UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

INSTITUTE OF POST GRADUATE (T) STUDIES LIBRARY

INSTITUTE OF POST GRADUATE (E) STUDIES
LIBRARY

Cl. No.

Ac. No.,

This book should be returned on or before the last date stamped below. An overdue charge of 5 Paise/25 Paise (Text-books) will be collected for each day the book is kept overtime.

Other works by the author :

University Drama in the Tudor Age
Songs of Ulster and Balliol
Shakespeare and the Universities
An Introduction to the Reading of Shakespeare
Richardson to Pinero
An Introduction to Tudor Drama
Christopher Marlowe : A Biographical and Critical Study
British Academy Shakespeare Lecture
An Introduction to Stuart Drama
Queen Elizabeth in Drama
Thomas Heywood

SHAKSPERE
AND
HIS PREDECESSORS

By
FREDRICK S. BOAS, O.B.E.
M.A., Hon. LL.D., Hon. D.Litt., F.R.S.L.

RUPA & CO.
Calcutta Allahabad Bombay
1963

Copyright GUY BOAS

First Edition	...	March	1926
Reprinted	...	April	1902
Reprinted	...	June	1910
Reprinted	...	March	1918
Reprinted	...	December	1922
Reprinted	...	March	1925
Reprinted	...	December	1930
Second Edition	...	November	1939
Reprinted	...	August	1947

This first Indian Edition published by arrangement with Mr. Guy Boas through Messrs. John Murray (Publishers) Ltd., London, W. I.

August 1963

Complete & Unabridged

Price : Rs. 16.50

PRINTED IN INDIA

by B. D. Sen

at the Naba Mudran Private Ltd.

170A Acharya Prafulla Chandra Road, Calcutta-4

and

Published by D. MEHRA for

RUPA & CO.

15 Bankim Chatterjee Street, Calcutta-12

94 South Malaka, Allahabad-1

11 Oak Lane, Fort, Bombay-1

Bound by Asoka Binding Works

50 Pataldanga Street, Calcutta-9

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGES
	INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER	vii-xix
	Miracle Plays and Moralities—Medwall, Heywood, Udall—Kyd and Marlowe—Lyly and the first Blackfriars Theatre—Sureties of the Peace against Shakspere—Shakspere in the suit of Belott v. Mountjoy—Shakspere and the Companies of Actors—The Sonnets, Southampton or Pembroke?—Changes in Shakspere's Dramatic Art—Professional or Personal Causes?—Good and Bad Quartos—Shakspere's Manuscripts—The Problem of Sir Thomas More—The Disintegration of Shakspere—One Man Supremely Endowed—Conclusion.	
I.	THE MEDIAEVAL DRAMA	1-15
	The Rise of the Miracle Plays—The Miracle Cycles—The Coventry Plays—Characteristics of the Miracle Plays—The Early Moralities—The Moral Interludes—John Heywood—Decline of the Mediaeval Drama.	
II.	THE EARLY RENAISSANCE DRAMA	16-25
	Ralph Roister Doister—Influence of Seneca—Introduction of Blank Verse—Popular Plays—Sir Philip Sidney's Criticisms—Sir Philip Sidney's Mistakes.	
III.	THE RISE OF THE THEATRES.—MARLOWE'S DRAMATIC REFORM	26-51
	Growth of National Spirit—Elizabethan Theatres—Marlowe's Life—Marlowe's Blank Verse—Tamburlaine—Dr. Faustus—The Jew of Malta—Edward II.—The Massacre at Paris—Dido—Marlowe and Shakspere.	
IV.	KYD, LYLY, AND PEELE	52-63
	The Spanish Tragedy—Euphuism—Campaspe—Midas—Lyly and Shakspere—Peele's Plays.	
V.	ROBERT GREENE	64-73
	Greene's Orlando Furioso—James IV—George-a-Greene—A Looking Glasse for London—Greene and Shakspere.	
VI.	SHAKSPERE AT STRATFORD	74-88
	Shakspere's Biography—Stratford-on-Avon—The Guild of the Holy Cross—Warwickshire Traditions—Shakspere at School—Shakspere's Classical Knowledge—Shakspere leaves School—Shakspere and Sir Thomas Lucy.	
VII.	SHAKSPERE IN LONDON.—THE SONNETS	89-107
	Shakspere as Actor—Shakspere and Southampton—The Globe Theatre—Shakspere's Sonnets—'Will' probably William Herbert—Shakspere and Essex—Shakspere and Ben Jonson—Shakspere returns to Stratford—Shakspere's Career—Close of Shakspere's Career.	
VIII.	SHAKSPERE'S DRAMATIC APPRENTICESHIP ...	108-150
	Order of Shakspere's Plays—Metrical Evidences—Shakspere's Periods of Authorship—Titus Andronicus—Henry VI, Part I—Henry VI, Part II—Henry VI, Part III—Richard III.	

CHAPTER PAGES

IX. SHAKSPERE'S POEMS. THE EARLY PERIOD OF COMEDY 131-163
Venus and Adonis—Lucrece—Love's Labour's Lost—The Comedy of Errors—The Taming of the Shrew—A Midsummer Night's Dream—The Two Gentlemen of Verona.

X. SHAKSPERE ITALIANATE 164-195
Romeo and Juliet—The Merchant of Venice.

XI. THE CHIEF GROUP OF CHRONICLE-HISTORY PLAYS ... 196-243
Shakspere's History plays—King John—Richard II—Henry IV—Henry V.

XII. THE GOLDEN PRIME OF COMEDY 244-287
The Merry Wives of Windsor—Much Ado about Nothing—Twelfth Night—As You Like It.

XIII. THE PROBLEM-PLAYS 288-342
All's Well that Ends Well—Measure for Measure—Troilus and Cressida—Hamlet.

XIV. THE CLIMAX OF TRAGEDY 343-380
Macbeth—Othello—King Lear.

XV. THE PLUTARCH SERIES OF PLAYS 381-423
Shakspere and Plutarch—Julius Caesar—Antony and Cleopatra—Coriolanus—Timon of Athens.

XVI. THE DRAMATIC ROMANCES 424-454
The Dramatic Romances—Cymbeline—The Winter's Tale—The Tempest.

APPENDICES 455-464

INDEX 465-468

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER TO THE SEVENTH REPRINT

As this volume, first published in 1896, is now being reprinted for the seventh time, it may be assumed that it still has a useful purpose to fulfil. As to its critical aspects, even were I inclined to modify my views, I would consider it inexpedient to make alterations in the text. These views, whatever their value may be, have the unity that springs from an approach to their subject at a particular period with its distinctive influences. An attempt to revise or 're-edit' to-day my earlier critical estimates or interpretations would therefore, I believe, be inadvisable. On the other hand, it has been inevitable that, 'forty years on,' new facts should have been brought to light and fresh perspectives opened. It is desirable to make a short survey of these in their bearing on the contents of this volume.

Since the brief sketch of mediaeval drama in chapter I was given, research has been much occupied with its origins. The persistence of secular folk-drama in crudely popular forms has been demonstrated, even if such survivals as the Mummers' play and the Plough play in their different variants have undergone later transformation[1]. At the same time new light has been thrown upon the wide diffusion and influence of religious drama in its earliest form[2], the liturgical play (p. 2)[3]. From municipal accounts and other local archives additions have been made to our knowledge of the distribution and presentation of Miracle plays. Since 1896 two of the four great cycles have been re-edited. In the Towneley cycle (p. 5), in five of the pageants and portions of four others, the hand of a remarkable playwright, 'the Wakefield master,' has been recognized[4]. It has been shown beyond question that the so-called Coventry cycle (p. 6) has no connexion with the Warwickshire town[5]. Two plays that were acted there have now been edited[6], and several other plays not belonging to extant cycles have been made accessible[7].

1 E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage* (1903), I, vii-x; *The English Folk-Play* (1933).
2 Karl Young, *The Drama of the Mediaeval Church* (1933).
3 The page references are to *Shakspere and his Predecessors*.
4 *The Towneley Plays*, ed. G. England and A. W. Pollard (1897), pp. xxi-ii.
5 *Ludus Coventriae*, ed. K. S. Block (1922).
6 *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. H. Craig (1902).
7 *The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays*, ed. O. Whitehouse (1909).

Among the earlier and longer Moralities *Everyman* (p. 11) still takes pride of place, and its enduring dramatic appeal has been confirmed by a series of recent revivals both on the professional and amateur stage. It has, however, been shown that it is not of purely English origin, but is a skilful adaptation of a Dutch play, *Elckerlijk*[1].

Another play of which we have now more accurate knowledge is John Bale's *Kynge, Johan* (p. 14), which combines allegorical figures of the Morality type with historical personages. It has been printed in full from the original manuscript, which has now gone to California, and is shown to have been more than once revised by its author[2].

One of the most important recent additions to English dramatic history relates to the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. John Heywood (pp. 13-4) had long been regarded as the creator of the English secular interlude. But there is now no doubt that he is only one, though the most important, of a group of early Tudor playwrights. His father-in-law, John Rastell, has been proved to be not only the printer but the writer of the interlude of *The Four Elements* (p. 12), of the dialogue of *Gentleness and Nobility,* probably of the unfinished *Calisto and Meliboea* adapted from Spanish *Celestina*[3]. From Rastell's press came also *Fulgens and Lucres* by Henry Medwall, chaplain to Cardinal Morton. A unique copy of this play was found in Lord Mostyn's library when it was sold in 1919. It dates probably from about 1497 and is the first dramatic work in English to introduce entirely secular figures. Lucres, the high-spirited daughter of the Roman senator, Fulgens, is worthy to stand at the head of the long roll of our heroines in drama[4].

In the light of this newer knowledge the canon of Heywood's own plays has been called into question. Beside *The Four P's* he was certainly the author of *Witty and Witless, Love* and *Wether.* But *Johan* and *The Pardoner and the Frere,* which have affinities with contemporary French farces, are more doubtfully his. In any case he is now seen not to be a solitary figure, but the most prominent of a group whose dramatic technique and characterization owed nothing to classical models.

Nicholas Udall (p. 17) still stands first among those who adapted the typical figures and the construction of Roman comedy

1 *Elckerlijk and Everyman,* ed. H. Logeman (1892).
2 Malone Society Reprint of *King Johan,* ed. by J. H. P. Pafford and W. W. Greg.
3 A. W. Reed, *Early Tudor Drama* (1926).
4 *Fulgens and Lucres,* ed. F. S. Boas and A. W. Reed (1926).

to an English background. Besides *Ralph Roister Doister* and a lost play, *Ezechias* (Hezekiah), acted before the Queen at Cambridge in 1564, plausible claims have been made for his authorship of the Biblical play, *Jacob and Esau,* and the interlude *Thersites,* adapted from a neo-classic source. Udall remains the best known of the writers of school-plays whose wide vogue as a Renaissance instrument of education has been clearly established[1].

This is true in yet greater measure of the universities, where the writing and performance of plays, both in Latin and English, received a stimulus from the visits of Elizabeth to Cambridge in 1564 and to Oxford in 1566 and 1592. Of one of the most notable of Cambridge plays, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (p. 18) the authorship is still in doubt, but it has been shown that the ascription of it to Bishop Still is mistaken, and that it should probably be assigned either to William Stevenson, a Fellow of Christ's College, or to John Bridges of Pembroke Hall, afterwards Bishop of Oxford[2]. While Cambridge, on the whole, favoured comedy, Oxford inclined more to tragedy, represented especially by the Latin plays of William Gager of Christ Church, acted between 1582 and 1592[3].

While Gager was making use of Senecan rhetoric and machinery in neo-classic plays for the amateur university stage, Thomas Kyd (pp. 52-5) was effectively turning them to melodramatic purposes in the London professional theatre. The earliest edition of *The Spanish Tragedy* is unfortunately not dated, but recent investigation makes it probable that it preceded by a year or two the production of *Tamburlaine.* If so, Kyd, instead of Marlowe, must have the credit of being the first dramatist to use blank verse on the English popular stage (p. 31). But Kyd was a master of theatre-craft, not of poetic expression, and the account of Marlowe's transformation of blank verse (pp. 31-3) remains true.

On the personal relations of these two chief predecessors of Shakspere[4] new light has been thrown. Kyd was arrested on May 12, 1593, on suspicion of some offence against the State. In his possession were found parts of a so-called 'atheist' treatise which (as he declared) belonged to Marlowe and became mixed with his papers when they were writing together in the same room about two years ago[5]. It was probably owing to this allegation that the

1 H. Vail Motter, *The School Drama in England* (1919).
2 F. S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (1914), chap. IV.
3 *Op. cit.*, chaps. VIII-IX.
4 For the sake of uniformity I am retaining in this chapter the spelling 'Shakspere' which I adopted in 1896, following the examples of Dowden and Furnivall. But more recently 'Shakespeare' has become the almost universally accepted spelling, and I have used it elsewhere.
5 *Works of Thomas Kyd*, ed. F. S. Boas (1901), pp. lxv-lxxii.

Privy Council on May 18 ordered the arrest of Marlowe, who appeared before them on May 20. His death at Deptford on May 30 and his burial on June 1 quickly followed. But though he met his end in an inn, it is now known that it was not, as Francis Meres had led posterity to believe, at the hand of a serving-man in a brawl about a woman (p. 30). The discovery of the inquest documents has revealed that the dramatist was killed by Ingram Frizer in the presence of Robert Poley, a Government agent, and Nicholas Skeres[1]. Whether the plea accepted by the jury that Frizer acted in self-defence in a quarrel about the 'reckoning' was true, or whether Marlowe was murdered for some political end, is still a matter of controversy.

The documentary investigations that have added of recent years so much to our knowledge of the history of the Elizabethan theatre and the acting companies have solved a puzzling problem relating to the performances of Lyly's *Campaspe* and *Sapho and Phao* (pp. 56-8). These plays have each two prologues, and *Campaspe* two epilogues, spoken respectively 'at the Blackfriars' and 'at the Court.' They were acted early in 1584, but the only Blackfriars theatre known till recently to stage-historians was the one first occupied by the children of the Revels in 1600. The *crux* was solved by Professor Feuillerat, when he discovered that there was an earlier Blackfriars theatre where children's companies had acted from about the end of 1576 to May, 1584, when Sir William More, the owner of the premises, re-occupied them[2].

Other problems connected with Lyly's plays cannot be so definitely settled. There have been different interpretations suggested of the allegory in *Sapho and Phao* and *Endimion* (pp. 58-9), and its application to Elizabeth has been challenged. Lyly's authorship of the songs in his comedies has been questioned but not, in my opinion, disproved. The whole of his works, with some doubtful additions, have been collected in an Oxford three-volume edition (1902) by Professor R. Warwick Bond, and a similar service has been performed for Robert Greene's plays and poems (pp. 64-73) by J. Churton Collins (1905). The MS., 'part' of the hero of *Orlando Furioso* (pp. 65-6) and the MS. 'plot' of Peele's *Battle of Alcazar* (p. 63) have been studied in relation to their quarto texts by Dr. W. W. Greg[3], and have thrown light on Elizabethan theatrical practices.

Though there has been incessant valuable investigation by Mrs. C.

1 J. Leslie Hotson, *The Death of Christopher Marlowe* (1925).
2 *Malone Society Collections*, II. 1 (1913).
3 *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements* (1931).

C. Stopes, Mr. F. C. Wellstood, E. I. Fripp and others, into the archives of Stratford-on-Avon and its neighbourhood, the chief additions to Shakspere's biography in the present century from documentary sources relate to his life in London. One of them presents the 'gentle' Shakspere in an unexpected light. Among the entries for Michaelmas term 1596 in the Controlment Rolls of the Court of Queen Bench was a petition of William Wayte craving 'sureties of the peace against William Shakespeare, Francis Langley, Dorothy Soer . . . and Annie Lee for fear of death.' A writ of attachment was issued to the sheriff of Surrey, returnable on November 19. This petition was in retaliation for one entered a short time previously by Francis Langley against William Gardiner and William Wayte. Gardiner was a wealthy and overbearing justice of the peace who had been directed by the Privy Council to 'pluck down quite' the stages of the Bankside theatres, and Wayte was his stepson. As Langley was the owner of a Bankside theatre, the Swan, finished about the middle of 1595, friction between him and the Gardiner-Wayte connexion was natural. But how Shakspere and the two women became involved is not known[1].

In any case the documents throw light on the question of Shakspere's places of residence in London. In October, 1596, he had been assessed as a resident in the parish of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, on the north side of the Thames, for the payment of 5*s.*, and in October, 1598, for 13*s.* 4*d.* in the same parish. On each occasion Shakspere was in arrears with his payment. But as the writ of attachment arising out of Wayte's petition was issued to the Sheriff of Surrey, it would appear that by November, 1596, Shakspere had moved across the river, perhaps to be near the new Swan theatre. In that case the assessment in October, 1598, would have been made after he had ceased to reside in St. Helen's.

The much more detailed documents in the suit of *Belott* v. *Mountjoy* connect Shakspere with yet another London district and exhibit him in an attractive, if somewhat unexpected, light. Christopher Mountjoy, a French Huguenot, plied his trade as a tire-maker in a house near St. Olave's Church in Cripplegate Ward. He had an apprentice, Stephen Belott, who, on November 19, 1604, married his daughter Mary. In 1612 Belott accused Mountjoy of violating the financial agreement under which the marriage had taken place. During the hearing of the suit, Shakspere, who had lodged in the Mountjoys' house, was examined on May 11. He deposed that

1 J. Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare versus Shallow* (1931), pp. 9-21. The discovery of Wayte's petition is important, whether or not Hotson's identification of Justice Shallow with Gardiner is accepted.

Belott was 'a good and industrious servant'; that at the entreaty of Mountjoy's wife he had moved and persuaded Belott to conclude the marriage; and that he could not remember the details of the agreement between the parties[1].

It is curious to hear of the dramatist in 1612, near the close of his career, being spoken of simply by other deponents as 'one Mr. Shakespeare,' and in 1604, the year when the second quarto of *Hamlet* was published, helping on the marriage of a Huguenot tire-maker's daughter. But he appears in the proceedings as kindly in his actions and scrupulous in his speech—much as Chettle had described him in 1592 (p. 90). How long he remained with the Mountjoys after 1604 is not known, but as he is entered in the deposition as of Stratford-on-Avon, gentleman, he probably had in 1612 no permanent London residence. Though he bought a property in Blackfriars in 1613, he at once leased it to a tenant.

During the past half-century attention has been concentrated by an increasing number of scholars upon the history of the Elizabethan companies of actors. There is much that is still obscure in the period of twenty years between 1574 when Leicester's men obtained their patent and 1594 when the two leading adult companies, the Lord Chamberlain's and the Lord Admiral's, took definite and separate shape. But the view that Shakspere may have joined Leicester's men when they visited Stratford in 1587 (p. 89) does not find support to-day, and it is doubtful if Leicester's company passed as a body into the service of Lord Strange, whose players from about 1590 till 1594 became amalgamated with the Lord Admiral's men. It has been suggested that during these early years in London Shakspere may have been a member of different companies, those of Lord Strange, the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Sussex. But from the mention of his name in a warrant as one of the three payees on behalf of the Lord Chamberlain's men for performances before the Queen in the Christmas season of 1594 (p. 91), all doubt ends. He remained, as a 'sharer' not a 'hired man,' a leading member of the company which on Elizabeth's death became the King's men with the status of Grooms of the Chamber. In this capacity Shakspere was one of twelve of the King's men who in August, 1604, attended the Constable of Castile, when he visited London on a special mission. He was associated in a different way with the most famous of his fellows when in March, 1613,

1 C. W. Wallace in *Harper's Magazine*, March, 1910, and in *University Studies*, Nebraska, vol. X, quoting from Depositions in suit of *Belott* v. *Mountjoy* (Court of Requests).

he designed an *impresa* (heraldic device) for the Earl of Rutland's shield, which Richard Burbage painted, each receiving 44 shillings in gold. Thus, like Sir J. Forbes-Robertson and Mr. Ernest Thesiger in our own day, Shakspere and Burbage were both actors and artists.

The problem of the bearing of the Sonnets (pp. 94-100) on Shakspere's biography continues to be hotly debated, together with the allied questions of their date, their order, and their authorship, whether wholly by Shakspere or otherwise. There are few who now question that they have a basis in the poet's real experiences, whatever the amount of imaginative embroidery may be. In spite of the difficulty caused by the publisher's dedication 'to the onlie begetter of these insuing sonnets, Mr. W. H.' (p. 98), the tide had seemed to turn in favour of the identification of the young high-born friend, to whom Sonnets 1-126 are addressed, with Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. Among those who have supported this view are Sir Sidney Lee[1], Mrs. C. C. Stopes[2], Mr. J. A. Fort[3] and Professor J. Dover Wilson[4]. But recently the view set forth by Thomas Tyler and adopted in this volume (pp. 98-100), that the friend was William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, has found renewed support from Sir Edmund Chambers[5], though he puts the bulk of the Sonnets back to 1593-6 and thinks that the question of a match is not with Lady Bridget Vere in 1597, but with Elizabeth Carey in 1595. This date puts Mary Fitton out of court as the dark lady of the second group of Sonnets, who in any case was a married woman. But I still hold that the references to the rival poet (p. 99), especially when coupled with the allusions to the School of Night in *Love's Labour's Lost*, fit Chapman better than any other contemporary.

A new aid to the re-creation of Shakspere's personality has been found through exploring and collating the imagery employed by him in the plays and poems. From this Professor Caroline Spurgeon has concluded that the quality that most attracted him was *movement*. 'It is the life of things which appeals to him rather than the beauty of colour or form or even significance[6].' In illustration she points to the very large number of river images, where the dramatist's interest is almost entirely in the life of the current

1 *A Life of William Shakespeare* (1915 edition), pp. 221-30.
2 *The Third Earl of Southampton* (1922), pp. 42-4.
3 *The Two Dated Sonnets of Shakespeare* (1924).
4 *The Essential Shakespeare* (1932), pp. 60-1.
5 *William Shakespeare* (1930), I, 565-8.
6 *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us* (1935), p. 50.

itself, and she interprets this as Shakspere's reminiscence of the Avon in flood under Clopton Bridge[1].

It is satisfactory to be able to record that after more than half a century of research and debate one basic element of Shaksperian commentary stands firm—the chronology of the plays. The four 'periods of authorship' indicated in this volume (pp. 111-2) were mainly based on the grouping by Edward Dowden in his *Shakspere's Mind and Art* (1875) and his *Shakspere Primer* (1877). · If the dates in the *Primer* (pp. 56-7) be compared with those in Sir Edmund Chambers's *William Shakespeare* (1930), I, pp. 270-1, they will be found to differ only in some details, partly due to the fact that Chambers puts the beginning of Shakspere's dramatic career a year or two later than Dowden. One important piece of external evidence for the dating of some of the seventeenth-century plays of which I did not make use, as it then lay under suspicion, was the Revels Accounts for 1604-5 and 1612-3, which has now, in my opinion, been proved to be authentic[2]. These accounts record performances at Court of *Othello,* November 1, 1604; *Measure for Measure,* December 26, 1604; *The Tempest,* November 1, 1611; and *Winter's Tale,* November 5, 1611.

With the approximate order of the plays confirmed, the question continues to be debated why it was that Shakspere, who till about the end of the sixteenth century had put forth a long series of chronicle-histories and light-hearted comedies, thereafter for about eight years was absorbed in the writing of tragedies and plays of disillusion and followed these in the final period of his career with dramatic romances. To one set of critics these remarkable changing aspects of Shakspere's dramatic art are quite unrelated to any corresponding changes in his moods or his attitude to life. They had a purely professional origin. Sir Sidney Lee emphasized 'the impersonal aspect of Shakespeare's art[3]'; Professor Quincy Adams suggests that 'ambition, rather than melancholia,' led him to the production of his tragic masterpieces[4], and in turning afterwards to dramatic romances he merely followed the trend of the day[5]. And in two British Academy lectures Professors Sisson[6] and R. W. Chambers[7] have sought to blow sky-high the view that Shakspere was more

1 *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us* (1915), p. 96.
2 Ernest Law, *Some Supposed Shakespeare Forgeries* (1911), and A. E. Stamp, *The Disputed Revels Accounts* (1930).
3 The title of his English Association pamphlet (1909).
4 *A Life of William Shakespeare,* p. 302.
5 *Op. cit.,* p. 411.
6 *The Mythical Sorrows of Shakespeare* (1934).
7 *The Jacobean Shakespeare and 'Measure for Measure'* (1937).

unhappy in the reign of James I than he had been under Elizabeth. They have also combated a variant of 'the sorrows of Shakspere' theory of which Dr. G. B. Harrison has been a leading exponent[1]. This sees in the tragedies a reflection not of bitter experiences personal to the dramatist, but of a supposed widespread disillusionment and despondency in the era that followed the downfall of the brilliant Essex, the death of Gloriana, and the succession to the throne of a semi-foreign King, son of the tragic Queen of Scots. Yet the view, to which Dowden gave popular currency, that Shakspere's transition from comedy to tragedy and from tragedy to romance had its root in his own fluctuations of mood, still finds modified support. Even so austere a biographer as Sir Edmund Chambers sees in the series of tragedies evidence 'of mental strain and sometimes exhaustion' and in the transition to the romances 'some mental process such as the psychology of religion would call conversion[2].' Professor Dover Wilson believes that between 1601 and 1608 Shakspere was subject 'to a dominant mood of gloom and dejection, which on one occasion at least brought him to the verge of madness,' but in the sudden change that followed he sees not a process of 'conversion' but of 'falling in love a second time with Stratford[3].' Such are some of the representative views on a subject which by its very nature must remain equally provocative and insoluble.

On another major Shaksperian problem, the relation of the folio and quarto texts, twentieth-century investigation has had fruitful, and to some extent unexpected, results. The disparaging terms in which Heminge and Condell, the editors of the first folio, spoke of the previously published plays as 'diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious impostors, that expos'd them,' had produced a fixed conviction that the quarto editions of seventeen (or probably nineteen) of the plays represented as a whole inferior texts. The recent work of bibliographical experts, conspicuously Professor A. W. Pollard[4]. has proved that the folio editors were too sweeping in their condemnation, and that it is necessary to discriminate between 'good' and 'bad' quartos. To the bad class belong *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), *Henry V* (1600), *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602) *Hamlet* (1603). To these have probably to be added *The First Part of the Contention* (1594) and *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York*

1 *Shakespeare at Work* (1935).
2 *William Shakespeare*, I, 85-6.
3 *The Essential Shakespeare*, p. 136.
4 A. W. Pollard, *Shakespeare Quartos and Folios* (1909).

(1595). It has been plausibly argued that these are bad quartos of 2 and 3 *Henry VI*[1] and not, as had been usually held, older plays which Shakspere revised (pp. 455-7).

The origin of the corrupt texts of the bad quartos, each of which has its peculiar features, is a difficult problem. They seem to be based not on transcripts but on notes of performances. But as it is doubtful if shorthand was as yet available, the reporters appear to have trusted to memory. In some cases the marked superiority of the text of the speeches of certain characters suggests that these were furnished by the representatives of the parts[2]. With the 1603 quarto of *Hamlet* the problem is complicated by the question whether this is based on an earlier revision by Shakspere of an older play, probably by Kyd (p. 322), in which the names Corambis and Montano occur. Was it to this that Gabriel Harvey referred in one of his *marginalia,* complimentary to Shakspere's *Hamlet,* probably soon after 1598[3]?

In any case a good quarto of *Hamlet* appeared in 1604, as a good quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* had in 1599 supplanted the bad one of 1597. Thus, apart from *Pericles,* which was omitted, fourteen more or less good quartos were available to the editors of the first folio, and internal evidence indicates that for these plays Heminge and Condell mainly used the quartos, though in the latest, not the best, version, and with additions or cuts from the prompt-copy in the theatre[4]. But here again *Hamlet,* with the striking divergences between the first folio and the 1604 quarto texts, has a place of its own.

If we exclude 2 and 3 *Henry VI,* there were eighteen plays as yet unpublished which the editors brought together for the first time in the folio of 1623[5]. The title-page claimed that all the plays were 'Published according to the True Originall Copies,' and in the

1. Peter Alexander, *Shakespeare's Henry VI and Richard III* (1929).
2. In his introduction to the typed facsimile of the 1602 quarto of *The Merry Wives,* W. W. Greg shows that the actor who played the Host was most probably the reporter.
3. F. S. Boas, *Shakespeare and the Universities* (1923), pp. 22-8 and 256-60.
4. Since 1905 the discovery of a copy of the 1594 edition of *Titus Andronicus* in Sweden (now in the Folger Shakespeare library, Washington) has displaced the 1600 quarto as the first extant edition (p. 137 n.).
5. An earlier piratical attempt at a partial collected edition seems to have been made by the bookseller, Thomas Pavier, in 1619, and the printer, William Jaggard. There are often found together ten quartos unusually tall and with exceptionally short imprints. Two of the plays, *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and *Sir John Oldcastle,* are not Shakespere's. There are three good quartos, *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600), *Merchant of Venice* (1600), and *King Lear* (1608), and two bad quartos, *Henry V* (1608) and *The Merry Wives* (1619), and also *The Whole Contention* in its two parts (no date) and *Pericles* (1619), these three with continuous signatures indicating that they were to be the opening section of the proposed volume. An order of the Lord Chamberlain stopped the enterprise, and the quartos were published separately, all in 1619, but most of them with the spurious dates given above. See W. W. Greg's articles in *The Library* (1908), pp. 113-31 and 381-409; A. W. Pollard, *The Shakespeare Folios and Quartos* (1909), pp. 81 ff.; and W. J. Neidig in *Modern Philology* (1910), viii, 145 ff.

address to the readers Heminge and Condell stated that 'wee haue scarce receiued from him a blot in his papers.' The natural inference from these words would be that the editors had access to Shakspere's manuscripts. There is sufficient reason for believing that some at any rate of the good quarto and of the folio texts were derived from them, subject to the results of wear and tear on playhouse copies, through cuts, marginal annotations, prompter's stage directions and the like. In any case the drive of recent textual criticism, in the light of intensive study of Elizabethan palaeography, is to get behind the printed texts to the hypothetical manuscripts in Shakspere's own hand[1]. This would, of course, be easier if there were any undoubted specimens of the dramatist's handwriting apart from his signatures to legal documents. In the view of eminent palaeographers three leaves in the play *Sir Thomas More* (British Museum Harl. MSS. 7368) are in Shakspere's autograph[2], and there is confirmatory evidence of other kinds, though in such a case certainty is impossible. Among the points advanced in favour of Shakspere's authorship of the 147 lines attributed to him in *Sir Thomas More* is the similarity of some unusual spellings found in them to spellings in the good quartos[3]. Thus in recent Shaksperian criticism the question of the dramatist's orthography has gained fresh importance. This is also true of his punctuation which has, it has been claimed, not a grammatical but a rhetorical basis[4].

From a different angle it has been increasingly realized that the plays must be studied in the light of Elizabethan stage methods which William Poel did so much to make familiar. The expert knowledge of a man of the theatre versed both in Elizabethan and modern methods of production has been applied by Mr. H. Granville-Barker in a series of illuminating *Prefaces* to about a dozen of the plays (1927-34), and his chapter on 'Shakespeare's Dramatic Art' in the valuable *Companion to Shakespeare Studies*[5].

This sketch of some of the new achievements and movements in Elizabethan scholarship, as applied in the field of Tudor and Shaksperian drama, must finally take notice of a disturbing feature which has been summed up in the phrase, 'the disintegration of Shakspere.'

1 The most elaborate study of a play from this point of view is in J. Dover Wilson's *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' and the Problem of its Transmission* (1934).
2 Sir E. Maunde Thompson, *Shakespeare's Handwriting* (1916), and chap. III of *Shakespeare's Hand in 'Sir Thomas More'* (1923). The play has been edited from the MS. by Dr. W. W. Greg in Malone Society Reprints (1911).
3 J. Dover Wilson, chap. IV, with appendix, in *Shakespeare's Hand in 'Sir Thomas More.'*
4 Percy Simpson, *Shakespearian Punctuation* (1911).
5 Edited by H. Granville-Barker and G. B. Harrison (1934).

No serious notice need be taken of the fantastic theories which see in 'the man from Stratford' a mask for the dramatic activities of some Elizabethan nobleman, though Lord Becon in the rôle of the true author of the plays has been challenged in turn by the Earl of Derby and the Earl of Oxford. For this frontal attack critics like F. G. Fleay and J. M. Robertson have substituted a flanking movement. On purely internal criteria of style, metre and vocabulary, they have deprived Shakspere of a large part of what has been included since 1623 in the canon of his works. Robertson sees the hand of one or other of his contemporaries, Kyd, Marlowe, Greene, Peele, Chapman, singly or jointly, in the *Henry VI* trilogy, *Richard III*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*[1]. The mere enumeration of this list, belonging to different periods and types of Shakspere's work, is in itself almost a *reductio ad absurdum*.

But when frontal and outflanking attacks have been repelled there remains the more insidious and dangerous method of sap and mine. The bibliographical methods which have served such useful purposes in recent Shaksperian scholarship have also been turned to more questionable uses. Minute examination of the texts of the plays in their quarto and folio forms, together with speculation as to the fortunes of the manuscripts in the printing-houses and the theatre, has led to the elaboration of theories which have been propounded in articles and afterwards embodied in the introductions to the single plays that have appeared in the new Cambridge edition[2]. The basis of these theories, though they are worked out more fully for some plays than for others, is that Shakspere's dramas are not the products of a genius in a continuous unbroken spell of activity. They are the result of successive revisions by Shakspere of his own earlier work or, as often as not, plays from some inferior hand. That this may be true in some instances need not be denied. There is Ravenscroft's testimony that he only touched up *Titus Andronicus*. In *King John* and *The Taming of the Shrew* we see features reproduced from *The Troublesome Raigne* and *The Taming of a Shrew*. *Hamlet* itself seems to have been cast in the mould of an earlier play. In *Macbeth* there seem to be traces of both cutting and interpolation. In *Pericles* the first two Acts are from an alien hand. *King Henry VII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (pp. 460-4), as I still believe,

1 *The Shakespeare Canon* (1922-30); *Shakespeare and Chapman* (1917); *Marlowe* (1931).
2 Edited by Sir A. Quiller-Couch and J. Dover Wilson (1921 and proceeding).

were the joint product of Shakspere and Fletcher.

But to present Shakspere's work taken as a whole as the result of his patching up from time to time of his own or other men's efforts is to fly in the face of the testimony of Heminge and Condell that 'his mind and hand went together,' and what he thought he uttered with easiness. A highly effective detailed rebuttal of the arguments of the disintegrators has been furnished by Sir Edmund Chambers. He sums up in words which could not be bettered[1]:

'After all, we have read the plays for ourselves and have learnt to recognize in them, through all their diversities, a continuous personality of which style is only one aspect. A single mind and a single hand dominate them. They are the outcome of one man's critical reactions to life, which make the stuff of comedy, and of one man's emotional reactions to life, which make the stuff of tragedy.'

This has been instinctively recognized not only by Shakspere's fellow-countrymen but by the whole world, which has accorded him a place alike on the stage and in the study differing in kind rather than in degree from even the greatest of his contemporaries. The highest manifestations of genius in the sister arts, of Pheidias and Michael Angelo in sculpture, of Raphael and Velasquez in painting, of Bach and Beethoven in music, are born of the brain and heart and creative impulse of one man supremely endowed. So it is with Shakspere who stands on an eminence abreast with them. All attempts to minimize or dislocate his individual achievement in the sphere of drama bring to mind words of his own:

'We do it wrong being so majestical
To offer it the show of violence.'

I may be allowed to close on a personal note.

I felt it a privilege in 1896 to have my first book, *Shakspere and his Predecessors*, published by the historic House of Murray, when John Murray the Fourth was its ruler. It is a pleasure after so many years to be able to add this introductory chapter to it in the reign of John Murray the Fifth.

1939 F. S. B.

1 *William Shakespeare*, I, 219.

CHAPTER I

THE MEDIAEVAL DRAMA

THE attitude of religion and the drama towards each other has been strangely varied. Sometimes it has been one of intimate alliance, sometimes of active hostility, but never of indifference. In Greece the connexion between the two was of the closest, for tragedy had sprung directly out of the worship of Dionysus, and the art of Aeschylus and Sophocles bore visible stamp of its sacred origin. Euripides introduced a more secular tone into his plays, and thenceforth the breach between the stage and religion had ever grown wider. The Attic New Comedy, and its Latin reproduction by Plautus and Terence, drew their materials purely from social life, and were concerned with the most mundane interests. But the degraded taste of imperial Rome and Byzantium could not appreciate an entertainment in which wit and literary grace were cardinal features. Comedy, in the higher sense, was unable to keep the boards; it was ousted by farce and pantomime, by the shows of the Circus and the Amphitheatre. Thus Christianity found the stage in the lowest depths of degradation. To regenerate it seemed impossible, and therefore the Church took the course of proscribing it entirely. Hence an absolute line of cleavage separates the classical and the mediaeval drama. The former sank out of sight, to reappear at the Renaissance: the latter had an entirely independent birth[1].

The Church had attacked the corrupt stage of the Caesars, but she could not abolish the theatrical instinct in human nature, and almost unconsciously she turned it to her own account. Once again, as in Greece, the drama had its origin in religious ceremonial. The liturgy of the Mass, including the actions and gestures of the consecrating priests, the chants and confession, the reading of portions of Scripture, the prayers and responses of the congregation, contained from the first true dramatic elements. On festival days there were frequently added *tableaux vivants* of scenes from the Gospels, often accompanied by song. Into these *tableaux* action and dialogue were

1 This broad fact of dramatic history is not invalidated by the composition during the earlier Middle Ages of a few plays on classical models. Such are the comedies of Hroswitha, a nun of Gandersheim, which are largely inspired by Terence; and the Χριστὸς Πασχων, a Greek play on the Passion, incorporating several hundred lines of Euripides. This work, long attributed to St. Gregory Nazianzene, is most probably a production of the tenth century. Neither it nor Hroswitha's comedies exercised any influence on the development of the mediaeval drama.

soon introduced, and Easter became the season of especially elaborate ritual. A highly impressive ceremony was the burial of the crucifix on Good Friday in a sepulchre within the church, and its disinterment, amidst jubilant strains, upon the following Sunday. In another of the Easter services a dramatic colloquy took place between two choirmen representing St. Peter and St. John, and three others in albs, personating the three Maries, who announce the Resurrection to the disciples[1].

Such ceremonies readily developed into *liturgical plays*, written in Latin, and acted by the priests in the churches. Soon other incidents in the Gospel story, and episodes in the lives of the saints, attracted the clerical dramatists, and thus a severance began between the liturgy and the scenic representations of which it had been the source. The plays dealing with scriptural events were originally called *Mysteries*, while those which handled legends of the saints were distinguished by the name of *Miracles*. In England, however, the former term seems never to have taken root, and the title of *Miracle* was given indiscriminately to all species of sacred plays. They were almost certainly unknown in this country till after the Norman Conquest, and the first performance of which we have record may be assigned to about 1100. The play acted was in honour of St. Katherine, and was written by a certain Geoffrey, a member of the University of Paris, who afterwards became Abbot of St. Alban's. Testimony to the popularity of *Miracles* in London is given by William Fitzstephen in his *Life of Becket*, about 1180, and at an earlier date in the twelfth century an Englishman, Hilarius, who was a pupil of Abelard, wrote three sacred plays, which have been preserved. The subjects are the story of Daniel, the Raising of Lazarus, and a miracle of St. Nicholas. The dialogue was in Latin, but French refrains were occasionally introduced, and we thus get the first hint of an all-important change—the substitution of the vernacular for the language of the Church. The earliest play in the common tongue that has come down to us is the Norman *Adam*, dating from the thirteenth century. It is probable that the English *Miracles* had their beginning at the same period, though there is none extant that goes back quite so far.

The rise of the *vernacular sacred drama* was associated with a number of important changes. The plays passed from the church to the churchyard, but the latter soon became unable to accommodate the crowds who flocked to the spectacle, especially at fair-times.

[1] See Pollard's Introduction to his edition of extracts from the *English Miracle Plays, Moralities and Interludes*, pp. xiv–xvi. I am indebted to this Introduction for valuable suggestions, especially on the subject of the *Morality*.

Hence a further migration took place into the adjoining meadows, and eventually into the streets and squares of the market-towns. This change of *locale* involved a change of performers. The clergy, who had naturally been the actors within the sacred building, could not well take part in entertainments whose surroundings had become entirely secular. A papal edict in 1210 forbade their appearance on the stage, and the prohibition was repeated by the Council of Treves in 1227. Yet, in spite of such decrees, the inferior Church officials continued to share in the performances. Thus Chaucer's parish clerk, 'joly Absolon,' used to display his talents in the part of Herod 'on a scaffold hie.' But by the end of the thirteenth century the representation had passed almost entirely into the hands of the laity, especially the trade-guilds, who in a number of towns took over the entire arrangements. A great impetus was given to the dramatic activity of the guilds by a decree of the Council of Vienne, 1311, ordaining the strict observance of the feast of *Corpus Christi* on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. This day was adopted by many of the guilds as their chief festival, and as it is generally one of the longest in the year, it lent itself to the production of an elaborate 'cycle' of plays in which each craft could enact a separate scene. Neither trouble nor expense was spared to secure a creditable performance. A notice of the Chester plays states that the actors were 'the occupacions and companies' in the city, and that 'the charges and costs thereof which was great was theirs also.' A bill preserved at Coventry gives a list of the items spent at the rehearsals and performance of one of these 'pageants,' and another document contains a quaint account of the sums disbursed for 'properties,' from 'a pair of gloves for God' to a 'pollaxe for Pilate's son.' From the municipal records at York we learn that great care was taken to choose and train competent actors. A proclamation of April 3, 1476, ordained:

'That yerely in the time of lentyn there shall be called afore the maire for the tyme being iiij of the most connyng discrete and able players within this citie, to serche, here, and examen all the plaiers and plaies and pagentes throughout all the artificers belonging to Corpus Xti Plaie. And all such as they shall find sufficiant in personne and connyng, to the honour of the citie, and worship of the saide craftes for to admitte and able; and all other insufficiant personnes either in connyng, voice or personne to discharge, ammove, and avoide.'

The Corporation at York also issued stringent regulations for the control of street-traffic during the performances, which were conducted on what may be called a rotatory system. The spectators took their places at various 'stations' throughout the town, and

each scene, acted on a movable scaffold drawn by horses, passed in succession before them. The *locus classicus* on the subject is the account by Archdeacon Rogers of one of the last performances of the Whitsun plays at Chester in 1594:

'Every company had his pagiant or parte, which pagiants weare a high scafolde with two rowmes, a higher and a lower, upon four wheeles. In the lower they apparelled them selves, and in the higher rowme they played, being all open on the tope, that all behoulders mighte heare and see them. The places where they played them was in every streete. They begane first at the abay gates, and when the firste pagiante was played it was wheeled to the highe crosse before the mayor, and so to every streete: and soe every streete had a pagiant playing before them at one time, till all the pagiantes for the day appointed were played.'

It is not surprising that performances arranged on this elaborate scale drew not only crowds of humbler folk, like Chaucer's Wife of Bath, who in Lent was wont to frequent preachings, pilgrimages, and 'plays of miracles,' but also the highest in the land, including at times the King himself. Thus we hear of Richard II being present at the York 'pageants,' and of Richard III visiting the Coventry plays in 1484.

The golden era of the religious drama begins about the middle of the fourteenth century, and extends over a period of about one hundred and fifty years. Throughout this time Miracle Plays were acted with great success in nearly every part of England. It is probable that the earliest performances in the vernacular took place in the East-Midland district, and spread thence to the North, finding in Yorkshire specially congenial soil. York, Beverley, and Woodkirk became important dramatic centres, and the influence extended as far as Newcastle. In the West the chief home of the pageants was Chester, but there are traces of them at Lancaster, Preston, and Kendall. Coventry was their principal seat in the Midlands, though they were performed also at Worcester, Tewkesbury, and Reading. London and Canterbury each had its series, and Miracle cycles flourished even in distant Cornwall and across the Irish Sea in Dublin.

Of the mass of literature which thus sprang up only a portion has come down to us, but it comprises four complete cycles, besides fragments from series that have disappeared from view. The extant cycles are known as the York, Towneley, Chester, and Coventry plays, and each embraces the main events of Biblical history from the Fall of Satan to the Day of Judgement. The *York* plays (which were not printed till 1885) are probably the most ancient. They are spoken of in 1394 as being 'of old time,' and they often emplo

the early alliterative long lines, though rhymed and arranged in stanzas. They contain forty-eight pieces, and in their choice of subjects they strikingly resemble the great religious poem, *Cursor Mundi*, written by a native of the Durham district in the early part of the fourteenth century. This cycle, composed and acted under metropolitan auspices, was naturally dignified and reverent in tone, though full of dramatic life and energy. The central theme of the Passion and Crucifixion is elaborated with a painful but deeply impressive realism. Special prominence is given to the Nativity and the domestic life of the Holy Family, as also to the ascension of Mary and the relations between Mother and Son in heaven[1].

Closely allied to the York cycle is the *Towneley* series, so called because the only known MSS. was long in the possession of the Towneley family. A tradition current in that family assigned them to 'the Abbey of Widkirk near Wakefield.' Widkirk is doubtless a mistake for Woodkirk, about four miles from Wakefield, where there was a cell of Augustinian Canons. The connexion with Wakefield is proved by various points of internal evidence. At the head of the first play is written 'Wakefelde, Barkers' (i.e. Tanners), and in one place there is an allusion to the 'shroges' or moorland of Horbery, a neighbouring village. But the whole cycle cannot have been peculiar to the Wakefield district, for of the thirty-two plays which it contains five are practically identical with the corresponding 'pageants' in the York series. In spite, however, of this close connexion between the two groups, the Towneley cycle has marked characteristics of its own. Its dialect has, as a rule, a more rustic flavour, and broadly humorous elements are much more abundant, as in the scenes between Cain and Abel, between Noah and his wife, and the Shepherds on the eve of the Nativity[2].

The *Chester* plays are twenty-five in number and were performed at Whitsuntide. They probably date originally from the end of the fourteenth century, and have remarkable points of similarity to the French *Mystère du Vieil Testament*, from which they may have been partly adapted. Ten Brinck is of opinion that the series underwent considerable revision, for it exhibits a singular uniformity of style and metre. Nearly all the plays are written in an eight-lined rhyming stanza, with a smooth and even movement. The element of popular humour is present, as in the Towneley cycle, but the fun is, on the whole, less boisterous, though the Shepherds' play in its

1 On other special characteristics of the York cycle see Miss L. Toulmin-Smith's introduction to her edition of the plays.
2 A full account of the Towneley cycle is given by Miss Bates in her book on *The English Religious Drama*, chap. 2.

homely country realism does not lag far behind its Yorkshire counterparts. A didactic tendency is visible in the introduction of an Expositor, who at the end of each play explains its significance and lesson.

The didactic element reappears, greatly intensified, in the collection known as the *Coventry* cycle. On the fly-leaf of the MSS. which belonged to Sir Robert Cotton, there is a note by Dr. Richard James, his librarian: *Contenta Novi Testamenti scenice expressa et actitata olim per monachos sive fratres mendicantes: vulgo dicitur hic liber Ludus Coventriae, sive Ludus Corporis Christi.* On the strength of this inscription, the series has been identified with that performed on *Corpus Christi* day by the Grey Friars at Coventry. But it is very doubtful whether this cycle belongs to the Midland town at all. The concluding lines of the prologue, which announce that the play will be begun 'in N- town' on Sunday next 'at six of the belle,' point to a performance by a strolling company rather than by a resident body of clergy. Moreover, the linguistic evidence suggests a connexion not with Coventry, but with the North-East Midlands, a district conspicuous for its dramatic activity in the fifteenth century, to whose earlier years this cycle may be attributed[1]. There are forty-two pageants, of which only seven deal with Old-Testament history, and these entirely lack the humorous elements of the Towneley and Chester plays. The history of the Virgin, drawn chiefly from the *Apocryphal Gospels*, is treated at great length, and one of the chief aims of the series is to promote Mariolatry. The didactic speeches are put into the mouth of *Contemplacio*, and other personifications appear on the scene; *Veritas, Misericordia, Justicia,* and *Pax* hold dialogue together in heaven, and *Mors* makes his entry into Herod's palace. In the introduction of these allegorical figures, as also in the special prominence assigned to the Devil, the Coventry plays anticipate the *Moralities.*

Having thus outlined the distinctive features of the four extant Miracle cycles, we may briefly consider certain aspects of the sacred drama common to them all. It was only under peculiar conditions that such a form of art could exist. A naïve conventionality was of its very essence. To adequately represent upon the stage spiritual beings and conceptions is impossible; all the more daring attempts to solve the difficulty hang perilously between the sublime and the ridiculous. The frankly insufficient devices of an uncritical age are

1 For a fuller discussion of these points see Ten Brink's *History of English Literature*, vol. ii. pp. 294–6 (German edition).

really far more successful, just because the gulf between the reality and the symbol remains so manifestly unbridged. Shakspere indeed was afterwards to ridicule the stage-artifices of his day; Starveling coming on with a bush and a lanthorn to 'disfigure or present' Moonshine is doubtless fit matter for mirth. But it was the survival of these conventionalities from the era of the miracle-pageants that made possible some of his own finest effects. The fairy-world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* the ghosts in *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar,* the witches in *Macbeth,* Ariel and Caliban in *The Tempest,* could all be easily brought upon a stage where a crudely simple representation of the supernatural was traditional. The more fastidious spirit of the modern theatre, striving after a less inadequate realization of the unseen world, has often merely aroused the critical faculty without satisfying it.

Closely akin to the treatment of the supernatural in the *Miracles* is the treatment of history. The first claim made to-day upon a writer who deals with a period of the Past is that he should steep himself in its spirit and reconstruct as far as possible its form and pressure. The method followed in the *Miracles* is diametrically the reverse. It ignores all distinctions of time or place. The personages in the plays are Jews or Romans, but there is no attempt to reproduce the life of the East or of classical antiquity. On the contrary, we see before us the knights, the churchmen, the burghers of the Middle Ages, with their religions and social surroundings. Thus in the York plays Noah speaks of the rainbow as a sign to 'all Christen men'; and Joseph, before the birth of Christ, appeals to the 'God in Trinite.' In the Towneley cycle Pharao and Herod swear by 'Mahowne,' and one of the shepherds, at the time of the Nativity, invokes 'Jesus o' Nazorus, Crucyefixus.' In the Coventry series the Jewish high priest appears as a mediaeval bishop with his court for the trial of ecclesiastical offences, in which those fare best who pay best. Herod and Pilate are practically feudal lords, the one an arbitrary tyrant, the other ready to do justice in 'Parliament'; Satan himself is the Great Duke of Hell; and, most curious of all, the wicked queen on the Judgement Day is found appealing to knight or baron to wrest the law on her behalf. Thus Shakspere, when he placed his Roman and Celtic characters amidst the conditions of his own time, was perpetuating a distinctive feature of the early English drama.

There is another less obvious aspect in which the religious playwrights anticipated the method of their mighty successor. Their treatment of their originals—the Bible and the *Apocryphal Gospels*

the performance would take place 'on the grene in ryall array.' Thus for the movable series of 'pageants' on which the *Miracles* were played we have now substituted a single temporary erection shaped like a castle in the centre, and with four stations, one at each corner, for the World, the Flesh, the Devil, and God. Underneath the castle is a bed whence appears *Humanum Genus*, as an infant, naked save for the baptismal cloth on his head. A good and a bad angel at once begin to struggle for his soul, and the latter wins the day. In the next scene *Humanum Genus*, grown to youth's estate, is introduced to the World, who confides him to the care of the Flesh, the Devil, the Seven Deadly Sins, and other undesirable companions. But his Good Angel, with the aid of Confession and Shrift, rescues him from his sins, and lodges him for safety in the *Castell of Perseverance*. Then begins an assault of the castle by the Seven Deadly Sins led by the Devil, but the Virtues beat them back with roses, emblems of Christ's Passion. The World then calls in the help of Covetousness, who lures *Humanum Genus*, now an old man, out of the castle, by the gift of 100 marks. The money, which is not to be lent to the Church or to the poor, is hidden underground, but when Death prepares to strike down *Humanum Genus* the World claims it as his inheritance. Wretched and bereft of all, *Humanum Genus* mounts before the throne of God, where Truth, Justice, Peace, and Mercy argue over his fate. Mercy's plea is heard; the sinner is saved by the grace of the Father in heaven.

The World and the Child, printed in 1522, belongs, as characteristics of style and metre show, to a much earlier date. It is similar in scope to the *Castell of Perseverance*, but it does not carry us beyond the grave. A newborn child is called by his mother Dalliance. In boyhood the world renames him Wanton. When fourteen years are gone he gets the fresh title of Lust-and-Liking, and is dismissed to a life of pleasure. At twenty-one he is styled Manhood, and is given as companions the Seven Deadly Sins. But now Conscience addresses him in the guise of a monk, and declaring himself 'a teacher of the spirituality,' warns him against consorting with these associates. Manhood is on the point of obeying him, when Folly enters, 'born in Holborn,' and with London as his chief dwelling. Manhood takes him into his service, and is thus brought to misery. In his last state he is called Age, and repents of his misdeeds. Perseverance then appears, to remind him of the counsels of Conscience, and christening him Repentance, bids him be of good hope.

But of these early *Moralities* the most impressive and ably-

planned is *Everyman.* God sends His mighty messenger, Death, to summon Everyman on his long journey. No respite can be granted, but he is allowed to take with him any friends who will bear him company. Fellowship and Kindred both refuse; Gold makes mock of his request. He then betakes him to Good Deeds; but she lies helpless and cannot accompany him till her sister Knowledge has guided him to Confession, by whom he is released from his sins. Good Deeds is then set free, and accompanied by her, starts on his journey, taking with him also Strength, Discretion, Beauty, and Five Wits. But, beside the grave, all these desert him, and Good Deeds alone remains to plead for his soul, and see it taken up to heaven. *Everyman* thus deals nominally with only the final episode in human life, but its construction is so ingenious that it reaches back over all that has gone before. It is this breadth of design that distinguishes the *Morality* in its earlier and higher form from its later developments, which may be more appropriately termed *Moral Interludes.* These, as Pollard has pointed out, 'seldom greatly exceed a thousand lines in length, they required no stage accessories, and could mostly be performed by four or five players dividing the parts among them. In place of the whole of man's life in its relation to its eternal issues, they deal with mere fragments of it, and their moral teaching is confined to exhortations against the besetting sins of youth, and to the praise of learning and studiousness.' It is in these *Moral Interludes* that the *Vice* plays a prominent part. The *Morality* had retained, amidst its personified abstractions, the Devil of the Miracle plays, and the *Vice* was now added as an attendant. He is the elfin spirit of evil that takes all forms, but is at root ever the same. Thus he appeared under varied titles—Iniquity, Hypocrisy, Shift, Fraud, and the like. He was dressed in a fool's coat, and, like the Harlequin, wore a vizor and carried a wooden sword. His business was to move the audience to merriment by his gibes and antics, generally at the expense of the Devil, on whose back he was finally carried off to hell. We find in the Elizabethan drama, especially in Jonson's works, lingering echoes of the impression he created, and in his rôle of jester he may claim to be in part the forerunner of the Shaksperean Fool.

The *Moral Interludes,* which deal with the temptations of youth, belong chiefly to the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary, and have generally a controversial tendency. Thus *Lusty Juventus* is a dramatic 'tract for the times' on the side of the Reformation. It opens with a pretty lyric, with the refrain, 'In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure,' sung by Juventus, or Youth. He is interrupted in his

merriment by Good Counsel and Knowledge, who take him to task for his religious ignorance, and imbue him with strict Protestant principles. This puts the Devil on his mettle, and he sends as a companion to Juventus his son Hypocrisy, the *Vice* of the piece, who introduces him to Abominable Living. In her company he follows evil courses till at last he is rescued by his former tutors, who renew their instructions in Divinity. Juventus repents, and ends the play with appropriate Lutheran sentiments.

The champions of the orthodox faith naturally rejoined in kind to such attacks, and among their contributions to this polemical stage-literature are *Hycke-Scorner* and its recast in the reign of Mary, *The Interlude of Youth.* The other, and more attractive, class of these *Moral Interludes* is not concerned with religion, but with the 'new learning' introduced by the Renaissance. The earliest play of the kind that has been preserved is *The Nature of the Four Elements.* The Messenger who speaks the prologue laments that English books deal only with 'toys and trifles,' and that 'works of gravity' are to be found only in Latin and Greek. Then Nature enters with Humanity, whom she instructs in the properties of the elements. Studious Desire continues the lecture, which is interrupted by the entrance of Sensual Appetite, a rollicking character, who carries off thirsty Humanity to a tavern. After he has been refreshed, the traveller Experience instructs him in geography, but Ignorance breaks in with a song and dance. Then Nature reappears and warns Humanity that while mirth is allowable within limits, he must make study his chief concern. Similarly didactic in its tendency is the interlude of *Wyt and Science,* written by John Redford, probably in the latter part of Henry VIII's reign. It traces the adventures of Wit, who is wooing Science, the daughter of Reason and Experience. He is led astray by Ignorance and Idleness, and suffers a defeat at the hands of the giant Tediousness, whom, however, he finally overthrows. He is then robed in the gown of Knowledge, and united in wedlock to the lady of his heart.

But these *Moral Interludes,* with their echoes of the Reformation and the Renaissance, carry us beyond the mediaeval atmosphere. The novel forces of which they were in part the product were destined eventually to crush them out of existence. Indeed, neither in its earlier or later form had the *Morality* so prolonged or vigorous a life as the Miracle cycle, and the personifications whom it substitutes for the Biblical figures of the older plays are often less interesting and vitally conceived than their predecessors. Yet an immense step was taken when the drama shook itself free from its exclusive

dependence on Scriptural themes. In the *Miracles* the playwright had been compelled to confine himself within prescribed limits; his plot was determined beforehand, and he could only vary it in details. But the writers of *Moralities* and *Moral Interludes* had to invent their own framework, and this liberty in choice of theme once asserted, it was inevitable that other than abstract figures should gradually be introduced on the stage. Indeed, abstractions like Folly, Abominable Living, or Hypocrisy, only became dramatically effective in proportion as they ceased to be allegorical symbols, and took the concrete shape of typical human representatives of the vice in question. It was natural that a writer of realistic temper should push this tendency to its logical issue, and, boldly dispensing with personifications, should introduce in their place familiar social types.

Such a writer was John Heywood, who enjoyed the favour of Henry VIII and of Mary. He is the creator of a peculiar dramatic species, which has been distinguished as the *Satirical Interlude,* though the satire is bright and genial. Orthodox in doctrine, he yet had a keen eye for clerical failings, and these he rallied with much of the racy vigour of Chaucer in his *Mery Play between Johan the Husbond, Tyb his Wyfe, and Syr Jhon the Preest,* and in the *Mery Play between the Pardoner and the Frere, the Curate and neghbour Pratte.* More comprehensive in its range is his chief work, *The Four P's,* which hits at clergy and laity alike. It introduces four stock characters of mediaeval society, the Palmer, the Pardoner, the Poticary, and the Pedlar. The dialogue is opened by the Palmer, a professional pilgrim, who relates how, in the hope of saving his soul, he has journeyed 'in many a fair and far country,' and gone the round of all the shrines. The Pardoner, the seller of Papal indulgences, sneeringly retorts that he is a fool for his pains. Why wander over the world in search of salvation when it can be obtained much more easily and comfortably at home? An indulgence bought at his own door will do as much for him as a voyage 'thrice to Jericho'; for the trifling expenditure of a penny or twopence,

> 'In half an hour, or three-quarters at most,
> The soul is in heaven with the Holy Ghost.'

While the two men of religion are disputing about the merits of their rival methods, the Poticary breaks in with a word for the medical profession. How seldom is it that an honest man is ushered into the next world 'without help of the Poticary'! Thus the duel becomes triangular, when the Pedlar enters, and he is appointed umpire. He disclaims any competence to judge in things spiritual, but he has 'some skill in lying,' and if the competitors will give a dis-

play of their powers in that art, of which he knows them all to be past masters, he will make his award. The Poticary leads off with a sensational story of a marvellous cure that he has effected. The Pardoner caps this with his burlesque account of his 'harrowing of Hell' to rescue the soul of his friend Margery Corson. There are few passages in our early literature to surpass this episode for humour and verve. Lucifer and all the devils, who 'have more to do' with two women than with the rest of their 'charge,' are only too delighted to get rid of such a shrew, and 'roar' with joy at her delivery. This gives the Palmer his chance : he declares that he cannot understand why women have so bad a reputation in hell, as, though he has met on his travels half a million of the sex, he has never seen or known 'any one woman out of patience.' Such a quintessential falsehood simply takes away the breath of the listeners; not only the judge, but even his two rivals, unanimously acknowledge the Palmer's victory, and the piece ends with a few serious words from the Pedlar on the right use of pilgrimages and pardons.

The Four P's is the last typical utterance on the stage of the Pre-Renaissance spirit in this country. It shows absolutely no trace of foreign influence, and is English to the core alike in its excellences and its faults. Its dialogue is pungent and nervous in a high degree; its sketches of character are firm and effective; its mixture of good sense, humour, and piety is singularly pleasing. But it lacks the distinctive mark of the higher drama, for in spite of the neatness of the *dénouement,* there is nothing that can seriously be called a plot. Many of the features that go to make a first-rate comedy are present, but we miss one that is essential—the constructive faculty. This was a gift almost entirely withheld from the mediaeval playwrights, and in his lack of it Heywood proves himself a late-born son of the era which produced the *Miracle* and the *Morality.* Before his death the new learning had begun to familiarize men with higher dramatic types, and the old-world forms had had their day.

It is true that allegorical figures are found in some of the early Elizabethan comedies, and in such first-fruits of native tragedy and chronicle-history as *Cambises, Apius and Virginia,* and Bale's *Kynge Johan.* Moreover, the representation of *Moralities* and of *Miracles* continued till the opening of the seventeenth century, and thus overlapped with the production of *Hamlet.* Hence it is something worthier than love of picturesque anecdote that prompts us to accept the statement of biographers, supported by apparent reminiscences in his works, that Shakspere in his boyhood had made

the short pilgrimage from Stratford to Coventry, to witness the famous *Corpus Christi* pageant. It is genuinely significant that the historic continuity of our dramatic literature should thus have been preserved. But by this time the Miracle cycles and the *Moralities* were a mediaeval survival amidst the surroundings of the Renaissance. By their very nature they were wanting in flexibility and power of adaptation to a novel environment; their decay was inevitable, and left no regrets behind. But they had done an all-important work. They had kept the theatre alive through centuries whose instinct was largely hostile to it. They had preserved and popularized the knowledge of stage conventions and technique. They had identified the drama with the national life, and had ensured it against monopoly by a single class or school. They had based it on a moral foundation which, shaken by the tumultuous forces of the new age, was to be relaid, deep and broad, by the master-builder Shakspere.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY RENAISSANCE DRAMA

ENGLISH literature, though its spirit is so distinctively national, has throughout its course been highly sensitive to foreign influences. To Italian stimulus, more especially, our writers, from Chaucer to Browning, have responded with alacrity; and through the thinner if purer veins of our native poetry there tingles a stream of the rich, full southern blood. Thus, at the eventful epoch which we now reach in the history of the drama, it is from Florence and Rome that a fresh and dominant impulse comes. To trace the course of the Renaissance in Italy is not within our present scope. It is sufficient to note how from the middle of the fourteenth century onward scholars and poets were busied in bringing to life again the buried past of the ancient world: how this movement was gradually accelerated and intensified till it took the form of a violent recoil from mediaevalism and a return to the classical sense of the dignity and interest of human life; how this 'new birth' of a feeling long dead found a majestic expression in architecture, painting, and letters, and gave to the southern peninsula the intellectual primacy of Europe. So when, towards the beginning of the Tudor period, Italy and England were brought into closer communication than before, the southern country could put forth a double claim to the homage of the island power; she appeared bringing forth from her treasury things old and new. She could point to the recent productions of her genius, to the poems of Ariosto and Tasso, the histories of Guicciardini and Machiavelli, to novels, plays, treatises innumerable. But, in a certain sense, all this splendid achievement was an imitation, a reflex of the infinitely more glorious Past of Classical Antiquity. It was as the inheritor, guardian, interpreter of this Past that Italy stood forth unassailably supreme, the one law-giver in things intellectual. Was it not natural that England, destitute of literary traditions, of fixed native forms of art—for Chaucer's language and metrical system had become more than half obsolete—should bow before these august credentials and accept the methods and models proferred to her from the south? What was to be gained by hazardous experiments in prose or verse, when here at hand were methods and forms of tested efficiency and immemorial prestige? So in every branch of letters we find England following a foreign or classical

lead. It almost seemed as if native effort would be stifled by alien pressure, and that no more honourable portion was reserved for our literature than to become a series of lifeless imitations of imported models. But, happily, before it was too late, English genius rose insurgent and vindicated its claim to independent life and power. It is the struggle of the spontaneous, national instinct with external forces that forms one of the most striking aspects of Elizabethan literature, and, in particular measure, of the Elizabethan drama. It may therefore be taken as a leading thread through the period upon which we now enter.

The play which opens this period, *Ralph Roister Doister*, was written about 1550, by Nicholas Udall, Headmaster of Eton and afterwards of Westminster. As might be expected from the position of its author, it exhibits in full force the classical influences of the Renaissance, and proves that they were needed to produce the decisive dramatic combination of plot, dialogue, and action which Heywood failed to attain. *Ralph Roister Doister* is founded upon the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus, who is mentioned with Terence in the Prologue as 'bearing the bell' among the learned of the day. Its two principal characters, Ralph Roister Doister, a pusillanimous, vain, and foolish braggart, and Matthew Merigreek, a needy adventurer and parasite, who makes him his tool, are types directly borrowed from the Roman stage. But they are adapted with considerable skill to the conditions of English life, and made the chief actors in a *bourgeois* drama, whose plot is natural and well-constructed. Ralph is in love with Christian Custance, a widow betrothed to a merchant, Gawin Goodluck, who is away on a voyage. During Goodluck's absence, Ralph, through the agency of Merigreek, besieges the widow with letters, vows, and visits. She rates this persistent suitor at his true value, but in a spirit of fun gives some encouragement to his attentions. Goodluck arrives home unexpectedly, and finding an apparent courtship in progress between Custance and Ralph, is aroused to jealousy. But Ralph's own foolish speeches help to clear up the situation, and the play ends with his exposure and discomfiture. Thus the comedy, as is interesting to note, turns to some degree upon the same pivot as *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and however immeasurably inferior in the qualities of humour and imagination, it may claim to be a respectable forerunner of Shakspere's farcical masterpiece. Its versification is simple and natural, and with a certain note of homely refinement, but it is monotonous in its flow, and lacking in the vigour and verve of Heywood's metre in *The Four P's*.

Inferior alike in conception and execution to *Roister Doister* is *Gammer Gurton's Needle,* dated about 1566, and generally ascribed to John Still, Master in turn of St. John's and Trinity at Cambridge, and Bishop of Bath and Wells. The play, unlike its predecessor, is by no means such as we should have expected from a scholarly hand, and it furnishes a negative, as *Roister Doister* a positive, proof that it was only under classical guidance that comedy of the higher type could as yet be written in England. It is a coarse and vigorous sketch of low country life, without a connected plot, and turning upon a single farcical incident. Gammer Gurton loses her needle, and Diccon the Bedlam, a mischief-making rogue and vagabond, with many of the characteristics of the *Vice* of the Morality, accuses Dame Chat, the ale-wife, of stealing it. Hence arises a sad imbroglio into which the whole village is gradually drawn. But, when the commotion is at its height, peace is restored by the discovery of the missing needle sticking in the breeches of Hodge, the Gammer's farm-servant. The humour of the piece is rude and slight, but, as Ward has pointed out, it is the first English play which employs the device, so often since put to brilliant use, of making the action of the drama turn upon the fortunes of an inanimate property.

In the same year as *Gammer Gurton's Needle* was performed at Christ's College, another comedy, more suited to the hall of a learned society, was acted at Gray's Inn. This was the *Supposes* of George Gascoigne, a translation of the *Gli Suppositi* of Ariosto, which, in its turn, was constructed from materials supplied by Terence and Plautus. The work is important for several reasons. It is our first humorous play in prose; it suggested part of the plot of *The Taming of the Shrew*; and it illustrates the influence on our stage, not of the Roman drama direct, but of that drama as interpreted by the Italian playwrights[1].

We have thus briefly traced the development of comedy, and have seen that it is the resultant of English, Italian, and classical influences combined, though, in this branch of the drama, the native elements were sufficiently powerful to absorb and give colour to the others. If we turn to tragedy, we shall find that here the alien forces were far more aggressive, and that they made a determined effort to capture the whole field. It is therefore important to realize clearly their exact nature. To the modern student ancient tragedy means, and practically means only, the Athenian drama of the fifth

1 For an account of the influence of the Italian Renaissance drama on the English, see Mr. Churton Collins' *The Predecessors of Shakspere*, in his *Essays and Studies*. In this essay, which has been reprinted since the above chapter was written, Mr. Collins shows that the various forms of the Elizabethan drama had their prototypes on the Italian stage.

century B.C. That drama deals, as a rule, with a definite crisis or entanglement rather than the gradual development of a character or intrigue: hence its action is usually confined within narrow limits both of time and space. Treating, moreover, stately and solemn themes, it tends to avoid, though with no uniform austerity, the intermixture of lighter episodes, and permeated with the Greek artistic sense it keeps in the background all realistic details of suffering or death. But these features are the spontaneous outcome of a natural instinct; they are not due to the conscious observance of fixed canons or rules. They are not arbitrary limitations upon the free action of the dramatic spirit, but rather the methods through which that spirit elects to work. Thus had the men of the Elizabethan age been brought into immediate contact with Aeschylus and Sophocles, they would have felt the force of a creative activity, genuinely inspired and inspiring. But this was as far as possible from being the case. After the great masters, with their living and plastic energies, invariably follow the imitators, the pedants, the formalists. In his critical treatise, the *Poetics*, Aristotle, by the mere act of analysis, went some way to systematize and reduce to rule what had been instinctive in the dramatists themselves. Later on, the Romans, with their passion for legal accuracy and precision, carried the process further, with the final result that the free dramatic spirit was handed over to the arbitrary despotism of the 'Unities.'

The outcome of five centuries of gradual degeneration may be seen in the tragedies of Seneca, the Roman dramatist of the time of Nero[1]. In these plays there is little action, and, in its place, we have sententious dialogue, born of the rhetorical and forensic faculty, not of the poetic. Unfortunately for the world, the age of the Renaissance in Italy had much in common with the Neronian age in Rome, and, with a fatal instinct, out of the classical treasures laid bare to its view, it fastened upon these compositions of Seneca as its models of dramatic art. Its playwrights imitated and reproduced them with unceasing diligence, and sought to bring the other literatures of Europe under their spell. Their success in France is among the commonplaces in the history of the drama. In England, there was the danger of a similar result. Here too it was Seneca, not Sophocles, who was taken as the true type of classical art. Between the years 1559 and 1566 five English authors are found translating his plays, a complete edition of which was published in 1581. Accord-

[1] For a full account of Seneca's characteristics and their bearing on our dramatic literature, see the interesting monograph, *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*, by J. W. Cunliffe. The same subject is treated in Rudolf Fischer's *Zur Kunstentwicklung der Englischen Tragodie*.

ing to Nash (in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, 1589) this version was a storehouse of phrases to contemporary dramatists, 'English Seneca read by candlelight yields many good sentences, as *Blood is a beggar* and so forth'. But a more important tribute to Seneca's influence than this translation was the production of an English tragedy, *Gorboduc* or *Ferrex and Porrex*, modelled as closely as possible upon his style. The play was the joint work of Thomas Norton, a lawyer of eminence, and Thomas Sackville, afterwards Lord Buckhurst, a brilliant courtier and man of letters. It was acted, for the first time, in January, 1562, before Elizabeth, at the Inner Temple. The plot is drawn from the legendary history of early Britain, and, in its main motive, reminds us of *King Lear*. It shows how Gorboduc, the king, divides his realm during his lifetime between his two sons Ferrex and Porrex, and how from this rash act spring unnatural crime, 'domestic fury and fierce civil strife.' While the story is thus thoroughly national, the treatment is completely in the debased classical manner. There is no attempt to exhibit character in action, no collision of personalities, no development on the stage of incident or intrigue. The *dramatis personae* come upon the scene only to utter long sententious monologues; the murders, rebellions, battles, with which the plot is rife, do not take place before the eyes of the spectators, but are related by messengers. The play, in imitation of the Roman model, is divided into five acts, a practice which henceforth became universal in tragedy. Each act is preceded by an allegorical dumb show, and concluded by a chorus spoken by 'four ancient and sage men of Britain,' who moralize upon the situation.

Thus *Gorboduc* is Senecan to the core, and judged from this standard it has very real merits. Its theme is serious, and of tragic significance; the treatment is dignified and, from the special point of view, adequate; there is no lack (to use Sidney's words) of 'stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style.' As a fact, it is in the language rather than in the matter that the main interest of the play lies. In their attempt to be completely faithful to their classical model, the authors discarded the rhymed metres which had hitherto been the sole dramatic vehicle, and adopted in its place the new blank verse which Surrey had just used for his translation of the *Aeneid*, and which seemed to them, as to him, to be the one way of reproducing the unrhymed measures of Greece and Rome. Thus the use of blank verse was, in the first instance, due, like so much else in that age, to conscious and deliberate imitation; it came of the same spirit that strove to force the

Hexameter and the Sapphic upon English poetry. Yet the one experiment resulted in glorious success, and the other in disastrous failure. The reason thereof lay in a vital difference, overlooked by the men of the time. The genuine classical metres are based upon the principle of quantity, and they can never be reproduced save as the feeblest of exotics, in the modern languages which take accent as the basis of their prosody. But the heroic measure, the iambic pentameter employed by Surrey, Sackville, and Norton, is native to our tongue : by throwing aside rhyme, though it gains immeasurably in freedom, flexibility, and range, in its essential nature it continues unaltered. The verse of *Gorboduc,* though not without vigour in parts, is monotonous and stiff, but it had in it, far beyond the conception of those who first used it, infinite possibilities. They had thought of it as a pale replica of classical measures : it was really destined to an existence in the world of art as independent, as glorious, as immortal as theirs. To have discovered the fitness of blank verse for high dramatic purposes is the distinctive achievement of the English classical playwrights.

Sackville and Norton soon found followers among the scholars and wits of the day. We have already seen that in 1566 the members of Gray's Inn acted a prose comedy translated by Gascoigne from the Italian ; together with it was performed a tragedy by the same author, called *Jocasta,* and modelled upon an adaptation from Euripides, by Dolce, the Italian translator of Seneca. Like *Gorboduc* it was written in blank verse, and introduced choruses and explanatory opening scenes of dumb show. Another drama directly inspired by Senecan influence is *Tancred and Gismunda,* written and performed by members of the Inner Temple, in 1568. The plot is borrowed from the *Decamerone,* but the style is modelled on that of the Roman playwright. In the 'epistle dedicatory' the work is asserted to be 'in stateliness of show, depth of conceit, or true ornaments of poetical art, inferior to none of the best in that kind : no, were the Roman Seneca the censurer.' Originally written in rhyme, it was afterwards recast into blank verse, to recommend it more fully to the fastidious taste of the polite world. It employs the classical machinery of prologue, chorus, and messenger; and the principal incidents, except the death of the heroine and her father in the last act, take place behind the scenes.

In 1587 the gentlemen of Gray's Inn, whose theatrical activity is worth noting, produced at Greenwich before the Queen another work in the Senecan style, *The Misfortunes of Arthur.* The body of the play is from the hand of Thomas Hughes, but various members of

the Inn contributed. The story, as in the case of *Gorboduc*, is drawn from the legendary annals of early Britain, and was peculiarly adapted to classical treatment, for its theme is one dear to ancient dramatists, the ruin of a royal house through wanton crime. Uther Pendragon, in adulterous love with the wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, whom he afterwards slays, begets a son and daughter, Arthur and Anne. These, in their turn, by incestuous union, have a son Mordred, who, when grown to man's estate, seduces Guenevora, the wife of Arthur's later years. Hence arises war between father and son, ending in the death of Mordred at Arthur's hand. It is with the final episode, the conflict between Arthur and Mordred, that the drama mainly deals. It is opened by the Ghost of Gorlois, so foully wronged, who cries for revenge upon the sinful house of Uther, and who, at the end of the play, retires appeased by the penalties of blood. The Ghost is directly borrowed from Seneca, and is thus of distinctly classical origin, though we shall see later to what high destinies it was advanced by Romantic art. Yet even in *The Misfortunes of Arthur* its introduction is neither unskilful nor unimpressive, and, indeed, the play has real merit throughout, and marks an advance upon *Gorboduc*[1]. The characters of Arthur and Mordred have individuality and force; the blank verse is often spirited and vigorous; the whole tone of the drama is less artificial than that of its predecessor. In fact, as has been pointed out by Ward, it has the distinction of reminding us in parts of Greek rather than of Roman tragedy, not of Seneca but of Euripides.

Such was the line of development of classical tragedy in England But side by side with it there flourished another homelier species of dramatic art. The plays of this class were not written by scholars and gentlemen of the Court who could afford to have them printed and preserved to posterity, nor were they acted by learned societies They were the outcome of the general popular taste for the drama the same taste that had fostered Miracles and Moralities ; they were played by professional actors in great men's halls, or the yards of inns, or the permanent theatres which were beginning to be built Many of them remained in the sole possession of the company who performed them, and never found their way into print. But such as were best received by popular audiences were repeated before the Queen, and from the minutes of the Revels we can gather a list of their names. Between 1568 and 1580 fifty-two of these dramas

1 It should be noticed, however, that Hughes, not content with imitating the general style of Seneca, introduces into the play long extracts from several of his dramas. For a list of these, see Appendix II in Cunliffe's *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*.

were performed at Court[1], dealing with every variety of subject—classical history, Italian fable, mediaeval legend, English tale of domestic life. 'I may boldly say it, because I have seen it,' says Gosson, 'that *The Palace of Pleasure, The Golden Ass, The Aethiopian History, Amadis of France,* and *The Round Table,* comedies in Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish, have been thoroughly raked to furnish the playhouses in London.' Among the classical titles it is significant in the light of later events to notice such names as *Caesar and Pompey* and *Catiline's Conspiracies,* and even of greater interest is the fact that one of the first English tragedies drawn from Italian romance was, in all likelihood, a *Romeo and Juliet.*

These dramas, whatever their subject, followed in the track of the Miracles and Moralities. They were written in rhyme; they had no regard for the Unities, and they intermingled lighter matter with the serious stuff of tragedy. They obeyed a native instinct rather than external rule, and their aim was to give a vigorous picture of life in its varied phases. These facts about them may be gathered less from the plays themselves, which have chiefly perished, than from the attacks of contemporary critics. Among these George Whetstone occupies an important and, in many respects, unique position. In the preface to his play, *Promos and Cassandra,* 1578, he pleads for an intermediate dramatic species, free alike from the monotony of the classical type and from the absurdities of the popular stage. The English playwright, he declares, 'is most vain, indiscreet and out of order: he first grounds his work on impossibilities; then in three hours runs he through the world: marries, gets children: makes children men, men to conquer kingdoms, murder monsters, and bringeth gods from heaven, and fetcheth devils from hell.' These extravagances, he complains, are rendered even more ridiculous by the use of one order of speech for characters however different. Against this he protests in words which strike the keynote of the true Romantic drama: 'grave old men should instruct young men, strumpets should be lascivious, clowns disorderly, intermingling all these actions in such sort as the grave may instruct and the pleasant delight.' *Promos and Cassandra* is written to illustrate these principles, and thus uses a medley of styles, including long rhyming lines, ballad metre, the heroic couplet, and blank verse. But it is a loosely-jointed piece in two Parts, each of five Acts, and is chiefly memorable as the source of *Measure for Measure.* Whetstone's service is to have pointed out the way in which others more richly gifted than himself were hereafter to walk.

1 For a list of the plays thus performed, see Fleay's *History of the Stage,* pp. 14-31.

Another censor of the popular stage was Stephen Gosson in his *School of Abuse*, 1579, but it was the Puritan rancour of a renegade playwright, not zeal for the welfare of the drama, that inspired his splenetic onslaught. 'Let us but shut up our ears to Poets, Pipers, and Players, pull our feet back from resort to Theatres, and turn away our eyes from beholding of vanity, the greatest storm of abuse will be overblown, and a fair way trodden to amendment of life. Were we not so foolish to taste every drug and buy every trifle, Players would shut in their shops and carry their trash to some other country.' Finally the indictment is summed up from the rigidly Senecan point of view, by Sir Philip Sidney, in his *Defense of Poesy*, 1583. 'Our tragedies and comedies,' he states, 'are cried out against, observing rules neither of honest civility nor skilful poetry.' By these 'rules' he means chiefly the strict observance of the Unities, and his remarks on their violation are so characteristic that they deserve to be quoted in full. 'Where the stage should always represent but one place; and the uttermost time presupposed in it, should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day: there is both many days, and many places, inartificially imagined. You shall have Asia on the one side and Afric of the other, and so many other under kingdoms, that the player, when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now shall you have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and bye, we hear news of shipwreck in the same place; then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave; while, in the meantime, two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field? Now of time they are much more liberal; for ordinary it is, that two young princes fall in love: after many traverses she is got with child: delivered of a fair boy: he is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is ready to get another child; and all this in two hours' space; which, how absurd it is in sense even sense may imagine; and art hath taught and all ancient examples justified, and at this day the ordinary players in Italy will not err in.' He then proceeds to make the further charge against the plays of the period, that they violate dramatic unity by their medley of light and serious episodes: 'they be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns.' And he points with admiration to the ancients who 'never or very daintily, match hornpipes and funerals.'

Thus here from the mouth of the typical scholar and humanist of the Elizabethan age, only a few years before the advent of Marlowe and Shakspere, we have an uncompromising philippic against the contemporary stage. And we, who can now judge of the romantic drama by its fruits, to whom it calls up *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, *Egmont* and *Faust*, *Wallenstein* and *Don Carlos*, may with easy self-complacence make merry over Sidney's want of insight and foresight. But it is true of many contests, intellectual and political, that the best men on the wrong side are often only just inferior to, and have much in common with, the best men on the right. We may therefore feel sure that so fine a 'wit' as the author of the *Arcadia* was not wholly beside the mark in his strictures. He saw before him, on the one hand, the compact, stately, well-ordered structure of ancient drama, dealing with high themes, in fitting language: on the other, the straggling, invertebrate compositions that found favour with his countrymen, wherein tragedy jostled against buffoonery and grossness, and 'jigging' rhymes were the only vehicle of the theatrical Muse. It was but natural that he should think meanly of the work of his contemporaries. Even if we take plays like Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*, so much finer than anything spoken of in the *Defense of Poesy*, we see sufficiently plainly the faults against which Sidney aimed his shafts. *Tamburlaine* is a series of dramatic pictures rather than a drama in the true sense; it lacks cohesion and unity of design. In these qualities, it stands far below the least admirable work of Euripides. Again, the humorous episodes in *Tamburlaine*, and in *Faustus*, are a blot upon the tragic matter rather than a genuine comic relief: Sidney's words are fatally apt, 'they thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters with neither decency nor discretion.' Sir Philip has just grounds for his indictment; he puts his finger on real faults. But he was mistaken in the remedies that he proposed. He thought that the glories of the classical drama could be reproduced by compliance with a few definite canons, the *caput mortuum* which criticism had blindly substituted for the living spirit of ancient art. He could not discern that a new and equally noble tragic type was winning its way to victory, dissimilar to the drama of the Greek world in its outlook upon life, and in its methods of working, yet really akin in that it was the spontaneous growth of a native energizing instinct. Almost at the time that Sidney was penning his *Defense of Poesy* new circumstances were coming into play which were to be decisive against his ideas and aspirations, and which thus mark an important epoch in dramatic history.

Another censor of the popular stage was Stephen Gosson in his *School of Abuse*, 1579, but it was the Puritan rancour of a renegade playwright, not zeal for the welfare of the drama, that inspired his splenetic onslaught. 'Let us but shut up our ears to Poets, Pipers, and Players, pull our feet back from resort to Theatres, and turn away our eyes from beholding of vanity, the greatest storm of abuse will be overblown, and a fair way trodden to amendment of life. Were we not so foolish to taste every drug and buy every trifle, Players would shut in their shops and carry their trash to some other country.' Finally the indictment is summed up from the rigidly Senecan point of view, by Sir Philip Sidney, in his *Defense of Poesy*, 1583. 'Our tragedies and comedies,' he states, 'are cried out against, observing rules neither of honest civility nor skilful poetry.' By these 'rules' he means chiefly the strict observance of the Unities, and his remarks on their violation are so characteristic that they deserve to be quoted in full. 'Where the stage should always represent but one place; and the uttermost time presupposed in it, should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day: there is both many days, and many places, inartificially imagined. You shall have Asia on the one side and Afric of the other, and so many other under kingdoms, that the player, when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now shall you have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and bye, we hear news of shipwreck in the same place; then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave; while, in the meantime, two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field? Now of time they are much more liberal; for ordinary it is, that two young princes fall in love: after many traverses she is got with child: delivered of a fair boy: he is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is ready to get another child; and all this in two hours' space; which, how absurd it is in sense even sense may imagine; and art hath taught and all ancient examples justified, and at this day the ordinary players in Italy will not err in.' He then proceeds to make the further charge against the plays of the period, that they violate dramatic unity by their medley of light and serious episodes: 'they be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns.' And he points with admiration to the ancients who 'never or very daintily, match hornpipes and funerals.'

Thus here from the mouth of the typical scholar and humanist of the Elizabethan age, only a few years before the advent of Marlowe and Shakspere, we have an uncompromising philippic against the contemporary stage. And we, who can now judge of the romantic drama by its fruits, to whom it calls up *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, *Egmont* and *Faust*, *Wallenstein* and *Don Carlos*, may with easy self-complacence make merry over Sidney's want of insight and foresight. But it is true of many contests, intellectual and political, that the best men on the wrong side are often only just inferior to, and have much in common with, the best men on the right. We may therefore feel sure that so fine a 'wit' as the author of the *Arcadia* was not wholly beside the mark in his strictures. He saw before him, on the one hand, the compact, stately, well-ordered structure of ancient drama, dealing with high themes, in fitting language: on the other, the straggling, invertebrate compositions that found favour with his countrymen, wherein tragedy jostled against buffoonery and grossness, and 'jigging' rhymes were the only vehicle of the theatrical Muse. It was but natural that he should think meanly of the work of his contemporaries. Even if we take plays like Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*, so much finer than anything spoken of in the *Defense of Poesy*, we see sufficiently plainly the faults against which Sidney aimed his shafts. *Tamburlaine* is a series of dramatic pictures rather than a drama in the true sense; it lacks cohesion and unity of design. In these qualities, it stands far below the least admirable work of Euripides. Again, the humorous episodes in *Tamburlaine*, and in *Faustus*, are a blot upon the tragic matter rather than a genuine comic relief: Sidney's words are fatally apt, 'they thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters with neither decency nor discretion.' Sir Philip has just grounds for his indictment; he puts his finger on real faults. But he was mistaken in the remedies that he proposed. He thought that the glories of the classical drama could be reproduced by compliance with a few definite canons, the *caput mortuum* which criticism had blindly substituted for the living spirit of ancient art. He could not discern that a new and equally noble tragic type was winning its way to victory, dissimilar to the drama of the Greek world in its outlook upon life, and in its methods of working, yet really akin in that it was the spontaneous growth of a native energizing instinct. Almost at the time that Sidney was penning his *Defense of Poesy* new circumstances were coming into play which were to be decisive against his ideas and aspirations, and which thus mark an important epoch in dramatic history.

CHAPTER III

THE RISE OF THE THEATRES
MARLOWE'S DRAMATIC REFORM

WITH the third decade of Elizabeth's reign opens its most glorious period, political and intellectual. One of the tendencies of the Renaissance epoch throughout Europe was to break down the mediaeval hierarchy of classes, and to substitute a compact national body with the throne as head and centre of its life. This movement had affected England, but it had been partially checked by the religious and political troubles springing from the Reformation, which had created so much discord during the reigns of Edward VI and Mary, and the earlier years of Elizabeth. Twenty years, however, of the maiden queen's strong government had produced, broadly speaking, order and unity in Church and State. The mass of the people were thoroughly well affected to the throne and to its policy; Roman Catholics on the one hand, and Puritan extremists on the other, might chafe or conspire against the existing settlement, but they were powerless to upset it. The days of Elizabeth's coquetting with France or Spain were over; the logic of events and the aspirations of the people were more and more clearly defining the position of England as the champion of the Protestant cause in the west. The national spirit ran higher year by year, and found for itself splendid expression in deeds of adventure and daring. Between 1577 and 1580, Frobisher made his voyages to the northern seas, Humphrey Gilbert visited the shores of America, Drake sailed round about the earth. In the years immediately following, Raleigh sent forth his Virginian expeditions, Davis tracked his way nearer to the Pole than any of his forerunners, Philip Sidney found a hero's grave at Zutphen. Then, to crown all, came the *annus mirabilis* of 1588, when national life and death hung in the balance, and in a fashion as decisive as it was unforeseen, the scale dipped to the side of life. From the day that the Armada turned northwards to its doom, England thrilled with a patriotism as intense and operative as that of Athens after Salamis. And this feeling, ardent at all points, glowed, as it were, into flame about the person of the sovereign. Elizabeth, to the men of her day, was no longer merely a woman or even a Queen: she became the incarnation of England, an ideal and romantic figure, a fount of inspiring energy. Such she remains to all time as the Gloriana of *The Faerie Queene*.

It was natural that this growing national spirit should leave its mark on literature, and that it should give an impulse to the forces that were of native growth. Its first epoch-making product is Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, 1579, wherein the poet, bursting through the trammels of quantitative verse to which Sidney and Harvey had sought to bind him down, compelled a generation, that had almost forgotten Chaucer, to give ear anew to the melody of English rhythms. Almost at the same date Lyly and Sidney woke the English novel into fresh life. Stow and Holinshed, by the publication of their *Chronicles of Britain*, gave proof of the renewed interest in the national annals; Warner in his *Albion's England* made these annals a theme of epical verse. Hakluyt, in putting forth his first collection of *Seamen's Voyages* called the world to witness that all lands were full of the labours of his countrymen.

It was inevitable that the drama should feel the force of the same quickening touch. But, before we speak of this in detail, another point claims notice. For the literature of the stage is not solely the result of intellectual forces. There is a determining factor of a material kind, the condition of the theatre. In this respect, as in others, the period that we have reached saw a notable fresh departure.

We have seen that Miracle Plays had been acted principally by amateurs in the streets and squares of towns. The Moralities and Interludes were performed by roving companies at first in open spaces, afterwards in the banqueting-rooms of lords and gentry. But the great Tudor nobles were not long satisfied with the occasional services of these strolling troupes. We find them, as early as the reign of Henry VII, attaching permanent companies of actors to their households. Thus a professional class of performers was gradually developed. In the earlier years of Elizabeth the principal companies belonged to Lords Leicester, Warwick, Clinton, and Charles Howard. Warwick's men were later succeeded by Lord Hunsdon's, Clinton's by those of the Earl of Sussex, and Lord Charles Howard's by those of Lord Derby. In addition to these men-actors, there were troupes of boy-performers, composed of the choirs of the Chapel Royal and of St. Paul's, or of the scholars of Westminster and Merchant Taylors'. When not playing at Court or at the houses of their patrons, these companies, as a rule, made use of inn yards, such as 'The Bell' in Gracechurch Street, 'The Bull,' mentioned by Gosson, in Bishopsgate, and 'The Bell Savage' on Ludgate Hill. Leicester's influence with the Queen enabled him in 1574 to procure for his 'servants' a royal patent empowering them to perform within

the city of London; and throughout the realm of England, provided that their plays were licensed by the Master of the Revels. But the company was to meet with strenuous opposition to the exercise of these privileges. The Corporation of London was the determined enemy of the stage, on the double ground of the immorality of so many of the performances, and of the peril of contagion in time of plague. Accordingly, in the year 1576, it issued an order that no theatrical performances should be given in public within the city bounds. This order led to a prolonged contest between the Corporation and the Privy Council, which had a highly important result. The players, relying on the favour of the Court, yet not daring openly to defy the authority of the Mayor, established themselves in permanent buildings just beyond the boundaries of the city. Here they were outside the jurisdiction of the Corporation, and yet close enough to the town to permit of both the public and the Court gallants being present at their performances. In this way regular theatres sprang into existence, and took the place of the inns and the temporary erections which had hitherto sufficed for dramatic shows: the stage passed from a nomadic to a settled condition.

In the year 1576, Leicester's men, of whom James Burbage was the head, built the 'Theater' in Shoreditch, and the 'Curtain' was erected in the same year. These were followed by the 'Rose,' the 'Swan,' and others of less note. The history of these early playhouses, and of the companies which successively occupied them, is still partially obscure, and it is unnecessary to dwell upon it in a volume not concerned with the antiquarian details of the Elizabethan stage[1]. What calls for emphasis here is the broad fact that the growth of permanent theatres guaranteed that the drama should have as its patrons and inspirers, not a clique or a coterie, but the nation at large. Sidney and his school might sigh after an ideal of classical perfection, and ridicule the conventionalities of popular drama, rendered so transparent by the simplicity of Elizabethan *mise-en-scène*. But the people, with its eager, straining life, was careless of perfection. What it wanted was vigour and movement, and these it found in the plays which were the product of untutored instinct, not of formal rule. Thus a mighty impulse was given to the native species of dramatic art, and that in more ways than one. For authors, writing to meet a specific and immediate, instead of merely an occasional, demand, threw themselves into their work with the energy usual in such cases. The 'moving accident' was distinctly

[1] The fullest account of the early companies and theatres is given in Fleay's *Chronicle History of the Stage*, where much laborious and fruitful investigation is combined with a good deal of hazardous and over-confident theorizing.

their 'trade'; and indeed the word is apt, for their close connexion with the theatre—as actors often as well as authors—lent to their writings a dramatic effectiveness and reality, the fruit of professional experience. And the very artlessness of the scenic arrangements of the day, however irritating to the developed critical faculty, gave the playwright an unbounded scope. Time and space were at his command. He laid his plot in Scythia, or Africa, or Italy, without taking thought of labour or expense; his audience were ready at a word to follow him whithersoever he wished; they looked for no attempt at realistic illusion. As Hallam has pithily said, 'the scene is perpetually changed in our old drama precisely because it was not changed at all.'

Thus two very different forces, the growth of the national spirit, and the establishment of permanent theatres, combined to influence the group of dramatists immediately preceding Shakspere, foremost among whom are Marlowe, Kyd, Lyly, Peele, Greene. There is a singular resemblance in the lives and careers of all these men. They were of good birth and position, graduates of the University, members of learned societies, cultivated by foreign travel. Yet when they settled in London they plunged into the wildest debauchery. Greene has in various pieces of autobiography given us a vivid picture of his career. At the very time that he was 'famoused for an arch play-making poet,' his companions 'were lightly the lewdest persons in the land, apt for pilfering, perjury, forgery, or any villainy, who came still to my lodging, and these would continue quaffing, carousing, and surfeiting with me all day long.' His end was in accord with his life: he died penniless and deserted by friends on a bed for which he owed money, and attended only by a landlady and a woman whom he had wronged.

Equally Bohemian was the career of **CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE**, born at Canterbury in February, 1564. He was the son of a shoemaker, but doubtless through the liberality of some rich patron, he was entered at Benet College (now Corpus Christi), Cambridge, in 1581, where he took his B.A. degree in 1583, afterwards proceeding to his M.A. in 1587. We have proof of his scholarship in his frequent classical quotations, and in his English versions of part of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, and of Ovid's *Amores*, though of the latter it has been said that 'he misses the sense in passages which could be construed to-day with ease by any fourth-form boy.' For the details of his career after he left Cambridge no satisfactory evidence exists. We only know that some time previous to 1587, when his first play was produced, he must have joined that literary circle in the capital

described above, whose members appear to have eked out their gains as playwrights and pamphleteers by occasional appearances on the boards. In addition to a too well deserved reputation for riotous living, Marlowe seems during his residence in London to have come into special discredit for 'atheistical' opinions, possibly fostered by Francis Kett, a Fellow of Benet College, who was burned at Norwich in 1589 for heresy[1]. We are told that 'he wrote a book against the Trinity,' and that he declared 'the holy Bible to be but vain and idle stories, and all religion but a device of policy.' And when in June, 1593, he came to a discreditable end beneath the dagger of a serving-man at Deptford there were not wanting moralists to draw the appropriate lesson. 'Thus did God,' says Vaughan in his *Golden Grove,* 1600, 'the true executioner of divine justice, work the end of impious atheists,' or as a poet of the time summed up the case in a neatly conclusive couplet:

> 'Our theatre hath lost, Pluto hath got
> A tragic penman for a dreary plot.'

But the pitiable record of Marlowe's short term of years only serves to throw into more brilliant relief his achievements as a dramatist, whose epoch-making importance it would be difficult to exaggerate. It is not necessary to depreciate the tentative efforts of the earlier Elizabethan playwrights in order to recognize that they had failed to point with certainty to a glorious dramatic future. The situation was beset with dangers and difficulties. The scholarly critics, as we have seen, frowned upon the works which, whatever their imperfections, had in them most of native salt; the majority of the play-going public were addicted to mere buffoonery and drollery, a fault for which even in later years they do not escape censure from the lips of Hamlet. A considerable section of the citizens objected entirely to the theatre and all its surroundings. It was still a question whether any man would arise of sufficient genius to successfully combat these sinister influences, and become the dramatic interpreter of the Elizabethan 'grand age.' By 1587 the question was determined, for in that year Marlowe produced upon the stage Part I of his *Tamburlaine the Great,* followed shortly

1 Greene in a repentant death-bed pamphlet addressed a special warning to Marlowe on this head: 'Wonder not thou famous gracer of tragedians that Greene, who hath said with thee, like the fool in his heart, "There is no God," should now give glory unto His greatness: for penetrating in His power, His hand lies heavy upon me; He hath spoken unto me with a voice of thunder, and I have felt that He is a God that can punish enemies. Why should the excellent wit, His gift, be so blinded that thou shouldest give no glory to the giver? Is it pestilent Machiavellian policy that thou hast studied? Oh peevish folly!.....Defer not with me till this last point of extremity, for little knowest thou how in the end thou shalt be visited.'

afterwards by Part II. In the few lines of prologue to his work the young playwright explicitly announced his mission:

> 'From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits,
> And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
> We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,
> Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine,
> Threatening the world with high astounding terms,
> And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.'

In these introductory verses Marlowe calls his audience to witness that his play will differ from the conventional type alike in language and in subject. With the 'jigging veins' of rhymsters are contrasted the Scythian's 'high-astounding terms,' while his heroic exploits are similarly set off against the mere conceits of 'clownage.' Thus the author of *Tamburlaine* aimed at a double reform in the dramatic art, and seldom has a literary revolutionist achieved so swift and enduring a triumph. His innovation in style was extremely bold, and yet in a sense, like other intuitions of genius, extremely simple. It consisted in the adoption of blank verse, the accredited metre of the classical school, for the purposes of the popular drama, which had hitherto found its instrument in the rhyming couplet. Such a change was absolutely essential if Romantic art was to attain to a rich and untrammeled development. Of all forms of literature, the drama, which calls its creations into independent life, and bids them be their own interpreters, naturally craves the largest and freest utterance. Its organ of expression must be stately enough for the highest uses and yet sufficiently simple and nervous to render articulate the cry of the human heart in passionate extremes. Rhyming metres with their necessary element of antithesis and artificiality are unequal to this service; they throw emotion into leading strings, they distort its lineaments, dwarf its stature, emasculate its virility. Thus the genius of Marlowe, seeking a fit channel of utterance, turned instinctively to blank verse. We have seen how, and for what reasons, this metre had become the instrument of the Senecan school of dramatists. But as yet it had only been declaimed to select gatherings of scholars and courtiers within academical or legal precincts. To dissever it from these associations, and submit it on the boards of the public theatres to the rough-and-ready verdict of the groundlings, might well have seemed a hazardous experiment. Yet it achieved an instant success which completely disconcerted contemporary playwrights. Nash, writing shortly after the production of *Tamburlaine*, held up to the ridicule of the 'gentlemen students of both Universities' the 'idiot art-masters who intrude

themselves to our ears as the alchemists of eloquence: who (mounted on the stage of arrogance) think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of a bragging blank verse'; and who can find no other vent for their choleric humours than 'the spacious volubility of a drumming decasyllabon.' Similarly Greene compared the metre of the play to the 'fa-burden of Bo-bell,' and spoke with scorn of the writers who 'set the end of scollarisme in an English blank verse.' But the satire glanced harmlessly aside, and Marlowe so indisputably bore off all the honours of the campaign that his opponents, as we shall see, notably in the case of Greene, thought well to capitulate, and to test the efficacy of the new weapon in their own hands.

This decisive result was principally due to the transformation which Marlowe wrought in the metre which he had adopted.[1] In blank verse of the Senecan school each line ended with a strongly accented syllable, and stood by itself, separated by a pause from the preceding and following verses. The effect was thus tame and monotonous, and would certainly never have held the ear of a popular audience. But Marlowe, breaking through conventional restraints, altered the structure of the metre, varied the pauses, and produced an entirely novel rhythm of surpassing flexibility and power[1]. The epithet which Nash threw in the young poet's teeth, 'alchemist of eloquence,' may be fairly turned to his honour, for with the serviceable magic of genius he ran the leaden ore of the metre of *Gorboduc* into the liquid gold of his 'mighty line.' Or it would be more accurate to say that *Tamburlaine* began, but did not complete this process, for though its verse moves at all times with majestic energy, its sonorous cadences are not without a sameness in their swing. This is not the only fault with which the language of the play may be charged. Extravagance of diction was a common literary sin of the epoch, and one to which Marlowe was irresistibly drawn both by temperament and by the special circumstances under which *Tamburlaine* was produced. Rhyme being discarded, the dramatist sought to fix the attention of his hearers by strange, swelling phrases, and it was inevitable that this 'great and thundering speech' (as it is called in the first few lines of the play) should not unfrequently be exaggerated into mere bombast and rant. We have numerous contemporary references to the impression made by Tamburlaine's 'high astounding terms.' Thus Hall, the satirist,

1 'If we examine the mechanism of his verse, we shall see that it differed from that of his predecessors in the resolution of the iambic into tribrachs and dactyls; in the frequent substitution of trochees and pyrrhics for monosyllables, in the large admixture of anapaests, in the interspersion of Alexandrines, in the shifting of the pauses, in the use of hemistichs, in the interlinking of verse. Churton Collins, *Essays and Studies*, p. 153.

writing in 1597, speaks of the 'Turkish Tamburlaine,'

> 'Graced with huf-cap terms and thundering threats,
> That his poor hearer's hair quite upright sets.'

Ben Jonson is even severer, alleging that the language of the 'true artificer, though it differs from the vulgar somewhat, will not fly from all humanity with the Tamerlanes and Tamer-Chams of the late age, which had nothing in them but the scenical strutting and furious vociferation to warrant them to the ignorant gapers.' And every one remembers Shakspere's burlesque of the Scythian's grandiloquence through the mouth of ancient Pistol, who directly quotes a notorious couplet from the play.

But these blemishes could not mar the general effect of Marlowe's reform of dramatic style, and they sprang almost inevitably from his simultaneous reform of dramatic theme. The exploits of the Scythian shepherd Tamburlaine, who rose to be lord of the Eastern world, were known to Englishmen through Fortescue's translation of his Life by a Spaniard, Pedro Mexia. There was also a biography in Latin by Petrus Perondinus, with which Marlowe was probably familiar. In the stupendous career of this Oriental conqueror the young poet saw a subject exactly suited to his purpose. Such heroical deeds of arms fittingly set forth upon the stage would put to shame the buffooneries of the popular plays. Accordingly he threw into the creation of Tamburlaine the full ardent force and passion of his genius. The result was a mighty Titanic figure, throbbing with intense vitality, a figure that by sheer masterful pressure storms its way into the imagination. But this figure is not, in the strictest sense, dramatic, with an objective and independent individuality; it is rather, in its highest aspects, an embodiment of its author, and of the epoch which he supremely represents. For a distinguishing note of the Renaissance age, intoxicated by the magnificent possibilities opened to it on every side, was an uncontrollable aspiration after the ideal, a scorn of earthly conditions, a soaring passion that sought to scale the infinitudes of power, beauty, thought, and love. It is this spirit—ever one and the same—that breathes in Sir Thomas More's visions of a perfect society, in Spenser's pattern of the highest, holiest manhood, in Bacon's clarion-call to the conquest of 'all knowledge,' and in the heroic deeds and speeches of Sidney, Gilbert, and Grenville. But nowhere does it find more characteristic vent than in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, though it there takes chiefly, yet not solely, its least noble form—the thirst for limitless power. Almost in his first words the Scythian shepherd declares himself as one 'who,

'Means to be a terror to the world,
Measuring the limits of his empery
By east and west, as Phoebus doth his course.'

When a Persian commander is sent against him he addresses him with sublime egotism:

'Forsake thy king and do but join with me,
And we will triumph over all the world:
I hold the fates bound fast in iron chains,
And with my hand turn fortune's wheel about,
And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere
Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome.'

The Persian is won over by these 'pathetical persuasions' and marches against his rightful sovereign Mycetes, whom Tamburlaine defeats in battle. He first bestows the crown upon Cosroe, the brother of Mycetes, but then turns against him and wrests from him his new dignity. In answer to his victim's reproaches he pleads Jove's treatment of Saturn as a precedent, and he further claims that he has a warrant from 'nature' who teaches all men 'to have aspiring minds.'

'Our souls whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres,
Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest,
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.'

These superb lines are put with almost ludicrous inaptness into the mouth of a Scythian conqueror addressing a dying foe, but they throw into clear relief Marlowe's dominant instinct that ambition on the grand scale is akin in origin to the intellectual and the artistic impulse. So unfamiliar a conception startles us, and doubtless it will not stand the test of a rigorous ethical analysis. But ethical considerations apart, the aspiring warrior may be said to aim at the realization of an ideal in the sphere of will, as the artist in the sphere of beauty, and the scientist in the sphere of truth. Hence Tamburlaine becomes the mouthpiece of all who have yearned after the vision of absolute loveliness, that vision which ever beckons the artist onwards, and ever hovers beyond his reach, jealous in its reserve of

'One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
Which into words no virtue can digest.'

For the Scythian, as set before us by Marlowe, is poet no less than hero. The beauty of his captive bride, the Egyptian Zenocrate, 'lovelier than the love of Jove,' moves him to rapturous utterance. When she is being taken from him by death he pictures the bliss that awaits her beyond the grave, in lines that, with their haunting and impressive refrain, fall upon the ear like a solemn chant:

'Now walk the angels on the walls of heaven,
As sentinels to warn the immortal souls,
To entertain divine Zenocrate. . . .
The cherubims and holy seraphims,
That sing and play before the King of Kings,
Use all their voices and their instruments
To entertain divine Zenocrate,
And in this sweet and curious harmony,
The God that tunes this music to our souls,
Holds out his hand in highest majesty
To entertain divine Zenocrate.'

Similarly Tamburlaine rises to lyric rhapsodies over the show and colour of the world. He revels in the thought of sun-bright armour, of milk-white harts drawing ivory sleds, of the 'Pyramides' that grace the Memphian fields. Never again, till the coming of Keats, did the sensuous imagination that glories in the lust of the eye and the pride of life speak in tones so full and rich. His fancy luxuriates in the mysterious splendours of Oriental geography, and the prospect of riding in triumph through old-world cities, Persepolis and Damascus, lends glow and colour to his ambition. That ambition he sates to the full. Not only the King of Persia, but the Emperor of the Turks, the Soldan of Egypt, and a host of minor potentates fall before his victorious arms. Even the deities he claims as tributaries:

'The God of War resigns his room to me,
Meaning to make me general of the world:
Jove, viewing me in arms, looks pale and wan,
Fearing my power should pull him from his throne:
Where'er I come the Fatal Sisters sweat,
And grisly death, by running to and fro,
To do their ceaseless homage to my sword.'

Thus when sickness suddenly strikes him down, he would fain in revenge carry war against the immortals, who have ventured to dispute his supremacy:

'What daring god torments my body thus,
And seeks to conquer mighty Tamburlaine? . . .
Come, let us march against the powers of heaven,
And set black streamers in the firmament,
To signify the slaughter of the gods.'

He seeks with scornful glance to scare away his 'slave, the ugly

monster Death,' but the 'villain' still comes stealing back, and at last he yields, with the hard-wrung avowal that 'Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die.'

Such, in essence, is Marlowe's first hero, a veritable incarnation of the genius of the Renaissance. But the poet's imagination flagged at times, he was encumbered by his historical data, and, above all, he was under the necessity of keeping the attention of his audience alert. We therefore find baser elements mingled with 'the air and fire' of his 'raptures.' Tamburlaine is often merely an insolent and bloodthirsty tyrant. He carries about the conquered emperor of the Turks with his wife in a cage, and uses him as his footstool; he yokes other of the captive kings to his chariot, and upbraids them as 'pampered jades of Asia' that can only draw twenty miles a day He flings to the spears of his horsemen the virgins of Damascus who come to crave his clemency; he burns down the city in which Zenocrate dies; and he even stabs one of his own sons upon the stage, because he gives proof of cowardice[1].

But *Tamburlaine* has more serious faults than these melodramatic extravagances. It is absolutely without dramatic unity or cohesion; the various scenes are only held together by the dominating personality of the central figure, and apart from him they would fall asunder like a pack of cards. This artistic defect springs in great part from Marlowe's ethical point of view. In *Richard III* and *Macbeth* Shakspere shows the working out of the Nemesis which attends upon an overreaching ambition; in both plays the lines converge from the outset to the vindication of moral law. But Marlowe's instinct, as has been shown, is to sympathize with ambition, and no avenging ghosts dog the footsteps of the Scythian conqueror. He simply continues his wild career till the weapons of war fall from his nerveless hands, and, when he lies dead, his eldest son recites over his bier an epitaph suited to a pattern of every virtue:

> 'Let earth and heaven his timeless death deplore,
> For both their worths will equal him no more.'

From the exploits of Tamburlaine Marlowe turned to a subject of a very different kind, but one peculiarly suited to his genius. The legend of the man who sells his soul to the devil dates from the

1 The purely farcical extravagances which disfigure the play need not be laid to Marlowe's charge. The publisher of the printed drama states in his preface that he has omitted 'some fond and frivolous gestures far unmeet for the matter, though they were of some vain-conceited fondlings greatly gaped at, what time they were shown upon the stage in their graced deformities.' It is thus plain that low-comedy 'gag' had been introduced into the play by the actors, and it is highly probable that even the revised literary version retains traces of it

beginning of the middle ages, but during the early part of the sixteenth century it became identified with a certain Dr. Faustus who studied at various German universities, including Wittenberg, where he was seen by Melanchthon. He engaged in the practice of necromancy, and numerous legends grew up around him, which took literary form in the *Volksbuch* published by Spiess at Frankfort-on-the-Main. This work was soon rendered into English under the title of *The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Dr. John Faustus,* and in this translation Marlowe found the materials for his drama of *Doctor Faustus.* The exact date of its first performance is uncertain, but it was probably about the year 1588, and the hero was played by the tragedian Alleyn, who had also created the part of Tamburlaine. The piece attained great popularity, not only in London, but abroad, where it was acted in German by an English company. It also went through numerous editions in book form, of which the earliest extant is the quarto of 1604, republished with very slight changes in 1609. There is a later version, considerably expanded and altered, belonging to the year 1616, and undoubtedly incorporating work by other hands, though also possibly preserving portions of Marlowe's original work omitted in the quarto of 1604. Thus here, as in the case of *Tamburlaine,* we are entitled to recognize the broad fact that Marlowe is not to be held accountable for all the weaker elements in the play, as it has come down to us; but there is no safe criterion by which we can definitely reject particular scenes as spurious.

It is important to notice Marlowe's special treatment of his theme. No doubt there is a truth in the statement that the *Volksbuch,* Marlowe's *Faustus,* and Goethe's *Faust* all have this point in common, that they represent love of knowledge as the primary motive which urges the Doctor to sign his contract with the powers of evil. But the Faust of the popular story is a mere vulgar enchanter, while the hero of the German masterpiece, though he covets forbidden lore, is at heart a sceptic, who sells himself to the spirit of denial, and, under his guidance, plunges straightway into sensual pleasures. Marlowe's Faustus, on the other hand, has the genuine Renaissance passion for 'knowledge infinite,' but it is not with him, as in the case of Browning's Paracelsus, a purely intellectual yearning. He aspires to unlawful knowledge because it is an instrument of power. This is shown clearly in the fine opening scene where Faustus is discovered in his study. He dicusses each of the arts in turn, Logic, Physic, Law, and Divinity; he has mastered them all, and yet they leave him 'still but Faustus and a man.' He chafes at these mortal limitations, and he

seeks freedom from them in magic:

> 'The metaphysics of magicians
> And necromantic books are heavenly.'

These alone promise him 'a world of profit and delight,' the command of 'all things that move between the quiet poles,' a power exceeding that of kings and emperors. It is thus, strictly speaking, the passion for omnipotence rather than omniscience that urges Faustus to summon Mephistophilis by incantations to his side. In bringing an infernal spirit upon the stage Marlowe was confronted with the difficult problem of presenting the supernatural in visible form. The crude realism of the miracle plays was no longer possible; on the other hand, hell had not become refined away with him, as with Goethe, into an idea. Hence Marlowe's delineation avoids physical horrors, while retaining a vividly graphic force. His Mephistophilis is not, as in the German drama, the arch-enemy himself, but an attendant spirit, 'a servant to great Lucifer.' He is a fallen angel, eager for the prize of a sinner's 'glorious soul,' and yet sorrowing with a stately pathos over the bliss that he has forfeited for ever. In his colloquy with Faustus, he perhaps, from a dramatic point of view, does not sufficiently play the part of 'devil's advocate,' but in his simple wistful answers there rings the piercing note of a deeper than human despair:

> '*Faust.* Tell me what is that Lucifer thy lord?
> *Meph.* Arch-regent and commander of all spirits.
> *Faust.* Was not that Lucifer an angel once?
> *Meph.* Yes, Faustus, and most dearly loved of God.
> *Faust.* How comes it then that he is prince of devils?
> *Meph.* Oh, by aspiring pride and insolence,
> For which God threw him from the face of heaven.
> *Faust.* And what are you that live with Lucifer?
> *Meph.* Unhappy spirits that fell with Lucifer,
> Conspired against our God with Lucifer,
> And are for ever damned with Lucifer.
> *Faust.* Where are you damned?
> *Meph.* In hell.
> *Faust.* How comes it then that thou art out of hell?
> *Meph.* Why this is hell, nor am I out of it:
> Think'st thou that I who saw the face of God,
> And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
> Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
> In being deprived of everlasting bliss?'

But this utterance of spiritual agony leaves Faustus unmoved, and he offers to surrender his soul to Lucifer, if he is allowed to live four and twenty years 'in all voluptuousness,' with Mephistophilis as his attendant. Here his motive seems to take a lower and more sensual form, but he immediately afterwards reverts to the idea of power

in his declaration that by infernal aid he will be 'great emperor of the world.'

Through this play, however, there runs the feeling, of which there is no hint in *Tamburlaine*, that the satisfaction of unbridled desire is unlawful, and the poet vividly paints the struggle in Faustus' soul before he finally surrenders himself to the powers of darkness. Good and evil angels whisper their counsels to him; a voice sounds in his ears, 'abjure this magic, turn to God again.' But the temptation is too strong, and at midnight in his study, alone with Mephistophilis, Faustus seals the bond. The scene is weirdly impressive, and the effect is heightened by genuine dramatic touches. Faustus is bidden sign with his own blood, but as soon as he has written a few words, it congeals, and has to be melted on a chafer of coals brought in by Mephistophilis. When he has finished the 'bill,' he is startled at seeing on his arm the mysterious inscription, '*Homo, fuge*,' and Mephistophilis has to divert his thoughts with a pageant of devils who make rich offerings to him. Assured that he too may raise up spirits such as these, Faustus hands over his 'deed of gift of body and soul' written in legal prose, and declaring with all formality that on the fulfilment of certain conditions, 'I, John Faustus, of Wertemberg, Doctor, by these presents do give both body and soul to Lucifer, Prince of the East, and his minister Mephistophilis, and furthermore grant unto them, that twenty-four years being expired, the articles above written inviolate, full power to fetch or carry the said John Faustus, body and soul, flesh, blood, or goods, into their habitation wheresoever.' The contract thus duly executed, Faustus is bidden ask what he will, and he returns to his old question of the whereabouts of hell. Mephistophilis answers in the same spirit as before:

> 'Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
> In one self place: for where we are is hell,
> And where hell is there must we ever be.
> And, to conclude, when all the world dissolves,
> And every creature shall be purified,
> All places shall be hell that is not heaven.'

Faustus then suddenly puts his new power to a very different proof by demanding a wife, 'the fairest maid in Germany,' and afterwards makes other requests, all of which are granted by Mephistophilis. Yet he cannot stifle the prickings of conscience: the Good Angel keeps whispering 'repent' in his ear, and in an outburst of remorse he calls upon Christ to save his soul. At the cry Lucifer rushes in with Belzebub and Mephistophilis to warn him that he is breaking his contract, and Faustus vows in terror,

'Never to look to heaven,
Never to name God, or to pray to Him,
To burn His scriptures, slay His ministers.'

Up to this point the plot has developed on natural and impressive lines, but here it is suddenly arrested. The vulgar conjuring tricks which Faustus performs at the courts of the Pope, the German Emperor, and the Duke of Vanholt, are utterly out of keeping with the dignity of the true theme of the play: even the famous scene in which he summons up the vision of Helen of Troy, and addresses her in words of passionate rapture, has, in spite of its beauty, no true dramatic relevance. It would almost seem as if the poet had husbanded his powers for the great final situation, when the twenty-four years have run their course, and Faustus is awaiting his doom. The prose dialogue on the fatal eve, when the doctor's agonized outbursts move his scholars to such touching solicitude, leads up to the highly wrought blank-verse soliloquy of Faustus, as he is left alone with 'but one bare hour to live.' Seldom has monologue been handled with such tragic intensity or mounted step by step to such heights of passion and terror. In the frenzy of despair Faustus appeals to the sun, 'to rise again and make perpetual day,' he seeks to leap up and catch 'one drop' of the blood of Christ that streams in the firmament, he calls upon the hills to hide him from the heavy wrath of God, upon the earth to gape and harbour him. But the minutes pass, and the clock strikes the half-hour. It is too late to hope for mercy, all he now craves is some end to his pain:

'Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and, at last, be saved.'

And as he curses the immortality which ensures his everlasting torment, the midnight hour strikes and the devils come for their prey. The horrors of hell hedge him in on every side: he gasps out broken agonized prayers of mercy:

'My God! my God! look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!
Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books! Ah, Mephistophilis.'

And with the last long-drawn sigh of a lost soul in the clutch of its captor, Faustus is borne off to his doom.

When Goethe said of *Doctor Faustus,* 'how greatly it is all planned,' he condensed much criticism into a phrase. The play is conceived on noble lines, and the beginning and the end are worthily executed, but between them there is a yawning gap. It is

thus rather a fragment than a dramatic whole, yet nevertheless it marks an advance upon *Tamburlaine* in many ways. The verse moves with less tumultuous energy, but it is freer and lighter, with more varied and subtle cadences. The power of characterization has ripened, for Faustus is a more complex and human figure than the Scythian conqueror, while Mephistophilis, unlike any of the subordinate personages in the earlier play, has an independent interest. In point of ethical significance there is notable progress, for sin works out its own Nemesis, and thus the catastrophe of the drama is in vital relation to conduct, not utterly divorced from it, as in the case of *Tamburlaine*. But perhaps the highest praise that can be given to Marlowe's *Faustus* is that, while it inevitably challenges comparison with the masterpiece of modern literature, it must always have its unique interest, not only as an Elizabethan play, but as the typically Renaissance rendering of the great story upon which it is based.

Marlowe's next play, *The Jew of Malta*, resembles *Faustus* in that it is the unequal and incomplete carrying out of a great design. The source of the drama is unknown, and its date cannot be accurately fixed, though it must have been later than the death of the Duke of Guise in December, 1588, mentioned in the Prologue. This prologue is put into the mouth of 'Machiavel,' whose spirit is supposed to brood over the tragedy, and whose nefarious 'policy' regulates all the actions of its leading personage. In Barabas, Marlowe found another of the *flamboyant* types to which his genius was specially drawn. The opening scene, in which the Jew is 'discovered in his counting-house, with heaps of gold before him,' is wonderfully effective. As Barabas fingers the glittering coins and hovers with the rapture of a lover over his precious jewels, his 'seld-seen costly stones'; as he follows in fancy the track of his argosies 'laden with silk and spice,' avarice itself becomes transfigured. It ceases to be a sordid vice, and swells to the proportions of a passion for the infinite, though it be only for 'infinite riches in a little room.' We have thus in Marlowe's Jew a vein of idealism which is wanting in the more miserly Shylock of Shakspere, of whom he is certainly in part the progenitor[1]. The laying up of treasure is, in the eyes of Barabas, sanctified by divine benediction:

> 'Thus trowls our fortune in by land and sea,
> And thus we are on every side enriched;
> These are the blessings promised to the Jews,

[1] The connexion between Barabas and Shylock is well brought out by Elze, *Essays on Shakspere*, pp. 72—79.

'Never to look to heaven,
Never to name God, or to pray to Him,
To burn His scriptures, slay His ministers.'

Up to this point the plot has developed on natural and impressive lines, but here it is suddenly arrested. The vulgar conjuring tricks which Faustus performs at the courts of the Pope, the German Emperor, and the Duke of Vanholt, are utterly out of keeping with the dignity of the true theme of the play: even the famous scene in which he summons up the vision of Helen of Troy, and addresses her in words of passionate rapture, has, in spite of its beauty, no true dramatic relevance. It would almost seem as if the poet had husbanded his powers for the great final situation, when the twenty-four years have run their course, and Faustus is awaiting his doom. The prose dialogue on the fatal eve, when the doctor's agonized outbursts move his scholars to such touching solicitude, leads up to the highly wrought blank-verse soliloquy of Faustus, as he is left alone with 'but one bare hour to live.' Seldom has monologue been handled with such tragic intensity or mounted step by step to such heights of passion and terror. In the frenzy of despair Faustus appeals to the sun, 'to rise again and make perpetual day,' he seeks to leap up and catch 'one drop' of the blood of Christ that streams in the firmament, he calls upon the hills to hide him from the heavy wrath of God, upon the earth to gape and harbour him. But the minutes pass, and the clock strikes the half-hour. It is too late to hope for mercy, all he now craves is some end to his pain:

'Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and, at last, be saved.'

And as he curses the immortality which ensures his everlasting torment, the midnight hour strikes and the devils come for their prey. The horrors of hell hedge him in on every side: he gasps out broken agonized prayers of mercy:

'My God! my God! look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!
Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books! Ah, Mephistophilis.'

And with the last long-drawn sigh of a lost soul in the clutch of its captor, Faustus is borne off to his doom.

When Goethe said of *Doctor Faustus*, 'how greatly it is all planned,' he condensed much criticism into a phrase. The play is conceived on noble lines, and the beginning and the end are worthily executed, but between them there is a yawning gap. It is

thus rather a fragment than a dramatic whole, yet nevertheless it marks an advance upon *Tamburlaine* in many ways. The verse moves with less tumultuous energy, but it is freer and lighter, with more varied and subtle cadences. The power of characterization has ripened, for Faustus is a more complex and human figure than the Scythian conqueror, while Mephistophilis, unlike any of the subordinate personages in the earlier play, has an independent interest. In point of ethical significance there is notable progress, for sin works out its own Nemesis, and thus the catastrophe of the drama is in vital relation to conduct, not utterly divorced from it, as in the case of *Tamburlaine*. But perhaps the highest praise that can be given to Marlowe's *Faustus* is that, while it inevitably challenges comparison with the masterpiece of modern literature, it must always have its unique interest, not only as an Elizabethan play, but as the typically Renaissance rendering of the great story upon which it is based.

Marlowe's next play, *The Jew of Malta*, resembles *Faustus* in that it is the unequal and incomplete carrying out of a great design. The source of the drama is unknown, and its date cannot be accurately fixed, though it must have been later than the death of the Duke of Guise in December, 1588, mentioned in the Prologue. This prologue is put into the mouth of 'Machiavel,' whose spirit is supposed to brood over the tragedy, and whose nefarious 'policy' regulates all the actions of its leading personage. In Barabas, Marlowe found another of the *flamboyant* types to which his genius was specially drawn. The opening scene, in which the Jew is 'discovered in his counting-house, with heaps of gold before him,' is wonderfully effective. As Barabas fingers the glittering coins and hovers with the rapture of a lover over his precious jewels, his 'seld-seen costly stones'; as he follows in fancy the track of his argosies 'laden with silk and spice,' avarice itself becomes transfigured. It ceases to be a sordid vice, and swells to the proportions of a passion for the infinite, though it be only for 'infinite riches in a little room.' We have thus in Marlowe's Jew a vein of idealism which is wanting in the more miserly Shylock of Shakspere, of whom he is certainly in part the progenitor[1]. The laying up of treasure is, in the eyes of Barabas, sanctified by divine benediction:

> 'Thus trowls our fortune in by land and sea,
> And thus we are on every side enriched;
> These are the blessings promised to the Jews,

[1] The connexion between Barabas and Shylock is well brought out by Elze, *Essays on Shakspere*, pp. 72—79.

> And herein was old Abram's happiness.
> What more may heaven do for earthly man
> Than thus to pour out plenty in their laps,
> Ripping the bowels of the earth for them,
> Making the sea their servants, and the winds
> To drive their substance with successful blasts?'

Thus when at one blow he loses his whole wealth, which is confiscated by the governor of Malta to pay a tribute due to the Turks, his fortunes excite compassion, and he has our sympathy when he contends that theft is a worse sin than covetousness, and bitterly asks of his persecutors whether they are 'satisfied':

> 'You have my goods, my money, and my wealth,
> My ships, my store, and all that I enjoyed:
> And, having all, you can request no more,
> Unless your unrelenting flinty hearts,
> Suppress all pity in your stony breasts,
> And now shall move you to bereave my life.'

We even feel inclined to condone the stratagem by which he repossesses himself of a portion of his treasure. His house has been forfeited and turned into a nunnery, and, in order to recover a store of wealth hidden in an upper chamber, he induces his daughter Abigail to enter the sisterhood, and throw out the jewels to him by night. As the money-bags come tumbling into his arms, he cries out in confused ecstasy:

> 'O my girl,
> My gold, my fortune, my felicity!
> O girl, O gold, O beauty, O my bliss!'

The relations of Abigail to her father prelude those of Shylock and Jessica, though Marlowe's Jewess certainly has the advantage over Shakspere's in filial tenderness. Like Jessica she has given her heart to a Christian lover, but Barabas craftily procures his death at the hands of a rival, whereupon she again retires to the convent, though no longer in a spirit of hypocrisy. From this point the play, so finely begun, suddenly degenerates into a tissue of melodramatic villanies. The plot indeed develops in a sufficiently ingenious way, and Barabas is skilfully made the instrument of his own destruction. But the record of his unnatural crimes moves no interest: all the poetic and humanizing touches which elevate the portrait in its earlier stages vanish, and the Jew becomes a mere stage caricature. The reason of this strange falling off can be only matter of speculation. The poet's genius may have faltered in its flight, or the play may have been hastily completed for production at a given date, or it may have been turned over to an inferior collaborator. Whatever the cause,

Marlowe just failed magnificently where Shakspere as magnificently succeeded. Barabas in the malignity of revenge turns to a monster, but with Shylock, revenge itself is dignified by its triumph over the baser sin of avarice, and, for all his cunning ferocity, he remains life-like and human to the last. Moreover Barabas moves in a dull and colourless atmosphere, among Christians and Turks little less deceitful and covetous than himself, while the lurid gloom of Shylock's personality deepens into sable intensity against the radiant Renaissance environment in which it is set. If Marlowe has come within measurable distance of creating the solitary figure of the Jew, he has given us no hint of the complex glories of *The Merchant of Venice.*

In his next work Marlowe entered upon a new field. Turning aside from the fortunes of foreign and semi-legendary personages like Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Barabas, he went for his materials to the national history of his own country, and selected for dramatic treatment the tragical career of Edward II. His authorities were the chronicles of Fabian, Stow, and Holinshed, but he treated them in a bold and free spirit, adapting them to his purpose with skilful tact. Thus *Edward II,* in the matter of plot and construction, stands on a different level from any of its author's previous works. Instead of being a collection of unconnected episodes, or the tantalizingly imperfect fulfilment of a great design, it is a complex and organic whole, working up by natural stages to a singularly powerful climax In style also, from the dramatic point of view, it marks an advance. The 'high astounding terms' of the earlier period have almost entirely disappeared, though there is still a plentiful supply of the unseasonable classical allusions which had so irresistible a fascination for Elizabethan playwrights. Otherwise the language is of chastened simplicity, verging at times on baldness, but full, for the most part, of silvery charm and grace. 'The measure,' as has been well said, 'that had thundered the threats of Tamburlaine' is now made 'to falter the sobs of a broken heart.' But it is above all in power of characterization that the play shows most distinctive evidence of growth. Marlowe's earlier dramas are each dominated by the commanding figure of the hero, which overshadows and dwarfs the other personages, robbing them of all interest on their own account. In *Edward II* this fault is avoided, and while the King stands clearly out as the central character, we have other well defined types in Gaveston and Mortimer, to whom, though of inferior interest, may be added young Spencer and the Queen. Gaveston, the favourite, is pourtrayed with much insight and skill. He has a Frenchman's dislike of London and its citizens, and a contempt for the English

nobles whom he infuriates with his foreign fashions and airs. As Mortimer indignantly complains:

> 'I have not seen a dapper Jack so brisk;
> He wears a short Italian hooded cloak,
> Loaded with pearl, and, in his Tuscan cap,
> A jewel of more value than the crown.
> While others walk below, the king and he
> From out a window laugh at such as we,
> And flout our train, and jest at our attire.'

He craftily strengthens his hold on the King's affections by ministering to his artistic and musical tastes, and providing him with congenial entertainment. So successful are his devices that Edward for his sake proves false to his duties as a ruler and a husband. He leaves his wife to pine with grief at his neglect of her, and offers to share his kingdom amongst the barons if he may have some nook or corner left to frolic with his 'dearest Gaveston.' The nobles and clergy compel the favourite's banishment for a time, but he is speedily recalled, and shows the same insolent spirit as before, bidding the 'base, leaden earls' to go home and eat their tenants' beef. They answer the taunt by rising in insurrection. Gaveston is captured, and sentenced to die. When he is told that, as the King's favourite, he is to have the privilege of meeting his fate upon the block instead of on the gallows, he retorts, even in this extremity, with characteristic *insouciance*:

> I thank you all, my lords: then I perceive
> That heading is one, and hanging is the other,
> And death is all.'

When he is gone, his place in Edward's affections is taken by Young Spencer, who, though more slightly drawn, is skilfully discriminated from Gaveston by a few firm and vigorous touches. He is lacking in the aesthetic sensibilities and defiant gaiety of the Frenchman, but he outrivals him in cynical audacity and statecraft, and in the end he draws down upon himself a similar fate.

At the head of the barons in their conflict with the favourites stands Mortimer, who is pourtrayed with great spirit and power. It has been too little noticed that Mortimer is remarkably akin to Marlowe's earlier heroes, especially Tamburlaine. The lines of his character are, of course, toned down to suit the altered environment, but there is the same note of lawlessly aspiring ambition. It is he who throughout is the advocate of violent measures, urging the lords to 'parley' only with their 'naked swords.' He is eager to depose the king unless he consents to banish Gaveston, and when the favourite

on his return provokes him by his insolence, he stabs him. When taken prisoner in an unsuccessful revolt and condemned to the Tower, his haughty spirit chafes at such a curb upon his 'virtue that aspires to heaven.' He escapes to France, and there gains the love of Isabel, the Queen, with whom he returns to England. Having overthrown Edward, he assumes royal state, and vaunts his authority with despotic arrogance :

> 'The prince I rule, the queen do I command,
> And with a lowly congé to the ground
> The proudest lords salute me as I pass;
> I seal, I cancel, I do what I will.'

He even speaks of himself in the true spirit of Tamburlaine, as one who makes fortune's wheel turn as he pleases. But he fears a popular rising on the King's behalf, and with mingled cruelty and craft procures his removal to Berkeley Castle, and his brutal assassination within its vaults. The crime carried out, Mortimer feels himself safe; he stands as 'Jove's huge tree' to whom the others are only 'shrubs.' But young Prince Edward summons the peers to his side, arrests his father's murderer, and orders him to instant execution. Mortimer meets his fate with a haughty indifference and without a touch of repentance or regret. He has made the most of this life, and he looks forward with eager zest to the new possibilities that lie beyond the grave:

> Base Fortune, now I see, that in thy wheel
> There is a point, to which when men aspire
> They tumble headlong down: that point I touched,
> And seeing there was no place to mount up higher
> Why should I grieve at my declining fall?
> Farewell, fair queen: weep not for Mortimer,
> That scorns the world, and, as a traveller,
> Goes to discover countries yet unknown.'

Thus here, at the close of Marlowe's last play, the note is struck that rings throughout his writings—the contempt for earthly limitations and the yearning to glut human desires with a completeness denied in this world.

Of Mortimer's partner in crime, Queen Isabel, few words are needed. She is drawn more elaborately than any of Marlowe's other women, yet she fails to arouse sympathetic interest. In the earlier scenes her grief at the King's neglect of her for Gaveston and her eagerness to win back his love are forcibly depicted. But the transition to her unlawful passion for Mortimer is crudely handled, and her ready consent to her husband's destruction revolts us by its callous cruelty.

Edward II is a strangely different figure from the protagonists of Marlowe's former plays, and his career seems an ironical retort to Tamburlaine's exultant cry, 'Is it not brave to be a king?' Throughout the earlier scenes of the drama he exhibits every form of unroyal baseness. Absorbed in his infatuation for his minions, he alienates the nobles, drives the commons to angry discontent, and looks on listlessly while enemies overrun his borders on every side. And to sins of weakness he adds others of cruelty, for he banishes his queen from court during the exile of Gaveston, and afterwards bloodily avenges his death upon the peers. The one doubtful redeeming element in his character is the constancy with which he clings to his unworthy favourites, and this is at best the perverted virtue of honour rooted in dishonour. It is thus only with his fall at the end of Act IV that he begins to appeal to our sympathies, and it is certain that 'the reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty' (to use Lamb's famous phrase) have never been more finely interpreted than in the closing portions of the play. The pathetic scene in the abbey of Neath, where Edward and his followers take refuge among the monks, leads up to the yet more pitiful situation in Killingworth Castle where the captive sovereign is bidden surrender the crown. He cannot bring himself to such an act, and the plaintive cry bursts from him:

> 'What are kings when regiment is gone
> But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?'

He pleads that he may at least be king till night, and wear his crown till then; and in words that recall Faustus in his agony, he bids the sun stand still for ever in heaven. But at last he is fain to yield up the emblem of royalty, and with it he sends a handkerchief, wet with tears 'and dried again with sighs,' which may move the queen to pity. Thus through ever-mounting stages of passion and pathos the play moves onward to its superb climax in the last dread scene within the vaults of Berkeley Castle. Here the dramatist's genius has achieved its highest triumph in combining with extreme and even painful realism that subtle poetic touch which keeps everything within the limits of true art. The unhappy king is seen in his dungeon standing up to the knees in 'mire and puddle,' sleepless and starving, and with the added agony of the remembrance of past days of love and glory:

> 'Tell Isabel, the queen, I looked not thus,
> When for her sake I ran at tilt in France,
> And there unhorsed the Duke of Cleremont.'

When Lightborn enters Edward is struck with presaging fear, and

sees his 'tragedy' written on the murderer's brows. He seeks to win his good will by the gift of the one jewel left to him, and by reminding him that he is a king, though robbed of his crown. But all is in vain, and Edward, too feeble to resist, is barbarously done to death.

Of the murder of the king Charles Lamb has written that it 'moves pity and terror, beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted.' These may seem strong words when we think of Prometheus chained to the mountain top, or of Lear storm-tossed on the heath, but they are memorable as coming from so clear-eyed a critic. In any case there can be no doubt that the fifth act of Marlowe's tragedy far surpasses the corresponding portion of Shakspere's *Richard II*. This is partly due to a chracteristic difference between the dramatists in the handling of their allied themes. Shakspere's aim is to show how Richard's weakness and sentimentality bring about his downfall. The purpose of the play would have been defeated had he awakened a reaction in the unhappy king's favour by a vivid picture of his prison sufferings and death. This, on the contrary, is what Marlowe has done, and so persuasive is his art that our recollection of Edward's sins is almost effaced in the contemplation of his long-drawn agony. Here, as always, Shakspere's moral point of view is loftier than his forerunner's, and *Richard II* moreover breathes a spirit of fervent patriotism absent in the earlier work. But in the variety of its situations, and in closely sustained dramatic interest, *Edward II* has without question the advantage over Shakspere's play.

Marlowe wrote another historical piece, *The Massacre at Paris*. Its date is unknown, but it cannot have been an early work, as it ends with the death of Henry III of France, which took place in 1589. The play has come down in an imperfect form, yet even when complete it must have been its author's weakest composition. It is chiefly interesting as an index of contemporary English feeling upon the Massacre of St. Bartholomew and the events which followed. In this play the 'atheist' Marlowe shows the most approved Protestant leanings throughout, and the Roman Catholic personages, headed by Catharine de Medici and the Duke of Guise, are drawn in the darkest colours. The only one of them who is allowed a redeeming quality is Henry III, the suitor of Elizabeth, to whom he sends salutations with his dying breath. The most powerfully drawn character is Guise, another member of Marlowe's lawlessly aspiring brotherhood. His temper and aims are frankly revealed in a notable soliloquy:

'That like I best, that flies beyond my reach.
Set me to scale the high Pyramides
And thereon set the diadem of France:
I'll either rend it with my nails to nought,
Or mount the top with my aspiring wings,
Although my downfall be the deepest hell.'

Guise closely resembles Mortimer, and in its general theme—the struggle between a feeble throne and rebellious peers—*The Massacre at Paris* is a weak anticipation or echo of *Edward II.*

Of greater interest is *Dido, Queen of Carthage,* published in 1594, and stated on the title-page to have been written by Marlowe and Nash. It has been conjectured that Marlowe left the work incomplete at his death, and that it was finished by the lesser playwright. But there is no proof of this, and, whatever Nash's share may have been in the drama, there is no scene that does not contain lines which must have been written by the author of *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus.* Indeed, but for the external evidence, we should not assign the play to two hands, as though constructed on comparatively simple lines, it is very neat and even in execution. While following closely the story of the early books of the *Aeneid,* and even putting into the mouths of the leading characters several Virgilian lines, the drama is thoroughly original and merits more attention than it usually receives, especially as it contains Marlowe's most elaborate picture of a woman. Dido, the oriental queen, is conceived with power and refinement, but instead of being a complex creation, like Shakspere's Cleopatra, she is yet another of Marlowe's embodiments of limitless desire, which in her case takes the form of amorous passion. In the supremely difficult task of portraying a woman who makes the advances in courtship, without being a mere wanton, the dramatist is not quite unsuccessful, and he of course excels in giving utterance to Dido's ecstasy when she finds that her love is returned:

'What more than Delian music do I hear,
That calls my soul from forth his living seat,
To move unto the measures of delight? ...
Heaven envious of our joys is waxen pale,
And when we whisper, then the stars fall down
To be partakers of our honey talk.'

So she declares that in her lover's looks she sees 'eternity,' and that he can make her 'immortal with a kiss.' When he sails away at the call of destiny, she cries that she will follow him:

'I'll frame me wings of wax, like Icarus,
And o'er his ship will soar unto the sun,
That they may melt, and I fall in his arms.'

Despair drives her to seek her end upon the pyre, but her suicide has nothing of the theatrical magnificence that lights up with hectic brilliance Cleopatra's dying moments. Shakspere surrounds the Egyptian queen with an atmosphere of voluptuous splendour to the last, only to convince us more irresistibly of the essential worthlessness of the purely sensuous life. Such an aim was far from Marlowe, and his treatment of the story of Dido illustrates vividly the contrast in ethical temper between him and the author of *Antony and Cleopatra.*

Aeneas is little more than a lay figure, and is chiefly noticeable for his account of the fall of Troy, which presents the main difficulty of the play. His speech contains lines which must have been written by Marlowe, but the passage describing the murder of Priam by Pyrrhus in the presence of Hecuba is extravagant beyond even the worst excesses of Tamburlaine, and reads like an intentional burlesque:

> 'At which the frantic queen leaped on his face,
> And in his eyelids hanging by the nails,
> A little while prolonged her husband's life.
> At last the soldiers pulled her by the heels,
> And swung her howling in the empty air,
> Which sent an echo to the wounded king.'

Among the minor characters Iarbas, the jealous rival of Aeneas, is drawn with some force, and the Nurse, garrulous of tongue, and still alive to the stirrings of the tender passion, is a type which Shakspere was to develop. The Olympian deities are skilfully introduced, and their action fits naturally into the plot. The play, as befits an oriental theme, recalls *Tamburlaine* in the brilliant colouring of many passages, notably Jupiter's opening dialogue with Ganymede, and Dido's description of how she will repair Aeneas' ships:

> 'I'll give thee tackling made of riveld gold,
> Wound on the barks of odoriferous trees:
> Oars of massy ivory, full of holes,
> Through which the water shall delight to play:
> Thy anchors shall be hewed from crystal rocks,
> Which, if thou lose, shall shine above the waves:
> The masts, wherein thy swelling sails shall hang,
> Hollow pyramides of silver plate:
> The sails of folded lawn.'

With *Dido* our survey of Marlowe's dramatic works comes to a close, as the plays, usually ascribed to Shakspere, in which he had a share, will be more conveniently treated in a later chapter. But

a few words must be said on his narrative poem *Hero and Leander*, which, though fragmentary, is one of the most remarkable of Elizabethan compositions, and gives ample proof that Marlowe might have achieved no less fame as a poet than as a dramatist. Indeed the two Sestiads of *Hero and Leander*, which he lived to complete, are, for sustained beauty and consummate workmanship, the most perfect product of his pen. The Renaissance spirit is there in its very quintessence: it leaps and glows in every line. Its frank Paganism, its intoxication of delight in the loveliness of earthly things, especially, the bodies of men and women, its ardour of desire, the desire that wakens 'at first sight' and that presses forward impetuously to possession—all these find here matchless utterance. The atmosphere of the poem is, of course, highly sensuous, but the tale moves forward with such lightness and freedom, and Marlowe's imaginative touch is so unerring, that there is never a feeling of closeness. In this respect *Hero and Leander* is incomparably superior to the *Venus and Adonis*, which is oppressive in its realistically detailed study of lustful passion. In freshness too and winding beauty of melody Marlowe's fragment far outvies Shakspere's completed poem, and it achieved an immediate and widespread popularity. We are told that rowers used to sing the poet's couplets as they plied their sculls on the Thames, and that

> 'Men would shun their sleep in still dark night
> To meditate upon his golden lines.'

Among these men we may reckon Shakspere, through whose mind *Hero and Leander* was clearly running when he quoted one of its most notable verses in *As You Like It*, and apostrophized its author in a tone of tender recollection as 'Dead Shepherd.'

Christopher Marlowe is one of the most fascinating figures in our own, or indeed in any, literature. In the temple of poetic fame the highest places are sacred to genius that has mounted securely to its meridian splendour, to Homer, Dante, Shakspere. But seats only lower than these, and hallowed with perhaps richer offerings of human sympathy and love, are granted to genius dead ere its time, cut down in the freshness of its morning radiance. It is here that Marlowe is to be sought, side by side with Collins and Shelley and Keats. What the world has lost by the untimely close of his career we cannot know; but we do know that, even had he lived, he could never have been 'another Shakspere.' For nature, so lavish to him in other ways, had entirely withheld from him the priceless gift of humour, and the faculty of interpreting commonplace human

experience. He never learnt the secrets of a woman's heart, and he knew of no love lifted above the level of sense. Between him and his mighty successor there is, and there must always have been, an impassable gulf. Marlowe is the rapturous lyrist of limitless desire, Shakspere the majestic spokesman of inexorable moral law.

CHAPTER IV

KYD, LYLY, AND PEELE

THE fascination of Marlowe's genius and the enduring success of his reform have tended to overshadow the important services rendered to dramatic progress by some of his contemporaries, notably by Kyd in tragedy and by Lyly and Greene in comedy. Of no leading Elizabethan playwright do we know so little as of **THOMAS KYD**, yet persistent stage-tradition during the earlier seventeenth century testifies to his remarkable influence and popularity[1]. With the exception of *Tamburlaine*, no pre-Shaksperean play excited so much enthusiasm and was at the same time so widely ridiculed and parodied as *The Spanish Tragedy*. This is the only drama which can be with certainty ascribed to Kyd, except his paraphrase of *Cornelia* by the French writer Garnier. It is possible that he wrote *Soliman and Perseda*, whose theme is briefly introduced as 'a play within the play' into *The Spanish Tragedy*. The *First Part of Jeronimo* may also have come from his hand. It deals with the events preceding the story of *The Spanish Tragedy*, and may have been composed by Kyd before the more elaborate work. But this is conjectural, and there is much to be said in favour of the view that *Jeronimo* is an expansion in dramatic form of the opening narrative in *The Spanish Tragedy* by an anonymous playwright anxious to make capital out of the popularity of the subject[2]. To these dramas of doubtful origin we may add the old version of *Hamlet*, satirically mentioned by Nash in 1589 as the work of an author deeply read in 'English Seneca,' and further scoffed at by Lodge in his *Wit's Miserie*, 1596. Recent criticism has tended to fix on Kyd as the object of Nash's invective, and there is certainly no dramatist of the period to whom a play on the subject of the Danish prince, treated in the Senecan style, can be so plausibly ascribed[3].

1 It has been recently suggested with great plausibility, that the dramatist may be identified with the 'Thomas Kydd, son of Francis Scrivener,' entered at Merchant Taylors' School, October 26, 1565. In this case Nash's famous reference in the preface to Greene's *Menaphon* to 'the shifting companions that leave the trade of *noverint* whereto they were born and busie themselves with the endeavours of art,' probably alludes to Kyd, and not to Shakspere, as has been sometimes supposed. See further on this subject *Thomas Kyd und sein Kreis*, by Gregor Sarrazin, chaps. 2 and 5.

2 This view is ably worked out by Fischer, *Zur Kunstentwicklung der Englischen Tragödie*, pp. 110—112.

3 The evidence for this is excellently worked out in Sarrazin's essay, chap. 5

For *The Spanish Tragedy*, dating probably from 1587, with revenge and madness as its main themes, anticipates in certain aspects Shakspere's mighty work, and at the same time borrows much of its machinery from the Roman writer. Thus it opens in orthodox Senecan fashion with the apparition of Andrea's Ghost, accompanied by Revenge. These two figures are supposed to watch the development of the action throughout, and they serve as Chorus by commenting at intervals on the situation. The place of the classical Prologue is filled by the General who gives the Spanish king an account of the battle in which the Portuguese prince Balthasar slew Don Andrea, and was afterwards taken prisoner by Horatio, son of the Knight-marshal, Hieronimo. Balthasar, during his captivity at the Spanish court, falls in love with Belimperia, the betrothed of Don Andrea, but she spurns the addresses of her lover's murderer, and transfers her affections to Horatio, in alliance with whom she hopes to avenge Andrea's death. The scenes between them strike a more intense note of amorous passion than had hitherto been heard on the English stage, and their parting interview heralds the last leave-taking of Romeo and Juliet. For their joy is of the briefest. Belimperia's brother Lorenzo, whose coolly methodical villainy anticipates that of Iago, favours Balthasar's suit, and is resolved to further it at all hazards. He employs an agent, Pedringano, to spy upon his sister and her lover, and thus surprises them at nightfall in Hieronimo's garden. Horatio is seized, hung upon a tree, and stabbed by Lorenzo before Belimperia's eyes. Her frantic cries for help as the villains carry her away rouse the Marshal from his bed, and he rushes to the bower to find his 'sweet son' Horatio shamefully done to death. Solemnly he dedicates his life to revenge for the outrage, but resolves to dissemble his grief till he has tracked out the murderers[1].

From this point the plot is skilfully developed. Belimperia, whom her brother keeps in durance, contrives to send Hieronimo a letter written with her own blood, in which she discloses the assassins' names. The Marshal, fearing a ruse, makes inquiry for Belimperia at her father's house, and thus arouses the suspicions of Lorenzo, who fears that the plot has been betrayed. He artfully contrives that Pedringano shall slay Serberine, one of the accomplices, and shall immediately afterwards fall into the hands of the Watch. The cynical egotism of his soliloquy after he has despatched his wretched dupes to their fate is in the true spirit of Shakspere's villains:

1 In the additions to the play by Ben Jonson in 1602, Hieronimo is represented as straightway going mad on the discovery of Horatio's body. This seems to me by no means an improvement, for it is psychologically improbable, and it weakens by anticipation the effect of later scenes. In my analysis of the play I have omitted Ben Jonson's additions.

'Better 'tis that base companions die
Than by their life to hazard our good haps;
Nor shall they live for me to fear their faith;
I'll trust myself, myself shall be my friend;
For die they shall: slaves are ordain'd to no other end.'

Yet this crafty scheme recoils upon its author. After Pedringano has been executed for the murder of Serberine, there is found upon him a letter to his master from which Hieronimo learns that Lorenzo and Balthasar are, without doubt, guilty of Horatio's death. This discovery plunges him into frenzied agitation bordering on madness. Wellnigh hopeless of revenge on such highly placed offenders, he bethinks him of suicide, that he may appeal for justice to the infernal powers. In the presence of the King he digs up the earth with his dagger, to find Horatio, and show him with all his wounds. He wanders about at night with torchbearers prying in every crevice and brake, searching in woods and waters for his murdered son. At times, as with Hamlet, his purpose seems to evaporate in rhetorical outbursts, and like Hamlet too he feels rebuked by the contrast between his own inaction and the energy of a suppliant who has suffered a wrong similar to his own.

But though swayed to and fro by imaginative ecstasies, he never loses sight of his aim. He goes through a feigned reconciliation with Lorenzo, but it is merely to disarm suspicion before he strikes his grand blow. In the method that he adopts he again forestalls Hamlet. In honour of the Viceroy of Portugal he arranges a dramatic entertainment on the tragic subject of Soliman and Perseda, and so apportions the parts that under the colour of a stage-murder he can stab Balthasar to death. Belimperia follows suit with Lorenzo, and then kills herself. Thereupon Hieronimo explains to the horror-stricken audience that they have witnessed a real, not a 'fabulously counterfeit' tragedy. When threatened with torture to extract a fuller confession, he bites out his tongue; and then with a penknife, obtained by a ruse, he stabs Lorenzo's father, the Duke of Castile, and finally crowns the heap of slain with his own body. In a brief epilogue the Ghost of Andrea declares himself appeased by the series of 'carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts' that have taken place before his eyes. But he is not content with the spectacle of the guilty and the guiltless weltering in death side by side. He lifts the curtain of the future and shows us his friends amidst heavenly bliss, while his enemies are haled by Revenge down to Hell, and there doomed to an 'endless tragedy' of suffering.

This brief analysis of *The Spanish Tragedy* proves that in Kyd a dramatist had arisen capable of devising a well-sustained plot. He

was not so bold an innovator as Marlowe, and his machinery was mainly borrowed from the Senecan school. It was from it that he drew the Ghost and the Messenger, or his equivalent; under its influence he frequently employed *στιχομυθία*, and put classical quotations into the mouths of his characters. Thus much of his verse has the monotonous rhythm distinctive of all the plays written after the Senecan model. He lacked Marlowe's sensitive ear, his joy in the roll of golden periods. But his dialogue, at its best, has the quality of passionate directness and simplicity essential to the highest dramatic achievement. The love-scenes, short as they are, between Belimperia and Horatio touch a responsive chord in our hearts, and the mingled agony and rage of Hieronimo are rendered with masterly power. In this complex delineation of character Kyd made a notable step forward, and he may justly claim to be the pioneer of introspective tragedy in England. Yet the moral basis of the play is crude in the extreme. A wild insatiable fury of revenge is the sole animating impulse of all the chief personages, and suffices to condone every atrocity, even the murder of the innocent Duke of Castile. But, in spite of defects, *The Spanish Tragedy* is an organic creation, and fully deserved its widespread influence. It holds a unique place in dramatic literature, reaching back to *Gorboduc*, and forward to Shakspere's early plays, probably even to *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.

While tragedy was thus making rapid advances in the hands of Marlowe and Kyd, comedy was being raised to a higher level by **JOHN LYLY.** Born in Kent in 1554, Lyly was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, and afterwards came up to London, where he wrote novels and plays, took part in the Marprelate controversy, and made vain efforts to obtain the post of Master of the Revels. He sprang at a bound into fame by the publication in 1579 of *Euphues*, a prose romance whose slender story is used as the thread for dissertations upon love, friendship, and a variety of moral themes. The subject of the book, and of its sequel, *Euphues and his England*, does not immediately concern us, but its style had an effect on all contemporary literature, including the drama. It therefore claims a brief examination, the more so because it has paid for its brief spell of popularity by being made the mark for much ignorant ridicule and caricature. 'Euphuism' in one of its aspects was merely an exaggerated form of a prevalent tendency. The Renaissance loved the classics not wisely but too well, and its enthusiasm often ran into perverted channels. Thus the habit arose of introducing in and out of season references to mythology and ancient history, and of quoting cons-

> 'Better 'tis that base companions die
> Than by their life to hazard our good haps;
> Nor shall they live for me to fear their faith;
> I'll trust myself, myself shall be my friend;
> For die they shall: slaves are ordain'd to no other end.'

Yet this crafty scheme recoils upon its author. After Pedringano has been executed for the murder of Serberine, there is found upon him a letter to his master from which Hieronimo learns that Lorenzo and Balthasar are, without doubt, guilty of Horatio's death. This discovery plunges him into frenzied agitation bordering on madness. Wellnigh hopeless of revenge on such highly placed offenders, he bethinks him of suicide, that he may appeal for justice to the infernal powers. In the presence of the King he digs up the earth with his dagger, to find Horatio, and show him with all his wounds. He wanders about at night with torchbearers prying in every crevice and brake, searching in woods and waters for his murdered son. At times, as with Hamlet, his purpose seems to evaporate in rhetorical outbursts, and like Hamlet too he feels rebuked by the contrast between his own inaction and the energy of a suppliant who has suffered a wrong similar to his own.

But though swayed to and fro by imaginative ecstasies, he never loses sight of his aim. He goes through a feigned reconciliation with Lorenzo, but it is merely to disarm suspicion before he strikes his grand blow. In the method that he adopts he again forestalls Hamlet. In honour of the Viceroy of Portugal he arranges a dramatic entertainment on the tragic subject of Soliman and Perseda, and so apportions the parts that under the colour of a stage-murder he can stab Balthasar to death. Belimperia follows suit with Lorenzo, and then kills herself. Thereupon Hieronimo explains to the horror-stricken audience that they have witnessed a real, not a 'fabulously counterfeit' tragedy. When threatened with torture to extract a fuller confession, he bites out his tongue; and then with a penknife, obtained by a ruse, he stabs Lorenzo's father, the Duke of Castile, and finally crowns the heap of slain with his own body. In a brief epilogue the Ghost of Andrea declares himself appeased by the series of 'carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts' that have taken place before his eyes. But he is not content with the spectacle of the guilty and the guiltless weltering in death side by side. He lifts the curtain of the future and shows us his friends amidst heavenly bliss, while his enemies are haled by Revenge down to Hell, and there doomed to an 'endless tragedy' of suffering.

This brief analysis of *The Spanish Tragedy* proves that in Kyd a dramatist had arisen capable of devising a well-sustained plot. He

was not so bold an innovator as Marlowe, and his machinery was mainly borrowed from the Senecan school. It was from it that he drew the Ghost and the Messenger, or his equivalent; under its influence he frequently employed *στιχομυθία*, and put classical quotations into the mouths of his characters. Thus much of his verse has the monotonous rhythm distinctive of all the plays written after the Senecan model. He lacked Marlowe's sensitive ear, his joy in the roll of golden periods. But his dialogue, at its best, has the quality of passionate directness and simplicity essential to the highest dramatic achievement. The love-scenes, short as they are, between Belimperia and Horatio touch a responsive chord in our hearts, and the mingled agony and rage of Hieronimo are rendered with masterly power. In this complex delineation of character Kyd made a notable step forward, and he may justly claim to be the pioneer of introspective tragedy in England. Yet the moral basis of the play is crude in the extreme. A wild insatiable fury of revenge is the sole animating impulse of all the chief personages, and suffices to condone every atrocity, even the murder of the innocent Duke of Castile. But, in spite of defects, *The Spanish Tragedy* is an organic creation, and fully deserved its widespread influence. It holds a unique place in dramatic literature, reaching back to *Gorboduc*, and forward to Shakspere's early plays, probably even to *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.

While tragedy was thus making rapid advances in the hands of Marlowe and Kyd, comedy was being raised to a higher level by **JOHN LYLY**. Born in Kent in 1554, Lyly was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, and afterwards came up to London, where he wrote novels and plays, took part in the Marprelate controversy, and made vain efforts to obtain the post of Master of the Revels. He sprang at a bound into fame by the publication in 1579 of *Euphues*, a prose romance whose slender story is used as the thread for dissertations upon love, friendship, and a variety of moral themes. The subject of the book, and of its sequel, *Euphues and his England*, does not immediately concern us, but its style had an effect on all contemporary literature, including the drama. It therefore claims a brief examination, the more so because it has paid for its brief spell of popularity by being made the mark for much ignorant ridicule and caricature. 'Euphuism' in one of its aspects was merely an exaggerated form of a prevalent tendency. The Renaissance loved the classics not wisely but too well, and its enthusiasm often ran into perverted channels. Thus the habit arose of introducing in and out of season references to mythology and ancient history, and of quoting cons-

tantly from Roman writers. This vice of style appears in its most flagrant form in the *Euphues*, but it is combined with other more distinctive and unusual features. One of these is the habitual balance of the sentences in two or more parisonic parts, through a highly artificial system of antithesis and cross-alliteration. This peculiarity did not originate entirely with Lyly; it is employed in less elaborate form by earlier writers, especially the Spaniard Guevara and his English translator, Lord Berners. But the author of the *Euphues* raised it from a mere literary ornament into a definite type of structure. Alliteration, which had been the basis of the earliest English verse, was adopted by Lyly as the basis of his new-fangled species of prose. In his hands, as has been lately said, it was 'not a trick, but a convention,' and though wearisome to modern ears, it had its saving virtue in an age whose besetting temptation was to carelessness of construction. No such excuse can be made for the third, and most singular feature of Lyly's style his constant introduction, in the guise of similes, of an almost entirely fictitious natural history, borrowed largely from Pliny. He is deeply versed in the attributes of a strange *flora* and *fauna* with which science has nothing to do, and he drags them in at every turn in ingenious illustration of human passions and actions. Sidney, Drayton, and Nash united in ridiculing this amazing fashion, but it had immense vogue for a time, and we shall have occasion to trace its influence on Lodge and Greene, and, in a measure, on Shakspere.

The distinctive features of Euphuism all reappear in Lyly's comedies. Excluding one or two doubtful plays, they are eight in number, and were acted by the 'children of the Chapel' and the 'children of Paul's.' Six of them were performed in the presence of Elizabeth, and they were admirably adapted to gratify the prevalent court tastes. These six were *The Woman in the Moon, Campaspe, Sapho and Phao, Endimion, Gallathea,* and *Midas.* As the titles show, the subjects were drawn from mythology or classical legend, but Lyly displayed extraordinary skill and originality in his manipulation of this traditional material. None of these comedies has much dramatic movement or plot, or can claim to be a play in the stricter sense. They are graceful and ingenious exercises of fancy on a chosen theme, and they partake of the qualities of the Masque. But they mark an important stage in the development of comedy. Except *The Woman in the Moon,* which was the earliest, and which retained the blank verse of the classical school, all these pieces were written in prose. Gascoigne had used prose in his translation of Ariosto's *Suppositi,* but it had not hitherto been employed in an

original play. It is Lyly's distinction to have discovered its fitness for dramatic purposes, and to have handled it with notable success. His dialogue, it is true, often exhibits the full-blown peculiarities of Euphuism, but these are found chiefly in the soliloquies and other set speeches. On the stage, too, the merits of the style, its pregnancy, finish, and precision, go further to counterbalance its defects than in the pages of a novel. Moreover, dramatic necessities often demanded a swifter verbal interchange than was possible under strictly Euphuistic conditions, and here Lyly throws off his cumbersome panoply and thrusts right and left with nimble dexterity. The volleys of wit between his characters are frequently exercises in extremely thin-spun repartee, but his dialogue at its best moves with exemplary ease and vivacity, and has a true ring of distinction.

These court-comedies may be conveniently separated into two groups. *The Woman in the Moon, Gallathea, Campaspe,* and a pastoral written in Lyly's old age, *Love's Metamorphosis,* are simply fanciful renderings of classical myths or legends, without any secondary design. But *Sapho and Phao, Endimion,* and *Midas* are dramatic allegories dealing under transparent fictions with social and political incidents of the period. Amongst the first group *Campaspe* is remarkable for its polish and neatness of workmanship. Its main story is the rivalry in love between Alexander the Great and the painter Apelles for the fair Theban captive Campaspe. The contrast between the man of action and the artist foreshadows a favourite Shaksperean device, and Alexander exhibits many of the qualities of a Theseus or a Henry V. He is merciful to the vanquished and courteous to his inferiors; he loves a practical joke or a sally of wit; and in the end he magnanimously surrenders Campaspe to Apelles. He frankly confesses that 'Alexander cannot subdue the affections of men, though he conquer their countries,' and declares 'it were a shame he should desire to command the world, if he could not command himself.' Apelles' sudden passion for his beautiful 'sitter' is well pourtrayed, and there is a charming scene in the painter's studio. 'When will you finish Campaspe?' asks the amorous monarch. 'Never finish,' is the reply, 'for always in absolute beauty there is somewhat above art.' Alexander borrows Apelles' pencil, but finds that he bungles sadly in his attempts. 'How have I done here?' he inquires. 'Like a king,' is the diplomatic answer, to which Alexander makes rejoinder, 'I think so: but nothing more unlike a painter.' Apelles has musical as well as artistic gifts, and from his lips floats one of the daintiest of Elizabethan songs, 'Cupid and my Campaspe.' A minor plot is provided by a group of philosophers and

their servants. In bold defiance of dates, Plato, Aristotle, Crisippus, Crates, Cleanthes, and Anaxarchus are all included in Alexander's retinue, but they are shadowy figures. Diogenes, on the other hand, the tub-philosopher, is admirably drawn. His biting repartees show Lyly's dialectical power at its best, and he would more than hold his own in wordy warfare with Shakspere's Apemantus. On the principle of 'like master, like man,' he is suited with a servant *Manes*, who can give as good as he gets, and who as often as not bears off the honours in a duel of abuse.

Two of the allegorical plays, *Sapho and Phao* and *Endimion*, treat of Elizabeth's relations with Leicester. In both cases Lyly twists the original story to make it serve his special purpose. Phao, the ferryman of Syracuse, is endowed by Venus with marvellous beauty, and thus wins the heart of Sapho, the princess of the city. For long it had been said of her that 'she conquers affections and sendeth love up and down upon errands,' but Cupid at his mother's bidding transfixes her with an arrow. The result is her passion for the handsome ferryman, which he returns, though aware that it is 'unmeet for his birth, his fortune, his years.' The struggle in Sapho's breast between love and dignity is well pourtrayed, and there is true charm in the scene where the princess, sick with concealed affection, sends for Phao as a physician, and they hint at their feelings in phrases of double meaning. Lyly uses an ingenious artifice to cut the knot. Venus herself becomes enamoured of the youth whom she has made so fair, and she bids Cupid strike Sapho with a fresh arrow which will cause her to disdain Phao. This he does but at the same time he strikes the ferryman with an arrow which inspires him with loathing of Venus. Thus the goddess is crossed in her purposes, and Cupid even adopts Sapho as his mother, and promotes her to the place of Queen of Love. Phao, when he finds that Sapho has become indifferent to him, bids farewell to Syracuse, though he declares his resolution, 'wherever I wander to be as I were ever kneeling before Sapho; my loyalty unspotted, though unrewarded.'

In the Epilogue to the play Lyly hints at its underlying meaning, to which he dares not venture to furnish a key. The same subject is more elaborately handled in *Endimion*. Here Lyly, reversing the classical story, represents Endimion as enamoured of Cynthia, the moon-goddess. For her sake he slights his earthly mistress, Tellus, who in revenge persuades the witch Dipsas to charm him into a deep sleep. Tellus suffers for her treachery by being condemned to imprisonment in a lonely castle under the charge of Corsites.

Endimion slumbers for forty years, till his friend Eumenides learns by supernatural means that Cynthia's kiss will waken him. The goddess visits the sleeper and finds him grown from youth to age, but a touch from her lips breaks the spell and rouses him from his trance. Tellus, who has inspired her gaoler Corsites with a violent passion, then confesses that she plotted against Endimion because she was jealous of his love for Cynthia. But Endimion protests against his feeling for one so exalted being given such a name.

'The time was, madam, and is, and ever shall be, that I honoured your highness above all the world, but to stretch it so far to call it love I never durst. There hath none pleased mine eye but Cynthia, none delighted mine ears but Cynthia, none possessed my heart but Cynthia. Such a difference hath the gods set between our states that all must be duty, loyalty, and reverence, nothing (without it vouchsafe your highness) be termed love.'

These words are exactly applicable to the relations of Leicester and Elizabeth, which almost certainly form the groundwork of the play, though Halpin's interpretation of details may be open to doubt. He identifies Tellus with the Countess of Sheffield, whom Leicester clandestinely married while he was paying suit to Elizabeth. Endimion's sleep is his imprisonment at Greenwich; the friendly intervention of Eumenides is that of the Earl of Sussex; and the solution of the difficulty in Tellus' marriage to Corsites is the union of Lady Sheffield with Sir Edward Stafford. Besides these incidents in Elizabethan court life, the play has a humorous underplot, of which the central figure is Sir Tophas. He is an admirable specimen of the *Miles Gloriosus*, a type which had already been introduced from the classical stage in *Roister Doister;* and in his mixture of bragging and pedantry he specially anticipates Don Armado. He at first loudly protests his scorn of love, but soon becomes infatuated with the witch Dipsas, and at the end, when she is found to be married, he is paired off with her maid Bagoa. This degrading union completes his contrast with Endimion, who remains unwedded because he has fixed his affections on a being above the sphere of earth.

Midas lifts us out of the atmosphere of courtly love-complications into the region of international politics. It is the most powerful of Lyly's comedies, and though extremely simple in construction, it merits high praise as a piece of imaginative satire. The story of Midas, King of Phrygia, who obtained the fatal gift of turning all that he touched into gold, is here applied to Philip of Spain. We see Midas debating with his advisers what to choose from Bacchus, and finally deciding in favour of gold. But he soon bitterly rues the

effects of his greed, and he bursts into fierce self-reproaches in a speech which is in reality a crushing indictment of the Spanish foreign policy, especially of the expedition against England.

'I have written my laws in blood, and made my gods of gold. Have I not made the sea to groan under the number of my ships: and have they not perished, that there was not two left to make a number? Have I not thrust my subjects into a camp, like oxen into a cart; whom having made slaves by unjust wars, I use now as slaves for all wars? . . . Why did I wish that all might be gold I touched but that I thought all men's hearts would be touched with gold; that what policy could not compass or prowess, gold might have commanded and conquered? A bridge of gold did I mean to make in that island where all my navy could not make a breach. Those islands did I long to touch that I might turn them to gold and myself to glory. But unhappy Midas, who by the same means perisheth himself that he thought to conquer others: being now become a slave to the world, a scorn to that petty prince, and to thyself a consumption. A petty prince, Midas? No, a prince protected by the gods, by nature, by his own virtue, and his subjects' obedience.'

The same theme of Philip's shortsighted ambition in seeking to conquer Lesbos, as England is named, recurs throughout the second half of the play, where Midas, freed from his disastrous gift, is endowed with asses' ears for preferring Pan's music to that of Apollo. The man who lets his perceptions of the fitness of things be blunted by his desires is turned into a laughing-stock, as Philip had found in the case of the Armada. There is only one way by which he can get rid of his deformity, he renounces for the future all aggressive aims: 'I perceive (and yet not too late) that Lesbos will not be touched by gold, by force it cannot: that the gods have pitched it out of the world, as not to be controlled by any in the world.' It speaks well for Lyly's sagacity that he should have so clearly foreseen that Spain would be ruined by her gold-fever and lust of dominion; and *Midas* is an interesting specimen of the political type of drama which was developed later by Middleton and Massinger.

One play of Lyly, *Mother Bombie,* stands apart from the rest. It is not an adaptation of a classical story, but a comedy in the characteristic Italian manner, though the scene is supposed to be laid at Rochester, in Lyly's native county. The plot hinges upon an elaborate series of mistakes in identity, and of the complications in wooing which thence arise. The unnaturally symmetrical balance of the characters gives an air of artificiality to the whole, but the construction is ingenious, and *Mother Bombie* is remarkable as the first original English comedy, in the strict sense, written in prose.

Thus both as novelist and playwright Lyly may justly claim to be an innovator, and Shakspere is among those who came under his widespread influence. Doubtless the Stratford dramatist, with his aversion to all affectations of speech, was keenly alive to the absurdi-

ties of Euphuism, which he parodies in the speech of Falstaff to Prince Hal (1 *Henry IV*, ii.4).

'Harry, I do not only marvel where thou spendest thy time, but also how thou art accompanied: for though the camomile, the more it is trodden on, the faster it grows, yet youth, the more it is wasted, the sooner it wears... There is a thing, Harry, which thou hast often heard of, and it is known to many in our land by the name of pitch: this pitch, as ancient writers do report, doth defile: so doth the company thou keepest; for, Harry, now do I not speak to thee in drink, but in tears; not in pleasure, but in passion; not in words only, but in woes also.'

Further evidence is supplied by *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale*. These plays are founded on novels written in Euphuistic style, but Shakspere, as will be more fully shown, substituted a simpler diction, and replaced Lyly's 'unnatural natural' philosophy by genuine Warwickshire country-lore. Yet the great dramatist shows traces of his predecessor's influence in the remarkable frequency of the allusions to animals—sometimes of a fabulous nature—which occur in the early plays and poems, as well as in later works like *Lear* and *Coriolanus*. Moreover, though Shakspere mocked at the artifices of Euphuism, he must have appreciated its incisive force, its lucidity and refinement. These are the qualities which specially distinguish his own colloquial prose, and when we listen to the brilliant sallies of Falstaff or Benedick, Beatrice or Rosalind, we should remember that they have their prelude in the witty dialogue of *Campaspe* or *Endimion*. Lyly too set the fashion which Shakspere followed of introducing lyrics, as a musical relief; and his imaginative type of comedy, with its supernatural framework and allegorical design, pointed the way to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*.

GEORGE PEELE was, born in Devonshire about 1552, and like Lyly, after studying at Oxford, came up to London, where he wrote plays and poems, and made vain efforts to secure court patronage. His services to dramatic literature were slighter than his conventional reputation would lead us to expect. His first work of importance was *The Arraignment of Paris*, performed in 1584 before the Queen by the children of the Chapel Royal. It is written in verse, but otherwise it bears a strong resemblance to Lyly's comedies, for its main motive is to turn a classical story into a neat compliment to the sovereign. Paris has to award the apple, the prize of beauty, to the fairest of the three goddesses, Juno, Pallas, and Venus. His choice falls on Venus, but her jealous rivals arraign him for injustice before Zeus and the Olympians. He makes an eloquent defence,

which is received with favour, but on the motion of Apollo, who holds that women should be judged by women, the final award is referred to Diana. She solves the difficulty by assigning the prize, not to any one of the competitors, but to the 'gracious nymph Eliza,'

> 'In state Queen Juno's peer, for power in arms
> And virtues of the mind, Minerva's mate;
> As fair and lovely as the Queen of Love,
> As chaste as Dian in her chaste desires.'

The *dénouement* is felicitous, and Diana's eulogy on England,

> 'An ancient seat of kings, a second Troy,
> Y-compassed round with a commodious sea,'

breathes exactly the spirit of John of Gaunt's eloquent apostrophe in Shakspere's *Richard II.* The play is graceful throughout, and, despite a few somewhat irrelevant episodes, is well constructed. It is written chiefly in rhyming metres, but the speeches of Paris and of Diana before the Council of the Gods are in flowing and agreeable, though slightly monotonous, blank verse[1].

Peele's patriotism found less worthy expression in a later play, *The Chronicle of Edward I*, wherein his hatred of all things Spanish prompted him to blacken the fame of good Queen Eleanor of Castile. Though not published till 1593, it was acted several years previously, and almost certainly preceded Marlowe's *Edward II*, to which it is immeasurably inferior. But it was later in date than *Tamburlaine*, and was affected by the revolution in dramatic style produced by the success of that play. The rhyming couplets of *The Arraignment of Paris* are discarded, and in their place we have blank verse written in evident imitation of Marlowe's manner, and often with incongruous effect. The most successful lines occur in some of the earlier speeches, which ring with a genuinely national tone. One passage may be quoted as an apt embodiment of the spirit of Elizabethan England, here transferred to the age of 'Longshanks':

> 'The people of this land are men of war,
> The women courteous, mild, and debonair,
> Laying their lives at princes' feet
> That govern with familiar majesty;
> But if their sovereigns once 'gin swell with pride
> Disdaining commons' love, which is the strength
> And sureness of the richest commonwealth,
> That prince were better live a private life
> Than rule with tyranny and discontent.'

1 A curious play, *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, was attributed to Peele by Dyce, on insufficient evidence. Its date is probably about 1584, and it deals with the fortunes of two mediaeval heroes, who are supposed to meet at the court of Alexander the Great. It is written almost entirely in rhyming septenars, and the verse besides lacking Peele's usual grace, contains peculiarities of diction (e.g. the habit of adding a pronoun after a noun, 'The King of Norway, he,') not found in his known works. An analysis of the play is given in Morley's *English Writers*, vol. ix. 238.

The Battle of Alcazar, printed anonymously in 1594, has the same characteristics of style as *Edward I*, and is almost undoubtedly by Peele. Its hero is Thomas Stukeley, a Devonshire man, whose life was a series of extraordinary adventures, ending on an African battle-field. The story is told with vigour, but construction and character-drawing are both immature. *The Old Wives' Tale*, printed in 1595, is chiefly noticeable for having probably furnished Milton with hints for the framework of *Comus*. In the *Tale*, amidst a variety of other disconnected episodes, we have the adventures of two brothers seeking their sister Delia, who has been beguiled by the enchanter Sacrapant, and is only set free at the last through the intervention of a ghost or spirit. Among the secondary threads of interest is a caricature of the classical school of versifiers, especially Gabriel Harvey, whose hexameters are quoted and ridiculed by a comic character, Huanebango. Finally, we have from Peele's hand a play founded on Scripture history, *David and Bethsabe*. It has been called 'a curious specimen of the Miracle Play in its most modern form,' and is noticeable as one of the few dramas of the Renaissance period drawn from Scriptural sources. This is Peele's most ambitious and finished work. It is written throughout in blank verse, and, as its full title tells us, deals with two incidents, *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe, With the Tragedie of Absalom*. The earlier plot is handled with tact and delicacy, and the story of Absalom's revolt is powerfully told. But little skill is shown in connecting the two episodes, and the play is rather a dramatized chronicle than a drama in the stricter sense. The blank verse is facile and fluent, and is often not without a real, though somewhat grandiose, beauty, but it seldom varies its cadence and soon palls on the ear.

Peele's theatrical activity extended over a period of fifteen years; he was not cut off in mid-career like Marlowe and Greene. Yet he made less contribution than either to dramatic advance, and he was not an originator in the same sense as Lyly. He can scarcely be said to show the instinct of a true master, whether in plot, portraiture, or versification. But his versatility, his urbane and graceful treatment of his themes, his command of imagery and language, his freedom from the sensuous taint—all these combine to give him an honourable place among the lieutenants, not the leaders, of Elizabethan drama.

CHAPTER V

ROBERT GREENE

AMONG Shakspere's predecessors the place second to Marlowe must be assigned to **ROBERT GREENE**, of whose personal career, as typical of the Bohemianism of the times, some details have already been given. Like Lyly, he was novelist and playwright in one, and attained high excellence in both arts. He himself tells us that as soon as he had taken his degree he 'left the University and away to London, where I became an author of plays, and a penner of Love-Pamphlets, so that I soon grew famous in that quality.' Of his early dramatic works, published previously to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine,* not one has survived. Whether from professional jealousy, or the more respectable motive of literary conservatism, Greene, as has been said, had opposed with envenomed ridicule the introduction of blank verse upon the stage. But the victory of the new metre was so decisive that he found himself compelled to follow in the fashion that his rival had set. *Alphonsus, King of Arragon,* which is almost certainly the earliest of his extant plays, is written in obvious imitation of *Tamburlaine.* Not only are Marlowe's style and diction faithfully copied, even to the almost literal reproduction of individual lines, but the whole plot of the drama is modelled upon that of its predecessor. The interest is supposed to centre round Alphonsus, who, like the Scythian, rises from a lowly fortune to high estate, conquering kingdom after kingdom, and finally overcoming 'the Great Turk,' whose daugter he wins as his wife. But the play shows few traces of power or spontaneity. It was not difficult to improve upon Marlowe's extravagances, and to represent the victorious Alphonsus making his entry 'with a canopy carried over him by three lords, having over each corner a king's head crowned.' But it was quite a different matter for Greene to catch the real spirit of his predecessor's great creation, with its superb poetry and passion, and in this he completely failed. His hero is a purely lay figure, whose exploits arouse scant sympathy, and the subordinate characters are equally wooden. There is little attempt at dramatic development of plot; we have merely, as in *Tamburlaine,* a succession of scenes without any adequate binding motive. Perhaps the most effective touch, and one which owes nothing to Marlowe's example, is the skilfully managed reappearance of the hero's father

in the last act, to resolve complications and bring about a happy *finale.* The play exhibits a magnificent contempt for historical perspective, which is remarkable even in that age of jumbled chronologies. The story is mediaeval, but it is introduced by Venus, who acts throughout as Chorus; Medea, Mahomet, and the Homeric seer Calchas are all pressed into the service of the plot, and Calchas is represented as rising 'in a white surplice and a cardinal's mitre,' while the Great Turk orders prisoners to be led to 'the Marshalsea.' A similar *naïveté* characterizes many of the stage directions, as for instance, 'Exit Venus; or if you can conveniently, let a chair come down from the top of the stage, and draw her up.'

Orlando Furioso is similar in its general style to *Alphonsus,* and is written for the most part in equally inflated diction, but it shows a distinct advance both in constructive power and characterization. The plot is taken from Ariosto's epic, though numerous additions and changes are made by the dramatist. Angelica, the daughter of Marsillius, Emperor of Africa, is sought in marriage by princely suitors from all parts of the earth. In the opening scene of the play the wooers one by one make their appeal, and Angelica, passing over mighty potentates like the Soldan of Egypt and the King of the Isles, fixes her choice on Orlando, the County Palatine. The foreshadowing of a leading situation in *The Merchant of Venice* will be noticed, and there can be little doubt that this episode was introduced to gratify Elizabeth, before whom (as the title page of the first edition informs us) the play was acted. Orlando's success inflames to furious jealousy a rival lover, Sacripant, whom it is difficult not to regard as a conscious burlesque of Tamburlaine. He thus sets forth his ambitious visions:

> 'When I come and set me down to rest,
> My chair presents a throne of majesty;
> And when I set my bonnet on my head,
> Methinks I fit my forehead for a crown;
> And when I take my truncheon in my fist,
> A sceptre then comes tumbling in my thoughts:
> My dreams are princely, all of diadems.'

In order to sow disunion between the two lovers Sacripant has recourse to craft. In a grove where Orlando is wont to walk communing of his mistress, Sacripant carves on every tree the name of Angelica, coupled with that of Medor, one of her friends, and hangs roundelays on the boughs, in which the latter declares his love to the princess. The plot meets with full success, for Orlando passing through the grove is struck with furious jealousy, and straightway goes mad. Little art is shown in leading up to this crisis, which

occurs with a suddenness that is far from plausible, nor is the course of Orlando's unreason impressively depicted. Scenes that might not be wanting in a certain pathos and force are marred by the introduction of purely farcical incidents, without any bearing on the plot, and the climax of weakness is reached in the device by which Orlando is restored to sanity. For this is not effected gradually through proof of Angelica's continued love, but with sudden completeness by the arts and potions of an enchantress Melissa, who otherwise has no connexion with the play. An anticipation of the opening scene in *Lear* may be found in the conduct of King Marsillius, who on hearing of the charge against his daughter with impetuous fury banishes her from the court. Angelica bears her wrongs with dignity and unfailing loyalty to her love, and though only drawn in outline she may take a humble place among Greene's charming portrait gallery of women. Her constancy has at last its reward, for Orlando, being informed of Sacripant's treachery by Melissa, slays him in single combat, and after further vanquishing the peers of France, he begs Angelica's pardon, which she readily grants on the plea that his madness was a proof of the extremity of his love. Marsillius repents of his harshness, and in token of his contrition bestows his crown upon Orlando, who thus wins at once a kingdom and a bride.

While *Orlando Furioso* thus marks an evident advance upon *Alphonsus,* the two plays may be classed together as treating mediaeval and foreign subjects in a style modelled upon that of Marlowe. They thus differ from another group of dramas, belonging to the more matured period of Greene's art, which take for their theme English history and traditions, and which are written in far purer and less ornate verse, with an intermixture of really humorous prose scenes. To this group belong *James IV, Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay,* and *George-a-Greene.* There is no certain evidence to determine the order of these three plays, of which *James IV* is the most artistically rounded in design and execution. Its full title is *The Scottish History of James IV, slaine at Flodden, intermixed with a pleasant Comedie presented by Oboram, King of Fayeries.* The main plot is skilfully drawn, and may be briefly summarized. James of Scotland weds Dorothea, daughter of Henry VII of England, but at the same time he conceives an unlawful passion for Ida, daughter of the Countess of Arran, who, however, will not listen to the suit of a married lover. The King, therefore, on the suggestion of the villain, Ateukin, arranges to make away with his Queen. She hears of the plot, and escapes in the disguise of a page.

But she is pursued and wounded by a hired French bravo, and has to remain for a time in concealment. Her father, hearing of her supposed death, makes war upon her husband, whereupon she leaves her hiding-place and by her intervention reconciles them. The lady Ida has meanwhile married an English nobleman, and thus the play has a happy ending. The reference in the title to the death of James IV at Flodden has no justification in the drama, and 'the pleasant comedy of Oboram' only consists of a prelude and *entr'acte* conversation between the king of the fairies and a cynical Scotchman named Bohun, who is supposed to be the author of the main story. But in thus introducing Oboram on the stage, Greene again anticipates Shakspere.

The special merit of this play is the skill displayed in the drawing of character. It has been aptly said that Greene, from what we know of his life, is the last man from whose hand we should have expected types of noble and chaste womanhood. Yet such appear alike in his novels and his plays, and prominent among them are Dorothea and Ida in *James IV.* The Queen, whose love cannot be killed by her husband's infidelity and cruelty, is a finely-conceived character. When the nobles urge her to avenge her wrongs, by summoning her father to punish her husband, she makes a true wifely protest:

> 'As if they kill not me who with him fight,
> As if his breast be touched, I am not wounded,
> As if he wailed, my joys were not confounded;
> We are one heart, though rent by hate in twain,
> One soul, one essence doth our weal contain,
> What then can conquer him, that kills not me?'

Her hesitation in assuming the disguise of a page, her true womanliness showing itself when, like Rosalind, she forgets that 'tears do not become a man,' her modesty in disclosing her true sex, her frank and wholehearted forgiveness of the repentant King—all these are natural touches, making up a lifelike and attractive picture. Equally well drawn is the high-souled Lady Ida, akin to the heroines of Shakspere in her union of 'rare wit, fair face,' and resolute will. Very graceful is her comparison between the varied show of the world and the needlework which gives her occupation in her mother's house. We readily echo her true lover's words when he speaks of her eye,

> 'In which is heaven and heavenliness,
> In which the food of God is shut,
> Whose powers the purest minds do glut.'

Several of the male characters are well drawn, especially the King, whose unlawful passion, though too abrupt in its origin, is powerfully portrayed, and the unscrupulous Ateukin, who is really a notable villain of the Machiavellian type. His servant Slipper is an amusing clown, and it is noticeable that he plays a real part in the development of the plot. Thus the play combines varied elements of interest, while the style ranges agreeably from the rhymed couplet to blank verse or to prose.

Not so powerful nor well-constructed, but in some ways even more attractive, is Greene's other semi-historical play, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. It unites, though loosely, two threads of interest, of which the one that gives the title is the less important. It deals with the story of Friar Bacon, the mediaeval Oxford conjurer, who outwits Friar Bungay, another practiser of the magic art, and an arrogant German wizard, Vandermast. But Bacon's necromancy is of a childish type, and the scene in which he abjures it is without power. More interesting than the Friar is his 'man' Miles. He has all the tricks and doggrel snatches of the *Vice*, and in the end a devil comes to take him to hell. Miles declares 'tis a place I have desired long to see,' and having been assured it contains a 'good tippling house where a man may have a lusty fire, a pot of good ale, and a pair of cards,' he cheerfully goes off 'roaring' upon the devil's back. But the real centre of interest is the story of the love of Prince Edward (afterwards Edward I) for Margaret, the fair maid of Fresingfield, who, however, gives her affections to Edward's proxy wooer, the Earl of Lincoln, while the Prince eventually accepts his father's choice of a bride in Eleanor of Castile. Margaret of Fresingfield is another of Greene's charming miniature portraits of women. He is successful in throwing round the Suffolk lass a pastoral charm that has nothing of pastoral conventionality. Prince Edward's description of her in her dairy reminds us of Perdita, 'the queen of curds and cream:'

> 'Into the milk-house went I with the maid,
> And there amongst the cream-bowls she did shine
> As Pallas, 'mongst her princely house-wifery.
> She turned her smock over her lily arms,
> And dived them into milk to run her cheese,
> But whiter than the milk her crystal skin,
> Checked with lines of azure, made her blush,
> That art or nature durst bring for compare.'

And Prince 'Ned,' roaming about in disguise through the country with his 'wags,' consorting with friars and dairy-maids, and letting his own servant personate him for a time, is he not the forerunner of

Shakspere's madcap Prince Hal? Indeed the whole drama in its thoroughly national spirit, as in its changes from grave to gay, from court to street and homestead, anticipates *Henry IV.*

George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield, is another story of English country life interwoven with legendary incidents. George-a-Greene, the hero, is keeper of the pinfolds, near Wakefield and is the ideal representative of all the excellences, physical and moral, of the yeoman class. He is the stoutest man of his arms to be found throughout the land, and is a 'true liegeman' to his King Edward. Otherwise he is no respecter of persons or of ranks:

> 'For stature he is framed
> Like to the picture of stout Hercules,
> And for his carriage passeth Robin Hood.
> The boldest Earl or Baron of your land
> That offereth scathe unto the town of Wakefield
> George will arrest his pledge unto the pound.'

By his bravery and craft he quells the rebellion of the Earl of Kendal, and sends him a prisoner unto the King, with the request that his life may be spared. He afterwards worsts in fair fight Robin Hood and two of his men, who have come on purpose to try the odds with him, but on hearing the name of the foes whom he has overthrown, he greets them with generous heartiness:

> 'Welcome sweet Robin, welcome, maid Marian,
> And welcome you, my friends. Will you to my poor house?
> You shall have wafer cakes your fill,
> A piece of beef hung up since Martlemas,
> Mutton, and veal.'

When the king, in reward for his valour and loyalty, offers to endow him with lands and dub him knight, he pleads that he may be let 'live and die a yeoman still': all he asks is that Edward should further his suit with his true love Bettris, who has given him her heart, but whose crabbed old father Grime frowns upon a humble wooer. Needless to say the King's pleading is successful, and the play ends with Edward's gracious announcement that he will sup at the house of George-a-Greene.

Bettris, the heroine, forms a companion picture to Margaret of Fresingfield, though more slightly sketched and less idealized. Our sympathies go out to the rural lass who rejects the advances of high-born swains, and flies in disguise to the house of her lover, though she vows never to marry him without her father's consent. Another type of feminine constan[illegible] Jan[illegible]rley, who, in her husband's absence, resists the un[illegible]pos[illegible] the invading King of Scots,

Several of the male characters are well drawn, especially the King, whose unlawful passion, though too abrupt in its origin, is powerfully portrayed, and the unscrupulous Ateukin, who is really a notable villain of the Machiavellian type. His servant Slipper is an amusing clown, and it is noticeable that he plays a real part in the development of the plot. Thus the play combines varied elements of interest, while the style ranges agreeably from the rhymed couplet to blank verse or to prose.

Not so powerful nor well-constructed, but in some ways even more attractive, is Greene's other semi-historical play, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. It unites, though loosely, two threads of interest, of which the one that gives the title is the less important. It deals with the story of Friar Bacon, the mediaeval Oxford conjurer, who outwits Friar Bungay, another practiser of the magic art, and an arrogant German wizard, Vandermast. But Bacon's necromancy is of a childish type, and the scene in which he abjures it is without power. More interesting than the Friar is his 'man' Miles. He has all the tricks and doggrel snatches of the *Vice*, and in the end a devil comes to take him to hell. Miles declares ''tis a place I have desired long to see,' and having been assured it contains a 'good tippling house where a man may have a lusty fire, a pot of good ale, and a pair of cards,' he cheerfully goes off 'roaring' upon the devil's back. But the real centre of interest is the story of the love of Prince Edward (afterwards Edward I) for Margaret, the fair maid of Fresingfield, who, however, gives her affections to Edward's proxy wooer, the Earl of Lincoln, while the Prince eventually accepts his father's choice of a bride in Eleanor of Castile. Margaret of Fresingfield is another of Greene's charming miniature portraits of women. He is successful in throwing round the Suffolk lass a pastoral charm that has nothing of pastoral conventionality. Prince Edward's description of her in her dairy reminds us of Perdita, 'the queen of curds and cream:'

> 'Into the milk-house went I with the maid,
> And there amongst the cream-bowls she did shine
> As Pallas, 'mongst her princely house-wifery.
> She turned her smock over her lily arms,
> And dived them into milk to run her cheese,
> But whiter than the milk her crystal skin,
> Checked with lines of azure, made her blush,
> That art or nature durst bring for compare.'

And Prince 'Ned,' roaming about in disguise through the country with his 'wags,' consorting with friars and dairy-maids, and letting his own servant personate him for a time, is he not the forerunner of

Shakspere's madcap Prince Hal? Indeed the whole drama in its thoroughly national spirit, as in its changes from grave to gay, from court to street and homestead, anticipates *Henry IV.*

George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield, is another story of English country life interwoven with legendary incidents. George-a-Greene, the hero, is keeper of the pinfolds, near Wakefield and is the ideal representative of all the excellences, physical and moral, of the yeoman class. He is the stoutest man of his arms to be found throughout the land, and is a 'true liegeman' to his King Edward. Otherwise he is no respecter of persons or of ranks:

> 'For stature he is framed
> Like to the picture of stout Hercules,
> And for his carriage passeth Robin Hood.
> The boldest Earl or Baron of your land
> That offereth scathe unto the town of Wakefield
> George will arrest his pledge unto the pound.'

By his bravery and craft he quells the rebellion of the Earl of Kendal, and sends him a prisoner unto the King, with the request that his life may be spared. He afterwards worsts in fair fight Robin Hood and two of his men, who have come on purpose to try the odds with him, but on hearing the name of the foes whom he has overthrown, he greets them with generous heartiness:

> 'Welcome sweet Robin, welcome, maid Marian,
> And welcome you, my friends. Will you to my poor house?
> You shall have wafer cakes your fill,
> A piece of beef hung up since Martlemas,
> Mutton, and veal.'

When the king, in reward for his valour and loyalty, offers to endow him with lands and dub him knight, he pleads that he may be let 'live and die a yeoman still': all he asks is that Edward should further his suit with his true love Bettris, who has given him her heart, but whose crabbed old father Grime frowns upon a humble wooer. Needless to say the King's pleading is successful, and the play ends with Edward's gracious announcement that he will sup at the house of George-a-Greene.

Bettris, the heroine, forms a companion picture to Margaret of Fresingfield, though more slightly sketched and less idealized. Our sympathies go out to the rural lass who rejects the advances of high-born swains, and flies in disguise to the house of her lover, though she vows never to marry him without her father's consent. Another type of feminine constancy is Jane-a-Barley, who, in her husband's absence, resists the unlawful proposals of the invading King of Scots,

and will sooner see her boy butchered than stain her chastity. The boy has the spirited temper of Shakspere's children. While his schoolmaster is by he stirs not from his book, but as soon as he is at liberty, he seizes his bow and goes forth in quest of sport. When captured by the Scotch King he speaks out boldly in defence of his mother's honour, and he adjures Jane-a-Barley to let him die rather than do his father a wrong. Besides these incidents of rustic romance we have diverting scenes at Bradford, where the shoemakers force every traveller to 'vail his staff,' a custom to which King Edward, who visits the town in disguise, consents to submit. There is also the inevitable clown in the person of George's man Jenkin, whose drolleries are not unamusing. Thus the play is full of varied interest. It moves with unflagging bustle and vivacity, and it adapts to the service of Elizabethan partriotism thoroughly racy national traditions.

In these pastoral plays Greene attains his highest level, but his experiences of town-life have their dramatic record in the curious work, *A Looking Glasse for London and England*, written by him and Thomas Lodge. The scene is laid in Nineveh during the reign of King Rasni, the conqueror of Jeroboam, and a striking picture is drawn of a wanton and luxurious Oriental Court. Rasni proclaims himself 'God upon earth,' and being thus 'above nature's reach,' he sets her laws at defiance by taking his sister Remilia to wife. When Remilia is struck down by avenging lightning from heaven, he consoles himself with an unholy passion for Alvida, Queen of Paphlagonia, who poisons her husband with a drugged bowl of wine. The life of the palace has its counterpart throughout the city, where biting usury, judicial corruption, and all forms of violence and debauchery are shown in full sway. These sinful scenes have a witness in 'Oseas the prophet,' who 'is brought in by an angel and let down over the stage in a throne.' He takes no part in the dialogue, but acts as a kind of Chorus, noting the iniquities of Nineveh, and, with characteristic contempt for chronology, pointing their moral to Elizabethan London:

> 'London, look on, this matter nips thee near,
> Leave off thy riot, pride, and sumptuous cheer;
> Spend less at board, and spare not at the door,
> But aid the infant, and relieve the poor,
> Else seeking mercy, being merciless,
> Thou be adjudged to endless heaviness.'

Later in the play another prophet, 'Jonas,' appears at Nineveh to preach repentance, and his exhortations are of such force that all

wrong-doers, from the King downwards, forsake their evil courses and turn again into the path of righteousness. London is solemnly warned to act in like manner, and the play closes with a deft though extravagant compliment to Elizabeth, whose virtues alone are said to delay the impending doom:

> 'O proud adulterous glory of the West,
> Thy neighbours burn, yet dost thou fear no fire;
> Thy preachers cry, yet dost thou stop thine ears;
> Thy larum rings, yet sleepest thou secure.
> London, awake, for fear the Lord do frown.
> I set a looking glass before thine eyes,
> O turn, O turn with weeping to the Lord,
> And think the prayers and virtues of thy Queen,
> Defers the plague which otherwise would fall.'

Many of the blank-verse passages are overloaded with imagery, and there is the usual tasteless profusion of classical references, but at times we have a sweet and silvery rhythm. The prose scenes depicting the evils of usury and of judicial extortion are written with graphic realism; the satire and the pathos both ring true, and the characterization, so far as it goes, is vigorous and firm.

As with Marlowe, so with Greene. He was cut down in the fullness of his powers, and his name goes to swell the piteous company of 'famous poets in their misery dead.' Of him, as of his fellow, though for very different reasons, it may be confidently said that even with a larger grace of years, he could never have rivalled Shakspere. His genius had no massive strength, no rich depths of thought and imagination. It could not rise to the full height of the tragic argument, nor move the springs of supreme passion and pity. Yet Greene has a claim to the title of 'Shakspere's predecessor' in a very special sense. His art, though bounded in its range, is fundamentally akin to that of the mightiest of the Elizabethans. It was he who, first among our Renaissance dramatists, succeeded in vitally connecting scenes of genuine comedy with the serious elements in his plays. He thus gave a practical answer to the criticisms of Sidney, and he set a precedent which, followed and infinitely bettered by Shakspere, has become consecrated to all time. Connected with this is his skill, which Lyly shared, in blending together different plots, as in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, and *George-a-Greene*. Here too the greater dramatist trod in the same path with a far surer step, and the result is seen in the complex structures of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *King Lear*. Greene's instincts as a novelist clung to him even in his work for the stage, and the plots which he so skilfully handled have rather the interest

of a tale or romance than of a complicated dramatic intrigue. He thus greatly developed that species of comedy, of which Shakspere's *As You Like It* is perhaps the most perfect specimen, in which the story ambles along leisurely without momentous crises, and where incident is less important than dialogue and characterization. It was natural that in plays written by a novelist love should be a leading feature, and we have seen with what purity and delicacy of touch Greene treated the passion throughout. It never falls with him to the sensuous level, and it is in exquisite keeping with his noble conception of womanhood. 'All of Greene's ideal women,' it has been well said, 'have a family likeness. In their love there is neither passion nor egotism. They love ideally. Their devotion is an uninterrupted self-sacrifice.' It is perhaps the highest of all his distinctions that his maidens and matrons have not only this family likeness, but may claim a kinship, real though remote, with the glorious sisterhood of which Portia and Rosalind, Hermione and Imogen are members. Thus just where Marlowe's genius withers, Greene's puts forth its finest flower. The difference is largely due to moral contrast. By no art could Marlowe, out of a multitude of insurgent desires, create 'a woman breathing thoughtful breath.' But Greene had not to attempt so hopeless a task. In his dramas there is no glorification of passion, ambitious or amorous, save when subdued to the service of a higher law: self-sacrifice, purity, loyalty of soul unshaken by danger or temptation, are with him the things above price. His moral outlook is incomparably less wide and searching than that of Shakspere, but the focus is essentially the same.

There is yet another point in which Greene has remarkable affinity to his great successor. His best plays breathe a thoroughly national spirit, and they are instinct with love of English traditions, English virtues, and English familiar scenes. *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and *George-a-Greene* set before us pictures of country life as natural and attractive as any in *Love's Labour's Lost* or *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. A pure and fragrant air ripples through their pages, blowing from over homestead, and meadow, and stream. Here too we meet with members of every social class, prince and peasant, earl and shoemaker, philosopher and clown, all mixing in easy familiarity. So it is in the world of Shakspere, where rank is never the measure of merit, and where the ideal ruler wandering in disguise among his soldiers declares to them that the King is but a man as other men, with like senses and conditions. But Greene in his popular sympathies goes further than Shakspere, who can never be

called democratic, and of whose heroes and heroines not one is taken from humble life. The portrait gallery of the greater dramatist, wide and varied as it is, contains no such figures as Margaret of Fresingfield or the Pinner of Wakefield. The village maid, who is really what she seems, not, like Perdita, a princess in disguise, and who yet may be worthy of an Earl's love; the yeoman, with the sturdy independence of his class united to genuine loyalty and ardour of heart—these are not types over which Shakspere lingers lovingly. For them we are indebted to Greene, who thus takes his place on the long list of our writers headed by Langland, and numbering Burns, Crabbe, and Wordsworth among its foremost names, who have found their truest inspiration in the joys and sorrows of the poor. Finally, we must reckon his services to poetic style in freeing the verse of the stage from pedantry and overloaded diction, and thereby, in Ward's apt phrase, helping 'to wing the feet of the English dramatic muse.' Marlowe, Kyd, and Lyly surpass him in the originality of their genius, yet in temper and method he may claim a nearer kinship than any of them to the poet of Stratford, whose early successes caused him death-bed pangs of jealousy. Would not those pangs have been still bitterer could he have foreseen that posterity, with something of uncritical and ungenerous partiality, was to ratify so completely the 'upstart crow's' conceit of being 'the only Shake-scene in the country'?

CHAPTER VI

SHAKSPERE AT STRATFORD

BROWNING, in his well-known poem *At the Mermaid* pronounces judgement, in picturesque and forcible fashion, upon a question which is raised at the very threshold of any inquiry into Shakspere's career. The great dramatist is represented as 'taking his ease at his inn' with Ben Jonson and other kindred wits, and protesting to them, while the sherris goes round, that his plays are no index to his real self.

> 'Here's my work: does work discover
> What was rest from work—my life?
> Did I live man's hater, lover?
> Leave the world at peace, at strife?
>
> Blank of such a record, truly,
> Here's the work I hand, this scroll,
> Yours to take or leave: as duly
> Mine remains the unproffered soul.'

Does the speaker in Browning's poem say truth? Is the man, William Shakspere, something entirely apart from and outside of his plays? Are they really 'blank' of any 'record' of his life? Is the pursuit of his personality through their pages only a wild-goose chase, from which every self-respecting student will hold aloof? To these momentous questions diametrically opposite answers have been given. Browning's view is strongly upheld by Halliwell-Phillipps, who asserts that 'determined care' must be taken 'to avoid the temptation of endeavouring to illustrate [Shakspere's] history by his writings, or to decipher his character and sensibilities through their media.' Dowden on the other hand, declares that 'if we could watch [Shakspere's] writings closely, and observe their growth, the laws of that growth would be referable to the nature of the man, and to the nature of his environment. And we might even be able to refer to one and the other of these two factors producing a common resultant, that which is specially due to each. Fortunately the succession of Shakspere's writings is sufficiently ascertained to enable us to study the main features of the growth of Shakspere as an artist and as a man.'

Between these conflicting views there opens a *via media*, possibly less attractive but more secure. The denial of any discoverable relationship between Shakspere's plays and his life is unconvincing,

when pushed to extremes. No writer, be he dramatist or not, can cut himself entirely adrift from the general influences of his age, and from his special personal experiences. It is wholly inconceivable that his works should not reveal something of his individuality, or that changes in their general tone should be quite uncoloured by his own vicissitudes of mind and fortune. Thus it is obvious that comedies like *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* contain reminiscences of country society and surroundings such as would have been under the poet's eyes during his early days in Stratford. Again, the remarkable difference between the comedies written during the closing years of the sixteenth century and the tragedies which belong to the first decade of the seventeenth, suggests that Shakspere had at this period gone through some bitter affliction of soul, and it will be shown that there is strong confirmatory evidence of this. Or, once again, the general political principles that underlie the whole group of historical plays, the ardent patriotism, the zeal for monarchy when worthily represented, the conservative distrust of violent social change, the undisguised contempt for demagogues and their dupes—all these are not only what we should naturally expect in an Elizabethan citizen ancestrally connected with the higher yeoman class, and brought in his professional capacity into connexion with the Court, but they are further in complete accordance with Shakspere's ambition to become a landowner, as clearly evidenced by his repeated purchases of property at Stratford. It is not too much to say that only literary partisanship can overlook the significance of these and similar points of contact between Shakspere's writings and his personal career. But are we, therefore, warranted in going further, and endeavouring, by a combination of references from the plays with our comparatively slight knowledge of the external facts of the dramatist's life, to recreate the history of his development both as an artist and a man? Such attempts have an abiding fascination, and when undertaken with scholarly judgement they attain to results that certainly express a measure of truth. But when so much has ungrudgingly been admitted, the broad fact remains that these endeavours to reconstruct the poet's biography from a mixture of external and internal evidence must always be unsatisfactory. The links between the two sets of *data* are so few and fragmentary that it is impossible to piece them together in a consistent whole. Thus to say that the man William Shakspere, the native of Stratford, the actor and playwright, the purchaser of New Place, passed successively in his own mental history through the experiences of a Romeo, a Hamlet, and a Timon,

may be quite conceivably true, but in the comparative dearth of facts to throw light on such changes of mood, a statement of the kind is of little service to the poet's biography. Shakspere has left us no prose pamphlets like those of Greene, giving a key to his inner history. Indeed, any reference to the earlier dramatist should serve as a caution against hasty deductions from Shakspere's works to his life. To judge from the purity of Greene's plays and novels, and their delight in innocent country joys, no one would take their author to have been a debauchee of the Town, and there may well have been similar points of antithesis between the writings and the personal career of his great successor.

It thus seems advisable, while recognizing the interest and relative value of the alternative method, to state what is known about William Shakspere, apart from any evidence that his plays may be supposed to furnish. Exception may, however, be made of a few passages which are introduced without any special dramatic propriety, and which appear to have some personal application. It is evident also that the plays must throw light on the poet's reading and general culture. The authorities which remain for biographical purposes are contemporary notices, later tradition embodied in various 'lives,' legal and other documents still extant bearing upon his career, and, finally, his non-dramatic writings. The value of the first and third groups of evidence is obvious: that of the fourth will be discussed below. It therefore only remains to say a few words upon those early memorials of Shakspere's career which have formed the basis of all succeeding biographies. First in date come some entries in a note-book of the Rev. J. Ward, who was appointed vicar of Stratford-on-Avon in 1662, and who was thus in a position to know the local traditions current in the poet's native town within a comparatively recent period after his death. Less trust is to be given to a narrative compiled about the same time by another antiquary, John Aubrey, who visited Stratford, and left a somewhat gossipping account of what he heard, though he can scarcely have been mistaken as to main facts. A further record of local belief has been handed down by a traveller who made a pilgrimage to Stratford Church in 1693, and drew what information he could from William Castle, the parish clerk and sexton. But the first attempt at a detailed biography dates from the early years of the eighteenth century. In 1709 Nicholas Rowe published a life of the poet, the materials for which were contributed chiefly by Betterton, the celebrated Restoration actor. 'I must own,' says Rowe, 'a particular obligation to him for the most considerable part of the passages

relating to his life which I have here transmitted to the public, his veneration for the memory of Shakspere having engaged him to gather up what remains he could of a name for which he had so great value.' Thus Rowe's account claims to be based on special inquiry, and though the accuracy of many of its statements has often been questioned, it bears upon it intrinsic evidence of good faith, and in several points it has been strikingly verified by modern research. In the acceptance of tradition scepticism may be pushed to a point where it is little less of a historical vice than uncritical credulity, and because some of Rowe's anecdotes are picturesque they are not therefore necessarily untrue. In any case, for long afterwards, extremely little was added to the scanty memorials of Shakspere's career, and, though during the present century heroic efforts have been made to fill up the gaps in our knowledge, yet their success has lain more in shedding fresh light upon the state of the Elizabethan stage, and of society in Stratford and London, than in substantially increasing our information about the poet's personal history. This is indeed a matter of rejoicing to the school of critics, with whom an interest in Shakspere's private life ranks merely as an undesirable form of inquisitiveness. Against such a view it is impossible to argue: the all-sufficient answer is *Honi soit qui mal y pense.* The majority of students will feel guilty of no irreverence in their regret that so many secrets of the career of the greatest of Englishmen are drowned, like Prospero's book, 'deeper than did ever plummet sound.'

Even the exact date of William Shakspere's[1] birth is uncertain, but we know that he was baptized on April 26, 1564. He was the eldest son of John Shakspere, whose father was a farmer of Snitterfield, a small Warwickshire village, but who had left his home some time before 1552, and had settled in the ancient and thriving borough of Stratford-on-Avon. The history of the town is in itself of great interest, and some slight acquaintance with its main features is essential to a thorough understanding of the conditions among which the early life of the dramatist was passed.[2] Its origin dates probably as far back as 691, when Ethelred, king of Mercia, granted the monastery of Stratford with three thousand acres of adjacent land to the Bishop of Worcester. This gift was confirmed by subsequent

1 On the spelling and pronunciation of the dramatist's name see Elze's *William Shakspere*, Appendix I. Of the two forms which can claim authority, 'Shakspere' and 'Shakespeare,' I have chosen the former, as the one used most frequently by the dramatist in the only unquestionably genuine signatures of his that have come down to us, the three on his will and the two on his Blackfriars conveyance and mortgage of 1613.

2 For the main facts in this and the following paragraph I am indebted to Mr. Sidney Lee's *Stratford-on-Avon from the earliest times till the death of Shakspere.*

rulers in 781 and 845. Of the monastery nothing is afterwards heard, but the township thus grew up in dependence on the midland see, and became one of its most valuable manors, under which head it is set down in the Domesday Survey. All the inhabitants were under the jurisdiction of the Bishop's steward, and were in a condition of virtual villeinage, though this did not imply very special material hardship. Their occupations were chiefly agricultural, but by the close of the twelfth century various industries, such as weaving and tanning, had sprung into existence, and a weekly market had been instituted, while a little later leave was obtained for a series of annual fairs. With this commercial advance came an increase of independence, as traders were allowed to commute their dues for a fixed payment, and thus acquire the burgage tenure of land, with which went the title of burgess. The purely agricultural members of the community also gradually rose from the state of villeinage, and by the time of Edward III, they had become for the most part freeholders. From this class, about the middle of the fourteenth century, sprang several men who attained to the highest places in Church and State, and who so far anticipated Shakspere in that they rose from humble origin at Stratford to distinguished eminence in the outer world. Of these mediaeval notabilities the most important is John of Stratford, who was Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor during the early years of Edward III's reign, and who showed himself a notable benefactor to his native place. He enlarged and beautified the ancient parish church by the river-side, adding to it several chapels, and founding a chantry of five priests, which he richly endowed, and for which he purchased the patronage of the living from the see of Worcester. His nephew Ralph, afterwards Bishop of London, built for these priests a 'house of square stone adjoining to the church-yard,' which came to be known as the College of Stratford. The warden of this college in the time of Edward IV, a Dr. Balsall, added 'a fair and beautiful choir' at his own cost, and one of his successors, Ralph Collingwood, besides making improvements in the edifice of the church, appointed 'four children choristers to be daily assistants in the celebration of divine service,' and set aside lands for their support. Thus the church attained its full splendour, but the period of its enjoyment thereof was brief. The Reformation was at hand, and with it came Cromwell's visitation of the Monasteries in 1535. The Commissioners on their rounds did not overlook Stratford, and as the result of their investigations the chantry was shorn of a considerable portion of its revenues. The priests were, however, allowed to reside

within the college till 1547, when all chantries were suppressed. For some years the building was unoccupied, but it was afterwards leased out to laymen, and in Shakspere's time was tenanted by John Combe, a wealthy citizen of the town. Thus the parish church, when the future dramatist was brought to be christened at its font, had been stripped of its stately surroundings and ceremonial, but the fabric itself still stood, as it stands at this day, to link together the centuries of Stratford life, and to whisper in the ear of the Renaissance poet something of 'the last enchantments of the Middle Age.'

There was another bond between mediaeval and Elizabethan Stratford, whose connexion with Shakspere's family history was more intimate. The gradual progress of the town to independence was greatly furthered by the rise of the Guild of the Holy Cross. This institution dates at least as far back as the twelfth century, and was originally, as its name implies, of a religious character, the members being bound to aid one another in the performance of certain rites, and to afford mutual relief on numerous occasions. The affairs of the guild were managed by its own elected officers—a warden, aldermen, and a common council. As the wealthier members bequeathed to it a portion of their property at death, it soon became rich in houses and lands. By the time of Edward I it already possessed a chapel and almshouses, and Edward III granted it a charter confirming its right to all its possessions and to the full control of its own business. It soon acquired considerable powers of civil jurisdiction and administration, and thus helped to release the burgesses from their old dependence on the Bishop's steward. One of its most important acts in the fifteenth century was to found a free grammar school for the children of the members. But the Reformation dealt quite as hardly with the guild as with the parish church. In 1547 the ancient organization was dissolved by the king's commissioners, and its property went to swell the royal treasury. In the same year the lordship of the manor was transferred from the Bishop of Worcester to the Duke of Northumberland, who was too much occupied with affairs of State to attend to the exercise of such rights over the district as still remained to him. Thus the town was left for some years without any responsible government, but in June, 1553, on the application of the leading inhabitants, Edward VI granted a charter, reviving the ancient guild under the form of a municipal corporation, with only a slight change in the name of some of the officers. The warden was transformed into the bailiff, the aldermen retained their own title, the common council met as before, in the guildhall, though with the addition of ten 'capital burgesses,'

and its edicts now governed the whole town, and penetrated into every department of social life. The estates of the guild became corporate property, and the school, chapel, and almshouses were turned into institutions of the borough. Thus the mediaeval municipal life was perpetuated without any real break, and the poet in his boyhood grew up under its shelter, and had every opportunity of familiarizing himself with its most intimate details.

In the surrounding district the continuity of the national existence was equally manifest. Warwickshire, 'the heart of England,' as Drayton named his own and Shakspere's native county, abounded in memorials of the past. Conquerors and settlers, from the dawn of history, had left their mark deep upon its soil. It was here, in the very centre of the island, that the two great Roman roads, Watling Street and the Fosse Way, intersected, and near the point of junction remains of military stations still recalled the period of imperial sway. The names of prominent natural features, such as Avon and Arden, bore witness to the permanence of Celtic influences in a district where the Anglo-Saxon conquest had resulted rather in a fusion of races than in the extermination of the original inhabitants. Here at a later date the boundary line had run between the kingdom of Wessex and the territory carved out to the north-east by the Danish sword. The Norman invaders had found in Warwickshire a district peculiarly suited to the exercise of the feudal system of land-tenure. The river Avon divided the county into two regions, Arden to the north, and Feldon to the South. The former was a densely-wooded belt of territory where the forest-laws were applied in their full rigour, while Feldon was, for the most part, an open plateau 'with champains riched, with plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads.' This was an ideal neighbourhood for manorial demesnes, and from the castles and parks of Warwickshire came forth many of the leaders in the great mediaeval struggles. Simon de Montfort, the head of the constitutional party in the Barons' war of the thirteenth century, was the lord of Kenilworth, and it was at Evesham that the contest was finally decided. In the Wars of the Roses the mighty Earl of Warwick, 'the kingmaker,' had been for long the central figure of the struggle; the midland shire had been the scene of incessant march and countermarch by the rival houses, and the climax of the strife occurred within its borders on Bosworth Field. It is significant that in the patent of arms granted to Shakspere's father mention is made of an ancestor who had fought for Henry VII in the battle which set the houses of Tudor upon the throne.

Thus in Warwickshire every feature of the landscape was eloquent

of the past, from the grey vistas of a pre-historic era to the gorgeous panorama of the age of chivalry. Yet the floating mass of poetic material had never yet crystallized into higher literary forms. Warwickshire had given birth to no prominent verse-writer during the middle-English period, though, not far to the west, Layamon, on the banks of the Severn, had gathered into his epic Saxon, Celtic, and Norman elements, and Langland, in the following century, had written his great allegory under the shadow of the Malvern hills. Yet though it lacked its *vates sacer* the midland district had been far from wholly inarticulate. It was one of the chosen fields of the middle-English ballad poetry, and among the popular heroes canonized by this homely species of verse, Guy of Warwick holds a foremost place. The Robin Hood cycle of legends originated further to the north; but they, with the kindred tales of Clym o' the Clough and William of Cloudesley, were rapidly acclimatized in the congenial atmosphere of Arden and its surroundings. Rustic festivals and pageants kept alive an untutored spirit of poetry among the country-folk, and, above all, as we have seen, in the ancient town of Coventry the popular drama of the Middle Ages had found a favourite abode, whose fame reached far and wide.

Such was the condition of Stratford and its neighbourhood about the time that John Shakspere settled in the town at a house in Henley Street, and began business as a glover[1]. He must have been fairly successful, as he was able in 1556 to buy two small freehold estates, though he did not make any change of residence. But in the following year his fortunes took a rapid advance through his marriage with Mary Arden, the youngest daughter of a wealthy proprietor of Wilmecote who had died a few months previously. The Ardens were an ancient and distinguished Warwickshire family, which furnished during the reign of Elizabeth several martyrs to the Roman Catholic cause. Robert Arden, Mary's father, in addition to his Wilmecote estate, known as Ashbies, and consisting of a house with nearly sixty acres of land, owned a considerable property at Snitterfield, part of which was leased to the Shakspere family. It was probably this connexion that prepared the way for a match in which all the material advantages seem to have been on the side of the Stratford tradesman, for Mary Arden had inherited, under the terms of her father's will, Ashbies in immediate possession, and the reversion of a large portion of the estate at Snitterfield. That the union had at once an advantageous effect upon John Shakspere's position is evident from his election within the same year as a

1 See, however, Elze, p. 19 (English translation).

'capital' burgess on the Town Council, and as an ale-taster, for the supervision of malt liquors and of bread. From this time forward his rise to municipal honours was rapid and unbroken. In 1558 he was appointed one of the constables to direct the watch; in 1559 and 1561 he was an 'affeeror' for the assessment of fines; in the latter year he was elected chamberlain, an office which he held till 1564, presenting annually the municipal accounts, though he was unable to write his own name, and could only sign with the glover's trade-mark. In 1565 he rose to the rank of alderman, and, at Michaelmas, 1568, attained to the highest dignity that the Corporation could bestow, by becoming bailiff. In 1571 he acquired the further distinction of chief alderman.

At this date his eldest son was in his seventh year, the age at which boys, who had learnt to read, were allowed to enter the Free Grammar School of the town. That William Shakspere received his early education there is practically certain, not only from the testimony of Rowe, but from the fact that his father, as a municipal dignitary, would naturally have sent his son to an institution so closely linked with the history of the corporation.

The nature and degree of the learning which young Will Shakspere acquired at the Grammar School have been matters of endless discussion. His classical attainments, in particular, have given rise to acrimonious debate, one set of critics, like Farmer and Douce in the eighteenth century, striving to show his complete ignorance of ancient languages, while another rival band has as eagerly done battle on behalf of his 'scholarship.' The controversy may really be said to take its origin from the famous line in Jonson's memorial verses on his 'beloved master,' in which, without a touch of disparagement, as the context shows, he speaks of Shakspere as having had 'small Latin and less Greek.' But considering Jonson's own encyclopaedic erudition, the epithet 'small' may be only a relative term, and may be quite compatible with fair classical proficiency. Fresh light has recently been thrown upon the subject by increased familiarity with the nature of the grammar-school curriculum in Shakspere's time. Two educational reformers of the early seventeenth century, John Brinsley and Charles Hoole, have left important pamphlets which describe in detail the course of studies in an Elizabethan grammar school. On this basis Spencer Baynes has reconstructed Shakspere's probable school career. In his first year he would be occupied with Latin accidence, for which Lily's grammar was the usual text-book. In his second year he would make further advance in grammar, and be drilled in some manual of short phrases,

like the *Sententiae Pueriles.* In his third year he would take up Cato's *Maxims* and Aesop's *Fables*; in his fourth he would begin Ovid and Cicero and the mediaeval pastoral poet Mantuanus, whose writings had a wide-spread popularity. In his fifth and sixth years he would read parts of Virgil, Horace, Terence, Plautus, and the Satirists.

If we turn to *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* we shall find conclusive proof that Shakspere had reached at least the standard of classical attainment expected from grammar-school boys in their fourth year. In *The Merry Wives* Sir Hugh Evans, the curate, puts little Will Page through his accidence, and warns him that if he forgets 'his *quies, quaes,* and *quods*' he 'must be preeches.' Holofernes, the schoolmaster of *Love's Labour's Lost,* interlards his conversation with scraps of Latin, and holds dialogues in the same language with Sir Nathaniel, which are extracts from Lily's grammar or from the *Sententiae Pueriles.* We have here evident reminiscences of the teaching in the school-room at Stratford, and the same is probably the case with Holofernes' attempts to recall his Horace, and his quotation of the hackneyed line, '*Fauste, precor, gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra,*' which begins the first eclogue of 'good old Mantuan.' The pedant's criticism of Biron's love-letter, with its technical distinction between 'invention' and 'imitation,' and its reference to Ovid as the pattern poet, is an echo doubtless of the strictures which Shakspere himself had heard passed upon his own youthful attempts at Latin verse. 'Here are only numbers ratified; but, for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy, *caret.* Ovidius Naso was the man: and why, indeed, Naso, but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention! *Imitari* is nothing.' The qualities here attributed to Ovid's verse, are, as a matter of fact, those which specially distinguish it, and Shakspere in his early days doubtless felt the spell of the Augustan lyrist whose Muse strikes often so strangely modern a note. A comparison of the *Venus and Adonis,* and the *Lucrece,* with passages in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti,* brings out such striking points of resemblance, often in minute detail, that Shakspere's debt to Ovid can scarcely be doubted[1]. On the other hand he shows little knowledge of the Roman historians, for his classical plots are drawn from translations, like North's version of Plutarch's *Lives,* or from mediaeval

1 See Spencer Baynes' essay, *What Shakspere learnt at School* (Shakspere Studies). Baynes, however, appeals to illegitimate testimony in favour of the dramatist's familiarity with Ovid, when he quotes from plays like *Titus Andronicus, Henry VI,* and *The Taming of the Shrew,* whose authorship is partly doubtful. His argument from Holofernes' peculiar use of the word 'intellect' in *Love's Labour's Lost* that Shakspere had been trained in the art of rhetoric is extremely ingenious.

settings of old-world legends. And it is quite evident that he was completely ignorant of the antiquities of Greek and Roman life, for his classical characters all appear in the attire, and adopt the manners and customs of his own day. There are not many allusions in his works to the Latin dramatists, though we are told of the 'cry of players' in *Hamlet* that for them 'Seneca cannot be too heavy nor Plautus too light.' Shakspere, if he completed the normal course of study at the grammar school, would probably have read selections from these writers in the original. But, in any case, their dramas were accessible to him in translations, though the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, upon which *The Comedy of Errors* is based, had not, as far as we know, been rendered into English till after the production of Shakspere's play.

Greek was not included in the ordinary grammar-school curriculum, but Jonson seems to credit Shakspere with a knowledge of its rudiments, and without this he could scarcely have made such curiously felicitous use of proper names taken from that language. Ophelia has a bitterly ironical significance when applied to the most helpless of heroines, and Desdemona is in truth the most ill-starred of brides[1]. It is noticeable that Shakspere is fond of references to the familiar tenets of several Hellenic philosophers, especially Pythagoras and Epicurus, but this is far from implying familiarity with their writings in the original. There are critics who regard the whole question of the dramatist's classical knowledge as trivial, but everything depends on the spirit in which it is approached. To merely make a pedantic inventory of Shakspere's educational attainments or shortcomings is a congenial task to the Dryasdusts of literature. But a modest and loyal endeavour to discover how far the mightiest genius of romantic art was familiar with the classical masterpieces, whose supremacy in the sphere of the drama he was the first to challenge with complete success, is not only entirely legitimate, but is of genuine importance.

It is perhaps worth noticing that the 'schoolboy,' as described by Shakspere, is far from being an enthusiast in the cause of learning. Every one remembers Jaques' picture of

> 'The whining schoolboy, with his satchel,
> And shining morning face, creeping like snail
> Unwillingly to school.'

And Romeo cries,

> 'Love goes towards love, as schoolboys from their books;
> But love from love, toward school with heavy looks.'

1 See 'Shakspere's Greek Names,' by Hales, in *Notes and Essays on Shakspere.*

It is impossible not to wonder if these passages are reminiscences of the poet's own boyhood, and it is, in any case, certain that young Shakspere was by no means entirely given over to study. He had his eyes and ears open, as the early plays and poems abundantly prove, to all the Warwickshire sights and sounds: he angled in the Avon, and followed the hare, and learnt to know the points of a horse and a dog[1], he attended rustic festivals like harvest-homes and sheep-shearings, and he took part in the games of the country-side, 'nine-men's morris' and 'more sacks to the mill.'

But studies and pastimes were soon interrupted by the sterner realities of life. In 1575 John Shakspere increased his property by the purchase of two houses in Henley Street, including the one which tradition, on very insufficient grounds, has identified as the poet's birthplace. But by 1577 a reverse in his fortunes had set in, for he was unable to pay his full share as a councillor 'towards the furniture of three pikemen, two billmen, and one archer,' or to contribute the sum of fourpence for the relief of the poor. To raise money he was obliged to sell to a nephew his own and his wife's interest in the Snitterfield property, and to mortgage the Ashbies estate to Edmund Lambert, who was a connexion by marriage. Yet his difficulties increased, for in 1579 borough taxes due from him are entered as unpaid, and in 1586 the return to a writ to distrain goods on his land was that he had nothing in which he could be distrained. This financial bankruptcy, joined to continued absence from the 'hall,' led the corporation to deprive him of his alderman's gown, and in 1587 he would even seem to have been arrested by his creditors, for he is found suing out a writ of *habeas corpus*, and as late as 1592 his failure to appear monthly at church is set down to fear of 'process for debt.' The cause of this complete reverse of fortune is not very clear. After his marriage John Shakspere doubtless added to the glove-business large transactions in the produce of the estates at Wilmecote and Snitterfield. He dealt in sheep, meat, wool, leather, timber, and corn, and his ruin would seem to have been caused by unfortunate speculations in one or more of these commodities[2].

In consequence of these pecuniary difficulties, young William Shakspere was withdrawn from school at an early age, probably about fourteen, and was set to earn his livelihood. What precise occupation he followed cannot be positively determined, but there

1 On Shakspere's intimate knowledge of natural history and of country pursuits see Elze, pp. 391-398

2 An ingenious and plausible estimate of John Shakspere's character will be found in Baynes' essay on Shakspere in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ninth edition.

seems no good reason for doubting Rowe's statement that he was placed by his father, who is described as 'a cosiderable dealer in wool,' in his own business. Aubrey indeed, in his somewhat earlier account, has scandalized the aesthetic susceptibilities of posterity by asserting that the future poet was 'bound apprentice to a butcher,' though he attempts to salve the blow by adding that 'when he killed a calf, he would do it in a high style and make a speech.' His statement, however, which is supported by the assertions of the Stratford parish clerk in 1693, is not necessarily at variance with that of Rowe, for John Shakspere as a dealer in meat might easily be described by the blunter title. If, however, we choose to reject this evidence there is nothing to fall back upon, for all conjectures based upon hints supposed to be furnished by the plays hang purely in the air. One point alone calls for serious notice. There can be no doubt that wherever and whenever acquired, Shakspere's familiarity with legal technicalities is very remarkable, and many critics have concluded that he must have spent some time in an attorney's office. This is, of course, possible, but it is not supported by external testimony of any weight[1], and it should be noticed that in the circumstances, public and private, of his father's career, involving close and habitual contact with the law, he had special opportunities for becoming acquainted with judicial terms and procedures.

But, whatever his occupation, he did not succeed in mending the fallen fortunes of his family, and it was not long before he incurred additional grave responsibilities on his own account. On November 28, 1582, a licence was granted by the Bishop of Worcester for the marriage of William Shakspere and Anne Hathaway upon once asking of the banns. The bridegroom was rather over eighteen, and the lady was some seven years his senior. She was the daughter of Richard Hathaway, a substantial yeoman of Shottery, a village about a mile distant from Stratford. Her father had been dead a short time, but her friends seem to have pressed on the match, not without sufficient reason, for a child was born in May, 1583, six months after the wedding. It has been urged on Shakspere's behalf by Halliwell-Phillipps and others that a precontract had probably been celebrated some months before the betrothal in church, and

1 Nash's words, in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, *may* apply to Shakspere, 'It is a common practice nowadays among a sort of shifting companions, that run through every art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of *Noverint* whereto they were born [i. e. that of an attorney's clerk, so called because legal documents generally began *Noverint universi*] and busy themselves with the endeavours of art, that could scarce Latinize their neck-verse, if they should have need.' (But see p. 62, note.) The fullest account of Shakspere's knowledge of law is given by Lord Campbell in his *Shakspere's Legal Acquirements*. Campbell, however, leaves it an open question whether Shakspere had ever been professionally engaged in law-work. Elze maintains strongly that Shakspere must have been in an attorney's office.

that such a ceremony, as is plain from the poet's own words in *Measure for Measure,* was recognized as giving complete legal validity to a union. But the existence of a precontract in Shakspere's case is a pure supposition, and the point will scarcely seem worth debating to those who see in the poet's Sonnets an unmistakable confession of subsequent disloyalty to his marriage vow. Such a confession also, if accepted as genuine, goes far to answer the question whether the union, so inauspiciously begun, was happy or the reverse. Flawless it cannot have been, and the famous passage in *Twelfth Night,* where the Duke declares with an emphasis uncalled for by the special situation, 'Let still the woman take an elder than herself,' has a ring that seems to come from the dramatist's own heart. The fact that in his will he only left her his second-best bed, and that apparently as an afterthought, supports the theory that his marriage was unhappy. It is true that her dower in his freehold property was secured to her by law, but had he felt for her the devotion of an affectionate husband, he would have been at pains to secure for her more than the legal minimum of his worldly belongings.

One fact at least is certain, that the marriage made it more imperative than ever that Shakspere should secure an adequate income. Within two years of the birth of his first child, who had been christened Susannah, his wife bore him twins, baptized as Hamnet and Judith in the parish church on Feb. 2, 1583. It was probably these increased responsibilities that largely determined him to seek his fortunes in a wider field than Stratford, but there is no reason for absolutely discrediting Rowe's circumstantial statement that the immediate cause of his departure was a quarrel with Sir Thomas Lucy, the powerful owner of Charlecote House. Rowe's story of the poaching expedition[1], of Lucy's prosecution of Shakspere, of the latter's reprisal in a satirical ballad, 'which was probably the first essay of his poetry,' and of Lucy's redoubled severity which drove him from Stratford, need not be accepted in every detail, but it is supported in its main features by the earlier authority of Davies, vicar of Saperton, who wrote at the close of the seventeenth century, and it has doubtless a kernel of truth. Davies also states that Lucy is Shakspere's 'Justice Clodpate,' and he calls him a great man, and that, in allusion to his name, bore three louses rampant for his arms.' Justice Clodpate is, of course, Justice Shallow, and the

1 In his pamphlet, *Shakspere no Deer-Stealer,* Mr. Bracebridge has sought to show that the scene of the adventure was not Charlecote Park, but the neighbouring estate of Fulbrooke, which had been sequestered by the Crown, and of which Sir Thomas Lucy may, without any legal right, have constituted himself the guardian.

reference is to the opening scene in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Shallow has come up from Gloucestershire to make a Star-chamber matter of a poaching affray on his estates, in which Falstaff is the chief culprit, and it is here worth noticing that Lucy in 1585 introduced a bill into Parliament for the better preservation of game. In a conversation with his cousin Slender, Shallow enlarges upon his judicial functions and his ancient lineage, and Slender in support of the latter claim alludes to the 'dozen white luces' in his 'coat.' Luce is the heraldic term for a pike, and the words undoubtedly refer to the 'three luces hauriant argent,' which are the arms of the Lucys and are engraved on their monuments in Charlecote Church. Shakspere makes the conversation linger round the topic, for Shallow replies, 'It is an old coat,' and Sir Hugh Evans makes the delightfully blundering comment, 'The dozen white louses do become an old coat well.' Shortly afterwards, when Falstaff enters, Shallow flings his misdeeds in his teeth, 'Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broken open my lodge,' and he reiterates his resolve to bring the matter before the Council. Here would seem to be a reminiscence of incidents like those described by Rowe, and it is at any rate certain that more than ten years after Shakspere had left Stratford he still felt a sufficiently deep grudge against the owner of Charlecote to satirize him in the only one of his characters who can be successfully identified with an original[1].

1 The identification finds further support in *Henry IV*, Part II, where Shallow is proud to call himself one of the king's justices of the peace, and where, as commissioner of the muster, he helps Falstaff to review his ragged regiment. Sir Thomas Lucy served in both these capacities, and Shallow's officiousness tallies with what the Stratford archives record of his fondness for the exercise of his legal authority.

CHAPTER VII

SHAKSPERE IN LONDON. THE SONNETS

IT was almost certainly in 1586 or 1587 that Shakspere set out for London and began his theatrical career. He had frequent opportunities in Stratford of becoming familiar with plays and players. His father, when bailiff in 1568, had licensed two important companies to play in the town, and between 1573 and 1581 performances had been given yearly in the Guildhall. Shakspere can scarcely fail to have been present on many of these occasions, and he may also have seen the great Miracle cycle at Coventry on Corpus Christi Day. He may even himself at festival times have played a part in rural comedies, such as the 'pageants of delight,' of which Julia speaks in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, or the show of the 'Nine Worthies' presented by Holofernes and his companions in *Love's Labour's Lost*. The year 1587 was one of unusual theatrical activity as Stratford, and Shakspere doubtless took the opportunity of joining a travelling company, and so making his way to the capital. But, if unanimous tradition is to be at all trusted, he must have begun his connexion with the stage in some very humble capacity. Johnson, writing in 1765, states that after the poet's arrival in London he 'lived for a time by very mean employments,' and he tells the well-known story that his 'first expedient was to wait at the door of the playhouse, and hold the horses of those that had no servants, that they might be ready again after the performance.' According to Castle, the parish clerk of Stratford, he was received into the playhouse 'as a serviture' or attendant on the actors, and Malone towards the close of the eighteenth century mentions the stage tradition that his first office was that of prompter's attendant. Fleay maintains that in all probability the company in which Shakspere enlisted was that of Lord Leicester which visited Stratford in 1587[1]. The earl's original body of actors, together with that of Lord Warwick, had been broken up in March, 1583, by the selection of twelve men to form the Queen's players. But enough remained to compose a second company, and in 1586, during the prevalence of the plague in London, they travelled on the Continent, where they acted for Frederick II of Denmark, who afterwards transferred five of them to Christian I, Duke of Saxony. On their return to England

1 Fleay's *Life and Work of Shakspere*, pp. 8-26 and 90-125.

in 1587 they made a provincial tour, and it was during this that Shakspere may be supposed to have joined them. The company then included Kempe and Pope, two of the most noted comedians of the day, and possibly the tragedian, Richard Burbage. On Sept. 4, 1588, Leicester died, and his players soon afterwards found a new patron in Lord Strange. They then settled in London and acted for a time at the Cross Keys, but in February, 1592, they migrated to the Rose Theatre on the Bank Side, built by the enterprising manager, Henslowe. At this time or possibly earlier, Henslowe's son-in-law, Edward Alleyn, joined the company, which on March 3 produced with triumphant success (as we learn from Nash in his introduction to *Piers Penniless*) *Henry VI*, Part I, in whose composition Shakspere had a hand. That by this year Shakspere had become sufficiently prominent both as actor and as dramatist to excite professional jealousies is plain from the well-known words of Greene in his valedictory *Groatsworth of Wit*, where he warns Marlowe and other writers for the stage against putting any trust in players. 'Yes, trust them not: for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapped 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 the country.' The passage testifies to Shakspere's multifarious activity, and to the bitter chagrin with which University scholars saw themselves in danger of being outstripped by a mere provincial, 'an upstart crow' from Stratford. It is curious that this attack by Greene should have been the cause of the earliest complimentary reference to Shakspere that has come down to us, for Henry Chettle, the editor of the *Groatsworth of Wit*, in issuing three months later his own pamphlet, *Kind-Harts Dream*, apologized to the Warwickshire poet for the insult that had been offered him: 'I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than be 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, that approves his art.' The term 'quality' in this passage alludes to Shakspere's vocation as an actor, and shows that he had already acquired a reputation on the boards.

From June, 1592, till the end of 1593 he can have had practically no opportunity of appearing before metropolitan audiences, for the London theatres were closed, with one short interval, on account of the plague. Shortly after they reopened, on April 16, 1594, Lord Strange died, and his company found a new chief in Lord Hunsdon,

the Lord Chamberlain. The patronage of this powerful official raised his servants to the leading position in the theatrical world of the day, though they lost one of their star actors, Alleyn, who henceforward performed with the Lord Admiral's men. Thus by 1594 Shakspere indubitably belonged to the chief London company, and he must have held a distinguished position in its ranks, for he is mentioned (with Kempe and Burbage) in the accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber as having appeared on December 26 and 28 in 'two several comedies or interludes' before Elizabeth at Greenwich. Of his further career as an actor but little is known, and it must, as Rowe suggests, have been overshadowed by his growing literary fame. Yet Aubrey records that he did act exceeding well, and among the plays in which he is stated to have appeared are his own *Hamlet,* where he took the part of the Ghost[1], and Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* and *Every Man in his Humour.* It is at any rate clear from Hamlet's address to the players, where the Prince of Denmark is simply the poet's mouthpiece, that he had fully mastered the true theory of acting, and that rant and buffoonery were equally distasteful to him. Hamlet speaks respectfully of the players as 'the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time,' and orders them to be 'well bestowed.' Yet that Shakspere at times felt an aversion to the profession into which circumstances had forced him is plain from Sonnet 111, where he lays the guilt of his 'harmful deeds' upon Fortune,

> '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[2].'

It may partly have been due to this feeling that in 1593, while the playhouses were closed on account of the plague, he made a bid for literary fame by publishing his poem *Venus and Adonis*[3]. The volume was brought out by Richard Field, a native of Stratford, who

1 Elze has well pointed out that the choice of the poet for this rôle shows that 'he possessed the necessary physical appearance, above all things, therefore, a stately and a noble figure, and a voice both good in tone and capable of modulation' It is to be noted that Sir John Davies, in his lines addressed to 'our English Terence, Mr. Will Shakspere,' speaks of him as having played 'kingly parts' For a further discussion of the rôles in which Shakspere may have appeared, see Kurz, *Shakspere als Schauspieler,* Shakspere-Jahrbuch, vol. 6

2 With these lines we may compare the words addressed by Davies in his *Microcosmos* to the players W. S. and R. B., i.e. probably Shakspere and Burbage:—

> 'Fell Fortune cannot be excused
> That hath for better uses you refused
> And though the stage doth stain pure, gentle blood,
> Yet generous ye are in mind and mood'

3 There are indications in Shakspere's works that he travelled on the Continent, and it has been plausibly suggested that the year 1593, when the theatres were closed, would have been a natural time for him to go abroad. Though we are without documentary record of any journey by Shakspere, there is no *a priori* improbability in the supposition that he visited foreign countries. Elizabethan literature testifies to constant intercourse between our island and

had set up as a printer in London, and it is interesting to have this proof that Shakspere kept up in the capital his Warwickshire associations. But he was at the same time seeking powerful friends and patrons at Court, and his poem, which he calls 'the first heir of my invention,' is dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, a young nobleman twenty years of age. The extremely timid terms in which Shakspere addresses the youthful earl make it doubtful whether there was as yet any personal acquaintance between them; but the immediate success of the *Venus and Adonis* must have drawn them together, for in the following year, when Shakspere dedicated to the same patron his second poem *Lucrece*, he speaks in a tone of confidence and affection, 'The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end. . . .What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours.' There can be little doubt that Southampton requited these ardent professions generously, though we must look with the gravest suspicion upon Rowe's statement that he made Shakspere at one time a gift of £1,000 'to enable him to go through with a purchase which he had a mind to.' But, apart from the favours of patrons, the success of the two poems, which appealed to a wider circle than acted plays, greatly improved Shakspere's position, and from this time forward there are continued evidences of his increasing prosperity, and of his resolution to turn it to account by establishing himself as a landowner in his native town. Thus in 1596, John Shakspere is found applying to the College of Arms for a grant of Coat-Armour, though, as he was still in very poor circumstances, the attendant expense must have been borne by his son. But if the dramatist cherished the ambition of founding

the Continent; and Italy, in especial, was the favourite haunt of Englishmen of every class. That actors from London went abroad in large numbers has been conclusively shown by A. Cohn in his *Shakspere in Germany*. We have already seen that members of the Lord Chamberlain's company had been in Germany and Denmark, and in *The Return from Parnassus*, Kempe is welcomed back 'from dancing the morris over the Alps.' If Kempe wandered 'over the Alps' into North Italy, why may not Shakspere have done the same? Indeed, as Elze has urged with great force in his *Essays on Shakspere*, p. 262 seq., there are a number of allusions in the dramatist's works which can scarcely be explained on any other hypothesis. Even if we grant that imaginative genius alone enabled him to throw round *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet* so marvellously vivid an Italian atmosphere, no power of intuition, however transcendent, could impart to the poet a knowledge of positive facts. How did he know that 'the common ferry' from the port at the mouth of the Brenta to Venice was called the *traghetto* or 'traject'? How did he make acquaintance with the works of the Italian artist Julio Romano, of whom he speaks in *The Winter's Tale* in terms that are as appropriate as they are enthusiastic? How above all did he know that Romano was a sculptor as well as a painter—a fact of which posterity would have been ignorant but for the evidence of a couple of Latin epitaphs preserved in Vasari's *Lives*? It would appear that Shakspere must have either read Vasari in the original, or, what is at least equally probable, have made acquaintance with Romano's works at Mantua. But whether or not Shakspere ever swam in a gondola, he acquired a fair knowledge of two or three European languages. Several plays contain a considerable amount of French dialogue, and both Italian and Spanish phrases are scattered here and there through his works. Good reason has further been shown for crediting the dramatist with the knowledge of works which he could only have read in the original, e.g. those of Rabelais, Giordano Bruno, and Montaigne (previous to the publication of Florio's version in 1603).

a family, his pride as well as his affection suffered a great blow in the death of Hamnet Shakspere at the early age of twelve, in August, 1596. But, in spite of the loss of his only male heir, he pursued his project, and in the spring of 1597 he bought for £60 New Place, the most considerable mansion in Stratford, which had long been popularly known as 'the Great House.' From a letter written in the following year by Abraham Sturley, a native of Stratford, to a friend in London, we learn that the poet was 'willing to disburse some money upon some odd yardland or other at Shottery,' his wife's native village, and the suggestion is made that he should be induced to buy the tithes of the town. 'This obtained would advance him in deed, and would do us much good.' Later in the year the same correspondent, writing to Richard Quiney, the father of Shakspere's future son-in-law, who was in London with the object of relieving Stratford from the payment of a subsidy, in consequence of the great dearth of corn, expressed a hope that 'our countryman, Mr. William Shakspere, would procure us money.' Perhaps Quiney was chosen as agent in the matter, because a few weeks previously he had made a like petition to Shakspere on his own behalf in a letter of which the manuscript is still extant: 'Loving countryman, I am bold of you as of a friend, craving your help with £30. You shall friend me much in helping me out of all the debts I owe in London.' Thus Shakspere, who about ten years ago had left Stratford as a penniless adventurer, had now reached so prosperous a position that he was not only able to acquire the most considerable tenement in his native town, but was appealed to by his fellow-citizens as a powerful friend in difficulties, public or private. In some quarters, however, his rapid rise must have been viewed with jealous eyes. The author of *The Return from Parnassus* speaks bitterly of the glorious vagabonds who 'with mouthing words that better wits have framed' purchase lands and are made esquires; and in *Ratsey's Ghost* sarcastic allusion is made to the actors who when their purse is well lined 'buy some place of lordship in the country' where, when they have grown weary of playing, their money may bring them to dignity and reputation.

To this year, 1598, belong further evidences of Shakspere's advance. Since 1594, the Lord Chamberlain's men had acted chiefly at the 'Theatre.' But now, in consequence of a quarrel with the ground-landlord, the Burbages pulled down the edifice and rebuilt it as the 'Globe' on Bankside, joining to themselves, as we learn from the document discovered by Halliwell-Phillipps in the Lord Chamberlain's office, 'those deserving men Shakspere, Heminge, Condell,

Phillips, and others, partners in the profits of that they call the house.' The concluding words mean that Shakspere and the other deserving men received half the daily profits from certain seats in the theatre, and they refute the idea which long prevailed that the dramatist was an actual shareholder in the 'Globe.' In the same year Francis Meres, a Cambridge Master of Arts, resident in London, published his *Palladis Tamia, Wit's Treasury,* in which he makes most favourable mention of Shakspere both as poet and playwright; 'as the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet, witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakspere, witness his *Venus and Adonis,* his *Lucrece,* his sugared sonnets among his private friends. . As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakspere among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage.' And then he proceeds to give a list of twelve plays whose importance will be discussed later. The passage is conclusive as to Shakspere's position in the literary and dramatic world of the day, and a very practical proof of his popularity was given in the following year when an unscrupulous publisher named Jaggard issued in his name a volume of poems, entitled *The Passionate Pilgrim,* which was in reality a compilation from various sources, and which owed to its reputed author only a few extracts from *Love's Labour's Lost,* and two of the sonnets which Meres had spoken of as in private circulation.

Jaggard's piratical enterprise thus brings us face to face with the general problem of Shakspere's Sonnets and their relation to his career. Reasons have been given for making scanty use of the poet's plays in telling the fragmentary story of his life, but these do not apply to writings which are quite undramatic, and which, if interpreted in their natural sense, are a record of real experiences. Is the natural sense of the Sonnets the true one, and in reading them are we brought face to face for a brief period with the real man, William Shakspere, whose features so largely baffle our scrutiny when hidden behind the dramatic mask? To these questions very different answers have been given. Thus Halliwell-Phillips writes: 'There are no external testimonies of any description in favour of a personal application of the Sonnets. . . . If the only safe method, that of discarding all mere assumptions, be strictly followed, the clearer the ideality of most of them, and the futility of arguments resting on any other basis, will be perceived.' Similarly Delius asserts that the Sonnets are 'the free outcome of a poetic imagination,' and looks upon them as mere exercises in verse. Other students see in

them some profound allegory which they construe in strangely varied ways. Opposed to all these critics is the large and growing school of interpreters who take the Sonnets as what they purport to be—genuine autobiographical confessions. Greatest of those who have held this view is Wordsworth, who asserted that in these poems the writer 'expresses his own feelings in his own person,' and who claimed for the sonnet as its crowning glory that it was the key wherewith 'Shakspere unlocked his heart.' Wordsworth's example is followed by Hallam, Swinburne, Dowden, Furnivall, Tyler, and many others alike in England and abroad. In favour of this view, as Dowden has well brought out, there is the argument from analogy. In the sonnet, 'as in other forms, the poetry of the time, which possesses an enduring vitality, was not commonly caught out of the air, but, however large the conventional element in it may have been, was born of the union of heart and imagination: in it real feelings and real experience, submitting to the poetical fashions of the day, were raised to an ideal expression.' And he points in proof to the sonnets of Spenser and Sidney, both telling the tale of veritable joys and sorrows. But far more cogent is the internal evidence of Shakspere's poems themselves. It is inconceivable that such intensity of passion as they reveal—the love, the jealousy, the remorse, the strivings between sense and spirit—should spring from no solid basis of fact. And the many personal touches that bring before us so vividly the chief characters in the story, the references to the poet's own occupations and circumstances, the notes of time and place, all cry aloud that the Sonnets move in the atmosphere of reality and not of fiction. In the face of such evidence all amiable *a priori* assumptions that Shakspere's life was as stainless as it was outwardly prosperous go for nothing.

The Sonnets being accepted as genuine self-revelations, what light do they throw upon Shakspere's character and career? They were published, in their completed form, in 1609, by Thomas Thorpe, probably without the author's sanction, and they consist of two series which are perfectly distinct, though mutually related. The first series (1—126, ending with an *Envoi* of twelve lines in couplets) is addressed to a man; the second (127—154) to a woman. The man was young, 'a tender churl,' 'the world's fresh ornament'; he was high-born and beautiful with inherited beauty (S. 3):

> 'Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
> Calls back the lovely April of her prime.'

To this youth, who bore Shakspere's own Christian name of 'Will,'

the poet gave away his heart wholly and without reserve, and the first twenty-six sonnets tell of Shakspere's boundless love for him, and his eager desire that he should perpetuate his fairness by marrying and begetting offspring. Even when he is absent from him (S. 26—32), wearied with travel and toil, probably on some provincial theatrical tour, the thought of his friend is sufficient to console him for all the miseries of his state. But during the period of separation a cruel blow fell on Shakspere's short-lived happiness (S. 33):

> 'But, out! alack! he was but one hour mine,
> The region cloud hath masked him from me now.'

Will's affections were stolen from him by a woman whom the poet loved, and thus a 'twofold truth' was broken, and Shakspere suffered a double wrong. But he seeks to forgive the injury, for his friend's fault was natural to his youth and beauty, and he was a victim to the arts of a potent temptress. In spite of all, the bond between them is Shakspere's most precious possession, and he promises to reward Will's favour by conferring upon him an immortality in his verse. But gradually a sadder strain is heard. The poet is weary of this 'vile world,' and his thoughts often reach forward to death (S. 66—71). The principal cause of his bitterness is that his young patron has lent an ear to rivals who are seeking to oust Shakspere from his grace, and chief among these is a learned poet, with singular skill in flattery. He feels that Will's heart is alienated from him, and he bids him farewell, though without a touch of reproach. Then follows a period of separation and estrangement, lasting perhaps for nearly three years (S. 104), but finally Shakspere and his friend come together again, and the last group of sonnets in the first series (S. 100—126) celebrates the renewal of their love, which by its very nature was eternal and changeless:

> 'Love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds,
> Or bends with the remover to remove.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
> Within his bending sickle's compass come;
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
> But bears it out even to the edge of doom.'

And now the fiery trials through which affection has passed have left it surer and more intense than of old:

> 'O benefit of ill! now I find true
> That better is by evil still made better;
> And ruined love, when it is built anew,
> Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater.'

The second series of Sonnets is addressed to the woman who stole Will's heart, and its connexion with the preceding series is clearly shown in the key-sonnet, 144:

> 'Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
> Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
> The better angel is a man right fair,
> The worser spirit a woman, coloured ill.
> To win me soon to hell, my female evil
> Tempteth my better angel from my side,
> And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
> Wooing his purity with her foul pride.'

It thus appears that the heroine of the second series was dark and far from beautiful, and this fact the poet dwells upon with curious emphasis:

> 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
> Coral is far more red than her lips' red.'

But those eyes that seemed to go in mourning for the pain that they wrought could sway the heart of Shakspere with a strangely potent spell. This woman, dark of hue, and yet more darkly stained in soul, was to him his 'music' in a far deeper sense than the sweet concord of sounds which her skilful fingers drew from the virginal. Even when she has robbed him of his friend, he can only beg of her to include him also in her love, for he too is Will. He knows that she is untruthful, false alike to her vows of wedlock and her oaths to him. His devotion to her is a madness which Reason, the physician, vainly seeks to cure. But in his eyes her 'worst all best exceeds,' and his passion for her forces him to 'betray his nobler part' and wrestle down his better will. Thus the second series ends in spiritual chaos, and it is natural to believe that these sonnets to his mistress were completed by Shakspere before he wrote the final group of poems to Will, with their tone of trust and hope, and strengthened sense of moral order in the world.

Such are the unquestionable facts which the Sonnets reveal from internal evidence. The further question remains: Can any light be thrown upon them from outside enabling us to fix the date of the events recorded, and to identify Shakspere's friend, mistress, and rival? The question of date is an extremely difficult one. It is certain that some at least of the sonnets must have been written before September, 1598, when Meres' *Palladis Tamia* was registered. These may only have been the earlier poems to Will, to which the singular term 'sugared' would most fittingly apply, but the two sonnets (138 and 144), included in the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599, prove that by that year Shakspere's friend had already become en-

tangled with the dark lady. On the other hand, even the earliest sonnets, from their maturity of style and thought, must be later than the *Lucrece* in 1594, and the fact that Shakspere throughout speaks of himself as old, though probably only in contrast with Will's extreme youth, is an additional argument against setting the date too far back. Thus all the evidence tends to show that the beginning of Shakspere's intimacy with his friend, and the troubles that so quickly followed, must be placed about 1597 or the spring of 1598. Sonnet 104 proves clearly that between the poet's first meeting with Will and their final reconciliation a period of at least three years must have elapsed. This would give 1601 as the date which brings the incidents referred to in the poems to a close. Without aiming at an impossible precision it may be confidently urged that the renewal of Shakspere's affectionate relations with Will coincides with the opening years of the seventeenth century.

The more important problem of identification follows. Who was Will? Many answers have been given to the question, but there is only one name supported by tangible evidence—that of William Herbert, who became Earl of Pembroke in January, 1601[1]. It was to him, together with his brother, that Heminge and Condell dedicated the folio edition of Shakspere's works in 1623, on the ground that he had 'prosequnted' their author living with so much favour. His Christian name corresponds with that of the friend in the Sonnets. Moreover Thorpe, the publisher of the poems, prefixed to them a dedication in which he wished 'to the onlie begetter of these insuing sonnets, Mr. W. H., all happiness and that eternitie promised by our ever-living poet.' The begetter of the Sonnets is best interpreted as the friend who inspired them, and whom the poet assured of immortality through his verse[2]. The initials W. H. thus appear to have belonged to Will, and they are those of Herbert's name. Further, in every characteristic Herbert answers with curious fidelity to Shakspere's picture of his friend. He was young, accomplished, and remarkable for his beauty of person, which he inherited from his mother, the sister of Sir Philip Sidney, who might truly be said in him to recall 'the lovely April of her prime.' He was, as Clarendon records, 'immoderately given up to women, but he was not so much transported with beauty and outward allurements, as with those advantages of the mind as manifested an extra-

1 Drake, Gervinus, Kreyssig, Flesy, and others have argued that the young man to whom the first group of sonnets is addressed was Lord Southampton, but it is inconceivable that the Earl, whose name was Henry Wriothesley, could be spoken of over and over again as 'Will.'

2 Others interpret 'begetter' as the person who obtained the MSS. for the publisher. On this basis Neil and Philarète Chasles have indentified W. H. with William Hathaway, Shakspere's brother-in-law. Elze inclines to endorse this view.

ordinary wit, spirit, and knowledge.' Such a man would be peculiarly liable to be fascinated by Shakspere's dark mistress. But Clarendon also bears witness that Herbert, in spite of his licentiousness, 'was the most universally beloved and esteemed of any man of that age.' This completely accords with the ardour of devotion which Will inspired not only in Shakspere, but doubtless also in the rivals who sought to supplant him in his patron's grace.

Against this cumulative evidence for the identification of Herbert and Will two principal objections have been raised. It is urged that the last lines of Sonnet 13, written about 1598,

> 'Dear my love, you know
> You had a father: let your son say so,'

imply that Will's father was dead, while Herbert's lived till 1601. But a consideration of the context shows that such an inference is unnecessary, and that Will is simply being exhorted to do as his father had done before him, by begetting a son. It has also been maintained that, as Herbert was born in 1580, Shakspere could have had no motive in pressing marriage upon a youth of eighteen. But an interesting correspondence preserved in the Record Office, and recently brought to light, disposes of this objection. Letters from the Earl and Countess of Pembroke in 1597 to Lord Burleigh show that they were eager to forward a match between Herbert and Bridget Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford, and Burleigh's own granddaughter. The negotiations proceeded favourably for some time, but eventually they were broken off, and if the reason was Herbert's unwillingness to marry, there is nothing strange in Shakspere having addressed to him the series of petitions with which the Sonnets begin, possibly by the desire of the countess of Pembroke herself. Thus a cumulative mass of evidence points to the identity of Will and Herbert.

Similarly the dramatist's chief rival for Will's favour has been shown to correspond in striking particulars with George Chapman. The rival is described at length in Sonnet 86, where, after speaking of the 'proud full sail of his great verse,' the poet proceeds:

> 'Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
> Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
> No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
> Giving him aid, my verse astonished.
> He, nor that affable familiar ghost
> Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
> As victors of my silence cannot boast.'

Now in 1594 Chapman published a poem, *The Shadow of the Night*, in the dedication to which he censures the vulgar searchers after

knowledge who 'think skill so mightily pierced with their loves that she should prostitutely show them her secrets, when she will scarce be looked upon by others, but with invocation, fasting, watching, yea not without having drops of their soul *like a heavenly familiar.*' In the poem itself he consecrates himself to 'the black shadows and desolation of night,' and he calls upon his compeers to do the same. All this exactly corresponds with the strange expressions in the sonnet, which would otherwise be entirely incomprehensible. Moreover the words, 'the proud full sail of his great verse,' apply entirely to the long swelling fourteen-syllable metre in which Chapman's translation of the *Iliad* was written. The first portion of this work was published in 1598, and the date suggests that it may have helped to draw Herbert's notice away from Shakspere to the more learned author. Such a view is supported by the fact that a later edition of the translation contains a dedicatory sonnet to Herbert.

Far greater mystery enshrouds the dark lady. An attempt has recently been made to identify her with a Mary Fitton, maid of honour to Elizabeth, with whom Herbert had an intrigue about 1600. The references to her in contemporary letters show that she had certain qualities corresponding to those of Shakspere's mistress—a ready wit, artistic accomplishments, and unfeminine boldness. She was acquainted with Kempe, who dedicated a book to her, and a play upon her name has been detected in one of the sonnets in the second series. But as there is an entire absence of external evidence connecting her with the poet, and as there is nothing to show that she was a brunette in complexion, the endeavour to identify her with the 'woman coloured ill' is far from convincing, and is at best an ingenious speculation.

In the Sonnets we see, as through a glass darkly, a central episode in the poet's life, yet only an episode, and for the latter part of his career, as for the beginning, we have to fall back upon the external chronicle. Meagre though it is, it adds something to the record of Shakspere's friendships. Even in his passionate devotion to Will, the author of the *Lucrece* cannot have entirely forgotten his other noble patron Southampton, to whom he had promised a 'love without end.' The Earl was an adherent of Essex, and accompanied him on his ill-starred expedition to Ireland in 1599. This explains Shakspere's special interest in the campaign for whose speedy and successful termination he goes out of his way to express a wish in a chorus to *Henry V.* He must have been correspondingly mortified at its failure, and yet more deeply concerned at Southampton's participation in the reckless outbreak of 1601, which cost him im-

prisonment in the Tower till the Queen's death[1]. How far Shakspere came into personal relations with Elizabeth herself it is impossible to tell. Ben Jonson speaks of her as being 'taken' by his flights, and Chettle declares that she

> 'Graced his desert,
> And to his lays opened her royal ear.'

It is certain that many of his dramas were performed at Court, and there is an early tradition that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was written at the express desire of Elizabeth, who wished to see Falstaff in love. But there is no evidence, except a statement of Rowe, that the Queen showed Shakspere any exceptional favour, and the references to her in his works are, as is well known, surprisingly few. In the chorus to *Henry V* spoken of above she is styled 'our gracious empress,' and she is without doubt 'the fair vestal thronèd by the West' of Oberon's vision in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* But the profuse compliments of Greene and Peele are lacking, and it is noticeable that Chettle complains that on the Queen's death 'the silver-tongued Melicert,' as he calls Shakspere, did not 'drop from his honied muse one sable tear.'

A poet will number among his friends other followers of the Muse, and among literary intimacies few are more interesting than that between Shakspere and Ben Jonson. The latter's comedy *Every Man in his Humour* was brought out in 1598 by Shakspere's company, and, according to tradition, at the request of the elder dramatist, who played one of the parts. But when in 1599 Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour* was produced at the Globe Theatre, Shakspere did not appear in it. He may have disliked the bitter personal attacks which the play contained upon contemporary dramatists, and which gave rise to what is known as 'the war of the theatres,' in which Jonson, Dekker and Marston were the principal figures. The Lord Chamberlain's company evidently did not favour Jonson's cause, for he had to migrate to the Blackfriars Theatre, then tenanted by a troupe of boy-actors, who produced for him *The Case is altered, Cynthia's Revels,* and *The Poetaster.* Dekker and Marston retaliated in several plays, the most important of which is *Satiromastix,* acted by the Chamberlain's company in 1601. Shakspere himself took part in the quarrel, and for a time he must have been in antagonism to Jonson; for in *The Return from*

[1] It will be shown later that the play, *Richard II*, which the conspirators caused to be acted in the streets, was in all probability Shakspere's. Fleay connects with this the temporary disgrace at Court of the Lord Chamberlain's company during 1601, and their consequent tour in Scotland, evidenced by the presence of Laurence Fletcher, one of the company, at Aberdeen in October.

Parnassus, acted at St. John's College, Cambridge about 1602, Burbage and Kempe are introduced, and the latter makes use of these remarkable words: 'Few of the university pen plays well, they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Juppiter. Why here's our fellow Shakspere puts them all down, aye and Ben Jonson too. O that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow, he brought up Horace giving the poets a pill, but our fellow Shakspere hath given him a purge that made him bewray his credit.' The reference in Jonson's case is to *The Poetaster,* where he introduces Horace, who represents himself, offering pills to rival poets to cure them of tumorous heats. But in what way Shakspere administered a purge to Jonson we do not know, for Fleay's attempt to find allusions to this controversy in *Troilus and Cressida* is far from convincing. In any case the breach must soon have been healed, for in 1603 Shakspere acted in Jonson's *Sejanus,* which was produced at the 'Globe.' We do indeed find hits in *Bartholomew Fair* and elsewhere at incidents in some of Shakspere's later plays, but, in speaking of the dramatist after his death to Drummond, Jonson uses words of warm and generous affection. '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.' And in the verses 'To the memory of my beloved master, William Shakspere,' he uses terms of equal tenderness: 'My gentle Shakspere, sweet swan of Avon, thou Star of Poets.' Strong indeed must have been the personal fascination which could charm such expressions from rugged Ben.

But however complex during the last years of Elizabeth's reign the inner life of Shakspere may have been, with its loves and jealousies, its crises of mind and heart, his outward worldly success was uninterrupted, and he adhered steadfastly to his purpose of returning to Stratford as a man of property. By his father's death in September, 1601, he inherited the two houses in Henley Street, and in the May of the following year he bought from William and John Combe for £320 one hundred and seven acres of arable land in the parish of Old Stratford. Some months later he purchased a cottage adjoining New Place, and a messuage with two orchards, gardens, and barns. By this time he is described in legal documents as *generosus* or gentleman, an epithet which doubtless gave him much gratification. Shortly afterwards a significant testimony was given to his high position in the theatrical world. James I issued warrant, within a few days of his accession, to the Lord

Chamberlain's servants licensing them to continue their performances at the 'Globe' and elsewhere; and among the company who henceforward took the title of the King's Players, Shakspere's name is mentioned second, preceding even that of Richard Burbage. At a subsequent date, which cannot be exactly fixed, Shakspere, together with Heminge and Condell, the future editors of his works, was placed by his manager at the Blackfriars Theatre, which had hitherto been leased out to a troupe of boy-actors, but which was now turned into a second house for the King's servants. An attractive glimpse of the relations between the members of the company is given in the will of Augustine Phillips, who on May 4, 1605, leaves, among other legacies to his fellows, a thirty shilling piece in gold to Shakspere. In the following July the dramatist carried out the suggestion made to him in 1598 by buying for £440 the unexpired term of a lease of the tithes of Stratford, Bishopston, and Welcombe, and the purchase proved a very profitable one. To his speculations in real estate he had added trade in agricultural produce, for early in 1604 he is found suing one Philip Rogers in the local Court for the balance of a debt on malt sold and delivered to him. In 1608 he attempts to recover another debt from a John Addenbrooke, and obtains a verdict which however was rendered barren by the flight of the defendant.

During these years his visits to Stratford were, no doubt, increasingly frequent, and he was drawn there not only by material interests but by family joys and sorrows. On June 5, 1607, his eldest daughter Susannah was married to John Hall, a Stratford physician in large practice. In the same year, on December 31, he lost his brother Edmund, who had followed him in the career of a player, and who was buried in the church of St. Saviour's, Southwark. A heavier blow came in September, 1608, in the death of his mother, and it is probable that he followed her to the grave, for a month later he was at Stratford and stood godfather to a friend's child.

It cannot have been long afterwards that he retired from the stage and the society of the capital to take up his permanent abode in New Place. The house had been let to a Thomas Greene, town clerk of Stratford, who claimed to be a cousin of the poet, and who states in a letter of 1609 that he perceives he may stay another year. This would tend to fix the date of Shakspere's final return to his native town about 1610, and it must have been with a feeling of genuine delight that he turned his back upon the fever and fret of London life to spend the evening of his days, as he had spent

their morning, amid Warwickshire meadows and lanes and streams. Yet he cannot have entirely severed his connexion with the capital. Several of his last plays were in all probability written at Stratford, and he must have followed with interest their fortunes on the boards of the 'Globe,' till the famous house was burnt down on June 29, 1613, during a performance of *Henry VIII.* Earlier in the same year he bought for £140 a property near the Blackfriars Theatre. He only paid down £80 of the purchase money, the balance remaining on mortgage, and immediately leased the house to John Robinson for ten years.

It is noticeable that he made no attempt to follow in his father's footsteps as a candidate for municipal honours, partly, perhaps, because of the sympathy which the Town Council of Stratford was beginning to show with the Puritan movement. Twice in the early part of the seventeenth century it had taken into consideration 'the inconvenience of plays'; and in February, 1612, it resolved that they were unlawful and not to be tolerated in well-governed boroughs. Such a measure must have been very distasteful to Shakspere, though, strange to say, record remains of the entertainment at New Place in 1614 of one of the Puritan preachers whom the Council was in the habit of inviting to deliver discourses, and for whom it provided a pottle of wine and a quart of sack at the municipal expense. The preacher's host may, however, not have been the poet but his son-in-law Dr. Hall, who had Puritan leanings. In the same year Shakspere came into conflict with the Corporation over another matter. In 1614 the wealthy proprietor John Combe died, leaving the dramatist five pounds in his will. His heir, William Combe, on his succession to the estate, attempted to enclose the common fields at Welcombe, part of whose tithes belonged to Shakspere. The Corporation hotly resisted Combe's design, and formally invited the proprietor of New Place to help them in the struggle, while Greene, the Town Clerk, sent him ' a note of the inconveniences that would happen by the enclosure.' But Shakspere had been assured by Combe's agent that his interests would not be allowed to suffer by the contemplated invasion of the townsmen's rights, and his sympathy was given to the unpopular side[1]. The Corporation finally gained the victory, but the dramatist did not live to see it. On February 10, 1616, he witnessed the marriage of his second daughter Judith to Richard Quiney, a vintner of Stratford, whose father had formerly been bailiff. Little more than two months afterwards, on

1 The misinterpretation of an entry in Greene's diary has led some writers to wrongly represent Shakspere as the champion of popular rights on this occasion. But see S. Lee's *Stratford on Avon, &c.*, p. 281.

Tuesday, April 23, he died at the comparatively early age of fifty-two. Tradition asserts that the cause of his premature end was a fever contracted at a 'merry meeting' with Drayton and Ben Jonson, where the trio of wits drank too hard. The story must be taken for what it is worth, though modern inquirers have suggested a more probable origin of the malady in the unsavoury condition of the streets bordering on New Place. On April 25 he was buried in the chancel of the ancient parish church of Stratford amidst every sign of respect from his neighbours, who, while eager to pay fittingly the last honours to a distinguished and successful fellow-citizen, were most certainly unconscious that they were carrying to his rest the one man who was to make the history of the little Warwickshire town of supreme interest to all nations and for all time. On the flat stone that covers the grave an inscription is carved:

> 'Good friend, for Jesu's sake forbeare
> To dig the dust enclosed heare;
> Blesse be the man that spares these stones,
> And curst be he that moves my bones.'

The lines are ascribed, on the doubtful authority of Ward, to Shakspere himself, and they are said to be due to his fear that his remains might be moved to the neighbouring bone-house. They have, in effect, prevented any such sacrilege, and they still hedge with a peculiarly solemn awe the modest sepulchre that holds the precious dust of England's 'Star of Poets.'

Such was William Shakspere's life, so far as it can be pieced together from fragmentary records. Fresh discoveries may yet conceivably be made to throw new light upon minor points, but it is safe to say that the radical enigma of that life will never fail to perplex, and, in some degree, irritate posterity. Philistinism has at all times been wont to partially console itself for the homage which it is fain to pay to genius with the comforting assurance that poets and philosophers, and the race of idealists generally, prove but poor masters of the art of living amid the actual conditions of this present world. Moreover, students of the Elizabethan age are impressed with the strangely consistent ill-fortune that dogged the careers of its most brilliant and fascinating personalities: Leicester, Essex, and Raleigh; Greene, Marlowe, and Spenser; Francis Bacon and Ben Jonson; all alike closed their days amid disaster or disgrace. Yet in defiance alike of general probabilities, and of the special circumstances of his age, Shakspere, from the time of his arrival in London, advanced steadily in prosperity, bought houses and land, engaged in business, retired to enjoy the fortune and position that he had won,

their morning, amid Warwickshire meadows and lanes and streams. Yet he cannot have entirely severed his connexion with the capital. Several of his last plays were in all probability written at Stratford, and he must have followed with interest their fortunes on the boards of the 'Globe,' till the famous house was burnt down on June 29, 1613, during a performance of *Henry VIII.* Earlier in the same year he bought for £140 a property near the Blackfriars Theatre. He only paid down £80 of the purchase money, the balance remaining on mortgage, and immediately leased the house to John Robinson for ten years.

It is noticeable that he made no attempt to follow in his father's footsteps as a candidate for municipal honours, partly, perhaps, because of the sympathy which the Town Council of Stratford was beginning to show with the Puritan movement. Twice in the early part of the seventeenth century it had taken into consideration 'the inconvenience of plays'; and in February, 1612, it resolved that they were unlawful and not to be tolerated in well-governed boroughs. Such a measure must have been very distasteful to Shakspere, though, strange to say, record remains of the entertainment at New Place in 1614 of one of the Puritan preachers whom the Council was in the habit of inviting to deliver discourses, and for whom it provided a pottle of wine and a quart of sack at the municipal expense. The preacher's host may, however, not have been the poet but his son-in-law Dr. Hall, who had Puritan leanings. In the same year Shakspere came into conflict with the Corporation over another matter. In 1614 the wealthy proprietor John Combe died, leaving the dramatist five pounds in his will. His heir, William Combe, on his succession to the estate, attempted to enclose the common fields at Welcombe, part of whose tithes belonged to Shakspere. The Corporation hotly resisted Combe's design, and formally invited the proprietor of New Place to help them in the struggle, while Greene, the Town Clerk, sent him ' a note of the inconveniences that would happen by the enclosure.' But Shakspere had been assured by Combe's agent that his interests would not be allowed to suffer by the contemplated invasion of the townsmen's rights, and his sympathy was given to the unpopular side[1]. The Corporation finally gained the victory, but the dramatist did not live to see it. On February 10, 1616, he witnessed the marriage of his second daughter Judith to Richard Quiney, a vintner of Stratford, whose father had formerly been bailiff. Little more than two months afterwards, on

1 The misinterpretation of an entry in Greene's diary has led some writers to wrongly represent Shakspere as the champion of popular rights on this occasion. But see S. Lee's *Stratford on Avon*, &c., p. 281.

Tuesday, April 23, he died at the comparatively early age of fifty-two. Tradition asserts that the cause of his premature end was a fever contracted at a 'merry meeting' with Drayton and Ben Jonson, where the trio of wits drank too hard. The story must be taken for what it is worth, though modern inquirers have suggested a more probable origin of the malady in the unsavoury condition of the streets bordering on New Place. On April 25 he was buried in the chancel of the ancient parish church of Stratford amidst every sign of respect from his neighbours, who, while eager to pay fittingly the last honours to a distinguished and successful fellow-citizen, were most certainly unconscious that they were carrying to his rest the one man who was to make the history of the little Warwickshire town of supreme interest to all nations and for all time. On the flat stone that covers the grave an inscription is carved:

> 'Good friend, for Jesu's sake forbeare
> To dig the dust enclosed heare;
> Blesse be the man that spares these stones,
> And curst be he that moves my bones.'

The lines are ascribed, on the doubtful authority of Ward, to Shakspere himself, and they are said to be due to his fear that his remains might be moved to the neighbouring bone-house. They have, in effect, prevented any such sacrilege, and they still hedge with a peculiarly solemn awe the modest sepulchre that holds the precious dust of England's 'Star of Poets.'

Such was William Shakspere's life, so far as it can be pieced together from fragmentary records. Fresh discoveries may yet conceivably be made to throw new light upon minor points, but it is safe to say that the radical enigma of that life will never fail to perplex, and, in some degree, irritate posterity. Philistinism has at all times been wont to partially console itself for the homage which it is fain to pay to genius with the comforting assurance that poets and philosophers, and the race of idealists generally, prove but poor masters of the art of living amid the actual conditions of this present world. Moreover, students of the Elizabethan age are impressed with the strangely consistent ill-fortune that dogged the careers of its most brilliant and fascinating personalities: Leicester, Essex, and Raleigh; Greene, Marlowe, and Spenser; Francis Bacon and Ben Jonson; all alike closed their days amid disaster or disgrace. Yet in defiance alike of general probabilities, and of the special circumstances of his age, Shakspere, from the time of his arrival in London, advanced steadily in prosperity, bought houses and land, engaged in business, retired to enjoy the fortune and position that he had won,

died in his bed surrounded by sorrowing kinsfolk and neighbours, and left behind him a will clearly proving his ambition to found a family. So paradoxical do such achievements and aspirations appear in the author of *Hamlet* and *Othello*, that preposterous modern theories have striven to cut the knot by denying to Shakspere the credit of his own writings. Saner criticism will recognize that the spectacle is strange, but will seek a partial explanation of it in the dramatist's early circumstances and surroundings. It is in some degree misleading to speak of Shakspere, as is almost uniformly done, as a pure product of the Renaissance era. Stratford and its neighbourhood were, as has been shown, singularly eloquent of the English mediaeval spirit, of its religion, its land system, its municipal organization, its drama. Prominent among the characteristics of that spirit were an ingrained conviction of the difference between social classes, a keen sense of the power attaching to the possession of land, a jealous desire of local influence and prestige, a reverence for custom, prescription, and law. These are the very qualities in Shakspere which excite surprise, and they may be fairly put down in part to inherited tendencies and early associations. Moreover, his father's pecuniary reverses, with their immediate effect upon his own career, must have developed these latent instincts, and have inspired him with the ambition of repairing the fortunes of his family.

But while it is thus right to recognize the practical element in Shakspere's personality, it is a profound mistake to give it undue prominence. The Stratford poet, though not so completely a child of the Renaissance as Marlowe or Spenser, yet felt to the full its ardours of passion and emotion. He was, as Ben Jonson has told us, 'of an open and free nature,' quick to offer boundless affection, and craving an equally boundless return. To Southampton he dedicates 'a love without end': the devotion that he lavishes upon Will is feminine in its tenderness and forgetfulness of self, and the breach in their friendship means for him 'a hell of time.' So, on the other hand, he must have prized at its full worth the reverent love, 'this side of idolatry,' which Ben Jonson, and doubtless others, freely rendered to him. And as he was sensitive beyond measure to human affections, so he had a soul open to all influences of nature, and swayed by every art, especially music, of which, in plays and poems alike, he speaks again and again with the enthusiasm of a true votary[1]. But such a temperament his its peculiar dangers, and these Shakspere in no way escaped. The heart that was quick to the prompt-

[1] On Shakspere's attitude towards music and painting, see Elze, *William Shakspere*, pp. 411-421.

ings of love was swift also to feel the pang of jealousy, and the *Sonnets* tell us of the torture with which rivals could rack its strings. And they tell us too of graver fallings away from the highest ideal of manhood, of sullied purity, of criminal surrender to the baser instincts, of dark and turbulent spiritual chaos. Yet throughout all the poet never falters in his conviction of what is right, never takes evil to be his good: sense wins victories over soul, but the battle is always renewed. Among the Knights who gather at the Round Table of the Muse Shakspere is no stainless Galahad. Rather may he be likened unto Lancelot, false for a time to his higher nature, too weak to break the bonds that defamed him, and yet, in his agony, 'groaning with remorseful pain.' As Lancelot's mood was often like a fiend driving him into the wilderness, so Shakspere knew what it was to be 'frantic-mad with evermore unrest': and the parallel may be carried a stage further. To Lancelot, in spite of his guilt, it was given to see the Holy Grail, though through blasting and blinding fires, and at the very last to die a holy man. So Shakspere, as the final sonnets to Will sufficiently show, after a fierce struggle gained the conquest over his baser self. And of all the theories that seek to read his personal history in his plays, none is more attractive or has greater inherent plausibility than that which traces the serene tone of the closing dramas, so sharply contrasted with the storm and stress of the tragedies, to a corresponding change in the poet's own mood. The season of suffering and shame had passed for ever, and when the sun of Shakspere's life dipped to its fall, it was not amid driving cloud-rack, but the hushed and solemn loveliness of a tranquil eventide.

CHAPTER VIII

Shakspere's Dramatic Apprenticeship

In the investigation of Shakspere's personal career critical inquiry will readily be allowed, but when we turn to speak of him as a dramatist the legitimacy of such a method may be challenged at the outset. There is a venerable prejudice which clings to the idea that poetic genius is something entirely unaccountable and wayward, subject to no law or rule. To search for its secret is merely to profane a mystery; and of Shakspere, as the supreme poet of all time, this, it may be said, holds especially true; he is a stupendous phenomenon, to be accepted with awe and thanksgiving. His plays should be read in any and every order, each for its own inherent beauty, and all attempts to arrange them in groups, and thence to infer the development of their author's mind, are an offence against true æsthetic principles.

Such a view has in it a kernel of truth that cannot be disregarded; it calls to remembrance that after all 'the play's the thing,' and that critical knowledge is dearly bought at any sacrifice of pure and spontaneous delight in the creations of art. It also pushes home the fact that the ultimate secret of genius defies the most rigid analysis, and that no study of antecedents and environment, no skilful classifications and chronologies will ever make it clearer why Shakspere was what he was, and not merely a Marlowe or a Greene. But Ben Jonson himself, in those memorial lines which are the first, as they are one of the best, of commentaries on Shakspere, declares that 'a good poet's made as well as born.' It is this process of 'making' through which even the inspired singer must pass that justifies the application of the critical method to the dramatist's writings. The distinguishing mark of that method is its endeavour to arrange the plays in the order of their production, to note their mutual points of contact or of contrast, and to interpret them as a progressive revelation of their author's genius. From this point of view the dramas cease to be a mechanical aggregate, and shape themselves into an organic whole. But just as in an organism the individual members gain instead of lose by their union in a higher life, so each separate play adds to its interest and significance when seen in its relation to every other. The passion of *Romeo and Juliet*, the charm of *As You Like It*, the mystery of *Hamlet*, the terror of

King Lear are one and all enhanced when we realize that they are not due to accident, but form the stages in a continuous mental growth. It is true, of course, that the results of such a method of inquiry cannot be all equally definite and dogmatic, and that criticism sometimes cuts an ungainly figure as it toils along, with its club foot, in the track of creative art. But when all deductions are made, the study of Shakspere's works in their natural sequence must approve itself to every lover of literature by its pre-eminent interest and fruitfulness.

A preliminary question, however, at once starts up: Can the order of the plays be determined with sufficient accuracy for chronological criticism to be anything better than ingenious guesswork? Upon the main issue an affirmative answer may be confidently given, though in details there is considerable doubt. The evidence for fixing the dates of the dramas may be divided broadly into two classes, external and internal[1]. Under the former head comes first the entry of certain of Shakspere's works in the register of the Stationers' Company. The first complete collection of his writings (with the exception of parts of *Pericles* and possibly of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*) was the folio of 1623 edited by his fellow actors Heminge and Condell. But during his lifetime seventeen of the plays and all the poems were issued in quarto form, and they were registered either on or shortly before publication[2]. We thus get a downward limit before which these works must have been written, and a similar limit is fixed by the other branch of external evidence, which consists in contemporary allusions to the dramas. Far the most important of these is the well-known passage in Meres' *Palladis Tamia*, 1598. Meres there mentions as already existing six of Shakspere's comedies, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Comedy of Errors, Love's Labour's Lost, Love's Labour's Won, A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Merchant of Venice*; and six of his tragedies, *Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV, King John, Titus Andronicus*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. As Meres cites these works with the express purpose of proving Shakspere's excellence as a writer for the stage, it is very unlikely that he left out any play of importance, and the inference is almost certain that all the dramas not mentioned by him were later than 1598. Minor references in other contemporary

1 Dowden, in his Primer, adopts a triple classification: (1) wholly external, (2) partly external, partly internal, (3) wholly internal. The whole of his chapter on the chronological evidences, pp. 32-46, should be consulted.

2 For a complete list of the quarto editions, with their printers and publishers, see Fleay's table in *New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1874, reprinted in his Manual. For relative value of the quarto and folio texts, see his Manual, pp. 61-63, and Elze, *William Shakspere*, pp. 275-297.

writings help to fix the date of *Twelfth Night, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, The Winter's Tale,* and *King Henry VIII.*

Under the head of internal evidence we may place first the few allusions in the plays to contemporary historical events. Of these the most important is the reference to Essex's Irish expedition, 1599, in a chorus to *Henry V,* while in the prologue to the same drama mention is made of the recently built Globe Theatre as 'this wooden O.' Other less precise allusions do something to help to place *The Comedy of Errors, The Merry Wives of Windsor,* and *Romeo and Juliet.* Similar to these historical references are those to books issued during Shakspere's life. Thus, in *As You Like It,* a line is quoted from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* published in 1598, while *King Lear* and *The Tempest* show debts respectively to Harsnet's *Declaration of Popish Impostures,* and Florio's Translation of *Montaigne's Essays,* both belonging to 1603. In all these cases an upward limit is established after which the plays must have been written.

The other more strictly internal evidence is less concrete, but, if cautiously handled, furnishes sufficiently definite results. It consists in the changes that Shakspere's dramatic style underwent during his long career of authorship. Of these the most unmistakable are the various gradual alterations in the character of his verse[1]. In the earlier dramas it has an even, and often monotonous, flow; there is a pause at the end of nearly every line, and the movement of the longer passages is lacking in variety and freedom. But, as he continued to write, Shakspere felt his way to more intricate and subtle rhythms; he varied his pauses, and ran on the sense without a break from verse to verse. This tendency grew upon him with constantly increasing force, so that in the latest plays the periods are often extremely prolonged and complicated[2]. Closely connected with this change are others of a subsidiary kind. When the sense pauses with each verse, the final syllable will naturally be strongly accented; but when one line runs on to combine with its successor, it more naturally terminates with some unimportant word which is no obstacle to union. And thus, in the later plays, an increasing number of lines have 'weak' endings, i.e. they close with some trifling monosyllable which leans for support on the opening word of the following verse. Ingram distinguishes between the 'light endings,' consisting of auxiliary verbs and pronouns (e.g. am, do, I), on which the voice

[1] For the history of the gradual application of different portions of the verse-test by Malone, Hickson, Spedding, Bathurst, Craik, Furnival, Fleay, and Hertzberg, see Ingram's paper on 'Light and Weak Endings' in *New Shakspere Society's Transactions,* 1874. The latest monograph on the subject is G. König's *Vers in Shakspere's Dramen* (Trübner, 1888).

[2] See Spedding's letter on 'The Pause-Test,' *New Shakspere Society's Transactions,* 1874.

can to a small extent dwell, and the 'weak endings,' including conjunctions and prepositions (e.g. for, if, in), on which the reader cannot pause at all. Light endings appear frequently first in *Macbeth,* and weak endings in *Antony and Cleopatra.* Allied to the weak endings are the double, or feminine endings. In the earlier plays the lines consist almost uniformly of ten syllables, but as Shakspere's style progressed to greater freedom, an extra syllable was frequently added to give variety to the rhythm, so that in the closing dramas almost one verse in three is distinguished in this way.

With these changes is connected the gradual disuse of rhyme. At first he often employed it, especially in his comedies, but, as his art matured, he discarded it by degrees for blank verse or for prose, except in certain passages where he introduced it for a special purpose. Thus the proportion of rhyme in a play is a test which, if discreetly applied, helps to decide whether it is early or late. With the decrease of rhyme there disappeared the sonnets, quatrains, and snatches of doggrel which at first had found their way into the dialogue[1].

Other immaturities, besides those of versification, cling to the earlier plays; they abound in conceits, puns, overwrought imagery, and excessive classical allusions. As yet, thought and imagination lagged behind fancy and power of expression. But gradually they came to the front, and took their rightful place in the dramatist's work; language, instead of being racked and stretched for want of matter, is found at the last staggering along under a burden of ideas almost beyond its power to bear.

These evidences furnish a basis for the division of the plays into groups. No such division can be completely authoritative or final, but recent criticism has, for the most part, agreed in recognizing four leading stages in the development of Shakspere's genius and art. His literary career, beginning about 1588, extended over a period of rather more than twenty years. Of these the first five or six (1588—1594) were years of dramatic apprenticeship. He started with theatrical hack-work, touching up old plays, and collaborating with writers of established repute in stagecraft. He next began to test his independent genius in various spheres, trying, in turn, comedy, historical drama, narrative verse, and tragedy. Much of what he produced during this early period is of enduring interest and beauty, but everywhere there are the marks of youth. The style is often crude and artificial; the power of characterization is still

1 See the metrical table on p. 123 of Furnivall's Introduction to the *Leopold Shakspere.* On the reservations with which the 'rhyme-test' must be accepted, see Dowden's *Primer,* pp. 44-46.

rudimentary; the wit is sparkling and vivacious rather than subtle and refined; the pathos of life is recognized, but not its terror or its mystery. Shakspere is as yet in his adolescence. Thence he passes onward to the second stage of his career (1595—1600). His powers have now ripened, and to this period belongs much of his most flawless workmanship. His joyous strength and energy flow forth without stay or stint, and Falstaff and Prince Hal, Beatrice and Rosalind, spring into superb and radiant existence. Instead of imperfect sketches we have full-length portraits, showing a grasp of life and of character in deeper and more complex aspects than before. The splendid panorama of national history is unrolled before our eyes, and its moral issues are exhibited in clear and comprehensive working. Shakspere is in his full manhood, but his outlook is as yet not without limitations. Life still attracts him chiefly on its practical, mundane and material side. His world is one of sane and strenuous activities, of sweet and loyal affections, which find their foil in cowardice, vanity, deceit, and hardness of heart. It is not till he enters upon his third period (1601—1608) that he begins to handle the problems of the deeper spiritual life, and to face the tragic riddles of human sin and agony. This is his 'hell of time,' during which, under the pressure of personal suffering, he sounded the lowest abysses of our mortal lot, and gazed unappalled upon the awful spectacle of the guilty and the guiltless involved in a common doom, and of Nemesis following as relentlessly upon error as upon crime. Hamlet, Brutus, Othello, Desdemona, Lear, Cordelia, Edmund, Macbeth, Timon all alike die the death, and 'the rest is silence.' For seven years that grim vision floated before the poet's eyes, and the terror and pity of it would have driven weaker natures to despair. But Shakspere was too strong to succumb even to the stress of such an ordeal, and at the last he struggled upwards once more to light and calm. It is this final mood which is reflected in the plays of the fourth period (1607—1612), and nowhere in literature is there a more startling contrast than that between Shakspere's closing group of dramas and the tragic series that precedes it. The fell images of sin and death vanish alomst entirely from the scene, and the hand of the avenger ceases to claim its victims. The funeral notes of the dirge are hushed, and the air is filled with sweet and tender melodies whose themes are repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Instead of a King Lear we have a Prospero, and Hermione and Imogen replace Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth. The spirit of these last plays cannot find fitter expression than in the words, 'At eventide it shall be light.'

But while we thus note the changes through which Shakspere's art and genius and temper passed, the converse fact must never be forgotten that his work throughout has a marvellous stamp of unity. Except a few plays, belonging chiefly to the beginning or end of his career, when he was collaborating with other writers, or was touching up older materials, there is no one of his dramas which could conceivably have been written by any other man. This distinctively Shaksperean note depends upon a combination of characteristics, partly of style, partly of thought and motive, but its dominant feature is a majestic commonsense, an unfaltering eye for the true proportion of things, a fidelity as constant as it is unobtrusive to the eternal, underlying principles of morality. Shakspere is supreme and unique, not because he lacks every fault or possesses every excellence, but because the circle of his vision is so completely concentric with the orbit of the world's forces: he seems to stand at the core of circumstance, and to touch truth at its source. 'Shakspere,' as Goethe said, 'has identified himself with the spirit of the Universe. He penetrates it as the spirit itself does: to both nothing is unrevealed.' Herein lies the secret of his individuality, for no man was ever less at pains to be original in the ordinary sense. He had in him nothing of the spirit of the reformer or the pioneer, and, instead of attempting to create new methods or instruments, he accepted those which he found current, and was content to follow in the paths which his predecessors had marked out. When he began his career of authorship, Romantic drama in all its leading types of tragedy, comedy, and history-play had already been popularized by Marlowe, Kyd and Greene, and Shakspere threw himself into the prevailing fashion. Neither in subject-matter nor in treatment did he aim at novelty, and, as has been shown, hints of many of his leading incidents are scattered through the works of his immediate forerunners. Thus Shakspere became a Romantic dramatist, not, as is sometimes represented, from conscious choice, and after deliberately rejecting classical precepts, but simply because his creative activity flowed into the nearest and most natural channels. He was a poet and playwright, not a doctrinaire, and he did not do battle on behalf of the Unities, or against them; in the majority of his dramas they are violated, but in *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Tempest* they are scrupulously observed.

It is this complaisance of Shakspere towards the dramatic *status quo* that creates the difficulty of deciding at what exact point his own work begins. In his earliest productions he appears as the imitator or collaborateur of the leading playwrights of the time, and

aesthetic tests can never conclusively determine how far these works are from the pen of Marlowe, Greene, and others, or of Shakspere copying their style. This question of authenticity confronts us at the outset in the case of **TITUS ANDRONICUS**. The external evidence is entirely in favour of the play being by Shakspere. It was included by Heminge and Condell in the first folio, and it is mentioned by Meres in his list of 1598. It dates almost certainly from 1587 or 1588, for in the introduction to *Bartholomew Fair*, 1614, Ben Jonson declares that any man 'who will swear Jeronimo or Andronicus are the best plays yet, shows that his judgment hath stood still *these five and twenty or thirty years*[1].' Thus external evidence pronounces that *Titus Andronicus* was written by Shakspere immediately after leaving Stratford, and the chief German critics (e.g. Kreyssig, Ulrici, and Hertzberg) accept this view. English commentators however, almost without exception, have refused to recognize the play as genuinely Shaksperean, and have at most admitted that it was touched up by the poet. A stage tradition dating from 1687 affords slender support to this theory, which, otherwise, rests purely upon aesthetic considerations arising out of the nature of the plot and its treatment. The incidents, though fictitious, are supposed to be drawn from the annals of the later Roman empire, and are marked by all the characteristics of that degenerate epoch. Titus Andronicus, the general of the Romans, conquers the Goths in battle, and takes captive their Queen Tamora with her three sons, the eldest of whom he sacrifices at the tomb of his ancestors. He is chosen by the people to fill the vacant imperial throne, but he declines in favour of Saturninus, son of the preceding ruler. Saturninus is anxious to marry Lavinia, the daughter of Titus, but has a successful rival in his own brother, Bassianus, who carries her off in spite of the opposition of her father, who, in his fury, slays his son Mutius for taking his sister's part. Saturninus then weds Tamora, by whose charms he has been captivated, and the rest of the play is occupied with the details of the Gothic Queen's revenge upon Andronicus and his family. Her husband, her sons, and her paramour, Aaron the Moor, all in turn, become accomplices in her scheme, which includes the murder of Bassianus, the mutilation and rape of Lavinia, and the execution of two children of Andronicus, whose mind is crazed by these accumulated ills. Yet,

[1] It is, however, not till 1594 that we find an entry of the play in the Stationers' Register. In the same year Henslowe mentions a performance of *Titus Andronicus* by the Earl of Sussex' men. The first extant edition of the play is 1600; the name of the author is not given.

with the craft of a madman, he lures Tamora and her sons into a trap and kills them with his own hand, at the same time putting an end to Lavinia's wretched life. He immediately falls himself beneath the sword of Saturninus. The latter, in his turn, is slain by Lucius, the only surviving son of Andronicus, who has put himself at the head of the invading Goths, and who is now chosen emperor.

The plot is thus a tissue of horrors, and they are accentuated unsparingly throughout. It is this repulsive realism that has led English critics to deny that the play is a genuine specimen of Shakspercan tragedy, which wellnigh uniformly shuns all that is barbarous or gross. In *Titus Andronicus* the worst excesses of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* are reproduced, combined with the most unnatural horrors of classic fable. The ghastly legends of Atreus and Thyestes, of Tereus and Philomela directly suggest incidents in the play, while other episodes are borrowed from the stories of the Tarquins, of Virginius, and Coriolanus. The running fire of classical allusion throughout every act, united to occasional quotations from Latin authors in the original, has been urged as an additional proof that the play was not written by Shakspere. But it is far from impossible that the Stratford poet may have poured out, in this early work, his stock of grammar-school reminiscences, and have drawn upon them for the materials of a blood-curdling tragedy of the approved type. In any case neither this peculiarity of style, nor the loathsome nature of so many incidents in the play, justifies the attitude which English criticism has adopted. External evidence ascribes the play to Shakspere, and the conjecture that he merely added revising touches to it finds no support in the character of the work. For, whatever its demerits are, it has an unmistakable stamp of unity. The plot is clear and compact, and the versification is singularly homogeneous throughout. Moreover, a close examination reveals certain characteristics of style and spirit, which temper the horrors, and which anticipate the later methods of the Stratford dramatist. A breeze from the Warwickshire glades blows fresh at times through the reeking atmosphere, and amidst the festering corruptions of a decadent society we have glimpses of nature that make us less forlorn. The constant allusions, however, to animals and birds in *Titus Andronicus,* as in other of the early plays and poems, are due not only to Shakspere's familiarity with the country, but to the influence of Euphuism, one of whose most notable features is the persistent use of illustrations from the natural world. Other passages anticipate speeches or situations in the dramatist's later works, and afford strong confirmation of the Shak-

sperean authorship of the play[1]. But yet weightier evidence is to be found in the character-drawing where, amidst much that is intolerably crude, there are already signs of the master-hand. Titus forfeits our sympathies in the first act by his tyrannical attempt to separate his daughter from her betrothed, and by his hot-headed murder of the son who stands forth in her defence. But as the action proceeds he becomes a man more sinned against than sinning, and he atones for his misdeeds in the scene where he sacrifices his hand in the vain hope of saving Quintus and Martius from their doom. Thus, like Lear, he expiates his crimes by suffering, though his horrible revenge upon his enemies at the close proves that his moral purgation has been but superficial, and Nemesis justly claims him as a victim. More noteworthy, however, than Titus is Aaron the Moor, the arch-villain of the drama. In the cynical effrontery of his wickedness, he resembles some of Marlowe's creations, especially Barabas. But he further displays, though in rudimentary form, two leading characteristics of Shakspere's criminals: he has an acid humour, and he has the faculty of adroitly turning to his own purposes the vicious desires of his fellow-men. A redeeming touch, that keeps him within the pale of humanity, is his affection for his bastard child; but otherwise he is an incarnation of motiveless malignity, thus prefiguring, strangely enough, Iago, who ruins a very

1 Among these passages the following may be mentioned:—

(*a*) i. 1. 'Romans, friends, followers, favourers of my right.'

Cp. 'Friends, Romans, countrymen' (Antony's speech in *Julius Caesar*).

(*b*) i. 2. 'Wilt thou draw near the nature of the Gods?
Draw near them then in being merciful:
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge.'

Cp. Portia's 'mercy' speech in *The Merchant of Venice*.

(*c*) i. 2. Titus at the tomb of his sons:
'Here lurks no treason, here no envy swells,
Here grow no damned drugs, here are no storms,
No noise, but silence and eternal sleep.'

Cp. Macbeth's words—

'Duncan is in his grave.
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well:
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further.'

(*d*) ii. 1. 'She is a woman, therefore may be woo'd;
She is a woman, therefore may be won.

These lines are repeated, with slight alterations, in *Richard III*.

(*e*) 'The hunt is up, the morn is bright and grey,
The fields are fragrant, and the woods are green.
Uncouple here, and let us make a bay,
And wake the emperor and his lovely bride.'

Cp. the hunting-scene in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iv 1.

(*f*) ii. 5. 'Those lily hands
Tremble like aspen-leaves upon a lute,
And make the silken strings delight to kiss them.'

Cp. sonnet 128.

'How oft when thou, my music, music play'st,
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand.'

different type of the Moorish race. Among the crowd of repellent figures the boy Lucius forms an attractive picture, with his combined nervousness and high spirit, his precocious intelligence, and his tender memories of the loving mother who left him his Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. He is of the same kin as the two young princes in *Richard III*, and one hand must have created them all. But the most distinctively Shaksperean feature of the play is its close. It is a uniform law in the dramatist's tragedies that, however terrible be the catastrophe in which they culminate, they never end in unmitigated gloom. Individuals may perish, the victims of their own or others' misdeeds, but their fate has in it something of sacrificial efficacy, and beyond the darkness we foresee the dawn of a new social order. So here the choice of the valiant soldier Lucius, the sole surviving son of Titus, to be emperor is of good omen for the future, and gives hope of a sounder era when Rome shall no longer 'herself be bane unto herself.'

The three Parts of HENRY VI, with *Richard III*, form a tetralogy, giving a complete picture of the dissensions between the Houses of Lancaster and of York, till the victory of a nobler and more catholic spirit in the person of Henry Richmond. The links between the various portions of this history-cycle are evident, alike in the reappearance and development of numerous characters, and in the unity of moral drift throughout the series. There can thus be no reasonable doubt that Shakspere, who was the author of *Richard III*, had a share in the three parts of *Henry VI*, which stage by stage lead up to it, and which are included by Heminge and Condell in the first folio. It is however highly probable that they are not his work alone, and this would seem to account for their omission by Meres from his list in 1598. Part I is, almost without doubt, chiefly by other hands. It displays a reckless disregard of facts which is found in none of Shakspere's genuine historical plays. It is one thing to slightly alter the perspective of events for dramatic purposes, and quite another to outrage all chronological truth. Thus the coronation of the Dauphin at Rheims is represented as taking place before the appearance of Joan of Arc, instead of being the climax of her career. The death of Talbot takes place in the fourth act, and in the fifth act we hear of the revolt of Paris from the English, though, as a matter of fact, Talbot survived this event for twenty-two years. In addition to such glaring blunders, the play is disfigured by violent national partisanship. Shakspere's ardent patriotism does not prevent him being magnanimous to his country's foes, but here there is no trace of this loftier spirit. The play combines in no very skil-

sperean authorship of the play[1]. But yet weightier evidence is to be found in the character-drawing where, amidst much that is intolerably crude, there are already signs of the master-hand. Titus forfeits our sympathies in the first act by his tyrannical attempt to separate his daughter from her betrothed, and by his hot-headed murder of the son who stands forth in her defence. But as the action proceeds he becomes a man more sinned against than sinning, and he atones for his misdeeds in the scene where he sacrifices his hand in the vain hope of saving Quintus and Martius from their doom. Thus, like Lear, he expiates his crimes by suffering, though his horrible revenge upon his enemies at the close proves that his moral purgation has been but superficial, and Nemesis justly claims him as a victim. More noteworthy, however, than Titus is Aaron the Moor, the arch-villain of the drama. In the cynical effrontery of his wickedness, he resembles some of Marlowe's creations, especially Barabas. But he further displays, though in rudimentary form, two leading characteristics of Shakspere's criminals: he has an acid humour, and he has the faculty of adroitly turning to his own purposes the vicious desires of his fellow-men. A redeeming touch, that keeps him within the pale of humanity, is his affection for his bastard child; but otherwise he is an incarnation of motiveless malignity, thus prefiguring, strangely enough, Iago, who ruins a very

1 Among these passages the following may be mentioned:—

(*a*) i. 1. 'Romans, friends, followers, favourers of my right.'

Cp. 'Friends, Romans, countrymen' (Antony's speech in *Julius Caesar*).

(*b*) i. 2. 'Wilt thou draw near the nature of the Gods?
Draw near them then in being merciful:
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge.'

Cp. Portia's 'mercy' speech in *The Merchant of Venice*.

(*c*) i. 2. Titus at the tomb of his sons:
'Here lurks no treason, here no envy swells,
Here grow no damned drugs, here are no storms,
No noise, but silence and eternal sleep.'

Cp. Macbeth's words—

'Duncan is in his grave.
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well:
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further.'

(*d*) ii. 1. 'She is a woman, therefore may be woo'd;
She is a woman, therefore may be won.

These lines are repeated, with slight alterations, in *Richard III*.

(*e*) 'The hunt is up, the morn is bright and grey,
The fields are fragrant, and the woods are green.
Uncouple here, and let us make a bay,
And wake the emperor and his lovely bride.'

Cp. the hunting-scene in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iv 1.

(f) ii. 5. 'Those lily hands
Tremble like aspen-leaves upon a lute,
And make the silken strings delight to kiss them.'

Cp. sonnet 128.

'How oft when thou, my music, music play'st,
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand.'

different type of the Moorish race. Among the crowd of repellent figures the boy Lucius forms an attractive picture, with his combined nervousness and high spirit, his precocious intelligence, and his tender memories of the loving mother who left him his Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. He is of the same kin as the two young princes in *Richard III*, and one hand must have created them all. But the most distinctively Shaksperean feature of the play is its close. It is a uniform law in the dramatist's tragedies that, however terrible be the catastrophe in which they culminate, they never end in unmitigated gloom. Individuals may perish, the victims of their own or others' misdeeds, but their fate has in it something of sacrificial efficacy, and beyond the darkness we foresee the dawn of a new social order. So here the choice of the valiant soldier Lucius, the sole surviving son of Titus, to be emperor is of good omen for the future, and gives hope of a sounder era when Rome shall no longer 'herself be bane unto herself.'

The three Parts of HENRY VI, with *Richard III*, form a tetralogy, giving a complete picture of the dissensions between the Houses of Lancaster and of York, till the victory of a nobler and more catholic spirit in the person of Henry Richmond. The links between the various portions of this history-cycle are evident, alike in the reappearance and development of numerous characters, and in the unity of moral drift throughout the series. There can thus be no reasonable doubt that Shakspere, who was the author of *Richard III*, had a share in the three parts of *Henry VI*, which stage by stage lead up to it, and which are included by Heminge and Condell in the first folio. It is however highly probable that they are not his work alone, and this would seem to account for their omission by Meres from his list in 1598. Part I is, almost without doubt, chiefly by other hands. It displays a reckless disregard of facts which is found in none of Shakspere's genuine historical plays. It is one thing to slightly alter the perspective of events for dramatic purposes, and quite another to outrage all chronological truth. Thus the coronation of the Dauphin at Rheims is represented as taking place before the appearance of Joan of Arc, instead of being the climax of her career. The death of Talbot takes place in the fourth act, and in the fifth act we hear of the revolt of Paris from the English, though, as a matter of fact, Talbot survived this event for twenty-two years. In addition to such glaring blunders, the play is disfigured by violent national partisanship. Shakspere's ardent patriotism does not prevent him being magnanimous to his country's foes, but here there is no trace of this loftier spirit. The play combines in no very skil-

ful fashion several independent threads of interest, of which the most prominent is the progress of the war in France, and the loss of the English dominion there. A salve is given to the national sense of honour by representing all defeats as due to treachery or witchcraft, and by dwelling with enthusiasm upon the exploits of valiant Talbot, 'great Alcides of the field,' who is the real hero of the piece. That he was accepted as such by Elizabethan audiences is plain from an allusion in Nash's *Piers Penniless*, 1592, 'How would it have joyed brave Talbot, the terror of the French, to think that after he had been two hundred years in his tomb he should triumph again on the stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators.' These battle-scenes are written with a lusty vigour, which accounts for their popularity. On the French side La Pucelle (Joan of Arc) is the most prominent figure, but her character is drawn in such crude colours that it is a relief to have warrant for feeling satisfied that she has no claim to a place among Shakspere's portrait-gallery of women.

The other leading interest in the play lies in the quarrels between the nobles who surround the young king. In the opening scene the Duke of Gloster and the Bishop of Winchester break into strife round the dead body of Henry V, and throughout the drama their enmity waxes in bitterness. But a yet more fatal feud begins to make head between the partisans of the reigning line and those of the rival house of York. It bursts into open rupture in the Temple Gardens, where Richard Plantagenet, the Yorkist representative, after pleading the justice of his claim, challenges the bystanders, as they hesitate to speak, yet to proclaim their thoughts in 'dumb significants':

> 'Let him that is a true-born gentleman,
> And stands upon the honour of his birth,
> If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
> From off this briar pluck a white rose with me.'

Somerset, a Lancastrian supporter, rejoins in kind:

> 'Let him that is no coward nor no flatterer,
> But dare maintain the party of the truth,
> Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me.'

This scene (Act ii. 4) with its swift verbal thrust and parry, and its striking imagery, may almost certainly be attributed to Shakspere, and it is possible that touches from his hand are to be found in the character of the young king, who from the first shows himself unfit to control the unruly elements that surge around his throne. When Winchester and Gloster break into violent quarrel before his face, instead of quelling them by his authority, he merely utters the feeble

lament, 'O how this discord doth afflict my soul,' and moralizes on the evils of civil dissension. So again, when a broil arises between partisans of Somerset and York, he thinks to restore peace by a few smooth words, not realizing that his action in fastening a red rose on his breast gives deep offence to his aspiring rival. But it is, above all, in the matter of his marriage that he gives proof of his incapacity for rule. When Gloster announces that the Earl of Armagnac offers him his daughter, in order to knit France and England in amity, he at first protests:

> 'Alas! my years are young,
> And fitter is my study and my books
> Than wanton dalliance with a paramour.'

But soon he declares himself

> 'Content with any choice
> Tends to God's glory and my country's weal.'

Yet at the instigation of the Duke of Suffolk, who has his own purposes to serve, he violates his contract and takes as his bride Margaret of Anjou, whose imperious spirit is to prove a main agent of his fall. It is with Suffolk's fateful mission to bring Margaret overseas to England that Part I of *Henry VI* comes to a close.

Parts II and III are the recasts of two older plays, *The First Part of the Contention,* and *The True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of York.* The mutual relation of these four dramas is a most difficult problem, but careful study of the internal evidence goes far to prove that Marlowe and Greene, with possibly some assistance from Peele or Shakspere, wrote the old plays, while the revision was effected by Marlowe and Shakspere conjointly[1]. Part II contains much fine dramatic material in the guilty love of Suffolk and Queen Margaret, their alliance with York and Winchester (now raised to the rank of Cardinal) for the overthrow of Gloster, Suffolk's fall and death, the popular rising under Jack Cade, and the first armed encounter of the rival Houses at St. Albans. The character of Suffolk is quite in the vein of Marlowe, and presents striking points of similarity to that of Young Mortimer in *Edward II.* Amorous passion and ambition are his sole motives; he wins the affections of Margaret from her lawful lord, and with her aid he seeks to 'wecd' the nobles who are obstacles to his rise. He plans the murder of Gloster, and is careless what means are used:

> 'Be it by gins, by snares, by subtlety,
> Sleeping or waking, 'tis no matter how,
> So he be dead.'

1 See Appendix A.

When the deed is done he can affect a hypocritical grief, but the popular instinct fastens upon him as the culprit, and Henry is forced to banish him. Yet even in the moment of defeat he plays the lover with all his old ardour, and takes a lingering farewell of the queen:

> 'If I depart from thee, I cannot live;
> And in thy sight to die, what were it else
> But like a pleasant slumber in thy lap?'

And when in his flight he is captured by pirates, and threatened with instant execution, his 'imperial tongue' disdains to plead for life to 'vulgar grooms,' and he meets his fate with haughty *insouciance,* consoled by the thought that he is faring like the heroes of old.

> 'Great men oft die by bold Bezonians;
> A Roman sworder and banditto slave
> Murdered sweet Tully; Brutus' bastard hand
> Stabbed Julius Caesar; savage islanders
> Pompey the Great; and Suffolk dies by pirates.'

Margaret of Anjou is also probably a creation, in the main, of Marlowe. She has the outward, but none of the inward graces of her sex. Haughty, vindictive, treacherous, and of iron will, she hesitates at no deed that furthers her own supremacy and that of her paramour; even her lawless love has not the tender note that wins a measure of sympathy, while for her husband with his mind bent to holiness she has only the scornful wish that the college of cardinals 'Would choose him pope, and carry him to Rome.' The sole feminine quality which she exhibits is her spiteful jealousy of the Duchess of Gloster, whose imperious temper vies with her own, and whose costly display so mortifies her that she boxes her ears for not stooping to pick up her fan, though she pretends that it was by mistake.

Another figure after Marlowe's heart is that of 'dogged York' with his arm that 'reaches at the moon' and his fixed resolve to raise aloft the milk-white rose, 'With whose sweet smell the air shall be perfumed.' With politic foresight he accepts the governorship of Ireland, which his enemies thrust upon him, for he thus obtains command of an armed body of men to support his designs, while in the interval he suborns Jack Cade to head a revolt of the Commons against Henry's rule. Thus with daring astuteness he takes advantage alike of the king's weakness, the selfish wrangles and jealousies of the nobility, and the popular discontent, till he feels sufficiently secure to challenge Henry face to face, and to deny his right of

sovereignty. York's ambition is not without excuse, for Henry displays with pitiable clearness the incapacity of the moralizing devotee for the high duties of kingship. He has saintly aims, but his goodness never goes further than pious aspirations and utterances, and under his nerveless rule confusion becomes ever worse confounded. When the furious peers around him break into fierce quarrel, instead of coercing them into silence, he has only feeble appeals, and unctuous reflections on the blessings that attend on peacemakers. At the news of Cade's revolt he resolves to send a holy bishop to argue with the rebels,

> 'For God forbid so many simple souls
> Should perish by the sword,'

and when the captured conspirators are brought to him with halters round their necks, he pardons them and dismisses them unpunished to their homes. When York lands with a mighty array from Ireland, he sends an envoy to ask 'the reason of these arms,' but 'not too roughly,' and while he is thus parleying, the White Rose partisans have time to bring up their forces, and to strike their first victorious blow at St. Albans. He has not even sufficient worldly wisdom to fly when defeated. His wife urges him to hasten to London to repair his fortunes, and he answers, 'Can we outrun the heavens? Good Margaret, stay.' The one idea about the heavens which never suggests itself to Henry is, that they help those who help themselves.

The picture of the mob-leader, Jack Cade, is either due to Shakspere or, at least, harmonizes with his attitude towards demagogues in his undoubted works. Cade claims to be of royal descent, and vows reformation when he is king. 'There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny: the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops, and I will make it felony to drink small beer. All the realm shall be in common—there shall be no money: all shall eat and drink on my score.' As the first step to this liberty all lawyers, scholars, and gentlemen are to be put out of the way, and those only to be spared who go in clouted shoon. The Clerk of Chatham is hung with his pen and inkhorn about his neck, because he can write his own name, and Lord Say is beheaded for that he 'has most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school,' and has men about him 'that usually talk of a noun and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear.' For a time Cade prospers and enters Southwark in triumph, but his followers desert him on the offer of a free pardon, and he comes to an inglorious end.

Part III of *Henry VI* was less thoroughly revised than Part II from its original, and is inferior in dramatic interest. It deals in chronicle fashion with the varying fortunes of the civil war, and depicts the overwhelming ruin in which the House of Lancaster expiates the weakness of its head. But it also foreshadows the Nemesis that awaits the Yorkist family for its lust and criminal violence, and young Henry Richmond is already prophetically hailed as 'England's hope,' destined to bless a regal throne. Throughout the play Henry and his Queen act their accustomed parts, and each is placed in a situation in which their characters are glaringly exposed. During the temporary triumph of her party after the battle of Wakefield, when the Duke of York falls captive into her hands, Margaret shows herself a very 'she-wolf of France,' gloating over her prisoner's woes, offering him a napkin red with the blood of his murdered son, crowning him in mockery with a paper crown, and finally with her own hand helping to stab him to death. By this outburst of ferocity she alienates in advance such sympathy as she might otherwise have gained at a later period of the drama, when the butchery of her son, Prince Edward, leads her to a display of genuine mother-feeling. But this tenderness does not extend to her husband. During the battle of Towton, while the issue of the fight is still uncertain, Henry is seen sitting on a molehill afar from the battle, whence he has been chidden by his Queen. So while his crown, his liberty, and his very life are at stake, he remains a passive spectator, content to acquiesce in the decree of heaven: 'To whom God will, there be the victory.'

With such a chief the Lancastrian cause is doomed. Henry's followers are defeated, and he has to fly into retirement, and adopt disguise. But the change is no hardship to him; he is still a 'king in mind,' and when questioned 'Where is thy crown?' he answers,

> 'My crown is in my heart, not on my head,
> Nor to be seen: my crown is called "content."
> A crown it is, that seldom kings enjoy.'

What Henry never realizes is that a man is entrusted with the high responsibilities of kingship not to secure 'content' for himself, but to further by strenuous action the well-being of the people over whom he is set as ruler. And thus his merely negative virtue, his impotent aspirations after holiness, prove a curse instead of a blessing, and he who yearns above all things to be a peacemaker among men, has to see his kingdom rent by intestine strife, and to grow familiar with war in its most cruel and unnatural shape.

The Nemesis that overtakes the House of Lancaster entails the temporary rise of the Yorkist party, but violence and craft are as

little the true elements of kingship as feeble inactivity, and they too must have their reward. In the fortunes of various members of the White Rose faction the working out of this truth is exemplified, but its cardinal illustration is shown, with intense dramatic effect, in the career of its most notable representative, Richard, Duke of Gloster. He first appears upon the scene in *Henry VI*, Part III, and the original lines of his character were without doubt drawn by Marlowe, to whose heroes he is in many points akin. The youngest son of the murdered Duke of York, he concentrates in his own person in pre-eminent degree the abilities and vices of his House. Circumstances have helped to develop the evil in his nature. He is a hunchback,

> 'Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,'

born amid every evil omen, and with teeth in his head, to signify he came to bite the world. Thus marked off even in his cradle from the rest of his fellows, he holds that the ordinary human ties do not exist for him, that he is not called upon to deal in the soft laws of love. He tramples under foot those primary ties of kinship and society without which man is not man; he claims to stand pedestalled, solitary and secure, upon the basis of self:

> 'I have no brother, I am like no brother;
> And this word, "love," which greybeards call divine,
> Be resident in men like one another
> And not in me: I am myself alone.'

Thus he views the world merely as so much space for that self to bustle in, as so much material which it may mould to its own purposes and upon which it may wreak its will. Self-development, as the phrase is ordinarily used, implies moral progress: to Richard it simply means the uncontrolled expansion of the energies which chafe, as it were, within the shrunken compass of his withered frame. This imperious instinct is something more colossal and comprehensive than ambition, yet it includes ambition in its capital form, the lust to wear a crown,

> 'Within whose circuit is Elysium,
> And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.'

The sense of his physical disqualifications for sovereignty is to him only an additional, piquant incentive never to rest till his 'misshaped trunk be round impaled with a glorious crown.' To all that stand between him and the goal of his desire, he is as pitiless as some

destructive force of nature. The daggers of his brothers, as well as his own, smite down the young Prince Edward, heir to Henry VI, but it is Richard alone who offers to kill Queen Margaret by the side of her son, and who posts off to the Tower to make a 'bloody supper' by the murder of the imprisoned and helpless king. The line of Lancaster is no longer a barrier to his aspirations; henceforward his foes are of his own household.

It was to this point that Shakspere, with his fellow playwrights, brought the fortunes fo Gloster in *Henry VI*, Part III. Fired by the interest of the theme he carried it forward, probably after the death of Marlowe and Greene, in **RICHARD III**, the first historical drama which can be ascribed wholly to his hand. Its date is probably 1593 or a little later[1]. About the same time appeared an anonymous play, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, of which however Shakspere made no use. With a Latin drama on the same subject by Dr. Legge, performed at Cambridge in 1579, he was not likely to be familiar, and his play is thus almost entirely based upon the Chronicle of Holinshed, who had drawn his narrative from Sir Thomas More's *History of Richard III*. The drama, when compared with any of the parts of *Henry VI*, shows a great advance, due in large measure to its unity of authorship. A series of loosely connected scenes is replaced by a compact structure, and a concentrated interest. Indeed, the mighty figure of Richard so dominates the drama that we are reminded that Shakspere, though now working by himself, was yet under the influence of Marlowe's methods. At a later period he learnt to combine in a single play the most varied contrasts of character. Other tokens of immature art appear in the overstrained rhetoric of numerous passages, and in the shrill monotony of lamentation by the female characters, which produces a lyrical rather than a strictly dramatic effect. Similarly artificial in its crude balance is the arrangement by which the ghosts in Act v alternately curse and bless Richard and Richmond: the supernatural loses its plausibility when it stands out in such jagged outline, instead of shading insensibly away into the dim unknown. Yet, whatever its

1 The first quarto appeared in 1597, without Shakspere's name, which is found in the second quarto in 1598. Seven quartos were issued before the first folio. There is a wide divergence between the quarto and folio texts. See on this subject the introduction to the play in the Cambridge edition, the papers by Spedding and Pickersgill in the New Shakspere Society's Transactions, 1875, and Delius' essay in the *Shakspere Jahrbuch*, vii. The Cambridge editors take the quarto as their standard, and look upon many of the corrections in the folio as the work of a 'nameless transcriber.' Pickersgill supports this view, which is rejected by Spedding, who pronounces in favour of the folio, and considers that the revision was effected entirely by Shakspere, though the text is corrupted by the printer's blunders. Delius also adopts the folio, which he considers to represent the original text, the quarto being an imperfect pirated edition.

faults, the work is strangely impressive in its sombre power, and of all Shakspere's historical plays it holds most securely its position on the stage. This is chiefly due to the masterly development of the principal character, the outlines of which had been firmly laid, as has been seen, in *Henry VI*, Part III. Richard's opening soliloquy is a restatement of his confession of faith made in the earlier play, while it emphasizes, at the same time, a change of conditions to which he adapts his methods. The stern alarums and dreadful marches of the civil war, in which his turbulent spirit had found a ferocious joy, have been replaced by fair well-spoken days which give him no occupation save to see his shadow in the sun. Thus for the achievement of his ends he is now thrown entirely upon his intellectual resources, especially upon that gift of dissimulation in which he can outdo his master 'Machiavel' himself. It is seldom that a nature so unbridled and vehement can wear the hypocrite's mask with success, and in this very fact Richard finds his safeguard, while the consciousness of his triumph fills him with the most intense scorn of the 'simple gulls' who are his dupes. This cynical contempt of humanity gives a relish to his villainies quite apart from their usefulness to his ends; he exults in them for their own sake, he has all the joy of an artist in the perfection of his work. Thus the mock commiseration of his dialogue with his unsuspecting victim Clarence changes, the moment he is left alone, to the chuckle of sardonic glee:

> 'Simple, plain Clarence!—I do love thee so,
> That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven.'

This light-hearted mirth in a fratricide appals us, but to Richard the moral aspect of the situation never presents itself, he is simply tickled by its irresistible humour. So, too, with his next exploit, the wooing of the lady Anne, widow to Prince Edward of Lancaster: it is a necessary step in his designs, but what enchants him is the paradoxical humour of the thing:

> 'What though I killed her husband and her father!
> The readiest way to make the wench amends
> Is to become her husband and her father.'

The whole process of this wooing is a masterpiece, and a cardinal illustration of Richard's methods. With complete confidence in his powers he makes no attempt to smooth away difficulties, but lays siege to Anne under what seem wantonly unfavourable conditions, while she is following the corpse of Henry VI to burial, and while curses upon his murderer are thick on her lips. At first he meets

her terrible denunciations with mere tongue-fence, till her declaration that he is fit for no other place than hell gives him the opportunity of adroitly slipping in as alternative 'your bed-chamber.' Then, seeing that the mesmeric force of his nature is working upon Anne in spite of herself, that the weak will is yielding to the fascination of the strong, he abandons his word-play, and with magnificent audacity, using his very crimes as an instrument of courtship, declares that the motive of them has been her beauty, which can draw tears from the eyes that pity or sorrow had never dimmed. Though she gazes on him with scorn, though she even spits at him, he knows that inwardly she is giving way, and confident in his irresistible spell he ventures neck or nothing by laying bare his breast and lending her his sword to strike at it. As the uplifted blade falls from her irresolute hand, we know that Richard has triumphed, and her acceptance a few moments later of his proferred ring is the outward sign of the completeness of her submission. Dissimulation as a fine art cannot go further than in this scene, and Richard may well, as soon as Anne's back is turned, break into ecstatic self-congratulation:

> 'Was ever woman in this humour wooed?
> Was ever woman in this humour won?'

The consummate achievement is to have overcome stupendous obstacles by sheer technical mastery in evil:

> 'What! I that killed her husband, and his father,
> To take her in her heart's extremest hate;
> With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
> The bleeding witness of her hatred by;
> Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me,
> And I no friends to back my suit withal
> But the plain devil and dissembling looks,
> And yet to win her, all the world to nothing!'

It should be noticed that Richard's success as a wooer tears away the shred of justification for his evil courses, as it proves that love might after all be a force in his life as in that of other men, that nature has not penalized him irretrievably. Yet he presses forward without halt in his fell designs. His agents do Clarence foully to death in the Tower, and this crime Richard with characteristic strategy turns to a two-handed engine for the destruction of other enemies. Bursting into the presence-chamber where Edward, stricken with sickness, is attempting a reconciliation of all family feuds, he drives the blood from every cheek by the calculated brusqueness of his announcement that 'the gentle duke is dead.' The startling news comes with a fatal shock to the enfeebled king, who

is led out merely to breathe his last, while Richard takes cunning advantage of the consternation on the faces of the Queen's kindred, by pointing to their paleness as evidence of guilt. In this faculty of turning every opportunity to instant account, of wasting no resource, we see again the tact of the consummate craftsman in evil.

But Richard's fertility of resource is equalled by the unhesitating promptitude and decision of his action. Edward is scarcely in his grave before Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan are seized and hurried to their doom, while Hastings, weakly credulous, like Clarence, till undeceived by the peremptory 'off with his head,' follows his rivals to the block, just in time for the news of his execution to add an extra flavour to Richard's dish of strawberries at dinner. What matters the spilling of a little more blood to one who has passed unmoved through the carnage of the civil war? Yet even the case-hardened criminal may be melted by the sight of helpless innocence and youth. Such a spectacle in its most moving form is presented by Gloster's nephews, the Prince of Wales and his brother of York. There are no more delicate strokes in the play than those with which Shakspere in a single scene has individualized these two boys. The elder brother, as befits an heir to the throne, has a quiet dignity which disdains the insinuation that his maternal uncles were false friends, and which rebukes York's petition for Richard's dagger with the laconic query, 'A beggar, brother?' His meditations upon fame and upon the character of Caesar give proof of intellectual powers beyond his years, while his high spirit is shown in his declaration that when he is a man he will win back 'our ancient right in France,' or die in the attempt. York is more wayward, pert, and quick of tongue: he bandies repartees with his uncle, and shows 'a sharp-provided wit,' which with high-bred tact he can at need exercise upon himself in order to blunt the sting of too unmannerly a gibe. But though precocious in his speech, he has the childish love of playthings, and the childish dread of the supernatural in the shape of his 'uncle Clarence's angry ghost,' which he fears to meet within the Tower. Boyhood could take no more attractive and appealing form than in this royal pair, yet to Richard they are merely bastards, 'two deep enemies,' to be knocked on the head like vermin. Tyrrell's ready consent to be their butcher touches his sensibilities—it is a sound of sweet music in his ears—and the recital of the deed of horror which draws tears from the fleshed villains who have been its agents is reserved by him as 'a *bonne-bouche* after supper[1].'

1 Moulton's *Shakspere as a Dramatic Artist*, chapter iv. I owe several suggestions to this study of Richard's character.

With Richard's peculiar constitution it affords him a special pleasure, on the very eve of this tragedy, to enact an elaborate piece of hypocrisy which degrades religion to the office of a decoy. The preliminaries of the plot concerted with Buckingham, by which the citizens are to acclaim Gloster as king, having somewhat missed fire, though Richard has not scrupled to blacken his mother's honour to serve his ends, a clever piece of stage business is arranged for the edification of the Lord Mayor and his companions. Richard is found by them, prayer-book in hand, with a right reverend father on either side, deep in the devotional exercises which impress the bourgeois sense of piety. With well-feigned reluctance, as of one dragged down from holy contemplation to earthly things, and with protestations of unfitness, he accepts as a scarcely endurable burden the crown for the proffer of which his confederate gives so urgent a cue. The stratagem is wholly successful, and Richard, besides gaining his end, has the added zest of outraging what humanity holds most sacred.

Thus villainy has prospered in superlative degree, and the brows of the arch-criminal are bound at last with the glittering circle within which he had looked to find Elysium. And the spectacle, as we gaze on it, provokes the troubled query, Is Richard right, and *can* evil be made the law of life? But just as the suspense becomes intolerable, Shakspere gives us a hint that the Powers above are delaying, not forgetting, and in the very hey-day alike of Richard's fortunes and crimes, the warning note of the Nemesis to come is struck in Stanley's brief announcement that 'Dorset is fled to Richmond.' Here for the first time in the play the name of the destined avenger falls on the new king's ear, and the effect is seen in the brooding reverie over prophecies forgotten till that moment into which Richard falls, and which betrays to us that, like other irreligious natures, he is superstitious at bottom. And when he is aroused from this mood, it is only to vent himself in bitter and contemptuous mockery of Buckingham, which turns him into an enemy. Richard's genius for hypocrisy for the first time fails him at a crisis. And henceforward, except that in his suit to Elizabeth for the hand of her daughter he achieves a *tour de force* similar to the wooing of the ill-starred Anne, he shows signs of failing power. In preparing for the expedition against the revolted Buckingham, which is afterwards turned against Richmond, he gives contradictory orders, changes his mind, strikes a messenger before waiting to hear his news, and lets himself be outmatched by Stanley with his own weapon of hypocrisy. These are tokens of an inward trouble which

Richard gives up the attempt to conceal, when on the eve of Bosworth, whilst issuing orders with feverish rapidity, he suddenly confesses to a subordinate:

> 'I have not that alacrity of spirit,
> Nor cheer of mind, that I was wont to have,'

and seeks for stimulus in a bowl of wine. As long, however, as he can find in action scope for the exercise of will, the dogged force of his nature keeps him from entirely giving way, but when his will is fettered in sleep, then at the crisis of his fate those primal human instincts which he has outraged, rising with rebellious power, fling before his gaze the awful vision of his victims, and fill his ears with the dread reiteration of their 'despair and die.' And as Richard starts from his slumber, with drops of sweat cold upon his brow, there is wrung at last from his lips the agonized cry of homage to the might of moral law:

> 'My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And every tongue brings in a several tale,
> And every tale condemns me for a villain.'

The horror of his isolation from humanity falls upon him, and echoing, as it were, the grim burden of the spectral chorus, he shrieks aloud—

> 'I shall despair:—There is no creature loves me;
> And if I die, no soul will pity me.'

He to whom love had been only foolishness clutches at it convulsively as he hangs over the darkness of the abyss, and, with the imploring cry for pity from his fellows, his scheme of self-centred life crumbles into the dust. That is the 'true tragedy' of Richard III, the real and significant Nemesis of which his death in battle at the hands of Richmond, God's representative, is only the outward, though dramatically and historically imperative, confirmation.

While the figure of the hunchback king throws all other characters into a subordinate place, the full intent of the drama is missed, unless Richard's fate is seen as the climax of a series of Nemeses upon the guilty House of York. Clarence, King Edward, the Queen's kindred, Hastings, Buckingham, follow one another to their doom, and in each case, as will be evident on careful study of the play, there is a turn of the wheel with the result that 'those who triumph in one Nemesis become the victims of the next.' But each incident, in addition, goes to form a chain of triumph for Richard, while the catastrophe of his fate, as the gathering of the ghosts testifies, is

the retribution for them all. Yet further, alike he and his victims suffer in common expiation of the sins of York against Lancaster, so that a complicated law of Nemesis controls the issues of the play. So uniform indeed is its working that it runs a risk of appearing automatic, and thus losing something of its moral significance. In view of this danger Shakspere varies the action by a number of devices, of which the most striking is the introduction upon the scene, in weirdly impressive contrast, of the two women, the Duchess of York and the Lancastrian Queen Margaret, who epitomize, as it were, the whole story of crime and its retribution. They are less human personages than monumental figures, embodiments of suffering and of doom. The aged Duchess, widow of the great Duke of York, mother of Edward, Clarence, and Richard, grandmother of the boy princes, gathers up into her own breast all the spear-points of penal destiny; as she herself exclaims:

> 'Alas! I am the mother of these moans:
> Their woes are parcelled, mine are general,'

and Queen Margaret, like some Fury of old, chants over her the wild paean of sated, or all-but sated, revenge:

> 'Thy Edward he is dead, that killed my Edward;
> Thy other Edward dead, to quit my Edward;
> Young York he is but boot, because both they
> Match not the high perfection of my loss:
> Thy Clarence he is dead that stabbed my Edward;
> And the beholders of this frantic play,
> The adulterate Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey,
> Untimely smothered in their dusky graves.'

One last victim is still due, 'hell's black intelligencer,' Richard, but that culminating debt is at length paid, and the account between the Houses made even. Then, and not till then, may the White Rose mingle with the Red, and 'fair prosperous days' once more dawn over a re-united land. If, as is probable, *Richard III* was Shakspere's first serious play, it gave convincing proof that the new dramatist, however tolerant in some ways, held rigidly to the doctrine that evil-doing, whether in the individual or in the State, is dogged by a Nemesis that wrings its penalty, even to the uttermost farthing.

CHAPTER IX

SHAKSPERE'S POEMS
THE EARLY PERIOD OF COMEDY

IT has seemed desirable to deal first with Shakspere's early historical plays, as in them we see most plainly how intimate was his relation to his predecessors, and by what gradual stages he rose to independent effort in the domain of serious drama. But meanwhile he had been putting forth his powers in other and, for the most part, lighter spheres, where the distinctive nature of his genius was from the beginning more unmistakably shown, and where the influences of his youthful surroundings helped to give special colour to his art. Delighting, as it would seem, in making varied trial of the faculties that he felt unfolding within him, and urged forward as yet by no single dominating impulse, he experimented, in these early days, here, there, and everywhere, turning his hand with dexterous rapidity to narrative verse, comedy of manners, comedy of incident, fairy comedy, and lyrical tragedy. His output at this period is thus extremely diversified, but in every branch it bears the broad stamp of adolescence.

The two poems **VENUS AND ADONIS** and **LUCRECE** may be conveniently spoken of at the outset, though they were preceded by some of the plays. The circumstances of their publication and dedication to Southampton have been already described. In them Shakspere challenged a place among the descriptive poets of the Elizabethan age, and the claim was willingly allowed by his contemporaries. It was by them that his fame was at first widely spread, and that he won the title of 'mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakspere.' Yet by posterity these works have been, for the most part, neglected, and it must be allowed that some of the very points which made them so popular in Shakspere's own time strike modern taste as blemishes. The subject of *Venus and Adonis* is taken, though with considerable modifications from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*[1]. It tells the tale of how Venus woos the beautiful boy Adonis, how he disdains her love, and, in spite of her warnings, goes to the hunt where he is slain by a boar, and turned, as he lies

1 For a detailed comparison between passages in *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, see Baynes' Essay, *What Shakspere learnt at School*.

dead on the ground, into a violet. Such a theme may be effectively handled in two ways. There may be a frankly pagan treatment, a revelling in sensuous beauty, a glorification of passion which, to be convincing, must itself be passionate. This is the method which has given such superb results in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. Or there is the method employed, for instance, by Spenser in his description of Acrasia's bower in *The Faerie Queene*, where a voluptuous picture of the Temptress is drawn to typify the snares of carnal sin. But between these two modes of treatment the youthful Shakspere is found halting. He does, indeed, put into the mouth of Adonis an outburst on the difference between love and lust, and the episode of the 'jennet' is doubtless intended as an illustration of the same theme. Yet he lingers with unaffected relish over the details of Venus' charms, and elaborates with minute realism every incident in her amorous strategy. The result, however, is not to call into life a glowing, if luscious, Renaissance figure. There are superb touches, as when the hand of Adonis in the grasp of Venus is likened to

> 'A lily prisoned in a gaol of snow
> Or ivory in an alabaster band,'

but the general air is one of ingenious and laboured analysis. This is due in part to the technique of the poem, wherein Shakspere adopts unreservedly the prevalent fashion, of symmetrical balance, quaint metaphor, and antithesis strained to cracking point. The following verse may serve as specimen:

> 'O, what a war of looks was then between them!
> Her eyes, petitioners, to his eyes suing:
> His eyes saw her eyes as they had not seen them;
> Her eyes woo'd still, his eyes disdained their wooing,
> And all this dumb play had his acts made plain
> With tears, which, chorus-like, her eyes did rain.'

Similar is the couplet in which Venus speaks of Adonis' disdainful words as

> 'Melodious discord, heavenly tune harsh-sounding
> Ear's deep-sweet music, and heart's deep-sore wounding.'

Modern criticism, as it contrasts such verbal sword-play with the light and music of Marlowe's lines, cannot echo the encomium of Cripple in Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* on *Venus and Adonis*, as 'the very quintessence of love.' But the Stratford poet, if he failed to irradiate his theme with the glow of a living passion, has done much to freshen the loaded atmosphere by vivid and whole-

some touches which waft with them the breath of the Warwickshire fields and glades. The detailed study of the 'points' of Adonis' courser, the pathetic history of the hunting of 'poor Wat' the hare, the picture of the 'fawn hid in some brake' whom the milch-doe hastens to feed, the lovely description of the lark, weary of rest, mounting from 'his moist cabinet' to greet the sun,

> 'Who doth the world so gloriously behold
> That cedar-tops and hills seem burnished gold,'

—all these and similar images are reminiscences of that sweet and pure country life, whose air blows so often over Shakspere's pages, and preserves them from the more tainted influences of the Renaissance. And under the healthy charm of such scenes we are scarcely disposed to regret that the poet's attempt to portray the Goddess of Love, in her debased aspect, must be pronounced, on the whole, a splendid failure.

The *Lucrece* is probably the 'graver labour' with which Shakspere, in his dedication to *Venus and Adonis*, had promised to honour Southampton. It is longer than the earlier poem by just above a third, and is written, not in a six-lined stanza, but in the more complicated 'rhyme-royal.' In the choice of theme and in its handling there are further signs of a 'graver' temper and a maturing art. The exact source upon which Shakspere drew cannot be determined, but the story of Lucretia had already been told by Livy and Ovid in Latin, and by Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, and Painter in English. It doubtless attracted the poet as offering the materials for a companion study to *Venus and Adonis*. The picture of woman's lust and man's chastity needed for its foil the contrasted picture of woman's chastity and man's lust. Thus the two poems naturally present many similar characteristics. *Lucrece* repeats the balanced and often paradoxical antitheses of *Venus and Adonis*, and, like it, subordinates action almost entirely to pictorial effect, and to declamation. Nothing could be dramatically more inappropriate than the long-drawn rhetoric of the heroine upon the themes of Night, Opportunity, and Time, while she is yet in the first agony of her hideous wrong, and the detailed description of the painting 'made for Priam's Troy' stops the movement of the main story for a couple of hundred lines. Yet *Lucrece* shows unmistakable signs of advance upon its predecessor. The ethical tone is more consistent, and there is far greater reserve in dealing with the physical details of passion: even the somewhat overheated picture of the charms of the sleeping Lucrece is tempered by touches of sweet and fresh fancy:

'Without the bed her other fair hand was,
On the green coverlet: whose perfect white
Show'd like an April daisy on the grass
With pearly sweat, resembling dew of night.
Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheathed their light,
And canopied in darkness sweetly lay,
Till they might open to adorn the day.'

The character of Lucrece is drawn in firm and vigorous outline. Her perfect loyalty to her lord, and unsuspicious courtesy to the guest who is alike his friend and king, her appeal to Tarquin not to dishonour his princely name by outrage, and her resolve to die by her own hand, and so 'bail' her soul from its 'polluted prison,' all combine to form the type of the ideal Roman matron, and show the early cunning of the hand that was hereafter to create Brutus, Portia and Volumnia. Tarquin also is forcibly conceived, struggling for a time between conscience and desire, then hardening his heart as a millstone, and finally, after the accomplishment of his fell purpose, jaded and self-loathing with the horrible recoil of surfeited passion. The stanzas that tell of his torturing remorse, of the bitter cry of 'the spotted princess,' his soul, are the most powerful in the poem and strikingly anticipate some of the Sonnets of the second series. Interesting in a different way is the account of the picture of Troy besieged by the Greeks. Though introduced somewhat inaptly, it is the most detailed study of a painting that Shakspere has left us, the most elaborate attempt to translate into words 'pencilled pensiveness and coloured sorrow,' and it proves that the young poet had already been attracted by the incidents which were to form the basis of his *Troilus and Cressida*, and of the first player's recitation in *Hamlet*.

It will be convenient here to deal briefly with the other poems, apart from the *Sonnets*, which have come down to us under Shakspere's name. In 1599 William Jaggard published a collection of verse, *The Passionate Pilgrim*, ascribed on the title-page to Shakspere, but in reality a miscellany of the familiar Elizabethan type, containing two of Shakspere's *Sonnets*, three rhymed extracts from *Love's Labour's Lost*, poems by Marlowe, Barnfield, Griffin, and others uncertain in origin, three of which deal with the subject of Venus and Adonis. It is to be noted that the Sonnet (No. 8) in which the praises of Spenser's 'deep conceit' are sung, is certainly by Barnfield and not by Shakspere. Thus *The Passionate Pilgrim* added nothing to the stock of undoubtedly Shaksperean verse, and when the piratical Jaggard, in a later edition of 1612, included further two 'epistles' by Thomas Heywood, the Stratford poet, as Heywood him-

self states, 'was much offended with Mr. Jaggard that (altogether unknown to him) presumed to make so bold with his name.' *The Phoenix and the Turtle* appeared in Chester's *Love's Martyr* or *Rosalin's Complaint,* 1601, and is there attributed to Shakspere. It would seem to have an allegorical, possibly a personal, reference, which cannot now be solved, but the fine verses describing the 'mutual flame' of the two birds,

> 'Two distincts: division none:
> Number there in love was slain,'

with their ingenious antitheses and conceits are quite in Shakspere's early lyrical manner. *A Lover's Complaint* was printed at the end of the *Sonnets* in 1609, and there is thus no reason for doubting its authorship. It is written in the same seven-lined stanza as the *Lucrece,* and is the lament of a maiden who has been betrayed by a beautiful and fair-spoken youth, not unlike 'Will' of the *Sonnets.* Like the other poems, it consists chiefly of declamation, but it shows a very marked decrease in the use of antithesis and verbal paradox, and so far points to a refinement in taste. There is, however, nothing very striking in the treatment of the subject, and the maiden is left at the end in a curious state of uncertainty as to whether under the same temptation she would not succumb a second time. Thus, except under the pressure of private grief which gave birth to the *Sonnets,* Shakspere after 1594 wrote very little independent verse, finding sufficient exercise for his lyrical faculty in the matchless songs strewed up and down his plays, those magical and entrancing snatches of melody which in a special sense are his 'native wood-notes wild.'

But, as the examination of *Richard III* has already partly shown, Shakspere's early dramas have points of kinship in style with his poems, and this is yet more evident when we turn to the first group of comedies from his pen. It is impossible to fix their order with absolute certainty, but metrical tests point to **LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST** as heading the list. It has two rhymed lines to every one in blank verse, it is almost entirely free from 'run-on' lines and double endings, it introduces stanzas of various arrangement into the dialogue, and it contains a far greater proportion of doggrel than any other play. These evidences of immaturity are all the more striking because the comedy, as we have it, is not in its original form, having been 'newly augmented and corrected' according to the first quarto of 1598, when 'presented before her Highness this last Christmas.' The additions must be to some extent matter of conjecture, but

they, no doubt, occur chiefly in the first, fourth, and fifth acts, which, especially the last, are much longer than the second and third[1].

The play has very little action or intrigue, and it seems, almost alone amongst Shakspere's dramas, to be purely of his own invention[2]. In the main-plot Shakspere covers with ridicule an attempt to defy the ordinary laws of life, not criminal like that of Richard III, but equally impossible. The King of Navarre has resolved to turn his court into 'a little academe,' and with his principal lords has vowed for three years 'not to see ladies, study, fast, not sleep.' The idea of these statutes in defiance of affection may have been developed by contrast from the statutes of those mediaeval 'Courts of Love,' which flourished especially in that district of Provence where Shakspere has laid the scene of his play. By the King, Longaville, and Dumain the oaths are taken without misgiving, but Biron only signs under protest, prophesying the failure of the scheme, and pointing out that one of its articles *must be broken immediately, for the Princess of France is expected* on an embassy of state. The King's confession that 'this was quite forgot,' shows at once that abstract theories and practical necessities will not square, and the rigour of the oath goes by the board when the Princess and her suite are received in audience, though denied entrance within the palace gates. So far we have deft workmanship, but the grouping of the Princess with her three ladies over against the King with his three lords is too obvious and mechanical, and the

1 Evidences of revision, apparently in hasty fashion, are seen in Biron's fine speech at the close of Act iv, where lines 296-301 are repeated with slight verbal changes, and with considerable additions in the passage 317-351. And similarly in Act v, Scene ii, Rosaline's rebuke of Biron, in lines 808-812, is afterwards worked up more fully in the speech beginning at line 831.

2 A hint of the framework may, perhaps, be found in a passage of Monstrelet's French Chronicle, which tells that, for the Duchy of Nemours, and a promise of 200,000 crowns, Charles, King of Navarre, surrendered certain territories to the King of France. It is of interest to note that Shakspere borrowed the names of contemporary personages for his leading male characters. The year 1590, about which the play is to be placed, saw the victory of Henry of Navarre over the League at Ivry. Amongst his chief lieutenants were Biron, Longueville, and the Duc de Maine (Dumain), and these titles, then on every lip, were used by the Dramatist for his purposes. It was under Biron, whose later career furnished tragic materials to Chapman, that the English allies of Henry served, and it is related of him, that he was a brave soldier, but of uncontrolled tongue, given to *'rhodomontades, jactances, and vanités.'* In these characteristics he is a prototype of the Biron of the comedy, and his curious saying, *'Je sais bien que je ne mourra qu'à l'hôpital,'* may well have furnished the hint for the singular penalty inflicted upon the mocking lord at the close of the drama. It is further possible that the interview between a King of Navarre and a Princess of France, may have been suggested by a historical meeting in 1586, between Henry and Catherine de Medici, who was accompanied on the occasion by a bevy of ladies, and that the wooing in Russian masquerade may be founded upon a real incident of the year 1583, when an ambassador of the Czar paid suit on behalf of his master, with quaint ceremonial, to Lady Mary Hastings a relative of Elizabeth. The memory of this latter fact must, in any case, have lent an additional interest to the Christmas performance before the queen and her court. