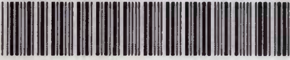
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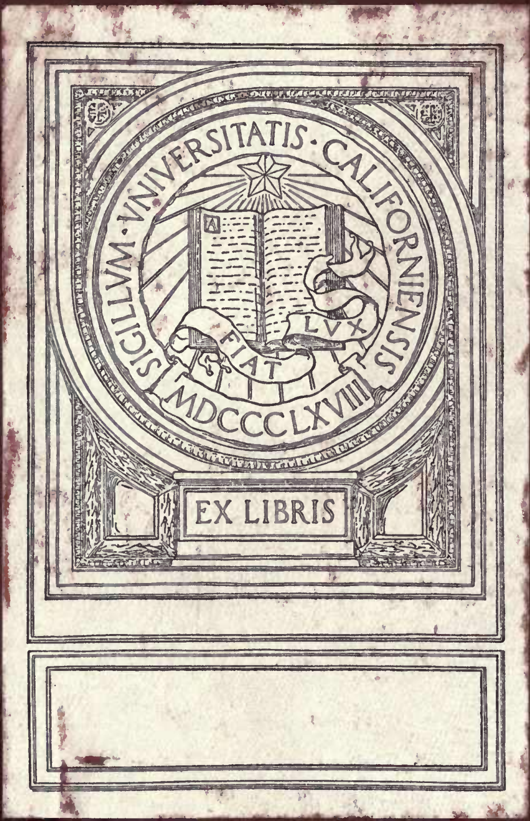
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SHAKESPERE:

HIS BIRTHPLACE, HOME, AND GRAVE.

Monument of Shakespere.

IN THE PARISH CHURCH, STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

Annie with the love of
New Year 1868. J. B.

SHAKESPERE:

HIS BIRTHPLACE, HOME, AND GRAVE.

A Pilgrimage to Stratford-on-Avon

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1863.

BY THE

REV. J. M. JEPHSON, B.A., F.S.A.

WITH

PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERNEST EDWARDS, B.A.

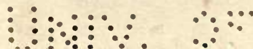
A Contribution to the Tercentenary Commemoration of the Poet's Birth.

LONDON:

LOVELL REEVE & CO., 5, HENRIETTA STREET,

COVENT GARDEN.

1864.



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PREFACE.

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Four years ago I was induced to give a very plain, matter-of-fact account of a tour which I took in Brittany. To my great surprise and pleasure it was most indulgently received by my literary friends, the critics. I accomplished, not only my primary object of passing my summer holiday with pleasure and profit, but also the secondary one of obtaining much unexpected praise. I have been ever since projecting another expedition, but something always prevented me, till last autumn, when my friend, Mr. Lovell Reeve, suggested a visit to Stratford-upon-Avon, and a little book *à propos* of the Tercentenary Festival in honour of Shakespere's birth. A love for the drama, and an especial veneration for the Father of it in England, are, I may say, hereditary in my family. In the last century my grand-uncle, Robert Jephson, was one of those who endeavoured to revive the romantic drama of the Elizabethan era, and wrote several tragedies, amongst which was "The Count of Nar-

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bonne," founded on Walpole's "Caſtle of Otranto," and "Julia, or the Italian Lovers," which long held poſſeſſion of the ſtage. From my childhood, then, I have heard Shakeſpere diſcuſſed, extolled, acted, and quoted; and I was glad of an opportunity of viſiting the place which is eſpecially conſecrated to his memory, and of adding my tiny grain to the volume of incenſe which will riſe in his honour on his three hundredth birthday. The few facts of his life already known have been publiſhed over and over again; but I thought that they might be ſo connected with the ſcene of his youth and the choſen retreat of his mature age, as to make a whole which might be ſuggeſtive of thought to thoſe who ſhall viſit Stratford next ſpring. I am the more bold to offer this little ſketch to lovers of England's greateſt poet, becauſe, if, like Moſes, my ſpeech be weak and ſtammering, I am aſſiſted by a coadjutor whoſe camera is almoſt as great a worker of wonders as was Aaron's rod.

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SHAKESPERE.

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CHAPTER I.

MANY are the changes which have paſſed over England ſince Edward the Third was king; and amongſt them not the leaſt characteriſtic is that which may be obſerved in the objects, the manner, and the ſeaſons of our pilgrimages. The men of the fourteenth century ſought forgetfulneſs of the evils under which they groaned by adoring at the ſhrine of the bold prieſt who, by paſſive reſiſtance, withſtood the will of the fierce Norman Conqueror; we try to elevate our minds above the common drudgery of life by ſeeking Nature where ſhe may be worſhipped in her grandeſt forms, or by treading the ground which has been conſecrated by Genius. They rode from every ſhire's end of England to kneel at the ſhrine of Beckett, "the holy, bliſsful martyr," and to kiſs his blood-ſtained veſtments; we take the expreſs train to Warwick, and thence

proceed by omnibus to Stratford-upon-Avon, that we may gaze on the cottage where Shakeſpere was born and the grave where his bones moulder in peace. Their minds were prepared to adore in the gorgeous temple where the relics of the ſaint were enſhrined in gold and precious ſtones, by the peruſal of legends written in defiance of Nature and Taſte; our intereſt in the homely ſcenes we viſit is inſpired by poems in which Nature is preſented to our minds with the fidelity of the moſt conſummate art, and every ſentiment and word dictated by the moſt exquiſite taſte. Not leſs ſignificant is the change in the ſeaſon at which we ſeek our annual recreation. In days when men were content with few luxuries and had leiſure to chooſe their time for work and play, the verdure, the flowers, the ſinging of the birds, and the genial breezes of April, reminded them that a ride in pleaſant company through the pretty fields and woods of Kent would be beneficial to their ſouls; then "longen folk to gon on pilgrimages;" now we can only ſave from labour and corroding cares a few weeks at the fag end of ſummer, when we are releaſed for a ſeaſon from the conſuming toils of our buſy life.

On the whole, I think our nineteenth-century pilgrimages, whether their objects be the Matterhorn or the little town of Stratford-upon-Avon, have the

advantage of their predeceſſors in the fourteenth century. But in one reſpect mine was ſadly inferior to that which ſtarted from the *Tabard* in the Borough ſomewhere about the year 1383. I had no "perfight gentil knight," no clerk of Oxenford, no jolly friar, no gentle manciple, no gallant ſquire, no preciſe prioreſs, no boiſterous hoſt, to bear me company; nor, I fear, if I had, ſhould I have anſwered to the deſcription of the "pore perſoun of a toun" in any quality except that implied in the firſt epithet. "I rode all unarmed and I rode all alone." I rode becauſe I preferred ſpending my "parſon's week" loitering among the green lanes, taking the rough and ſmooth, the ſunſhine and ſhower, the bitter and ſweet, as it pleaſed God to ſend them, to being whiſked from one point of my journey to the other in a railway carriage. In the latter plan the journey itſelf is quite unintereſting, and is, therefore, hurried over as quickly as poſſible; in the former it forms part of the pleaſure of the trip. "The prize is in the purſuit." Some of my neighbours, indeed, to whom I imparted my deſign, ſaid very plainly, by their looks at leaſt, that they thought me a trifle inſane for ſpending three days in travelling a diſtance which might be accompliſhed by train in as many hours; but the imputation of inſanity is one which muſt be ſubmitted to by any one who reſolves to follow his own inclinations in theſe

days when all thought and action are civiliſed down to a dead level of inſipid conventionaliſm.

A friend kindly lent me a Norwegian pony of ſmall ſize but immenſe power, for the journey. Theſe ſtrong, compact little animals get through far more work than a large horſe. I chriſtened my temporary ſervant "Stornoway," for I thought that had a fine Scandinavian ſound. And ſo, having packed the feweſt poſſible number of neceſſaries in the old knapſack which had accompanied me round Brittany ſome ſix years ago, and ſtrapped it on little Stornoway's crupper, I mounted for my journey.

At that moment, my black retriever, whom his former maſter had called "Smoker," came bounding up, wriggling from ſide to ſide, holding up "his honeſt bawſoned ſonſie face," laying back his ears, and wagging his tail, as much as to ſay, "What a pleaſant ride we are going to have together." I did not like to diſappoint him, and it ſtruck me that he might make an agreeable addition to the *tête-à-tête* between me and Stornoway. So Smoker was permitted to join the expedition.

By the way, I never could make out the propriety of calling a dog "Smoker." Johnſon explains the word, "One who dries or perfumes by ſmoke." And with all his good qualities, Smoker is as guiltleſs as

Crab was of having anything in common with perfume. Smoker is not a romantic or an elegant name; but my Smoker is as good-natured, ſagacious, faithful, engaging, and, I may ſay, with *Launce,* "gentleman-like" a dog, as if he had taken his name from gods or heroes. Still, I muſt ſay, he had ſome of Crab's qualities, for he never ſhed a tear at leaving his friends, the beagle puppies.

The evening was delightful. It was the 31ſt of Auguſt: every field was filled with labourers gathering in the heavy ſheaves, and at every turn I met the laden waggons, drawn by their ſturdy teams, and entering the homeſteads.

But, at the very outſet, I met with ſome troubles for which I had not bargained. Stornoway was a very wiſe little fellow, and evidently thought that though it might be very good fun for me to ride along the pleaſant lanes of England on a harveſt evening on his legs, he had much rather be in his comfortable ſtable, and that poſſibly a little well-timed firmneſs on his part might intimidate the new rider whom he found upon his back. Accordingly, as ſoon as he came to the well-known gate of his home he objected ſtrongly to go any farther. The ſmalleſt intimation of mine with hand or knee that I wiſhed him to go on, was met with a defiant toſs of the head. When I became im-

portunate he ſidled towards the gate. But he immediately reſented an application of the whip or ſpur by ſtanding up ſtraight on his hind-legs. If I had not been very quick in leaning well forward and looſening the reins, he muſt have tumbled back on the hard road. The next time he tried it, however, I was prepared, and leaning over his ſhoulder with a rein in each hand, I pulled him down, and then applied the ſpurs vigorouſly. After ſome fighting and loſs of time and temper on both ſides, we agreed upon a truce. The ſame ſcene was repeated, however, with gradually diminiſhed intenſity at every farm-yard we came to, and I thought to myſelf, "Maſter Stornoway, either you muſt give in, or we ſhall not reach Stratford this month." Stornoway *did* give in, for this was the laſt time he ſhowed any ſerious diſpoſition to diſpute my wiſhes.

Hertford was my deſtination on the firſt night of my pilgrimage, and my road lay through the pretty village of Blackmore, and to the left of Foreſt Hall, whence many a gallant fox has broken covert, and led the Eſſex hounds for miles acroſs the celebrated Roding, or Roden, country, on the outſkirts of which it is ſituated. Both the country and the peer take their titles from the little ſtream called the Roden which runs through it. About four miles on this ſide of Epping I turned to the right for Harlow Buſh, and

as the ſhades of evening were deſcending, paſſed the fine park of the Rev. Joſeph Arkwright, a brother-in-law of the Biſhop of Rocheſter, and Maſter of the Eſſex Fox-hounds; and what is more, though now over ſixty, one of the fineſt riders in England. From Harlow Buſh my way lay through Natſhall Croſs, Burnt Mills, Eaſtwich, and Stanſtead—all charming, picturesque villages of thatched and tiled cottages, ſurrounded by trees. The moon had riſen, the ſtars were ſhining, and the clocks were going nine as I ſaw the lights of Hertford below me in the valley. I put up at the *Dimſdale Arms*, and having ſeen Stornoway fed, retired to what is called the coffee-room, having accompliſhed twenty-ſix miles on this the firſt day of my pilgrimage.

Perhaps it may be uſeful to obſerve that horſes on a journey derive wonderful benefit from being fed in the preſence of their maſters. Why it is I never could make out; it may be that they enjoy their corn the more for company. The coachman of a friend of mine always makes it a point to comb his horſes' tails while they are eating their oats at an inn, and he ſays that they do their work as well again in conſequence of this practice. The oſtlers do not like it.

Having ſeen my pony fed, the next thing was to look after my own creature comforts. And here I was

ſoon made unpleaſantly aware that I was travelling in a country where people live *at home.* I might have ſaid, it is true,

> "The chambres and the ſtables were wyde,
> And wel we weren eſud atte beſte,"

as far as houſe-room went; but in reſpect of all that miniſters to real material comfort and cheerfulneſs, an Engliſh inn is far behind a Continental one. In a French town ſuch as Hertford, there would have been a *ſalle-à-manger* filled with gueſts, and the *chef* would have ſent in a refreſhing *potage*, with ſome delicate cutlets, or other *appétiſſant* diſh, followed by a *poire cuite*, and waſhed down with a bottle of Bordeaux. Here I was ſhown into a room, carpeted and curtained it is true, with well-ſtuffed chairs to ſit on or to go to ſleep in, but with an air as if it was never occupied. And then when I aſked for ſupper I was told I might have cold beef, or they would ſend out for a chop—a thing with a quantity of fat and griſtle on it, from which one has to pare the eatable part with the greateſt care, and even that is imbued with the flavour of the tallow which one has to baniſh to the farther corner of one's plate. And this is to be waſhed down with heavy brewer's ale or brandied ſherry. We Engliſh are indeed highly favoured in our meat, but who ſent us our cooks?

While waiting for my animals to be fed next morning, I ſtrolled about the town. The ſtaple manufacture here is ſchoolboys. There are the Blue Coat School, the Green Coat School, and ever ſo many other ſchools, public and private, and upon theſe the tradespeople live. The town is ſurrounded by fine woods, and prettily ſituated on the river Lea, where the quaint old haberdaſher, Izaak Walton, uſed to catch chubs with toaſted cheeſe, and liſten to the milk-maids ſinging "Come live with me and be my love."

At about nine I ſtarted, intending to paſs through Welwyn, ſeven miles diſtant; Wheathampſtead, five miles from Welwyn, both in Hertfordſhire; Luton, eight miles from Wheathampſtead, in Bedfordſhire; Dunſtable, five miles from Luton; Leighton Buzzard, nine miles from Dunſtable; and perhaps Winſlow in Bucks, twelve miles from Leighton: thus making forty-ſix miles in the day. This would have been too long a journey for a continuance; but I thought that it would be beſt to get well forward towards my deſtination at firſt, and then to take my time afterwards; and little Stornoway did not ſeem to mind my weight in the leaſt.

On leaving Hertford, I took the wrong turning for Welwyn, but it proved a fortunate miſtake; for the road led me round Panſhanger, the beautiful demeſne

of Lord Cowper. Happily it is furrounded by park-palings, not a wall, and I had an advantageous view of the green glades, dotted here and there with noble oaks and elms, and lofing themfelves in coppices of beech. Smoker put up feveral coveys of birds which lay funning themfelves and bathing in the duft by the road-fide; and by eleven o'clock I heard the guns going in all directions, and faw the fhooting parties "going a-birding," and tramping through the Swedes. It was a fplendid firft of September, if not for the partridges, at leaft for the fportfmen.

After paffing Panfhanger, I defcended into the valley of the Lea, along which the road runs for feveral miles. It is a fluggifh river, and is laid out at this part of its courfe in extenfive beds of water-creffes, which men were employed in gathering. Unfortunately it had no "fhingly bars," nor did it "chatter" as it went, but only "loitered" continually "round its creffes." To do it juftice, however, it did "ftir its fweet Forget-me-nots that grow for happy lovers," and indeed abounded with the richeft vegetation.

At Welwyn, a fplendid viaduct, of nearly a quarter of a mile long, fpans this valley, and carries the Great Northern Railway acrofs it. From this to Luton, which is fituated on the boundary between Herts and Beds, the road lies along the fluggifh ftream, and paffes

to Luton Hoo, formerly belonging to the Marquis of Bute. A few years ago it was burnt down, and the ruins and eſtate were purchaſed by a Liverpool attorney, who had made a fortune by the ſale of land at Birkenhead. Luton Hoo is ſurrounded by a great, high, ugly, brick wall, and threatening placards denounce the ſevereſt penalties of the law againſt thoſe who dare to tread its hallowed precincts; ſo the attorney has his fine place all to himſelf. How different from the ſtately Panſhanger, with its pictureſque park-pales, the fence of Engliſh demeſnes and warrens from time immemorial.

Luton is the head-quarters of the ſtraw bonnet manufacture, and has all the unpleaſing look of a manufacturing town.

After leaving Luton, I found that the country loſt its rich park-like character. The ſoil appears to be chalk, and the landſcape ſtretches away in fine breezy downs and rolling hills, and corn-fields of fifty acres in extent.

The entrance to Dunſtable—the place where the ſtraw bonnets were firſt manufactured, and from whence they take their name, and where you now ſee women walking about platting, as they knit on the Continent—is very ſtriking. The church, an exquiſite example of Early Engliſh architecture, appear-

ing all the more beautiful from the uglineſs of the ſurrounding buildings, ſtands to the left. The deep arcading and bold mouldings of the weſt end are perfectly charming.

It is the faſhion, I believe, to ſay that Gothic architecture culminated in the Decorated period, but to me, judging merely by the light of nature without any pretenſion to deep learning on the ſubject, there ſeems a poetry, a feeling in the Early Engliſh which the ſtyle of no other period approaches.

Here I was ſtruck by a name which appeared over the door of a wretched public-houſe. It was Norman Snoxell. What on earth could have brought Norman Snoxell to Dunſtable to retail beer and tobacco? Balzac uſed to perambulate the ſtreets of Paris for days looking over the doors of the ſhops for appropriate names for his characters. Here would have been quite a godſend for any noveliſt who wanted to name his Norſe ſmuggler or pirate. But, indeed, the names of the Engliſh peaſantry are ſometimes very curious. I remember, in Norfolk, a ſervant-maid named Phebe Blanchflower. You would never expect ſuch a name out of a novel; but it was a real name nevertheleſs; for her father, old Blanchflower, drove the Ipſwich mail for many years.

I reached Leighton Buzzard, on the borders of

Bucks, at about ſix; but I was determined, if poſſible, to ſleep at Winſlow where I heard there was a very comfortable country inn, and ſo puſhed on; but both Stornoway and I were tired, and the laſt five miles ſeemed interminable. However, at Winſlow we arrived at about ten o'clock, and put up at the "Bell," having accompliſhed a journey of forty-ſix miles ſince breakfaſt.

Next morning, being the 2nd of September, I ſtarted from Winſlow at a little after nine, purpoſing, if poſſible, to reach Edgehill the ſame night. Edgehill is within twelve miles of Stratford, and I thought that by ſleeping there, I might ride into Stratford next morning at my leiſure, and thus have the advantage of ſeeing the end and object of my pilgrimage by daylight.

The firſt town I reached was Buckingham, ſeven miles from Winſlow. It is a nice, pretty country town, in the valley of the Stour. Between this and Brackley I paſſed one of the lodges of Stowe, and then the ſcenery changed. I am no great geologiſt, but the ſtone appeared to me to be a reddiſh green limeſtone. It lies in regular ſtrata, and comes out of the earth in nice rectangular pieces, well adapted for building. Accordingly the houſes and fences are all built of ſtone, the latter having no mortar; but

great art is apparently employed in making the ſtones fit nicely into each other, and ſome of the walls have quite a Cyclopean or Etruſcan character. I was particularly ſtruck with the village of Middleton-Cheney. Here the houſes ſeem very old, and the brown and greeniſh ſtone of which they are built has become covered with lichens, which add much to the beauty of the colouring. Their ſhingled roofs, of high pitch, are very picturefque. Yet here, where Nature and the practice of former generations would ſeem to have plainly indicated the right forms and materials, the people are actually building ſome new almſhouſes of flaming red brick and blue ſlate. Red brick may be made a very beautiful material, and is proper for London or Eſſex, where there is no ſtone; but to import it into a place where there is already a beautiful material provided by Nature, ſhows a wonderful amount of bad taſte in the builders.

Banbury is a handſome town, and the principal inn extremely comfortable. I could not deſcry the Croſs, to which, when I was a baby, I was invited to "ride a cock-horſe;" but I ate a Banbury cake out of curioſity. It is a villainous invention, being a "roll-up," to uſe Miſs Evans' expreſſion, of rich paſtry, enveloping currants.

From Banbury I ſtarted at a little after ſix, and,

after paſſing ſome gentlemen's places—Colonel North's amongſt the reſt—got upon ſome high table-land, with wild country, as far as I could ſee in the rapidly cloſ-ing-in evening, on either ſide. Smoker as well as I ſeemed to feel the lonelineſs of the road, for inſtead of foraging about as uſual, and enjoying the pleaſure of finding out what everything he paſſed ſmelt of, he kept cloſe to Stornoway's heels. At laſt I ſaw a twinkling light, which I afterwards found proceeded from the houſe of a Mr. Fitzgerald, and deſcried two keepers under the trees. This was quite a relief. Preſently I came to an almoſt ruinous toll-bar, and in a few mi-nutes more reached the lonely road-ſide inn. This was Edgehill, where the firſt blood was drawn in the Civil War. I knocked at the door with my whip, and was anſwered by a ſcared maid, who, however, ſoon made me comfortable; and I went to bed in a great, wild chamber, and dreamt of battles between Cavaliers and Roundheads, the latter being worſted by a well-directed fire of Enfield rifles, in which I took part.

CHAPTER II.

NEXT morning I found that the inn at which I had ſlept was called the "Sun Riſing." It bears on its walls the old proverb, "Good wine needs no buſh," yet betrays its unbelief in the adage by diſplaying over the door a huge bunch of grapes.

It is built on the very edge of a ſteep hill, hence probably called Edgehill, and commands a fine view of at leaſt thirty miles in extent, bounded by the Malvern Hills. To the right is the village of Kyneton, or Kington, where the Parliamentary army was poſted on the eve of the battle of Edgehill; and cloſe under the hill is Battle Farm, where the firſt battle was fought in the quarrel between the Sovereign and the Parliament,

> "When hard words, jealouſies, and fears
> Set folks together by the ears."

But what was more to my preſent purpoſe, mine hoſt pointed out to me a little riſing ground in the middle of the vaſt plain which was ſpread out before me,

behind which, he ſaid, lay Stratford-upon-Avon. Here, then, I was beginning to tread the ground which was familiar to him whoſe words are houſehold words to all Engliſh-ſpeaking people, and which ſuggeſted to him thoſe ſweet, and withal accurate and life-like pictures of country manners with which his great poems abound.

At about ten o'clock I ſtarted on my final ride to Stratford, and after deſcending the almoſt precipitous hill upon which the inn is perched, I found myſelf on a level road, bounded on either ſide by cornfields, from which the harveſt was, in many caſes, not yet gathered in. The only villages of note I paſſed were Pillerton Priors and Eatington, the ſeat, ever ſince the Conqueſt, of the ancient family of Shirley.

At a little after twelve I came in ſight of the beautiful old bridge built over the Avon at the entrance to Stratford, by Sir Hugh Clopton, in the reign of Henry VII. It conſiſts of fourteen ſlightly-pointed arches, and is nearly, if not quite, level. In fact, one does not ſee how modern architects excel the older ones, even in this thoroughly utilitarian branch of the art—at leaſt ſo far as the old materials of lime and ſtone are employed. The feudal *trinoda neceſſitas* laid upon the vaſſal the obligation of defending the country, building bridges, and keeping the highways

in order, and the vassal appears to have performed the obligation tolerably well in mediæval England.

And now I was all expectation. I had at last reached the spot where Shakespere was born, where he imbibed his earliest impressions from outward things, and where he chose to spend his life, in preference to many other places which would seem to have had greater claims upon his regard. The question I asked myself was, Is it possible, by fixing my mind upon the scene which inscribed its impressions upon the white paper of the poet's mind, and comparing it with his writings and with the few facts known of his life, to arrive at anything like a just conception of the man himself? I have often observed that by perseveringly fixing the attention upon a difficult passage in a foreign language, the meaning after a time seems to flash like lightning upon the mind. Can I, by any process like this, read the mysterious book of Shakespere's nature?

My first impressions were certainly not encouraging. The bridge was fine, and to the right was a pretty old house, approached by an avenue of trees, and kept with that beautiful neatness and elegance of greensward and flower-beds which is seen nowhere but in England. The Avon, too, was flowing majestically on, as it did when Shakespere played upon its banks, or flew his hawk at the wild-fowl which harboured in its sedges;

and a pair of ſwans, accompanied by their cygnets, were thruſting their long necks to the bottom, where they probably found an abundant repaſt of worms and grubs, waſhed down from ſome new cuts and embankments a little higher up the ſtream. Theſe were all pleaſing objects, upon which the fancy of a poet might delight to dwell; but as I rode up the High Street, I was obliged to acknowledge that Stratford is about as unintereſting to the outward ſenſes as any country town I had ever ſeen in England. There is no appearance of anything like antiquity, except perhaps a couple of carriers' inns, and they are moderniſed. There is no appearance even of wealth, nor any of that neatneſs and elegance which are its fruits. Stratford is a collection, generally ſpeaking, of mean houſes, and the High Street is not its beſt feature. At the upper extremity is the ugly market-houſe, where the old market-croſs uſed to ſtand, but this diſappeared in the laſt or the beginning of this century.

Having called at the "Red Horſe," a good inn on the right of the High Street, in hopes of finding that Mr. Edwards, the photographer, had arrived—a hope in which I was diſappointed—I turned to the left, down Chapel Street, to the "Shakeſpere," where I took up my quarters.

The "Shakeſpere" is an old-faſhioned, comfortable

inn, and the hoſt ſhows a laudable intereſt in the Poet who gives a name to his hoſtelry and brings him moſt of his cuſtomers. Each room is called after one of the plays, the title of which is placed over the door. Thus the commercial room is ſuperſcribed "The Tempeſt"—not very appropriately, however, at leaſt during my ſtay, for the houſe was remarkably quiet. The coffee-room was "As You Like It"—I confeſs I did not much like it, for it was as lonely as the Foreſt of Arden itſelf. My bed-chamber was named "A Midſummer Night's Dream;" another on the ſame landing, "Much Ado about Nothing;" another, "Love's Labour Loſt," and ſo on. Buſts of the Poet are placed on every lobby, and the walls are hung with portraits of himſelf and illuſtrations of his works. A curious old clock, ſaid to have been taken from New Place, and various articles of ancient furniture with which his name is connected, are to be ſeen in different parts of the houſe. Indeed, as a general rule, I believe Stratford-upon-Avon may be ſaid to live upon the memory of its great Poet, as Rome does upon the relics of the Apoſtles.

What a capital plan it would be, by the way, to ſet up a Shakeſperian high-prieſt at Stratford, whoſe function it ſhould be to regulate the devotions of the pilgrims and employ himſelf in the *culte des ruines*, and

who ſhould be inſpired to pronounce an infallible judgment upon Shakeſperian criticiſm. He ſhould decide whether "The Two Noble Kinſmen," "Titus Andronicus," "Pericles," and the firſt and ſecond parts of "Henry VI." were canonical or apocryphal; what ſhould be the received text—the folio of 1623 or that of 1632—and what the authority of the quartos; he would pronounce upon the validity of the claims of various readings, and winnow the whole crop of commentators, from Malone, Farmer, Theobald, Steevens, and Johnſon, down to Collier, Dyce, and the Cambridge editors. And ſo at length the republic of letters might repoſe upon infallible authority, and not be, as it now is, a prey to unhappy diviſions, and diſtracted by the uncertain ſound emitted by its contending teachers.

But to return from my digreſſion.

Having ſeen poor little Stornaway made comfortable in a looſe box, to reſt after his long journey, and left Smoker to keep him company, I walked out to take a general ſurvey of the town. The High Street I have already deſcribed. Henley Street, which branches off from it at the market-place, is built of mean houſes, and has nothing remarkable about it but Shakeſpere's birthplace, of which I ſhall ſpeak preſently. Chapel Street, where New Place once ſtood, has much more character. But everybody ſeems to have conſpired to

deface this town. The Town Hall is an ugly modern building, and the Guild Chapel of the Holy Croſs is in the debaſed ſtyle of the reign of Henry VII., when Sir Hugh Clopton built it on the ruins of an older edifice, the chancel of which ſtill bears evidence to its ſuperior beauty. The clumſy tower is ſeen to the left in the photograph of the Grammar School. In the chapel is the tomb of Sir Hugh, on which is the following inſcription: "He built y^{e} ſtone bridge over Avon, with ye cauſey at ye Weſt End; further manifeſting his piety to God and love to this place of his nativity (as ye centurion in ye Goſpel did to ye Jewiſh Nation and Religion by building them a ſynagogue), for at his ſole charge this beautiful chappell of ye Holy Trinity was rebuilt, temp. H. VII., and ye croſs iſle of ye Pariſh Church." Inſtead of, perhaps, a beautiful Early Engliſh or Decorated building, we have one of clumſy proportions and debaſed ornamentation. Such as it is, however, it has been further debaſed by the churchwardens or common-councillors of the eighteenth century. Profeſſor Willis has well obſerved, that whenever a church wanted rebuilding or decoration in the middle ages, ſome Saint, or Saint's relics, were ſure providentially to turn up in the neighbourhood. The clergy immediately enſhrined them, the people flocked to pay their devotions, and the church was renovated

by means of their pious offerings. Surely the votaries of Shakespere ought to offer for the restoration of a shrine whose shadow fell upon his house, upon which he must have looked from his windows, and where he probably used often to kneel. Little besides the clearing away of a quantity of ugly cumbrous church furniture would be enough to restore it to nearly the same appearance as it bore when Shakespere knew it. It would now be impossible, even if such a proceeding were sanctioned by public opinion, to restore the beautiful frescoes discovered in 1804, when the chapel was repaired. The chief subject was the "Invention of the Holy Cross," to which the chapel was dedicated; but that which probably brought the swiftest ruin upon the whole was the "Martyrdom of Thomas-a-Beckett," to whose memory Henry VIII. bore special enmity, because the ground of the "blissful martyr's" canonization was his resistance to the power of the crown. His name is carefully erased from all missals and other service-books used in Henry's reign. The frescoes were therefore probably defaced by the Reformers even before they were finally destroyed in 1804. They were, however, copied, and have been published.

Passing on from the Guild Chapel, we have the whole range of buildings containing the Grammar School and Guildhall, and, near the parish church, a

nice-looking old houſe, built on the ſite of the old college for prieſts, which was pulled down in 1799.

The pariſh church is a very fine ſpecimen of Perpendicular, built on the banks of the Avon, and ſurrounded by trees. I ſhall ſpeak of it more at length in connection with Shakeſpere's grave and monument. The bridge, the chapel, the church, the Poet's birthplace in Henley Street, and the old houſe in Chapel Street, of which Mr. Edwards has taken an excellent photograph, are the only viſible remains of the period when Shakeſpere lived here. They may ſerve to give us ſome idea of how Stratford looked in his time.

