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SHAKESPEARE'S PATRONS
& OTHER ESSAYS

SHAKESPEARE'S PATRONS

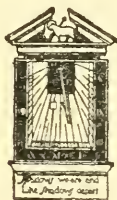
& OTHER ESSAYS

BY THE LATE

HENRY BROWN

Author of

"Sonnets by Shakespeare Solved," and "Historical Sketch
of Music," etc., etc.



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Dedicated
to the memory of his sister,
MRS. E. C. GEORGE,
and also
by special permission
to the memory of
SIR HENRY IRVING.

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THE ROYAL AND NOBLE
PATRONS OF SHAKESPEARE

PEMBROKE DEFENDED, SOME LETTERS BY THE EARL AND A
EULOGY OF HIS CHARACTER, FOUNDED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

THE ROYAL AND NOBLE PATRONS OF SHAKESPEARE

I

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The poet was throughout his life greatly indebted to the patronage and support of royal and noble personages ; his royal patrons were Queen Elizabeth and King James I., both of whom greatly loved the drama. The virgin queen devoted herself to the study of the ancient classical period ; she also delighted in our own theatrical entertainments, and used her influence in the progress of the English drama, and fostered the inimitable genius of Shakespeare. In regard to her taste for the ancient stage, Sir Roger Naunton tells us " That the great Queen translated one of the tragedies of Euripides from the original Greek for her amusement." Shakespeare was ardently attracted to Elizabeth and her Court, and proved a faithful servant to his royal mistress. The first evidence of this is in his fine eulogy of the virgin queen in that most sweetly poetical early drama, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, as " a fair vestal throned by the west " ; the play was probably produced for a special Court performance. The passage in which these words occur is a gem of

poetical beauty and is the most exquisite compliment she ever received from any poet of her day. Our poet thus muses—

“ That very time I saw—but thou couldst not—
 Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
 Cupid all arm'd : a certain aim he took
 At a fair vestal throned by the west,
 And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow
 As it should pierce a hundred-thousand hearts :
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
 Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
 And the imperial votaress passed on,
 In maiden meditation fancy free.” —Act II., Sc. i.

A story of Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare must perhaps be noticed here, the anecdote a mere late eighteenth-century invention relating to Queen Elizabeth at a theatre one evening while Shakespeare was playing a king, and bowing to him as she crossed the stage, but he went on with his part without returning the salutation. The Queen again passed him, and to directly attract his attention dropped her glove ; the poet at once picked it up, and, continuing the delivery of his speech, added these lines—

“ And though now bent on this high embassy,
 Yet stoop we to take up our cousin's glove.”

The Queen, we are told, was greatly pleased. The story is obviously absurd and incredible. Elizabeth did not visit the public theatres, and the custom was to sit removed from the stage at both private and also at Court performances, and her majesty, however much she may have estimated plays and players, and Shakespeare in particular, would not thus have forgotten her queenly state and dignity.

Returning to historical fact, we find from the

State papers, etc., that Shakespeare, Burbage, and others played in two comedies before the Queen in December, 1594, at the Royal Palace at Greenwich; these players then took the leading position as servants to the Lord Chamberlain, though no record has been discovered of the names of the plays performed by them before the Queen at this period. But it is known that "The Pleasant Conceited Comedy of *Love's Labour's Lost*" was played before her highness in the Christmas holidays on December 26, 1597, and in this and the following year the Queen witnessed the First and Second Parts of *King Henry IV.*, both new plays, and was very pleased with the performances. Falstaff gave great delight to the royal spectator and her Court, and at her wish to see exhibited the fat knight in love, the poet produced the comedy of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; this play gave infinite satisfaction to all beholders. The part of Falstaff was written originally under the name of Oldcastle; some of that family being then remaining, the Queen was pleased to command him to alter it, upon which he made use of Falstaff, a name that now represents the most humorous character the stage or the world has seen.

It is known from the State papers and other authentic documents that the company to which the poet belonged were, in the Christmas holidays of 1598-1599, playing before the Queen at Whitehall and at Richmond Palace; they also played again before her majesty at the latter palace on two occasions in the year 1600, and at the former palace in the Christmas festivities of the same year, and on

February 24, 1601, they played before her Majesty at Richmond Palace, and again before the Queen at Whitehall during the festivities of 1601-1602.

In December 23, 1599, it is reported from the Council Chamber, Richmond Palace, in the State papers of that date, that "There is no other news than of dancing, plays, and Christmas pies. The Court is the only school of wisdom in the world."

In connection with the drama it has not hitherto been observed that in the latter part of her life Queen Elizabeth was often at Nonsuch Palace during the summer ; her successive and frequent stay there was during the period of Shakespeare's enrolment as actor and servant to her majesty. Elizabeth held court at Nonsuch as early as 1582 till her closing years, and we cannot but suppose that the players frequently acted at this favourite royal mansion, as at her other palaces, and Shakespeare would be one of the number. Eventually the palace came into the possession of Anne of Denmark and Henrietta Maria, both lovers of the drama.

The last time the company had the honour to perform before the aged Queen, so long and to the last their devoted patroness, was at the palace at Richmond on February 2, 1603, her death following soon after a brief illness on March 24th of the same year. Shakespeare did not forget, though he has been accused of forgetting, his royal patroness ; he could not well eulogise her in a set of verses, as his old friend and patron the Earl of Southampton was at the time imprisoned in the Tower, and with the Earl of Essex, who had then suffered his sad

doom, he had long been in bitter enmity against the Queen. Our poet, however, took a better way of recording the praise of his royal mistress, by inditing a most ardent eulogy of the then dead Queen in the last scene of the play of *King Henry VIII*. This would be heard merely by the audience at the Globe, and not be proclaimed broadcast in print, and that course might possibly have incurred the ill-feeling of the partisans of Essex and Southampton. The poet has most certainly extolled her and sung of the glories of her reign, though some doubtless erroneously think the lines were inserted by another from variations in the style of the verses, forgetting that our protean-poet was all poets in one, sometimes by the very sporting of his genius resembling others, then again giving full Shakespeare, hence Ben Jonson aptly styled him the "Soul of the Age"; he resembles all men's minds, all men's styles. Here are the lines, and they are fine enough for Shakespeare, and we believe them to be his.* The poet briefly places before us a picture of her from her cradle to her grave, and makes Cranmer the speaker. Addressing the King on the newly named child Princess Elizabeth, he utters a most laudatory prophecy—

" Let me speak, sir,

For heaven now bids me ; and the words I utter
Let none think flattery, for they'll find 'em truth.
This royal infant—heaven still move about her—
Though in her cradle, yet now promises

* The play, evidently a work written in haste, is equal or but little below much of the poet's latest writing, either in dramatic construction, nor is it in the supposed added portions inferior to some of his later versification.

Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,
 Which time shall bring to ripeness : she shall be—
 But few now living can behold that goodness—
 A pattern to all princes living with her,
 And all that shall succeed : Saba was never
 More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue
 Than this pure soul shall be : all princely graces,
 That mould up such a mighty piece as this is,
 With all the virtues that attend the good,
 Shall still be doubled on her : truth shall nurse her,
 Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her :
 She shall be lov'd and fear'd ; her own shall bless her :
 In her days every man shall eat in safety,
 Under his own vine, what he plants ; and sing
 The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours :
 God shall be truly known ; and those about her
 From her shall read the perfect ways of honour,
 And by those claim their greatness, not by blood,
 Nor shall this peace sleep with her : but as when
 The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,
 Her ashes new-create another heir,
 As great in admiration as herself ;”

“ She shall be, to the happiness of England,
 An aged princess ; many days shall see her,
 And yet no day without a deed to crown it.
 Would I had known no more ! but she must die,—
 She must, the saints must have her,—yet a virgin ;
 A most unspotted lily shall she pass
 To the ground, and all the world shall mourn her.
King Henry. O lord archbishop,
 Thou hast made me now a man ! never before
 This happy child did I get anything ;
 This oracle of comfort has so pleas'd me,
 That when I am in heaven I shall desire
 To see what this child does, and praise my Maker.”

Assuredly the solemnity and general tone of these thoughts resemble Shakespeare more than Fletcher or any other writer for the stage of that period. A later writer speaks in her praise for her patronage of the drama and for her regard for the actor's art : “ Our late Queen Elizabeth of blessed memory, rightly stiled the world's Phœbe ; among women a Sibylla, among Queens a Saba, how well she approved

of these Recreations, being (as she termed them) harmless spenders of time, the large exhibitions which she conferred on such as were esteemed notable in that kind may sufficiently witness. Neither did she hold it any derogation to that royal and princely Majesty which she then in her royal person presented, to give some countenance to their endeavours, whereby they might be the better encouraged in their action." *

The following verse from the "Threnos," written by Shakespeare and appended to his poem, "The Phoenix and the Turtle," appear allusively to refer to the death of Elizabeth—

"Beauty, truth, and rarity,
Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclos'd in cinders lie."

"Truth may seem, but cannot be;
Beauty brag, but 'tis not she;
Truth and beauty buried be."

All in all, we may therefore well suppose that *Henry VIII.* was written not long after the entreaty by Chettle to Shakespeare upon the death of Elizabeth to mourn for her and—

"Drop from his honied muse one sable tear,
To mourn her death that graced his desert,
And to his lays opened her royal ear." †

From the first to the last the poet had an unwavering lofty opinion of the Queen's supreme goodness, virtue, and purity.

* "The English Gentleman," by R. Brathwayt, fol., London, 1652, p. 106.

† "England's Mourning Garment," 1603.

II

KING JAMES I. OF ENGLAND AND VI. OF SCOTLAND

King James I. was a great admirer of poetry and the drama from his earliest days, later in life he appears chiefly to have regarded and favoured dramatic art. He had been tutored by the celebrated George Buchanan and had well profited by his instructions ; he was one of Scotland's greatest poets, and had produced political and religious works, and also poems and dramas. Under this famous scholar he made great progress in learning. It has been usual to ridicule the weaknesses of this king, but he had his nobler qualities, that far outweighed his foibles and weakness. Lord Bacon thought highly of his judgment. Mr. D'Israeli gives the character of the King : " He was called a pedant, but," says he, " he was no more a pedant than the ablest of his contemporaries, nor abhorred the taste of tobacco, nor feared witches, more than they did : he was a great wit, a most acute disputant," &c.*

Queen Elizabeth, probably to gain the friendship on a particular occasion, sent in 1589 a select company of players to the Scotch capital, and they

* " Calamities of Authors," vol. ii p. 245.

appear to have paid a previous visit to Scotland, as we find "The King at a sumptuous banquet prepared by the Earl of Arran at Direleton, after a Council held there ; divers of the nobility and gentry passed the time right pleasantly with the play of Robin Hood." *

The names of only two of the players sent by the Queen are known, Fletcher and Martin ; they were probably both managers of the company. Fletcher was the head, and he seems quickly to have won great favour with the King, and on his return to England suffered some ill-treatment for some service and for especial favour he had received from the King. And we learn from the State papers under date March 22, 1595, Edinburgh, George Nicholson to Mr. Bowes—the English Ambassador, among other news, says that "The King heard that Fletcher, the player, was hanged, and told him and Roger Aston so, in merry words, not believing it, saying very pleasantly that if it were true he would hang them also." †

Roger Aston was a gentleman residing at the Scottish Court, a correspondent to Sir Robert Cecil of affairs at the Court of King James. Whatever was Fletcher's fault, he was soon in favour again with the English ministers.

In 1599, Fletcher and Martin were sent for by the King, and Elizabeth sent them with a company of comedians on a visit to Edinburgh in November of

* Reg. Com. Scot., May 5, 1585.

† Cal. St. Pap., Scottish Series, by M. J. T., vol. 2, p. 676.

that year. The King was greatly pleased with them, and they received from him warrant to act in public, and defended them against the Kirk Sessions, who were denouncing them, and who sought to silence them, but the King forbade and overruled this insult to the actors and the drama. The State papers say of this transaction, in a letter dated Edinburgh, November 12, 1599, George Nicholson to Sir Robert Cecil: "Performance of English players, Fletcher, Martin, and their Company, by the King's permission; enactment of the Town Sessions, and preaching of the ministers against them. The bellows blowers say that they are sent by England to sow dissension between the King and the Kirk." These papers also contain the King's full proclamation on the subject, the players were neither to suffer restraint nor censure.* These players were held by some at the time to be vile fellows unworthy of any honourable person's regard, but the King would not hear of their being slandered, but gave them the highest possible honour. The company of English actors were in Scotland from Oct. 1599 to Dec. 1601, and Laurence Fletcher received the freedom of the city of Aberdeen on Oct. 22, 1601, as "Comedian to his Majesty."

It has long been supposed that Shakespeare visited Scotland at this time as one of the company of players; no proofs, however, have come down to us, and it is not probable that as an occasional actor, as Shakespeare was, he should have been

* Cal. St. Pap., Scottish Series, vol. 2, pp. 777-8.

enrolled in the company. It would perhaps be nearer the mark to suppose that the poet between 1599 and 1600 paid a visit to Scotland; professional interests might induce him to take some of his latest MS. plays to be performed before the Scotch Court by the company of players to which he belonged. Shakespeare probably, like many in the Court of Elizabeth at this time, had his eye upon King James as the successor to the throne of England, and by this means may have prepared the way for his regard and favour. And the poet seems to have been absent from London late in 1599 to sometime in 1600, perhaps for about nine months; of this lengthened absence from the metropolis at this period there appears several indications, as also of his having visited Scotland. But three short years and "the spacious times of great Elizabeth" were over, and King James ascended the throne of England, and one of his first acts was to favour the drama. The good estate and position of the players were at once regarded; Laurence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, Richard Burbage, and others, on May 17, 1603, but a few days after the King's arrival in London, by letters patent under the great seal, were granted a licence to perform in London at the Globe theatre, and in the provinces at town-halls, and other suitable buildings. The company were now styled the King's players.

The far-seeing poet doubtless quickly added to his praise of Elizabeth the vista of newly and more widely extending glories of the reign of her successor, and in *King Henry VIII.*, Act V., Sc. iv., he appends

to his sketch of Elizabeth's reign, when paying that noble tribute to her life and death which we have noticed, and in reference to the blessed times of peace and prosperity enjoyed in her reign, he quickly foresaw the like happiness would be extended onward in the reign of King James I. He says of the new King :

“ Nor shall this peace sleep with her : but as when
 The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,
 Her ashes new-create another heir,
 As great in admiration as herself ;
 So shall she leave her blessedness to one,
 When heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness,
 Who from the sacred ashes of her honour
 Shall star-like rise, as great in fame as she was,
 And so stand fix'd : peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,
 That were the servants to this chosen infant,
 Shall then be his, and like a vine grow to him :
 Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,
 His honour and the greatness of his name
 Shall be, and make new nations : he shall flourish,
 And, like a mountain cedar, reach his branches
 To all the plains about him :—our children's children
 Shall see this, and bless heaven.”

Shakespeare would hardly allow this twofold eulogy of his royal patrons to be delegated to any other than his own golden pen. The present writer will endeavour in a separate work to conclusively prove that Shakespeare wrote the supposed Fletcherian portions of *Henry VIII*.

The King during his first regular progress through his new kingdom after leaving the city of Salisbury on August 26, 1603, was, with the royal party entertained on the 29th and 30th of the same month at Wilton, the noble seat of William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, and on the 6th October the King and Queen were again at Wilton, and at this noble mansion they stayed several weeks. And on the 2nd

December the King and Court were again at the seat of the Earl of Pembroke witnessing a theatrical performance by the company of players to which Shakespeare belonged, and again during the Christmas holidays the same company gave several performances before the Royal party at Hampton Court. The list of plays they performed has unhappily not been preserved. There is little doubt but that Shakespeare was with his company at Wilton on some of these highly important occasions, if not on all, and that the King first noticed the poet on this occasion, even if he had not already become acquainted with him in Scotland; and the famous "Amicable Letter" which on good authority, we are told, was written by the King to Shakespeare, may have been in reference to his desire to see a play written by him upon the subject of Macbeth. This play was produced we may well suppose upon receipt of the letter and in haste for a special Court performance. The King was proclaimed King of Great Britain and Ireland in 1604, and the play may well be assigned to the first year of his coronation. If not in Scotland, at Wilton and elsewhere the King was already acquainted with Shakespeare, and the position he held and the company to which he belonged.

The new monarch it should be remembered was a descendant of Banquo; this the poet has kept in his mind's eye—

"Some I see
That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry."

Macbeth has the appearance of a bold, impromptu,

hastily conceived sketch, emanating from the poet's brain in fiery flashes; the entire background and scenery is as lurid as the boldest sketches of Salvator Rosa, the figures are dashed in as bold as from the pencil of Rubens, and the ancient lieges of Scotia's land and the witches and ghosts pass before us like the titanic weird figures of Blake or Fuseli; and as the poet conceived it so he left it—a splendid sketch, but not a full and completely finished work.

A great change had come over the country, "the old order passeth away and giveth place unto the new." It was like a new world, if we glance back to 1567, when Queen Elizabeth gave order to the Bishop of London to find how many Scotsmen were in the metropolis, and we are told by Dr. Robertson there were but fifty-eight—now they came in streams following the King. This evoked much banter and sarcasm amongst the wits, dramatists, and actors of the day, several of them openly showing their dislike by satirising the King, his Court, and countrymen; they failed to see the benefit that would arise from the union of the kingdoms. Shakespeare appears most fully and clearly to have seen it, and heralded the advent, as we have seen, by a full tribute of gratulation and praise.

That King James would be very likely to suggest the play of *Macbeth* is highly possible. George Buchanan, who, as before observed, had been preceptor to the King in his "History of Scotland," published in Edinburgh in 1582, states in the 7th book that the history of Macbeth was well adapted for the stage, "Multa hic fabulose quidam nostrorum

affingunt ; sed quia theatris aut Milesies fabulis sunt aptiora quam historiæ, ea omitto." And the King himself had written his famous work, "Demonology," in 1597, relating to witchcraft and demoniacal possessions. Viewed in this light the poet had several objects in view in producing his *Macbeth* at this juncture, and moulding it, though roughly, yet in weighty and attractive metal a masterpiece of skill and power.

In the play of *Measure for Measure*, written in 1604, a passage appears to refer to the proclamation of the Scottish King on his accession to the throne of England, forbidding the populace to assemble to meet him on his entry to his new kingdom, a proceeding on the part of the people both of Scotland and of England of which he soon grew weary, and told the people how greatly he disapproved of it. The poet notes the mood of the King—

" I love the people,
But do not like to stage me to their eyes.
Though it do well, I do not relish well
Their loud applause and *aves* vehement ;
Nor do I think the man of safe discretion,
That does affect it." —Act I., Sc. i.

This comedy was acted before the Court at Whitehall on December 26, 1604. These lines would be at once recognised as aptly alluding to the extreme aversion of the King, long well known alike in regard to his Scotch subjects, as also lately proclaimed to his new people.

Some lines attributed to Shakespeare on King James have been handed down in old MS. collections as early as the time of Charles I., but it does not

seem to be known upon what occasion they first appeared ; they have always, however, been assigned to our poet in every collection in which they are preserved. Their first appearance in print we now find was under a very rare engraved portrait of King James I., published about the year 1610. The various MS. style them alike as—

“ SHAKESPEARE ON THE KING.

“ Crownes have their Compasse length of dayes their date
Triumphs their Tombes, felicitie her fate
Of more then earth can earth make none partaker,
But knowledge makes the King most like his maker.”

