wordsworth, in his *Shake-*

* Sonnet LXXIII.

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speare's Knowledge and Use of the Bible (fourth edition, 1892), gives a long list of passages for which Shakespeare may have been indebted to the Bible. But the Bishop's deductions as to the strength of Shakespeare's adult piety seem strained. The Rev. Thomas Carter's *Shakespeare and Holy Scripture* (1905) is open to the same exceptions as the Bishop's volume, but no Shakespearean student will fail to derive profit from examining his exhaustive collection of parallel passages.* It may be, as Sir Sidney Lee thinks, that Shakespeare's 'scriptural reminiscences bear trace of the assimilative or receptive tendency of an alert youthful mind,' and it may be a mistake 'to urge that his knowledge of the Bible was mainly the fruit of close and continuous application in adult life.' But his knowledge of the Bible, however acquired, was a fact, and in it he found a safeguard against the missionary efforts of Marlowe, all the more dangerous by reason of the admiration and affection with which he was regarded by his friend and disciple.

An interesting feature of the annual celebration at Stratford of the birthday of Shakespeare is the preaching of a memorial sermon in the parish church. In one of these the late Canon

* *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 23, note 2.

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Ainger, having spoken of the discipline 'under which he grew to be a prophet and a teacher to his kind,' says 'wherever men do congregate, or wherever they muse in solitude, there abides this great cause of thankfulness to Almighty God that the greatest name in our literature should be also our wisest and profoundest teacher.'*

Coleridge expressed his confidence 'that Shakespeare was a writer of all others the most calculated to make his readers better as well as wiser,'† and Professor Dowden writes: 'Is Shakespeare a religious poet? An answer has been given to this question by Mr. Walter Bagehot, which contains the essential truth: "If this world is not all evil, he who has understood and painted it best, must probably have some good. If the underlying and almighty essence of this world be good, then it is likely that the writer who most deeply approached to that essence will be himself good. There is a religion of weekdays as well as of Sundays, a religion of 'cakes and ale,' as well as of pews and altar cloths. This England lay before Shakespeare as it lies before us all, with its green fields, and its long hedgerows, and its many trees, and its great towns, and its endless ham-

* *Shakespeare Sermons, preached in the Collegiate Church of Stratford-on-Avon* (1900).

† Lecture on Shakespeare and Milton.

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lets, and its motley society, and its long history, and its bold exploits, and its gathering power ; and he saw that they were good. To him perhaps more than to anyone else has it been given to see that they were a great unity, a great religious object ; that if you could only descend to the inner life, to the deep things, to the secret principles of its noble vigour, to the essence of character . . . we might, so far as we are capable of so doing, understand the nature which God has made. Let us then think of him, not as a teacher of dry dogmas, or a sayer of hard sayings, but as

A priest to us all

Of the wonder and bloom of the world,

a teacher of the hearts of men and women.”*’

From Shakespeare’s fellowship with Marlowe we learn something of the strength and sanity of his character, and also of his constancy in friendship. He was ready to learn from Marlowe what he had to teach, and to follow him where he ought to tread, but no further. He was loyal to the memory of a fallen and discredited friend. Deaf to Chettle’s entreaty that he would drop a tear on the sable hearse of Elizabeth, he was moved to depart from his use by the tragic death

* *Shakespeare, his Mind and Art*, quoting from *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen*.

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of Marlowe, as he was by the circumstances of the last days of Spenser :

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.

Loyalty such as Shakespeare's to his fellows and friends is a sure token of the genuineness of the character which Spenser was the first to discover in Shakespeare.

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TOWARDS the end of the century in which Shakespeare died an attempt was made to collect and record what was then remembered of the facts of his life. Nicholas Rowe, Poet Laureate, the earliest critical editor of the plays of Shakespeare, was also his earliest biographer, for none of the scanty notes of former writers deserve the name of biography. Rowe was a man of note, as a poet and as a dramatist. The popularity of his best-known drama, *The Fair Penitent*, is attested by the survival from it of the phrase 'gallant gay Lothario,' descriptive of the villain of the piece. Of this play, Dr. Johnson writes: 'There is scarcely any work of any poet at once so interesting by the fable, and so delightful in the language.' Rowe's work as editor was of considerable value at the time, but his edition of the plays which appeared in 1709 was before long superseded by that of Pope (1725) and by the far superior work of Theobald, 'the Porson of Shakespearian criticism.'*

* *Essays and Studies* (Churton Collins).

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Rowe's poems and plays are now forgotten. But he has a claim to our undying gratitude, second only to that which is due to the players to whom we owe the Folio of 1623. It is founded on the pains that he took, by careful inquiries at Stratford, to preserve from oblivion such knowledge of Shakespeare's life as had then survived, and on the discrimination and restraint with which he made use of the material which was supplied to him.

In this pious labour he had the assistance of the famous actor Thomas Betterton. Born about the year 1635, Betterton in 1661 joined a company of players formed by Sir William Davenant at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre. He was thus brought into contact with one who was closely connected with Shakespeare. Shakespeare's intimacy with the D'Avenant family has been noted in an earlier chapter. With William the connection was closest, for he was Shakespeare's godchild, and devoted to the memory of his godfather. Betterton was not only an actor, but a dramatist, many of whose plays were produced, and in the words of Pepys, 'well liked.'

Betterton was known to Rowe not only as a great actor, but as an earnest student of Shakespeare. 'No man,' he writes, 'is better

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acquainted with Shakespeare's manner of expression, and, indeed, he has studied him so well, and is so much a master of him, that whatever part of his he performs, he does it as if it had been written on purpose for him, and that the author had exactly conceived it.'

Betterton was the first to make a serious attempt to collect material for a biography of Shakespeare: 'his veneration for the memory of Shakespeare having engaged him to make a journey into Warwickshire on purpose to gather up what remains he could of a name for which he had so great a veneration.'

At what time Betterton's veneration engaged him to journey to Stratford we do not know. No time is more probable than shortly after the death of Davenant in 1668. The strong personal interest in Shakespeare which prompted this undertaking can be traced back to this date, when Betterton purchased the Chandos portrait, which had been in the possession of Davenant. In his later years Betterton was in straitened circumstances and a martyr to gout, and in those days a pilgrimage to Stratford-on-Avon was a serious undertaking. Rowe, when he published his *Life* in 1709, made use of the information which had been collected by Betterton, but there is no reason to suppose that Betterton's

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visit to Stratford was made in contemplation of Rowe's work.

Fifty-two years after the death of Shakespeare there must have been men and women living at Stratford who had not reached the extreme limit of life, and who had spoken with Shakespeare when he was resident at Stratford during his later years.

Nothing can be more commonplace than the story as told by Rowe. He tells us of the birth of Shakespeare in April, 1564. 'His family, as appears by the register and public writings relating to that town, were of good figure and fashion there, and are mentioned as gentlemen. His father, who was a considerable dealer in wool, had a large family, ten children in all, and could give his eldest son no better education than one to fit him for his own employment.' He was educated for some time at a free school, 'but the narrowness of his circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forced his father to withdraw him from thence. . . . Upon his leaving school he seems to have given entirely into that way of living which his father proposed to him ; and in order to settle in the world after a family manner, he thought fit to marry while he was yet very young. His wife was the daughter of one Hathaway, said to have been a

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substantial yeoman in the neighbourhood of Stratford. In this kind of settlement he continued for some time till an extravagance that he was guilty of forced him both out of the country and that way of living which he had taken up.'

Rowe tells the tale of the stealing of the deer of Sir Thomas Lucy, for which he was prosecuted, as he thought too severely; of Shakespeare's revenge for the ill-usage in the form of a ballad, 'the first essay of his poetry,' then lost, which 'redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire for some time, and shelter himself in London. . . . The latter part of his life was spent, as all men of good sense will wish theirs may be, in ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends. He had the good fortune to gather an estate equal to his occasion, and, in that to his wish, and is said to have spent some years before his death at his native Stratford. His pleasurable wit and good nature engaged him in the acquaintance, and entitled him to the friendship of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood.'

This commonplace record, the result of the inquiries of Betterton and Rowe, may be taken as representing the impression made on the good

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folk of Stratford by the life of Shakespeare, in so far as it was spent among them, and of this record no part is more commonplace than the reference to his marriage. His early marriage to the daughter of a substantial yeoman is attributed to a desire to settle in the world in a family manner, in the way of living which his father proposed to him ; that is to say, as an assistant in his business as a considerable dealer in wool. It never occurred to Betterton's informants, or to the seventeenth-century collectors of Stratford gossip and scandal, that there was anything out of the common, or worthy of note, about the circumstances of Shakespeare's marriage. Not a hint at unhappy relations between husband and wife can be found in the local gossip collected by Aubrey, Ward, Davies, Hall, and Oldys.

With the revival of interest in the facts of Shakespeare's life came the searching of ancient records, and the discovery of certain facts which, read in the light of nineteenth-century ideas, seemed to have a significance that had not been attached to them by the sixteenth-century folk among whom they took place. On Monday, the 28th of November, 1582, Shakespeare obtained at the Bishop's Registry at Worcester a licence to be married to Anne Hathaway, after

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publication of banns. In what church the celebration of the marriage took place is unknown. The eldest child of the marriage, Susanna, was baptized in the parish church of Stratford on the 26th of May, 1583.

A marriage in November, followed by the birth of a child in the following May, if these facts were to occur in our day, would naturally lead to the conclusion that prenuptial intercourse had been followed by a forced marriage, at the instance of the wife's relations, and this is the conclusion from which most biographers have started in their accounts of the domestic life of Shakespeare.

It is always dangerous to draw inferences from facts which have a relation to conduct without a complete knowledge of the laws and customs of the period at which they took place, and this peril is especially imminent when the facts and inferences are conversant with the relations between the sexes, as governed by the law of marriage, and the ecclesiastical and social customs which had grown up around the law, and which disappeared when the law ceased to exist.

Mr. Charles Elton has earned the gratitude of all who seek to attain to a real knowledge of the life and character of Shakespeare by the care

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with which he has investigated the circumstances of his marriage in the light of contemporary customs and ecclesiastical regulations.

Mr. Elton had rare qualifications for the task. A fine scholar, and a lawyer of real learning, especially in the branches of law which are akin to history and archæology, he would have attained to a high position in his profession had not his accession early in life to an ample estate made it possible for him to devote his powers to historical and literary research, while he was at the same time engaged in such practical work as the discharge of his duties as Member of Parliament, and the collection and cataloguing of an interesting library. As the result we have the *Origins of English History*, and *William Shakespeare His Family and Friends*, published in the year 1904, after the death of the author, with a memoir by Andrew Lang. In this work, which is a storehouse of information industriously collected from all quarters, and sifted with critical care, he thus sums up the result of his investigations :

‘ We may say at once that there is no reason to suppose that Shakespeare and his wife had made an irregular or clandestine marriage, though they appear to have been united by a civil marriage some time before the ceremony

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was performed in the face of the Church. We should distinguish between regular and irregular contracts. A contract of future espousals was regular, but it did not amount to marriage, being nothing more in reality than a mutual covenant to be married at a future time. A contract of present espousals, on the contrary, was a legal marriage. . . .

‘The congregation was frequently warned that such civil marriages ought to be contracted publicly, and before several witnesses. If these rules were broken the offenders were liable to the punishments for clandestine marriage, such as fine, imprisonment, or excommunication, and the victim might be compelled to walk, like the Duchess of Gloucester, in a white sheet, with bare feet and a taper alight :

Methinks I should not thus be led along,
Mail'd up in shame, with papers on my back ;
And follow'd with a rabble that rejoice
To see my tears and hear my deep-fet groans.

The civil marriage required the religious solemnity to give the parties their legal status as to property, but otherwise it was both valid and regular. The clandestine marriage was valid, but all parties could be punished for their offences against the law.’

This is an accurate statement of the³Canon

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Law as it was in force in England in the year 1582. But it leaves unanswered this question : If Anne Hathaway had become the lawful wife of William Shakespeare at some time before the month of November, 1582, why was not their marriage solemnised in church, after publishing of banns, in the usual way? The fact that the marriage was not so solemnised has led writers who approached the subject with nineteenth-century prepossessions (including the writer of these pages) to conclude that there must have been something clandestine or irregular about this civil marriage, although it was, by the laws then in force, valid and binding.

Mr. Elton was an antiquary as well as a lawyer, and his research has supplied an answer to the question, which he puts in these words : ‘ Why marriages were not always solemnised in church after banns published, or special licence obtained. . . . The answer is that it was difficult to get married [in church] especially with due publication of banns, except in the latter half of the year, between Trinity and Advent. The ancient prohibitions had been relaxed by the Council of Trent; but the decrees of that assembly were not accepted in England. In our own country the ancient rules prevailed. The banns could not be published, nor marriages

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solemnised, although they might certainly be legally contracted during any of the periods of prohibition, unless, indeed, a special licence were obtained. The periods extended from Advent to the octave of the Epiphany, or January the 13th inclusive; from Septuagesima to the end of Easter week; and from the first Rogation day, three days before the feast of the Ascension, to Trinity Sunday, inclusive.' Attempts were made after the Reformation, without success, in Parliament and in Convocation to remove these disabilities. Ultimately 'these distinctions being invented only at first as a fund (among many others) for dispensations and being built upon no rational foundation, nor upon any law of the Church of England, have vanished of themselves.'*

But in the year 1582 they were in force. Shakespeare was one who believed that

No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
To make this contract grow,

if heed be not taken that

All sanctimonious ceremonies may
With full and holy rite be minister'd.

And so he took the necessary steps, at a time when the law of his Church permitted, to have

* *William Shakespeare His Family and Friends.*

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the marriage solemnised in Church, after due publishing of banns.* But neither at the time of his marriage, nor when, many years afterwards, he put these words into the mouth of Prospero, would it have occurred to him to be a necessary condition of a happy married life that the holy rite and the indissoluble civil contract should have taken place at one and the same time. Indeed this would not have been possible in the case of a marriage contracted during any of the prohibited periods. There is a principle of our jurisprudence, not founded on legal technicality, but the result of the garnered experience of centuries, which tells us that the best way of arriving at truth, in the absence of direct testimony, is to refer events to a legal origin, when it is possible so to do, and to presume, in the language of the law, *omnia rite esse acta*.

Shakespeare was born in the month of April, 1564. He was thus about eighteen years of age at the time of his marriage in 1582. Anne, his widow, died on the 8th of August, 1623, at the age of sixty-seven. She was therefore twenty-six years of age at the time of the

* The banns were to be published once. But from the researches in ancient registers of Mr. Elton and Mr. Gray (*Shakespeare's Marriage, etc.*) it appears that a licence in this form was not unusual.

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marriage. After about eighteen years Shakespeare wrote these words :

Duke. Let still the woman take
An elder than herself : so wears she to him,
So sways she level in her husband's heart :
For boy, however we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm.
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn
Than women's are.

Vio. I think it well, my lord.

Duke. Then let thy love be younger than thyself,
Or thy affection cannot hold the bent.*

When Shakespeare wrote these words he could look back on eighteen years of married life, and no one has doubted that in the speech of Orsino, which is devoid of dramatic significance, we have the result of this retrospection : Eighteen years before, a boy of eighteen, he had married a woman of the mature age of twenty-six. Then followed a few years of married life at Stratford, and the birth of three children. There is no reason why we should import into these years the idea of unhappiness or discord. Shakespeare left his wife and family, not of choice, but of necessity. The trouble in which his reckless love of sport involved him is not suggestive of domestic trouble. Then followed long years of separa-

* *Twelfth Night*, II. iv. 29.

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tion, of solitary struggles in London; it may be of error and estrangement. Looking back on these years, Shakespeare may well have thought that it would have been better for his wife had she taken an elder than herself, for so might she have swayed 'level in her husband's heart,' and have exerted more influence on his life and character. But his thoughts and sympathies were for the older wife, not for the younger husband, whose giddy and infirm fancies brought on her trouble and disappointment.

Aubrey's statement that Shakespeare was wont to go to his country once a year was probably not true of the earlier years of his stay in London. But with his improving fortunes his thoughts turned towards home, and the homing instinct that was part of his nature asserted itself. When *Twelfth Night* was written the tide in his affairs had turned, and had set in the direction of the return to domestic life and permanent reunion, which was fully consummated when some ten years later he came to live in New Place. Towards this consummation, devoutly wished, his efforts during many years had consistently tended. He had already obtained from the Heralds' College a grant of arms to his father, by virtue of which he came to be described in the deed conveying to him a

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share in the tithes of Stratford as 'of Stratford-upon-Avon, gentleman.' He had in 1597, in the words of Sir Sidney Lee, 'taken openly in his own person a more effective step in the way of rehabilitating himself and his family in the eyes of his fellow-townsmen.' On the 4th of May he purchased the largest house in the town, known as 'New Place,' and at the time when *Twelfth Night* was produced in the Hall of the Middle Temple he must have been in treaty for the purchase of a substantial real estate, the conveyance of which was executed shortly afterwards. According to the careful estimate of Sir Sidney Lee, 'a sum approaching 150*l.* (equal to 750*l.* of to-day) would be the poet's average annual revenue before 1599. Such a sum would be regarded as a very large income in a country town.*' In the full splendour of his fame as a poet and successful dramatist, and in the receipt of an ample income, at an age at which he might reasonably have looked forward to the enjoyment of many years in the life of London, 'like him that travels he returned again,' to spend the remaining years of his life in a dull country town, for no other reason that can be assigned except that it was his native place and the home of his wife and children.

* *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 300.

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One would have thought that the fact that Shakespeare was not kept by the attractions of life in London from visiting once in every year the country town in which he had left his wife and family, and that when he had made an ample fortune he came home to end his life in their company, in the house which he had made ready for them some years before, would have led to the conclusion that their relations were, at all events, fairly satisfactory. But against all this is the unforgettable fact that he left his wife his second-best bed.

The truth is that Shakespeare, when making his will, failed to realise that he was writing, not for his executors and legatees, but for all time. It has been a source of disappointment and serious concern to many that he made no mention of Drayton, Ben Jonson, Fletcher, or other of his literary friends, and that his will contains no mention of his own writings. Memorial rings might have been bequeathed to them, and to the "incomparable pair" to whom the First Folio was dedicated, who, in the words of the editors, prosecuted the author when alive with so much favour. They were provided for some fellow players and a few obscure neighbours. The master of the Grammar School at Stratford, who made a transcript of the will in 1747 when interest began

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to be taken in the subject, was sorely disappointed when he read it, and could not help observing that it was 'absolutely void of the least particle of that spirit which animated our great poet.' On which Mr. Halliwell-Phillips pertinently remarks, 'It might be thought from this impeachment that this worthy preceptor expected to find it written in blank-verse,' adding, 'The preponderance of Shakespeare's domestic over his literary sympathies is strikingly exhibited in this final record.'

Shakespeare's will might well be left to rest in the obscurity of a registry were it not for the extravagant ideas to which this very commonplace document has given rise. Not only did he leave his wife entirely unprovided for, but to this injury a deliberate insult was added by the introduction of an interlineation into the original draft by which his second-best bed was given to his wife, showing that this trifling and insulting notice of her existence was a mere afterthought.

Mr. Halliwell-Phillips, in the notes to his *Outlines*, has printed the will in a convenient manner, which enables the reader to understand the process by which it attained its ultimate form. The portions of the print included in square brackets represent erasures, and those in italics, interlineations. The erasures are of

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no significance, and the only interlineations with which we need concern ourselves are those which relate to the provision for the wife of the testator.

By the original draft, New Place, with practically the whole of Shakespeare's property in land, was settled on his eldest daughter, Susanna Hall, for her life, with remainder to her issue male, in strict settlement. In the draft, the gift was without qualification, but before the will was executed the following words had been introduced by interlineation, immediately after the gift to Susanna Hall: 'for better enabling of her to performe this my will and towards the performance thereof.' By these words, the significance of which has been overlooked, Susanna was constituted a trustee of the property which was devised to her, in order to enable her to perform and give effect to what the testator calls 'this my will.' What was the will which Susanna was to perform by means of her ownership of New Place? It was not anything expressed on the face of the will, which contains no indication of any trust or obligation imposed on her. The words 'this my will,' if taken literally, would refer to something contained in the document in which they occur. Shakespeare's will was composed neither in the blank

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verse of a poet nor with the technical exactness of a conveyancing draftsman, but the meaning is quite clear. The testator must be taken to have meant something by the words 'this my will,' and if they are to be given any significance they must be taken as meaning 'the whole of my testamentary disposition now declared.' Directions given to his daughter by word of mouth as to the use that she was to make of the property given to her by the will would be legally binding, if she accepted the gift, and the testator's entire disposition might fairly be spoken of as 'this my will.'

From what was done before and after the making of the will there can be no doubt as to the nature of the trust that was imposed on the owner of New Place or as to the loyalty with which it was carried into effect. For some reason or other Shakespeare had for some time made up his mind to provide for his wife otherwise than by putting her into the possession and management of property of any kind. When he acquired by purchase the Blackfriars estate he was at pains to take the conveyance in such a form as to bar his wife's title to dower. We must assume that there was some good reason why Shakespeare did not make his wife the mistress of New Place for her life, and why he

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did not put in writing the entire of his testamentary disposition. Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, with the sanity by which his speculations are characterised, suggests an explanation which is accepted by Mr. Elton and in substance approved by Sir Sidney Lee. 'Perhaps the only theory that would be consistent with the terms of the will, and with the deep affection which she is traditionally recorded to have entertained for him to the end of his life, is the possibility of her having been afflicted with some chronic infirmity of a nature that precluded all hope of recovery. In such a case to relieve her from household anxieties and select a comfortable apartment at New Place, where she would be under the care of an affectionate daughter and an experienced physician, would have been the wisest and kindest measure which could have been adopted.'* Susanna had married in 1607 a physician of great local eminence, named John Hall, resident in Stratford. He was a gentleman by birth, bearing two talbots on his crest. 'He was well educated, travelled abroad, and acquired a good knowledge of French.'† A Master of Arts, of what university is not known, he was a good Latin scholar. In 1657 a volume

* *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare.*

† Sir Sidney Lee in *Dict. Nat. Biography.*

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was published entitled 'Select Observations on English Bodies, and Cures both Empericall and Historicall performed upon very eminent persons in desperate diseases, first written in Latin by Mr. John Hall, physician, living at Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, where he was very famous, as also in the counties adjacent.' A second edition was published in 1679, which was reissued in 1683. The confidence placed in Hall and in his wife, of whom something will be said hereafter, was fully justified. Shakespeare's widow lived with them at New Place until her death in 1623. Her position, living under these circumstances in a house of which she had been the mistress, was a trying one, both to her and to her successor, and after her death Mr. Hall paid a tribute to the memory of his mother-in-law in a copy of Latin elegiacs which was inscribed on her monument, a striking testimony to her virtues and also to the harmony that reigned in New Place.

But why the second-best bed? It would be contrary to all received ideas of the relations of Shakespeare with his wife to suggest that he left her this bed because she wished to have it. The best bed was in the guest chamber, the second best in the room which she and her husband occupied. If Shakespeare had only realised

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his duty to posterity, and, after the residuary gift to his son-in-law, John Hall, and his daughter Susanna, his wife, of his goods, chattels, and household stuff, had by interlineation inserted the words 'except the bed which my wife and I have occupied together, which is to be her property,' much searching of heart would have been saved, and justice might have been done to the affectionate forethought which prompted Shakespeare, when he read over the first draft of his will, to secure to his wife, as a matter of right, such maintenance as he thought most suitable to her condition, and also to gratify what we may well believe to have been a wish expressed by her, by excepting from the general bequest of household stuff one article, that known in the family as the second-best bed.

Nature will out, even in an epitaph, and the pilgrim to Stratford in search of stray glimpses of the life that was lived in New Place three centuries ago may learn something of the occupants of the house from a study of the inscriptions on their monuments in the parish church.

The 'Stratford Monument' was a public testimonial to an eminent fellow townsman, and nothing of a personal character was to be looked for in the verses inscribed on it. In the Latin

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lines at the head of the inscription Shakespeare is compared, with a disregard of quantity pardonable in the case of a proper noun, and with still less regard to aptness, to Nestor in wisdom, to Socrates in genius, and to Virgil in art; by which last words Ben Jonson is absolved from all suspicion of complicity in the composition. Halliwell-Phillipps notes the absence from the verses which follow of any allusion to personal character, and also of the local knowledge which would have forbidden the author to describe the subject of the verse as lying within the monument. The whole thing was probably imported from London, where the bust was certainly executed by Gerard Johnson, or Janssen, a Dutch sculptor, or tombmaker, settled in Southwark. From it, the pilgrim turns to some homely words inscribed on a stone covering the grave, which, according to an early tradition, 'were ordered to be cutt by Mr. Shakespeare,' who had a horror of his bones being dug up and removed from the church to the adjoining charnel-house to make room for the reception, in accordance with ancient right, of another tithe-owner. With the reflection that Shakespeare was a man of like passions with ourselves, he passes from the conventionality of the monument and tomb to memorials of domestic affection,

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and here he is not disappointed. ‘Mrs. Hall,’ Mr. Elton writes, ‘placed a strange inscription over her mother’s grave a few years afterwards : “Here lieth interred the body of Anne, wife of William Shakespeare, who departed this life the 6th day of August, 1623, being of the age of 67 years.”’ The inscription proceeds with six lines of Latin verse,* to the effect that the spirit as well as the body was held in the sepulchre :—

“*Ubera tu mater,*” it commences. “A mother’s bosom thou gavest, and milk, and life ; for such bounty, alas ! can I only render stones ! Rather would I pray the good angel to roll away the stone from the mouth of the tomb, that thy spirit, even as the body of Christ, should go forth,” and the hope is expressed that Christ may quickly come, so that the imprisoned soul may be able to “seek the stars.” After noting that ‘the mother’s care for the infant is treated as a matter of high importance, but nothing is said about the rest of her life,’ Mr. Elton adds : ‘But the exclusive reference to the earliest cares

* *Ubera tu mater, tu lac, vitamque dedisti
Vae mihi, pro tanto munere saxa dabo ?
Quam mallet, amoveat lapidem, bonus angelus ore
Exeat ut, Christi corpus, imago tua
Sed nil vota valent, venias cito Christe ; resurget
Clausa licet tumulo mater et astra petet.*

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of motherhood may very well point to a subsequent incapacity from later duties as the mother of a household.'

In these words the memory of a woman lovable and loving, noted rather for piety than for intellectual gifts or strength of character, is piously embalmed. And if she were physically infirm, we can understand the thoughtful care that provided for her maintenance in a way that would not involve her in the management of property or the duties of housekeeping.

Of such a woman it is natural that tradition should tell us little. But what it has recorded is in accordance with the testimony of her monument. A man named Dowdall, who wrote in the year 1693, visited Stratford Church. He read the inscription on the tombstone, and had a talk with the gossiping clerk, who was above eighty years old. 'Not one,' he writes, 'for fear of the curse aforesaid, dare touch his gravestone, tho' his wife and daughters did earnestly desire to be layd in the same grave with him.'

It is at least possible that the expression of a similar affectionate desire to be associated in memory with her husband may have prompted to Shakespeare the addition to the original draft of his will which made her the owner of the bed which they had occupied together.

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To such a woman, affectionate and pious, the wife of his youth, we may well believe that Shakespeare, though in his

Nature reign'd

All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,

would, like one who travels, return again, with real love, and memories of happy days at Shottery and years of early married life.

Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a yeoman, and twenty-six years of age, was not the wife that we should have chosen for Shakespeare with an expectation that she would sway level in her husband's heart. But she was Shakespeare's choice. According to Jane Austen, it sometimes happens that a woman is handsomer at twenty-nine than she was ten years before. At twenty-seven Anne Elliott had 'every beauty excepting bloom.' Anne Hathaway at twenty-six was capable of fascinating a poetical and impressionable youth of eighteen. It is at all events certain that she retained sufficient attraction to induce Shakespeare, when his prospects improved, to visit Stratford every autumn. It is true that he did not bring his wife and family to London, and live with them in suburban comfort and respectability, like his fellows Heming and Condell. But if Halliwell-Phillipps' specu-

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lation is well founded, the infirmity which induced Shakespeare to provide for his wife by imposing on his daughter a trust for her maintenance will equally explain why he considered her unfit for the strenuous life of London.

It is at all events certain that Shakespeare did return to Stratford to spend with his wife a life that might reasonably have been expected to continue for many years. It is also certain that some years before his settlement in Stratford he had written this sonnet :

O, never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seem'd my flame to qualify.
As easy might I from myself depart
As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie ;
That is my home of love : if I have ranged,
Like him that travels I return again,
Just to the time, not with the time exchanged,
So that myself bring water for my stain.
Never believe, though in my nature reign'd
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
That it could so preposterously be stain'd
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good ;
For nothing this wide universe I call
Save thou, my rose ; in it thou art my all.

It is probably an accident that this sonnet (cix.) was printed by Mr. Thorpe with two sonnets (cx. and cxī.) which have been generally

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accepted as autobiographical, in the sense that they express ideas and feelings present to the mind of the writer which can be referred to known facts in his experience. Those who favour the autobiographical reading of the sonnets have taken infinite pains to discover a foundation in the experiences of the writer for sonnets relating to a rival poet, and to a dark and sinful woman, who obtained, for a time, a strange influence on the poet's life. The searchers after the dark woman would be the first to allow that at some time of Shakespeare's life he was the victim of 'all frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,' and they cannot deny that in the end he returned again to end his days with the wife of his youth. And yet I do not find that any one of these writers has attempted to support the autobiographical theory by a reference to Sonnet cix.

Susanna Hall survived her father, her mother, and her husband, dying at the age of sixty-six on the 11th of July, 1649. On her tombstone in the chancel of Stratford Church the following lines were inscribed :

Witty above her sexe, but that's not all :
Wise to salvation was good Mistress Hall ;
Something of Shakespere was in that, but this
Wholly of Him with whom she's now in blisse.

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Then, passenger, hast ne'er a teare
To weepe with her, that wept with all ?
That wept, yet set herself to chere
Them up with comforts cordiall ?
Her love shall live, her memory spread,
When thou hast ne'er a tear to shed.

Reading these simple lines, the pilgrim felt that he had been well repaid for his pains. They bear the impress of truth, and owe nothing to the partiality of a husband's love, for Hall had died in the year 1635. They tell us what was thought and said of Shakespeare's daughter Susanna by the people among whom she had spent her life. They tell us that thirty-three years after the death of Shakespeare it was said in Stratford that Mistress Hall had wits above her sex, but that was not to be marvelled at in the daughter of Shakespeare, of whom they were often put in mind when they spoke to her. Then a precisian of the straiter sect would say that this was the least of her virtues, and would tell of her Christlike charity, how she would weep with those that wept. Another would add that Mistress Hall did more than weep with the sorrowful ; that while she wept she set herself to cheer up the sufferer with ' comforts cordiall,' not of words only, spoken in her merry, cheerful way within the limits of becoming mirth—some-

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thing of Shakespeare was in that—but by deeds of mercy, the memory of which would long survive.

To such a daughter, keen-witted, and Christ-like in practical charity, a fond father might well give the name 'Miranda.'

Sir Walter Raleigh writes of *The Tempest*: 'The thought which occurs at once to almost every reader of the play, that Prospero resembles Shakespeare himself, can hardly have been absent from the mind of the author.' In *Shakespeare, his Mind and Art*, Professor Dowden has given the fullest expression to a reading of the character of Shakespeare that has found general acceptance. 'It is not chiefly,' he writes, 'because Prospero is a great enchanter, now about to break his magic staff, to drown his book deeper than ever plummet sounded, to dismiss his airy spirits, and to return to the practical service of his dukedom, that we identify Prospero in some measure with Shakespeare himself. It is rather because of the temper of Prospero, the grave harmony of his character, his self-mastery, his calm validity of will, his sensitiveness to wrong, his unfaltering justice, and with these a certain abandonment, a remoteness from the common joys and sorrows of the world, are characteristics of Shakespeare as

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discovered to us in all his latest plays.' 'It is Shakespeare's own nature which overflows into Prospero,' writes Dr. Brandes, and from that source may have flowed the love of daughter and the love of books which are the most striking characteristics of Prospero, as revealed to us by Shakespeare.

Of Shakespeare's younger daughter, Judith, we know little. About two months before the death of her father she married Thomas Quiney, whose father, Richard Quiney, had been High Bailiff of Stratford. Quiney, who was a vintner, had received a good education. This is shown by his use of a French motto in one of his accounts, the penmanship of which is particularly good. He was unsuccessful in business, and the marriage was an unfortunate one. Judith died in Stratford in the year 1662, at the age of seventy-six. Her husband, in education and position, was far inferior to Hall, and it is no violent assumption to conclude that there was a corresponding difference between Susanna and Judith, and that a truthful epitaph might have recorded that, as Susanna had inherited the wits of her father, the virtues of her mother had descended on Judith.

'In the latest plays the country life of Stratford reasserts itself. After all our martial and

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political adventures, our long-drawn passions and deadly sorrows, we are back in Perdita's flower-garden, and join in the festivities of a sheep-shearing. A new type of character meets us in these plays : a girl innocent, frank, dutiful, and wise, cherished and watched over by her devoted father, or restored to him after long separation. It is impossible to escape the thought that we are indebted to Judith Shakespeare for something of the beauty and simplicity which appear in [Miranda and] Perdita, and in the earlier sketch of Marina. In his will Shakespeare bequeathes to Judith a "broad silver-gilt bowl"—doubtless the bride-cup that was used at her wedding. There were many other girls within reach of his observation, but (such are the limitations of humanity) there were few so likely as his own daughter to exercise him in disinterested sympathy and insight, or to touch him with a sense of the pathos of youth' (*Shakespeare, Raleigh*).

This delightful picture of Judith Shakespeare has no monumental inscription to vouch for its truthfulness. It has a deeper and a sounder foundation, an appreciation of the nature of Shakespeare, and an understanding of the kind of domestic life for the sake of which he was ready to abandon the intellectual society and the fuller life of London. It has a relation to fact

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widely different from the gloomy fancies about the family life of Shakespeare with which we are familiar, for it is at all events consistent with fact.

The most distressing of these nightmares results from the inability of certain critics inwardly to digest a speech into which Shakespeare, irrelevantly after his manner, introduced certain ideas borrowed from a book that lay open before him as he wrote.

The book was a copy of Florio's English version of Montaigne's *Essayes*. Whether it was the very copy which may be seen in the British Museum is an interesting inquiry, but it is nothing to our present purpose.

Gonzalo. I' the commonwealth I would by
contraries
Execute all things ; for no kind of traffic
Would I admit ; no name of magistrate ;
Letters should not be known ; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none ; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard none ;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil ;
No occupation ; all men idle, all ;
And women too, but innocent and pure ;
No sovereignty.*

In these words a passage is reproduced with literal accuracy from Montaigne.

* *Tempest*, II. i. 150.

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In another page of the same volume he had read these words :

‘ Few men have wedded their sweet hartes, their paramours or Mistrises, but have come home by weeping crosse, and erelong repented their bargain. And even in the other world what an unquiet life leads *Jupiter* with his wife, whom before he had secretly knowen and lovingly enjoyed ? ’

Shakespeare was a dramatist, ever ready to adapt to his purpose whatever he might have seen or read which was capable of artistic treatment. There is no particular reason apparent why he should have worked Montaigne’s description of an ideal commonwealth into a speech put into the mouth of Gonzalo. But having done so, it is natural that the passage should be reproduced with the faithful and prosaic accuracy that was suitable to his character.

For some reason, equally inscrutable, he puts into the mouth of Prospero Montaigne’s warning against the destruction of happiness in married life consequent on marrying a paramour or mistress ; attracted, possibly, by the quaintness of the appeal to Jupiter’s experience of the unquiet life which he led with his wife. Shakespeare was not a copyist. If such a warning were to be given by Prospero, Shakespeare’s

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dramatic instinct taught him that it should be expressed with poetic fervour, inspired by the love of a precious daughter, which was part of the nature which he had poured into Prospero. And so he wrote

Take my daughter : but
If thou dost break her virgin-knot before
All sanctimonious ceremonies may
With full and holy rite be minister'd,
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
To make this contract grow ; but barren hate,
Sour-eyed disdain and discord shall bestrew
The union of your bed with weeds so loathly
That you shall hate it both ; therefore take heed
As Hymens lamps shall light you.*

Two thoughts are involved in this address. Lovers should take heed as Hymen's lamps shall light them, for the consequences of anticipating marriage will be fatal to the happiness of their married life. And, moreover, if they would have the blessing of heaven upon the marriage contract, the blessing should be invoked by all sanctimonious ceremonies, with full and holy rite. These ideas which are easily separable in prose, are somewhat involved, in a manner characteristic of Shakespeare, and Prospero spoke of the contract and of the holy rite as one and

* *Tempest*, IV. i. 15.

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the same thing. But the offence to which a terrible punishment is attached in these words

barren hate,
Sour-eyed disdain and discord shall bestrew
The union of your bed with weeds so loathly
That you shall hate it both,

is not that of separating the civil contract from the holy rite, but that of breaking the virgin knot heedless of Hymen's lamps : in plain prose, before marriage. To those who are obsessed with the idea that Shakespeare, when he wrote of barren hate, sour-eyed disdain, discord, and loathing, had in his mind the torture to which he had yielded himself up when he returned to Stratford, it would be idle to prescribe a remedy in the form of reasoning, even if argumentation or controversy could be admitted to pages which deal simply with ascertained fact. But those who suffer under this affliction—and they are, happily, a decreasing number—may find some relief in reading what has been written by some whose minds were unclouded by theories and prepossessions which have no foundation in fact.

‘No writer of any time—and his own time was certainly not one of special respect for marriage—has represented it so constantly as not only “good,” but “delightful,” to retort La Roche-

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foucauld's injurious distinction. Except Goneril and Regan, who designedly are monsters, there is hardly a bad wife in Shakespeare—there are no unloving, few unloved, ones. It is not merely in his objects of courtship—Juliet, Viola, Rosalind, Portia, Miranda—that he is a woman-worshipper. Even Gertrude—a questionable widow—seems not to have been an unsatisfactory wife to Hamlet the elder, as she certainly was not to his brother. One might hesitate a little as to Lady Macbeth as a hostess—certainly not as a wife. From the novice sketch of Adriana in the *Errors* to the unmatched triumph of Imogen, from the buxom honesty of Mistress Ford to the wronged innocence and queenly grace of Hermione, Shakespeare has nothing but the *beau rôle* for wives. And if in this invariable gynæolatriy he was actuated by disappointment in his own wife or repentance for his own marriage, he must either have been the best good Christian, or the most pigeon-livered philosopher, or the most cryptic and incomprehensible ironist that the world has ever seen. Indeed, he might be all these things, and feel nothing of the kind.*

‘In the plays of Shakespeare’s closing years

* *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. V., p. 168 (George Saintsbury).

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there is a pervading sense of quiet and happiness,' Sir Walter Raleigh writes, 'which seems to bear witness to a change in the mind of their author. . . . An all-embracing tolerance and kindness inspires these last plays.'

And of the last of his plays Professor Dowden writes: 'The sympathetic reader can discern unmistakably a certain abandoning of the common joy of the world, a certain remoteness from the usual pleasures and sadness of life, and at the same time, all the more, this tender bending over those who are like children still absorbed in their individual joys and sorrows.'

By the homely words 'ease and retirement,' the tradition of Stratford, as recorded by Rowe, expressed the idea that critics have extracted from the plays written in the later years of Shakespeare's life

Me, poor fool, my library
Was dukedom large enough.

Shakespeare wrote these touching words as one who was bidding farewell to public life, in which he had taken an active and successful part, and by none other could they have been written. In them Shakespeare, through Prospero, reveals to us his inner self; his love of his books and of the library by the narrow

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limits of which his dukedom was henceforth to be bounded. And we find Prospero-Shakespeare recurring to the thought of his library when he tells Miranda how a noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo, out of his charity, supplied them with 'rich garments, linens, stuffs, and necessaries,' adding—

So, of his gentleness,
Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me
From mine own library with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom.*

It is in modern times, according to the *New English Dictionary*, that the word 'library' has come to denote a room above a certain level of size and pretensions. To Shakespeare the word meant no more than a collection or 'study' of books in some unpretending room, or closet, in New Place. It is not to be believed that Shakespeare, when at the age of forty-seven he passed, in the words of Professor Dowden, 'from his service as artist to his service as English gentleman,' and from companionship with the world of letters to the society of a country town, did not better for his life provide than to divorce it from fellowship, through his books, with the mighty minds of old.

* *Tempest*, I. ii. 162.

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My days among the Dead are past ;
Around me I behold
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old ;
My never failing friends are they
With whom I converse day by day.

It would be a grave omission from pages in which it is sought to learn something from the fellowship wherein we find Shakespeare engaged throughout his life, to leave unconsidered such beloved and constant companions as his books, and here we can tread with certainty, without encroaching on the forbidden ground of speculation. Shakespeare's library, like other libraries of the time, has been long since scattered to the winds. But unlike many more important collections, it has left certain traces behind. Walter Bagehot, in his essay on *Shakespeare—the Man*, writes : ' On few subjects has more nonsense been written than on the learning of Shakespeare.' I do not propose to make any contribution to the accumulated mass, for I am satisfied with the testimony of Ben Jonson, rightly understood. When he said of Shakespeare that he had 'small Latin and less Greek,' he criticised him as classical scholar, who had proceeded so far as to have some knowledge of Greek—a rare acquisition in those days—but who, in this

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particular, was vastly his inferior. Jonson's testimony, in the lines in which these words are found, to the surpassing greatness of Shakespeare is so generous and so nobly expressed that we need not grudge him this small satisfaction.*

An examination of the traces that may be found of Shakespeare's library involves no inquiry into the extent of his learning. Shakespeare makes no mention of books in his will. He gave his 'broad silver-gilt bole' to his daughter Judith, and with the disregard which has been already noted of the testamentary obligations to posterity which devolved on him as a famous poet and dramatist, he allowed his books to become the property of his son-in-law, John Hall, by the gift to him and to his daughter Susanna of all the rest of his 'goodes, chattels, leases, and household stufte whatsoever.'

Their daughter, Elizabeth Hall, the last lineal descendant of Shakespeare, married Thomas Nash in 1626. Hall, in 1635, made what is known as a nuncupative will, in which the following words occur: 'Item concerning my

* Those who desire to pursue the subject of the learning of Shakespeare cannot do better than study Professor Baynes' essay, entitled *What Shakespeare learned at School*, published in his *Shakespeare Studies*, where the question is discussed in a judicial spirit, removed from the extremes of Farmer on the one hand, and Churton Collins on the other.

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study of books, I leave them, said he, to you my son Nash, to dispose of them as you see good.'

And here again we owe an obligation to Mr. Elton and to his studies as an antiquary, through which we have made known to us the meaning, in the seventeenth century, of the words 'study of books.' 'We know hardly anything about Shakespeare's books, except that they must have passed to Mr. Nash and afterwards to his widow, as his residuary legatee. . . . There is no list of the "study of books," but it appears by several authorities that the phrase means a collection or library.' *

Elizabeth, after the death of her first husband, married a Mr. John Barnard, who was created a baronet by Charles II. in 1661. She died in 1669. Malone records an old tradition mentioned by Sir Hugh Clopton to Mr. Macklin in 1742, that Elizabeth 'carried away with her from Stratford many of her grandfather's papers.'

However this may be, all attempts to trace the 'study of books' have failed, and that it was dispersed is evident from the fact of the discovery in the course of the eighteenth century of two books that it had contained.

* *William Shakespeare, his Family and Friends.* An authority referred to by Mr. Elton is of the year 1667.

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There is in the Bodleian library a copy of the Aldine edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1502), on the title of which is the signature 'Wm. Sh^e,' and a note: 'This little Booke of Ovid was given to me by W. Hall, who sayd it was once Will. Shakespere's.' The opinions of the experts in favour of its authenticity will be found in the *Annals of the Bodleian Library* 1890 (Macray). But belief in the presence of a copy of Ovid in Shakespeare's library rests on what is to some minds a firmer foundation, for the book brings us into certain touch with the earliest period of Shakespeare's literary work.

Venus and Adonis was published in 1593, but as the poet calls it, in the dedication to the Earl of Southampton, the first heir of his invention, it must have been written some years before its publication. It is a love poem written in the manner of Ovid, founded on a story told in the *Metamorphoses*. Two lines from the *Amores* are printed on the title page:

Vilia miretur vulgus : mihi flavus Apollo
Pocula castalia plena ministret aqua.

The poem had an extraordinary success, and the poet was acclaimed as a second Ovid. Francis Meres writes in *Palladis Tamia* (1598): 'As the soule of *Euphorbus* was thought to live

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in *Pythagoras*, so the sweete wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued *Shakespeare*, witnes his *Venus* and *Adonis* his *Lucrece* his sugred Sonnets among his private friends.' Shakespeare's love of Ovid is shown not only by imitation, but, characteristically, by making him the subject of a pun: 'Ovidus Naso was the man; and why, indeed, Naso, but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy.'* For many years Shakespeare's literary position was estimated by his poems rather than by his dramas. This was in accordance with the ideas of the time, for poems were literature, plays were not. Ben Jonson was ridiculed when in 1616 he published a collection of plays under the title of his *Works*. In *The Returne from Pernassus* Judicio, in his censure of Shakespeare, says

Who loves *Adonis* love or *Lucre's* rape
His sweeter verse containes hart robbing life
Could but a graver subject him content
Without love's foolish lazy languishment.

And yet when this play was presented (1602) Shakespeare had given to the world *Henry IV.*, *King John* and *Henry V.* A critic of the day, writing after the production of *Hamlet*, says—

* *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. ii. 130.

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And Shakespeare thou, whose hony-flowing vein
(Pleasing the world) thy praises doth obtain.
Whose Venus, and whose Lucrece (sweet and chaste)
Thy name in fame's immortal book have placed.

It is remarkable that the claim to immortality of the creator of *Hamlet* should have been rested on the authorship of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. It is still more strange that Shakespeare would have it so, for his poems were given by him to the world edited with care. As to his plays, he was satisfied with the applause of the playgoers and the profits of the Globe theatre. We owe their preservation, as we have seen, to the piety of his fellow-playgoers, and the sonnets which in literary merit far exceed these poems, remained tossing about among his private friends, and but for the adventure of Thomas Thorpe, would have been lost to the world.

An analogy may be found in the instance of another great creative genius, worthy of being named with Shakespeare. Scott, for many years after his immortal novels had been given to the world, preferred to be known as a poet rather than as a novelist, and if a serious illness, contracted when he was of about the age at which Shakespeare died, had proved fatal, the world would have been bequeathed a true mystery for solution.

We can replace Shakespeare's Aldine Ovid in

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his study of books with the satisfactory reflection that Shakespeare's interest in his poems was rewarded by success. Six editions of *Venus and Adonis* and of *Lucrece* were published in his lifetime, and the eagerness with which they were devoured appears from the fact that but few copies have survived the wear and tear of generations of admiring readers. 'The strangest fact to be noticed in regard to the bibliography of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* is that, though there were at least six editions issued in the poet's lifetime, and seven in the two generations following his death, in the case of only two—the second and the sixth—of these thirteen editions do so many as three copies survive. In regard to the twelve other editions, the surviving copies of each are fewer.'*

In the year 1844 John Payne Collier published under the name of *Shakespeare's Library* a collection of the plays, romances, novels and histories employed by Shakespeare in the composition of his works. In the preface he writes: 'We have ventured to call the work *Shakespeare's Library*, since our great dramatist in all probability must have possessed the books to which he was indebted, and some of which he

* Sir Sidney Lee. Note to *Venus and Adonis*, Oxford facsimile reprint.

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applied so directly and minutely to his own purposes.' *

Shakespeare may have had these books in his possession for a time as part of his professional outfit. But that they were admitted to intellectual fellowship is doubtful. He probably looked on them as a lawyer regards his law books : *biblia abiblia*, necessary but unwelcome occupants of his bookshelves. And it is to be noted that the two books of his library that have survived were admitted to the 'study' purely on account of their literary quality.

Notice has been already taken of the copy of Florio's Montaigne bearing the signature of Shakespeare, which is preserved in the library of the British Museum. That Shakespeare added to his library a book of essays published in 1603 suggests that he was a student and purchaser of what might be called current literature. Montaigne did not serve him, like his Holinshed or Plutarch, as a storehouse of useful plots for histories or tragedies. Much has been written on the subject of Shakespeare and Montaigne, and it has been suggested that Montaigne exercised an influence on the mind of Shakespeare in later life comparable to that of Ovid when he was

* A new and improved edition of this collection was brought out in 1875 by William Hazlitt the younger.

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in the *Venus and Adonis* stage of existence. These speculations are interesting, as suggesting a special literary fellowship, with the two volumes included in his study of books which have survived the ruin of time. But they are foreign to pages which are conversant, not with literary criticism, but with matters of fact.

With two, indeed, of the books which supplied him with plots for his dramas, he had a relationship so close as to justify their inclusion in his study of books. His Holinshed must have been near at hand from about the year 1591, for from it he derived the plots of the series of historical plays, in which he followed the *Chronicle* in greater or less degree of exactness. Of *Henry VIII*. Sir Sidney Lee writes: 'The Shakespearean dramas followed Holinshed with exceptional closeness. . . . One of the finest speeches in the Shakespearean play, Queen Katharine's opening appeal on her trial, is in great part the chronicler's prose rendered into blank verse, without change of a word.' *

The second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, published in 1586, lay open before Shakespeare when, in about the year 1593, he took from it the plot of *Richard III.*, and copied a misprint, or slip of the pen, which does not occur in the

* *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 443.

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earlier edition of 1577. It was in Holinshed that he found the plot of *Macbeth*, and there also he found the story of Lear. And the well worn folio followed him in his retirement to New Place, for it was in this, his great storehouse of English history, that he found some account of a British king, Kimbeline or Cimbeline, and interweaving with this fragment a story from Boccacio's *Decameron*, gave us *Cymbeline*.

The two volumes of Holinshed contain, in addition to his *Chronicles*, descriptions of England and Ireland; the latter, the work of Richard Stanyhurst, an accomplished scholar educated at the famous school of Kilkenny—in after years the school of Berkeley, Swift and Congreve—whom Gabriel Harvey ranked as a poet with Spenser. His reputation would have been higher if he had not been misled by Harvey into the folly of translating the *Aeneid* of Virgil into English hexameter, a fate from which Spenser was happily rescued. It is impossible to read this interesting *Description* without having the knowledge borne in on one that Shakespeare had been over the same ground; no doubt in search of the plot that he failed to find.

But although Shakespeare failed to find in Holinshed a plot to his mind, for History or Tragedy, he found many things that excited an

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interest, of which traces may be found throughout his writings. He found his stage Irishman, Captain Macmorris, 'An Irishman, a very valiant gentleman i' faith,' who is made to display a number of national characteristics, every one of which was noted by Stanyhurst in his description. The stage Irishman of Ben Jonson and of Dekker was a comic footboy. It is owing to his habit of 'turning over the pages' of his Holinshed, even in the most unpromising chapters, that Shakespeare's stage Irishman is a soldier and a gentleman. Holinshed's *Chronicles* were in his hands for so many years, and were at times copied with such exactitude, that they have gained a title to be placed in his study of books.

If Holinshed must be admitted to literary fellowship with Shakespeare, the claims of Sir Thomas North's version of Plutarch from the French translation by Amyot are far stronger. The claim of North's Plutarch to admission to Shakespeare's study of books could not be put better than it has been by my lamented friend, Robert Tyrrell. 'The Master Mind of all time, the Artist of Artists, not only drew from him the materials for his amazing pictures of the ancient world, but sometimes transferred to his plays whole scenes from the *Lives*, with scarcely a

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phrase or a word altered or modified. Had Plutarch never written his *Lives*, or had they not been translated by some sympathetic mind like Sir Thomas North's, it is very unlikely that the world would ever have had *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, or *Antony and Cleopatra*.' The final scene in Cleopatra's life is 'one perfect example of the confidence with which the "myriad-minded" Englishman was content to put himself into the hands of the simple Boeotian, borrowing from him every artistic touch, and adding only the dramatic framework. Greece took captive her proud Roman conqueror, but never had she a greater triumph over posterity than when a Greek wrote a scene on which not even a Shakespeare could make an improvement.'*

In addition to his Ovid, two works in the Latin language may be traced to this library with a reasonable degree of probability, founded not only on what he has written of them, but of an ancient and trustworthy tradition. They are deserving of attention, for they aid in the attempt to supply an answer to a question that has been often asked: How did Shakespeare employ himself after he left school, and before he married

* *Essays on Greek Literature*, by Robert Yelverton Tyrrell Litt.D., etc., etc., Fellow of the British Academy, Fellow of Trinity College and formerly Professor of Greek in the University of Dublin.

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and settled down, according to Rowe, to assist in his father's business? His frequent and accurate use of legal phraseology led Lord Campbell to conclude that Shakespeare, like another great creative genius, Charles Dickens, had been employed in his early years in an attorney's office, of which there were at that time several in Stratford. A good deal can be said in support of this supposition, but there is no hint of it in any contemporary writing, and no suggestion of any such employment can be found in the traditions that were current in Stratford shortly after his death. It follows that no law-book can make good a claim to be admitted to Shakespeare's library.

Some of the gossip retailed in the notice of Shakespeare in Aubrey's *Lives of Eminent Men* is undeserving of serious attention. But statements made by him on the authority of Sir William Davenant stand in a different position, for reasons which have been stated in an earlier chapter (*ante*, pp. 85—88).

'I have heard Sr. Wm. Davenant and Mr. Thomas Shadwell (who is counted the best comœdian we have now) say that he had a most prodigious witt, and did admire his naturall parts beyond all other Dramaticall writing. He was wont to say that he "never blotted out a

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line in his life," said Ben: Johnson "I wish he had blotted out a thousand." His Comœdies will remain witt as long as the English tongue is understood ; for that he handles *mores hominum* ; now our present writers reflect so much upon particular persons and coxcombeities that 20 yeares hence they will not be understood. Though, as Ben Johnson sayes of him, that he had but little Latine and lesse Greek, he understood Latine pretty well ; for he had been in his younger yeares a Schoolmaster in the Countrey.'

If the responsibility for this account is to be apportioned between Davenant and Shadwell, the story about the players should be assigned to Shadwell, and Davenant should be held responsible for an account of an incident in the early life of Shakespeare with which the D'Avenant family were more likely to be acquainted than an actor who flourished so lately as the time of Aubrey, and who merely retailed the tradition of the theatre. Shadwell's story we know to be true, and there is no reason to discredit what was said by Davenant, even if it did not receive confirmation from what has been written by Shakespeare.

It has often been noted that Shakespeare's earliest play is full of reminiscences of school life. 'In the ¹mouth of his schoolmaster Holo-

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fernes, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Sir Sidney Lee writes, 'and Sir Hugh Evans in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare places Latin phrases drawn directly from Lily's grammar, from the *Sententiæ pueriles* and from the "good old Mantuan."' *

In *Love's Labour's Lost* the following speech is put into the mouth of the pedant Holofernes: 'Fauste, precor gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra Ruminat—and so forth. Ah, good old Mantuan! I may say of thee, as the traveller doth of Venice;

Venetia, Venetia,

Chi non ti vede non ti pretia.

Old Mantuan, Old Mantuan! who understandeth thee not loves thee not.' *

Baptista Spagnolus, surnamed Mantuanus from the place of his birth, was a writer of poems in Latin, who lived in the fourteenth century. The words quoted by Holofernes form the first line of the first of his *Eclogues*. This quotation is referred to by Nash in his *Pierce Peniless*, published in 1592, as the learning of a 'grammar school boy.' A French writer, quoted by Warburton, said that the pedants of his day preferred *Fauste precor gelida* to *arma virumque cano*—

* *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. ii. 95.

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that is to say, the *Eclogues* of Mantuan to the *Aeneid* of Virgil.

The late Mr. Horace Furness, in his *Variorum* edition of *Love's Labour's Lost*, thus explains the extraordinary popularity of Mantuanus in the sixteenth century as a school book, of which he has collected much evidence: 'I think it is not utterly incomprehensible. His verse is very smooth, and being a poet, his ideas are commonplace, and expressed in lucid language quite suited to teachers of moderate intelligence and latinity.' One phrase, he points out, has become one of our hackneyed quotations—'*Semel insanivimus omnes.*'*

Such a teacher was Holofernes. We may hope that it was as a dramatist that Shakespeare wrote in praise of Mantuan, attributing to Holofernes the opinion which as a pedant he was likely to entertain. At the same time it must be admitted that there is a note of affectionate reminiscence in Shakespeare's quotation of *Fauste precor*, and a genuine ring about his praise of 'good old Mantuan.'

Another reminiscence of school days is found in the words addressed by Holofernes to Nathaniel: 'Bone? bone for bene. Priscian a little

* See also Sir Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 16, note 3.

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scratched, 't will serve.'* This was a school-master's phrase. Priscianus, who taught grammar at Constantinople about A.D. 525 was the great grammarian of the middle ages. '*Diminuis Prisciani caput*' was a common phrase applied to those who spoke false Latin, and as Mr. Clark, one of the Cambridge editors, writes, 'a little scratched' is a phrase familiar to the school-master, from his daily task of correcting his pupils' 'latines.'

How many classical authors in the original were to be found in this study of books, and how many in the translations in prose and in verse—a long list of which is to be found in the *Prolegomena* to the *Variorum* edition of 1821—is a question that cannot be discussed without treading on forbidden ground. But it is worth noting that three writers in the Latin language, mentioned by name in Shakespeare's writings, are associated with his early days: Ovid inspired the first heir of his invention, and Mantuan with Priscian were part of the stock-in-trade of the occupation in which he is said to have been engaged when young. The grammar school at Stratford was one of the first in which Greek was taught. A fair acquaintance with the

* Theobald's emendation of the text of the Folio, which is here hopelessly corrupt.

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ancient classics would be required in a young man promoted from student to teacher ; a kind of scholarship which might be described by a great scholar, when in an envious mood, as small Latin and less Greek.

The Book of Sport of the sixteenth century has no place in treatises on English literature. It had nevertheless a very real existence. Allusions to the Book of Sport are to be found here and there in the literature of the period, but none more definite than Shakespeare's.

Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* marvels at the ' world of Bookes—not alone on arts and sciences, but on riding of horses, fencing, swimming, gardening, planting, great tomes of husbandry, cookery, falconry, hunting, fishing, fowling, and with exquisite pictures of all sports games and what not ? ' ' Nothing is now so frequent,' he says, ' as hawking, a great art, and many books written of it.' Fourteen books on horses and horsemanship were published during the lifetime of Shakespeare, one of which went through four editions in this period. The books on hunting and falconry were nearly as numerous, some of them famous in their time, but now forgotten by all but book collectors, or an occasional wanderer in the bypaths of Elizabethan literature. These books were studied

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not only by genuine sportsmen for love and understanding of the subject, but by the would-be gentlemen of the Tudor age, who afford a constant topic to the dramatist and satirist ; for correct use of the language of sport was expected of a gentleman. Bishop Earle says of his upstart knight ' a hawke, hee esteemes the true burden of Nobilitie ' (*Micro-cosmographie*). Master Stephen, in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*, asks his uncle Knowell, ' Can you tell me can we have e'er a book of the sciences of hawking and hunting ? I would fain borrow it.' To his uncle, who regards this as most ridiculous, he says, ' Why you know if a man have not skill in the hawking and hunting languages nowadays I'll not give a rush for him ; they are more studied than the Greek or the Latin ' ; and this was natural, for they were compulsory studies for every one who pretended to be a gentleman. There was a term of art for every action or incident of sport, with an endless array of appropriate verbs, nouns and adjectives, the misapplication of any one of which would have been fatal to any such pretension. The earliest attempt to teach the hunting and hawking language by means of a printed book is to be found in the *Book of St. Albans*, published in 1476. Dame Juliana Barnes or Berners was the

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first English authoress to find her way into print. In the part of the *Book* which is attributed to her with probability, she addresses herself to 'gentill men' as well as to 'honest persones,' and attributes to them a desire to 'know the gentill termys in comuning of their hawkys.' The greater your accuracy in the use of this language 'the moore worshipp may ye have among all menne.' The *Book of St. Albans* was reprinted in whole or in part no fewer than fourteen times before the death of Shakespeare. An ancient English treatise on falconry bears the significant title of *The Institute of a Gentleman*. 'There is a saying among hunters,' says the author, 'that he cannot be a gentleman whyche loveth not hawking and hunting.'

Shakespeare's vocabulary of sport is as copious and accurate as that of the books of sport. There have been collected from his works one hundred and thirty-two terms and phrases of art relating to woodcraft, and eighty-two relating to falconry. The minute accuracy with which these terms are employed could not have been attained by a practical sportsman without the aid of his *Book of Sport*, even if he had been engaged in the task for many more years than Shakespeare could have devoted to it.

We might therefore have been justified in

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placing the Book of Sport in Shakespeare's library, even if he had not let us into the secret of his knowledge and appreciation of it.

In the passage in *Troilus and Cressida*, in which Hector, unarmed, visits the tents of the Greeks, Achilles says to him—

Now, Hector, I have fed my eyes on thee. I have with exact view perused thee, Hector, and quoted joint by joint.

This dialogue follows :

Hect. Is this Achilles ?

Achil. I am Achilles.

Hect. Stand fair, I pray thee ; let me look on thee.

Achil. Behold thy fill.

Hect. Nay I have done already.

Achil. Thou art too brief : I will the second time, As I would buy thee, view thee limb by limb.

Hect. O, like a book of sport, thou'd read me o'er. But there's more in me than thou understand'st.*

When Shakespeare attributes to one of the characters in his play the expression of a thought which is an irrelevance, unconnected with the action of the drama, or the character of the speaker—especially when it is an anachronism—we may be pretty certain that he is giving expression, in characteristic fashion, to an idea that was present to his mind at the moment.

* *Troilus and Cressida*, IV. v. 231.

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In the words of Hector we find an expression of the contempt which a genuine English sportsman would feel for the would-be gentleman who reads over his book of sport to get a smattering of the hunting and hawking language, without any real understanding of the 'more' that is to be found in it.

It is to the Book of Sport, in which the Book of Horsemanship may be included, that we owe the following passage—

Ner. What warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

Por. I pray thee over-name them; and as thou namest them, I will describe them; and according to my description, level at my affection.

Ner. First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

Por. Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts, that he can shoe him himself. I am much afeard my lady his mother played false with a smith.*

How did it come to the knowledge of Shakespeare that the words of Portia were a characteristic description of a Neapolitan prince? Quite easily, if we may place on his shelves a treatise on riding by one Astley, Master of the Jewel House, published in 1584, in which he would

* *Merchant of Venice*, I. ii. 36.

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have read of 'wel-neere a hundred as well Princes as Noblemen and gentlemen : among the which Noblemen of that cetie (Naples) that were descended of the senators' who brought the art of riding to its highest perfection. The classic work of Grisone, 'a noble gentleman of the citie of Naples,' translated under the auspices of Burleigh, was the foundation of Blundevill's well-known treatise on horsemanship, and Neapolitan riding-masters had been imported into England. But that a Neapolitan prince could be best described as a practical horseman proud of shoeing his horse himself, could hardly have been a matter of common knowledge.

The most interesting of the additions to Sir Sidney Lee's *Life* which are to be found in the latest edition are contained in the chapter entitled 'The Close of Life.' By the aid of the information which he has succeeded in collecting, we can realise the truth of the account recorded by Rowe that the latter part of Shakespeare's life was spent in 'ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends.' We find in the immediate neighbourhood some who were worthy of his friendship. The poet and politician, Sir Fulke Greville, chosen in 1606 to the office of Recorder of the Borough of Stratford, lived at

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Alcester, nine miles distant. Sir Henry and Lady Rainsford, whose residence, Clifford Chambers, was at a short distance from Stratford, were the friends and patrons of Michael Drayton, a Warwickshire poet who is brought into fellowship with Shakespeare, for he is found, with Ben Jonson, at New Place at the time of his last illness.

It is pleasant to read in these pages an account of Shakespeare's relations with the Combe family, and the interest that he took in the attempt, which proved unsuccessful in the end, to enclose the common fields at Welcombe. But among these friends and neighbours we find none who can be admitted to the degree of fellowship.

Sir Thomas Lucy had been dead for some years when Shakespeare settled in Stratford. The story of the trouble about deer had not been forgotten, but it would be told to the credit of Shakespeare. It showed him to have been a young man of spirit and a sportsman. Coney-catching, as a gentleman's recreation, did not rank so high as deer-stealing, and yet Simple says with pride of his master, Slender: 'He is as tall a man of his hands as any is between this and his head; he hath fought with a warrener.'*

* *Merry Wives*, I. iv. 26.

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No offence, but rather the reverse, was intended to Aaron the Moor when he was asked

What, hast thou not full often struck a doe,
And borne her cleanly by the keeper's nose ? *

Deer-stealing was the recognised extravagance of young gentlemen of spirit. Fosbroke, in his *History of Gloucestershire*, writes : 'The last anecdote I have to record of this chase [Michaelwood] shows that some of the principal persons in this country (whose names I suppress when the family is still in existence) were not ashamed of the practice of deer-stealing.'

Shakespeare's popularity among the lesser gentry about Stratford would be rather enhanced by the ridicule which he cast upon the great Sir Thomas Lucy, if, as seems probable, the prototype of the Master Robert Shallow of the amended edition of the *Merry Wives*—a very different person from the immortal Justice of *King Henry IV.*—was a pompous and self-asserting man, dwelling on his dignities and posing as a personage.

On the whole, there is every reason to believe that Shakespeare's expectations of happiness were realised, when, attaining the end towards which he had been tending for many years, he

* *Titus Andronicus*, II. i. 93.

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came back to end his days in Stratford. But however happy he may have been in the fellowship of domestic life and in his relations with the townsfolk of Stratford and the surrounding gentry, he was not forgetful of his fellows, the players, and of his chosen friends among the playwrights. We have found him engaged, in one of his visits to London, in co-operating with Burbage in devising an *Impresa* for the Earl of Rutland, and in the diary of the Rev. John Ward, who became Vicar of Stratford in the year 1662, there is this note : ‘ Shakespeare, Drayton and Ben Jhonson had a merry meeting, and it seems drunk too hard, for Shakespeare died of a feavour there contracted.’

The meeting of these men, united to Shakespeare in the fellowship of letters, we may accept as a fact, and also that their meeting was a merry one. That they drank too hard is not a recorded fact, but an inference drawn by the worthy rector from the fact that Shakespeare contracted a fever, from the effects of which he died. This is the meaning of the words ‘ it seems.’ There was no reason why such an inference should have been drawn. There can be no doubt that the fever by which Shakespeare was carried off was the epidemic of fever which was then raging. ‘ The first quarter of the seventeenth century

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was marked by the appearance of epidemic fevers more malignant in type than the old-fashioned tertian and ague.' To this should be added the insanitary condition of the surroundings of New Place.*

“The cause of Shakespeare’s death is undetermined. Chapel Lane, which ran beside his house, was known as a noisome resort of straying pigs, and the insanitary atmosphere is likely to have prejudiced the failing health of a neighbouring resident.”†

The design which the writer of this chapter kept in view was to present Shakespeare as he may be seen in his relations with his family and friends, leaving it to the reader to draw any inferences as to the character of the man which the recorded facts may seem to suggest.

* * * * *

It sometimes happens that a painter can be found with skill to collect from casual sketches and stray hints an understanding of a man whom he has not seen, and to give expression to his conception in a portrait which bears a fair resemblance to life. In the future it may fall to

* See *Shakespeare, his Family and Friends* (Elton), where interesting information on this subject is collected.

† *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 484 (Sir Sidney Lee).

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the lot of some Artist, from a study of Shakespeare in his works, aided by the testimony of his fellows, and by such scattered hints as are here collected, to give to the world a portrait in words which will be accepted as an adequate presentment of the Master. If what has been here written should in any degree tend to this result, and if it should, in the meantime, assist a student who desires to form for himself a conception of the man and his nature, in an endeavour to hold by what is true, and to reject what is false, the purpose of the writer will have been fulfilled.

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