In the firſt place, then, the ſtreets were not, as now, compoſed of rows of unintereſting brick cottages. The dwelling-houſes were probably detached, and ſurrounded by yards and gardens, like John Shakeſpere's, in Henley Street. Of the ſtyle of the ſhop-fronts, the ſhop of Mr. Williams, breeches-maker, glover, &c. (ſee photograph), will give us an idea; and a ſtreet of ſuch fronts, with the ſhape, and height, and ornamentation of each varied indefinitely, muſt have been very beautiful. There, on the top of the hill upon which the town ſtands, was the old market croſs, a pictureſque Gothic ſtructure, round which the chapmen aſſembled, and ſhowed their merchandiſe, and perhaps ſome *Autolycus* ſung:—

Ancient House in Stratford-on-Avon.

> "Will you buy any tape,
> Or lace for your cape,
> My dainty duck, my dear-a;
> Any silk, any thread,
> Any toys for your head,
> Of the new'st and fin'st, fin'st wear-a;
> Come to the pedlar,
> Money's a meddler
> That doth alter all men's wear-a."

Here, near the church, was the old college for priests, appropriated by Master John à Combe as a dwelling-house on the dissolution of the religious houses, but still retaining its stately ecclesiastical character. The church and chapel were shorn, indeed, of their former glories, and a coat of whitewash had perhaps been laid on the walls to deface any traces of colour or painting; but the carved benches or chairs, the rood-screen, and the stained glass probably yet remained, and the galleries and pews were as yet in the womb of time. Chapel Street was adorned and dignified by New Place, a fine old mansion built by the magnificent Sir Hugh Clopton. In such a town, built on a rising ground on the banks of the Avon, close to the parks of Fulbrooke and Charlecote and the Forest of Arden, the Poet of Nature might well have been proud to have been born, and glad to dwell amongst his own people.

CHAPTER III.

I HAD now got ſo far as this in my inveſtigation:—The place of Shakeſpere's birth—where he ſpent his youth, and to which he retired the moment he had acquired a competence—was in his time, notwithſtanding its preſent dreary appearance, a town embelliſhed by many ſtately and beautiful buildings, the reſidence of wealthy burghers and of a large body of clergy, at that time the moſt learned and cultivated claſs of ſociety. It was moreover built on the banks of a lovely river, ſurrounded by rural villages, parks, and foreſt tracts—ſuch a country, in ſhort, as would ſeize upon the fancy of a poet, and mark his imagination with the impreſs of its own character. For though the poet's fancy be, in one ſenſe, independent of outward things, and

> "Doth glance from heaven to earth, and earth to heaven,
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to ſhapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name,"

yet if, as Locke aſſerts, the mind be a ſheet of white paper till written upon by the ſenſes, the original ſimple ideas from which the complex images of poetry are formed muſt have had their origin in outward things, however independent of them they may afterwards become. And that Shakeſpere's young imagination fed upon the ſcenes in which his youth was ſpent is plain, both from the fact that he never loſt ſight of the grand object of returning to live in his native town, and from the whole character of his writings. None of his contemporaries has drawn ſo directly and ſo largely from Engliſh rural life as he, and the ſtyle of ſcenery upon which he delights to dwell, as deſcribed, for inſtance, in the words of *Titania*—

> "And never, ſince the middle ſummer's ſpring,
> Met we on hill, in dale, foreſt, or mead,
> By pavèd fountain, or by ruſhy brook"—

is juſt that of the neighbourhood of Stratford. Greene and Peele have ſome pretty country ſcenes, but they want the touches of nature, the elegance, the lightneſs of the maſter. In theſe reſpects no one approaches him but Chaucer, whoſe merits are unhappily buried for the generality in his obſolete language, and whoſe occaſional groſſneſs condemns his poems to cloſe priſon. To quote inſtances of Shakeſpere's power of depicting Engliſh country ſcenes and people would be to tranſcribe

a great part of his plays. But to take an inſtance: "As You Like It" is ſaid to be more generally read than any other of his works; and this is owing, I think, to the hold which the idea of life in the Foreſt of Arden has on the reader, who finds in the ſhepherds and ſhepherdeſſes, not the Arcadian article, but the real Engliſh one. And where did Shakeſpere get his Foreſt of Arden? Not, we may be ſure, in Flanders, but in the foreſt tract of Warwickſhire. Of Engliſh middle claſs ſociety in a country town, where ſhall we find a more life-like or genial picture than in "The Merry Wives of Windſor?" *Page, Ford,* and their wives, *Sir Hugh Evans,* and the hoſt of the "Garter" were doubtleſs drawn from the ſubſtantial glovers and wool-ſtaplers, innkeepers and parſons, of Stratford and the neighbourhood. Of the home of a wealthy juſtice of the peace in a remote county *Shallow's* houſe and ſurroundings is the trueſt and moſt humorous conception that ever was penned.

But to gather from the place all the inſight which it can yield, we muſt take into account eſpecially the poſition which the Poet held there in his youth. The impreſſion made upon the mind, of the young eſpecially, by outward objects, depends much upon the ſtanding-point from which it views them. A peer and a coſtermonger ſhall both inhabit London, but yet their

ſeveral conceptions of the place ſhall differ as widely as if one lived in Timbuctoo and the other in Siberia.

The family of Shakeſpere, which had been long ſettled in Warwickſhire, appears never to have riſen above the rank of the yeomanry. The Poet's father, John Shakeſpere, was the ſon of Richard Shakeſpere, a farmer of Snitterfield, not far from Stratford, and reſided in the houſe in Henley Street which tradition aſſigns as the place of the Poet's birth. In an entry in the regiſter of the Bailiff's Court of that town, dated 1556, ſtating that he was ſued by Thomas Siche of Arſcotte in Wiltſhire for £8, he is deſcribed as "Johannes Shakeſpere de Stretford in Comitatu Warici, *Glover*." It appears that he alſo farmed land, or at leaſt ſold corn and timber, for in the ſame year he ſued Henry Fyld for eighteen quarters of barley, which the latter unjuſtly detained. In 1564 the corporation of Stratford paid him 4*s*. for a piece of timber. In the ſame year—the year of his celebrated ſon's birth—he contributed towards the relief of the poor when the plague was raging in the town. He occupied a farm of fourteen acres at Ington Meadow, or Ingon—*Ing* means "meadow," as in Ingateſtone, called in Latin, *Pratum apud petram*—and in 1575 he purchaſed two freehold houſes in Henley Street. One of theſe he had before occupied as tenant—that, namely, in which

William Shakespere was in all probability born. In a deed dated 1579 he is described as a yeoman, and his name is found in a roll of the gentlemen and freeholders of Barlish hundred, in which Stratford is situated, bearing date 1580. In a deed dated 1596 he is again described as a yeoman. In 1586 the copyhold of a house in Henley Street was assigned to him.

We have seen that in one document he is styled "glover," and that from others it appears that he farmed land. Aubrey says he was a butcher, and Rowe, that he was a considerable dealer in wool. But all these are callings which might very possibly be exercised by one and the same person. Even at the present day, when the principle of the division of labour is much more rigidly carried out than formerly, we often see farmers combining with their principal callings those of butchers, general dealers, timber-merchants, charcoal-burners, horse-dealers, corn-factors, auctioneers, valuers, or such like country trades. In those times it was still more likely that a man of active mind and of some claim to gentility should be impatient of the small profits of farming, and should try some short cut to wealth by speculating in any business with which circumstances might have made him acquainted.

At any rate he must have been a man of some standing and influence in his native town, for in 1557

Shakesperes House, Stratford-on-Avon.

FROM HENLEY STREET.

he was appointed an ale-taſter and a burgeſs; in 1558 and 1559 he ſerved as conſtable—an office generally held by reſpectable farmers or tradeſmen; in 1561 he was appointed afferor—an officer defined by Cowel, "Such as are appointed in court-leets, &c., upon oath, to mulct ſuch as have committed faults arbitrarily puniſhable, and have no expreſs penalty ſet down by ſtatute." He was elected one of the chamberlains in 1561; an alderman in 1565; high bailiff in 1568; and on September 5, 1571, he was again elected alderman for the enſuing year. From ſome of the documents from which theſe facts are recorded, it has been argued that John Shakeſpere could not write his name, for he has made his mark at the foot of ſeveral of them. At that time the inability to write was not conſidered ſo diſgraceful as it would now be. But that John Shakeſpere ſigned his mark and not his name is by no means deciſive of the fact that he could not write. I think it is Dr. Maitland who obſerves, in his book on the middle ages, that it was then conſidered a mark of dignity to have your name written by a clerk, and merely to acknowledge the act by making a croſs or other mark oppoſite it.

It has often been obſerved that men of genius favour —to uſe a provincial, but, I think, alſo a Shakeſperian word—their mother, rather than their father; a prin-

ciple acted upon by the Arabs, who are said to count the pedigrees of their horses through the dams, and not the sires. It may be so in the case of men, but the fact, if it be one, may also be due to the early education imparted by mothers to their children. Education begins, in fact, at the mother's knee; and the bent given to the youthful mind from infancy to eight or nine years old, during the long hours spent at home while the father is at his work, is probably discernible for ever after. Was it so in the case of Shakespere? We cannot tell, indeed, for certain; but still the mind, in dealing with the mysterious problem of his genius, clings to anything in the shape of even a probability. When we read "Hamlet," "The Moor of Venice," "The Merchant of Venice," "As You Like It," "Much-Ado About Nothing," "Lear," "Cymbeline," or "Romeo and Juliet," we are amazed at the variety of character displayed in *Ophelia, Desdemona, Portia, Rosalind, Celia, Hermione, Beatrice, Cordelia, Imogen,* and *Juliet*; but in each we recognise fundamental truth to the highest type of woman's nature. How did he obtain the moral insight and elevation necessary as a foundation on which to raise these various superstructures? Where did he, a wild young man, spending his youth among the young farmers and tradesmen of Stratford, and his manhood about the London theatres, acquire

that reverence for women which enabled him to combine in his female characters the wildest passion with the most exquisite purity? Clever sons have often had foolish mothers; but if any man has a tender respect for women and a deep appreciation of female excellence, I think it will be found that he has acquired these qualities from the early lessons of maternal love. I am willing, therefore, to fancy that Shakespere obtained his faculty of forming his high ideal of female character from the early impressions left upon his mind by his mother.

Her very name, Mary Arden, is suggestive. The painters have taken care that the first bearer of the name of Mary shall present to our minds all that is purest, noblest, most graceful, and womanly in maid, wife, and mother. The simple country folk give her name to the most wholesome, the sweetest, and the prettiest herbs and flowers that grow in their gardens and hedges—the rosemary, the marygold, the lady's slipper, the maiden-hair, the lady's fingers, and other such like. Arden means a forest, and is applied, by way of excellence, to the forest country in Warwickshire, and that on the borders of France and Flanders, the scene of "As You Like It" and "Quentin Durward."

Of Mary Arden, indeed, no personal record remains, but we know this at least, that she was of an old and

wealthy Warwickshire family, some members of which had done good service to Henry VII. Her father was Robert Arden, a gentleman of Wilmecote, in the parishes of Stratford-upon-Avon and Aston, from whom she inherited the estate of Ashbies, consisting of about fifty-four acres, two tenements in Snitterfield, a share in other lands at Wilmecote, besides a small sum of money. The family derived its name from the forest district of Arden, whence the Poet, no doubt, took his ideal of the Arden whose trees Orlando "marred with writing love-songs in their barks." That the heiress of Wilmecote inherited some gentle qualities from her gentle ancestry is possible; and its probability will not be gainsayed by those who know what a difference the fact of a pointer being shot over or left untrained, makes in the steadiness of its offspring. The sagacity acquired by association with man's superior intelligence is transmitted from generation to generation in the lower animals; and that in man the qualities of mind fostered by the habitual self-respect, intellectual activity, and pursuit of noble aims, which, as a general rule, are found only amongst those who are exempt from a dependence upon bodily toil, should also descend with the blood, is not improbable; but that her father's easy circumstances secured to Mary Arden the unquestionable benefits of a good education, there can

Shakespere's House.

SHOWING THE WINDOW OF THE ROOM IN WHICH HE WAS BORN.

be no reaſonable doubt. And ſo Shakeſpere, perhaps, might add one more inſtance to confirm the ſuppoſed rule that the genius of great men deſcends to them from their mothers' qualities or training. He was born, in fact, upon the outſkirts of gentility, and was excluded from the tempting inner circle by poverty rather than by birth.

I had now to viſit the actual houſe—nay, the very room—in which he probably firſt ſaw the light.

In this houſe reſided his father, John Shakeſpere, probably as a tenant, in 1552. In 1556 he purchaſed the freehold, and was reſident there in 1590. The baptiſm of his third child, William, is regiſtered in the pariſh church, under the date of April 26, 1564; and therefore it ſeems almoſt certain that the Poet was born in this houſe, his parents' uſual reſidence, in accordance with the uninterrupted tradition of the place.

Mr. Edwards, with camera more potent than the perſpective glaſs of Friar Bacon, or the wand with which *Proſpero* commanded the ſervices of his "trickſy *Ariel*," has compelled the bleſſed Sun himſelf to paint us four pictures of this intereſting relic. It is built of timber, with the interſtices filled in with what is called "wattle and dab," and probably reſembled moſt other houſes of its claſs in the old town of

Stratford; but I was not prepared to fee it look fo fmug and new. Many of the old timbers remain, and the houfe is, indeed, fubftantially the fame houfe as it was; but new timbers have been inferted where the old were decayed, everything has been fcraped and polifhed up, and the place looks as if it had been "reftored," a word to ftrike terror to the heart of an antiquary, not to fpeak of a man of tafte. The propenfity to ftain, and polifh, and varnifh, and fubftitute new work for old unneceffarily, is much to be deprecated. Perhaps the committee, who hold the property in truft for the nation, could not avoid giving to Shakefpere's birthplace its prefent holiday appearance; but how often is the artiftic eye offended by feeing a fine old building vulgarifed by reftorers! There is an ancient log-church at Grinftead, near Chipping Ongar, in this county, which is enough to make one tear one's hair. The trunks of the trees of which it is built, and which were all riven and white with age, have been fcraped, and ftained, and varnifhed; old ftone-work has been replaced by the moft neatly-pointed brick; windows filled with the weather-ftained green glafs of centuries ago, have been re-glazed in the neweft fafhion; an enormous and very conceited-looking eagle ftands in the middle of the nave, and the whole place is encumbered with berlin-wool im-

Living room, in Shakespere's House

pertinences. The worſt of it is, that the perpetrators of ſuch enormities are generally ſuch worthy, well-meaning people, that one is afraid to ſuggeſt a doubt as to their diſcretion, for fear of damping their zeal. Perhaps a few years' expoſure to the weather may tone down the "neat" look of the houſe in Henley Street.

The firſt room I entered was in that part of the building which had been a butcher's ſhop, and which, I believe, was the reſidence of John Shakeſpere. It ſeemed to be a ſort of hall, or outer kitchen, paved with unſhapely flags. The great old fire-place is ſupported by immenſe ſtone jambs, and the ceiling by a ponderous beam. Opening out of this is a better room, probably the keeping-room, or, as it is called in Yorkſhire, the "houſe-place." This, too, is paved with flags, and ſupported by beams. The fire-place is maſſive, and under its projecting jambs are coſy chimney-corners, where, doubtleſs, young Shakeſpere, ſeated on a ſettle, many a time conned his leſſons of a winter's evening, or read in Holinſhed, or roaſted crabs for the lambs'-wool, or, perhaps, dried himſelf after one of his raids upon a neighbouring park or warren. Beyond this are two ſmaller rooms, which were probably bed-chambers; and beyond them, again, ſome more rooms, which, there ſeems every reaſon to

believe, formed part of the other adjoining house, and which are not shown. Upstairs is the bed-chamber in which tradition asserts the great Poet to have been born; and tradition is probably right, for it is the best chamber in the house, and therefore probably appropriated to the mistress on such an occasion. The large window in the first photograph belongs to it, and the second places the interior before the reader's eyes as it exists; and if he cannot actually be present at Stratford on the 23rd of April next, he can see all that the veritable pilgrims will see without stirring out of his arm-chair. Every square inch of the walls is covered with the names of visitors, attesting the universal homage paid to the mighty genius who reflects his fame upon the unconscious stone and masonry. The jambs of the chimney have been appropriated by the modern actors and actresses, and amongst their names may still be read that of Edmund Kean. Sir Walter Scott has inscribed his in indelible characters with a diamond on a pane of glass in the large window.

In another room on the same floor is shown a portrait, much resembling the bust in the church, and said to have been preserved for many years in the family of Mr. William Oakes Hunt, town-clerk of Stratford, by whom it has been presented to the public. It is very like the monument in the church.

Room in which Shakespere was born

After looking at theſe things for a while, and lingering over them with a ſort of vague feeling that they ought to tell ſomething of him to whom they were once familiar—the feeling, I ſuppoſe which made men brave every danger to viſit Jeruſalem, and which ſtill impels them to traverſe the deſert that they may tread the ſtreets of Mecca—I paſſed out by a back-door into the garden, which is nicely laid out with gravel-walks, and in the middle of which may be ſeen ſome carved ſtones taken from the ruins of New Place. This ſupplied Mr. Edwards with another view of the houſe.

There was a ſcheme, I think, ſuggeſted of planting this garden excluſively with plants mentioned in Shakeſpere's works, but it was abandoned. Perhaps it would be impoſſible to carry the idea out thoroughly; but I would certainly plead for a place for poor *Ophelia's* "roſemary, that's for remembrance," and "panſies, that's for thought;" her fennel and her columbines, and "herb-o'-grace o' Sundays." I would have here—

> "Daiſies pied, and violets blue,
> And lady's ſmocks all ſilver white,
> And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue;"

and *Titania's* "muſk-roſes" ſhould be there too—not forgetting the "little weſtern flower," which

maidens call "Love in Idleneſs;" and ſweet *Perdita's*

> "——— Daffodils,
> That come before the ſwallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim,
> But ſweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
> Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroſes,
> That die unmarried, ere they can behold
> Bright Phœbus in his ſtrength: a malady
> Moſt incident to maids; bold oxlips, and
> The crown-imperial; lilies of all kinds,
> The flower-de-luce being one."

Theſe gardens are intended for the delectation of the public, and it would certainly contribute to the intereſt and amuſement of viſitors if, as they walked, they could read on labels the many charming paſſages in which the great Poet, like One ſtill greater, ſhowed his love of nature by taking ſimilitudes and pointing morals from "the lilies of the field."

In this houſe, then, which is that of a reſpectable yeoman, was William Shakeſpere born, ſome few days before the 26th of April, 1564, the date of his baptiſm. The period allowed to elapſe between his birth and baptiſm was, probably, not more than eight days; becauſe the analogy between the Jewiſh rite and the Chriſtian ſacrament was then maintained; and a ſuperſtition prevailed, that if the time were deferred longer, the infant might be carried off by the fairies, and an ouf ſubſtituted in its place. Here, at any rate, his

Shakespere's House from the Garden.

(THE GARDEN SEAT A CARVED STONE REMOVED FROM NEW PLACE)

boyhood and youth were ſpent, and he paſſed through the ages deſcribed by himſelf:—

> "At firſt the infant,
> Mewling and puking in the nurſe's arms;
> Then the whining ſchoolboy, with his ſatchel,
> With ſhining morning face, creeping like ſnail,
> Unwillingly to ſchool; and then the lover,
> Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad
> Made to his miſtreſs' eyebrow."

Before diſmiſſing the ſubject of the houſe in Henley Street, it may be well to record the viciſſitudes through which it has paſſed. John Shakeſpere, the Poet's father, appears to have lived in a freehold houſe in Henley Street, as tenant, in the year 1552. In 1574, he purchaſed from Edmund Hall, and Emma his wife, for forty pounds, the houſes, deſcribed as "two meſſuages, two gardens, and two orchards, with their appurtenances;" and one of theſe was, probably, that which he already occupied as tenant. On the death of John Shakeſpere, theſe houſes deſcended to his eldeſt ſon, William; and here, probably, the Poet's wife and family lived while he was working for them in London. The houſes continued to belong to him after he had purchaſed New Place, and he bequeathed "the two meſſuages, or tenements, with the appurtenance, ſituate, &c., in Henley Street, within the borough of Stratford," to his daughter, Suſanna Hall, from whom

they descended to her daughter, Elizabeth, married, first, to Thomas Nash, and, secondly, to Sir William Barnard. Lady Barnard bequeathed the property, described in her will as "the inn, called the 'Maidenhead,' and the adjoining house and barn," to Thomas and George Hart, the grandchildren of Shakespere's sister Joan, in the possession of whose descendants they remained till the beginning of this century. The name of the inn was, however, changed from the "Maidenhead," to the "White Lion," and the adjoining house was used as a butcher's shop. In this state they continued, the property of private persons; and, at one time, there was a rumour that some American—Barnum, perhaps—was about to buy them, and transport them bodily, like the Holy House of Loretto, to Boston. This act of sacrilege was prevented by the appointment of a committee of gentlemen, amongst the rest, Lord Carlisle, who collected subscriptions, and bought them for the nation. Rightly deeming that the preservation of the house was the first object, they pulled down the adjoining tenements to prevent the danger of fire, repaired the house where it was decayed, and laid out the waste ground in gardens. In 1854, Mr. John Shakespere, of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, left by will a sum of £2,000, to be employed in restoring the house, establishing a museum of Shakesperian relics, and paying

a curator; but the bequeſt was held by the Court of Chancery to be bad for its indefiniteneſs, and contrary to the proviſions of the Statute of Mortmain. Sufficient funds were, however, obtained, by ſubſcription, to put the premiſes into their preſent very creditable ſtate of repair; and the Shakeſperian pilgrims who viſit the place next ſpring will, no doubt, make up any deficiency.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next object of intereſt was the Grammar School, founded in the reign of Edward VI., by Thomas Jolepe. The preſent buildings, which compriſe the guildhall and the ſchoolroom, are in Chapel Street, and form part of a long row, the upper ſtory of which projects over the lower, after the manner of ancient dwellings. The reader may ſee it in Mr. Edwards's photograph, with the tower of the Guild Chapel in the background. It was during the play-hour that I viſited it, and the head-maſter very kindly ſhowed me over the place. You aſcend a flight of ſtairs to reach the ſchoolroom, which has much the ſame appearance as other rooms devoted to a like purpoſe. The ceiling has lately been removed and the oak roof revealed, which, with the aid of the latticed windows, gives the room an ancient and venerable appearance, ſuch as it bore when Shakeſpere learned his accidence here.

Much ſtreſs has been laid upon a ſuppoſition that

Grammar School & Tower of the Guild Chapel,

STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

Shakeſpere was taught in "a ſchool i' the church;" and indeed there is evidence that at one time the ſchool was held in the Guild Chapel. But the mode of education was the ſame whether it were given in the church or in a ſeparate building. A chantry prieſt, or the pariſh prieſt himſelf, was often the ſchoolmaſter, and held the ſchool in the ſoler over the church porch, and the foundation of the education he gave was grammar—the grammar of the Latin language as being the moſt ſcientific and accurate. At that time ſchoolmaſters were not ſo fooliſh as to teach Latin grammar and Engliſh grammar ſeparately, as if they were two diſtinct branches of knowledge. Latin was the medium for teaching grammar in general, and, therefore, we may be ſure that through it Shakeſpere learned the elements of the ſcience of language, in which he proved ſo great a maſter.

In the ſixteenth century Greek was only beginning to be generally ſtudied. Eraſmus, Rabelais, Sir Thomas More, and Dean Collet had up-hill work in recommending the ſtudy, and were vehemently oppoſed by the conſervatives in the old ſeats of learning. In ſome of the great grammar ſchools it was introduced in the reign of Edward VI., as, for inſtance, at Chriſt's Hoſpital, where the moſt advanced ſtudents are ſtill called Grecians. Chapman, who was ſenior to Shakeſpere, tranſlated

Homer, though his fcholarfhip was certainly not great, as may be feen by his notes; and Marlowe, Greene, and Peele, the "Univerfity pens," as they were called, knew enough of it perhaps to fwear by. But even this fmall amount of Greek, Shakefpere had no means of acquiring. He could not have remained at the Stratford grammar fchool long enough to become anything like a fcholar; but without becoming fo familiar even with Latin as to read it for pleafure, or acquiring a critical knowledge of Latin authors, he certainly learned the fcience of language to fuch good purpofe that his power of wielding words is unrivalled. And this is, after all, the beft fruit of fcholarfhip.

It is related fomewhere that Wilkie, feeing a grotefque face, and not having the materials of his art by him, drew it on his thumb-nail, and introduced it in one of his pictures; and Shakefpere, no doubt, like a true artift, loft no opportunity of obferving any old character he came acrofs and embodying it in his plays. Now amongft the names of the fchoolmafters who wielded the ferule at Stratford, I think we may find the probable prototype of a very amufing perfonage in the "Merry Wives of Windfor." In 1570, when Shakefpere was fix years old, the fchoolmafter was Walter Roche. In 1572, when he was eight years old, Thomas Hunt, curate of Shottery, came into

power; and in 1580 Thomas Jenkins was inſtalled. Shakeſpere was then ſixteen, an age at which boys are very keen to detect the weakneſſes of their maſters. In the "Merry Wives of Windſor" he pays off Sir Thomas Lucy; may he not alſo have drawn his quondam pedagogue in the admirable ſcene where *Sir Hugh Evans* puts *William Page* through his parts of ſpeech? Thomas Jenkins is obviouſly the name of a Welſhman, for which the Poet probably ſubſtituted the equally Welſh combination of names, Hugh Evans. At ſixteen, Shakeſpere had either left, or was about to leave, ſchool, and therefore we can hardly ſuppoſe "*William*" to have been himſelf; but he may have remained for a time after he had finiſhed his own ſtudies to aſſiſt Jenkins—and this, by the way, would account for the tradition that he was at one time a ſchoolmaſter—when he would have had abundant opportunities of obſerving ſuch ſcenes as the following. We might, therefore, perhaps, read "Thomas Jenkins" for "Hugh Evans" in this paſſage:—

Mrs. Page. How now, Sir Hugh? no ſchool to-day?

Evans. No; Maſter Slender is let the boys leave to play.

Quickly. Bleſſings of his heart!

Mrs. Page. Sir Hugh, my huſband ſays my ſon profits nothing in the world at his book; I pray you, aſk him ſome queſtions in his accidence.

Evans. Come hither, William; hold up your head, come.

Mrs. Page. Come on, ſirrah: hold up your head; anſwer your maſter, be not afraid.

Evans. William, how many numbers is in nouns?

William. Two.

Quickly. Truly, I thought there had been one number more; becauſe they ſay od's nouns.

Evans. Peace your tattlings. What is *fair,* William?

William. *Pulcher.*

Quickly. Polecats! there are fairer things than polecats, ſure.

Evans. You are a very ſimplicity 'oman; I pray you, peace. What is *lapis,* William?

William. A ſtone.

Evans. And what is a ſtone, William?

William. A pebble.

Evans. No, it is *lapis;* I pray you remember in your prain.

William. *Lapis.*

Evans. That is a good William. What is he, William, that doth lend articles?

William. Articles are borrowed of the pronoun; and be thus declined, *Singulariter, nominativo, hic, hæc, hoc.*

Evans. *Nominativo, hig, hag, hog;*—I pray you mark: *genitivo, hujus.* Well, what is your *accusative case?*

William. *Accusativo, hunc.*

Evans. I pray you, have your remembrance, child; *Accusativo, hung, hang, hog.*

Quickly. Hang hog is Latin for bacon, I warrant you.

Evans. Leave your prabbles, 'oman. What is the focative case, William?

William. *O—vocativo O.*

Evans. Remember, William, focative is, *caret,*

Quickly. And that's a good root.

If poor William Shakeſpere learned his accidence in this ſtyle, it is no wonder that he had "ſmall Latin;" and Farmer has clearly ſhown that the tradition of his lack of ſcholarſhip, embodied even in the encomiums of his contemporaries, is probably true. But

perhaps Thomas Hunt, the curate of Shottery, was a better ſcholar than Thomas Jenkins.

The grammar ſchool is alſo probably the parent of the comical ſcene in "Love's Labour Loſt," where *Sir Nathaniel*—called "Sir" becauſe a Maſter of Arts—and *Holofernes,* the ſchoolmaſter or pedant, ſhow off their learning before *Goodman Dull;* but whether *Holofernes* were intended to repreſent either William Roche or Thomas Hunt we have no means even to form a conjecture.

Nathaniel. Very reverend ſport, truly; and done in the teſtimony of a good conſcience.

Holofernes. The deer was, as you know, *ſanguis,*—in blood; ripe as a pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of *cœlo*—the ſky, the welkin, the heaven; and anon falleth like a crab, on the face of *terra*—the ſoil, the land, the earth.

Nathaniel. Truly, Maſter Holofernes, the epithets are ſweetly varied, like a ſcholar at the leaſt; but, ſir, I aſſure you, it was a buck of the firſt head.

Holofernes. Sir Nathaniel, *haud credo.*

Dull. 'Twas not a *haud credo;* 'twas a pricket.

Holofernes. Moſt barbarous intimation! yet a kind of inſinuation as it were, *in via,* in way, of explication; *facere,* as it were, replication; or, rather, *oſtentare,* to ſhow, as it were, his inclination, after his undreſſed, unpoliſhed, uneducated, unpruned, untrained, or rather unlettered, or, ratherеſt, unconformed faſhion—to inſert again my *haud credo* for a deer.

Dull. I ſaid the deer was not a *haud credo;* 'twas a pricket.

Holofernes. Twice ſod ſimplicity, *bis coctus!*—O thou monſter ignorance, how deformed doſt thou look!

Nathaniel. Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book: he doth not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink: his

intellect is not repleniſhed; he is only an animal, only ſenſible in the duller parts.

It is not unlikely that Shakeſpere, in this excellent caricature of a ſcholar, may have intended to retaliate upon Ben Jonſon and his other more learned friends for their reflections upon his "ſmall Latin." The whole ſcene is an example of the euphuiſm brought into faſhion by Lilly—the far-fetched and fantaſtic ſtyle which has deſcended to the ſecond-rate writers in newſpapers. A man who, like Shakeſpere, has fed upon the banquet that Nature provided for him, is apt to be a little impatient of thoſe who have, "as it were, eaten paper and drunk ink," juſt as Lord Bacon told his friend, Sir Thomas Bodley, that he was going to write a treatiſe againſt great libraries.

CHAPTER V.

FROM the grammar ſchool in Chapel Street I returned to Henley Street, and from thence, by a footpath acroſs the fields and over ſtiles, to the little village of Shottery. Many a time had Shakeſpere trodden this very path when he had attained the lover ſtage of life, "ſighing like a furnace, with a woful ballad made to his miſtreſs' eyebrow." Here, perhaps, when the ſighs became too deep, he may have cheered himſelf with—

> "Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,
> And merrily hent the ſtile-a;
> Your merry heart goes all the day,
> Your ſad one tires in a mile-a."