The portrait was published by the King's printer ; the lines may be accredited to our poet for their solemnity and dignity of thought.

It is not a little remarkable that this King was also in close connection from this time onward to the last with both of Shakespeare's patrons ; the special honours the King at once bestowed upon the Earl of Southampton, after granting his immediate release from imprisonment in the Tower, and the various other signal favours granted later in life, both to him and to William Earl of Pembroke, reveal the fact that he at once regarded Southampton with a favourable eye, and at the same time exhibited a devoted regard for Pembroke, whom he also favoured highly but with a more constant favour and more attached and friendly regard, as he ever after retained the latter in office or at the Court in what appears to have been a bond of most sympathetic friendship. He was evidently attracted at once by the merits of both these lords, and in every way he could, expressed his admiration for

them by conferring honours upon them upon several important occasions. His love for Pembroke, however, was far more constant and uniform, but he retained it would appear to the last also a regard, if not admiration, for Southampton ; Pembroke, however, was his assured friend, confidant, and counsellor.

King James remained an admirer of the drama all his life, and on many occasions witnessed the plays of Shakespeare at various performances at Court, and his plays doubtless added joy and brightness to the festivities of many a passing hour ; and the Court, upon our poet's retirement to his native town, missed the great luminary amongst men, though they had to abide the fate of the hour ; the poet doubtless needed rest and peace, and the pleasurable and constant circle of his family and friends. However that may be, we find that on December 31, 1614, Mr. Chamberlain, in a letter to Sir Dudley Carleton, says—

“ We have Plays at Court every night,—wherein they shew great patience, being for the most part such poor stuff that, instead of delight, they send the auditory away with discontent. Indeed our Poets' brains and inventions are grown very dry, insomuch that of five new Plays there is not one that pleases, and therefore they are driven to furbish over their old ; which stand them in best stead and bring them most profit.”

Such news as this was no doubt transmitted to Shakespeare in his affluent retirement amidst his townsmen in his quiet retreat at New Place. He may have laughed and given them over to Ben

Jonson, and the rest of his fellow dramatic wits, but he had ceased producing more great works ; he had poured forth his best of sparkling wit and wisdom, the most joyous humour, the sweetest and noblest verse, and the profoundest philosophy, and now he finally rests in the haven of domestic peace in true felicity and perfect happiness, and if ever man deserved this consummation it was William Shakespeare. We do not view him as a hale, hearty, strong man, but as a good and worthy man. And we may gather from the dramatic writings of the poet, and from his other various poems and sonnets, that he would not fail to make due preparation for the higher as for the present life ; and this is especially revealed in that noble cxlvith sonnet, as well as in several others, and finally in the opening declaration of his will it is fully, solemnly, and emphatically expressed in these his last recorded words.

The London play-goers nor the Court of King James knew not fully the great light that was passing away ; the poet's patron, the Earl of Pembroke, appears to have seen that light clearest and followed it closest, but its full glory was not possible to discover till after the publication of the first folio, seven years after Shakespeare's death. Yet, as we have seen, King James had welcomed the poet and beheld with pleasure his plays, and Ben Jonson in his poetical tribute to Shakespeare, prefixed to the folio of 1623, speaks of the delight Elizabeth and James took in witnessing the plays of Shakespeare—

“ Those flights upon the banks of Thames
That so did take Eliza and our James.”

III

THE EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON

The name of this earl has so long been closely connected with Shakespeare that, to merely mention it, is sufficient to recall to the mind, the memory of a patronage that has fixed itself foremost on the thoughts of all readers as having subsisted between this nobleman and the poet at a very early period of his life ; the poet himself in two dedications, one to his poem of " Venus and Adonis," and the other to his " Tarquin and Lucrece," has published the news broadcast, and the numerous editions not only in the poet's lifetime, but since his death, that have appeared have tended to inscribe it indelibly on the minds of all readers.

The Earl of Southampton when quite a young man became in a very few years after the poet's first arrival in London his chosen patron, and accepted the poet's dedication of the " Venus and Adonis " in 1593, and in the following year the " Tarquin and Lucrece."

These addresses are as follows ; the first is couched in these words—

“ To the

“ Right Honourable HENRY WRIOTHESLY,

“ Earl of Southampton and Baron of Tichfield.

“ RIGHT HONOURABLE,

“ I know not how I shall offend in dedicating

my unpolished lines to your lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden : Only, if your honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a god-father, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content : which I wish may always answer your wish, and the world's hopeful expectation.

“ Your honour's in all duty,

“ WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.”

The dedication to the “*Tarquin and Lucrece*” evinces a fuller affection, confidence of his patron's regard for him and his offering—

“ To the

“ Right Honourable HENRY WRIOTHESLY,

“ Earl of Southampton and Baron of Tichfield.

“ The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end ; whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours ; what I have to do is yours ; being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater ; meantime, as it is, it is bound

to your lordship, to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with all happiness,

“ Your lordship’s in all duty,

“ WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.”

The poet has herein protested most fully his devotion to his patron, and doubtless he intended to the utmost to fulfil the declarations he has made, but it is somewhat strange that no other non-dramatic work, or dramatic work, was ever after dedicated by the poet to him ; and of course it would be, and is, the non-dramatic efforts of his muse the produce of “ idle hours,” when not engaged in writing plays or in acting, the means by which he obtained his livelihood, catering for the public, no other poem or poems appearing is extraordinary after his repeated and fervent avowals pointing to new and more important poems in prospect. However that may be, Southampton’s connection with Shakespeare and his influence and bearing upon his writings need alone reviewing here ; his various military adventures, his embroilments, tiffs, Court troubles, enmities, entanglements in factions, enterprises, etc., and military, naval, political life, Court affairs, strife and restlessness, need not now be viewed ; from this we turn and chiefly view him as patron and friend of the poet, exhibiting the better side of his nature. His love of learning and of learned men, his perhaps over-zealous duty for what he thought his own and his country’s honour, the dignities loftily sustained to which he was born, and to those which he was

appointed to fulfil by King James, have all in all lent a lustre and brightness to his name never to be effaced.

There is no question but that this lord, then but a young man when the poet first sought his patronage, was a great admirer and greatly favoured Shakespeare; that he assisted the poet with a most extraordinary bounty is, however, a very late tradition, and was first published by Rowe in 1709. A gift from the earl may well be believed, but the amount stated to have been given the poet is beyond probability. Rowe tells us: "There is one instance so singular in the magnificence of this patron of Shakespeare that, if I had not been assured that the story was handed down by Sir William D'Avenant, who was probably very well acquainted with his affairs, I should not have ventured to have inserted; that my Lord Southampton at one time gave him a thousand pounds to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to." And this is rendered more probable, or at least the gift of something munificent, as we further learn from other testimony that the poet, besides the advantages of his wit and worthy qualities, his "honesty" and "uprightness of dealing," was in himself a good-natured man, of great sweetness in his manners, and a most agreeable companion. This the printed records of the time, from his earliest period as also the latest that have been handed down, most expressly affirm; to these qualities as also to his poetical merit we may doubtless attribute his rapid advancement.

The large sum said to have been given to the poet, an amount equal at the present value of money to £5,000, was not reported till long after the event—probably it was augmented mistakingly from £100 to £1,000, and as the sum of £100 was then equal to a sum of £500 of present money, that for the young earl to have given must be viewed as a considerable gift. The earl early in life was a recognised patron of poets and learned men, and Gervase Markham, in a sonnet addressed to the earl in 1595, appears to point especially to his patronage of Shakespeare—

“Thou, the laurel of the Muses’ hill,
Those eyes doth crown the most victorious pen.”

The earl’s love of learning and learned men is well known ; it was, however, chiefly confined to his early years, and strange to say there does not appear to have been a dozen books dedicated to him comprising the two early poems of Shakespeare. Of the Earl of Southampton’s regard for literature, poetry, and the drama, and help to learned men there is full and direct testimony, therefore a munificent gift of considerable importance to Shakespeare may be looked upon as conclusive, being perhaps like others at that time as much attracted by the poet’s modesty and gentleness as by his merit ; and his kind regard probably extended for several years. There is, however, no direct proof of close intercourse between the earl as years advanced ; in fact, it would appear that there was a coldness, if not disunion, grew up between them.

Probably as time went on the earl may have been

twitted for the amorous nature of the Greekish fable of the "Venus and Adonis" poem, or of the erotic titianesque presentment of the picture of the fair queen of love; if so, the poet would deeply feel the charge against the poem, a charge as we know that was long alleged against it, both during and long after the poet's life, and out of this may have grown the severance or at least silence we have spoken of in reference to further dedicated poems by the poet to the earl. And the mysterious "Willobie Arisa" poem of 1594, a year after the publication of the Venus poem, may secretly and satirically point to Shakespeare and the earl. During the poet's middle period the earl's military duties would however alone occasion long periods of separation. The earl at that time had been much absent from the metropolis and became involved through a long-growing fiery temper in many factions, State difficulties, and other matters to which we have alluded, and was finally mixed up with the rebellion of the Earl of Essex; and though with Essex doomed to death, Southampton obtained a remission of the sentence, but was condemned to imprisonment in the Tower. We are, however, now somewhat anticipating events. The loyal poet may in some way have offended the too-impetuous earl; of this, as will be seen, there appears several indications. After 1597 the earl in almost every transaction in which he engaged invariably incurred either the displeasure of the Queen or the Court, whether in military affairs, Court life, politics, or private affairs. His courtship and final marriage with one of the

Queen's maids, for a long period was the source of much unhappiness; this offence still more excited against him the enmity of Elizabeth, as will be seen not without some cause.*

After Southampton's too-ardent courtship with the Queen's maid of honour, fair Mistress Vernon, whom he, we may presume truly loved, on March 17, 1598, he passed over to France and offered his military services to Henry IV.; but the campaign ending by the peace of Vervius, the chivalric earl, after a stay at Paris for a few months, upon his return, married privately Mistress Vernon, whose condition compelled her to retire from the Court to the house of the Earl of Essex at Wanstead, to which Essex had retired from the favour of the Queen. Some of the wits of the day poked fun at the fair lady's obvious condition, though she was in great sorrow—weeping her fair eyes out of her head, she yet asserted full belief that Lord Southampton would "justify it." This marriage greatly displeased the Queen, and she threatened to send all parties concerned in it to the Tower; the countess was committed to the best lodgings of the Fleet, and the earl was for a brief time cast into prison. Southampton with all his faults, his fiery temper, continued impetuosity, and dominant self-will, was a nobleman of high courage, great honour, and integrity. His joining the Essex faction in 1601, as

* His ardent love was fixed on Elizabeth Vernon, the cousin of the celebrated Earl of Essex. Dr. Drake exactly puts it when he says "between whom and Southampton differences had arisen, which this passion for his fair relative dissipated for ever."

we have above remarked, finally doomed him to the Tower till the close of Elizabeth's reign ; the prospect before the countess must have been one of deep grief and desolation, and the event doubtless also caused much sadness of heart to Shakespeare.

SOUTHAMPTON AND THE DRAMA

There is evidence, in a letter by Rowland Whyte written in 1599 to Sir R. Sydney, that the Earl of Southampton was a lover of plays, and at that time was a constant visitor to the theatres. He says : " My Lord of Southampton and Lord Rutland come not to the Court. The one doth very seldom. They pass away the time in London merely in going to plays every day." And a year or two later the earl, who unfortunately joined Essex in his rebellion against Elizabeth, appears with some of the other conspirators to have sought to influence the people to join them by having exhibited at the Globe Theatre, and also at various other places in London, a play on the subject of Richard II., representing the deposition and murder of that king, and was played at the Globe on the day previous to the outbreak, February 8, 1601. Great interest is attached to this event, as to whether it was Shakespeare's *Richard II.*, or an old play on the same subject. It has long been supposed to have been our poet's drama ; it is a subject of considerable importance and worthy of further investigation, and it will be seen that in all probability it was not Shakespeare's play for the following reasons. Augustine Phillipps, one of the players of the company of the Globe,

appears to have been delegated on this occasion to treat with some of the leading party of the Essex faction, and was induced by them upon the payment of an extra allowance to perform a play of the deposing and killing of King Richard II., as he stated in his examination before the judges ; but he, as is quite clear, only came to terms with the conspirators, by undertaking to play *an old play long out of use*, apparently stale, unattractive, and unprofitable, hence a larger fee was given. Any such description would hardly apply to Shakespeare's play of 1595 of that name ; his plays always filled the theatre, even though they were not new. Phillipps, who appears to have had the sole transaction in his hands, was sent to represent the company. This accounts for the withdrawal of Shakespeare and the leading members from any complicity in the transaction, and the company of the Globe were fully excused ; but it has not perhaps been clearly seen why, but for this reason alone—for not using their own play of *Richard II.*, written by Shakespeare, but an old, long-disused play upon the same subject, a play that had been long since thrust into the background as far as the Globe company was concerned, and a play upon which no censorship had been passed, a play that had been revived at the instigation of the conspirators and had recently been played by their influence in theatres and elsewhere in London, and the same play was performed at the Globe at their entreaty ; being the most important theatre, the service of that company was most valued.

Shakespeare's play of *Richard II.* had been printed in 1597, with the suppression of 154 lines containing the trial and deposing of the king. Elizabeth appears greatly to have feared this deposing exhibition would stir up the people against her, on account of her religious principles. Sir John Hayward in 1599, in a history of the first part of Henry IV.'s reign, included an account of Richard II., and dedicated the work in words of high eulogy to the Earl of Essex, and at once received severe censure in the Star Chamber, was committed to prison, and the Queen threatened the author with the rack to force him to a full confession. We cannot well suppose Shakespeare and his colleagues to have been so unwise as to allow his play, with the scene of the deposition of Richard II., to be played by the company and that, the Lord Chamberlain's company of players for the purpose of inciting a spirit of insurrection. Though he had regard for the Earl of Essex and special admiration for the Earl of Southampton, we cannot believe the loyal poet would connive in such a league against his sovereign, who, in an especial manner, had honoured him and his company. The poet was doubtless fully aware a *Richard II.* had been played quite recently a large number of times at various places in London, and, as we have noticed, probably bribed to perform it by some partisans of the Essex faction, and he was also aware that those who sought to publish his own *Richard II.* had been compelled to withdraw the deposition scene by the censorship in 1597. Would he, in the face of all this or his colleagues,

with Sir John Hayward's fate before them, be foolishly bold to crown all this by allowing his play to be performed by the Queen's players with that scene at the Globe theatre? but would stand the risk, we may well suppose, of offending his rash patron rather than join in the endeavour to subvert the state, and we believe that his refusal offended Southampton. And the *Richard II.* played at the Globe was an old play, and is spoken of as such at the time and as out of date, and as it would not pay to play it, few would come to witness it, therefore an extra bribe was given to ensure its performance. This, from what we can gather, exculpated the Globe company, no blame was imputed to them, and the Queen continued to extend her favour to them, and just before the death of Essex, witnessed a performance by them at Richmond Palace on Tuesday, February 24, 1601.

Thorpe the antiquary has recorded in reference to the old play of *King Richard II.*, which had been played in various places in the metropolis "in open streets and houses," and we are further told the Queen, in a conversation with Lambarde the Keeper of the Records in the Tower, her Majesty speaking to him of the reign of *King Richard II.*, said in reference to the Essex plot: "I am *Richard II.*, know ye not that?"

In the midst of the stirring affairs consequent upon the rebellion of Essex, Shakespeare must have been much grieved and perplexed as to his future line of action. What was the poet to do? He now stood in a very peculiar position; he loved his

patron without doubt, but a new claimant had for about two years sought very zealously and it would appear persistently, to obtain the regard of the poet and had obtained it. This would also point to a division in some way having occurred between the poet and his first patron at an earlier period, and this may have been viewed as still widened by the Essex conspiracy—not perhaps that the poet did not still love and admire his early patron, but events seem to prove that it could not stand up firm and lasting, but must sooner or later fall. This perhaps the new patron—we now refer to the young Lord Herbert—clearly saw, and we learn that the poet did not have to seek his patronage and favour; he sought the regard of the poet and heaped favours upon him. This can all be shown from the records of the time and from the Sonnets. And the poet upon his part thought well to take into his regard the young lord, whom for his qualities, gifts, handsomeness, and position, and as the future head of a most noble house, he viewed the alliance with a most cordial and happy spirit.

Upon the Earl of Southampton being cast into the gloomy dungeon of the tower—

“To Julius Cæsar’s ill-erected tower.”

—*Richard II.*, Act V., Sc. i.

Shakespeare doubtless found himself in a curious position; he could not pen a poem on the treasonable outbreak or defend Southampton as he may to some extent have wished to. The poet was, however, equal to the occasion; he clearly, we find,

desired to express his regard for him, and he has done so, not by writing a poem, but by penning a drama after the earl's doom of imprisonment in the Tower, a period destined to be at least as long as Elizabeth's reign lasted.

The drama he has selected for his purpose is the noble play of *Julius Cæsar*, written probably late in 1601, in which the opening scenes largely reflect the Essex plot and the closing years of Elizabeth. To effect this, Cæsar is not made the leading character, except in the title of the play. Brutus and Cassius are the foremost figures, and it is somewhat remarkable that it has not hitherto been observed that Brutus is Southampton, and Cassius the Earl of Essex. The poet had to adhere to Roman history, but as far as possible has made it subservient to the rebellion of Essex, in character, incident, and detail, as far as regards the Earls of Essex and Southampton; the latter nobleman, his dear friend, stands most prominent. The play of *Julius Cæsar* is therefore of political significance; he has glanced at the rebellion against the Queen, and at the two leading personages of the plot, but has mainly, and in his position wisely and judiciously, adhered closely to the story of the conspiracy against Cæsar as narrated by Plutarch and as translated by Sir Thomas North.

The poet's regard for the personal qualities of Essex and Southampton is reflected in the effulgent brightness with which he has invested the portrayal of Brutus and Cassius. To add to their greater brightness he has dimmed the glory, greatness, and

majesty of Cæsar with the gathering clouds that finally enveloped the lurid sunset of his closing days ; for this decadence of Cæsar, Plutarch gives charter ; it also points more significantly to the decadence of Elizabeth's last years. Despite, however, of his eulogy of Southampton and Essex, the drama, like our poet's *Richard II.*, is adverse to State plots and conspiracy against the Crown.*

Southampton's short-sightedness and unpractical political ideas fully appear in Brutus, he is impulsive and wholly regardless of the course of events ; so was Southampton. The wilfulness of Brutus as a general and a man ended in his disgrace and brought ruin upon him ; this was Southampton's error right through his career. Whatever dignity was in the conspiracy against Cæsar, was conferred on it by the presence of Brutus, and it was Southampton's chivalric spirit that lent a certain amount of importance to the plot of Essex. Cassius is bitter of speech, unscrupulous, and merciless, he persuaded Brutus to join in the conspiracy ; and Essex besought the aid of Southampton. Cassius was well reputed as a military commander ; Essex had a like high repute. Essex's bitterness of tongue is well known ; among other fatal expressions he uttered is that "The Queen grew old and cankered ; and that her mind was become as crooked as her carcass." The conspirators meet at the orchard of Brutus, and they

* The poet has been much blamed for his representation of Cæsar, and many have imputed it to the poet's ignorance. Our view shows clearly why great Cæsar is cast into the shade, though the central character, and why Brutus has the effulgent rays of Shakespeare's genius cast upon him.

pledge themselves by oath to carry out their plot; Essex and the conspirators meet at Southampton's house for a like purpose. Brutus exhibits a zealous love of liberty for the common welfare; Southampton showed the same regard. Brutus was brother-in-law to Cassius; Southampton married Elizabeth Vernon, the cousin of the Earl of Essex. There have been differences between them, but this love for his relative brought that to an end. Elizabeth Vernon, who became Southampton's honoured wife, the poet pictures as Portia, wife to Brutus, and the devotedness of husband and wife and of her tender and most ardent regard towards him is finely shown in the scene between them. Brutus, after a midnight meeting with the conspirators, addressing Cassius ere they disperse on the approach of early morning, says—

“ Good gentlemen, look fresh and merrily ;
Let not our looks put on our purposes ;
But bear it as our Roman actors do,
With untir'd spirits and formal constancy ;
And so good-morrow to you every one.”

Portia seeks him, and gives in addressing Brutus a fine pourtrayal of Southampton to the life, to which we refer the reader—Act II., Sc. i.—and gently chides him for his rebukes and impatience of late to her, and being his wife therefore entreats upon her knees to know his secret sorrow and weight of care and his cause of midnight meeting with men—

“ Who did hide their faces
Even from darkness.”

She doubts to call herself his wife and not to know

his secrets, which she vows though he divulge them she will not reveal; and in the fulness of his soul he says—

“ You are my true and honourable wife,
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart.”

And this may well apply to the marriage of the earl and his lady and the Court tattle upon the event. The noble play ends with a fine eulogium directed towards his dear friend Southampton, whom to all the world was as dead, immured in that gloomy fortress; and the poet well might in the words of Antony in his tribute of praise over the dead Brutus, say—

“ This was the noblest Roman of them all :
All the conspirators, save only he,
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar ;
He only in a general honest thought,
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle ; and the elements
So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, ' This was a man ! ' ”

It may be a strained compliment, but pardonable as the outcome of a devoted friendship, and doubtless Southampton's early years were gentle and most loving till soured by Court factions and real or imagined grievances or errors. Nat Lee tells us, in the dedication of his “ Lucius Junius Brutus ” to the Earl of Dorset, that “ Shakespeare's Brutus with much ado beat himself into the heads of a blockish age, so knotty were the oaks he had to deal with.” But did not this arise from the play appearing in Elizabeth's last years? Her loyal subjects may well have thought the eulogy of Brutus too excessive. The poet could not of course be too open in his

representations of Essex and Southampton; this might have brought the enmity of the Queen upon him. The poet steered clear of offending, yet found a way to express his love and pity for his noble patron and friend. This drama may not have been written to draw his patron nearer to him, assuming there had been somewhat of a coldness or division between them, but to evince his regard for him at the time of his overthrow. It is certainly remarkable that through all this time there seems to have been no alliance or connection that can be traced between them, no poem of condolence openly addressed to him pitying his misfortunes and sad state, which in Shakespeare's case perhaps would have been unwise, and was fully excused by the earl. The bounteous gift given by the earl to the poet may very likely have been given after the earl's release from the Tower in the next reign, and arose from the kind tribute offered to him and to the Earl of Essex in *Julius Cæsar*, and he might readily forget former differences, if any, as he did in the case of Essex, and became his most zealous friend. No poem, however, is certainly known to have been written by Shakespeare on the earl's release from the Tower. The poets Daniel and Davies were jubilant on this occasion. Shakespeare's may not have appeared in print.

There is one event that places Southampton in touch with one of Shakespeare's plays, though not apparently with the poet himself. It appears that the comedy of *Love's Labour's Lost*, upon the visit of the Queen of James I. to the Earl of Southampton in

January, 1605, was selected by Burbage, the principal player of the company to which Shakespeare belonged, to be performed before her. Burbage extolled the wit and mirth of the play and said that it would please her exceedingly; it was played either at Southampton House, Bloomsbury, or at the earl's house in the Strand; the original letter is preserved at Hatfield.* We should perhaps remark that the British Museum stands on a portion of the immediately surrounding ground then belonging to the old mansion, and the poet we may well suppose frequently trod the very ground on which our national museum stands in the company of his early patron; the Earls of Southampton were lords of the manor of Bloomsbury. The mansion, which was large and stately, stood upon the north side of Bloomsbury Square; in the reign of Elizabeth the old manor house stood in the open country, the adjacent fields then formed part of the court of the manor.

It need not be supposed that Southampton stood aloof from Shakespeare any time of the poet's life, but circumstances occurred later in the earl's life that appear to have turned his attention to a great extent from his early love of literature and the society of learned men and poets, and though he continued to foster literary men at intervals, his life led him widely away to a large extent from London life and associations. Therefore though there might appear a disunion, it may have arisen from different duties,

* Halliwell-Phillipps, "Outlines," seventh edition, 1887, vol. ii. pp. 83, 84.

both on the earl's part and the part of the poet, that largely occupied their attention. We need not therefore suppose that after Herbert appears before the poet and desires to favour him with his especial patronage, that Southampton must needs retire to the background as far as Shakespeare is concerned. The poet, however, seems to have been very exclusive in his seeking or accepting patronage; during his life he sought public patronage and won it by his dramas and his acting; for his poems he sought the higher patronage of the nobility, and for their acceptance he had many admirers and "private friends." Beyond this circle there were but three noblemen that we know were his patrons: the Earl of Southampton stands first, and with him later in time were the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, the two brothers to whom the first folio is dedicated; and the elder brother William Herbert has long been identified with the "W. H." of the Sonnets. Ben Jonson, on the other hand, sought and obtained many patrons, amongst them were many noble and distinguished men and women, but he could not obtain the patronage of the public for the acceptance of his plays, therefore was always miserably poor and became very morose. Shakespeare exalted patronage up to ardent, constant, and most loving friendship; he appears to have thought it his greatest joy and esteemed it as his highest honour. That the favour of the two "incomparable brothers," Earl William and his brother Philip Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, was enjoyed and viewed as the poet's highest honour, not only has the poet's

testimony as to Earl William, but the player editors, as we have noticed in their dedication of the first folio to these lords, couple them together as the poet's most eminent dramatic patrons, and speak of the great favours granted by them to the then deceased poet. And of Pembroke's especial patronage of the poet we shall have to notice other contemporary evidence.

Some have sought to show, but without any proof whatever, that the Sonnets were written for and dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, but the view is most difficult to accept. Finally, we may truly say that Southampton was a brilliant and a most noble and heroic peer, a chivalric Elizabethan lord, but somewhat of a quixotic disposition—restless, ever ready to trample down a real or supposed grievance, or to participate in some adventure of knight-errantry or military quest, whether directly in or not in connection with his own affairs, his personal, country's, or his sovereign's interest, and this spirit remained in him to the last.* Finally, it may justly be said that Shakespeare's Sonnets present not the faintest reflection of the personal character or life of Southampton. The earl had the effusions, during his early period, of the almost insane, if not grossly wild and inebriated strains of sonnets and occasional poems, excessive and wantonly laudatory verses by Tom Nash, Barnaby Barnes, and Gervase Markham. Southampton's ear was receptive of the most vile and outrageous praise; he verily exceeded

* This character of the earl can be fully verified from the State papers, documents, and news-letters of the period.

Queen Elizabeth in accepting the grossest and most impious flattery.

We learn from a letter of Mr. Edward Bruce, a correspondent of King James during the last years of Elizabeth, to Lord Henry Howard,* written just before the death of Elizabeth, in which it is said the Queen " . . . very near approaches to her everlasting rest. The Earl of Southampton has written to King James an earnest letter for a warrant of his liberty immediately upon the Queen's death." This was one of the first acts granted by the new King. Elizabeth died March 24, 1603. The imprisoned earl was at once liberated upon the entry of James to his new kingdom. But, strangely enough, he seldom could make friends or be long at peace in the King's Court from the very first, and he seems to have been in real amity with few great persons at the new Court, but there are evidences of friendship having subsisted right through between Southampton and Pembroke. In 1603, on several occasions between August and December, both the earls were at Wilton, and Shakespeare's company of players were entertaining the new King and his distinguished company with plays at the mansion of Pembroke. The British Museum contains original letters from both the earls addressed from Wilton to Sir Julius Cæsar in London. Southampton's are written as though with the point and slash of the sword. Pembroke's are more easy and courtly. The following are examples of their caligraphy—

* Hatfield MSS., vol. cxxxii. fol. 102.

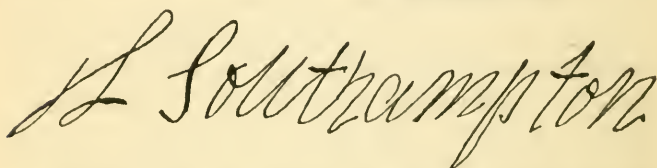
The Earl of Southampton to Sir Julius Cæsar, 16 of Dec. 1599,
subscribed,

Yor verry frynd



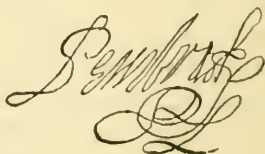
Henry Earl of Southampton, "To my very lovinge friend Sir
Julius Cæsar, 11 Nov. 1603, from Wilton," subscribed,

Your assured frend



Pembroke to Sir Julius Cæsar, 21 Dec. 1603, upon behalf of a
"poore blind mans preferment to the Hospital of St. Cross,"
subscribed,

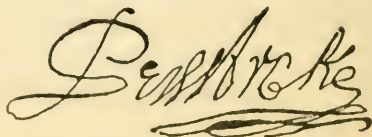
Ever your assured
loving frend



The Earl of Pembroke, 7 Oct. 1612,
"To the right honorable Sr Julius Cæsar Knight Chancellor of
his Maties Exchequer, On the behalf of his Aunt the Countess of
Huntington, subscribed,

"again comending this gute unto yo^r favor, wch I will ever study
to deserve by the best & truest offices my friendship can performe,
I rest

Yor most affectionate
frend to command



IV

WILLIAM HERBERT EARL OF PEMBROKE

The life of the Earl of Pembroke has like the life of the Earl of Southampton proved very difficult to biographers through conflicting testimony, especially in relation to the latter earl, and no adequate continuous account could perhaps well be composed on the Earl of Southampton. Very few of his letters remain, and they are brief and formal. Some have thought he was the author of some poetical pieces, but no poems have ever been assigned to him ; few letters are extant that were addressed to him or make mention of him, the pen he seems to have discarded for the sword and spear. He has been viewed in a glamour of glory, his merits disproportionately magnified, and his defects whenever possible placed in the best though perhaps often in a partially false light. We have in these pages sought to speak fairly of him, admitting his faults, extolling his merits. The earl lived seven years after the death of Shakespeare ; all his life's actions revealed would in many instances need a succession of apologies. The early portion of his eventful career seemed to betoken a splendid and perfect example of a chivalric Elizabethan Earl, and he proved noble, heroic, brave, and fearless to the last.

He died a few years too soon to come under the immediate notice of Clarendon, the historian of the rebellion, or he might have received a eulogistic portrait-sketch by that writer, or have received from the same ready pen, comprising with the highest eulogy, the basest if not the falsest and grossest denunciation in one and the same statement. It was different with the Earl of Pembroke; he lived onward seven years to 1630. And Clarendon, it would seem, wanted to load with aspersion some dignified person of the Courts of James I. and Charles I., and he showers calumny upon this earl, then long since dead, and who was in no way connected with the origin or outbreak of the Civil War, which did not begin till ten years after the earl's death. Had he introduced Southampton it would have been far nearer the mark; he was of republican principles, while Pembroke was a devoted royalist. Our method of defence will be a review of the life of the earl derived from statements made concerning him by those who had long personally known him and were well acquainted with him and his affairs, and shall treat this Earl's life precisely as we have Southampton's life, leaving minor details that add no light to his personal character and occasion confusion and perplexity to the reader, and like with our notice of Southampton shall fully speak of his faults and also shall fully take notice of his merits.

Shakespeare in 1597 or early in 1598 received the proffered friendship and patronage of a young lord of a very different character—we now refer to William

Herbert, the eldest son of the then old Earl of Pembroke. The son was at that time visiting and about to reside in London. The father was fond of the drama, and the young lord's mother the celebrated Sir Philip Sidney's sister; Mary Countess of Pembroke was a poetess and patroness of poets. Though this lord was unlike Southampton in respect to a lifelong, unruffled, gentle temper, he resembled him in a love of martial affairs, but used it as a Court dignity and accomplishment; in his heart he was a lover of peace and its lustre and honours, viewing peace as outshining the horrors of war. Shakespeare at once took an ardent fancy to the gallant young lord, whom he seemed to foresee would ride high in the state, both by his accomplishments and position. He was a lover of poets and the drama, of a fine presence, handsome, a skilful horseman, and of a martial character, so much so that Robert Barret prepared and published a folio volume on "The Theory and Practice of Modern Wars" expressly for the young lord in 1598. There are two dedications to the volume; the first is to the Earl of Pembroke, the other to his youthful son William Lord Herbert. Chalmers thought, and apparently justly, that Shakespeare caricatured Barret as Parolles in his play of *All's Well that Ends Well*, written about this time. The poet accepted this young lord's proffered and ardent friendship and patronage, and ardently sought by all the means he could to secure it on a firm basis, both for his own honour as also for that of his Muse. The young lord was evidently of most charming manners and sweetness

of disposition, and the poet justly feared other poets would seek to win his exclusive patronage and favours. It was in view of his amiable character that Shakespeare thus addresses him—

“ Shall I compare thee to a summer's day,
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.”

The young lord seemed quite willing upon his part to favour Shakespeare with a very close friendship, and appears not only to have acknowledged himself a lover of the poet as a worthy man and friendly counsellor, but was also most ardently attached to his Muse, whom he evidently viewed as the supreme representative of the poetry of the time.

The father of the young lord greatly desired to induce his son to become married. Many matches were proposed from his fifteenth to his twentieth year with noble ladies; the youth, however, appears to have been very self-willed, or had an extreme aversion at that time to wedlock. It had long been a constant theme with the old earl and his friends, and the youth appears to have been quite wearied with their assiduous and repeated endeavours; few youths have ever been so persistently entreated. As late as August 16, 1600, Rowland Whyte, a writer of Court news to Sir R. Sydney, says, “ I don't find any disposition at all in this gallant young lord to marry,” but states that he was “ well thought of, and was keeping company with the best and gravest.” This indicates the noble youth had formed acquaintances and friendship with worthy men, Whyte doubtless had observed his especial regard for Shake-

speare and perhaps alludes to him. The poet very early joined the friends, it is surmised by request of the countess to persuade the young lord to yoke himself to the car of Hymen, but he refused his friend the poet, as he also refused his relations and all others who desired the stripling to marry ; if he must marry he desired to unite himself willingly to no other than the Muse of Shakespeare. That purely ideal though most attractive woman alone appears to have charmed his fancy, and he conceived the fanciful idea of becoming devotedly engaged to her, and suggested so to Shakespeare. The poet sought to dissuade him from this course, or, if he followed it, also to unite himself in marriage to some virtuous maiden ; but no, he alone desires the poet's friendship and unity to his Muse. The idea of this poetical marriage arose with the young lord, and the poet worked it out according to the youth's fanciful idea. This entreaty to marriage forms the commencement of the collection of sonnets to the young lord, and is the prelude to the whole of the long chain of sonnets that follow ; hence in the words of Milton the youth was " married to immortal verse," and this mystic theme largely pervades the whole of the Sonnets.

This view of the connection of Shakespeare and Lord Herbert is drawn not only from the large collection of sonnets addressed to this young lord, but also from other sources, both from MSS. and printed matter of the period. A full and complete exposition of the Sonnets can only be given in a separate and distinct work ; rightly viewed we may,

however, say that they add honour both to the poet and to his patron. It should also be mentioned that the Sonnets have been supposed to refer to the love affair of the young Lord Herbert with Mary Fitton, but as they were obviously all written before that event was talked of, and during the whole course of writing the Sonnets was evidently unknown to Shakespeare—the Sonnets were all written in three years (see Sonnet CIV.) or perhaps less—the poet seems to speak rather of the time when he first saw his young friend than when he began writing to him; and as the poet refers to the time when he first noticed his bright eyes and attractive qualities, it must be dated from that time, so that in 1600 all of the sonnets undoubtedly were then written, the whole of the sonnet-poem being concluded during the close of the year 1599 and the early part of the summer of 1600. Briefly, it may be said that many new particulars can be brought forward to show that Pembroke was the patron addressed in the Sonnets.

We have already stated that the character of a great patron of Shakespeare has long been cast into the shadow of adverse criticism by writers who have too hastily summed up his merits and assumed demerits, founded on the report of one writer, and have not known, or only partly known, the surer and more accurate testimony left on record by others of known veracity, of those that had long been acquainted with the earl, to whom we now propose to give honour where honour is due, namely to the patron of Shakespeare's later period—William

Herbert, the third Earl of Pembroke. And as all that relates to him has of late become a very topical subject in connection with Shakespeare, especially in relation to the dedication to this lord and his younger brother of the first folio of the poet's plays, and also in reference to his celebrated series of 154 sonnets, we now propose to view this lord's life from the records of the time, and to dispel the clouds and efface the blots that have so long dimmed his glory and tarnished his fame and name. We shall also lay before our readers some highly important letters by Pembroke, never before published, as illustrative of the earl and characteristic of his qualities and worth, to help us to form a true and just opinion of the life and character of this noble and celebrated patron of Shakespeare.*

Letters by noted or eminent persons have always proved attractive, they reveal the character and personality of a man perhaps more than any other species of writing, and at the time when there were no newspapers to daily publish political, social, or domestic topics, letters of news and gossip were very acceptable, especially when couched in courtly or epistolary style. Some noted men as well as others of that period devoted much of their time to letter-writing for the transmission of news; some occupied themselves in this fashion for pleasure, others to supply a want, and some were employed by people of title and position to transmit from the

* We shall make occasion later in these pages to speak of Clarendon's evidently erroneous and untrustworthy charges against the Earl of Pembroke.

metropolis or from abroad current and passing news. The letters therefore often contain matters both of public and private nature; many of these letters of news were passed from hand to hand as modern newspapers now are. During the latter time of Shakespeare this system attained its height, though but a small part of it has reached our time. The chief portion of the news-letters that exist contain either Court, political, or foreign news, more than that of a domestic character. The three perhaps most gossipy and interesting writers of these kind of epistles are Rowland Whyte, John Chamberlaine, and Sir Dudley Carleton; their letters are well known and have often been published. These news-letters heralded the way for the printed news pamphlets that began regularly to appear in the reign of Charles I., with this difference—that the publishers of regularly printed news ventured chiefly on vending foreign news for publication, hence the early letters are of greater interest than the first news pamphlets. Of these letters we shall have occasion to give some important and interesting examples.

Lord Herbert, who had become Earl of Pembroke, having succeeded his father in 1601, occupied a dignified position in the magnificent funeral procession. On 28th April it is recorded in the description published in that year that “The great embroidered Banner of England was borne by the Earl of Pembroke, assisted by the Lord Howard of Effingham. The Standard of the Greyhound borne by Master

Herbert, brother to the Earl of Pembroke." It should be noticed Pembroke's brother, young Lord Philip, is styled "Master Herbert." His lordship soon became a great favourite of King James, and in 1606 he was created Earl of Montgomery. Shakespeare's dear friend and patron, the Earl of Pembroke, became one of the most distinguished personages of the Court of James I., and as a man was highly esteemed for his goodness, virtues, and excellent qualities.

We purpose now to bring forward the letters above referred to, copied from the originals, and never before printed or apparently known to students, and as they prove of interest directly and indirectly to a perfect study of Shakespeare's writings and to the times, we gladly lay them before our readers. It will be seen Pembroke well knew the formularies of ambassadorship, he having been appointed by Queen Elizabeth in 1599 to be ambassador to the Court of Denmark, and his mission gave satisfaction to both Courts. He was perhaps the youngest of our lords ever sent on an embassy, being at the time under twenty years of age. In our transcripts we retain alone the words spelt with capitals, and give throughout with other quotations modern spellings. All the letters are not of equal interest, but they all more or less reveal the man whom as Shakespeare's dear friend we desire to more fully know.

The first letter is written by the Earl of Pembroke from the Court at Greenwich to Sir Thomas Edmonds, Knight, His Majesty's Ambassador for France,

and is from the Stowe MSS., No. 172, f. 108, now in the British Museum ; it is on the relations between the Queens of England and France. The letter is as follows—

“ SIR, I am exceeding glad to hear from you when with conveniency you may afford it, but I will never wish it with the least wrong unto yourself. I have spoken with her Majesty and have told her how honourable and fit a thing it were for her to hold a kindness and never corresponding with the Queen of France of which I perceived by discourse with others, she was very desirous, and that now after some good beginnings there was grown a kind of coldness of which I was the more sorry because I feared her Majesty had partly given the cause, in showing more forwardness to entertain a friendship with some Ladies there: of whom she could never have any use, than with the Queen herself, from whom, considering the great power she is in the state, she might be assured to receive a princely requital. Her Majesty told me, she was very ready and desirous to embrace the Queen of France's love, but that the coldness began of her side, for since she had written unto her, when the Marshall Lorerin returned she had never heard from her, thus I find there is nothing but straining of courtesy who should begin,—Our progress now puts all businesses aside but hunting wherein I am as wise as my Lord Treasurer, and will ever be, Your most affectionate friend to command, PEMBROKE. I beseech you, send this enclosed to my Lord Chandois, Is he not at Paris ? ”

It is endorsed “ Greenwich 1. July 1611.”

The second letter is also from the Stowe Collection, No. 172, f. 253. It is still more characteristic of the earl's zeal for friendship and good-nature, of which Shakespeare makes repeated mention in the Sonnets written at an earlier date. The Earl through life retained that sweetness and loving-kindness for which he was so highly and universally extolled, and as he doubtless received many letters from Shakespeare, we perhaps may find in Pembroke's some of the poet's elegancies and formularies reflected therein.

The letter now before us is also addressed to Sir Thomas Edmonds, and is on a correspondence with the Duke de Bouillon, etc., dated from Whitehall, April 27 (1612). On March 24th of that year the Duke of Bouillon came to the Court of James I. to treat for a marriage between Prince Henry and Christina, sister of the King of France; he was unsuccessful, but was presented with plate to the value of £4,000. The State papers also denote a little earlier in the same month he had arrived on a double errand from the Palatine of the Rhine, and from the Queen Regent of France. Pembroke says to Sir Thomas in the following extract from the letter—

“SIR, You did me a great deal of honour, in naming me to the Duke of Bouillon, and in seeking to make an inward correspondency between us, which shall be by me most willingly embraced, because I assure you myself, he is sincerely affected to the Good of Religion in general. And in particular to His Majesties honour and service, and therefore

will omit no opportunity that may give furtherance unto it, for its own particular, assure yourself that I am the same man you left me, and the love I did bear you I bear you still, which shall ever employ itself to the best of my power to procure You a worthy reward for so many great and painful services." Endorsed April 27, 1612. "To my honourable friend, Sir Thomas Edmonds Knight his Majesties Ambassador for France."

These letters greatly add to the testimony of Lord Pembroke having been the person addressed by Shakespeare in his Sonnets. This is made more evident by this lord's ardent expression of friendship in his letters, beyond any other writer of which I am aware of that age. The following are the concluding words by him to a lengthy epistle to Sir Julius Cæsar, dated October 7, 1612. The letter is amongst Sir Julius's papers in the British Museum, and is endorsed "The Earl of Pembroke on the behalf of his Aunt the Countess of Huntingdon, To the Right Honourable Sir Julius Cæsar Knight Chancellor of His Majesties Exchequer. "Again commanding this suit unto your favour, which I will ever study to deserve by the best and truest offices my friendship can perform, I rest your most affectionate friend to command, PEMBROKE." And as early as December 21, 1603, a letter by Pembroke to Sir Julius Cæsar, upon behalf of "a poor blind mans preferment to the Hospital of St Cross." Subscribed "Ever your assured loving friend PEMBROKE." And is endorsed "To my assured loving friend Sir Julius Cæsar." Another very

characteristic letter is preserved amongst the Stowe MSS., vol. x., No. 175. The Earl of Pembroke acknowledges letters from Prince de Conde, and the Dukes de Rohan and Bouillon, dated Whitehall March 24, 1615, and is addressed to Sir Thomas Edmonds, Knight, in which he says—

“MY LORD, The Prince of Conde whose two [letters] I received from Monsieur de Courtney, and the Dukes of Rohan and Bouillon, whose letters came unto me in your Lordship’s packet ; have done me an excessive honour, in taking notice, in so noble a fashion of a man, that hath no more means to do them service, which favour I must chiefly acknowledge to the good report they have heard of me from you, otherwise to two of them I know the sound of my name scarce ever came to their ears, but since they are pleased to throw away so much honour on me, I beseech you say for me that I will strive to make myself worthy of it, by all the service which shall be in my power to perform unto them.

“ I have written to the Prince and sent my love to Monsieur de Courtney who hath promised to send it with all speed because I received the Princes love from him. And I beseech your Lordship to favour me with the conveying of these two enclosed to the Dukes de Rohan and Bouillon, and to supply unto them all the causes of the expression of my thankfulness in this kind, and to assure them that I should esteem it an extraordinary happiness, if anything that can fall which in my fortune may be serviceable unto them : to yourself, I will say no more but to entreat you confidently to expect in all your

occasions the best offices of my love which [I] will ever unfeignedly perform by remaining ever, Your Lordships most affectionate friend to command, PEMBROKE."

Having brought to an end our present extracts from the Stowe MSS., exhibiting Pembroke's regard and loving-kindness both as to the poor blind man as also to those in exalted position, it should also be stated that Shakespeare was not alone in partaking of Pembroke's proffered kindness; a crowd of others had cause during his life to praise his name, among whom were Inigo Jones, Ben Jonson, John Florio, and others, and Lord Bacon in his time of trouble found in him sympathy and support. Pembroke, like the gallant Raleigh, was a guest entertainer. Raleigh in the days of his prosperity took upon himself to be the guide of dignified persons visiting the metropolis on diplomatic occasions; his place was well filled by Pembroke, who performed with equal grace that courtly office. We bring to light a letter to Sir R. Cecil upon one of these events, dated September 6, 1601, it is said, when referring to the visit of the Duke of Byron to London—

"SIR, I am glad I came hither for I never saw so great a person so neglected. He hath been here now in the metropolis, but not one Nobleman nor Gentleman to accompany the Duke and his retinue, —nor to guide them—So Sir Walter with some friends carried them to Westminster to see the Monuments, and this monday we entertained them at the Bear Garden, which they took great pleasure

to see." We learn from the Salisbury papers at Hatfield that on Oct. 3, 1595, "The Marquis of Baden and suite passed several days in viewing the tombs of Westminster and Pauls, Paris Garden, and such like pastimes." The last words may and probably do refer to the theatrical exhibitions on the Bankside, Southwark. The foreign nobles evidently took a fancy to the sport of bull and bear baiting. We do not think Pembroke would have taken the Duke of Byron and his escort to witness cruel sports on the Bankside, Southwark, but rather to see Burbage perform in a play of Shakespeare's at the Globe Theatre in the same region of sport and pleasure.

This is rendered more probable by the following letter, apparently quite unknown, written by Pembroke, and is of considerable interest and importance, as it not only further shows his amiable nature, but evinces his remarkable love for the drama and for a player. This is seen in a document I have discovered, and in it that lord's character is fully revealed. He mentions in it the death of Richard Burbage, "England's great Roscius." Burbage was a great friend of Shakespeare's, and was also, as is now fully evident, loved and admired by Pembroke. The earl himself was an actor in Court masques, and greatly admired the art and its leading professors, among whom Burbage and Shakespeare are ranked highest. And prefaced to the first folio in 1623 of Shakespeare's plays—the volume dedicated to Pembroke—appear "The Names of the Principal Actors in all these Plays." At the head of the list

stand "William Shakespeare" and "Richard Burbage." Shakespeare acted in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*, in 1595, with Burbage, and also in the same poet's *Sejanus* in 1603, his name being printed at the head of the list in conjunction with Burbage, which would seem to imply that Shakespeare was a greater actor than is generally supposed. He may have been supreme in certain characters and phases of the actor's art, perhaps in a more limited range equal or superior to any. And Aubrey hands down the early tradition that Shakespeare "did act exceedingly well." Burbage is the most noteworthy of all the old actors as being the original performer of many of the principal characters in Shakespeare's plays; he was the friend and fellow of Shakespeare, whom he did not long outlive; he died March 13, 1619. Burbage was a legatee in Shakespeare's will, and was a man of whom all that is certainly known of him proves him not only to have been a great actor, if not the greatest of all actors, but also a most worthy man. No other nobleman of the day evinced like Pembroke such real interest in poets, players, and play-acting as this honoured lord, who at the same time filled very important offices of state with the utmost dignity and respect.

The letter above referred to may therefore be viewed as a connecting link between Pembroke, Burbage, and Shakespeare. This very interesting document has lain hidden amongst the MS. treasures of the British Museum, and is copied from the original in his lordship's handwriting; it is to be

found amongst the correspondence of the Earl of Carlisle, Egerton MS., No. 2592, ff. 7, 81, 103, comprising in these pages three letters of William third Earl of Pembroke to Lord Doncaster, Ambassador to Germany, dating from 1616 to 1619.

LORD PEMBROKE AND BURBAGE THE PLAYER

The letter now under especial notice is endorsed "20. May, 1619. From My Lord Chamberlain received at Heidelberg." The address is: "To the right honourable my very good Lord, the Viscount Doncaster, His Majesties Extraordinary Ambassador for Germany, Whitehall this 20th May," and is as follows—

"MY LORD, Having so fit an opportunity to kiss your hands. And so let you know that no man here in England is more your servant than myself. I would not let my courier Barkley go without this small testimony of my unceremonious respect unto [you] This day the French Ambassador took his leave of the King, to morrow he takes his journey for France. We shall put off our black at St. George's tide and be laughed at for it by all Christendom at Midsummer. And now your Lordship hath all our little news not worth your reading. The last is the best that the King will most willingly over-rule all his Spanish commissions. And accommodate the East India Trade, between us and the Hollanders, though I assure your Lordship some are *in furies lap* for it. And now your Lordship hath all that I know hath passed since your departure, but that my Lord of Lennox made a

great supper to the French Ambassador this night here. And even now all the company are at the play, which I being tender hearted could not endure to see so soon after the loss of my old acquaintance Burbage. If I had better matter to entertain your Lordship withal you should have it, but in the mean time I beseech you accept of this because it comes from him who will ever unfeignedly remain, Your Lordships most affectionate friend and servant, PEMBROKE. I beseech your Lordship commend my best love to Mr. Doctor Donne."

There are historic sidelights to this letter we are enabled to bring forward that enhance its interest. We find from other sources that on May 20, 1619, Lord Lennox made a great supper at Whitehall and a play was performed. The Calendar of State Papers, under date May 22, 1619, tells us, "The French Ambassador Extraordinary has taken his leave and was magnificently feasted by the Duke of Lennox," and in the same papers under date May 24th, in a letter from Sir Gerard Herbert to Carleton, there is an account of the supper given by the Duke of Lennox to the Marquis of Tremonville, the Ambassador, at Whitehall. We are told that "after a most magnificent banquet the company witnessed the play of *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, in the King's great chamber they witnessed the above named play, which lasted till two o'clock, after two acts the players ceased till the French and the company present were all refreshed, they partook of sweetmeats brought on china voiders, and wine and ale in bottles. After the players began anew.

The Ambassadors parted next morning for France at eight o'clock, full well pleased."*

The record from the State papers greatly enhances, we have observed, the interest attached to Pembroke's letter, as we learn that the play selected for that special occasion was a very remarkable play and assigned to Shakespeare. Pembroke's sensitive feelings may well also have been saddened by the thought of his loss of Shakespeare but three years past and now of Burbage, to whom he was also evidently deeply attached. This play appears to have been a favourite at this time, and this is the more evident by a quarto edition appearing of it in 1619, and bearing on its title-page testimony that it was written by William Shakespeare. We have little doubt but that Pembroke, Shakespeare, and Burbage were often together at Baynard's Castle to arrange plays to be privately performed on festive occasions in the castle, then the earl's town residence, especially as the fellow actors of Shakespeare's own company have recorded that Pembroke granted to Shakespeare great kindness and particular favour. We have therefore pictured him at the head of this article examining a new play by Shakespeare for private representation.

Doctor Donne, mentioned in Pembroke's letter, was Chaplain to the Embassy. It is to be noticed the earl uses Shakespeare's expression "in Furies lap," to be found in the Second Part of *King Henry IV.*, Act V., Sc. i. To lay anything in a person's lap

* *Vide* Cal. State Papers, Dom. S. 1619—1623, pp. 16-7.
Letter of News.

meant to place it entirely into their possession ; the term seems only to have been used by Shakespeare.

The news-letters of the period preserve many matters of interest which would else have become lost, and we may venture to say that if ever there is discovered a contemporary notice of Shakespeare's death, it will most likely be found hidden in foreign archives in a letter of news sent from the metropolis to some notable person either on a visit or as ambassador, or merchant, or on some diplomatic occasion abroad.

Nothing can show clearer than this particular letter of Pembroke's the love and sympathy the earl had for actors, at a period when the social status of actors was not thought worthy of especial regard, when the theatrical profession was held by a large part of the community in contempt, to which Shakespeare makes frequent allusion in the Sonnets. The drama indeed owes the Earl of Pembroke a debt of gratitude for his friendship and patronage of such men as Shakespeare and Burbage. Such a remarkable testimony to the affection this lord possessed for a player naturally leads us to conclude almost to a certainty from this alone that Pembroke, who speaks of a mere player in such friendly terms, was the patron-friend of whom Shakespeare writes in such loving language in the now world-famous Sonnets—as one high in dignity, who did not disdain to honour him with his friendship and most ardent esteem, though thus accounted by many merely a player and writer for the stage.

Pembroke, from his position at Court, had close

connection later in life with some of the leading players of the day; the following proves his contact with famous "Ned Alleyn," as he was called, the noted actor and founder of Dulwich College, an incident not known to his biographers. Mr. Chamberlain writes to Sir Dudley Carleton, on June 14, 1623: "On Whitmondaiy Pembroke the Lord Chamberlain, with other Lords and Gentlemen took their journey towards Southampton to take order for the reception of the Infante of Spain, when she shall arrive, for lodging her and her Train, etc., and for shews and pajaents to which purpose Inigo Jones and Alleyn the old player went along with them." *

Pembroke's patronage of Florio, the famous lexicographer and translator, has been mentioned. In 1625 he bequeathed by his will to the Earl of Pembroke about 340 books and manuscripts; this collection of learned volumes he desired to be placed in Pembroke's library, either at Wilton or Baynard's Castle. Pembroke all his life was fond of learned men and learned books; no nobleman of the time had so many important religious and learned works dedicated to his honour as this lord. He was a member of the original Society of Antiquarians, which had been founded in 1572. Queen Elizabeth was, it appears, patroness; it held weekly meetings in London. Pembroke's name is found in a list of members up to the end of 1604, in a paper in the Cottonian Library and in other MSS. Camden, Raleigh, Cotton, and Selden, and most of

* Birch MS., Brit. Mus., 4174.

the learned men of the time belonged to this society, and the Earl of Pembroke is especially mentioned as a "chief countenancer and patron" of at least one learned man at that early date, viz. 1604.

In 1629, near the close of Pembroke's life, he purchased for £700—a sum equal at the present day to £3,000—a collection of over 250 volumes of Greek manuscripts, for the purpose of presenting to the University of Oxford, and sent them as a present with the following letter, copied from Macray's "Annals of the Bodleian Library," pp. 53, 54—

"GOOD MR. VICE CHANCELLOR,

"Understanding of an excellent collection of Greek manuscripts brought from Venice, and thinking that they would be more use to the Church in being kept united in some public library than scattered in particular hands, remembering the obligation, I had to my mother the University, first for breeding of me, after for the honour they did me, in making me their Chancellor. I was glad of this occasion to repay some part of that great debt I owe her. And therefore I sent you down the collection entire, which I pray present with my best love to the Convocation house. And I shall unfeignedly remain,

"Your most assured friend,

"PEMBROKE.

"Greenwich the 25th of May, 1629."

The same abode of learning has another memorial of him. "His magnificent colossal statue," says Bliss, "is in the Bodleian Gallery, and is justly

esteemed one of the finest in the kingdom." * It is in brass by Hubert Le Soeur, who also made the statue of King Charles at Charing Cross. That of Pembroke is from a design by Rubens in 1629, who was residing in England in that year at the Court of Charles, and was probably made at the desire of the king, for whom he cast several statues in bronze after 1630. Pembroke College, Oxford, was named after William Earl of Pembroke, then Chancellor of the University. Fuller says: "That noble Lord died soon after the new College was erected."

The earl died in 1630 in his fiftieth year at his London residence, Baynard's Castle; throughout his life there are many proofs of his having been a man of the highest worth, qualities, and endowments. Arthur Wilson says: "William Earl of Pembroke, who after Somersets fall (by the late Queens mediation) was made Lord Chamberlain to the King, a man that merited the highest employment." † And Sanderson says of him that he was "a proper person, well set, of graceful deportment; his mind truly generous." ‡ Camden, writing in the latter years of Pembroke's life, says that this Earl William was "richly accomplished with all laudable endowments of body and mind." § And Robert Anton, a puritan, writing in the preface to his poems, speaks of his reputation in the world for virtue, and of his being a strict

* Add. to "Athenæ Oxonienses."

† "History of Great Britain," folio, 1653, p. 144.

‡ "Reign of King Charles I.," folio, 1658, p. 1.

§ "Britannia," folio edition, 1637, p. 656.

protestant and a worthy and religious man.* And Isaac Walton also tells us that this earl loved a man more for "learning and virtue" than all things else—as in the instance of George Herbert the poet, who was chosen Orator for the University of Cambridge in 1619. Upon the gift by King James of his book, called "Basilikon Doron," to the University, Herbert sent a letter of gratitude to his Majesty. Walton, who records this incident, says: "This Letter was writ in such excellent Latin, was so full of Conceits, and all the expressions so suited to the genius of the King, that he enquired the Orators name, and then asked William Earl of Pembroke, if he knew him: whose answer was, That he knew him very well; and, that he was his Kinsman, but he loved him more for his learning and vertue, than for that he was of his name and family. At which answer the King smiled, and asked the earl leave, that he might love him too; for, he took him to be the Jewel of the University."†

We are told in the annals of the period that the earl kept a most admirable correspondence with King Charles I.‡ And the King, as is known, was a great admirer of the plays of Shakespeare. The folio edition of 1632 the King had used, and containing his handwriting, is preserved in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle; it came into the possession of Sir Thomas Herbert, as kinsman of the Earl

* Anton's "Philosophical Satires," 1616.

† "The Life of Mr. George Herbert," by Isaac Walton, edition 1670, p. 23.

‡ "Annals of the Reign of King Charles I.," folio, 1656, p. 112.

of Pembroke. A host of writers could be brought forward who speak highly of the Earl of Pembroke who had long known him personally, extolling his moral, intellectual, and religious character ; amongst whom were Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and Drummond of Hawthornden, and several of the foremost divines of the Church.

The letters of the earl to King Charles, “ the most admirable correspondence ” above referred to, appear to have been lost during the pillage and distractions of the Civil Wars, therefore the loss of the larger and more matured portion of the earl’s later correspondence is very much to be deplored. A collection of interesting miscellaneous poems by Pembroke were published in 1660, but many remain in MSS., and are in the Bodleian Library and other collections. In this notice and defence of the earl’s character we must advert to the love affair of this lord’s early period with a lady of the Court of Elizabeth, the well-known Mary Fitton, one of the Queen’s most forward and noted maids of honour. The incident has of late been made far too much of, and needs viewing in a more dispassionate and clearer light. It occurred after the young lord’s appearing at Court. At this time he was very young, not having attained to more than some eighteen or nineteen summers—in short, this most attractive and susceptible young lord became entangled with this very bold and designing lady ; truly the maids of the Queen gave her Majesty a great deal of trouble. Sir Walter Raleigh had incurred the same disgrace as Pembroke ; so also, as we have seen, did the Earl

of Southampton, who saw his way after some wavering or delay to make his lady-love his wife ; Raleigh also married his mistress. The Queen was equally incensed against them, as she now proved with Lord Herbert, who had just become Earl of Pembroke, and he for certain private reasons exhibits a revulsion of marriage, and would not be entrapped into wedlock ; and in this, after events shows his wisdom in his refusal, as the life of Mary Fitton fully proves. This love affair has long been known to the present writer, but as it had evidently no bearing on the Sonnets, it has been dismissed from further notice ; but as others at a later time have supposed it has, it requires this allusion to it, but the incident does not have, as can be fully shown, any connection with the Sonnets of Shakespeare.*

Pembroke, however, a few years later married a lady that had been appointed, June 28, 1600, maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth, and in 1604 he became the husband to this Queen's maid, Mary Talbot, the eldest daughter of Gilbert Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury ; and he made a good choice, and as will be shown it proved a happy, honourable marriage. The earl had become a strictly virtuous and truly religious man.

Two notices of the love affair above briefly referred to, should be laid before our readers. It may be stated a child was given birth to but quickly died, and the event proved one of great grief and

* To this we have already adverted. See p. 54.

trouble to the young earl, and he deeply felt his sin from first to last, but would not blame his mistress, but nobly laid the whole blame on himself. The Earl of Pembroke said late in life in reference to this "juvenile lapse," as the narrator styles it, that he had heard the Earl of Pembroke state "that Lord Cobham exasperated the old Queen against him."* It should be noticed that nothing is said against Mary Fitton, or of her having been, or being at the time, the mistress of Shakespeare, or of any other, as has been assumed by some writers. And in the private interview the young earl's mother, Mary Sidney Countess of Pembroke, had with the Queen on this love affair, no other lover but the young earl is spoken of.

The other important notice, also not hitherto brought forward, is contained in the funeral sermon preached at Baynard's Castle on the death of the Earl of Pembroke, April 10, 1630, entitled, "The Just Man's Memorial," wherein his lordship's chaplain extols the purity of his life, and says, "His conversation was sweet and angelical," and that he was a "righteous man," worthy to join the saints in heaven—morning and evening he was on his knees, praying for the pardon of the sins of his youth, and the chaplain desires that he himself and his hearers will imitate his pattern of life, and join him in bliss. This thrusts aside the grave and evidently slanderous charges to which we have previously referred—made against this earl at a

* Osborn's "Memoirs of King James," edition 1650.

much later date by Clarendon, in his "History of the Rebellion," when penning a dashing sketch obviously from hearsay and calumny that the Earl was to the end of his days of a licentious disposition. This assertion is totally disproved by all the writers of the time, several of whom had known Pembroke for years, and were personally intimate with him. It is, however, well known that this historian inserted many grave errors and misstatements in his history. It is true in his notice of Pembroke he begins by penning a high eulogy on him, a fine tribute of praise, and after having spoken of his "proper vertue and merit," and of his religion, he says, "And sure never man was planted in a Court that was fitter for that soil, or brought better qualities with him to purify that air," but adds to this at a later date it would seem certain obvious hearsay slanders from some whom Pembroke had known and trusted in his business, charging him with immoderate licentiousness. This is quite opposed to and out of harmony with his previous statements. The earl died when Clarendon was in his twenty-first year, and his history was not fully begun till 1645. He also has a scurrilous reflection on Pembroke's wife; he avows the earl made a bad bargain in marrying her, and says Pembroke was very unhappy in his married life, and that "he paid much too dear for his wife's fortune by taking her person into the bargain"—a slur upon the countess that is quite opposed to the actual fact. We must conclude this writer was misinformed both in respect to Pembroke and his wife, and recorded slander for truth, and, as

before remarked, it is well known from writers of the highest rank that this historian's testimony is often to be impugned. In reference to Lady Pembroke, we find she was one of the bright stars of the Court, and joined in the dramatic and other festivities there.

The position and honour accorded to Pembroke and his lady appears to have evoked some little envy and slander, as might have been expected in the Courts of James and Charles, from this earl's prominent position, his ethical and religious principles and character. The following excerpts from letters, all written by Rowland Whyte, then Master of the Posts to the King's Household, a number of his lively and ingenious epistles are extant. The following are addressed to the Earl of Shrewsbury; the originals of these letters are in the Herald's College, and are mostly addressed from the Court at Whitehall to the Earl of Shrewsbury at Sheffield.

Among other Court matters, in a letter dated Baynard's Castle, March 4, 1604, he says: "My Lady Pembroke is very well, a better Lady lives not; and as long as I live I will be an humble servant to her." And in another dated Feb. 4, 1604, he says: "Lord Pembroke is well, and surely is as honourable and kind husband as any in Great Britain. My Lady much joys in it, and gives him every day more and more cause to increase it, God bless them both with children and long life. My Lady is much honoured by all his friends, and all strive who shall love her best. To me this is a great comfort, and my Lady, shall ever find me an humble servant unto

her, and one that shall well observe her. My Lord of Pembroke's favour with the King is more than he will make shew of ; and the young worthy, Sir Philip, grows great in his Majesties favour, and carries it without envy, for he is very humble to the great Lordships, is desirous to do all men good, and hurts no man." Again in a long letter written from the Court, April 25, 1605, he says that : " My Lady Pembroke, your worthy daughter, upon the assurance she had of your Honour's coming up, went to meet you, and missing you, staid at my Lord of Kents, to take the air, and returned upon Monday last to Baynards Castle, her sister my Lady Gray, accompanying her, where they are very well and merry. And let me assure your Honours that my Lady Pembroke is very much respected by all her Lords friends, she worthily deserving it. It may be the indiscretion of some that love tattling may buzz out the contrary, which occasions this protestation of mine to your Honour ; and I doubt not but that her Ladyship doth live, and shall ever live, as well contented as any Lady in England, if others suffer her to see and enjoy this happiness." And in October 4, 1606, in an account of the festivities at Hampton Court, he says : " In the Queen's Presence Chamber, there was dancing, the King, Queen, Prince, and Vandemont, my Lady Pembroke was taken out by a French Cavaliero to dance a courante. Her Ladyship took out our noble Prince. At last it came to a Galliard ; the Prince took out my Lady Pembroke, and she the Earl of Perth. No Lady there did dance so well as she did

that day : so she carried the glory, and it was given her by King, Queen, and others. Vandemont danced the Queen danced ; Lady Essex, Lady Knolles, Lady Livingstone, the Maids." In fact, there is every proof of continued affection between Lord Pembroke and his lady.* And the Earl of Shrewsbury in his will, dated May 14, 1616, reveals the fullest affection for the Earl of Pembroke and for his daughter, Pembroke's wife. All this is truly very different from the evidently groundless assertion of Clarendon. The honourable names of Pembroke and his lady have long been besmirched, at length we trust to have effectually cleared the stigma so long attached to them ; and in regard to these noble personages it may truly be said, in the words of our great poet—

" Slander ;
Whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue
Outnarrows all the worms of Nile ; whose breath
Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie
All corners of the world : Kings, Queens and states,
Maids, matrons, nay the secrets of the grave
This viperous slander enters."

Pembroke's lady partook of her lord's taste for literature ; she took pleasure in Ben Jonson's conversation and verses, and he wrote a poem at her request.† Pembroke gave him a sum every New Year's Day, equal at the present time to about

* For the letters in full, see Lodge's " Illustrations to British History," 1838, vol. iii.

† Ben Jonson's " Conversations with William Drummond " tell us " Pembroke and his Lady discoursing, the Earl said, the women were men's shadows, and she maintained them. Both appealing to Jonson, he affirmed it true ; for which," says he, " my Lady gave a pennance to prove it in verse," hence, says Drummond, his " Episrau."

£100, to buy books. And we cannot but enforce the fact that Pembroke's moral and religious life is fully revealed in the fact that from 1604 till his death it appears he had more learned, moral, philosophical, and religious works dedicated to him than any other nobleman of his age. Puritans, Churchmen and divines and writers of the highest note openly declared his merit and worth, and Ben Jonson from an early period repeatedly bears testimony to his surpassing critical judgment, and to the purity of his manhood and moral character of his life; and Drummond the poet, who had known the earl for many years, after his death in a tribute of praise certifies that he was a most religious and praiseworthy man. And Chapman, in a sonnet appended to his translation of Homer in 1616, speaks of Pembroke as a good, a great, and most learned person. We may well conclude our notice of this lord and his lady with an epigram by Owen on the marriage of Pembroke; the original is in Latin, we give an old translation—

“ In manners, personage, wit, age, estates,
 And in nobility, you both are mates,
 Yet thou deservest a better bride than she,
 A better bridegroom she deserves than thee.”

It should perhaps be remarked that Pembroke died according to a prediction as to the time of his death, and it is curious this is assigned by early report to three different persons, one of whom was imprisoned for a time for reporting it. A writer on the earl's death said at the time that had he died under the doctor his end might have been expected—

“ but to steal
 A close departure from us, and to die
 Of no disease, but of a prophecy,
 Is mystery not fate.” *

In some minds there appears to have been, and not perhaps without cause, belief of malice or treachery in this lord's sudden and remarkable end, especially as we find from Clarendon some were ready to sully the honoured and pure reputation he bore from his twentieth year to the end of his life.

The patronage of art, poetry, the drama, and philosophy in the noble and honoured house of Pembroke, especially in regard to Earls William and Philip, both of whom we are told in 1647 had been great supporters of the stage, and lent their help and power, not only it is said “ to the flowing compositions of the then expired sweet Swan of Avon, Shakespeare,” but Earl Philip after the death of his brother lent his “ most constant and diffusive goodness ” during several years, till the outbreak of the civil wars closed the theatres and scattered the players. †

Shakespeare was fortunate in obtaining the patronage of two leading noblemen of the times in which he lived ; the patronage of the young Earl of Southampton in his early period doubtless greatly lifted him up before the world, and advanced him and his writings. The earl, though a distinguished lover of letters and learned men, was as already stated of a stirring warlike spirit, and engaged in several naval and land actions, not perhaps always

* Old printed poem in Brit. Mus. Col.

† Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, folio edit., 1647. Dedicated to Philip Earl of Pembroke.

wisely and well, but always impetuous and brave. And later on, as he retired to his estates, duties and appointments, we lose sight of him as far as the drama and Shakespeare are concerned, and as he appears to retire to the background, then came forward the young Lord Herbert, and as Earl of Pembroke he was the acknowledged great patron of "Muses and good minds,"* and abode in London and at the Court till the last, not however mixing up much with dramatists and players; except in the persons of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Burbage, we do not find any others especially in touch with him. We may notice that the memory of these distinguished patrons of Shakespeare was not forgotten by the dramatic writers of the day. The following extract from a play written a few years after the death of these earls by Richard Brome, a former servant of Ben Jonson, and so-called son—"sealed of the tribe of Ben." In his comedy called *The Antipodes*, acted in the year 1638, Letoy, a fantastic lord, a great lover of the drama, says of his servants, of whom he thinks highly for their skill in acting, boastingly exclaims—

"These lads can act the Emperors lives all over,
And Shakespeare's Chronicled histories to boot,
And were that Cæsar, or that English Earl,
That lov'd a Play and Player so well now living,
I would not be out-vied in my delights."

—Act. I., Sc. v.

Letoy is comparing himself with two eminent patrons of the drama; by the first, Cæsar, he appears

* Dedication to the translation of St. Augustine's "Civitas Dec.," folio, 1610, to William Earl of Pembroke, by Th. Th. [Thomas Thorpe]

to glance at the Earl of Southampton, so styled for his military character, and who we know was an admirer of the stage and of the dramatic poet and actor Shakespeare. The English earl referred to as then deceased was most certainly Lord Pembroke, who, we know "lov'd a Play and a Player so well" in the person of the great dramatist Shakespeare, which fact was made public before all the world in the dedication of the first folio of 1623, and Brome's audience would know to whom he pointed. Letoy would be ambitious to equal both these patrons of plays and actors.

It is remarkable that the love for Shakespeare and the drama was inherent in the Pembroke family, in the early part of the last century one of the earls ornamented Wilton with a monument of Shakespeare. An early writer * says of their ancestral mansion, "But the glory of this place is the magnificent palace belonging to the Earl of Pembroke called Wilton-House, which is justly admired as one of the principal objects of curiosity in England," and further states that "In the great gateway is a statue of Shakespeare, by Sheemaker, in the same attitude as that in Westminster Abbey: but the lines on the scroll are different; these are out of *Macbeth*—

" 'Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.' "

And in another work in the same year, † giving

* "The Universal Museum and Complete Magazine," Sept. 1769.

† Russell, "England Displayed," folio, 1769.

“A particular account of the Jubilee at Stratford upon Avon,” says: “The Company at the masked ball in the evening was very numerous,—Among the most distinguished characters in the masquerade, Lady Pembroke, Mrs. Bouviero, and Mrs. Crewe, habited as Witches excited the general attraction.” The Lord Pembroke of that day kept up a most familiar epistolatory correspondence with an actor and dramatic poet and lover of Shakespeare, the inimitable David Garrick. The literature and art of England have much to honour the Pembrokes for, both in regard to their patronage of learned men, beginning with Shakespeare’s patron, who was termed the Mæcenas of his age, and for their advancement of philosophy, poetry, and the drama; and that noble house led the way to the honourable position the stage and the avocation of actor hold at this day. And William Herbert Earl of Pembroke, Shakespeare’s beloved patron and dear friend, broke down the barriers of prejudice and honoured the actor in the person of the “immortal Shakespeare” and “England’s famous Roscius, Richard Burbage,” and heralded the way for Queen Victoria, greater than Elizabeth, to confer high and especial favour and honour upon Sir Henry Irving, the greatest actor of our age, and one who has by his attractive and most cultured representations of our great poet’s dramas, not only exalted the drama and the stage, but has conferred a brighter immortality to the name of Shakespeare.

A CONTEMPORARY EULOGIST
OF SHAKESPEARE

A CONTEMPORARY EULOGIST OF SHAKESPEARE

Among Shakespeare's contemporaries there is one that demands more than a mere passing notice, such as he has hitherto received, and though he was but one of the lesser stars that moved round the great luminary that now attracts all eyes—that bright sun of our literature William Shakespeare—yet we are much indebted to him for particulars we should have been unable to obtain elsewhere. It is the purpose of this paper to seek to add to it by further light from the same source. The writer referred to is Leonard Digges, a well-known poet and translator of his day. He was born in 1588, and studied at University College, Oxford, and may have been acquainted with Shakespeare, who frequently visited the town on his journeys to and from London from Stratford-on-Avon, and whose company of players performed the play of *Hamlet* before the University in 1603. Digges was constantly at the college from the year 1603 to 1606; after travelling much abroad visiting various universities, he finally resided at his own college and died there in 1635. He was the author of a notable poem on Shakespeare prefixed to the first folio, and was the first by many years to mention the monument to Shakespeare

erected in the church at Stratford-on-Avon in that now memorable poem. He also penned at a later period another and much longer set of verses upon our bard, giving an interesting look back, as well as a far-seeing prophetic forward look, which appeared in the collected poems of Shakespeare printed in 1640.

Digges is therefore worthy of some record or memorial, not only for the genuine love he evinced thus early for the now universally admired works of the Swan of Avon, but notably for his record of the esteem Shakespeare was held in by his contemporaries, chiefly during the last few years before and the seven years after his death, till the appearance of the first folio ; and for his full and outspoken testimony to the transcendent genius of Shakespeare, and the applause his works received during this period, of which there is full proof from the verses by Digges.

And perhaps this is the most fitting time to pay a tribute to his memory, as I am able to place before the reader's notice an original letter by Leonard Digges which I have discovered hidden in the manuscript treasures of the British Museum. Deciphered and annotated, it proves to be of considerable interest and importance.

From Anthony A. Wood's "Athenæ Oxonienses," vol. i. pp. 636 to 639, and vol. ii. pp. 592, 593, and also from the "Biographica Britannica," vol. iii. p. 1717, we may gather that he was the son of Thomas Digges of Crainbrook in the county of Kent, the famous mathematician, and learned it is said to a

miracle in mathematical sciences, and well skilled in matters relating to soldiers and war, having been Muster-master General of all Queen Elizabeth's Forces in the Low Countries ; and brother to the celebrated Sir Dudley Digges, who was sent by King James I. Ambassador to the Emperor of Russia, and was afterwards Master of the Rolls ; he died in Aug. 1595. Leonard's mother was Anne, daughter of Sir William St. Leodgar, Knight. Leonard was born in London, became a Commoner of University College, Oxford, in the beginning of the year 1603, aged 15, took the degree of Bachelor of Arts Oct. 31, 1606, retired to the great city (London) for the present, afterwards travelled into several countries, and became an accomplished person. Some years after his return to London he retired to his college again, and upon his supplication made to the venerable convocation, he was, in consideration that he had spent many years in good letters in transmarine universities, actually created Master of Arts, Nov. 20, 1626. He was well esteemed by those that knew him in University College, being accounted a good poet and orator, and a great master of the English, French, and Spanish languages.

He translated from Latin into English verse, "The Rape of Proserpina," in three books, London, 1617, 4to, written by Claudian, and from Spanish into English, "Gerado the Unfortunate Spaniard," London, 1622, 4to, written by Goncalo de Cespades. He died April 7, 1635, and was buried, Wood says, "in that little old chapel of University College, (sometime standing about the middle of the present

quadrangle) which was pulled down in 1668. Several verses," says that learned antiquary, "of his composition I have seen printed in the beginning of various authors, particularly those before Shakespeare's works, which shew him to have been an eminent poet of his time." Digges in his own day and by his biographers received higher praise than was perhaps justly his due; his verses as poetry we must view as his least merit, but the record they contain—we refer to those relating to Shakespeare—renders them extremely valuable, and need not to be given here, as they are to be found in all the most complete editions of Shakespeare. Gerado's moral novel, as it has been called, Digges dedicated to Shakespeare's celebrated patrons, William Earl of Pembroke and his brother Philip Earl of Montgomery.

The letter, the principal subject of this notice, is to be found in the Lansdowne Collection of manuscripts, in the British Museum, No. 841, fol. 11, etc., and is described as Chiefly on the Subject of Larks and Invisible Musicians. The whole is worth perusal, and in fact reproduction by facsimile, but merely a brief account it is thought will suffice for the present purpose. The letter is an original one from Leonard Digges to his friend Mr. Philip Washington at Oxford, and is very amusing. It begins thus: "All Happiness to you and your Cousin Wentworth." The first part of the epistle refers to a jovial gathering at a squire's house in the country with whom Digges was staying, and relates some sports and pleasantries taking place

at the time of his visit, and what passed during the writing of this letter, while, with pen in hand, he was called away to greet newcomers to the hall. There is also talk of a merry-meeting at Oxford, to which Digges offers to contribute a fat turkey; another will send a capon, and another a couple of hens, to make the friends merry at East Gate, which was the old refectory and some chambers adjoining at the east side of that name at University College, Oxford. Mention is made of numerous persons and friends of the writer. Digges seems solicitous that his friend Washington should spend his time to the best advantage, and blames him for omitting to keep up his correspondence. He says: "Is it want of matter that keeps your pen from paper! No it is rather late sitting up, or lying in Bedde long in the mornings, correct that sluggishness and you will mend the fault of not writing, You cannot expect that I should write you news out of the country. Where there is no more than what I may well suppose you have with you about Oxford, extreme foul weather of late, but with us also there hath been in the night times frequent thunder and lightnings not usual at this tyme of the year." He speaks of himself as not being open to blame in neglecting to write, and desires to learn how his friends are at University College, and to be with Washington and his Cousin Wentworth and others, who, he hears, are drinking good sack and are making merry, if not too merry. He then describes a convivial meeting, the drinking of sack and the smoking of their pipes at the hall, and tells some humorous stories

that were related at the table during the beginning and completion of this letter. The first is of a prodigious drinker of sack, one Caterwood of Kent, what huge quantities of that Falstaffian beverage he would devour at a sitting; then one who was the mock and gull of the company, thinking to outdo the first tale as to the fabulous amount of sack Caterwood drank: "That is nothing sayd he, How many dozen of Larks think you, Gentlemen might good Skilowe of our Country, about Casome Side, [in Gloucestershire] eate at one meale, we told him, says Digges, it was difficult to guesse at an exactnesse, larkes being a small fowle [here a portion is effaced], One who thought to come nearer the marke sayd 12 dozen was fair, but would not allow him a bird more to save his life." More humorous speech follows; the teller vows it is a fact what he states of this monstrous and fearful gourmand, for so he described him. "And so I can tell you he sayd, he is yet living in Worcestershire, and I have seen him, he did eate, 1000 dozen of Larkes at one sitting, and do you believe it sayde a Mr Davis, I doe replied the other, for I have heard it credibly spoken by those whom I dare trust for a greater matter. To make a little sport says Digges, in went my spoone, and I spurred him up with this question, I pray Sir in how many of the 52 Shires of England and Wales were the larks taken, and how many Cookees were at the dressinge of the abominable larks feast, only you are strangely credulous my masters, says the fellow indeed, Sir cried I had you been so when this tale was put upon you as a gull, you would have

forborne the Legende, at least not mentioned your part of the beleif of it." There is more of this, and Digges finely banteres the student who gravely narrates the so-called "Legend of Truth," which he at once ridicules and disputes. Then follows by the same grave narrator, to win him favour at the board, a report of festivities at Christmass-time at a knight's in the same shire, at whose house some musicians were desirous to give a concert of music against the good time. They were admitted and led to a parlour, where they shut the door and would not, it is said, permit the knight or his friends to enter, and played the most harmonious music that ever was heard; they repeated their visits, but always played to the exclusion of all. These are, the grave, clerical-looking student states, the invisible musicians (of which there seems to have been some talk at that time), and these "fairy fiddlers," he says, "played most sweetly, and always vanished at midnight."

But one evening there happened to be a madde, i.e. humorous fellow, at the knight's at supper, who hearing the wonder, and word being brought that the musicians were come again, declares that he would into the parlour and see what they were. He breaks open the door, but as soon as he was entered a visible cudgel lights upon him and knocks him down, and the musicians at once vanished; then, says the grave clerique story-teller, the music was never welcomed more. Digges will listen to no more such idle tales, and declares that he must leave the company and go into the parlour to make an end of a letter to a friend; he has no longer

patience, he says, to hear such lying stories, and excuses sending an account of these ridiculous passages about such trifling matters ; his object in doing so he tells his friend Washington—and here we arrive at that which is of importance in this curious letter—is : “ That when you meet with Tom Coggan or Humphrey Ellis request them from me for shame to give over for they will never be able to match this matchless Curate in their trade. I coulde write [he continues] of your mad Relations of y^e Towne of Stratforde where I was last weeke, but they are too tedious & I have been so already, only tell Mat Wentworthe, Or friend Pilpit, is in Verie good healthe, but here you must if you come at any tyme & knowe him by the nam^e of Captaine Coombe, for he is Captain of [the] Stratforde Foote Trained Bande, and if Tom Radcliffe or he [Mat Wentworth] Chance hereafter to meete him at the Bathe, Let them adore the Golden Calfe, for they say in Stratforde that he cannot have lesse than 20000 : in his purse Encreased by honest Ten C & in the 2 Hundredth. If or friends be all well & you have ought worthe writinge concerninge B. Bancrofte writ : for shame, if not I will save my labour, and sende you woorde only sometyme after Shrove Tyde when I may be with you, And So Adieu.

“ LEO DIGGES.

“ Quinton, 30. Jan. 1631.”

The letter is directed to Mr. Philip Washington ; there appears to have been an enclosed note, as there is added : “ I pray sende the enclosed to Ned

Blounte"—it is endorsed in a contemporary hand—"Len Digges his letter to Philip Washington concerning Larkes and invisible Musicians." Philip Washington was born in the county of York about 1596, and was also of the University of Oxford; he died in 1635, the same year as his friend Leonard Digges. Of the Warwickshire family of Washington, Dugdale, in his "Antiquities" of that shire, printed in 1656, vol. ii. p. 1128, has a notice and gives their arms; there is also mention of the Wentworth family, p. 857. We can, however, fairly guess who "Ned Blounte" was, for we find Edward Blount printed Digges' "Rape of Proserpine" in 1617, and this Edward Blount was one of the four stationers at whose charges the first folio of Shakespeare was printed. And it was to this celebrated first folio that Digges' Eulogy on Shakespeare was prefixed. Dyce has already foreseen, instigated thereto by the remarks of Mr. Bolton Corney, a connection between them. He says, "Life of Shakespeare," 1866, vol. i. p. 165, as Digges contributed lines to Mabbe's translation "of 'Guzman de Alfarache,' he perhaps composed the present verses (viz. those before the folio of 1623) at the desire of Blount."*

Now a word or two as to the epistle and its contents. The letter, which is on two folio sheets, is

* And as Blount dedicated the "Ars Aulica" of Lorenzo Ducci, in 1607, to William Earl of Pembroke and Philip Earl of Montgomery, therefore Mr. Bolton Corney from these and other circumstances, in *Notes and Queries*, Sec. Series, vol. iii. p. 8, seeks to prove that Edward Blount was the real editor of the Shakespeare folio of 1623.

much effaced and in parts obliterated or undecipherable, besides this being manifestly written in haste and amidst interruptions, it proved somewhat difficult to decipher, but happily the most important part, viz. the latter portion, is best preserved; throughout there are abbreviations and contractions, that make it difficult till after repeated perusals to read easily. It is deeply to be regretted that Digges filled his letter with such trivial tales merely to please his friend, and to give a lesson of rebuke to some erring associates; how much he doubtless could have told us of Shakespeare, his family and friends, and of his own visits to Stratford, and many other particulars in no more words than this letter contains! But we must be thankful for what we have; he little thought a few words from his pen on these subjects would have been so eagerly desired, and would have set at rest many difficulties and doubts the world so much desires cleared up.

The humours, jovial meeting, and stories told at the friend's house in the country we may pass over; the relation, however, gives an insight into the writer's good sense and good-nature, and indicates his desire to impart the best advice to his friend Washington, as also to his college acquaintances, and we may well suppose Coggan and Ellis were two notorious liars and resembled the story-teller of which a brief account is given. As Cicester is mentioned in one of the mock curate's stories—for so I take him to have been—Cicester being formerly the common appellation of Cirencester, proves that

Quinton, where Digges was staying, was in Gloucestershire.

Now as to the more important part of the letter. Its chief interest is of course its reference to Shakespeare's birthplace, and is notably interesting as telling us that its writer was a visitor to Stratford-upon-Avon, and that he was acquainted with some of Washington's relations there. Another point of interest is, we find Digges was on terms of intimacy with one for whom Shakespeare had a personal regard—namely, Mr. Coombe, called here Captain Coombe, being Captain of the Stratford Foot Trained Band, though at first humorously mentioned as Pilpit. Now, as this Mr. Coombe and his famous uncle John Coombe were both friends of Shakespeare, this notice is one of extreme interest, as this Captain Coombe was no other than the Mr. Thomas Coombe Shakespeare mentions in his Will, and to whom he leaves an interesting bequest. This well-known mock epitaph on the elder Coombe, the moneylender,

“ Ten in the hundred lies here ingrav'd ;
 'Tis a hundred to ten, his soul is not sav'd ;
 If any man ask, who lies in this tomb ?
 Oh, oh, quoth the devil, 'tis my John-a'-Combe.”

so long imputed to Shakespeare, has been shown to be a fabrication, and was probably written a full year after our poet's death ; there is every proof of his friendship for the Coombes, and Digges hints that the gist of the epitaph, which turns on Coombe's wealth, obtained by usury, was the mere gossip of the town of Stratford. The wealthy John Coombe died in 1614, and was buried

in Stratford Church, and though a usurer he had a large circle of friends, whom he remembered in his will, which is still extant ; he did not forget the poor of Stratford, and in it Shakespeare is remembered as a personal friend by a bequest of five pounds, a not inconsiderable sum in those days. Coombe devised the greater part of his real and personal estate to his nephew Thomas Coombe, the Captain Coombe mentioned in the letter of Leonard Digges, and as remarked he was remembered by Shakespeare in his Will, as follows : " Item, I give and bequeath unto the poor of Stratford aforesaid ten pounds ; to Mr. Thomas Coombe my sword." At the time of Shakespeare's death he was twenty-seven years old ; he died at Stratford in July, 1657, aged 68. And the poet's sword, which would now be of inestimable value if in existence, has never been discovered. This relic of our poet may never be traced, but we may certainly infer from the interesting epistle of Digges that it was probably in remembrance of the martial character of this Mr. Thomas Coombe that Shakespeare left him his sword in his will.

It appears from this letter that this Mr. Coombe was wont to visit the city of Bath, and it was also the resort of his friends. Shakespeare is generally thought to allude to this resort of fashion in sonnets CLIII. and CLIV., and Sir John Harrington speaks of it as a place where " the fashionables and others went," and some among them " chiefly but to see and to be seen." * And in Lansd. MS., 213, of the

* Epigrams, " Of going to Bathe," edition 1615.

“ Travellers on a Tour in 1634,” the writer says they “ entered Bath City and took refreshment in those admired unparalleled, medicinal sulphurous hot Bathes. There we met all kinds of Persons, young and old, rich and poor, diseased and sound,” etc. It is described as a fashionable and attractive place, though not at all prudish.

Now as to Leonard Digges’ apparent personal acquaintance with Shakespeare; of this there is at least some show of probability. Digges, an ardent young poet, and as we have seen abiding in London as early at least as 1606, and a great admirer of Shakespeare and his immortal creations, if he did not attain to become a personal friend of our great poet, would certainly seek his company and become at least an acquaintance, by merely visiting the theatres with which he was connected, and it is likely Digges may have visited Stratford even before the poet’s death. And as in 1622 Digges writes of Shakespeare as though he were speaking of an intimate lost friend, it would lead us to think that he had frequented his society. He says—

“ Nor shall I e’er beleive or think thee dead,
Though missed.”

More especially as his “ Rape of Proserpine ” appeared but one year after Shakespeare’s death, he appears to have been a poet moving among poets, and notably as he was in London in 1606, and apparently remained in the metropolis till as late as 1618. The title of Digges’ Eulogy on Shakespeare, prefixed to the first folio, 1623, is “ To the Memory of the deceased Author, Master William Shake-

spere." Digges was a private gentleman, and free to pursue his own tastes and desires, and if a company of London friends made a pilgrimage to the poet's native town to see his grave or newly erected monument in the church, doubtless he was amongst them. And as he was evidently returned to his college at Oxford in 1623, the poem may have been written there; and if it did not represent the concurrent voice of the University, it at least proves him to have been an ardent admirer of Shakespeare. The poem was certainly, from the opening line and the mention of the poet's monument, written on the eve of the publication of the "Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies" in 1623. He thus begins—

"Shakespeare, at length thy pious fellows give
The world thy works"

And it is from the following lines we know that a monument to Shakespeare was erected anterior to the publication of the folio. Digges was the first by many years to mention its existence; he declares that volume shall outlive the poet's tomb—

"When that stone is rent,
And Time dissolves thy Stratford monument,
Here we alive shall view thee still."

Digges has also, as already mentioned, another and much longer tribute to Shakespeare besides the one which has occasioned the previous remarks; it appeared in the edition of Shakespeare's poems printed in 1640, and was left behind among his papers in manuscript. And by the allusion they contain to the Red Bull and Fortune Theatres, these verses, Malone thought—and later critics have

adopted the same view—that they could not have been penned so early as the appearance of the first folio, and that commentator erroneously conjectured that they were not written till 1640; he, however, could not have known that Digges had then been dead five years. Malone was misled by Digges censuring the numerous playwrights that had sprung up thus early, writing lame blank-verse for the theatres, disgracing the stage to which Shakespeare had lent so much glory; he tells the petty poets they are fit only to write for the Bull or Cockpit, or the New Fortune. Now, as the Fortune Theatre was burnt in 1621, and at once rebuilt, his reference in 1623, in the poem to “New Fortune’s younger bretheren,” must refer to the new race of players that had sprung up and were acting at the newly built theatre. Let these actors, says he, have their worthless plays; they will meet with no success at the Globe or Blackfriars, where Shakespeare’s had been and still were performed with applause to crowded houses. During Digges’ review of the drama in this poem he alluded chiefly to the period from the death of Shakespeare to the appearance of the folio in 1623. He tells us *Julius Cæsar* and *Othello* were the favourites of those who could scarce endure a line of Jonson’s *Catilina* and *Sejanus*; and *The Fox* and *Alchemist*, although they lived on and the latter was revived at intervals, yet when they were played it was to almost empty houses; but the mere announcement of Shakespeare’s Falstaff, Hal, Poins, Benedick and Beatrice, or Malvolio, and the whole theatre was filled, and you could with difficulty find room.

This poem, containing such valuable testimony in regard to Shakespeare's plays still receiving so much public favour after his death, needs a little further critical comment. These now well-known poems need not be given here. The later poem contains 68 lines, and is one of the longest poems in praise of Shakespeare that has appeared, and was certainly, as internal evidence proves, written for the 1623 folio, but not being used the shorter poem from the same pen took its place in that volume. The lines in the long poem are not only sharp against the lesser dramatic writers of the day, but they also, while giving Ben Jonson equivocal praise, as we have seen, inform us that the public did not relish them or patronise their performance, but declared Shakespeare's were still triumphant successes, and boldly asserts his ascendancy beyond all the writers of the age. This censure on the dramatists and reference to Jonson's lack of public favour may have been the cause of this poem not appearing in the folio, it being probably penned for it, but its personalities occasioned the production of the shorter poem to take its place, especially as Ben Jonson was connected with the appearance of the folio volume of 1623. And in 1640, when the poem did appear in print, he had been dead three years.

There is evidence therefore that Shakespeare kept possession of the stage, and that his plays were frequently played, and doubtless continued to be popular, till the outbreak of the Civil Wars, shortly after which, the theatres were closed and were not reopened for many years. And during this gloomy

period we may impute the loss of so many vestiges and memorials of Shakespeare which the world would now pour forth its wealth to recover; the poet's letters, manuscripts, and relics got scattered and destroyed, and almost all traces of him lost, and it is to be feared irrecoverably lost.

Hence the value of all such testimony as may be recovered as is afforded by Leonard Digges and his important letter, containing such interesting notice of Shakespeare's friends, his birthplace, and more especially as it refers to one whom the poet remembered in his will by so remarkable a bequest, and to which this letter throws new light upon.

THE SINGING OF THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE

“ My heart and ears, so ravishst with her voice,
I still forgot, what still I heard her sing,
The tune : Surely of Sonnets this was all the choice,
Poets do keep it as a charming thing.”

—“ *The Passions of Love*,” by ANTHONY SCOLOKER,
Gentleman, 1604.

THE SINGING OF THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE

Strange to say, Shakespeare's Sonnets, now the most famous of all sonnets, seem to have attained their first public recognition and admiration at the theatre. After having been comparatively so long unknown to the poet's admirers, these poems were first brought into notice by the stage, the stage that had first brought the poet's dramas into public appreciation; the plays, however, were written expressly for the stage, and were not published by the poet, though some few imperfect pirated copies were published in his time but without his sanction. The Sonnets, however, were written for his patron and avowedly for publication, and an edition of them appeared in 1609, just seven years before his death; they have become a very topical subject of late years, and are supposed to contain glimpses of his life, his own personal feelings, views, character, friendship and love, and are viewed in various lights by various readers, some having an exalted opinion of the poet's purpose in penning them, some quite an opposite and unworthy view.

In the poet's day sonnets were alone admired by the higher and refined class, the populace cared not a straw for them. But the especial love of the poets of the age was devoted to sonneteering—a

species of poetical folly then considered to be a cult of the highest refinement; for such productions Shakespeare had but little regard, and on various occasions ridicules them.

And though they may not have been sung at the Globe Theatre, at a later period, however, selections from them were sung at a London theatre before more refined audiences. The period when these selections were sung ranged from 1820 to 1825, and the audiences greatly admired them for their beauty. It appears that in Shakespeare's time, though they may not have been sung at the theatres, they or at least some of them were set to music in the poet's day. John and Thomas Morley are said to have written music for some. The collection of poems called "The Passionate Pilgrim," 1612, had the heading, "Sonnets to Sundry Notes of Music." Some of the sonnets of Shakespeare are to be found in old manuscript collections of poems and song-books, and appear to have been sung in the time of James I. and Charles I., so that their being set to music and sung would be but a revival; though, as just observed, it was probably their first exaltation to the stage, that is as regards the Sonnets of the 1609 collection. Shakespeare seems to have viewed them himself as songs. See Sonnets VIII., XVII., XXIX., XXXIX., LXXIII., CVI.

The Sonnets may have been sung at various London and provincial theatres; only one has, however, come before my notice, that is the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. The following notices I have been able to produce from original play-bills in

my own collection and from others in the British Museum. Various plays of Shakespeare were rendered more attractive by "Songs, Duets, Glee, and Choruses, selected entirely from his Plays, Poems and Sonnets, the music chiefly composed by Mr. Bishop." We select the following examples of some of the most popular—

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Nov. 8, 1820.

ACT I.

Song: "Full many a glorious morning."—Sonnets.

ACT IV.

Song: "O, how much more doth beauty."—Sonnets.

"Take all my loves . . ."—Sonnets.

This play had a long run. These sonnets are numbered in the 1609 edition the XXXIII., LIV., XL. The complete poems are as follows—

"Full many a glorious morning have I seen
 Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
 Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
 Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
 Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
 With ugly rack on his celestial face,
 And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
 Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
 Even so my sun one early morn did shine
 With all-triumphant splendour on my brow;
 But out! alack! he was but one hour mine,
 The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.
 Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
 Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun staineth."

The second song sung was—

"O, how much more doth beauty beautiful seem
 By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!
 The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
 For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
 The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye
 As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
 Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly
 When summer's breath their masked buds discloses;
 But for their virtue only is their show,

They live unwoo'd, and unrespected fade ;
 Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so ;
 Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made :
 And so of you, beautiful and lovely youth,
 When that shall fade, my verse distils your truth."

The third song is—

" Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all ;
 What hast thou then more than thou hadst before ?
 No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call ;
 All mine was thine before thou hadst this more
 Then, if for my love thou my love receivest,
 I cannot blame thee for my love thou usest ;
 But yet be blamed, if thou thyself deceivest
 By wilful taste of what thyself refuseth.
 I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,
 Although thou steal the all my poverty ;
 And yet, love knows, it is a greater grief
 To bear love's wrong than hate's known injury.
 Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,
 Kill me with spites ; yet we must not be foes."

The performance of this play and the accompanying music and singing was a success, and the play-bill of Nov. 23 of the same year tells us Shakespeare's comedy of *Twelfth Night*, with the introduction of his Sonnets, "are both so established in public favour that they will be acted alternately till further notice," and was repeated till near the close of the year 1822.

The *Two Gentlemen of Verona* was also a favourite play, and from a bill of the performance of Nov. 30, 1821, we find that there were no less than five of the Sonnets of Shakespeare selected to be sung, a testimony of the favour they received. They are as follows—

Song : " True love is an ever fixed mark."—Sonnets.

Song : " O never say that I was false."—Sonnets.

Song : " When in disgrace with fortune."—Sonnets.

Finale : " How like a winter."—Sonnets.

It also contains the notice: "Books of Songs to be had in the theatre, price 10d." And on another play-bill of the same theatre for Dec. 12, 1821, we are told "The play of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* again produced as great an effect on a brilliant and overflowing audience as any previous revival of Shakespeare—the introduction of his Sonnets and the music were enthusiastically received." This play was revived in the October of the following year, with the singing of the Sonnets, further examples however need not be given; it is curious, however, that poems that now are supposed to contain revelations of the poet's love and other deep mysteries should be selected from to make a theatrical entertainment more attractive. The list of the sonnets sung is the LXIV., commencing at the fifth line; the second is the CXVI., and commences with a slight variation also at the fifth line; the third is No. CIX.; the fourth the XXIXth; the fifth is sonnet XCVII., to which the reader can refer for the complete sonnets.

Cymbeline was played on June 19, 1822, followed by "A Grand Vocal and Instrumental Concert," in which Miss M. Tree sang Shakespeare's XXXIIIrd sonnet. This appears to have been an especial favourite, and indeed is one of the most attractive sonnets ever penned. Singing and music between the different acts appear to have made Shakespeare's plays more popular on the stage, and such would no doubt be the same at this day if managers would take the hint.

THE LOVE CONFESSIONS OF
SHAKESPEARE

THE LOVE CONFESSIONS OF SHAKESPEARE

In 1609, just seven years before the poet's death, was printed a volume of Sonnets by Shakespeare and dedicated to a "Mr. W. H.," some noble youth who was secretly hidden under that cipher. Among these poems are certain mysterious sonnets referring to and addressed to a dark woman, who has entranced the poet and also the noble youth, the poet's beloved patron, who was equally fascinated by her charms, so much so that she allures Mr., or—as we learn from the entire body of the sonnets—Master W. H. away from Shakespeare, whom she also neglects and to whom she causes much pain.

This happens while the poet is on a long journey and during an unusually long absence, but he has his doubts whether his friend remains true and constant to him, or whether the woman, the mutual mistress, has not won him away from him to herself. And though he occasionally doubts his friend, he is constantly in fear of the evil acts of the dark woman, who is unnamed, unknown, and stands in deep shadow in the background; and though he can fully see and acknowledge her brightness and beauty, he views her as black, unattractive, and most vile, in language of the most derisive and ironical character he could conceive. It is evident that she was described as black and vile from her acts, and not

from her presentment. To understand Shakespeare's Sonnets and to learn who the dark woman was, we must go back to the age, system, and form of sonnet composition of the period, and we must rightly discern how many of the last twenty-eight sonnets actually belong to and have reference to the collection to Master W. H., and they will be found to be much less than has been formerly supposed.

Master W. H. appears to have been a youth who greatly loved poets and poetry. In 1597 it would seem he became acquainted with Shakespeare, and chose him as a poet of poets, and importunately sought his friendship, and we may also surmise he had a more than slight regard for the Muse of Chapman, a Muse whom Shakespeare most deeply and fervently loved, and who also in return deeply loved Shakespeare, and whom Shakespeare introduced to Master W. H.

The question is: Was Shakespeare describing a fact or a fancy, or merely poetical utterances? The whole of the Sonnets tend to the latter view. Shakespeare loved the Muse of Chapman, Master W. H. also loved her, and our poet feared he would forsake his own Muse, to whom the young patron had allied himself and whom he had chosen, and no doubt laughed heartily at Shakespeare's mockeries and fun at the Muse of Chapman being pictured as a vile, black, and worthless woman.

This can all be proved from Shakespeare's Sonnets, of which there is ample evidence, but it is perhaps best to prove it from the custom of the time; much

fuller evidence can, however, be given upon this important topic.

Master W. H. seemed to take great interest in the strange notions of sonneteers, and found in Shakespeare one who could produce some strange novelties in that form of verse. Master W. H., if not the young Lord William Herbert, greatly resembled him. Samuel Daniel in 1602 dedicated to William Herbert, then Earl of Pembroke, *A Defence of Rhyme*. In writing of sonnets, he dwells on their mystery, importance, qualities, and inventions, and appears to refer to Shakespeare. He says: "For surely in an eminent spirit, whom Nature hath fitted for that mystery, Rhyme is no impediment to his conceit but rather gives him wings to mount, and carries him not out of his course, but as it were beyond his power, to a far happier flight."

It was the transformation of a Muse to a veritable real woman, or a woman to an actual Muse, so common a theme with the poetical writers of Shakespeare's day, that has caused so much difficulty to gather round the *Sonnets of Shakespeare*; his carrying out the idea in fulness and completeness has caused the difficulties to increase. The *Sonnets* give indication that the young patron suggested to the poet to a large extent the penning of his sonnets, and that they should be styled Master W. H.'s *Sonnet extravaganza*. After all, this, though a peculiarly fanciful idea, leaves no immoral taint upon either poet, patron, or so-called mistress. On the other hand, a literal view drags down all into the mire. The blots, sins, and stains, are merely the

language of the poetry of the day—merely feigning, and not fact.

The language of the day in regard to Muses being described as real women, as mistresses as well as ideal creatures, is now somewhat confusing, but was then thought to give scope to invention and mystical ideas. It is the key to the Sonnets of Shakespeare, they prove not for all time, they belong to the poet's day and not for all time. Young Master W. H. was styled by Shakespeare the Tenth Muse for his sonnets, suggestions, and poetical ardency. Our poet could, as will be seen, love another poet's Muse as a mistress, as Shakespeare loved Chapman's Muse; a poet could unite a patron to his Muse as to a mistress. Vowing and priority in love was viewed as a claim, a mental mistress a mistress of the mind, and was thought the quintessence of poetical art and sport, as the following examples will show, and illustrate Shakespeare and free him from literal and moral blame so long and unjustly assigned to him.

How pertinent to the question is a notice in Gabriel Hervey's "New Letter," 1593, of Petrarch. "I would," says he, "abandon other loves, to dote upon that most lovely Muse." His heart was more attached to his Muse than the Muses of others. Compare Shakespeare's Sonnets, XL.—

"Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all."

The charming Muse of Chapman may be briefly alluded to, but the poet is willing to be discarded if it pleases young Master W. H. to give and receive

favours from all the poets Shakespeare admires. He will himself stand in the background; they shall receive the favour of his young friend's loving patronage, if his friend so wills it. Nowadays such an idea as writing to a Muse seems a very strange idea, but it did not seem so in Shakespeare's day. The celebrated poet Dr. Donne says to a poet friend—

“ If thou unto thy Muse be married,
Embrace her ever, ever multiply;
Be far from me that strange adultery
To tempt thee and procure her widowhood.”

Again, he says in a poem called “Love's Growth”—

“ Love's not so pure an abstract, as they use
To say, which have no mistress but their Muse.”

The protean change of converting a Muse to a shadowy, delusive, and apparently realistic mistress was not only quite in Shakespeare's range and method of art, but was also in accordance with the ideas of the age. Like other poets, he views the assumed mutual mistress not as a maiden but a matron Muse; he compares her to “a careful housewife”; he also, in accord with sonnet marriage notions, denotes her sin in seeking to take young “W. H.” from the passion of Shakespeare's Muse, as “In act thy bed vow broke.” Any comical fancy was adopted and accepted by an Elizabethan poet and his admirers. Gascoigne, writing in our poet's early period, speaks of his Muse as a woman. He says, in an emergency of reply: “Speak, my Muse, a woman's wytt is best at sodayme call,” and, curiously enough, a poet may not only be said to have been

married to one Muse, but to the whole nine. In lines addressed it is supposed by Chapman and prefixed to the second folio of 1632, it is said the nine Muses—

“ jointly woo'd him, envying one another,
Obey'd by all as Spouse, but lov'd as brother.”

If that fine poem was written by Chapman, that poet in his old age lived to return love for love to Shakespeare and quite forgave his jest on himself and his Muse of his early days. The lines are inscribed “ I.M.S.,” supposed to signify To the Immortal Memory of Shakespeare. They are written in Chapman's best style and appear to be by him. There can be but little doubt that Shakespeare in his Sonnets, though in touch with the times, sought at the same time to ridicule the strange vagaries of the writers of this kind of poetry. The youth received his praises, the woman-Mistress-Muse his jesting; he now gives her “ mock-honour ” as the most beautiful and the brightest, then she is declared as “ the blackest of the black ” for her treachery; and though not openly avowed as a Muse, it is clear she was not a real woman or personality. The “ Return from Parnassus,” 1603, speaks of Drayton's Muse as a woman—

“ Drayton's sweete Muse is like a sanguine dye,
Able to ravish the rash gazer's eye.”

And Dekker a little later writes of poets who—

“ Sit kissing a Muse's cheek.”

Shakespeare, it also should be noted, carried his making sport of Chapman outside the range of

sonnets; he parodied, with an extremely satirical spirit in his *Troilus and Cressida*, Chapman's Homeric heroes, then in the course of translation by his rival. The idea of loving or being united to an ethereal personage like a Muse finds a counterpart in this play of Shakespeare's. Our poet well might say of young W. H., as is said of Troilus: "Mark him; note him. O brave Troilus! O admirable youth! he never saw three-and-twenty. Had I a sister were a grace, or a daughter a goddess, he should take his choice." Randolph, in his poems published in 1638, says in reference to women, even those of renowned beauty—

" I never mean to wed
That torture to my bed,
My Muse is she
My love shall be."

" If I a poem leave, that poem is my son."

In those days one may chose a poet's Muse, though, unsolicited, George Buck, in a poem prefixed to Beaumont and Fletcher's dramatic works, 1647, says—

" Let Shakespeare, Chapman, and applauded Ben
Wear the eternal merit of their pen :
Here I am love-sick ; and were I to choose
A mistress corival, 'tis Fletcher's Muse."

Several sonnets in which Shakespeare's mistress is described as black, it is clear, when closely viewed, were written for *Love's Labour's Lost*, but discarded in the second and improved play; and are preserved to us in the 1609 edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets, being amongst the first of the last twenty-eight of the Sonnets. Shakespeare has, however,

evidently given to the woman, who may well be styled his Muse mistress, a magical chiaroscuro that illumines and mystifies her presentment, and Chapman says that his Muse—

“ Black as his purpose, did the night resemble.”

And Ben Jonson, in an Epigram on his Muse, writes of her as an abandoned character and a vile and most disgraceful creature; she is a thing most abhorred, as black as black can be, a most vile woman, and desires her to leave him.

The moral tone of the period of Shakespeare has not been considered. Not only in the time of Elizabeth, but also in that of James I., it would have been highly imprudent to have been an avowed libertine, as we may see from the following extract from Ed. Homes' "History of the Period of James I." Elizabeth was very strict on the lapses of her nobles and her maids, and Shakespeare's Sonnets were written in the last years of her reign, though not published till the sixth year of James I, a period which, as Homes shows, was also very strict as to morality. He says, p. 1005: "Sonday the foure and twentieth of October, 1613, Sir P. Broccas Knight did open pennance at Paules Crosse, he stood in a white sheete, and held a stick in his hand having beene formerly before the high Commissioners for secret and notorious adulteries with divers women, &c."

Such is The Love Confessions of Shakespeare, merely a feigned and to a great extent an inordinate love for another poet's Muse, the whole thing rendered ridiculous by satire, irony, banter, and jest;

and in this love he participated and was joined by his young noble patron friend, who soon gave up to Shakespeare the entire honour not only of his patronage, which it would appear he had willingly promised, but also that which Shakespeare regarded chiefly, his friendship. Apart from Shakespeare, she was the most beautiful and entrancing Muse the age afforded, and Shakespeare, till Chapman's treachery, evidently loved her. She was truly an enchantress, but for her vile acts she is described as an evil, black, and sinful woman, a temptress and divider of friendship; but she failed in the attempt. Shakespeare infused this theme in his memorial of friendship in a large number of sonnets, upon which he placed such transcendent glory and viewed as a monumental work. This he could not well have done had it been founded on sensual love, and upon a vulgar amour with a vile woman in which the patron disgracefully participates with the poet, a theme scarcely fit to be viewed as a monumental work to be handed down the ages.

The youth, though faulty and wavering in his friendship with Shakespeare, was not altogether faithless, and proves finally, constant to Shakespeare and his Muse, though our poet is ready to disavow the marriage or unity to his Muse if his friend so wishes it; but the young friend finds he has made no rash choice or promise, and henceforth acknowledges Shakespeare only, and is then extolled as faithful, kind, and true to his promise. The Muse of Chapman suffers an eclipse, the woman—"The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured"—she will now go on her

way and no more be allowed by "W. H." to seek to eclipse "W. S."; peace henceforth between these two great poets—

" Proclaims olives of endless age."

Pembroke was noted throughout his life for his love of "Muses and good minds," as the folio dedication to him of St. Augustine's "Civitatis Dec." of 1610 proves; he could not have selected two greater poets or nobler-minded men than Shakespeare and Chapman. Ben Jonson speaks highly of his fine critical judgment and discernment of real merit; his lavish gifts to poets, divines, learned and deserving men gave him the title of the Macænas of his age.

We therefore see love devoted to a Muse, or love to one especial Muse, was viewed by poets and lovers of poetry as the purest and most perfect form of love, in other words as intellectual love, and the most æsthetic and noblest devotion to attain to. The theme of a Muse as a real mistress is carried out fuller and more complete as a work of art than any other writer attempted, as we might expect from the genius, fulness of power, wider range and vision alone possessed by that soul of the age, William Shakespeare.

SHAKESPEARE'S CHOICE

SHAKESPEARE'S CHOICE

Shakespeare had one pre-eminent and special choice, not it would seem hitherto to have been clearly observed, and as it bears upon the reality or non-reality of the "black woman," the woman "colour'd ill" of the Sonnets of Shakespeare, it may be viewed as a subject of importance in connection with the poet and those poems, it referring also as will be shown to what the poet regarded as the supremacy of beauty in women, and may be regarded as the poet's standard of taste in that particular; it is therefore of interest and worthy of notice in connection with his writings, and as he has himself revealed it to us, it is of the more value and certainty.

That he delighted in women being pretty, witty, clever, virtuous and wise, good and most lovable needs no mention; that is patent to all and to be at once acknowledged, and is evident alike from his earliest plays and all through the list to the latest. He has other female characters the opposite to those of this description, his love lay with such as we have described, but his art-power is equally given to those also whom he loved not but delighted to depict. We will now view the style of beauty the poet most loved, and see whether his choice

lay with the fair or the dark-complexioned, with the fair and golden-tressed or the dark and sable-haired ladies he has depicted for the admiration of all time, and has dwelt so ardently on their fairness, flowing locks, beauty, goodness, and virtues as a poet and sincere lover of the fair sex alone can pour forth in a rapture of golden praise.

It may be at once observed that whatever may have been the taste of the age or of the poet himself in these particulars, it is now acknowledged, whatever our individual fancies may be, that each kind of beauty, both the fair and the dark, sway equally in the opinion of critical lovers of beauty. But it was not so in Shakespeare's time; the fair-complexioned and bright-haired, or the golden or brown-tinted, the latter to a less degree—these colours were alone esteemed; black was discountenanced.

We find that Shakespeare in his own choice, apart from fashion, evidently loved the fair, the golden and brown-tressed beauties, and jested at or wrote ironically of dark-complexioned and black-haired ladies almost without exception throughout the entire range of his plays, from his earliest to his latest period. It may however be said that our poet was more discerning than his contemporaries; he has, as will be shown in two dramas, one written in his middle the other in his later period, given a certain show of regard for hair of any tint and of the black also; but the praise is brief and equivocal. The outlook of the poet was clearly largely but not entirely in accord with his own times and the fashion

of the day ; he loved two styles of beauty in women, the blonde and the brunette, or to be more precise the golden-tinted and the russet-brown, but not too deep or dark-coloured. The poets of his day alone extolled the fair and golden ; we will now fully reveal Shakespeare's own particular taste in his own words in regard to women's beauty.

SHAKESPEARE'S FAIR HEROINES, AND HIS DARK AND BLACK-TRESSED LADIES

It may be briefly stated that Shakespeare's world-famous Sonnets—they having become of late years a very topical subject in literature—are viewed as exhibiting the poet's own idea of beauty, and his particular choice of lady-love to be adored and admired. These poems, and especially a literal view of them, have caused much confusion to the poet's readers, students, biographers, and admirers, and an increasing darkness gathers around them, creating the utmost perplexity. The very "black woman," both in complexion and in deeds, this derisively so-called mistress—set up clearly as a foil to the "Master" "W. H." of the same poems—was evidently devised as a burlesque, and written merely in sport of the then general custom of poets and poetasters addressing whole volumes of sonnets often by the hundreds together and dedicating them to their real and imaginary mistresses ; the printed volumes and manuscript collections of such sonneteering were legion, and were of the most flattering, fulsome, extravagant, and absurd character.

Some of the multitude of these volumes have come down to us, but the larger number remaining in MS. have become almost entirely lost ; many of the latter sort are preserved in the British Museum, the Bodleian and other libraries. From these and from the large collections of printed volumes that remain, it is easily seen to what lengths of absurdity these writers reached in the descriptions and praises of their so-called mistresses and patronesses. They were divine, they were goddesses and of peerless and surpassing beauty, paragons of virtue and goodness, and saints of a most heavenly character ; and the highly fanciful descriptions of their personal charms, their snow-white complexions, their coral lips, their eyes dazzling jewels beyond compare, their hair the finest golden wire—these and a multitude of other high-flown terms and fancies were common to all the versifiers of the day, and were used by all lovers to all their mistresses, whether real or ideal. They were set up as idols to be worshipped by their adorers and the age was bidden to join in this worship, and all posterity it was declared would join in this adoration. The age at last began to get weary of these countless effusions, and many of the ladies—and some of those the most extolled even by the greatest of the sonneteers—had proved so opposite to their adorers' praises, both as to their beauty, appearance, virtues, goodness, and saintliness, that this poetical folly had well-nigh reached its height when Shakespeare completed his courtly comedy of *Love's Labour's Lost* in 1597, containing jesting sonnets on the fair, the golden, and dark ladies ; and other

sonnets of a like sportive and ironical character, feigned to be addressed to a black and evil woman, were penned about this date. These latter, with others of a little later date and of the nature of parodies, appeared in print in 1609.

Our present purpose is to show the poet's actual and real choice in regard to the beauty in women he really loved and delighted to describe, apart from irony, jest, and mockery.

SHAKESPEARE'S CHOICE IN THE BEAUTY OF WOMEN

The reader will now be prepared to see from Shakespeare's dramas and from his poems the poet's real choice of female beauty, chiefly as regards the complexion and colour of the hair of the lovely creations of his fancy, penned during the whole period of his life, and we shall readily perceive what was really the poet's taste, whether the blonde, brunette, or black.

Golden or light hair was thought by our old poets to be something of a divine or angelic type, was proclaimed as the perfection of beauty, and was viewed as indicative of goodness of disposition in those whom nature had blessed with being both fair and beautiful, being richly endowed with this brightness, fairness, and attractiveness. The lustre of black hair and dark complexion, strange to say, almost implied in that age affinity to necromancy or connection with some secret or black art—in short, the sable hue denoted those of evil nature, wicked, deformed in body or mind, or of ill aspect. There-

fore the true or fashionable cult was the fair and the golden, and was the outcome of the Renaissance during this period. Angels, goddesses, and lovely women were the theme of poets, both real and ideal beauties were depicted and extolled as possessing fair complexions and wearing light golden tresses; the dark or raven-black had but little said in their favour; then, both with poets and painters, brightness quite eclipsed blackness.

Shakespeare it will be seen was constant in his praise of golden and auburn hair, that red-gold Giorgione, Titian, Veronese, and the Venetian School of great colourists loved to represent, and our poet much resembled these masters in his wealth of design, the richness of his colouring, his chiaroscuro, choice of beauty, the gorgeous grouping of his scenes, and in his sweetness, attractiveness, and truth of nature. Shakespeare, like these great masters, lovingly adorned his most charming creations of the fair sex with hair according with the taste of the reigning golden colour, almost without exception; though in one especial instance, as we have observed in *Love's Labour's Lost*, he introduces, in a marked manner, one lady with very dark hair of ebony hue obviously for the purpose of banter, and as a foil to add greater lustre to the praise of the golden. This play was performed before Queen Elizabeth, hence ironical allusions to the black would be an acceptable courtly compliment, and the play is brimful of jests on this lady of the French Court on account of her sable hue. There is, however, in one of the poet's later plays written in the next reign,

The Winter's Tale, Act II., Sc. i., some slight praise given to a black-browed beauty.

The virgin Queen, Shakespeare's first royal patroness, when young, had a profusion of auburn hair, which later became golden, sandy, or tinged with red or russet. Auburn was then also in favour; it denoted whitish or pale-coloured flaxen-haired women of a slightly yellow tint. Our poet also extols the brown, both the light and dark-tinted, next to the light and golden for women. They were viewed as resplendent visions of beauty when enriched with this brightness, richness, and most fervent colouring. Shakespeare has honoured the brownish-tinted with a conspicuous place in his gallery of beauties; three of his most charming ladies are brunettes—Celia, Mistress Ann Page, and Hero. The poet, as will be seen, has not entirely restricted his praises to what was evidently his own choice; describing various ages, periods, fashions, and fancies, he naturally gives all colours and shades of hair and complexion some show of favour or presentment, but as remarked, generally, when speaking of dark complexion and dark hair, it is with some abatement, irony, or satirical tendency.

Fashion or rather fancy, we may conclude, swayed the poet in his love of fair, golden, and brunette beauties, not so much for the golden as may be supposed in regard to Elizabeth, as we find that he continued to extol it after the Queen's death, and also to deride the black in the next reign; the fair flaxen tint was, however, then generally honoured in regard to Queen Anne of Denmark, whose hair was

of a lightish colour. In this new era the brown and the darker hues were, strange to say, scarcely more lauded by the poets of this age than they had been in the previous reign, and the black was still scorned, mocked, and dispraised; the new queen, however, was not such a tyrant to courtly fashion as was Elizabeth. The fashion for the fair and fair-haired type lasted more or less through the period of James I., and the deeper splendour of darker-coloured hair was long thrown into the shade.

Shakespeare's fancy as above remarked ranged from the light golden to the brownish-tinted for his ladies; for his male characters, youths and young men, he preferred again, in imitation or resemblance to the Italian fashion, curled dark-brown locks of hair. The poet's heroines are the most beautiful and fascinating ever poet or painter portrayed, and form a bevy of the fairest and most attractive women art has given the world—those sweetest nature-poems, females full of joyousness of soul and deliciousness of beauty, modesty, and mental excellence, hence most dear to the loving Muse of exquisite poetry and exalted dramatic art.

Shakespeare does not denote the colour of all his heroine's hair; some of the principal are however particularly described, others we learn were fair or bright, so that from inferences we may gather they were either blondes, brunettes, or had hair of auburn hue. In some instances he has no allusion either to the colour of their complexion or tresses; they were doubtless left to the fancies of the actors in their make-up. It is not however a question as to

which is most beautiful, the light or the dark, or whether all are of equal beauty, for all find rapturous admirers, whatever may be their colour, fair or dark. Artist-poet as Shakespeare was, he had the Greek and Italian taste during the highest period of the poetical and artistic era of the Renaissance for women's most precious natural adornment, for their fairness and most transcendent beauty.

The following are the more important notices in the plays and poems of Shakespeare in which reference is made to the fair-complexioned and to the light and golden-haired beauties, and the brunettes he has so lovingly depicted, and some notices of the ironical or satirical references to the raven-haired, the sable-tressed, and dark-complexioned. Some of these personages are thrown into a deep Rembrandtish chiaroscuro, lit up by the poet's marvellous skill by flashes of light, then again cast into partial or sombre shadowing, resembling the great Dutch master's wonderful effects, both in his paintings and etchings; and it may be truly said that Shakespeare's are the finest examples of black and white any poet has ever conceived, whether he depicts men or women, Aaron the Moor, Othello, Shylock, or others of his dark-visaged characters, or be it Lord Byron's much-vaunted, black-browed and black-haired Rosaline, Cleopatra, or the very black women shadowed in the Sonnets with a mockery of praise and satire, or the sad lady styled Ethiop, or Tawny Tartar of *Midsommer-Night's Dream*, or Phœbe, in *As You Like It*, who was chided by one whom she loved because of her black eyes and black hair—all

are instances and evidences of the taste of the age, or rather of the taste of the poet. No other dramatist or poet has given so much eulogy and so much satire upon this subject as Shakespeare. Our poet, it is quite clear, had a settled aversion to dark and black-haired women, and it is curious also to notice that amongst Lord Pembroke's poems there are several instances of a like jesting at, and of extreme aversion to, dark-complexioned and black-browed women. Shakespeare had at his earliest period in one of his first plays, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, expressed the same spirit of banter upon this topic. Valentine tells the Duke the way to win his ladylove—

" Flatter, and praise, commend, extol their graces ;
Though ne'er so black, say they have angel's faces."

We will now give a brief general view of the dramas and poems to more fully exhibit the poet's choice. In his earliest poem, " Venus and Adonis," we find mention of the fair and the golden ; he pictures Venus the fair queen of love as arrayed with this glittering attraction. He says, line 51—

" Then with her windy sighs, and golden hair," etc.

And in the poem of " Tarquin and Lucrece " it is said of the chaste and fair Lucrece, line 400--

" Her hair like golden threads, play'd with her breath."

And in what is held to be his first play, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Julia says, looking at Silvia's picture—

" If I had such a tire, this face of mine
Were full as lovely as is this of hers : "

" Her hair is auburn, mine is perfect yellow :
If that be all the difference in his love,
I'll get me such a colour'd periwig."—Act IV., Sc. iv.

In *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Theseus says, the frantic lover—

“ See's Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.”

beholds the golden hair of fair Helen rivalled by the black brow of one resembling an Egyptian woman. And in a later play, Antony is derided for loving the tawny Cleopatra; we may however note that Hermia and Helena were fair, either blonde or golden; fair Hermia was beloved for her beauty, and Helena is described by her lover “ as a dove.” He rapturously exclaims—

“ Who will not change a raven for a dove.”

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Dumain extols his mistresses' hair as more beautiful than amber, therefore amber-coloured, a lightish transparent yellow. And in *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet's brightness, fairness, and beauty is the constant theme of Romeo; she was, as her lover says—

“ A snowy dove trooping with crows.”

—Act I., Sc. v.

And of his first love, Rosaline, he says she was a swan, not a crow. And in *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia is declared by Bassanio to be peerlessly fair and her head crowned with golden locks. He says—

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

—Act I., Sc. i.

And Bassanio, when referring to Portia's picture, infers that the artist had to resort to the use of streaks of fine gold to imitate her hair. This was the custom of Elizabethan miniaturists, as whether in flattery or necessity of their want of bright colour; her lover says, in beholding her portrait—

“ Here in her hairs
The painter plays the spider, and hath woven
A golden mesh t' entrap the hearts of men
Faster than gnats in cobwebs.”

We find Hamlet extols Ophelia for her fairness and beauty and speaks of “ her excellent white bosom ” ; being a lady of the Court of Denmark she was probably intended to be denoted as a blonde, and very fair-haired. In *Troilus and Cressida* this all too fascinating charmer speaks of her “ praised cheeks ” and “ bright hair,” viz. golden, and in *Cymbeline* the lovely Imogen for her whiteness is extolled as not only fair, but probably a blonde. Iachimo says—

“ fresh lily !
And whiter than the sheets ! ” —Act II., Sc. ii.

Of brown hair it may briefly be said that in the comedy of *Katherine and Petruchio*, Katherine has lightish-brown hair ; in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Mistress Ann Page has brown hair, and speaks small like a woman—Act I., Sc. i. It is thought that sweet and charming lady was intended as a picture of Ann Hathaway, beloved by the poet, and this is not improbable, and there are some reasons not yet brought forward that confirm it. In *As You Like It*, Celia has darkish-brown hair, in *Much Ado about Nothing* Hero we find adorned with dark brown hair.

Perditta had that soft, dusky-brownish hair that

accompanies a peerless creamy-white complexion ; she was the Queen of Curds and Cream, her hand—

“ As soft as dove's down, and as white as it,
Or Ethiopian's tooth, or the fann'd snow,
That's bolted by the northern blasts twice o'er.”

The exquisitely sweet Perditta was very fair and is extolled for her red and white blush-tints, and appears as fresh and deliciously beautiful as the dew-sprinkled flowers she offers to her guests.

The dejected maiden of the poem called “A Lover's Complaint” was very fair, her hand whose white weighed down the airy scale of praise, therefore she was very fair, had hair loosely flowing, and we may suppose of auburn colour. Benedick, the confirmed bachelor, speaks of the sharp-witted Beatrice as having dark brown hair and complexion.

Golden hair as we have seen was the favoured and fashionable taste, and received the most lavish praise ; our poet however favours the brown-tinted if not with equal regard, golden hair was alone thought worthy of being extolled in golden verse by the courtly poets. Those whom nature had not so blest by being adorned in the reigning fashion had their remedy in gracing their heads with false hair ; their lovers appear to have made no further question, but adored them for their added charms, for we are well assured both by Shakespeare and the writers of the time that all the ladies so rapturously extolled in sonnets by the crowd of poets and poetasters of the day had not the natural growth of bright hair for which they were so much overpraised. Our poet, we must fully observe, had

a marked partiality for the fair-complexioned and the light golden and brown-haired ladies when alone the work of nature and not beautified by art. Of this in his plays and poems he makes express mention ; he was not it would seem a general lover, he did not view with an equal eye the blonde and the black. Some hair, it should be observed, without the aid of art has the appearance of burnished gold. Fair-haired girls doubtless in all ages have been thought highly attractive, holding and reflecting the light as their hair does would draw eyes towards its added beauty. Sunshine makes light and golden hair to appear still more glorious in both girls and women ; the lighter hairs, spread out in flowing graceful lines, resemble a nimbus or halo of light round their heads, but the alchemical glory of the sun affects to a far less extent the beauty of the brunette or sable. With different complexions it must be fully admitted every variety of colour or shade has its own especial beauty, according to and in harmony with its accompanying complexion ; whether blonde, brunette, or black, or whatsoever tint from the fairest blonde to the blackest jet, all are lovely and attractive, and equally so to different tastes. There is no colour but looks beautiful under certain contrasts. This artists well know, and it gives their pictures the greatest charm ; the golden, the golden-brown, and the darkest tints all have their especial admirers.

Our English Titian, Etty, and others famous in art and verse, have given to the world most charming dark-haired beauties amongst their goddesses, nymphs, graces, portraits, and studies from the

nude, rendering the dark and sable-tressed of equal attractiveness with the fairer beauties of woman-kind, the browner and jet-black tints adding resplendent delicacy to the flesh tones and tints; therefore dark dusky hair has its equal charm and its ardent admirers, especially that of a deep brown colour, melting into a darker tint and becoming neither brown nor black.

Yet it must be said our English girls and women may well be proud of their delicately fair complexions and wealth of golden and rich brown hair, seeing Shakespeare so often represents his most lovely ladies as adorned with these beauties, and he was not the only great poet of his period who was attracted and sung the praises of this golden glory of feminine adornment. We will conclude with a few notices of the praise of ladies' tresses by English poets, and chiefly by some of his contemporaries, and may raise a smile not so much at their choice as at their extravagant praises, especially now when all tints and shades to the very darkest locks of jet, find, taught by nature and art, equal admirers, each adding to the charm of variety and attaining greater beauty by contrast.

The father of English poetry, Chaucer, therefore long before Shakespeare's time, sings of Emelie in a morn of May, and says her yellow hair—

“ was browdid in a tresse
Behynde hir bak, a yerde long I gesse.”

Robert Greene, a noted poet of our poet's early time, describes the hair of a perfect beauty as exceeding the golden beams of the sun—

" Her hair, of golden hue, doth dim the beams
That proud Apollo giveth from his coach."

Spenser sings of his mistresses' locks as " finest gold on ground." Sidney tells of Stella's flowing golden hair—

" That golden sea, whose waves in curls are brok'n."

and Constable, a noted sonneteer of Shakespeare's middle time, in the praises of his mistress in " Certain Sweete Sonnets," says " her faire hair, gold so doth please his sight." And in a love-poem amongst Sir Walter Raleigh's poems, the courtly poet says of the fair lady of his choice—

" Were her tresses angel gold
If a stranger may be bold,
Unrebuked, unafraid,
To convert them to a braid ;
And with little more ado
Work them into bracelets too :
If the mine be grown so free,
What care I how rich it be."

And Daniel pictures his " Delia," ere " Winter snows upon thy golden hairs," and further speaks of the time when her " golden hairs shall change to silver wire," and Griffin in his Sonnets to " Fidessa," says—

" My lady's hair is threads of beaten gold."

And Linche, in his volume of Sonnets, says of his mistress—

" Her hair exceeds gold forced in smallest wire,
In smaller threads than those Arachne spun."

Well might Shakespeare mockingly say of his feigned mistress—

" If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head."

—Sonnets, cxxx.

It is clear that golden praise of the golden was the only theme. He who had no particular choice

of beauty, fair or dark, was thought to be loveless, vile, and sensual. Fletcher, in the "Faithful Shepherdess," written in 1610, makes a sullen shepherd say—

" All to me in sight
Are equal ; be they fair, or black, or brown,
Virgin or caress wanton, I can crown
My appetite with any."

The golden also evoked the praise of the two most eminent poets of Scotland during the closing period of Shakespeare's life. The Earl of Stirling, in his collection of choice courtly Sonnets, full of curious fancies to the lady he styles "Aurora," says—

" I swear, Aurora, by thy starry eyes,
And by those golden locks whose lock none slips,
And by the coral of thy rosy lips,
And by the naked snows which beauty dyes.
I swear by all the jewels of thy mind.
Whose like yet never worldly treasure bought
Thy solid judgment and thy generous thought,
Which in this darkened age have clearly shin'd :
I swear by those, and by my spotless love,
And by my secret, yet most fervent fires,
That I have never nurs'd but chaste desires,
And such as modesty might well approve.
Then since I love those virtuous parts in thee,
Shouldst thou not love this virtuous mind in me ? "

Drummond of Hawthornden, who ranks high amongst the poets of Scotland, wrote during the closing years of Shakespeare's life ; he was an admirer of our great poet, and wrote a volume of exquisite sonnets in praise of the lady of his choice ; in one Song, beholding her in a vision, he says of her flowing locks—

" Her hair, more bright than are the morning's beams,
Hung in a golden shower above the streams,
And dangling sought her forehead for to cover."

And in his 31st Sonnet, Part I., he again refers

to his lady's tresses, and it is clear his taste was in accord with the choice of Shakespeare in this particular. He says—

“ Trust not, sweet soul, those curled waves of gold
 With gentle tides that on your temples flow,
 Nor temples spread with flakes of virgin snow,
 Nor snow of cheeks, with Tyrian grain enroll'd ;
 Trust not those shining lights which wrought my woe,
 When first I did their azure rays behold,
 Nor voice, whose sounds more strange effects do show
 Than of the Thracian harper have been told :
 Look to this dying lily, fading rose,
 Dark hyacinth, of late whose blushing beams
 Made all the neighbouring herbs and grass rejoice,
 And think how little is 'twixt life's extremes ;
 The cruel tyrant that did kill those flow'rs
 Shall once, ah me ? not spare that spring of yours.”

And Habington, shortly after Shakespeare's death, in his sonnets to his mistress “ Castara,” one of the last of the famous sonnet collections dedicated to mistresses, this poet sings of his lady's wealth of hair, the dower she received—

“ From bounteous Nature, her would I then lead
 To th' temple, rich in her own wealth ; her head
 Crown'd with her hair's fair treasure.”

We will end the list by observing that Milton sings of Eve's “ unadorned golden tresses.” Therefore that sturdy puritan poet, though late in life, still adhered to the taste of the age of his earliest period, and resembled Shakespeare not only as being a great poet, but in his choice as to woman's most beautiful and crowning adornment flowing like golden lights from her head.

I end with Aristotle's memorable words : “ I have written, you have read, the matter is before you ; judge of it.”

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