The village is a ſtraggling one, and the cottages are picturesque though poor. At the bottom of the village to the left of a pretty country lane, ſtands the cottage to which tradition points as having been the reſidence of Anne Hathaway, who afterwards became the Poet's

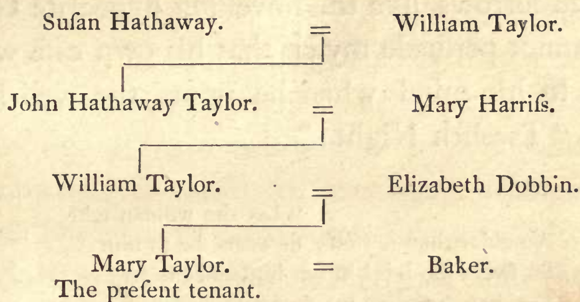
wife. The reader will at once ſee its character from Mr. Edwards's charming little photograph.

It was once obviouſly a ſubſtantial farm-houſe, much ſuperior to that of John Shakeſpere in Henley Street, though, like it, built of wooden frames filled in with wattle and dab on foundations of ſtone. In modern times brick has been in ſome places ſubſtituted where the ſtone has become decayed. The roof is thatched, I think with reed. It is now divided into two cottages, and Mrs. Baker, a pleaſing reſpectable-looking woman, who believes herſelf to be related to the Hathaways, lives in a portion of it. She is proud of her connection with the Poet—an honour which ſhe appreciates the more, perhaps, as it brings her in many a ſhilling from the pilgrims who flock to ſee the houſe. She willingly ſhows the inſide of her dwelling, and ſeveral pieces of old furniture which, as ſhe avers, have deſcended to her from her anceſtors. If ſo, and there is no reaſon to doubt the fact, they may very poſſibly have been uſed by young Shakeſpere when he was courting his future wife.

A flight of ſteps leads into a large keeping room or hall, where under the great old chimney may have ſat Shakeſpere and his love, in the days of his extreme youth when Love is ſtone blind. In a family Bible Mrs. Baker ſhows the following pedigree, in which ſhe

Ann Hathaway's Cottage, Shottery.

traces her descent from the Hathaways, who have continued to reside in the house ever since the sixteenth century.



Upstairs is a bed-chamber, where Mrs. Baker shows an old oak bed and a pair of very beautifully worked sheets and pillow-cases. She says she inherited them from her father, and that they have been in the family from time immemorial, and used on state occasions, such as marriages, births, and deaths. They are marked "Elizabeth Hathaway," but whether the character of the work be ancient or modern I am not such an adept in needlework as to determine. About the house are several old oak chests, chairs, and settles, but none, I should imagine, older than the seventeenth century.

Much has been written respecting Shakespere's marriage, and perhaps a good deal of it rashly. The circumstances are not, assuredly, very satisfactory. In the first place he was under nineteen when he married, and

Anne Hathaway was ſix and twenty. And though he was not a man to make literary capital out of his domeſtic relations, or to whine in public over his regrets and ſorrows, like the ſnivelling hypocrite Greene, yet I cannot perſuade myſelf that his own caſe was not preſent to his mind when he wrote the well-known lines in "Twelfth Night:"—

> "Let the woman take
> An elder than herſelf; ſo wears ſhe to him;
> So ſways ſhe level in her huſband's heart;
> For, boy, however we do praiſe ourſelves,
> Our fancies are more giddy and infirm,
> More longing, wavering, ſooner loſt and worn
> Than women's are.
> Then let thy love be younger than thyſelf,
> Or thy affection cannot hold the bent."

Anne Hathaway was the daughter of one Richard Hathaway, a ſmall farmer. The marriage bond and licenſe were diſcovered in the Conſiſtorial Court at Worceſter in the year 1836, by Sir Robert Phillipps. They are dated November 28, 1582, and are marked with croſſes. One of the ſeals has the initials "R. H.," ſuppoſed to be thoſe of the bride's father, Richard Hathaway. There is no record of the marriage in Stratford church; it therefore muſt have been ſolemniſed in the church of ſome neighbouring village, where the regiſters have not been preſerved, or perhaps in a

private houſe. The regiſter of Stratford bears witneſs, however, to the birth of the firſt-born of William Shakeſpere and Anne Hathaway, in May, 1583.

From theſe ugly facts, Mr. de Quincy, in his article on Shakeſpere, in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," has perhaps drawn unwarrantable concluſions. The agreement to live as man and wife is held, I believe, by the canon law to conſtitute marriage. Manzoni's "I Promeſſi Spoſi" is founded upon this principle, which ſtill prevails even in Proteſtant Scotland, while the law of the country follows that of Rome in many of its principles and forms. The religious ceremony was held to be merely a ſolemn ratification of a contract already complete, and to be in nowiſe eſſential to its perfection. Hence, the marriage of heathens has always been held good, and not to be repeated on the parties becoming Chriſtians. Every nation has, of courſe, a right to require certain forms to be gone through in order to prevent clandeſtine marriages, and to make the crime of bigamy more difficult to commit; and thoſe who chooſe to diſpenſe with ſuch legal forms in their own caſe, thereby ſhow, or may be preſumed to ſhow, that they have not really conſented to be bound by the laws of marriage. But the queſtion is, Was the cuſtom of holding troth-plight to be equivalent to marriage prevalent in England in Shakeſpere's time? There may, of

course, have been great laxity in this respect among the lower orders, as there is now; but Shakespere's family was rather above the lower orders. The English have always been particularly impatient of any attempt to introduce the canon law of marriage, and the famous "Nolumus leges Angliæ mutari" was uttered in opposition to the attempt of the Pope to make the law of England conformable to the principle of the canon law, that a subsequent marriage renders children born before wedlock legitimate. This was never admitted by English lawyers. But Shakespere himself has recorded his own judgment, and therein the judgment of his day, upon such an ante-dating of the public ceremony of matrimony. In "The Tempest," *Prospero* charges *Ferdinand* and *Miranda*—

> "Then, as my gift, and thine own acquisition
> Worthily purchas'd, take my daughter: But
> If thou dost break her virgin knot before
> All sanctimonious ceremonies may
> With full and holy rite be minister'd,
> No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
> To make this contract grow; but barren hate,
> Sour-ey'd disdain, and discord, shall bestrew
> The union of your bed with weeds so loathly,
> That you shall hate it both: therefore, take heed,
> As Hymen's lamps shall light you."

Whether Shakespere's married life were a happy one or not, we have no means of knowing; but certainly

the circumſtances under which it commenced were not promiſing.

It has been ſuppoſed that his bequeathing to his wife only his ſecond-beſt bed is indicative of no very ſtrong affection for her; but it has been well obſerved by Mr. Knight, that this circumſtance does not prove much with reſpect to the terms on which they lived, becauſe a conſiderable part of the property of which he died poſſeſſed was freehold, and out of this ſhe was entitled to her dower and thirds at common law. Still, I cannot help thinking, that had his love for his wife been very ardent or very tender, he would have mentioned her in his will in more endearing terms, and left her ſome more ſignificant token of affection than his ſecond-beſt bed.

Anne Hathaway died in 1623, ſurviving her huſband ſeven years, and is buried cloſe to him in the chancel of the pariſh church at Stratford. On her graveſtone is this inſcription, "Here lyeth interred the body of Anne, wife of William Shakeſpeare, who departed this life the 6th day of Auguſt, 1623, being of the age of 67 years."

CHAPTER VI.

MARY ARDEN had borne to John Shakespere two daughters—Joan, born in 1558, the year of Queen Elizabeth's accession; she probably died young, as a subsequent daughter was christened by the same name. Margaret, the second child, we know, from the register, to have died soon after her birth. William, therefore, was the eldest surviving child. He was succeeded by Gilbert, born in 1566; Joan, in 1569; Anne, in 1571; and Edmund, in 1580.

But before the birth of Edmund, John Shakespere was beginning to experience the usual lot of those who have many irons in the fire. In 1578, Ashbies, his wife's patrimony, was mortgaged. In the next year, the interest and reversion to the estate at Snitterfield was sold. When his brother aldermen were required to contribute six and eight pence for the equipping of three pikemen, two billmen, and one archer, John Shakespere was indulgently let off for one half, and

was altogether excused from contributing fourpence a week, which the others paid, for the relief of the poor, then first becoming chargeable upon the general public in consequence of the dissolution of the monasteries. When, in 1578-9, a rate was levied on the inhabitants for the purchase of armour, he was unable to pay; and because he had no goods to distrain upon, a *capias* issued against him on the 19th of January. And then, of course, his embarrassments came thicker and thicker upon him, till, at a court held on the 6th September, 1586, a more prosperous citizen was chosen to fill his place as alderman.

At this time the Poet was twenty-two years of age, and the gall of this indignity probably entered into his soul, and dictated those bitter taunting reflections of *Jaques*, when he saw the stricken deer deserted by the herd:—

> "'Tis right,' quoth he, 'thus misery doth part
> The flux of company.' Anon a careless herd,
> Full of the pasture, jumps along by him,
> And never stays to greet him: 'Ay,' quoth Jaques,
> 'Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens;
> 'Tis just the fashion; wherefore do you look
> Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?'"

The ostensible reason of John Shakespere's degradation from the post of alderman was, that he "dothe not come to the halles when they be warned, nor

hathe not done of longe time." But, probably, his absence was caused by his being in prison, or in hiding for fear of arrest; for, in the next year, he sued out a writ of *habeas corpus* in the Stratford Court of Record.

From these pecuniary embarrassments, and the legal proceedings which sprang out of them, William Shakespere probably derived that knowledge of legal terms and practice which, appearing in his plays, led Malone to believe that he was bound apprentice to an attorney; and it is but too likely that he then learnt to count the time by the duration of a law-suit. "I will devise matter enough," says *Falstaff*, "out of this *Shallow* to keep *Prince Harry* in continual laughter the wearing out of six fashions (which is four terms, or two actions), and he shall laugh without *intervallums*."

In these misfortunes it is to be feared that William Shakespere was not a comfort or assistance to his father. Both from the external evidence of tradition, and the internal testimony of his plays, there is good reason to suppose that his youth was, as the French say, stormy. In the archives of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, is a collection of antiquarian papers compiled by the Rev. William Fulman, who died in 1688, and who may therefore have been born some time before Shakespere's death. These papers were bequeathed by Mr.

Fulman to his friend, the Rev. Richard Davies, who died in 1708, and who has added the following remark on Shakeſpere, derived, probably, from information ſupplied to him by his friend. Under the head "Shakeſpere" we read, "Much given to all unluckineſſe in ſtealing veniſon and rabbits, particularly from Sir —— Lucy, who had him oft whipt, and ſometimes impriſoned, and at laſt made him fly his native country, to his great advancement; but his reveng was ſo great, that he is his *Juſtice Clodpate* (*i.e.* fooliſh juſtice), and calls him a great man; and that, in alluſion to his name, bore three lowſes rampant for his arms." The ſame ſtory is told by Oldys, Norroy king-at-arms, and the compiler of the "Biographia Britannica." There was a very aged gentleman living in the neighbourhood of Stratford (where he died fifty years ſince), who had not only heard from ſeveral old people in that town of Shakeſpere's tranſgreſſion, but could remember the firſt ſtanza of that bitter ballad, which, repeating to one of his acquaintance, he preſerved it in writing, and here it is, neither better nor worſe, but faithfully tranſcribed from the copy which his relation very courteouſly communicated to me:—

> "A parlemente member, a juſtice of peace,
> At home a poor ſcare-crowe, at London an aſſe;
> If lowſie is Lucy, as ſome volk miſcalle it,
> Then Lucy is lowſie, whatever befall it.

> He thinks himſelf greate,
> Yet an aſſe in his ſtate
> We allowe by his ears but with aſſes to mate.
> If Lucy is lowſie, as ſome volk miſcalle it,
> Sing lowſie Lucy whatever befall it."

Rowe, who wrote the firſt life of Shakeſpere, and derived his information from Betterton, the actor, gives the following account of the tranſaction:—"An extravagance that he was guilty of forced him both out of the country, and that way of living which he had taken up; and though it ſeemed at firſt to be a blemiſh upon his good manners, and a misfortune to him, yet it afterwards happily proved the occaſion of exerting one of the greateſt geniuſes that ever was known in dramatic poetry. He had, by a misfortune common enough to young fellows, fallen into ill company, and amongſt them ſome, that made a frequent practice of deer-ſtealing, engaged him more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, near Stratford. For this he was proſecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, ſomewhat too ſeverely, and, in order to revenge that ill-uſage, he made a ballad upon him. And though this, probably the firſt eſſay of his poetry, be loſt, yet it is ſaid to have been ſo very bitter, that it redoubled the proſecutions againſt him to that degree, that he was obliged to leave his buſineſs and family in Warwick-

ſhire, and ſhelter himſelf in London." A Mr. Thomas Jones, who lived at Tarbich, a village in Worceſterſhire about eight miles from Stratford, and died in 1703, aged ninety, had often heard the ſame ſtory from old people at Stratford. So far the external evidence is as ſtrong as any which is uſually relied upon under ſuch circumſtances.

The play of "The Merry Wives of Windſor" ſupplies internal evidence, not only of a quarrel with Sir Thomas Lucy, but that the quarrel had its origin in a poaching affray. The play opens before *Page's* houſe, at Windſor, where enter *Juſtice Shallow*, *Slender*, and *Sir Hugh Evans* :—

Shallow. Sir Hugh, perſuade me not; I will make a Star Chamber matter of it: if he were twenty Sir John Falſtaffs, he ſhall not abuſe Robert Shallow, eſquire.

Slender. In the county of Glo'ſter, juſtice of peace and *coram.*

Shallow. Ay, couſin Slender, and *Cuſt-alorum.*

Slender. Ay, and *ratolorum* too; and a gentleman born, maſter parſon; who writes himſelf *armigero!* in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation, *armigero.*

Shallow. Ay, that I do; and have done any time theſe three hundred years.

Slender. All his ſucceſſors gone before him have done 't; and all his anceſtors that come after him may: they may give the *dozen white luces in their coat.*

Shallow. It is an old coat.

Evans. The dozen white louſes do become an old coat well; it agrees well, paſſant; it is a familiar beaſt to man, and ſignifies love.

Shallow. The luce is a freſh fiſh; the ſalt fiſh is an old coat.

Though the name of the foolish justice be *Shallow*, the allusion here to the name and arms of Lucy—arms which the family at Charlecote now bear—is unmistakable; and, moreover, the very same ludicrous play upon the words is used as in the stanza of the ballad, which has been preserved. Now for the *corpus delicti*—the matter of the fault.

Falstaff comes in with *Bardolph*, *Nym*, and *Pistol*, and thus addresses the justice :—

> *Falstaff.* Now, master Shallow, you'll complain of me to the king ?
> *Shallow.* Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge.
> *Falstaff.* But not kiss'd your keeper's daughter.
> *Shallow.* Tut, a pin ! This shall be answer'd.

Malone, and others, seem unwilling to admit this story of Shakespere's youth, and seem to think that it was beneath Shakespere to be a " deer-stealer." The word certainly sounds bad, but I cannot conceive how anyone could suppose that, for a youth to ferret rabbits and kill the squire's game could imprint a lasting stigma upon his character. Probably many noblemen who now sit in the House of Lords and pass game-laws, have robbed hen-roosts and orchards, and snared hares, when they were at Harrow or Winchester, and nobody thinks the worse of them for it. In the reigns of Elizabeth and James, to break into a park, kill the

deer, beat the keeper, and kiſs his pretty daughter, would have been conſidered only in the light of a youthful frolic, and nothing more. Falſtaff, who, in his boyhood, was page to Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, and, at the period of "The Merry Wives of Windſor" at leaſt was received at Court, is not the leaſt aſhamed of his exploit.

The truth is, that the guilt of any crime is not meaſured by the crime itſelf, but by the motive and intention of him who commits it. Malice prepenſe is an eſſential element of the crime of murder; the *animus furandi* of that of larceny. A political aſſaſſination is a great crime; but the political aſſaſſin may be a high-minded, though miſtaken man; whereas the ſervant who cuts his maſter's throat that he may rob the till, or the garrotter who ſtrangles a man for his watch, is a baſe ſlave, for whom the moſt ignominious death that can be deviſed is too good. A peaſant who ſteals poultry and kills deer and other game to ſell, that he may live in idleneſs and luxury, is a thief, and deſerves ſome infamous puniſhment; but a ſchoolboy or youth who, for the ſake of the excitement and adventure, robs a hen-rooſt, or breaks into a deer-park and carries off a buck, is not really a thief. The *animus furandi*, the intention of ſtealing, is not really preſent in his mind. It is rather the love of ſport and the excite-

ment of incurring danger that impels him to do the unlawful act.

We may even go further than this, and assert that the same act varies in guilt according to the general estimate of its lawfulness or unlawfulness at different times; for this reason, that a man who committed an act universally held to be infamous, would be outraging his own conscience, and destroying his self-respect. In Shakespere's time and long after, the distinction between the soldier who robbed by wholesale and the poor gentleman who took purses by retail upon the road, was scarcely acknowledged; still less would any note of infamy be attached to a young fellow who should turn Robin Hood for the nonce, and infringe the odious forest-laws.

But, indeed, there is an antecedent probability that young Shakespere, circumstanced as he was, would be "much given to all unluckiness;" apt to do wild and daring things which would get him into scrapes, and live in enmity with the more staid and orderly portion of the community. Lord Clive was just such a youth. Lord Byron had the same aptitude. I do not, of course, mean to say that every man of genius must necessarily have been a scamp when he was young; but it is undoubtedly true, that the same active imagination and force of will which, when directed to

worthy ends, make a man great, will in his hot youth, if he be not reſtrained by ſome wholeſome external influences, hurry him into acts which his mature reaſon will condemn. It is when theſe youthful indiſcretions are not counterbalanced by nobler counteracting qualities, and therefore form habits which are only ſtrengthened by the lapſe of years and become part of the character, that they degrade and corrupt the man. I cannot believe that young Shakeſpere can have found an adequate ſcope for his energies and aſpirations in the farming, butchering, wool-dealing, or gloving, in the proſecution of which his father managed to become a bankrupt.

And what more likely form could his wildneſs have aſſumed than that of unlawful ſporting? All Engliſhmen are fond of manly out-of-door ſports, and no Engliſh poet, Chaucer perhaps excepted, has ſhown in his works a greater appreciation of the pleaſures of the chaſe than Shakeſpere. It is worth while to cite a few of the many paſſages which atteſt his practical knowledge and enjoyment of field ſports. Here is a deſcription of the ſhifts of the hare, from one of his earlieſt poems, the "Venus and Adonis:"—

> "And when thou haſt on foot the purblind hare,
> Mark the poor wretch, to overſhoot his troubles,
> How he outruns the wind, and with what care
> He cranks and croſſes with a thouſand doubles:

> The many muſits through the which he goes
> Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes.
>
> Sometimes he runs among a flock of ſheep,
> To make the cunning hounds miſtake their ſmell;
> And ſometimes where earth-delving conies keep,
> To ſtop the loud purſuers in their yell;
> And ſometimes ſorteth with a herd of deer:
> Danger deviſeth ſhifts; wit waits on fear;
>
> For there his ſmell with others being mingled,
> The hot ſcent-ſnuffing hounds are driven to doubt,
> Ceaſing their clamorous cry till they have ſingled
> With much ado the cold fault clearly out;
> Then do they ſpend their mouths: Echo replies,
> As if another chaſe were in the ſkies.
>
> By this, Poor Wat, far off upon an hill
> Stands on his hinder legs with liſtening ear,
> To hearken if his foes purſue him ſtill:
> Anon their loud alarums he doth hear:
> And now his grief may be comparèd well
> To one ſore ſick that hears the paſſing-bell.
>
> Then ſhalt thou ſee the dew-bedabbled wretch
> Turn and return, indenting with the way;
> Each envious briar his weary legs doth ſcratch,
> Each ſhadow makes him ſtop, each murmur ſtay;
> For miſery is trodden on by many,
> And being low, never relieved by any."

There is a familiarity ſhown, too, with the names of hounds and the terms of hunting in the paſſage where *Proſpero* and *Ariel* ſet the ſpirits on to hunt *Caliban*, *Stephano*, and *Trinculo*, in "The Tempeſt."

Prospero. Hey, Mountain, hey!
Ariel. Silver, there it goes, Silver!
Prospero. Fury, Fury! there, Tyrant, there! hark! hark!

Again, in the introduction to "The Taming of a Shrew," the nobleman who comes in from hunting says—

Huntsman, I charge thee, tender well my hounds:
Leach Merriman,—the poor cur is embossed;
And couple Clowder with the deep-mouthed brach.
Saw'st thou not, boy, how Silver made it good
At the hedge-corner, in the coldest fault?
I would not lose the dog for twenty pound.
First Huntsman. Why, Belman is as good as he, my lord!
He cried upon it at the merest loss,
And twice to-day picked out the coldest scent:
Trust me, I take him for the better dog.
Lord. Thou art a fool: if Echo were as fleet,
I would esteem him worth a dozen such.

Here in two distinct passages we have "Silver" used as the name of a hound; probably a favourite one of Shakespere's.

In "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is a charming dialogue on hunting between *Theseus* and *Hippolyta*:—

Theseus. Go, one of you, find out the forester;
For now our observation is performed;
And since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds,
Uncouple in the western valley; let them go:
Despatch, I say, and find the forester.
We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

> *Hippolyta.* I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
> When in a wood of Crete they bayed the bear
> With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear
> Such gallant chiding; for, beſides the groves,
> The ſkies, the fountains, every region near,
> Seemed all one mutual cry: I never heard
> So muſical a diſcord, ſuch ſweet thunder.

Theſeus, who poſſibly does not like to hear *Hippolyta* ſpeak of the pleaſant hours ſhe ſpent with Hercules and Cadmus, and extol their hounds, immediately ſays that his hounds, too, are of Sparta, and ſtands up for their excellence:—

> "My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
> So flewed, ſo ſanded; and their heads are hung
> With ears that ſweep away the morning dew.
> Crook-kneed and dew-lapped like Theſſalian bulls;
> Slow in purſuit, but matched in mouth like bells,
> Each under each. A cry more tuneable
> Was never holla'd to, nor cheered with horn,
> In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Theſſaly:
> Judge, when you hear."

It is true, theſe crooked-kneed, dew-lapped, long-eared, "tow-rowing" hounds, ſo ſlow in purſuit, would not ſuit the ideas of modern ſportſmen, who like to come home and talk of, "by Jove, ſir, the faſteſt thing of fifty minutes you ever ſaw!" but there is in this paſſage an appreciation of the qualities then prized in hounds, which ſhows that Shakeſpere was a ſportſman himſelf, and drew from the life.

For theſe reaſons I conclude that Oldys's aſſertion, that Shakeſpere was "much given to all unluckineſs in ſtealing veniſon and rabbits," is in itſelf probable; and if he did poach upon his neighbours' manors, thoſe who know anything of Engliſh country gentlemen will not be diſpoſed to doubt that he was an object of eſpecial diſlike to the largeſt preſerver of game in the neighbourhood—that Sir Thomas Lucy who actually brought a bill into Parliament to increaſe the ſtringency of the game-laws. When it is recollected how young Shakeſpere was when he married, and that his unlawful ſporting adventures had probably begun when he was ſtill at ſchool, or ſoon after, it is not unlikely that Sir Thomas Lucy had had him "whipt;" the impriſonment came afterwards, no doubt.

His mode of revenge was characteriſtic, and one which was not unfamiliar to his mind; for he makes *Falſtaff* threaten the *Prince* and *Pointz* in "Henry IV." "An I have not ballads made on you all and ſung to filthy tunes, let this cup of ſack be my poiſon." Though the ſtanza which has been handed down as the inſtrument of his revenge be not of the choiceſt, it was enough to anſwer his purpoſe. It is founded upon the ſame play of words that occurs in "The Merry Wives of Windſor," as already quoted, and is of that rough-and-ready ſort that would tickle the ears of an

audience of Warwickfhire clowns, for whom it was intended. It was alfo likely to be very mortifying to Sir Thomas Lucy. A county magiftrate like him would feel infinitely indignant at the bare idea of a youth like Shakefpere having fo little refpect for him as to hold up his perfon and name to ridicule; for if there be one thing more than another which angers a man to the foul, it is to play upon his name. To have his "luces," too, of which he was fo proud, turned into that "beaft" which, however familiar to man, is "abhorred alike by faint and finner!" It was more than any county magiftrate could bear. Sir Thomas Lucy might whip or imprifon young Shakefpere, but young Shakefpere could make Sir Thomas Lucy a nay-word through the whole country's fide, fo that wherever his name was mentioned, at fair or market, men would think of "loufy Lucy;" fuch is the power of what *Falftaff* calls the "damnable iteration" of the initial letter. But it is curious to fee the caprice of Fame. A worthy Warwickfhire juftice profecutes a young farmer for poaching and libelling him in the groffeft manner. The young farmer incontinently goes to London, and becomes the greateft poet of one of the greateft nations in the world, and the worthy country gentleman is handed down to all pofterity as the perfonification of all that is moft

ridiculous and contemptible in magiſterial folly and pretenſion.

There is ſome diſpute as to the real ſcene of Shakeſpere's exploits, but it is probable that he was not particular as to where he ſhot his deer or ſnared his rabbits. Mr. Bracebridge maintains, in a pamphlet on the ſubject, that Fulbrooke, and not Charlecote, was the ſcene of the affray which led to Shakeſpere's diſgrace; but Charlecote was probably only one demeſne among many that were laid under contributions. At any rate, it was the ſeat of Sir Thomas Lucy, *Maſter Robert Shallow, Eſquire*, of the play, and I therefore reſolved to pay it a viſit.

The road lies over the fine old bridge, built by Sir Hugh Clopton, and along the margin of the Avon, to the left as you leave the town. As I was walking through a pretty village, I overtook a waggon, and ſeeing that the waggoner looked very much pleaſed about ſomething, and was evidently anxious to enter into converſation, I determined to indulge him, and "gave him the time of day," as they ſay in Eſſex. Then it all came out. There had been a grand harveſt-home the day before; and firſt, he told me, the Vicar "prached a ſarmon for the good of our ſowls;" and there was a great tent pitched, and all the people ſat at long tables, and there was plenty of beef and plum-pudding; and "Sir

Robert H—— was runnin' about till he" (how ſhall I tranſlate the vigorous but not elegant Anglo-Saxon of my churl?) "perſpired again, aſkin' us all, 'Well, have you got anything to ate?' I ſuppoſe he have been in many a ſcrimmage, for he have got a lot o' medals. Then there was all ſorts of amuſement, a band o' muſic and dancin', and throwin' the wheat-ſheaf." He added, "Sir Robert is a big man, and a Parliament member." Here we have the very phraſe in the ſong. This honeſt waggoner and his harveſt-home put me in mind of the ſheep-ſhearing in the "Winter's Tale," when the *Clown* comes in, counting what he has to buy for the feaſt:—

"Let me ſee, what am I to buy for our ſheep-ſhearing feaſt? Three pound of ſugar; five pound of currants; rice—what will this ſiſter of mine do with rice? But my father hath made her miſtreſs of the feaſt, and ſhe lays it on. She hath made me four-and-twenty noſegays for the ſhearers; three-man-ſong men all, and very good ones; but they are moſt of them means and baſes, but one Puritan amongſt them, and he ſings pſalms to hornpipes. I muſt have ſaffron, to colour the warden pies; mace, dates—none; that's out of my note; nutmegs, ſeven; a race or two of ginger; but that I may beg;—four pounds of prunes, and as many of raiſins o' the ſun."

But ſtill more appoſite was the churl's deſcription of Sir Robert H——'s exertions to pleaſe the ruſtic gueſts to the *Shepherd's* reminiſcences of his wife's hoſpitable cares:—

> "When my old wife lived, upon
> This day ſhe was both pantler, butler, cook;
> Both dame and ſervant; welcomed all; ſerved all;
> Would ſing her ſong, and dance her turn; now here
> At upper end o' the table, now i' the middle;
> On his ſhoulder, and on his; her face o' fire
> With labour, and the thing ſhe took to quench it."

The ruſtic feaſts, with decorations of flowers and corn, which the gentry are now introducing, are, indeed, only revivals of the old cuſtoms; and Shakeſpere, had he reviſited Stratford in September laſt, would have found himſelf at home among thoſe country merry-makings.

After walking for about three miles, with the Avon on my left, I turned into Charlecote Park, by a clap-gate in the maſſive park pales faſtened with trenails with which it is encloſed. It is a noble park, interſperſed with fine oaks and elms, and interſected by the broad, clear Avon, which flows quietly, but not ſluggiſhly along. Preſently I heard the ſmart crack of a rifle, and then a herd of deer made a ruſh paſt me, followed by the boy on an old pony who was driving them to their fate. The keeper was ſhooting a buck. How different was the mode in which the Poet performed the ſame feat! It was a cloth-yard ſhaft that brought his quarry to the ground.

Among the glades of this fine old park, under the

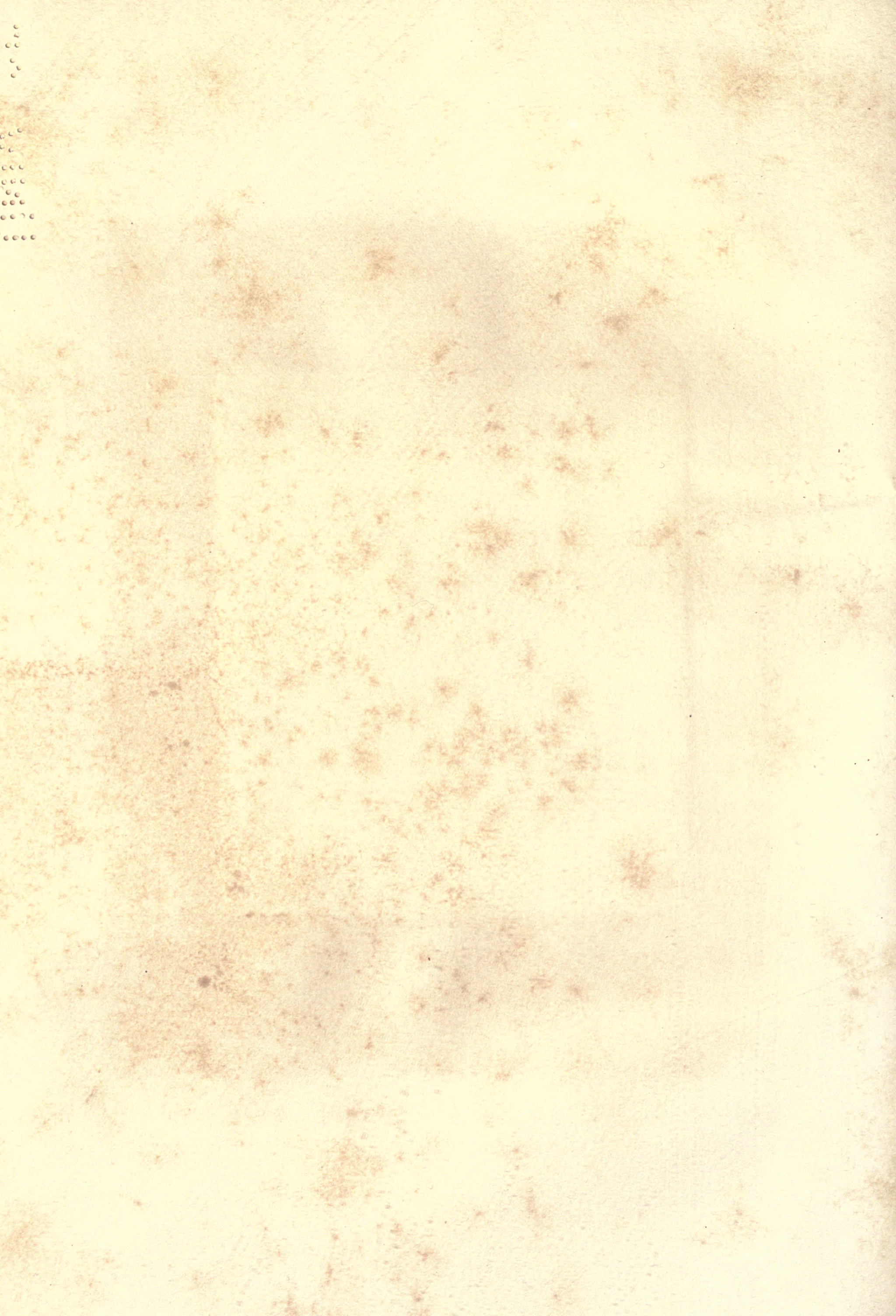
ſhade of oaks which were acorns, perhaps, when young Shakeſpere was a boy, I felt more ſenſibly the preſent divinity than in any other of the ſcenes conſecrated to his memory. Here Nature's High Prieſt was in her temple among the objects of his worſhip, and I was treading the very path which he trod; admiring the very views which he had admired, and looking at the fine old manſion which elicited from him, in the perſon of *Falſtaff*, the exclamation, partly of admiration and partly of envy, "'Fore God, you have a goodly dwelling, and a rich!"

And, indeed, Charlecote is a noble example of the dwelling of an Engliſh country gentleman in the ſixteenth and ſeventeenth centuries. It was built by Sir Thomas Lucy, in 1558, the year of Queen Elizabeth's acceſſion. My reader can judge of it from Mr. Edwards's ſun-picture, which ſhows the front entrance and the pleached garden, where *Maſter Robert Shallow, Eſquire*, and his man *Davy* entertained *Falſtaff* and his men of war, under the ſhrewd conviction that "a friend at court is better than a penny in purſe."

In looking at this fine old manſion—ſo light, ſo cheerful, ſo ſuited to the rich Engliſh ſcenery in which it is planted—I could not help wondering what Lord Macaulay could have meant when he ſaid that the country gentleman of the ſeventeenth century "troubled

Charlecot Hall, near Stratford-on-Avon.

THE SEAT OF SIR THOMAS LUCY, (JUSTICE SHALLOW)



himſelf little about decorating his abode, and, if he attempted decoration, ſeldom produced anything but deformity." This is the hiſtorian's eſtimate of ſuch houſes as Charlecote, and Helmingham in Suffolk, and Blickling in Norfolk, and their claſs, the deformity of which he contraſts with the elegance of thoſe cold, melancholy, barrack-like ſtructures, with a Grecian portico ſtuck on to them, which, till within the laſt few years, was conſidered the right ſort of abode for an Engliſh gentleman when he went to spend the dull ſeaſon in the country. But then it muſt be remembered that the Engliſh country gentleman of the ſixteenth and ſeventeenth century was a Tory.

The church is, unfortunately, quite new, having been rebuilt a few years ago by the mother of the preſent poſſeſſor of the eſtate. It contains, however, the old monuments, amongſt which is that erected to commemorate Sir Thomas Lucy, who died in 1595. His recumbent figure in armour, beſide his wife, gives one the idea that he was a fine-looking man, and not the ſtarveling deſcribed by Shakeſpere—but marble is deceptive. The "three white Luces" appear everywhere.

A walk acroſs the park and fields by the margin of Avon brought me to my inn at about ſix o'clock, and ſo ended one of the pleaſanteſt days of my pilgrimage.

CHAPTER VII.

And now, in order the better to underſtand the proceſs by which Shakeſpere, having left his beloved Stratford under a cloud, returned to it in a few years, gilded with the ſunſhine of proſperity, we muſt accompany him in his expedition to ſeek his fortunes in London.

In 1583, a few months after his marriage, his eldeſt child, Suſanna, was born, and was followed in the ſucceeding year by the twins, Judith and Hamnet. A family increaſing at this rate, combined with his father's embarraſſments, was enough to warn him that he muſt beſtir himſelf if he would not ſink into utter poverty. But perhaps theſe ſtrong inducements were quickened by the fear of a proſecution by the game-preſerving ſquire of Charlecote. However this may be, we find him in London in the year 1586 at lateſt.

Good fortune, or his inclination, led him, on his arrival, to the theatre. It ſeems to me extremely probable that he had dabbled in theatrical affairs

even before his departure from Stratford. Stage-plays were, before the general diffuſion of knowledge, a favourite amuſement with the common people, and formed a part of every great feſtivity, juſt as, before the multiplication of books, ſtory-telling was a favourite mode of ſpending a winter's evening or a ſultry ſummer's afternoon. He was probably only depicting the immemorial uſage when, in "A Midſummer Night's Dream," he repreſented the "baſe mechanicals" of Athens as welcoming *Theſeus* and *Hippolyta* with a play. In "Love's Labour's Loſt," too, a ſtage-play is the obvious mode which preſents itſelf to the pedant and the parſon of entertaining the court and ſhowing their own wit and learning; and when *Falſtaff* wants to be extremly merry, he propoſes to the Prince to extemporiſe a play. I, for one, cannot believe that the Engliſh people awoke ſuddenly, about the middle of the ſixteenth century, to a knowledge and a love of the drama. In one form or other, the people had always had ſtage-plays, or ſtories in action, at their feſtivities; and there can be little doubt that a young fellow like Shakeſpere, with the natural proclivity to the drama, which every one muſt acknowledge he had, took a part in ſuch entertainments of the kind as were performed in his native village. The ſame love of amuſement which led him into all unluckineſs in

ſtealing veniſon and rabbits, would alſo lead him to make one in any project for private theatricals that might be on foot.

The taſte for the ſtage had been for centuries foſtered among all claſſes of the Engliſh people by the religious plays, which formed part of the celebration of the great feaſts of the Church. At Chriſtmas, Eaſter, and Whitſuntide worldly buſineſs was laid aſide for ſeveral days, and even weeks. The ſovereign and principal nobility kept their courts with great magnificence at ſome favourite palace, and ſometimes at a rich monaſtery of which they had been the benefactors; and maſques, plays, and interludes were performed in their halls by players and muſicians, whom they ſpecially retained, and who were therefore called their "ſervants." For the general public the Church provided its Myſteries, Miracles, and Moralities, and theſe were played in the ſpacious naves of cathedrals and minſters, in inn yards, where the audience might ſee them from the galleries and the chambers, or upon ſcaffolds in market-places.

Antiquaries, of courſe, need not be told what is meant by Myſteries, Miracles, and Moralities; but as this little book is intended for the general reader, I think I had better ſay that Myſteries were dramatic verſions of the great events upon which the Chriſtian

religion is founded, ſuch as the Nativity, the Paſſion, the Reſurrection, Aſcenſion, and Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt at Whitſuntide. Theſe were reduced to the form of a dialogue carried on by the ſeveral characters, almoſt in the very words of Scripture. They are ſtill performed in the Tyrol, and laſt year ſeveral letters from touriſts, deſcribing them, appeared in the papers. The Miracles were dramatic repreſentations of ſome miraculous exertion of Divine power through the intervention of a ſaint; and the Moralities were allegorical dramas, repreſenting the action of certain virtues and vices perſonified. Several of theſe ancient dramatic works have been collected and publiſhed by the Shakeſpere Society. Many of them poſſeſs conſiderable humour and dramatic power, and are, indeed, plays to all intents and purpoſes, though they are not divided into acts and ſcenes. They bear quite as much reſemblance to a modern drama as the dialogues recited by the peaſants and ſhepherds, and ſaid by Horace to have been invented by Theſpis, did to the Prometheus, the Œdipus, the Medea, and the Nephelæ. Chaucer alludes to the Myſteries when, deſcribing *Abſolon*, in the "Milleres Tale," he ſays:—

> "Some time, to ſhew his lightneſs and maiſtrye,
> He playeth Herod on a ſcaffold high."

Herod, of courſe, was a character of great prominence

in the Myftery of the Paffion, and fitted to fhow off *Abfolon's* powers. *Hamlet,* too, refers to the fame character in the Myftery when he fays to the players, "O, it offends me to the foul, to hear a robuftious perriwig-pated fellow tear a paffion to tatters, to very rags, to fplit the ears of the groundlings; who, for the moft part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb fhow, and noife: I would have fuch a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant"—one of the fuppofed falfe gods of Mahometanifm; "it out-herods Herod," that is, it overdoes even the overdone character of the perfecuting king of Jews.

When the cuftom of entertaining great people during their vifits to the Univerfities, with an interlude or play, began, I cannot fay, but it probably dates far back beyond the time of Shakefpere. In France, at any rate, not only Myfteries and Miracles were known, but paftoral comedies, fo early as the eleventh century. M. Francifque Michel has publifhed feveral in that moft curious book, his "Théâtre Françai̧s du Moyen Age;" and it can hardly be fuppofed that, at a time when the dukes of Normandy, Touraine, Anjou, and Maine were alfo kings of England, and the nobility and high clergy, of both fides of the Channel, were of the fame race and fpoke the fame language, dramatic amufements fhould be fafhionable in one country and

unknown in the other. When people, therefore, ſpeak as if they thought that Engliſhmen had never heard a tragedy till Sackville and Norton wrote "Gorboduc," or a comedy till Udall wrote "Ralph Roiſter Doiſter," or Still "Gammer Gurton's Needle," they ſeem to me to be talking at random. Theſe may be the firſt inſtances of dramatic works reduced to the form of a modern play, but dramas had been known and loved by the people from time immemorial. Indeed, ſome of the plays of the eleventh century publiſhed by M. Franciſque Michel are in the original manuſcripts ſet to muſic, and anſwer to what we call operas.

The circumſtances which produced what may be called the Elizabethan drama are obvious enough. In the middle ages, it need hardly be obſerved, learning was left almoſt entirely to the clergy. Every one who followed learning thought it incumbent on him to take orders, becauſe that profeſſion, which included, be it remembered, the practice of the law, alone afforded leiſure, opportunity, and remuneration for ſtudy. The conſequence was, that almoſt all literature was tinctured with the eccleſiaſtical ſpirit, even though it was in many caſes directed againſt the doctrines of the Church and the privileges of the clergy. The drama was not exempt from this general law. It was the monk or the

friar who alone had the leiſure or ſkill to cater for the dramatic taſtes of the people, and he dramatiſed the Bible, juſt as Mr. Terry might dramatiſe "Rob Roy," or Mr. Dion Boucicault "The Collegians." At the revival, or rather, the diffuſion of learning, and eſpecially in the countries where the Reformation was eſtabliſhed, the clergy ceaſed to be an excluſively learned claſs. The diſſolution of the monaſteries and chauntries deprived the Church of the means of providing unambitious graduates of the Univerſities with a comfortable maintenance immediately on their entrance upon the world, for the parochial cures were then even leſs appropriately termed "livings" than now; and the conſequence was, that young men brought the learning they had acquired in the ſchools into general ſociety. They did not, as theretofore, take orders: there was the ſame complaint as now, that young men of promiſe preferred the chance of material wealth in worldly profeſſions to the ghoſtly riches of the prieſthood; and thoſe who did aſſume the ſacred office were ſo low in the ſocial ſcale that it was found neceſſary to forbid them by a canon to eke out their living by becoming tapſters. Univerſity men, like Udall, Still, Greene, Chapman, Peele, and Marlow, who adopted literature as a profeſſion, brought with them reminiſcences of Plautus and Terence, and

perhaps even of Sophocles, Euripides, and Ariſtophanes, and no longer derived the perſons of their dramas from ſupernatural or ſaintly beings, Scriptural characters, or abſtract virtue and vice, but from profane hiſtory and common life. In ſhort, the drama did not ſpring up all at once in the Engliſh nation, but merely, like every other art, received a new development from the great intellectual and ſocial revolution of the ſixteenth century.

With the ſtage, therefore, Shakeſpere was probably familiar from his youth. We know, indeed, that in 1569, when his father was bailiff, plays were performed in the Town Hall, and it is highly probable that a wild young man of his taſtes would ſeek aſſociates among "thoſe harlotry players," as *Quickly* calls them—the ſervants of the earls of Worceſter, Leiceſter, or Warwick, for whom the Town Hall was turned into a temporary theatre. And when he found himſelf in London, ſlenderly provided as we may preſume, he would naturally ſeek for friends among his old aſſociates, who were making money lightly at the Globe, Blackfriars, or the Swan, and ſpending it as lightly in the "Mermaid," the "Blue Boar," and the "Falcon."

In what capacity he firſt obtained employment is uncertain, but it cannot have been a very exalted one. The pariſh clerk of Stratford told Dowdall, in 1693,

that he was received into the playhoufe as a ferviture, which I fuppofe means a fervitor, or, in plain Englifh, a fervant. This is not inconfiftent with the ftory told by Sir William Davenant to Betterton, by Betterton to Rowe, by Rowe to Pope, by Pope to Newton, the editor of Milton, and by Newton to Johnfon, who incorporated it in the prolegomena to his edition of Shakefpere's plays :—" In the time of Elizabeth, coaches being yet uncommon, and hired coaches not at all in ufe, thofe who were too proud, too tender, or too idle to walk, went on horfeback to any diftant bufinefs or diverfion. Many came on horfeback to the play; and when Shakefpere fled to London from the terror of a criminal profecution, his firft expedient was to wait at the door of the playhoufe and hold the horfes of thofe that had no fervants, that they might be ready again after the performance. In this office he became fo confpicuous for his care and readinefs, that in a fhort time every man as he alighted called for 'Will Shakefpere,' and fcarcely any other waiter was trufted with a horfe to hold while Will Shakefpere could be had. This was the firft dawn of better fortune. Shakefpere finding more horfes put into his hand than he could hold, hired boys to wait under his infpection, who, when Will Shakefpere was fummoned, were immediately to prefent themfelves—'*I am Will Shakefpere's*

boy, sir.' In time Shakespere found higher employment; but as long as the practice of riding to the playhouse continued, the waiters that held the horses retained the appellation of *Shakespere's boys.*"

Whether this story be true or not, it certainly is not improbable. To take the first employment that offered any remuneration, and to distinguish himself even in the humble office of holding horses, is eminently characteristic of the practical good sense of the man who, while composing works requiring the exercise of the highest and most cultivated imagination and taste, was bringing actions for his rents, buying up impropriate tithes, and making money of his wheat, sheep, and beeves. Money was his pressing need at the time, not only for himself, but for the wife and young family whom he had left at Stratford; money was to be got honestly by holding gentlemen's horses—and he held them.

A man "whose blood and judgment were" not "so well commingled," would have been depressed by the meanness of his employment; but Shakespere knew that in order to climb to the top of the ladder you must begin at the bottom, and went on mounting steadily and surely till he had arrived at the height to which he intended to attain. With that taste which, in one of his education is even more wonderful than his

creative genius, he perceived the deficiencies of the plays which then held the stage. His predecessors were Udall, Heywood, Still, Redford, Ingelend, Munday, the two Wagers, Lyly, the euphuist; but Peele, Greene, Lodge, Nash, Marlowe, Kyd, Daniel, Belchier, Clarke, and Wilson were also his contemporaries, and though many of their plays show considerable merit, beside the great Master—him who held the horses of the gallants who came to hear their plays—they must pale their ineffectual fires. Greene's "Looking Glass for London and England" is more admirable in its comic than its tragic parts; but it is a fine play, full of fierce invective, which was his forte. "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay" has some pretty and some effective scenes; but one feels painfully throughout that, after one has been led up with great care and preparation to a point, the point is feebly made, or not at all. Peele's "David and Bethsabe" is perhaps better than "Titus Andronicus;" but "Edward I." is not to be compared with the worst of Shakespere's historical plays. The "Old Wives' Tale" is really a pretty piece of faerie, and there is something mysterious and grand in the unintelligible incantations at the well; but how infinitely is it left behind by *Oberon*, *Puck*, and *Titania*, by the weird sisters in "Macbeth," and by *Ariel* and *Caliban!* "The Devil and Dr. Faustus," by Marlowe, is much admired,

but it always ſeems to me as if the *Doctor* was too palpably cheated. He really gets nothing in exchange for his ſoul. Goethe's *Fauſt* does enjoy himſelf for the time, but Marlowe's *Dr. Fauſtus* wearies the reader by his continual anticipation of the day of reckoning. The whole intereſt and tragic effect of the play is produced by his repentance of the bargain he has made from the very moment when it has been ratified.

Shakeſpere's firſt employment in the higher buſineſs of the theatre is ſuppoſed to have been the correcting and adapting for the ſtage the imperfect plays of his contemporaries. In 1592 Robert Greene ended his wretched life in miſery, and, as his laſt act, bequeathed his " Groat's worth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance "—a malignant libel under the hypocritical maſk of a charitable warning—to his fellows in talent and profligacy, Marlowe, Lodge, and Peele. This ſtrange effuſion—of which I ſcarcely know whether to admire the power of the language, or wonder at the ghaſtly ſpectacle it preſents of a profligate pouring curſes with his failing breath upon the companions of his vices —contains the following addreſs to Peele, in which there is an obvious alluſion to Shakeſpere, as the publiſher afterwards acknowledged :—" And thou, no leſs deſerv-ing than the other two (Marlowe and Lodge), in ſome

things rarer, in nothing inferior, driven, as myself, to extraordinary shifts, a little have I to say to thee; and were it not an idolatrous oath, I would swear by sweet St. George thou art unworthy better hap, sith thou dependest on so mean a stay. Bare-minded men all three of you, if by my misery ye be not warned; for unto none of you like me sought those burs to cleave; those puppets I mean that speak from our mouths, those anticks garnished in our colours. Is it not strange that I, to whom they all have been beholding; is it not like that you, to whom they all have been beholding, shall, were you in that case that I am now, be both of you at once forsaken? Yes, trust them not, for there is an upstart now beautified with our feathers, that, with his tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is, in his own conceit, the only *Shake-scene* in a country."

The expression, "Tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide," is a parody of a line in the third part of "King Henry the Sixth," Act I., Sc. 4—

> "Oh, tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide!"

And there is no possibility of doubting that *Shake-scene* is an allusion to the name of Shakespere. From this it

may be concluded that in ſix years after coming to London, Shakeſpere had eſtabliſhed ſuch a reputation as an actor that he had become the object of Greene's impotent jealouſy; that he had made himſelf ſo uſeful to the theatre as to be conſidered a *Johannes Factotum:* an author as well as an actor, able to ſhake the houſe, and to rival "Marlowe's mighty line." But whether the expreſſion, "a crow beautified with our feathers," means only that he obtained profit and applauſe by acting the plays which they had written, or that he retouched them, or borrowed from them, is doubtful. Certain it is that he was an object of diſlike to the profligate ſet of whom Greene was one—partly, no doubt, becauſe he exhibited a ſelf-reſpect and forethought which were a tacit reproach to their debauchery and improvidence.

This malignant outburſt of envy on the part of Greene was the means of eliciting the teſtimony of Chettle, the publiſher, to the high character that Shakeſpere bore amongſt his contemporaries; and this is the more valuable as Marlowe is excepted from the like praiſe. Chettle appears to have really meant what he ſaid of Shakeſpere. The two aggrieved authors, as it ſeems, remonſtrated with Chettle for publiſhing this attack upon them, and this is his reply:—"With neither of them that take offence (Shakeſpere and

Marlowe) was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be: the other, whom at that time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had—for that, as I have moderated the heat of living writers, and might have used my own discretion, especially in such a case, the author being dead—that I did not I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes. Besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, which approves his art." As to Shakespere's excellence in his art we need not Chettle's testimony, but it is pleasant to find that the moral qualities for which he was respected by his contemporaries were uprightness and courtesy; nor is it small praise to say that he knew how to please men of station and good breeding.

It luckily happens that in a pedantic and euphuistic treatise on the poets of England, called "Palladis Tamia, Wit's Treasury, being the Second Part of Wit's Commonwealth," written by Francis Meeres, and published in 1598, we find an authentic record of the plays and poems which had been produced by Shakespere up to that period. Here is the passage:—"As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras,

ſo the ſweete wittie ſoule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakeſpeare; witneſs his 'Venus and Adonis,' his 'Lucrece,' his ſugred Sonnets among his private friends. . . . . As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the beſt for comedy and tragedy among the Latines, ſo Shakeſpeare among the Engliſh is the moſt excellent in both kinds for the ſtage; for comedy, his 'Gentlemen of Verona,' his 'Errors' [" Comedy of Errors"], his 'Love Labors Loſt,' his 'Love Labors Won' [" All's Well that Ends Well"], his 'Midſummer Night Dreame,' and his 'Merchant of Venice;' for tragedy, his 'Richard the Second,' 'Richard the Third,' 'Henry the Fourth,' 'King John,' 'Titus Andronicus,' and his 'Romeo and Juliet.'" To theſe original, or nearly original, plays, may be added his re-caſts of "Pericles," "Henry the Sixth," firſt part; "Henry the Sixth," ſecond part; "Henry the Sixth," third part. The three parts of "Henry the Sixth" were all originally written by the unfortunate Kit Marlowe, whoſe pretty ſong, "Come live with me and be my love," is ſung by *Sir Hugh Evans* in "The Merry Wives of Windſor," to keep up his courage when he is going to fight with *Dr. Caius*, and by the Milkmaid in Iſaac Walton's "Complete Angler." They were merely touched up and adapted for the ſtage by the "Johannes Factotum" at the theatre at Blackfriars.

From this, then, we learn that Shakespere, at the age of thirty-four, had written "Venus and Adonis," "The Rape of Lucrece," his Sonnets, amounting to one hundred and fifty-four, besides twelve original plays, and that he had altered and adapted four or five more. All this time he was also gaining money by acting.

In those times the profits of literary labour were not so great as now. We all remember the price for which Milton sold the copyright of the "Paradise Lost" in the next century. But the reign of Queen Elizabeth was the transition period between a listening and a reading age; the theatre was still the great vehicle through which the poet reached the public ear, and play-writing was probably the best paid of any literary labour. Of this a curious example is to be found in a novel called "Never too Late," written by Greene, the dramatist, and believed by Mr. Dyce to be the history of his wretched life. The hero, *Roberto,* is reduced to great shifts, and is bewailing his wretched fate behind a hedge:—

"On the other side of the hedge sat one that heard his sorrow, who, getting over, came towards him and brake off his passion. When he approached, he saluted Roberto in this sort, 'Gentleman,' quoth he, 'for so you seem, I have by chance heard you discourse some part of your grief, which appeareth to me more than

you will discover or I can conceit. But if you vouchsafe such simple comfort as my ability will yield, assure yourself that I will endeavour to do the best that either may procure your profit or bring you pleasure; the rather for that I suppose you are a scholar, and pity it is men of learning should live in lack.' Roberto, wondering to hear such good words, for that this iron age affords few that esteem of virtue, returned him thankful gratulations, and, urged by necessity, uttered his present grief, beseeching his advice how he might be employed. 'Why, easily,' quoth he, 'and greatly to your benefit; for men of my profession get by scholars their whole living.' 'What is your profession?' said Roberto. 'Truly, sir,' said he, 'I am a player.' 'A player!' quoth Roberto; 'I took you rather for a gentleman of great living; for if by outward habit men should be censured [judged], I tell you, you would be taken for a substantial man.' 'So am I, where I dwell,' quoth the player, 'reputed able at my proper cost to build a windmill. What though the world once went hard with me, when I was fain to carry my playing fardel afoot-back? [to carry my properties on my back as I walked.] *Tempora mutantur:* —I know you know the meaning of it better than I—but I thus conster it, *It is otherwise now;* for my very share in playing apparel will not be sold for two hundred

pounds.' 'Truly,' said Roberto, 'it is strange that you should so prosper in that vain practice, for that it seems to me your voice is nothing gracious.' 'Nay then,' said the player, 'I mislike your judgment; why, I am as famous for *Delphrygus* and the *King of Fairies* as ever was any of my time; "The Twelve Labours of Hercules" have I terribly thundered on the stage, and played three scenes of "The Devil on the Highway to Heaven."' 'Have you so?' said Roberto, 'then I pray you pardon me.' 'Nay, more,' quoth the player, 'I can serve to make a pretty speech, for I was a country author, passing at a Moral [a Morality]; for it was I that penned "The Moral of Man's Wit," "The Dialogue of Doves," and for seven years' space was absolute interpreter of the puppets. But now my almanack is out of date—

"The people make no estimation
Of Morals, teaching education."

Was not this pretty for a plain rhyme extempore? If ye will, you shall have more.' 'Nay, it is enough,' said Roberto; 'but how mean you to use me?' 'Why, sir, in making plays,' said the other; 'for which you shall be well paid, if you will take the pains.' Roberto, perceiving no remedy, thought it best to respect [have regard to] his present necessity, and, to try his wit, went with him willingly; who lodged him at the town's

end, &c. &c. . . . But Roberto, now famoufed for an arch play-making poet, his purfe, like the fea, fometimes fwelled—anon, like the fame fea, fell to a low ebb; yet feldom he wanted, his labours were fo well efteemed."

If Greene, with vaftly inferior powers and induftry, were able, by writing plays only, to fet want at defiance, notwithftanding his extravagant and thriftlefs mode of life, it is no wonder that Shakefpere, with his extraordinary induftry, his prudence, and the combined profits of writing for the ftage and acting, fhould have foon raifed himfelf to a good pofition, fo that he was reputed where he dwelt, and indeed was, "able at his proper coft to build a windmill," or to buy the beft houfe in his native town.

CHAPTER VIII.

We have followed Shakespere from Stratford to the playhouse, where he is enjoying not only the light froth of popular applause, but the solid pudding of substantial profit. We have seen him begin by holding the horses of gentlemen who rode to the play, and rising gradually from amending and adapting the works of others to be himself a great dramatic writer and actor, and, in fact, the founder of the modern drama. We naturally inquire what sort of playhouses were those in which his masterpieces first appeared? With what scenery and other means and appliances were those dramas, which now require all the art of the machinist, the scene painter, and the upholsterer, to make them tolerable to our fastidious age, first presented to the wits and courtiers of the days of Elizabeth and James?

The playhouses in which the pageantry of "Henry the Eighth" and "Macbeth," and the fairy scenes of "The Tempest" and "A Midsummer Night's

Dream," were firſt repreſented, were little better than wooden ſheds. I do not believe that they were deſtitute of a certain architectural beauty of their own, for in that time the old art-traditions of the middle ages had not yet been utterly loſt; and they were probably much better adapted to their purpoſe than our great, ſuffocating, uncomfortable theatres, where, what with the ſize of the houſe and the mumbling and ranting of the actors, it is impoſſible to hear one word in ten; but they were totally deſtitute of ſcenery. Curtains, or, as they were called, "traverſes," ſupplied the place of ſcenes; the ſtage was ſtrewed with ruſhes; at the back of the ſtage was a balcony, raiſed eight or nine feet from the ground, which ſerved as an upper chamber or window, from whence, as in "Romeo and Juliet," a part of the dialogue might be ſpoken; and the ceiling, called the "heavens," was painted blue, as in the churches of the time. The ſtage was hung with black when a tragedy was performed. A bed placed upon it indicated that the ſcene was a bed-chamber; a table with pen and ink denoted a counting-houſe. Trap-doors and pulleys were ſometimes uſed, but were not eſſential. The place of action was written on a board for the information of the audience. Inſtead of the prompter's bell, a flouriſh of trumpets announced that the curtain which ſeparated the ſtage from the audience

was about to be drawn, and at the third ſounding the play began.

The audience were not perhaps ſo well accommodated as at preſent. In the public theatres the area, called the "yard," was open to the ſky, and no part of the houſe was roofed but the ſtage and boxes; in the private houſes the whole was covered in. The ſtage was ſeparated from the pit or yard by pales, within which young men of faſhion uſed to ſit on ſtools, and criticiſe the performance. The orcheſtra was ſituated in the place now occupied by the ſtage-boxes. The remainder of the audience was accommodated, as with us, in private boxes and galleries, or ſcaffolds.

In Shakeſpere's time there were no leſs than eleven theatres in London. There was The Theatre, ſo called by way of diſtinction, Paris Garden, the Globe, the Roſe, the Hope, the Swan, in Southwark, the Blackfriars, the Whitefriars, the Fortune, in Golden Lane, and the Red Bull.

The dreſſes of the players were ſometimes very rich. We have ſeen that the player's wardrobe, in Greene's "Never too Late," was worth two hundred pounds. Women never acted till after the Reſtoration, and female parts were played by boys, generally the choriſters from the church or royal chapel, as they are now at the Weſtminſter plays. This muſt have been

the moſt ſerious defect in the Elizabethan acted drama. And yet, when one obſerves the continual effort of all but the beſt actreſſes to attract perſonal admiration, one cannot but acknowledge that both plans have their diſadvantages.

Hamlet's directions to the players, the play within the play, and ſome of Jonſon's comedies, afford the beſt idea of the cuſtoms of the players and audience. From *Hamlet's* directions to the players we learn that the clowns ſometimes, as indeed they do now, extemporiſed a joke to bring down a laugh—

> "And let thoſe that play your clown ſpeak no more than is ſet down for them; for there be of them that will themſelves laugh, to ſet on ſome quantity of barren ſpectators to laughter; though, in the meantime, ſome neceſſary queſtion of the play be then to be conſidered"—

and that the principal actors wore periwigs—

> "O, it offends me to the ſoul to hear a robuſtious periwig-pated fellow tear a paſſion to tatters."

From the play, we ſhould conclude that young men of faſhion criticiſed the performance aloud in a very rude and unceremonious manner, as where *Hamlet* ſays to the actor on the ſtage—

> "Begin, murderer—leave thy damnable faces, and begin!"

From Jonſon's comedies we learn that the audience took tobacco, that is, ſmoked without remorſe; that,

indeed, did not ſignify ſo much when the pit was *ſub Jove frigido.*

The prices of admiſſion to the boxes were a ſhilling, and to the yard or pit and galleries, ſixpence, fourpence, twopence, and even a penny. The play began after dinner, or at "undern of the day," or "under meles," that is, about three o'clock; and people, therefore, got home, or to the tavern, as the caſe might be, at about ſeven to ſupper.

Theſe arrangements would be conſidered rather rude and uncomfortable by modern play-goers; but then it muſt be remembered that plays were continually acted at Court, to which everybody of note at that time reſorted, and in the houſes of the high nobility; and, in the independence in which the drama ſtood of ſcenical decorations, the great dining-hall or preſence chamber could be converted into a theatre in a very ſhort time, by merely hanging a few pieces of tapeſtry acroſs the apartment.

And now the further queſtion ariſes, was juſtice done to Shakeſpere's plays in ſuch theatres, and with ſuch lack of ſcenery? I ſhould anſwer, without heſitation, yes. For myſelf, I am of Charles Lamb's opinion, that Shakeſpere's plays are more enjoyed in the reading than in the beholding. I have often ſeen "Hamlet" and "King Richard the Third," and to my mind *Hamlet*

and *Richard* have become identified with Mr. Charles Kean. Thank goodneſs! I have never ſeen "Lear." I ſhould be ſorry indeed to have my ideal of the hale, impulſive, ſomewhat boiſterous and paſſionate old king, firſt driven mad, then ſoftened and refined by his great ſorrow and tender love, deſtroyed by ſome periwig-pated fellow. But if acted at all, let the words of the Poet, and not the dreſs and ſcenery, be relied upon to produce their effect. As between tawdry, vulgar, inappropriate ſcenery and dreſſes, and the correct and taſteful decorations of the Princeſs's during Mr. Kean's management, there can be no compariſon. But, in my opinion, ſimple traverſes, or curtains, and the quiet, rich, unpedantic dreſſes of the Elizabethan drama, would be better than either. If managers would ſpend leſs money upon ſcenery, and more upon ſecuring the higheſt dramatic attainment in the performers; and if actors would think more of ſtudying their parts and declaiming them correctly, and leſs of their ſlaſhed doublets and fleſh-coloured tights, Shakeſpere would be more worthily repreſented on the ſtage.

Homer makes his model orator mean in his appearance, awkward in his geſtures, and totally deſtitute of action, ſo that people thought he was a fool until he opened his mouth; and then every eye was turned upon him, and every mind was bowed by the perſuaſion

of his voice. I have always thought this a high ſtroke of criticiſm—an ideal which would never have occurred to any but a maſter. If the orator cannot make an impreſſion by his words and the intonation of his voice, he will never do it by "ſawing the air." Juſt ſo, what one deſiderates on the ſtage is to have Shakeſpere's ſpeeches ſpoken as they are ſet down, with all the advantages of emphaſis and intonation which the natural aptitude, the ſtudy, and the practice of the actor can give them; but who cares, or ought to care, what dreſs the player wears, or whether the painted caſtle on the ſcene have the appropriate dog-toothed moulding of the reign of King John or not? I think, therefore, that Queen Elizabeth and King James and their courtiers, and the audiences which crowded the playhouſe at Blackfriars and the Globe, probably ſaw Shakeſpere's plays to as great advantage as we are ever likely to do, and perhaps to greater. At any rate, they did not ſee Shakeſpere inſulted by Cibber's and Garrick's interpolations. They were never treated to—"Off with his head! So much for Buck-ing-ham!"

Shakeſpere had got him "a fellowſhip in a cry of players," known as "the Lord Chamberlain's ſervants." They poſſeſſed two theatres, one at Blackfriars, oppoſite the place where Apothecaries' Hall now ſtands; here they played in winter, becauſe it was effectually

protected from the weather. At the Globe, on the Bankside, they played in summer. A petition, still extant, dated 1596, and addressed by the proprietors to the Privy Council, praying to be allowed to repair the house and continue their entertainments at the theatre in Blackfriars, proves that Shakespere was a shareholder in the concern, in conjunction with Thomas Pope, Richard Burbage, John Hemings, Augustine Phillips, Wm. Kempe, Wm. Slye, and Nicholas Tooley. As to his attainments as an actor, the traditions are various and conflicting. Chettle says, as we have seen, that he was "excellent in the quality he professeth;" Aubrey, that he "did act exceedingly well;" Wright, that "he was a much better poet than player." There can be little doubt of that, unless he was the greatest player that ever trod the stage. He adds, however, and this is obviously an error, "I could never meet with any further account of him this way than that the top of his performance was the *Ghost*, in his own 'Hamlet.'" Oldys says that a younger brother of the Poet's, who lived at Stratford to a good old age, used to tell how he saw Shakespere play the part of "an old man, who was carried by another person to a table, at which he was seated among some company who were eating, and that one of them sang a song." This obviously points to *Adam*, in "As You Like It."

There is a tradition that King James, flattered by the lines so complimentary to himself in "Henry the Eighth"—

> "Nor shall this peace sleep with her; but as when
> The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phœnix,
> 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 fixed: 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"—

"was pleased with his own hand to write an amicable letter to Mr. Shakespere;" which letter, though now lost, remained long in the hands of Sir William Davenant, "as a creditable person, now living, can testify." This is Lintot's statement, and Oldys, in a note on Fuller's Worthies, says that Lintot's authority for this was Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, who saw the letter in Davenant's possession. This is certain, from the "Accounts of the Revels at St. James's," in the reign of James, that Shakespere's plays were frequently performed at Court.

Amongſt the nobility of that time the theatre was a very popular amuſement. Of this we have a curious proof in the Sydney Papers. Rowland Whyte, in a letter to Sir Robert Sydney, ſays:—"My Lord Southampton and Lord Rutland came not to the Court; the one doth but very ſeldom; they paſs away the time in London merely in going to plays every day."

Southampton's reaſon for not going to Court was that his friend Eſſex was then in priſon and diſgrace; but the way in which he ſolaced himſelf indicates his taſte. This is the Southampton to whom Shakeſpere dedicated his earlieſt poems, "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece;" and the dedications are ſo charaćteriſtic, that I think they will help much in forming an eſtimate of Shakeſpere. The Dedication of the "Venus and Adonis" is addreſſed to the Right Honourable Henry Wriotheſly, Earl of Southampton and Baron of Tichfield, and is as follows:—

"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 labours. But if the firſt heir of my invention prove deformed, I ſhall be ſorry it had ſo noble a godfather, and never after ear [plough] 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 own wiſh and the world's hopeful expectation.—Your honour's in all duty, "WILLIAM SHAKESPERE."

The dedication of "The Rape of Lucrece" is addreſſed to the ſame accompliſhed nobleman:—

"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."

There appears to me to be in theſe complimentary addreſſes a more manly and independent ſpirit, leſs deformed by extravagant conceits, than is to be found in moſt dedications of the period. In the firſt, Shakeſpere does not heſitate to ſay, that he hopes to honour his patron by ſome graver work. This hope was not fulfilled, perhaps, as he intended it; but the memory of Southampton is certainly moſt honoured in the record of his friendſhip for the Poet.

The ſecond ſeems to indicate a growing intimacy and affection. This affection is ſaid to have been ſo great on Southampton's ſide, that he once preſented Shakeſpere with a thouſand pounds to carry through a purchaſe in which he was then engaged, poſſibly a ſhare in the Blackfriars or the Globe. Now a thouſand pounds in the time of Queen Elizabeth was worth fully as much as five thouſand now. This would have been a very large gift to one in Shakeſpere's circum-

ſtances; but that the tradition exiſted in the time of Sir William Davenant is ſufficient ground for believing that Southampton did make Shakeſpere a handſome preſent, though we may allow ſomething for exaggeration as to the amount.

The ſubjects of both theſe poems are ſuch, that an edition of Shakeſpere which contains them cannot be left upon a drawing-room table. I think my readers will therefore be obliged to me if I extract a few of the moſt ſtriking paſſages from both. They are Shakeſpere's earlieſt productions: the "Venus and Adonis" he calls the "firſt heir of my invention."

The deſcription of Adonis's hounds returning after having loſt their maſter and brought the boar to bay is extremely graphic, and further illuſtrates the Poet's intimate knowledge of hunting:—

"By this ſhe hears the hounds are at a bay,
Whereat ſhe ſtarts, like one that ſpies an adder,
Wreathed up in fatal folds juſt in his way,
The fear whereof doth make him ſhake and ſhudder;
Even ſo the timorous yelping of the hounds
Appals her ſenſes, and her ſpirit confounds.

"For now ſhe knows it is no gentle chaſe,
But the blunt boar, rough bear, or lion proud,
Becauſe the cry remaineth in one place,
Where fearfully the dogs exclaim aloud:
Finding their enemy to be ſo curſt,
They all ſtrain courteſy who ſhall cope him firſt.

*   *   *   *   *

"Here kennelled in a brake ſhe finds a hound,
And aſks the weary caitiff for his maſter;
And then another licking of his wound,
'Gainſt venomed ſores the only ſovereign plaſter;
And here ſhe meets another ſadly ſcowling,
To whom ſhe ſpeaks, and he replies with howling.

"When he hath ceaſed his ill-reſounding noiſe,
Another flap-mouthed mourner, black and grim,
Againſt the welkin vollies out his voice;
Another and another anſwer him,
Clapping their proud tails to the ground below,
Shaking their ſcratched ears, bleeding as they go."

No one who had not cloſely obſerved hounds could have written this. The concluſion almoſt riſes to ſublimity in the picture it draws of the dire evils which attend upon earthly paſſion :—

"Since thou art dead, lo, here I propheſy,
Sorrow on love hereafter ſhall attend:
It ſhall be waited on with jealouſy,
Find ſweet beginning, but unſavoury end;
Ne'er ſettled equally, but high or low,
That all love's pleaſure ſhall not match his woe.

"It ſhall be fickle, falſe, and full of fraud;
Bud and be blaſted in a breathing while;
The bottom poiſon, and the top o'erſtrewed
With ſweets that ſhall the trueſt ſight beguile;
The ſtrongeſt body ſhall it make moſt weak,
Strike the wiſe dumb, and teach the fool to ſpeak.

"It ſhall be ſparing and too full of riot,
Teaching decrepit age to tread the meaſures;

> The ſtaring ruffian ſhall it keep in quiet,
> Pluck down the rich, enrich the poor with treaſures;
> It ſhall be raging mad and ſilly mild,
> Make the young old, the old become a child.
>
> "It ſhall ſuſpect where is no cauſe of fear;
> It ſhall not fear where it ſhould moſt miſtruſt;
> It ſhall be merciful, and too ſevere,
> And moſt deceiving when it ſeems moſt juſt;
> Perverſe it ſhall be where it ſhows moſt toward,
> Put fear to valour, courage to the coward."

This is quite in the manner of the old Engliſh poets, and reminds one of the moral to the beautifully told but licentious ſtory of "January and May," in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales." Pluto threatens to make known the guilt of May, when Proſerpine thus addreſſes him, and, in her ſpeech, points the moral of the tale:—

> "'Ye ſhall,' quoth Proſerpine, 'and will ye ſo?
> Now, by my mother Ceres' ſoul I ſwear
> That I ſhall give her ſuffiſant anſwèr,
> And allè women after, for her ſake;
> That though they be in any guilt itake,
> With facè bold they ſhall themſelves excuſe,
> And bear them down that woulden them accuſe;
> For lack of anſwer none of them ſhall dien.
> All had you ſeen a thing with both your eyen,
> Yet ſhall we women viſage it hardily,
> And weep, and ſwear, and chidè ſubtilly,
> That ye ſhall be as lewed [fooliſh] as be geeſe.'"

Both the ſentiments, the idea of indicating the moral of the tale, and the vigour of the language, are alike in both. But there is a ſtill more ſtriking reſem-

blance, perhaps, in one of the expreffions in the paffage quoted, to a bitter ftanza in another of Chaucer's poems, "The Court of Love:"—

> "For it peràdventure may fo befall
> That they [women] be bound by nature to deceive,
> And fpin and weep, and *fugar ftrew on gall,*
> The heart of man to ravifh and to reave."

Compare with this:—

> "The bottom poifon, and the top o'erftrewed
> With fweets that fhall the trueft fight beguile."

"The Rape of Lucrece" is a far nobler and more varied poem. There can be little doubt that Shakefpere was indebted to the *Legenda Lucrecie Rome, Martyris,* in Chaucer's "Legende of Gode Women," for its general idea, and for many of the thoughts. It abounds with fine paffages; but I will choofe the defcription of the picture in the houfe of Collatinus, becaufe it fhows that even thus early in his career the Poet loved and appreciated the kindred art of painting:

> "At laft fhe calls to mind where hangs a piece
> Of fkilful painting made for Priam's Troy.
> * * * *
> A thoufand lamentable objects there,
> In fcorn of Nature, art gave lifelefs life;
> Many a dry drop feemed a weeping tear,
> Shed for the flaughtered hufband by the wife;
> The red blood reeked to fhow the painter's ftrife;
> And dying eyes gleamed forth their afhy lights,
> Like dying coals burnt out in tedious nights.

"There might you ſee the labouring pioneer
Begrimed with ſweat and ſmearèd all with duſt;
And from the towers of Troy there would appear
The very eyes of men through loopholes thruſt,
Gazing upon the Greeks with little luſt:
Such ſweet obſervance in this work was had,
That one might ſee thoſe far-off eyes look ſad.

"In great commanders grace and majeſty
You might behold triumphing in their faces;
In youth quick bearing and dexterity;
And here and there the painter interlaces
Pale cowards, marching on with trembling paces;
Which heartleſs peaſants did ſo well reſemble,
That one would ſwear he ſaw them quake and tremble.

"In Ajax and Ulyſſes, oh! what art
Of phyſiognomy might one behold!
The face of either ciphered either's heart;
Their face their manners moſt expreſſly told:
In Ajax' eyes blunt rage and rigour rolled;
But the mild glance that ſly Ulyſſes lent
Showed deep regard and ſmiling government."

How admirable is the contraſt between the mere ſoldier and the ſtateſman! How expreſſive the phraſe, "blunt rage!" and how exactly does it deſcribe the character of Ajax, as drawn by Homer! The "mild glance" of "ſly Ulyſſes" reminds one of the "Mitis ſapientia Lælî;" but the "deep regard and ſmiling government" are Shakeſpere's own, and ſhow that he had ſeen and marked the deportment of thoſe great ſtateſmen who ſteered the bark of the commonwealth

through the troubled ſeas of the beginning of the queen's reign. No words could better expreſs the habitual thoughtfulneſs, and quiet and dignified courteſy acquired by thoſe who are converſant with great affairs and ſubtle policy. It is ſomewhat remarkable that both theſe poems depict unrequited love, the one on the part of the woman, the other on that of the man. If one were diſpoſed to find autobiographical hints in Shakeſpere's poems, one might argue from hence that he had not found woman's love a ſolace and a comfort.

The ſonnets have always preſented a puzzle to thoſe who have endeavoured to draw from them hints with reſpect to the Poet's life and ſentiments. Some of them, perhaps, may contain alluſions to his own circumſtances. The following, for inſtance, may refer to his profeſſion of an actor, then ſcarcely freed from the infamy attached to it by the Roman law:—

> "Oh! for my ſake do you with fortune chide,
> The guilty goddeſs of my harmful deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means, which public manners breeds.
> Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
> And almoſt thence my nature is ſubdued
> To what it works in, like the dyer's hand:
> Pity me, then, and wiſh I were renewed,
> Whilſt, like a willing patient I will drink
> Potions of eyſell 'gainſt my ſtrong infection;

No bitterneſs that I will bitter think,
Nor double penance to correct correction.
Pity me, then, dear friends, and I aſſure ye
Even that your pity is enough to cure me."

One of the moſt beautiful of theſe exquiſite little poems is that in which the Poet laments his friend's abſence, or alienation :—

"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 maſked him from me now.
Yet him for this my love no whit diſdaineth ;
Suns of the world may ſtain when heaven's ſun ſtaineth."

"Stain," in the laſt line, is a neuter verb. "Heavenly alchemy"—heaven's own art of tranſmuting baſer things to gold—is one of thoſe happy metaphors which denote a true poet.

The dedication prefixed to theſe ſonnets has long been a puzzle to Shakeſperian biographers. In the original edition it is not pointed, but in modern editions it has always been printed thus :—

DEDICATION.

TO THE ONLY BEGETTER
OF THESE ENSUING SONNETS,
MR. W. H.,
ALL HAPPINESS
AND THAT ETERNITY PROMISED
BY OUR EVERLASTING POET,
WISHETH THE
WELL-WISHING ADVENTURER
IN SETTING FORTH,
T. T.

"Mr. W. H.," then, was ſuppoſed to be "the only begetter" of the ſonnets, and no one could make out who "Mr. W. H.," to whom ſo high an honour is attributed, was. Another reading has been ſuggeſted lately. A full ſtop is placed at "wiſheth," to which verb "Mr. W. H." then becomes the nominative caſe, and "T. T.," Thomas Thorpe, the bookſeller, is made merely to deſcribe himſelf as "the well-wiſhing adventurer in ſetting forth." Point it as we will, however, the dedication, like the ſonnets themſelves, remains an enigma which no Œdipus has yet been found to ſolve.

The lateſt attempt which I have ſeen to trace in the ſonnets the Poet's autobiography, is that of Mr. Francis Victor Hugo. By reading them over frequently, he thinks he has diſcovered the real ſequence in which they ſhould be placed, and arranges them accordingly, introducing ſome pieces from "The Paſſionate Pilgrim;" and in an "Introduction" explains

the purport of the ſtory which he thus makes them tell. In the firſt three ſonnets, according to his arrangement, Shakeſpere appears in love, and addreſſes his miſtreſs in the uſual language of lovers; but ſhe favours another, and in the eighth ſonnet the Poet changes his tone and threatens to go mad and ſpeak ill of her. In the ſucceeding ſonnets, he accordingly tells her that he has overrated her beauty, and overwhelms her with ſarcaſm. She retaliates by reminding him that he is married, and therefore, in loving her, perjured. He retorts, in the twenty-firſt ſonnet, that ſhe is as much to blame as he; and ſhe at length yields, and the twenty-fifth ſonnet is his ſong of triumph. But ſhe revenges herſelf, not only by being unfaithful, but by making his boſom friend, who is none other than Southampton, his rival. The friend confeſſes his fault, and the Poet "generouſly," as Mr. Hugo ſays, forgives him. The warmth of the language of the ſucceeding ſonnets, addreſſed to this faithleſs friend, is explained thus: "Deceived in love Shakeſpere throws himſelf unreſervedly into friendſhip. From friendſhip he aſks that impoſſible happineſs which he has ſought elſewhere in vain. From thenceforth he renounces material affection which is changeable like the inſtincts of animals; what he ſeeks is a love which ſhall be immovable, inexhauſtible,

ideal. By one of thofe fudden reactions fo frequent in impetuous natures, he paffes at once from one extreme to the other, and from having been enfnared by a courtezan, he attaches himfelf to a foul; in defpair at having been feduced by earthly paffion, he determines now to love by the intellect alone."

But in reply to this theory it may be afked, Why, then, were the fonnets difplaced from their natural order and thereby rendered unintelligible? They were publifhed in 1609, during the writer's life, and not, like the plays, after his death; he could, therefore, have placed them in their proper order.

The myftery is thus explained. Queen Elizabeth, like *Ferdinand* in "Love's Labour's Loft," had not only determined herfelf to lead a fingle life, but had forbidden all her courtiers to marry, and Southampton among the reft. He, however, yielding to the charms of "la belle Miftrefs Varnon," and to the eloquent pleadings of his friend, married, and the confequence was that he was fent, not for his fuppofed participation in the attempt of Effex, but for his difobedience to the Queen's command, to "contemplate the honeymoon in the Tower of London." The publifhers were, of courfe, afraid to publifh the fonnets which had been the caufe of fuch dire evils, during the Queen's lifetime; and when at laft they were given to the world

in the reign of her ſucceſſor, it was thought convenient to diſguiſe the name of Southampton under the initials "W. H.," and the true purport of the ſonnets by deſtroying their natural ſequence.

The ingenuity of this theory is undeniable, and Mr. Francis Victor Hugo's little book is well worth reading; but it muſt, of courſe, remain a theory only; and the latter part, at leaſt, relating to Elizabeth and her decree againſt marriage, is fanciful and utterly without foundation.

Amongſt Shakeſpere's early productions may be claſſed the ſhort poems called "A Lover's Complaint," and "The Paſſionate Pilgrim." They contain many pretty paſſages, and, in common with his other poems, are only not ſo much thought of and read becauſe of the overwhelming ſplendour of his dramatic works.

Theſe ſeveral poems were but the firſt eſſays of Shakeſpere's genius, yet upon them his fame reſted amongſt his contemporaries long after ſome of his beſt plays had been acted. In the firſt ten years the "Venus and Adonis" paſſed through thirteen editions, while "Romeo and Juliet" was only once printed.

The ſonnet had been introduced from Italy, by Lord Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt, in the reign of Henry

the Eighth. In Italy, Petrarch had invented, or, at least, brought it to the highest perfection of which it is capable; but, like caviar and olives, it is rather a sort of intellectual relish for those whose palates require a stimulant, than food such as ordinary minds can consume in any quantity. Sonnets must be read and mused upon one at a time. A sonnet is founded upon one thought which permeates the complicated metre, and is turned inside out by the metaphysical ingenuity of the poet. So artificial a structure can hardly express strong passion, nor does it convey pleasure to any but those who can regard it as a work of art, and follow and appreciate the poet's ingenuity. Its condensed form always makes it difficult to understand, and it is only educated minds which take pleasure in the intellectual effort necessary for the task. The age of Elizabeth was a metaphysical age. The old philosophy and theology still influenced men's minds, and prepared them to look for metaphysics even in poetry. And the conclusion that most people come to after reading Shakespere's sonnets is, that they are poetical and intellectual exercises, not intended to express the Poet's real sentiments, but merely to show his skill in finding poetical thoughts, and dressing them up in poetical language. They entitle him to a place among the metaphysical poets, Surrey, Wyatt, Ben

Jonſon, Donne, and Cowley, and, I think, they place him at the head of them.

A better preparation for the great dramatic works which were ſtill lying unhewn in Shakeſpere's brain could hardly have been found than theſe hundred and fifty-four ſonnets. In maſtering ſo thoroughly the difficulties of the metre and of the condenſation of thought and language neceſſary in the ſonnet, he muſt have acquired a facility of writing and power over words which would make them ever afterwards his ſlaves, and not, as is the caſe with inferior writers and thinkers, his maſters. And this explains the fact, otherwiſe not the leaſt wonderful of the many wonders of his genius, that he never blotted out a word or a line; that the "Hamlet," the "Macbeth," the "Lear," which have exerciſed the wits of critics any time this hundred years to fathom the depths of their meaning, flowed ſpontaneouſly from his pen, without effort and without heſitation.

A paſſage from Mr. Francis Victor Hugo's book, which I have ſeen ſince writing the above, exactly expreſſes my idea:—"Engliſh, that obſtinate jargon [no more a 'jargon' than French, Mr. Hugo!], ſo unamenable to rhyme, ſo briſtling with conſonants, Shakeſpere undertakes to throw into the crucible of the ſonnet, and to draw from thence a language

warm, ſparkling, harmonious, all chiſeled with antitheſes and conceits, which ſhall be the language of *Romeo* and *Juliet*, of *Othello* and *Deſdemona*."

But the popularity of his early poems was of infinite advantage to him, in giving him opportunities of obſerving a phaſe of manners with which he could otherwiſe ſcarcely have become acquainted. It is ſomething little ſhort of miraculous how Shakeſpere, the ſon of a Warwickſhire yeoman, who had never even been at the Univerſity, ſhould have known how to portray men and women of rank, not only in their graver hours, but in the eaſe and abandonment of ſocial intercourſe. The former he might have learnt from books, or from being preſent at great ſtate ſolemnities, but the latter he could have known only from taking part in it. The dialogues between *Prince Henry* and *Poyns* and *Falſtaff*, between *Romeo*, *Mercutio*, and *Benvolio*, between *Roſalind*, *Celia*, and *Orlando*, and between *Beatrice* and *Benedict*, are of the very beſt ſtyle of wellbred converſation. It is ſufficiently wonderful how, under any circumſtances, he could have ſo accurately caught the tone of good ſociety. We ſee daily how very indifferently even clever noveliſts, who have lived amongſt faſhionable people all their lives, depict their manners. Shakeſpere, of courſe, could not have attained this excellence by ſimple intuition. He muſt have ſomewhere ſeen the

original from which he drew. I think it is probable, therefore, that his early poems were the means of introducing him to the ſociety of people of refinement and high breeding, whoſe manners his extraordinary powers of perception enabled him ſo accurately to obſerve and reproduce. And thus, I think, the poems, and the ſame they brought him, may have combined to prepare Shakeſpere for the great dramatic career which his father's misfortunes and his own were the means of opening to him in London.

CHAPTER IX.

Shakespere was one of thoſe men who have got a great deal into a ſhort life. Before he had attained the age of thirty he had ſown ſome very wild oats at Stratford, and got into conſiderable trouble; he had managed his love-making and matrimonial affairs in ſuch a way as not by any means to ſmooth his way out of his difficulties; he had gone to London a ruined man, with a very ſlender education, and had adopted the firſt menial office which promiſed him bread; but by the time that he was thirty, he found himſelf eſtabliſhed amongſt the foremoſt poets of a poetic age, gaining a handſome competence as author, actor, and ſhareholder in the Globe and Blackfriars theatres, the envy of his profligate and unhappy fellow-dramatiſts, like Green, and the friend of men of rank and refinement, like Southampton.

But while all theſe honours and emoluments were flowing in upon him in London, he ſtill conſidered

the little village in Warwickshire where he was born as his real home. Aubrey says that he "was wont to goe to his native countreye once a yeare;" and there is a tradition that on these occasions he used to take up his quarters at the Crown inn, near Carfax, at Oxford. The house is now divided into shops, but retains much of its ancient character. It was kept by one Davenant, father of Sir William Davenant, the dramatist, in connection with whom a scandalous story was in circulation, after the Restoration, respecting the Poet; but as it is grounded upon no tangible evidence I do not care to record it. At Stratford it is probable he left his wife and family during his early struggles, and we may fancy how refreshing it must have been to the country-loving Poet to revisit every year the scenes of his early adventures, and to see his young family growing up, while he felt that he was every year increasing his means of providing for them. A family merrymaking, at which the Combes, Hathaways, Halls, Ardens, would meet over a bowl of lambswool, was in his eyes better than the wit-combats at the "Mermaid." With what delight must he have seen the Avon flowing majestically at the foot of the town by the fine old church! How pleasant must have appeared to him the glades and groves of Charlecote and Fulbrooke after the "melancholy of Houndsditch!" And how sweet must

have ſounded to him the cry of the hounds in the woodlands of Arden. Probably quite as ſweet as the plaudits of the theatre.

Indeed, one of the moſt curious traits of his character was his love for an unambitious country life in his native town. Like another of the world's great poets, he really might ſay—

"Flumina amem ſylvaſque inglorius."

He ſeems to have looked upon his literary fame only as a means to enable him to retire honourably to Stratford; and he was content that to be the author of "Hamlet," "Lear," "The Tempeſt," "As You Like It," and the reſt of thoſe great works which will laſt out the Engliſh language, ſhould bring him no higher reward than might have been gained by a career of ſucceſsful farming or trade.

This is a very Engliſh feeling. Horace Walpole was rather aſhamed of being a literary man; Walter Scott was much prouder of being the Laird of Abbotsford than the author of "Waverley;" and I fancy that Mr. Anthony Trollope, when got up in his "pink" and "tops," and ſtanding by a covert in the Rodings waiting for a fox to be found, would conſider it very bad taſte for any one to allude to "The Small Houſe at Allington." A foreigner cannot underſtand this

feeling. If, by writing a clever *feuilleton* in a paper he has obtained the croſs of the Legion of Honour, he will wear the ribbon in the button-hole of his ſhooting-jacket; indeed it is not clear to me that he does not wear it in his night-ſhirt. We, on the contrary, think literature a ſort of occupation which rather unfits a man for the buſineſs of the world, and look upon a literary man with ſome degree of ſuſpicion and diſtruſt; and moſt Engliſhmen would rather derive an hereditary fortune from a county magiſtrate, who had juſt brains enough to adjudicate on a poaching caſe with the aſſiſtance of a clerk, than from having written "Waverley," or "Pickwick."

In his careleſſneſs of literary fame, Shakeſpere was true to the national character. He reminds one of thoſe people in Chaucer's "Houſe of Fame," who cared not for renown:—

"With that, about I clewed mine head,
And ſaw anon the fifth rout,
That to this lady [Fame] gan to lout,
And down on knees anon to fall;
And to her then beſoughten all
To hiden their good workès eke,
And ſaid they would not give a leek
For no fame, nor for ſuch renown.
* * * * *
'What?' quoth ſhe, 'and be ye wood? [mad]
And ween ye for to doen good,

And for to have of that no fame?
Have ye despite to have my name?
Nay, ye shall lyen every one!
Blow up thy trump, and that anon,'
Quoth she, 'thou Eolus yhote,
[Thou who art called Eolus]
And ring these folkès works by note,
That all the world may of it hear.'"

We should have expected that Shakespere would have settled in London, to be near his great friends, to mix with the wits, and take his accustomed chair in the evening at some club of chosen spirits, like Dryden, Addison, and Johnson, and pronounce, *ex cathedrâ*, upon the merits of the latest play. But instead of this, the firstfruits of his prosperity are seen in his endeavour to establish himself in a good position in his native town. In 1597 his parents, John and Mary Shakespere, filed a bill in Chancery for the recovery of the estate of Ashbies, which they had mortgaged, and of which the mortgage was alleged to have been foreclosed. Now, a Chancery suit is not a cheap luxury, and it is not likely that John Shakespere, the poor bankrupt of a few years back, should so soon have retrieved his affairs as to be able to indulge in it. There was then no Commissioner of Bankrupts to wipe out an unlucky tradesman's liabilities, and enable him to start afresh and make a fortune as if nothing had happened. The renowned case of "Bardwell

againſt Pickwick" had not yet been publiſhed to the world, and debtors, once in priſon, were there till death releaſed them. To Shakeſpere himſelf, then, we muſt attribute this attempt to reſcue his mother's patrimony from the mortgageor. It was the proceeds of the ſale of the poems, and ſuch plays as he had then written, and the profits of the Globe and Blackfriars, that went to fee the Chancery lawyers for their unſucceſsful attempt to keep Aſhbies in the family.

To the ſame deſire to aſſume a poſition among the gentlemen of his county may be aſſigned his father's application to the Heralds' Office about the ſame time for a grant of arms; this, however, was not iſſued till 1599. It recites that John Shakeſpere's "parent, great-grandfather, and late anteceſſor, for his faithful and approved ſervice to the late moſt prudent prince, King Henry the Seventh, of famous memorie, was advaunced and rewarded with lands and tenements, given to him in thoſe parts of Warwickſhire where they have continewed by ſome deſcents in good reputation and credit; and for that the ſaid John Shakſpeare having marryed the daughter and one of the heyrs of Robert Arden, of Wellingcote, in the ſaid countie, and alſo produced this his auncient cote-of-arms, heretobefore aſſigned to him whileſt he was her Majeſtie's officer and baylefe of that towne: in con-

fideration of the premiffes and for the encouragement of his pofteritie, unto whome fuch blazon of arms and achievements of inheritance from theyre faid mother by the auncyent cuftom and laws of arms maye lawfully defend: we the faid Garter and Clarencieulx have affigned, graunted, and by thefe prefents exemplefied unto the faid John Shakfpeare, and to his pofteritie, that fhield and cote-of-arms, viz., In a field of gould upon a bend, fables, a fpeare of the firft, the poynt upward, hedded argent; and for his creft or cognizance, A falcon with his wings defplayed, ftanding on a wrethe of his coullers, fupporting a fpeare armed, hedded, or fteeled, filver, fixed upon a helmet with mantell and taffels, &c."

In the original draft of the grant by Dethick, and in feveral other documents, I find the name fpelt "Shakefpere," which fpelling I follow for the following reafons—the College of Arms is the beft authority in the matter of names; the name is an old one in Warwickfhire, and the correct fpelling of the two words of which it is compofed is "fhake" and "fpere." In the reign of Elizabeth an "a" was introduced into fuch words as were originally fpelt with an "e" alone—as fpear, head, ftead, mead, fear; for fpere, hede, ftede, mede, fere—to the great detriment of the language; and in the name Shakefpere I fee no reafon to

adopt it. The name is spelt in numerous different ways even by Shakespere himself, and I adopt that which was the mode of spelling it when it was first adopted by his ancestors.

In 1597 the wished-for opportunity of securing a place of retirement in his native town occurred. New Place, the best house in Stratford, was for sale, and Shakespere bought it for the sum of sixty pounds. It had been built in the reign of Henry the Seventh by the magnificent Sir Hugh Clopton, the builder of the bridge and restorer of the chapel, directly opposite to which it stood. It is thus described by Dugdale:—"On the north side of this chapel was a fair house, built of brick and timber by the said Sir Hugh, wherein he lived in his latter days and died." Sir Hugh bequeathed it to William Clopton, of Clopton, from whom it passed to William Bott. Its next possessor was William Underhill, of Eatington and Idlicote, from whom Shakespere bought it in Easter term, 1597. In the conveyance it is described in the comical dog-Latin of the law, to consist "de uno mesuagio, duobus horreis, duobus gardinis cum pertinentiis" (of one messuage, two barns, and two gardens, with their appurtenances). There is no drawing of it extant, for the pretended one published by Malone is a palpable forgery. That it was a com-

fortable, and even ſtately reſidence, may be inferred from the fact that it was built by Sir Hugh Clopton, that it was the beſt houſe in the town, and that when Queen Henrietta Maria afterwards ſojourned for a while at Stratford, ſhe took up her abode there. On Shakeſpere's death, in default of heirs male of his daughters, Suſanna and Judith, it deſcended to his right heirs, that is to ſay, to the daughter of Suſanna Hall, married to Thomas Naſh, and afterwards to Sir John Barnard. She died without iſſue, and New Place was ſold to Sir Hugh Clopton, a deſcendant of the original builder, who almoſt entirely pulled it down and rebuilt it. After Sir Hugh's death his houſe was ſold to the Rev. Francis Gaſtrell. This gentleman, who was married to a friend and correſpondent of Dr. Johnſon, conſidering that it was rated too highly to the relief of the poor, pulled down the houſe in 1757, having firſt cut down a fine mulberry-tree which was ſaid to have been planted by Shakeſpere's own hands in the gardens. The cauſe alleged for this ſelfiſh act was, that the reverend gentleman, who appears to have been an epicure, and fond of his eaſe, was annoyed by the flux of company who came to viſit the intereſting relic. Upon the old foundations was built a modern houſe, which, having been purchaſed for the public within the laſt few years, was pulled down, in the

hope that ſome remains of that in which Shakeſpere lived might be diſcovered.

When I viſited it, it preſented a moſt forlorn and miſerable appearance. Nothing was to be ſeen but a newly-made garden, and the rubbiſh and foundations of a houſe. The only parts remaining of the original building in which Shakeſpere lived are the ſtone foundations of the main wall, abutting on Chapel Lane, a portion of the porch wall, and a well, from which were taken a candleſtick, knife, tobacco-pipes, tiles, glaſs, and ſome pieces of iron. The further ſide of the plot of ground is bounded by a ſhed, which is dignified by the name of "The Theatre." Had the old houſe, where Shakeſpere ſpent the laſt years of his life in eaſe and opulence, ſurrounded by his family, and where ſome of his greateſt works were written, remained, it would really have been a relic of intereſt; but the place has been thoroughly and effectually denuded of everything upon which it is poſſible to fix any aſſociation with Shakeſpere. The little piece of ſtone wall which formed the foundation of the houſe tells no intelligible tale of the illuſtrious inhabitant. Still there at leaſt is the ground upon which he walked, and the garden which he probably took pleaſure in cultivating, and it is well to keep up our veneration for genius by reſpect for the place conſecrated by being

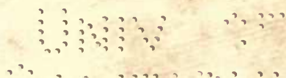
the ſcene of ſome of its happieſt creations. "Far from me and from my friends," ſays Dr. Johnſon, "be ſuch frigid philoſophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wiſdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied whoſe patriotiſm would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whoſe piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona;" or, we may add, whoſe veneration for genius would not grow deeper among the remains of Shakeſpere's home.

Mr. Edwards' photograph gives the little bit of the foundation of the porch and the boundary wall, with the theatre in the background. The reader will ſee that it is a ſcene of moſt admired diſorder, and what ſhape it will ultimately aſſume I know not.

The mulberry-tree, cut down by Mr. Gaſtrell and his wife, was ſold for fire-wood, and bought by a Mr. Thomas Sharp, a watch-maker in the town, who cut it up and made it into various little knick-knacks, which were greedily purchaſed by admirers of the Poet. Miſs Burdett Coutts poſſeſſes a chair made of it, with a medallion in the back, carved by Hogarth; and the cup from which Garrick drank when he ſang the fooliſh ſong compoſed for the Shakeſpere jubilee, was alſo made of it. Mr. W. O. Hunt, the donor of

Ruins of New Place, Stratford-on-Avon.

(THE HOUSE IN WHICH SHAKESPERE DIED.)



the portrait now to be ſeen in the houſe in Henley Street, has a table made of the ſame wood.

The veneration paid to theſe trifling remains ſhows how naturally we aſſociate the work of art with the artiſt. The plays would have the ſame excellence by whomſoever they might have been written. There is no intrinſic connection between them and the man William Shakeſpere. He has been long dead, and they remain a poſſeſſion for ever. But the mind refuſes to view things from this abſtract and cold point of view. It inſiſts upon tracing the work to the workman, and connects by ſome wayward and irrational, but ſtill natural proceſs, "Lear," "Hamlet," and the reſt of thoſe wondrous poems, with a cup or a ſnuff-box made of a piece of mulberry-tree!

CHAPTER X.

Cockneyism is one of the old inftitutions of the country which railroads have done much to modify. There was a time when barrifters and attorneys ufed to live all the year round, to eat, drink, fleep, and keep their carriages, in the gloomy ftreets near the Old Bailey and Weftminfter Hall. Indeed, perfons now alive can recollect an eminent civilian who had a handfome houfe and eftablifhment in Doctors' Commons, and never thought of leaving it. Publifhers not only had their warehoufes, but lived in Paternofter Row; tradefmen in Cheapfide, winter and fummer. Grub Street was the chofen abode of authors. Johnfon lived in Bolt Court, and thought the view down Fleet Street the fineft profpect in England. The country was confidered a fort of wildernefs, and a chance vifit to fome remote county was fufficient occafion for writing a book about fhepherds and fhepherdeffes. London was the centre of intelligence, and he who was not up to

all its ways—who did not know the faſhionable taverns, and could not call the waiters at them by their Chriſtian names—was called a gull and a ninny.

Railroads have changed all this. Lawyers, bankers, tradeſmen, and innkeepers, and even publiſhers and authors, now live ten, twenty, or thirty miles from town, in a country houſe with a demeſne and farm attached to it, where they ſpend, upon growing grapes and pines, turnips and mangold wurtzel, prize beef and mutton, pheaſants and partridges, the money which has been ſpun from their brains, or abſtracted from their clients' or cuſtomers' pockets in a gloomy den in the City. A friend and neighbour of mine, an eminent lawyer, who is no leſs remarkable for his legal acumen than for his ſkill as a ſportſman, and who in the very whirlwind of his practice has always given two days a-week to ſhooting or fiſhing, was complaining one day to the farmer who ſupplied him with corn for his pheaſants, of the quantity of barley which appeared againſt him in his bill. "Ah!" ſays Hodge, "you don't mind a quarter or two o' barley more or leſs in a half-year! *You'll* make it all right when you git a robbin' on 'em up in Lonon!" And Hodge was right. You paſs an exquiſitely kept place which puts the old ſquire's quite to the bluſh, and you are told that it belongs to the grocer in Piccadillywhere you got a jar of ginger the

day before. You fee a man perfectly got up in pink and leathers and tops, fplendidly mounted and followed by a groom on his fecond horfe, and what is more, riding well to hounds; all this is derived from the calico warehoufe in Cheapfide, or from the magazine of "leading articles" in Printing Houfe Square. A pack of harriers dafh acrofs the road followed by a gentleman in green; this gallant fportfman is the eminent publifher who thus learns whether to accept or refufe the MS. of Mr. St. Hubert's fporting novel. And to go a ftep lower in the focial fcale—whofe is this neat little villa with its fmall coach-houfe and ftable, and little paddock in which grazes a pretty Alderney cow? That is Mr. Whiff's, the tobacconift, in the Strand. All this is the falutary effect of railroads, which enable men of bufinefs to fleep in the pure air of the country, and be at their fhops or offices by bufinefs hours in the morning; which gives them healthful and civilifing amufements for their leifure hours, and infures health and vigour to their children. I don't mean to fay that this double life wholly eradicates the inftincts, language, and manners, which ufed to mark the dwellers within the found of Bow-bells, or that the profufe magnificence of a Londoner's eftablifhment in the country is as pleafing as the fimpler ftyle of the old fquire's—that would be too much to expect; but ftill the more

ſalient angles of Cockneyiſm have been rubbed off; and what is more, thoſe whoſe taſtes and habits lead them to prefer a country life can now, by means of the railroad, participate in ſome degree in the pecuniary advantages of the great market, where a purchaſer may be found for any article, whether manufactured by the hands or created by the brain.

Shakeſpere lived before Watt had invented the ſteam-engine, or Stephenſon had applied it to locomotion; but he anticipated in ſome degree the dual life which it enables us now to lead. London was never his real home—Stratford was the home of his mind. In the very hey-day of his fame and proſperity the little village on the Avon, with its ſimple ſociety of country ſquires and yeomen, its farming and field ſports, was the object towards which his life pointed; and to this, I think, we owe the healthy tone of his great dramatic poems and their variety of intereſt. Compare them with the plays of Jonſon, Greene, Peele, and Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Dryden, Wycherley, and Congreve, and one of the marks by which they are diſtinguiſhed, and their chiefeſt charm, will be found to be the ſuperior reality of the pictures of country life and character which they preſent. The town ſupplies but few phaſes of character; but Shakeſpere had the whole range at his command. While mixing in all

the humours of the court and city, his yearly visits to his native village kept his mind fresh and sweet, and enabled it to work amidst the reek of the theatres and taverns of the city without being tainted or enfeebled.

As a pilgrim to Stratford, I ought, perhaps, to confine myself entirely to his doings in his country home; but, I think, we can hardly judge what manner of man he was without a glance at the other life he led in London.

In the first place it was a life of labour. We have seen that before 1598 he had written his poems, and either retouched or written fifteen or sixteen plays, amongst which are some of his best, such as "The Merchant of Venice," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Henry the Fourth," Part I. It is impossible, after this, to determine exactly the year in which each play was produced, but from internal and external evidence, Malone, Mr. Halliwell, Mr. Dyce, and others, have arrived at an approximation to it. They all agree generally to attribute to the year 1599, "Much Ado about Nothing" and "Henry the Fifth;" to 1600, "As You Like It" and "The Moor of Venice;" to 1601, "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and "King Henry the Eighth;" to 1602, "Twelfth Night" and "Hamlet;" to 1603, "Measure for Measure" and "Julius Cæsar;" to 1605,

"Lear" and "Macbeth;" to 1607 and 1608, "Anthony and Cleopatra" and "Troilus and Creſſida;" to 1609, "Cymbeline;" to 1610, "Coriolanus" and "Timon of Athens;" to 1611, "A Winter's Tale" and "The Tempeſt," the moſt perfect as a work of art of all his dramatic poems. Like *Proſpero*, he is ſuppoſed, with this crowning exerciſe of his magic power, to have laid by his conjuring robe and wand. Within the ſpace of nineteen years, therefore, he muſt have written thirty-one plays at leaſt, beſides retouching others, ſuch as "Pericles," "Titus Andronicus," and the three parts of "Henry the Sixth," and taking part in the general theatrical buſineſs of the Globe and the theatre at the Blackfriars.

It is curious to obſerve what a deep abyſs of ignorance lies beneath the knowledge which is now-a-days ſpread over ſo large a ſurface. It reminds one of thoſe beautifully green ſpots of herbage which appear to offer ſafe footing on the banks of a ſluggiſh ſtream, but as ſoon as your horſe treads upon them the upper cruſt of verdure gives way, and you find yourſelf plunging helpleſſly up to the girths in black mud. Of the many people who talk of Shakeſpere, how many have read all his plays? Of the ſelect few who have read his plays, how many have tried to form a conception of the mode of their conſtruction? And yet what a lazy,

incurious mind must that be which can go on contemplating a phenomenon which is almost miraculous, and never seeking to penetrate the mystery! It is as if a man were daily to see the bones and tusks of the mastodon and the ichthyosaurus, the stems of giant ferns, and the shells of unknown molluscs, thrown up by the pick of the quarryman, and should never inquire how the earth was made. I must confess, with shame, that long after I had learned to read Shakespere with some degree of discrimination, and to appreciate his superiority to any other dramatic poet I had read, I was content to accept the fact that the plays had been written by an uneducated man in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, without further inquiry. As far as I thought about the matter, I believed that he had produced the whole thing, plots and all, by a sort of plenary inspiration, or by the help of a messenger from above, like Numa's Egeria, or Mahomet's pigeon. And I suppose a great many of those who really more or less enjoy such plays as "The Tempest," and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "As You Like It," are in the same state of happy ignorance. Shakespere's genius can hardly be overrated, but yet it was not equal to such a stupendous effort as this.

There is scarcely one of the plays of which the plot may not be traced to some previous writer. But is

Shakeſpere to be accuſed of plagiariſm or want of invention for this? Certainly not. The object of a play is not to tell a ſtory, but to ſhow men and women acting under the influence of ſtrong paſſion. And, therefore, Horace, in the Epiſtle to the Piſos, de arte poeticâ, properly adviſes authors to chooſe ſome fable well known to the audience, ſo that he may take them with him at once into the very midſt of the action. It detracts nothing from the merits of the hiſtorical plays that the incidents are taken bodily from North's "Plutarch," Holinſhed, or Geoffrey of Monmouth; becauſe it is not the proper buſineſs of the dramatiſt to invent plots, but rather to repreſent character in action. Geoffrey may tell us that *Lear* went mad, but who but Shakeſpere could have imagined the ſcene in the hut where the old king arraigns *Goneril* and *Regan*, while the *Fool* heightens the reality and the pathos of the circumſtance by his comments, and *Edgar* enhances the diſmal horror of it by his ſnatches of "Tom o' Bedlam" ſongs? Holinſhed may tell how Harry, Prince of Wales, forgot his ſtation for a time to haunt taverns with looſe companions; but it was reſerved for Shakeſpere to imagine the wit and fun which tempted him to leave his ſphere. Nor even in the romantic plays was the dramatiſt bound to invent his own plots, when

he could find them ready made in Boccaccio's "Decameron." The Italian novelist relates the incidents so tersely that they have almost the air of being the arguments of a poem. They are the very skeletons which Shakespere, and before him Chaucer, clothed with flesh and blood. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's "Eugene Aram" is not the less an original novel for being founded on fact, nor is Mr. Dickens's "Oliver Twist," because he had probably learned many of the incidents at the police courts.

Such has been the industry of Shakesperian critics that the plots of almost all the plays have been traced to their sources. To take them in the approximate order of their composition rather than in that in which they were printed in the first complete edition, which is the folio of 1623, and which is followed in modern editions—the three parts of "Henry the Sixth" can scarcely be called Shakespere's. They are, in fact, Marlowe's plays, retouched by him. The "Comedy of Errors" was probably taken from a play founded on the "Menæchmi" of Plautus, acted before Queen Elizabeth, at Hampton Court, on New Year's Day, at night, "by the children of Pawles," that is, the choir boys. The story of "Love's Labour 's Lost" has been traced by Mr. Dyce to an incident related in Monstrelet's "Chronicle." The incident of the caskets in "The

Merchant of Venice" is found in Gower's "Confessio Amantis," and that relating to the Jew in the "Gesta Romanorum," as also in a ballad published by Percy. For the incidents of "Richard the Second," Shakespere was indebted to an older play or to the Chronicles. The "Two Gentlemen of Verona" is founded on an older play called "The History of Felix and Philismena," played before Queen Elizabeth in 1584. "A Midsummer Night's Dream" appears to be one of the most original of the plays. The plot is found in no previous work as yet discovered, but the materials for the separate parts may have been derived by Shakespere from North's "Plutarch" and Ovid's "Metamorphoses." *Oberon*, *Titania*, *Puck*, and the other ouphes, are the genuine growth of the popular English imagination, and Shakespere probably drew his conception of them from the tales he had heard by the fireside on winter evenings in the farmhouses of Warwickshire. "The Taming of a Shrew" is a recast of a play "at sundry times acted by the Right Honorable the Earle of Pembrook his servants." "Romeo and Juliet" is "The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet, written first in Italian by Bandell, and now in English by Arthur Brooke" (1562), dramatised. "Henry the Fourth," Parts I and II., and "Henry the Fifth," are founded upon older plays. *Sir John Falstaff*, in

Shakeſpere's firſt draught called *Sir John Oldcaſtle,* is, of courſe, the undivided property of the great maſter. He was no doubt as great a favourite of Shakeſpere's as Sir Roger de Coverley was of Addiſon's. Shakeſpere cannot part with him. He takes him through the two parts of "Henry the Fourth," "Henry the Fifth," and "The Merry Wives of Windſor," and is careful to make his death as unexpectedy tragical as the nature of the caſe would admit. He knew that the ſoil which could throw up ſuch a luxuriant crop of wit muſt have been deep and rich by nature. The tattle of *Quickly* and the *Page,* as they tell the ghaſtly ſtory of his deathbed, gives us a glimpſe of the ſtruggle between *Falſtaff's* better nature and early recollections, and his long habits of debauchery. This was a touch of nature which none but the maſter could throw in. "Richard the Third" is founded upon hiſtory alone, though there was a former play on the ſame ſubject. "All's Well that Ends Well" is from the "Decameron" of Boccaccio, and is, indeed, thoroughly Italian in its plot. "King John" is founded upon an earlier anonymous play. "Much Ado about Nothing" is founded remotely on a ſtory in Bandello. The general plot of "As You Like It" is to be found in "The Cokes Tale of Gamelyn," generally included in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, but not, I think, written by Chaucer.

"The Moor of Venice" is from a ſtory in Cinthio's "Heccatommithi." The ſtories of "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Macbeth," were popular in chronicles and hiſtories in Shakeſpere's time. "Julius Cæſar," "Anthony and Cleopatra," and "Coriolanus," are taken from North's "Plutarch." The original of "Timon of Athens" is in Lucian, but the ſtory of the Miſanthrope was current in the ſixteenth century. Shakeſpere might have got all the incidents of "Troilus and Creſſida" from Chaucer's exquiſite love-ſtory, itſelf a recaſt of Boccaccio's "Filoſtrato," but he has given a totally different reading of the characters. I ſuppoſe I ſhall be accuſed of rank hereſy, but I muſt acknowledge that I prefer Chaucer's poem to Shakeſpere's play. The play is to me the only unpleaſing one of Shakeſpere's; the poem is one of the moſt elaborately beautiful in the Engliſh, or indeed in any, language, and far ſuperior to Boccaccio's. The remote original of "Cymbeline" is a very ancient romance, publiſhed by M. Franciſque Michel in his "Théâtre Français du Moyen-Age," from which is taken the "Roman de Violette;" but whether Shakeſpere borrowed his plot from either of theſe, or from ſome Engliſh tranſlation, I cannot tell. The ſtory was extant, at any rate, long before his time. "A Winter's Tale" is dramatiſed from Greene's novel, called "Pandoſto;" but as yet no

original has been found for Shakespere's most perfect and finished work, "The Tempest." Desert islands, magicians, spirits of air and water, damsels who had never seen a man, abound in the literature of romance; but I am glad to believe that Shakespere is indebted to no one for the exquisite combination of all these incidents which forms "The Tempest."

From this survey it would appear that Shakespere set himself, in a business-like way, to provide plays for the theatre in which he had a share, without much regard to anything but pleasing the public for the moment. For this purpose he ransacked the works of his predecessors and contemporaries, he read the old chronicles and romances, he seized upon every English version of an Italian novel as it came out, and for classical stories had recourse to North's "Plutarch," a translation of a French translation. In "The Tempest" is a whole passage taken from Florio's then recently published translation of "Montaigne's Essays." A copy, with Shakespere's autograph, or alleged autograph in it, is now preserved in the British Museum. That he was greedy of all knowledge there can be no doubt. His mind must have been stored with philosophy, divinity, law, art; and this varied knowledge, which was quite a different thing from classical scholarship, flowed into his dialogue, and gives it that richness which we

ſcarcely find in any other writer. This was the effect of his genius; but everything concurs to ſhow that his immediate object was gained when his plays filled the houſe. He never blotted or eraſed his manuſcript. He took no care to collect his works and publiſh them during his life-time, and they were not in fact collected till nearly ten years after his death.

Now it appears to me, though the propoſition ſeem paradoxical, that this writing for an immediate and tangible object was one cauſe of Shakeſpere's excellence. He knew that he had the ſecret of pleaſing the public, and he had no crotchets about writing for poſterity to mar the ſimplicity of his aim. He was not oppreſſed by the greatneſs of his taſk, and his thoughts, therefore, flowed the more freely and effectively. I think it will be found that works of art produced to anſwer ſome obvious end—paintings painted expreſſly to decorate ſome particular building, like thoſe of Giotto; hiſtories, compiled to ſerve ſome political or religious purpoſe, like Gibbon's Decline and Fall and Macaulay's England; pamphlets to overwhelm ſome perſonal enemy, like the Letters of Junius or Drapier, or the poem of "Hudibras"—*facit indignatio verſus*—and plays written with the ſole purpoſe of filling the houſe, like Shakeſpere's, are the very works that poſterity will not ſuffer to periſh. The great fault of the

later poets, those of the lakes in particular, was that they had some dream of perfection in their head which was too high for common men of their own generation—some ideal of beauty which ordinary men could not taste, and they have so far endangered their permanent fame. Shakespere, apparently, cared only to please the audience at the Globe and Blackfriars, and he has "built himself an everlasting name."

Of his social life—where he lived, and with whom, when he was in London—little is known, except that he was, as we have seen, noted for the straightforward honesty of his dealings and his pleasing manners, and that he was deemed worthy of the special regard of Queen Elizabeth and King James, and of the friendship of Southampton.

His humbler friends were the other poets of his time, among whom Ben Jonson stands pre-eminent for his affectionate and judicious praise. The foundation of their friendship was laid in an act of kindness on Shakespere's part which a literary man would be likely never to forget. Jonson, though the son of a mechanic, had been brought up at the renowned college of St. Peter's, Westminster; for, indeed, the ancient foundations of our great public schools were intended for the education of poor scholars. After this he became a bricklayer, following the trade of his stepfather,

and Fuller ſays that he "helped in the ſtructure of Lincoln's Inn, when, having a trowel in his hand, he had a book in his pocket." Scorning ſo mechanical an employment, he went as a ſoldier to the wars in the Low Countries, and, returned from thence, took to literature as a means of living, and while yet quite unknown, offered his celebrated "Every Man in his Humour" to the company at the Blackfriars. The manager failed to taſte the humour of *Bobadil* and *Brainworm*, and was about to return the play with one of thoſe diſagreeable anſwers with which ſome managers and publiſhers are ſaid to damp the hopes of unknown authors, when Shakeſpere aſked to ſee it, and was ſo pleaſed with it as to procure its acceptance. The acquaintance thus begun was ripened into friendſhip by frequent ſocial meetings at the "Mermaid Tavern," in Bread Street, where Sir Walter Raleigh had founded a club, the earlieſt probably known in England. It is alluded to by Jonſon in his lines "Inviting a Friend to Supper"—

> "To-night, grave ſir, both my poor houſe and I
> Do equally deſire your company;
> Not that we think us worthy ſuch a gueſt,
> But that your worth will dignify our feaſt
> With thoſe that come; whoſe grace may make that ſeem
> Something, which elſe could hope for no eſteem.
> It is the fair acceptance, ſir, creates
> The entertainment perfect, not the cates.

Yet fhall you have, to rectify your palate,
An olive, capers, or fome bitter sallat,
Ufhering the mutton, with a fhort-legged hen,
If we caught her full of eggs, and then
Lemons and wine for fauce; to thefe a coney,
Is not to be defpaired of for our money;
And though fowl now be fcarce, yet there are clerks,
The fky not falling, think we may have larks.
I'll tell of more, and lie, fo you will come,
Of partridge, pheafant, woodcock, of which fome
May yet be there, and godwit, if we can,
Knot, rail, and ruff, too. Howfoe'er, my man
Shall read a piece of Virgil, Tacitus,
Livy, or of fome better book to us,
Of which we'll fpeak our minds amidft our meat,
And I'll profefs no verfes to repeat.
To this, if aught appear which I not know of,
That will the paftry, not my paper fhow of;
Digeftive cheefe and fruit there fure will be.
But that which moft doth take my mufe and me,
Is a pure cup of rich Canary wine,
Which is the Mermaid's now, but fhall be mine;
Of which had Horace or Anacreon tafted,
Their lives, as do their lines, till now had lafted."

Allufion is again made to this celebrated tavern in "The Voyage:"—

"It was the day, what time the powerful moon
Makes the poor Bankfide creature wet its fhoon
In its own hall; when thefe (in worthy fcorn
Of thofe that put out monies on return
From Venice, Paris, or fome inland paffage
Of fix times to and fro, without embaffage,
Or him that backwards went to Berwick, or which
Did dance the famous Morris into Norwich)
At Bread Street's Mermaid having dined, and merry,
Propofed to go to Holborn in a wherry."

I have quoted the former of theſe paſſages becauſe it gives a curious inſight into the ſocial cuſtoms of Shakeſpere's time. From it we learn that it was not unuſual for one to read out ſome entertaining book during dinner, as they read out paſſages from Scripture, or the "Lives of the Saints," in monaſteries. It alſo gives one ſome idea of the luxury in which literary men lived, beſides ſome curious gaſtronomical facts, ſuch as that olives were eaten before, not after dinner.

At the "Mermaid," then, uſed to meet the wits of the town—Shakeſpere, Jonſon, Beaumont, Fletcher, Selden, Donne. And here, as quaint old Fuller in his "Worthies" relates, "Many were the wit combats between him [Shakeſpere] and Ben Jonſon, which two I behold like a Spaniſh great galleon and an Engliſh man-of-war: Maſter Jonſon, like the former, was built higher in learning, ſolid but ſlow in his performances; Shakeſpere, with the Engliſh man-of-war, leſſer in bulk, but lighter in ſailing, could turn with all tides, tack about and take advantage of all winds, by the quickneſs of his wit and invention."

Of this wit the ſpecimens which have been preſerved do not give a very exalted notion; but it is a curious fact that converſation which has delighted the hearers by its wit, when repeated, often ſeems inſipid. A joke which the reports of the debates in Parliament declare

to have been received with roars of "laughter," often seems so poor and trivial that we think our legislators must be wonderfully easily amused. Yet they are the most fastidious audience in the world. The joke was not a bad joke in reality, but wit read is not like wit spoken. The time, place, and manner have much to do with it. So *Falstaff*, a great authority surely on this subject, says, "Oh, it is much that a jest with a grave face and a slight oath will do with a fellow that hath never had the ache in his shoulders!" Besides, wit is of so slight and evanescent a character that it is not the best jokes that are remembered, but rather the heaviest and dullest. Barrow defines wit thus: "Sometimes it lieth in a pat allusion to a known story, or in a seasonable application of a trivial saying, or in forging an apposite tale; sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of their sense, or the affinity of their sound; sometimes it is wrapped in a dress of humorous expression; sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude; sometimes it is lodged in a sly question, in a smart answer, in a quirkish reason, in a shrewd intimation, in cunningly averting or cleverly retorting an objection; sometimes it is couched in a bold scheme of speech, in a tart irony, in a lusty hyperbole, in a startling metaphor, in a plausible reconciling of contradictions, or in acute nonsense; sometimes a scenical

reprefentation of perfons or things, a counterfeit fpeech, a mimical look or gefture, paffeth for it; fometimes an affected fimplicity, fometimes a prefumptuous bluntnefs giveth it being; fometimes it rifeth only from a lucky hitting upon what is ftrange; fometimes from a crafty wrefting obvious matter to the purpofe; often it confifteth in one knows not what, and fpringeth up one can hardly tell how. Its ways are unaccountable and inexplicable, being anfwerable to the numberlefs rovings of fancy and windings of language. It is, in fhort, a manner of fpeaking out of the fimple and plain way (fuch as reafon teacheth and proveth things by), which by a pretty furprifing uncouthnefs in conceit or expreffion, doth affect and amufe the fancy, ftirring in it fome wonder, and breeding fome delight thereto."

It would not be difficult, and it would be an amufing paftime, to cull paffages from Shakefpere's plays which would anfwer to each of the various forms of wit here enumerated. *Falftaff* would fupply moft of them. That he who fo nimbly followed the turnings of this Proteus in his writings, was equally active in his converfation, Fuller, no mean judge, affures us; and we muft blame the reporters, or the nature of wit itfelf, if the jokes which have actually come down to us be difappointing. I do not, however, feel at liberty to omit them.

From a collection of "Merry Paffages and Jefts,"

collected by Sir Nicholas l'Eſtrange, we learn that on one occaſion "Shakeſpere was god-father to one of Ben Jonſon's children, and after the chriſtening, being in a deep ſtudy, Jonſon came to cheer him up, and aſked him why he was ſo melancholy. 'No, faith, Ben,' ſays he, 'not I; but I have been conſidering a great while what ſhould be the fitteſt gift for me to beſtow upon my god-child, and I have reſolved at laſt.' 'I prithee what?' ſays he. 'I' faith, Ben, I'll e'en give him a dozen latten (Latin) ſpoons, and thou ſhalt tranſlate them.'"

Now we muſt recollect that Jonſon was a learned man, and probably was in the habit of poking fun at Shakeſpere for his lack of Latin. Shakeſpere retaliates by ſaying he will give the child ſome latten, or braſs, ſpoons, a uſual preſent from a ſponſor, and that Jonſon ſhall tranſlate them, playing upon the ambiguity of the word *latten,* and hinting that Jonſon could do little but tranſlate from the ancients. The joke is a good joke if we conſider the circumſtances, which, I think, muſt have been pretty much what I have ſuppoſed. It is what Aulus Gellius calls a *ſcomma,* and probably turned the laugh againſt honeſt Ben.

The next is not ſo ſucceſsful. We read in an Aſhmolean MS. that "Mr. Ben Jonſon and Mr. William

Shakeſpere being merry at a tavern, Mr. Jonſon having begun this for his epitaph—

> 'Here lies Ben Jonſon,
> That was once one,'

he gives it to Mr. Shakeſpere to make up, who preſently writes—

> 'Who, while he lived, was a ſlow thing,
> And now, being dead, is no-thing.'"

No doubt Shakeſpere was a little out of patience with Jonſon's "ſlowneſs in his performance;" his ending is certainly more pointed than Jonſon's beginning.

The two men ſeem to have been formed by nature, both from their reſemblance and the difference of their ſeveral characters, to be foils one to the other; they went about together obſerving odd humours, and the fact that they were always engaging in wit combats is one of the greateſt proofs of the ſincerity of their friendſhip. It is only a very ſincere affection that will bear the wear and tear of mutual jeſts, and none but men of a high order of intellect and fine taſte can joke or take a joke without giving or taking offence.

Jonſon in his "Diſcoveries," in the ninth volume of Gifford's edition, ſays—"I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakeſpere, that in his writing, whatſoever he penned he never blotted out

a line. My answer hath been, 'Would he had blotted a thousand!' which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this but for their ignorance, who chose that circumstance to commend their friend by wherein he most faulted, and to justify mine own candour; for I loved the man and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was, indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions; wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped: *Sufflaminandus erat*, as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so too! Many times he fell into those things could not escape laughter: as when he said in the person of *Cæsar*, one speaking to him, 'Cæsar, thou dost me wrong,' he replied, 'Cæsar did never wrong but with just cause,' and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than pardoned."

This is a piece of criticism characteristic of a correct scholar like Jonson. That Shakespere, writing with running pen, should have made such mistakes, was natural. It was as natural that Jonson should be scandalised by them; but I, for one, am glad that Shake-

ſpere did not blot a line. We can well forgive ſuch an Iriſh bull as Cæſar's reply, or ſuch a blunder as repreſenting a ſeaport in Bohemia—if it be a blunder, which is doubtful, for I have ſeen it ſtated in ſome periodical that ſeveral ſeaports on the Mediterranean formed part of Bohemia in the ſixteenth century—in conſideration of poſſeſſing the ſpontaneous flow of Shakeſpere's fine genius. Sheridan uſed to ſay that your eaſy writing was d——d hard reading, and this is generally true; but Shakeſpere is really an entirely exceptional caſe. Spontaneity is one of the peculiarities of his genius. But it is abſurd to accuſe Jonſon—honeſt Ben—of malignity for having his own view of his friend's excellencies and defects. If we wanted a contradiction to any ſuch accuſation it is to be found in his addreſs to his departed friend. Jonſon's poems are ſo little known to ordinary readers, and there is ſuch a charm in his fine nervous Engliſh, that I make no excuſe for giving the paſſage at length. How delightful is ſtrength! There is no unpardonable ſin in art but weakneſs, and for this there is no place of repentance.

"To draw no envy, Shakeſpere, on thy name,
Riſe I thus ample to thy book and fame;
While I confeſs thy writings to be ſuch
As neither man nor muſe can praiſe too much.
'Tis true, and all men's ſuffrage. But theſe ways
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praiſe.

For fillieft ignorance on thefe may light,
Which, when it founds at beft, but echoes right;
Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance
The truth, but gropes and urgeth all by chance;
Or crafty malice might pretend this praife,
And think to ruin where it feemed to raife.

* * * * * * *

But thou art proof againft them, and, indeed,
Above the ill-fortunè of them or their need.
I, therefore, will begin: Soul of the age!
The applaufe, delight, and wonder of the ftage!
My Shakefpere, rife! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer or Spenfer, or bid Beaumont lie
A little farther off to make thee room:
Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive ftill, while thy book doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praife to give.

* * * * * * *

Yet muft I not give Nature all: thy art,
My gentle Shakefpere, muft enjoy a part;
For though the poet's matter Nature be,
His art doth give the fafhion; and that he
Who cafts to write a living line muft fweat,
Such as thine are, and ftrike the fecond heat
Upon the Mufe's anvil; turn the fame
And himfelf with it, that he thinks to frame;
Or for the laurel he may gain a fcorn,
For a good poet 's made as well as born,
And fuch wert thou! Look how the father's face
Lives in his iffue; even fo the race
Of Shakefpere's mind and manners brightly fhines
In his well-turnèd and true-filèd lines;
In each of which he feems to fhake a lance,
As brandifhed at the eyes of ignorance.
Sweet Swan of Avon! what a fight it were
To fee thee in our water yet appear,

> And make thoſe flights upon the banks of Thames
> Which ſo did take Eliza and our James!
> But ſtay, I ſee thee in the hemiſphere
> Advanced, and made a conſtellation there!
> Shine forth, thou ſtar of poets! and with rage
> Or influence chide or cheer the drooping ſtage,
> Which ſince thy flight from hence hath mourned like night,
> And deſpairs day, but for thy volume's light."

The other tribute to the memory of his friend was ſubſcribed by Jonſon to Droeſhout's engraving of Shakeſpere, prefixed to the firſt folio edition of his works publiſhed in 1623, and atteſts both Jonſon's affection and the fidelity of the likeneſs:—

> "This figure that thou here ſeeſt put,
> It was for gentle Shakeſpere cut,
> Wherein the graver had a ſtrife
> With Nature, to outdo the life.
> O, could he but have ſhown his wit
> As well in braſs as he has hit
> His face, the print would then ſurpaſs
> All that was ever writ in braſs!
> But ſince he cannot, reader, look
> Not on his picture, but his book."

There is a paſſage in Spenſer's "Teares of the Muſes" lamenting the death of "Willy." This has been referred to Shakeſpere; but Mr. Dyce thinks it is inapplicable to Shakeſpere, and that it was intended rather for Sir Philip Sidney, for Willy is a common name for all ſhepherds, or, in paſtoral language, poets; but there can be no doubt, from the alluſion to the

name in the laſt lines of the following quotation from "Colin Clout's come home again," that by Ætion is meant Shakeſpere. Why he is called Ætion (Αιτιῶν, "one who aſks") it is difficult to underſtand:—

> "And there, though laſt not leaſt, is Ætion;
> A gentler ſhepherd may nowhere be found;
> Whoſe Muſe, full of high thoughts' invention,
> Doth, like himſelf, heroically ſound."

Heaps of commendatory verſes from other meaner poets might be quoted, but they would be rather dull reading, and, after Ben Jonſon's fine and diſcriminating lines, would ſeem very tame. The fact that Shakeſpere was commended and patroniſed by Elizabeth and James implies, of courſe, that he was noticed and careſſed by the courtiers.

Among such friends and companions was paſſed Shakeſpere's town life; but running parallel with it, as it were, was another totally different life in the country. In London he was the favourite of princes and great noblemen, the friend of the poets and men of letters, and, as he laments in his ſonnet alr dy quoted, dependent on the popular applauſe in a profeſſion to which prejudice ſtill attached a note of infamy. In his native Stratford we find him taking his place among the gentry and ſubſtantial burgeſſes, a farmer and a keen man of buſineſs, a man able to lend

a good round ſum of money to a friend, one whoſe influence was worth canvaſſing for. His occupations in the country probably weaned him gradually from London, and about 1612 or 1613 he finally took up his abode at New Place with his family. Ward, the Vicar of Stratford, ſays that "in his elder days he lived at Stratford, and ſupplied the ſtage with two plays every year, and for it had an allowance ſo large that he ſpent at the rate of one thouſand pounds a year," a ſum equal to five times the amount at the preſent time.

From old deeds and records, hunted out with incredible zeal and labour by Shakeſperian critics, and printed by Mr. Halliwell in his comprehenſive biography of the Poet, it appears that in 1612 he bought one hundred and ſeven acres of arable land at Stratford, of William Combe; alſo a cottage in Walker Street; in 1604 he brings an action againſt Philip Rogers for £1 15*s.* 10*d.*, owing to him for malt ſupplied at different times; in 1605 he purchaſes a moiety of the leaſe of the tithes of Stratford and ſome neighbouring pariſhes; in 1612 he ſues the other leſſees of the tithes; in 1613 he defends his right to certain common lands; and all this time he is producing two plays a year.

In the meantime various changes take place in his family. In 1601 his father dies; in 1607 his eldeſt daughter, Suſanna, marries Dr. Hall, a phyſician at

Stratford; in 1607 his firſt grandchild, Elizabeth Hall, is born, and in the ſame year his mother, Mary Arden, dies; in 1615 his ſecond daughter, Judith, whoſe twin brother, Hamnet, had died ſome conſider-able time before, marries Thomas Quiney, vintner.

Rowe, his earlieſt biographer, ſays that his agreeable manners and pleaſant diſpoſition procured him the friendſhip of the neighbouring gentry, and amongſt the reſt, of a Mr. John Combe, who lived at the old college from which the prieſts had been expelled at the Reformation. It ſeems to have been a favourite amuſement in thoſe times for friends to write imaginary epitaphs on each other over their wine. We have ſeen already that Shakeſpere and Ben Jonſon thus diverted themſelves. A ſimilar ſtory is told of Charles the Second and Buckingham, when the latter made the celebrated epitaph on the "mutton-eating king." Even Garrick, Reynolds, Burke, and Goldſmith played at this ſomewhat ghaſtly game. A ſtory then was current that Mr. Combe, who was noted for his uſurious practices, aſked Shakeſpere, when they were making merry together, to write his epitaph, and that Shakeſpere produced the following:—

"Ten in the hundred lies here engraved;
'Tis a hundred to ten his ſoul is not ſaved;
If any man aſks who lies in this tomb,
Oh, oh! quoth the devil, 'tis my John-a-Combe."

Mr. Halliwell ſays that this was a common joke in the jeſt-books of the period, but perhaps Shakeſpere thought it good enough for the occaſion. Others hold that the ſtory is diſproved, becauſe the two men were friends, Combe leaving Shakeſpere five pounds in his will, and Shakeſpere in his bequeathing his ſword to Combe's nephew, William. But, indeed, that friendſhip muſt be a frail commodity which could be broken by a joke like this. Mr. Combe was probably a ſaving man, and was certainly a rich one; and I have remarked that rich and thrifty men are the laſt people to be offended by a joke upon their cleverneſs in amaſſing money. As to prognoſtications on the company they are likely to keep in the next world, that is too unpractical a queſtion to trouble them much. The joke was a poor one enough, and perhaps a ſtale one too; but the ſtory illuſtrates the difficulty of catching that Proteus, wit, and binding him in the fetters of writing.

Another ſtory, related to Malone by a native of Stratford, ſays that Shakeſpere being invited to a party by the topers of Bidford, a neighbouring village, made the following epigram on them and their neighbours :—

> "Piping Pebworth, dancing Marſton,
> Haunted Hillborough, and hungry Grafton,
> With dodging Exhall, papiſt Wixford,
> Beggarly Broom, and drunken Bidford."

Such tales as this are the only samples which tradition could seize upon to give posterity an idea of the social powers of the wittiest writer perhaps that ever existed, and one whose conversation is stated by Fuller to have been remarkable for its versatility and humour.

As I rode and walked about Stratford and the surrounding green lanes, and by the banks of the Avon, I could not help wondering whether the country people whom I met were aware that they were treading the ground which Shakespere had trod while he was meditating "Cymbeline," "Coriolanus," the "Winter's Tale," and "The Tempest." The thought of course was absurd; the country people knew nothing about him, except that they sometimes got a shilling from people who came to visit his tomb; but my mind being wholly occupied with the memory of the mighty dead, it seemed to me as if they too must be thinking of him. But very likely even his contemporaries, the burgesses and country gentlemen with whom he associated, admitted him to their society, not because he was a great poet, but because he was a wealthy man and a pleasant companion, who could tell them stories of the great world in London. His plays were not published collectively till seven years after his death, and very likely few of the separate editions made their way down to Stratford. The burgesses, Shakespere's

fellow-citizens, had actually forbidden the representation of stage plays in the town, and we may, therefore, conclude that they would regard the arch-playwright as "little better than one of the wicked." Sir Walter Scott complained that some visitors at Abbotsford were too poetical for him; and I fancy that Shakespere would have had the same sort of feeling with regard to his art, and that any unobservant person seeing him at home would have scarcely believed that he was the author of the plays. There would have been very little of what we should call "the shop" about him.

His farms, his malting afforded him active occupation; but for exercising his great intellectual powers in works which kept his name alive amongst the great ones of the earth, he found time; and it is not a little remarkable that some of the finest of his plays were written after his retirement to the country, as if his genius were there most free and vigorous. His amusements were probably those so quaintly described by his contemporary, Burton:—"The ordinary sports which are used abroad [out of doors] are hawking, hunting: *hilares venandi labores,* one calls them, because they recreate body and mind; another *the best exercise that is, by which alone many have been freed from all feral diseases.* Hegesippus (lib. i., cap. 37) relates of

Herod that he was eased of a grievous melancholy by that means. Plato (7 *de leg.*) highly magnifies it, dividing it into three parts—by land, water, air. Xenophon (in *Cyropæd.*) graces it with a great name, *Deorum munus,* the gift of the gods, a princely sport, which they have ever used, saith Langius (Epist. 59, lib. ii.), sole almost and ordinary sport of our noblemen in Europe, and elsewhere all over the world. Bohemus (*De Mor. Gent.*, lib. iii., cap. 12) stiles it therefore *studium nobilium;* 'tis all their study, their exercise, ordinary business, all their talk; and indeed some dote too much after it; they can do nothing else, discourse of naught else. Paulus Jovius (*Descr. Brit.*) doth in some sort tax our English nobility for it, for living in the country so much, and too frequent use of it, as if they had no other means but hawking and hunting to approve themselves gentlemen with.

"Hawking comes near to hunting, the one in the air as the other on the earth, a sport as much affected as the other, by some preferred. It was never heard of amongst the Romans, invented some 1,200 years since, and first mentioned by Firmicus (lib. v., cap. 8). The Greek emperors began it, and now nothing so frequent; he is nobody that in the season hath not a hawk on his fist: a great art, and many books written on it. * * * The Muscovian emperors reclaim eagles to fly at hinds,

foxes, &c., and such a one was sent for a present to Queen Elizabeth: some reclaim ravens, castrels, pies, &c., and train them for their pleasures.

"Fowling is more troublesome, but all out as delightsome to some sorts of men, be it with guns, lime, nets, glades, ginnes, strings, baits, pitfalls, pipes, calls, stalking-horses, setting-dogs, coy-ducks, or otherwise. Some much delight to take larks with day nets, small birds with draff-nets, plovers, partrich, herons, snite, &c. * * * Tycho Brahe, that great astronomer, in the chorography of his Isle of Huena and Castle of Uraneburge, puts down his nets and manner of catching small birds as an ornament and a recreation, wherein he himself was sometimes employed." * * *

After enumerating fishing, which he terms "a kind of hunting by water," ringing, bowling, shooting, "keelpins, tronks, coits, pitching bars, hurling, wrestling, leaping, running, fencing, mustring, swimming, wasters, foils, foot-balls, balowns, quintans, &c., and many such, which are the common recreations of the country folks; riding of great horses, running at rings, tilts and turnaments, horse races, wild-goose chases, which are the disports of greater men, and good in themselves, though many gentlemen by that means gallop quite out of their fortunes;" he comes to "*deambulatio per amœna loca*, to make a petty progress, a

merry journey now and then with ſome good company, to viſit a friend, ſee cities, caſtles, towns,

> 'Viſere ſæpe amnes nitidos, peramœnaque Tempe,
> Et placidas ſummis ſectari in montibus auras'
>
> (To ſee the pleaſant fields, the cryſtal fountains,
> And take the gentle air among the mountains);

to walk amongſt orchards, gardens, bowers, mounts, and arbours, artificial wilderneſſes, green thickets, arches, groves, lawns, and ſuch like pleaſant places, like that Antiochian Daphne, brooks, pools, fiſh-ponds, betwixt wood and water, in a fair meadow, by a river ſide, *ubi variæ avium cantationes, florum colores, pratorum frutices, &c.*, to diſport in ſome pleaſant plain, park, run up a ſteep hill ſometimes, or ſit in a ſhady ſeat, muſt needs be a delectable recreation."

His enumeration of games for winter evenings is ſtill fuller and more various. "The ordinary recreations which we have in winter, and in moſt ſolitary times buſy our minds with, are cards, tables, and dice, ſhovel-board, cheſs play, the philoſopher's game, ſmall trunks, ſhuttle-cock, billiards, muſic, maſks, ſinging, dancing, ulegames, frolicks, jeſts, riddles, catches, purpoſes, queſtions and commands, merry tales of errant knights, queens, lovers, lords, ladies, giants, dwarfs, thieves, cheaters, witches, fairies, goblins, friars, &c., such as the old women told Pſyche in Apuleius,

Boccace novels, and the reſt, *quorum auditione pueri delectantur, ſenes narratione,* which ſome delight to hear, ſome to tell."

Such were probably the amuſements and employments in which Shakeſpere paſſed his latter days; for he, no doubt, lived and amuſed himſelf like his neighbours in Stratford and its vicinity. He did not quit the Court and the ſociety of London that he might ſpend his time in poring over books in the country.

But, as Cowley, another poet, who ſought for quiet in rural retirement, and healthful employment in the cultivation of a farm, complains:—"God laughs at man who ſays to his ſoul, *Take thy eaſe:* I met preſently not only with many little incumbrances and impediments, but with ſo much ſickneſs (a new miſfortune to me) as would have ſpoiled the happineſs of an emperor as well as mine: yet I do neither repent nor alter my courſe. *Non ego perfidum Dixi ſacramentum;* nothing shall ſeparate me from a miſtreſs [retirement] which I have loved ſo long and have now at laſt married, though ſhe neither has brought me a rich portion, nor lived yet ſo quietly with me as I hoped from her.

'Nec vos dulciſſima mundi
Nomina, vos Muſæ, libertas, otia, libri,
Hortique, ſylvæque animâ remanente relinquam.'

(Nor by me e'er ſhall you,
You of all names the ſweeteſt and the beſt,
You, muſes, books, and liberty, and reſt,
You, gardens, fields, and woods, forſaken be,
As long as life itſelf forſakes not me.)"

And ſo diſeaſe and death overtook Shakeſpere as they did Cowley, in that retreat where they both had hoped to find the reſt which fate had hitherto denied them.

New Place had probably been a ſcene of much feſtivity on February 10, 1615. Judith, Shakeſpere's younger daughter, had been married to Thomas Quiney, his fellow townſman, and no doubt there was a gathering of all the family, and the wedding party walked up to the beautiful church, and paſſed in through the porch and under the ſolar, of which Mr. Erneſt Edwards has given us ſuch a charming little picture, and there was a banquet, and the "brod ſilver and gilt bole" was filled with "canaris ſack," and there was a dance, and probably a play or interlude was acted in the hall. And this was, perhaps, the occaſion of Jonſon's and Drayton's viſit to their old friend, when, according to Ward, these three "had a merrie meeting, and it ſeems drank too hard, for Shakeſpere died of a fever there contracted." Whatever may have been the cauſe of his death, it is certain that he died on the 23rd of April, 1616, a little more than two

months after his daughter's marriage, and that the ſignatures in his will ſhow that his hand was unſteady when he ſigned it. It was executed on the 5th of March, 1616.

Whether Ward's teſtimony be worth much, ſeeing that it dates fifty years at leaſt after the event, is a queſtion. Indeed it seems to have been thought the correct thing to repreſent a poet, and eſpecially a dramatic poet, to have died of hard living, as Anacreon is ſaid to have been choked by a grape-ſtone. Puritaniſm, which was then coming into vogue, and which always ſuppoſes itſelf to be in the ſecrets of Providence, thought perhaps to ſhow by this means that Heaven was bound to puniſh, not only in the next world, but even in this, the heinous ſin of having written good poetry. Shakeſpere was proſperous; their theory therefore would not hold if it appeared that he who had held up the godly to ridicule by repreſenting a Puritan as "ſinging pſalms to hornpipes" had died like other men. Shakeſpere very likely rejoiced to ſhow his country hoſpitality and warm houſekeeping to Jonſon and Drayton, his countryman, and he may have ſickened with fever ſoon after. It was eaſy to ſay *poſt hoc, ergo, propter hoc*, though it was probably not hock but ſherry that they drank. And that there were plenty of perſons at Stratford who would be glad to tell

Ward, the vicar, a story to the disadvantage of the wild youth who had broken Sir Thomas Lucy's park, and afterwards become richer than they by writing and acting plays, human nature and the nature of Puritanism forbid us to doubt. With Puritans Stratford must have abounded, inasmuch as we find that stage-plays, as was before observed, had been forbidden there by the municipal authorities. We need not, therefore, believe that gentle Shakespere met his death in this untoward fashion. The tradition may have originated in a pious desire to blacken the name of a writer of plays.

Perhaps to the same cause may be traced the report of Davies, that "he dyed a Papist." His father was included in a list of persons who absented themselves from the reformed service at church, and of whom cognizance was taken for that offence by the penal laws of the time; but it is stated that the reason was not recusancy, but the fear of arrest. I am not aware of the date of the law which allows the debtor immunity from arrest on Sunday, but an eminent lawyer has informed me that it is part of that common law which derives its authority from the fact of its having been a custom "whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary," that is to say, traceable to the reign of Richard the Second. The allegation may, therefore, have been an excuse. The testi-

mony of Davies and of the corporation archives at Stratford is, however, confirmed in ſome degree by a document ſaid to have been diſcovered in the houſe in Henley Street in 1770. Thomas Hart, a deſcendant of John Shakeſpere, employed a maſon named Moſeley to repair the roof of one of the houſes there. Moſeley alleged that in the courſe of his work he found a manuſcript hidden beneath the tiling, and this manuſcript purported to be written by John Shakeſpere, and to be a profeſſion of his faith as a Roman Catholic. It has been publiſhed, and is indeed thoroughly anti-proteſtant. It was accepted at firſt as genuine by Malone, but he afterwards rejected it. Chalmers maintains its genuineneſs. Againſt this it is argued that John Shakeſpere muſt have taken the oath of allegiance on becoming a bailiff and alderman; but on the other hand he was depoſed from theſe offices; and it by no means follows that becauſe he once conformed, he may not afterwards have changed his mind. It is an hiſtorical fact that a great many perſons who, in the beginning of the queen's reign, attended the reformed worſhip, withdrew themſelves when the bull of Pope Pius V., iſſued in 1563, drew an impaſſable line of demarcation between Roman Catholics and Anglicans.

But it by no means follows that becauſe John Shakeſpere was a recuſant, his ſon was one too. There are

some passages in the plays which show no good-will to the cause of the Pope; as in "King John"—

> "*King John.* What earthly name to interrogatories
> Can task the free breath of a sacred king?
> Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name
> So slight, unworthy, and ridiculous,
> To charge me to an answer, as the pope.
> Tell him this tale; and from the mouth of England,
> Add this much more,—that no Italian priest
> Shall tithe or toll in our dominions;
> But as we under heaven are supreme head,
> So, under him, that great supremacy,
> Where we do reign, we will alone uphold
> Without the assistance of a mortal hand.
> So tell the pope; all reverence set apart,
> To him, and his usurped authority."

But, on the other hand, there is nothing anti-papal in "Henry the Eighth," where we might have expected to find it; and even in the passage above quoted the protest of King John is political, not doctrinal, and such as a Gallican might have used in the reign of Louis the Fourteenth.

It would be endless to quote passages to show how deeply imbued Shakespere was with the old theology. In "Hamlet" the ghost of the king declares that he has been released for a term from purgatory, and complains that he did not receive the Viaticum and the sacrament of Extreme Unction:—

> "Thus was I, ſleeping, by a brother's hand
> Of life, of crown, of queen, at once deſpatch'd:
> Cut off even in the bloſſoms of my ſin,
> Unhouſel'd, diſappointed, unanel'd.'

I think, too, we may trace an alluſion to the religious changes, backwards and forwards, which diſtracted the nation in the reigns of Henry the Eighth, Edward the Sixth, Mary and Elizabeth, in the ſaying in "Lear," "It is and it is not, is no good divinity;" or perhaps the paſſage may allude to the ambiguity of the Anglican formularies, which were framed to include both Catholics and Proteſtants. But certainly monks and friars are generally treated with reſpect in the plays, while the parochial clergy, who were generally favourers of the new doctrine, are held up to ridicule in ſuch characters as *Sir Hugh Evans* and *Sir Nathaniel.*

A very curious entry in the Chamberlain's accounts at Stratford under the year 1614, is ſtill extant:— "Item, for on quart of ſack, and on quart of clarrett winne, given to a preacher at the New Place, XXd." Now, whether this preacher were ſent to try and convert Shakeſpere, or whether he came by the Poet's wiſh is uncertain; but if the latter, the corporation would not have paid for his reverence's liberal potations. Indeed it was quite in the ſpirit of the age to ſend a preacher to a man's houſe for the expreſs purpoſe of refuting his religious belief.

From his writings I ſhould rather imagine that Shakeſpere, as far as religion was concerned, reſembled the great ſtateſmen of Henry and Elizabeth—politically they were Proteſtants, doctrinally Catholics, and were willing to ſubmit outwardly to the powers in being, while they held themſelves free to have their own private opinions, which were not thoſe of the vulgar, and far from fanatical.

The Poet's illneſs muſt have laſted a conſiderable time, for his will is dated the 5th of March, and the ſignatures to it, by their tremulous lines, ſhow that he muſt have been very weak when he wrote them. The houſe of rejoicing had ſoon been turned into the houſe of mourning; in February New Place rang with the merriment of a bridal; in April the maſter lay dead in one of its chambers. Shakeſpere's laſt teſtament ſhows the ſame kindly diſpoſition as was diſplayed in his whole life. After, in the uſual form, commending his ſoul to God, he leaves the bulk of his perſonal property to his elder daughter, Mrs. Hall; and to his ſecond daughter, Mrs. Quiney, and his nephews and nieces, ſons of Mrs. Joan Hart, his ſiſter, certain ſums of money; to Mrs. Hall all his plate, except his "brod ſilver-gilt bole;" to the poor of the pariſh ten pounds; to Mr. Thomas Combe his ſword; to Thomas Ruſſell and Francis Collins ſmall ſums; and

to Hamlet Sadleir, William Raynolds, William Walker, his godson, Anthonye Nashe, and to "my fellows, John Hemynges, Richard Burbage, and Henry Cundell," small sums of money "to buy themselves rings." His second best bed he leaves to his wife; but at any rate, as has been already observed, she had her dower and thirds at common law out of all his freehold property, and was therefore amply provided for. The most noticeable point, however, is his kind remembrances of his fellow actors and partners in the theatre.

In the next century Shakespere's family became extinct. His daughter Susanna, married to John Hall, died in 1649, leaving one daughter, married first to Thomas Nash, and secondly to John (afterwards Sir John) Barnard of Abington in Northamptonshire, but she died without issue, and was buried at Abington in 1669.

Judith, married to Thomas Quiney, had three children: Shakespere, baptised November 23, 1616, and buried May 8, 1617; Richard, baptised February 9, 1617-18, and buried February 26, 1638-9; and Thomas, baptised January 23, 1619-20, and buried January 28, 1638-9. She herself was buried in Stratford Church on February 9, 1661-2.

A Mrs. Hornby, a descendant of the Poet's sister,

Joan Hart, was living till lately at Stratford, and uſed to gain her livelihood by ſhowing the houſe in Henley Street to ſtrangers. She was quite illiterate, and was much vexed when the houſe was purchaſed to be reſtored.

Like Milton and Sir Walter Scott, Shakeſpere has left no lineal deſcendant to inherit his name or his genius.

By the Poet's untimely death, when he was only fifty-two, and therefore ſtill in the zenith of his powers, poſterity loſt the chance of obtaining a full and correct collection of his works. Whether he ever would have collected and edited them is, however, doubtful. Even his ſonnets, which were publiſhed in his lifetime, appear to have been given to the public without his concurrence. He ſeems, indeed, to have been like the oſtrich in the Pſalms, which the Lord is ſaid to have deprived of underſtanding, ſo that ſhe leaves her eggs in the ſand to be hatched by the heat of the ſun, or to be trodden down by the foot of the wayfarer, as chance may order it. Yet for the ſake of the money at leaſt, which might have purchaſed another farm or two at Stratford, it may be ſuppoſed that he would have entered into a ſpeculation which might have proved profitable. Then we ſhould have had no emendators; no Bentleys, no Irelands, no Colliers, and one great branch of literary induſtry would never have exiſted.

Neverthelefs, the certainty that we were reading what Shakefpere really did mean to fay might have confoled us even for this lofs.

The tafk of collecting his plays, was referved for his "fellows," John Heminge and Henry Condell, whom he had named in his will; and under their fuperintendence was publifhed, feven years after his death, the firft folio edition of his dramatic works. It is dedicated to William, Earl of Pembroke, the Lord Chamberlain, and to Philip, Earl of Montgomery.

The addrefs, "To the great variety of readers," prefixed to this edition is interefting:—

"From the moft able to him that can but fpell: there you are numbered. We had rather you were weighed: efpecially when the fate of all books depends upon your capacities; and not of your heads alone but of your purfes. Well, it is now public, and you will ftand for your privileges we know,—to read and cenfure. Do fo, but buy it firft; that doth beft commend a book, the ftationer fays. Then how odd foever your brains be or your wifdoms, make your licenfe the fame and fpare not. Judge your fix penn'orth, your fhilling's worth, or your five fhillings' worth at a time, or higher, fo you rife to the proof rates, and welcome. But, whatever you do, buy. Cenfure will not drive a trade or make the Jack go. And though you be a magiftrate of wit, and fit on the ftage at Blackfriars or the Cock-pit, to arraign plays daily, know thefe plays have had their trial already, and ftood out all appeals, and do now come forth quitted rather by a decree of court than any purchafed letters of commendation.

"It had been a thing, we confefs, worthy to be wifhed, that the author himfelf had lived to have fet forth and overfeen his own writings. But

ſince it hath been ordained otherwiſe, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envy his friends the office of their care and pain, to have collected and publiſhed them; and ſo to have publiſhed them, as where (before) you were abuſed with divers ſtolen and ſurreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and ſtealths of injurious impoſtors, that expoſed them, even thoſe are now offered to your view cured and perfect of their limbs, and all the reſt abſolute in their numbers as he conceived them; who, as he was a happy imitator of nature, was a moſt gentle expreſſer of it: his mind and hands went together; and what he thought he uttered with that eaſineſs that we have ſcarce received from him a blot on his paper. But it is not our province, who only gather his works and give them you, to praiſe him. It is yours that read him; and then we hope, to your divers capacities, you will find enough both to draw and hold you, for his wit can no more lie hid than it can be loſt. Read him therefore; and again and again; and if then you do not like him, ſurely you hunger not to underſtand him. And ſo we leave you to other of his friends, whom, if you need, can be your guides: if you need them not, you can lead yourſelves and others. And ſuch readers we wiſh him.

"John Heminge.
"Henry Condell."

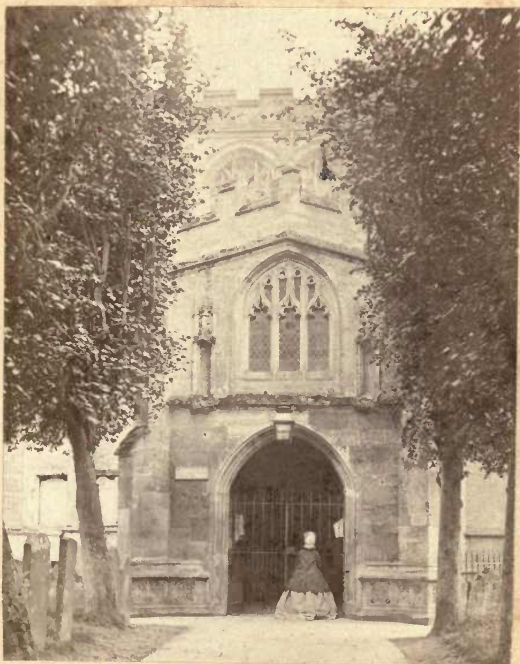
It is needleſs perhaps to ſay that in this edition the plays are very far indeed from being "cured and perfect of their limbs, and all the reſt abſolute of their numbers." If ſo we ſhould not have our attention drawn off from ſome neceſſary action of the play by having to look at a note to explain an unintelligible paſſage. But this firſt folio, as it is called, has been generally taken as the foundation of ſubſequent texts, and has been adopted as ſuch by the editors of the ſcholarlike Cambridge edition, now in courſe of publication.

CHAPTER XI.

It now remains to notice the few memorials of the Poet which are preſerved in different places throughout the town. Firſt there is Mr. James's muſeum of Shakeſperian relics, conſiſting of various pieces of furniture ſaid to have been taken from New Place. Then there is the Town Hall, where may be ſeen a picture of the Poet by Wilſon, idealiſed from the buſt; but I confeſs the original is more intereſting to me. How could Wilſon tell that Shakeſpere looked more poetical than the buſt repreſents him to have looked? Then there is an affected picture of Garrick leaning on Shakeſpere's buſt, and looking as if he actually believed the nonſenſe which people talked, about his rivalling the genius of the Poet himſelf. Fancy Davy patroniſing Shakeſpere, and thinking that he knew better than the author of "The Tempeſt" what was ſuited to the ſtage! Though Burke and the other members of the club combined to flatter him, ſturdy old Samuel Johnſon was much nearer a true eſtimation of his merits. The

very fact that he presumed to alter and adapt Shakespere's plays, is, to my mind, proof positive that, whatever his powers of declamation, he must have been a very little man indeed. Romney's portrait of the Duke of Dorset is also to be seen here, and is well worth looking at. On a screen may be observed ridiculous pictures of the mummery which was acted in the streets of Stratford under Garrick's auspices at the Jubilee in the last century. It is devoutly to be hoped that the Poet's memory may not be desecrated by a repetition of such folly next Spring. The worst of it is, that on all such occasions that respectable body called, in the language of the gods, "licensed victuallers," and in that of men, "publicans," has generally as influential a voice as it has in the election of members for Marylebone and the Tower Hamlets. Any vulgar show, therefore, which will fill the public-houses, will be sure to have many advocates at Stratford.

But the most interesting relic of all, which, as it comes last in the order of the Poet's life, I kept for the last station of my pilgrimage, is the church where his bones repose. It is, in itself, a noble structure, surrounded by fine trees, and built on the bank of the beautiful Avon, which on one side bounds the churchyard. As I approached it under an avenue of lime trees I thought how often the Poet had trodden the



Porch of Parish Church, Stratford-on-Avon.

ſame path. Here he had probably learned his firſt leſſons in divinity, upon which his works ſhow that he had thought deeply and accurately. Hither he had accompanied the chriſtening party, when his children, Suſanna, Hamnet, and Judith had been baptiſed. Here he had joined the crowd of his fellow-citizens in after days when they were "knolled to pariſh church," and endured the proſing of ſome worthy preacher, who endeavoured to ſoothe the fidgettineſs of his congregation with, "Have patience, good people; have patience;" or ſat amuſed upon his bench while "coughing drowned the parſon's ſaw." Here he followed the bier of his only ſon with ſorrow to the grave, and hither he himſelf was borne at laſt, when all too ſoon he left the world of which he was the benefactor, and will be till the crack of doom; for divines may preach and philoſophers may theoriſe, but what philoſopher or divine will ever convey ſuch leſſons of practical wiſdom, or ſpeak ſo inwardly to the conſcience as the writer of "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Othello?"

But I was recalled from theſe thoughts by a woman with a broom in her hand, who, like the vulture of the deſert, ſeemed to noſe from afar the prey which had come within her reach. However, I felt a ſort of diſinclination to enter too ſuddenly upon the *intima penetralia* of the temple, and made my approaches

with deliberation; just as one sometimes anxiously scans the postmark on the outside of a letter and the handwriting of the direction, when by simply breaking the seal all mystery might at once be dissipated.

I therefore began by walking round the church, and found that it was built of grey stone, in the form of a cross, with large chancel and tower at its junction with the nave; transepts, aisles, and north porch. There are some Romanesque remains and early English work in the structure; but the chief part is perpendicular, of the fourteenth century. The guide-book informed me that the south aisle was rebuilt by John de Stratford, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the reign of Edward the Third. The chancel appears to be the latest part of the building, and was probably rebuilt or largely altered in the fifteenth century. The college for priests, where John-a-Combe once resided, and which must have been one of the greatest ornaments of the town, was actually pulled down in 1799 by its then owner, a Mr. Edward Buttersbee.

On entering by the beautiful porch, surmounted by its solar, where a priest probably once kept school, the view is very imposing; you can see from the west to the east window, and can appreciate fully the extraordinary inclination of the chancel towards the south, for there are no high pews to intercept the vision.

West Window of Parish Church,

STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

The church has been, what is called, "reſtored," and the people ſit on low benches. This proceſs has not been done in the beſt of taſte indeed, and the aiſles are ſtill encumbered with galleries; but I do not think the ſtructure of the church itſelf has been materially injured. As I advanced up towards the eaſt end, I obſerved a chapel in the north aiſle filled with fine monuments of the Clopton family, amongſt which the alabaſter figures of George Carew, Earl of Totneſs and Baron Clopton, with his counteſs, coloured to reſemble life, are the moſt curious.

And now I approached the very ſpot in which repoſes all that was mortal of Shakeſpere. The chancel is, on the whole, a worthy ſhrine for ſuch a relic. The old *miſereres* or ſeats for the choir remain, and are curious examples of the groteſque taſte of the latter part of the middle ages; for each ſeat, on being turned up, diſcloſes ſome quaint and hideous figures, which are not certainly conducive to religious ideas, nor indeed quite decent. But of courſe, the object of all objects is the grave itſelf of Shakeſpere. It is beneath the dais on which ſtands the altar, and is covered by a flag-ſtone, which bears the inſcription—

> "Good frend, for Jeſvs ſake forbeare
> To digg the dvſt encloofed heare;
> Bleſte be ye man y^t ſpares thes ſtones,
> And cvrſt be he y^t moves my bones."

This piece of foolish doggrel, which is common enough on tomb-stones, has been, I believe, by some, supposed to have been written by the Poet himself. I cannot believe that he could have been so superstitious and egotistical—he who cared so little what became of the creations of his mind would surely be still less solicitous about the dust which formed his body. He who had so meditated on life and death as to write the scene at *Ophelia's* grave, could not have cared much what became of his bones :—

"*Hamlet.* To what base uses may we return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

Horatio. 'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.

Hamlet. No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: as thus; Alexander died; Alexander was buried; Alexander returned unto dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?"

It is not to be supposed that Shakespere could vehemently desire for his remains an immunity from the chances which might befall those of Alexander.

Within a few yards of the grave, against the north wall of the chancel, is the celebrated monument. Mr. Edwards gives the reader a photographic facsimile of it. It is in itself not in bad taste, except for the naked little boys at the top, and the effigy is probably the best likeness of the Poet extant. Digges,

in his verſes prefixed to the firſt folio edition of the plays, publiſhed in 1623, mentions it, and therefore it muſt have been erected ſoon after the poet's death. The tradition is that it was done by Gerard Johnſon from a caſt taken after death; and curiouſly enough ſuch a caſt was lately in the poſſeſſion of a German phyſician, and is now, I believe, in Profeſſor Owen's hands. It was originally coloured to repreſent life, for the artiſts of thoſe days had no idea but to "hold the mirror up to nature;" nor did they ſee any propriety in repreſenting the human form of a dead white colour. Shakeſpere, ſpeaking of the ſuppoſed ſtatue of *Hermione*, calls it "a piece many years in doing, and now newly performed by that rare Italian maſter, Julio Romano." Now this muſt have been ſuppoſed to have been painted to reſemble life, becauſe when *Perdita* is about to kiſs its hand, *Paulina* ſays.

> "O, patience!
> The ſtatue is but newly fixed, the colours
> Not dry."

And again, when *Leontes* is going to kiſs the lips *Paulina* interrupts him:—

> "Good, my lord, forbear;
> The ruddineſs upon her lip is wet;
> You'll mar it if you kiſs it; ſtain your own
> With oily painting."

It ſhewed, therefore, great ignorance in Malone to

have the buſt painted ſtone colour, as if that were more claſſical, when in reality we know that the Greeks and Romans painted the pureſt Parian marble; but Malone, in this, was only following the falſe taſte of his age, and therefore I think he is rather harſhly treated in the following epigram, inſcribed by a viſitor in the book appropriated to ſignatures and obſervations:—

> "Stranger, to whom this monument is ſhown,
> Invoke the Poet's curſe upon Malone;
> Whoſe meddling zeal his barbarous taſte betrays,
> And daubs his tombſtone as he mars his plays."

Malone's annotations and ſuggeſtions certainly did not mar the poet's plays, though it is true that the ſtone-coloured paint betrayed a barbarous taſte in art.

A few years ago the ſtone-coloured paint was removed, and the old colours renewed. The hair, mouſtachios, and beard are now repreſented as cheſnut, the eyes, I think, brown, and the complexion ruddy. The Poet is repreſented dreſſed in "his habit as he lived." It will be ſeen that he appears in the act of compoſition, and from the expreſſion of his face it is to be preſumed that the work upon which he is engaged is a comedy; there is indeed a certain ſmirk upon the features, but this is owing in great meaſure to the curl of the mouſtachios and the ſhadow they caſt upon the mouth. But the whole face expreſſes high intelligence and

genial good humour, and in this is much ſuperior to the other portraits of him, and eſpecially to the Chandos, and the engraving in the folio edition of his works, publiſhed in 1623.

On the ſlab beneath the buſt is the following inſcription, which I will give for the benefit of my more elderly readers; the younger, with the help of a magnifying glaſs, may decipher it themſelves, from Mr. Edwards's photograph :—

JUDICIO PYLIVM, GENIO SOCRATEM, ARTE MARONEM
TERRA TEGIT, POPVLVS MŒRET, OLYMPVS HABET.

"STAY, PASSENGER, WHY GOEST THOV BY SO FAST,
READ, IF THOV CANST, WHOM ENVIOVS DEATH HATH PLAST
WITHIN THIS MONVMENT, SHAKESPERE, WITH WHOME
QVICK NATVRE DIDE; WHOSE NAME DOTH DECK Yᵉ TOMBE
FAR MORE THAN COST, SITH ALL Yᵗ HE HATH WRITT
LEAVES LIVING ART BVT PAGE TO SERVE HIS WITT."

"Obiit Ano Doi 1616, Ætatis 53, die 23 Ap."

Beſide Shakeſpere's grave, to the ſouth, is that of Anne Hathaway, his wife (see ante, p. 57). On the ſouth ſide lies Mrs. Suſanna Hall, his eldeſt daughter, who died in 1649. On her tombſtone the original verſes have been renewed, for they had been obliterated, and run as follows :—

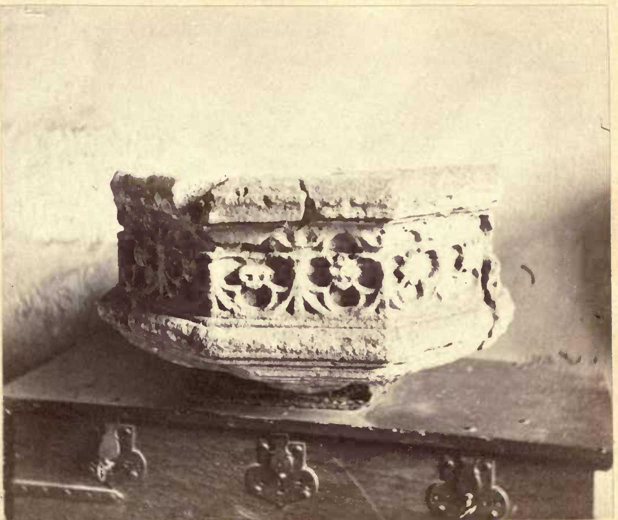
"Witty above her ſexe, but that 's not all,
Wise to ſalvation was good Miſtreſs Hall:
Something of Shakeſpere was in that, but this
Wholly of Him of whom ſhe's now in bliſſe.

> Then paffenger, haft ne'ere a teare
> To weep with her that wept with all?
> That wept, yet fet herfelf to chere
> Them up with comfort's cordiall.
> Her love fhall live, her mercy fpread,
> When thou haft ne'er a tear to fhed."

Some have thought that the fourth line is a reflection upon her father, as if fhe inherited none of her good difpofitions from him; but in reality it only fhows that the writer not only liked to make an epigrammatic antithefis, but was an orthodox anti-pelagian, and held the utter corruption of human nature. On the fame line, below the altar, are the tombs of Mrs. Judith Quiney, Shakefpere's younger daughter, and Elizabeth, his grand-daughter, married firft to Thomas Nafh, and afterwards to Sir John Barnard, and befide them, that of Dr. Hall. To the north of the altar, againft the eaft wall, is a handfome tomb erected to the memory of John-a-Combe, the Poet's friend.

Thofe who defire to fee the very entries themfelves of the births, deaths, and marriages in the Shakefpere family, will find them in the regifter. Malone has printed them in his edition of the Poet's works.

All that now remains to be noticed is the broken font in the veftry, in which Shakefpere himfelf and his children were probably baptifed. It is placed on the



Ancient Font in the Parish Church, Stratford-on-Avon.

IN WHICH IT IS BELIEVED THAT SHAKESPERE WAS BAPTIZED

pariſh cheſt, and has been photographed by Mr. Erneſt Edwards.

The old buildings and other remains of the England of Shakeſpere's day are faſt paſſing away. The true "Herne's Oak," was felled, I believe, in the laſt century, and a very old tree in Windſor Park, which local tradition had ſubſtituted for it, was blown down ſhortly before I undertook my pilgrimage. The "Boar's Head" in Eaſtcheap has long ſince diſappeared with its "fly-bitten tapeſtries," and the inn at Rocheſter, of which the carrier declared that "this be the moſt villainous houſe in all London Road for fleas," has juſt been pulled down to make way for a railroad. Of the ſtatue which graces "Poets' Corner" in Weſtminſter Abbey, and was erected in the laſt century, Mr. Edwards gives us a photograph. The attitude and drapery are graceful, but neither the face nor figure bear the ſmalleſt reſemblance to thoſe of the Poet as he is ſeen in the Stratford monument, from which we learn that his outward as well as his inward man repreſented the honeſt, manly, unſentimental Engliſhman—the typical John Bull.

Next day, being Sunday, I joined the groups who hurried along the, till then, deſerted ſtreets of Stratford to morning prayers, and found that the ſervice was conducted in a manner worthy of the fine church

and its great aſſociations. Almoſt the whole was ſung by a well-trained choir, and very fine and impreſſive it was. But when the clergyman mounted the pulpit to preach, I ſoon found that the ſermon was ſadly out of tune with the time, the place, and the reſt of the proceedings. It was, in fact, a ſcolding to the pariſhioners for not coming to the Sacrament. Now I hate all ſcolding, and do not believe in it; and, moreover, this particular ſcolding did not apply to me; while it laſted, therefore, I had leiſure to let my mind roam over the paſt and revel in the aſſociations of the place. And when the final bleſſing was given I could hardly prevail on myſelf to leave the laſt ſcene—the concluding ſtation of my pilgrimage.

With my viſit to the church on Sunday, and long lingering look at the marble beneath which repoſe the bones of Shakeſpere, my pilgrimage to Stratford came to an end. Thinking that I ſhould ſpend the Sunday afternoon quite as well in riding along the pretty roads of Warwickſhire as in falling aſleep in my inn over ſuch volume of old ſermons as I might borrow from my landlady, I mounted little Stornoway, and, accompanied by Smoker, turned my face towards home. On my road the horſe-boys ſeemed much ſurpriſed to ſee me returning ſo ſoon, for they had foretold that I ſhould never reach my deſtination; but they did not

Monument of Shakespere in Poet's Corner,

WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

know Stornoway's capabilities. I, who do know them, am happy to ſay that he has now taken up his permanent abode in my ſtable. Some few weeks after my return I happened to pay the friend who had lent him to me a viſit, and as we walked through the fields attached to the houſe, Stornoway came trotting up and thruſt his pretty noſe into the breaſt of my coat, thus ſhowing his remembrance of my care of him during our joint pilgrimage. The reſult was, that he tranſferred his allegiance to me next morning, and now carries me about to viſit in my pariſh, where he is the admiration and pet of everybody.

Smoker's travels have not, I think, improved him. He has grown too much a citizen of the world. His frequent viſits to inns have given him a taſte for ſuch haunts; and now, when I take him to Chelmsford, he makes himſelf ſo comfortable among the horſes and horſe-boys, that he ſcarcely cares to return home. But his friendſhip for Stornoway is unabated, and they occupy the ſame bed at night.

I myſelf am more than ever convinced of the benefit conferred on mind and body by ſuch a trip as I have deſcribed; but the next time I ride abroad, it ſhall be with a companion, eſpecially if England be the ſcene of my pilgrimage.

CHAPTER XII.

My experiment has now been made, and as far as I am concerned, it has proved ſucceſsful. My pilgrimage to Shakeſpere's birth-place, home, and grave, combined with the few facts and traditions reſpecting him which have come down to us, and with the ſplendid legacy which in his works he has bequeathed to mankind, have enabled me to form a certain ideal of the man. Whether that ideal be true or fantaſtical; whether it will recommend itſelf to others or not, I cannot tell; but, at any rate, I am ſatisfied with it.

In the firſt place, then, Shakeſpere was a manly man, fond of the ſports which make Engliſhmen quick of eye, fertile in expedients, ſtrong of hand, active of foot, and fearleſs in execution. His ſturdy, well-built figure, ruddy complexion, and frank open countenance, as ſeen upon his tomb, are at once an evidence and an effect of this trait, which is further atteſted by tradition and his writings. He was fond of ſociety, anxious to have a ſtately, well-appointed houſe and eſtabliſhment,

a little proud of his gentle blood, and ready with the firſt joke that came uppermoſt to tickle Southampton, retaliate upon Ben Jonſon, or make John-a-Combe chuckle.

Next, he was totally free from the pedantry of an author. He looks neither mad, nor ſentimental, nor melancholy, nor inſpired. While ſmaller men are apt to magnify the value of works which have coſt them immenſe labour and effort to produce, he cared ſo little for the ſpontaneous productions of his genius that he took no care about them once they had anſwered their immediate purpoſe. The ordinary companions of his later days were the honeſt ſquires and burghers of Warwickſhire, nor do the few jokes recorded of him at all ſmell of the lamp, but rather refer to the purſuits of ordinary men. All his aims were practical. His object in life was to ſecure to himſelf an independence, and to enjoy the amuſements and the occupations to which his ſimple taſtes impelled him. For this purpoſe he was not too proud to turn his hand to any honeſt employment, to hold gentlemen's horſes, act, adapt other men's works to the ſtage, write the fineſt plays that ever were conceived by mortal man, buy and ſell malt, and farm impropriate tithes.

As might have been expected from a man of this mould, he was free from the petty jealouſies of litera-

ture. The irritable race of his fellow poets ufe refpect-ing him fome turn of phrafe or epithet which denotes perfonal affection, fuch as "gentle." Spenfer, Drayton, Chettle, all have a kind word for him. And this is the more fignificant, inafmuch that they muft have felt that he had beaten them. The only exception to this rule is Greene, who feems to me to have been the very type of all that is moft bafe and degraded in literary men. The irritable, overbearing, and impulfive Jonfon declares that he loved him almoft to idolatry.

Behind thefe moral qualities rifes the ftupendous edifice of his genius; but indeed they add much to its beauty and effect. His manly, generous, unaffected, and nature-loving mind is apparent in every ftone of the ftructure—a proof, if any were wanting, that every work of the artift is the product of his whole nature, by which the height, depth, length, breadth, and colour of his foul and fpirit are meafured and gauged.

And happy it was for England that our greateft Poet was of this temperament. Who can fay what effect the widely-fpread ftudy of his works may have on the national character? His tranfcendent genius, had it been combined with fome morbid fentimentalifm or effeminate affectation, muft have more or lefs injured the moral fenfe of the thoufands of his countrymen to whom his writings are as familiar as houfehold

words. Lord Byron, with very inferior powers, was able actually to make it faſhionable for a time to ape the maudlin egotiſm and weak miſanthropy of a worn-out voluptuary. But there was no perverſe quality in Shakeſpere's mind to throw a jaundiced tinge over his pictures of God's fair creation. He has ſhown that robuſt good ſenſe is an element of the higheſt poetry, and that to be a great poet it is not neceſſary to be either mad or bad. Again, with reſpect to language, had he been a bookiſh man and a ſcholar, as ſcholarſhip was in thoſe days, he would probably have fallen in with the affectations of Sir Philip Sydney, and written in the half French, half Latin jargon of the Euphuiſts, or tied himſelf to the tail of Terence and Seneca, like Jonſon. Or, rebelling againſt the pſeudo-claſſical mania, he might have affected archaiſms, like Spenſer. But inſtead of this, he wrote in the ſtrong homely language of the Engliſh people of his own time; and his writings, combined perhaps with the Engliſh tranſlation of the Bible, have fixed our language for ever. There is in them always a model, ready to our hand and familiar to everybody, of the very beſt colloquial Engliſh.

He has conferred another great boon upon Engliſh literature. He has created a ſchool of dramatic criticiſm founded upon nature and the national character, and not

upon arbitrary laws of precedents. Ariſtotle laid down, and the dramatiſts of Greece and Rome followed, certain canons called the Unities, which required that the action of a play ſhould not occupy more than one day at moſt; that the ſcene ſhould not change to any place ſo diſtant that the actors might not have reached it in the time occupied by the events repreſented ; and that in tragedy, none but tragic and dignified perſonages ſhould be introduced. In one of his plays, "The Tempeſt," Shakeſpere has actually, whether intentionally or by accident, obſerved the firſt two of the Unities. The whole buſineſs of the play is tranſacted in *Proſpero's* little iſland within the ſpace of a few hours. It is impoſſible to deny that the reſult upon a reader's mind—at leaſt upon a critical reader's mind—is a certain feeling of artiſtic completeneſs. But this advantage is not enough in general to compenſate for the bondage under which the poet who writes under theſe conditions labours. In none of Shakeſpere's plays is the third Unity obſerved. Whether the Greek mind, in which theſe rules originated, were ſo ſenſitive as not to admit the mixture of tragic and comic emotions, or whether the religious character of the Greek feſtivals excluded it, or whatever may have been the origin of the canon, it certainly deprives the artiſt of one great inſtrument of artiſtic effect—contraſt. The grave ſcene in "Hamlet," the

ſcenes on the heath in "Lear," and at the caſtle-gate in "Macbeth," would ſuffer conſiderably if any claſſical enthuſiaſt were to omit the parts of the gravedigger, the fool, and the porter. At any rate, tragedy, comedy, and farce, are ſtrangely blended in real life, to which Shakeſpere held the mirror, and our ſluggiſh northern imaginations require the ſtimulus of the contraſt. The builders of our cathedrals muſt carve a ſow playing on the bagpipes, or a friar putting a gooſe into his ſleeve, on the moulding of a ſtructure which awes the lighteſt imagination by its ſolemn and myſterious beauty. If Shakeſpere had been a ſcholar, we ſhould probably have known no tragedy but ſuch as the ſtilted productions of Corneille and Racine, or dramatic criticiſm but ſuch as Voltaire's.

And now one word upon the Tercentenary Feſtival. As long as human nature remains what it is, the mind will attach a certain ſentimental importance to anniverſaries and other epochs which recall the memory of great events, of which the birth of Shakeſpere is moſt aſſuredly one of the greateſt. It is a principle interwoven in our religion, our laws, and our cuſtoms. The deſire to ſhow reſpect to the memory of a great man by erecting a monument to his honour is alſo a natural feeling which we inherit from our Celtic, Teutonic, or Scandinavian anceſtors, whoſe cairns and

barrows supply food for the speculations of our antiquarian societies. But in all our attempts as a nation to keep anniversaries or erect monuments, we are singularly unhappy. We set about such matters *moult tristement.* Something of course will be done at the coming Tercentenary Festival, and the best way not to be disappointed is not to expect much. A statue or an obelisk more or less will make little difference in the beauty or ugliness of our public places. Fortunately he whom we delight to honour may say, *Exegi monumentum ære perennius.* His plays, unlike the victories of warriors, are his real monument, and it seems to me that through them we can best evince our gratitude to their author. To found a theatre in which the Shakesperian drama could be acted and a school of acting maintained, would be a work really worthy of the occasion. The difficulties in the way, though great, are not insurmountable. There is the Academy of Music in Paris endowed by the State; and in every principal town in Italy, till lately, some such home was provided for the lyric drama. Why, then, should not persons co-operate to found a school of national dramatic poetry in this country? There can be no doubt that a public which can be drawn together to hear stupid lectures and orations about things in general by popular preachers, would flock to hear Shakespere's

plays declaimed exactly as they were written, and that without any of the factitious attractions of elaborate scenery and dresses. People do not from choice feed upon garbage when they can get wholesome food. To hope that such an idea will be actually carried out amidst the jarring elements of the literary and artistic world may perhaps be Utopian; but I cannot help thinking that to provide for the adequate representation of Shakespere's plays, and to enlarge the circle of those who receive from them benefit and delight, would be the most rational and noblest homage we could pay to his greatness.

FINIS.

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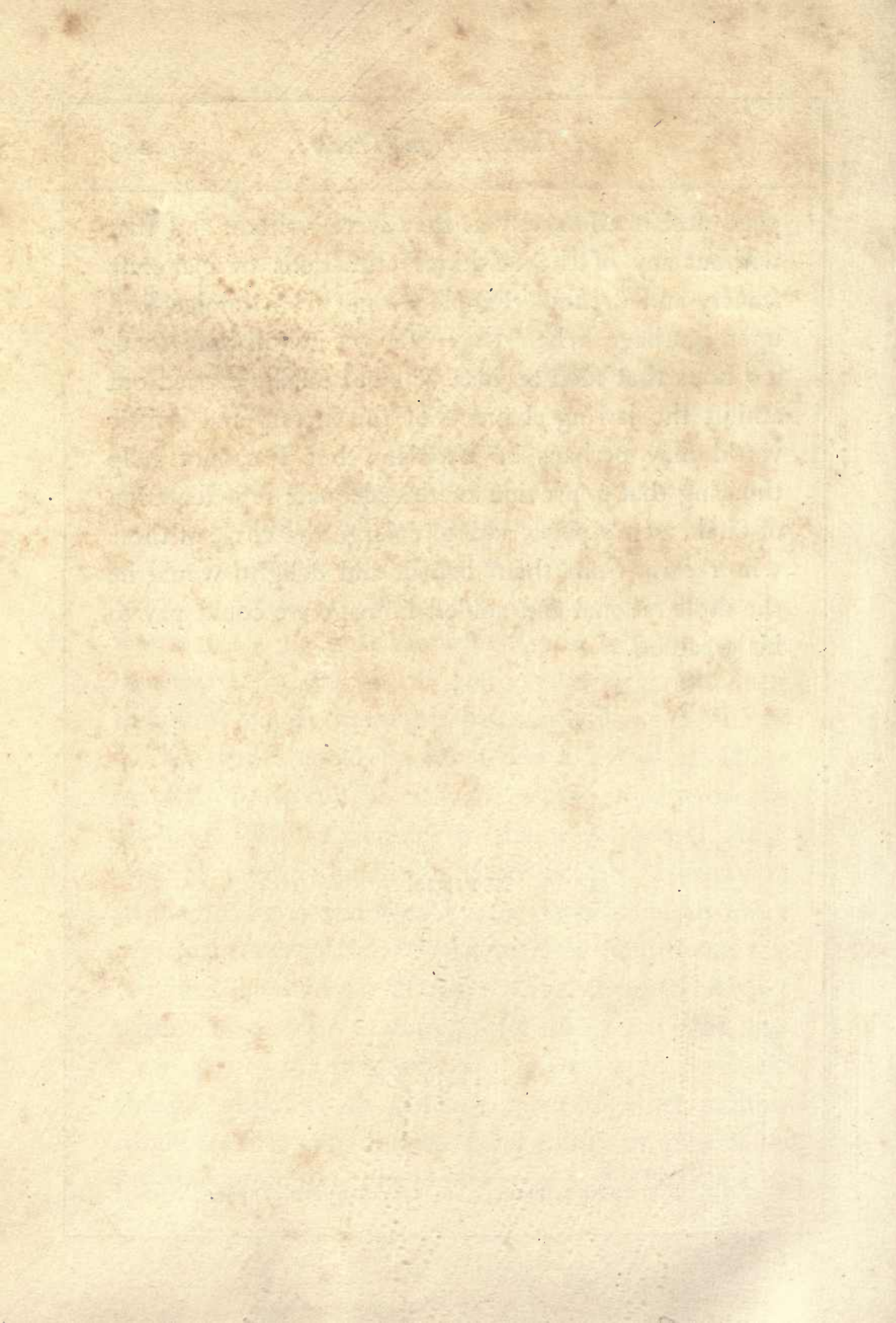

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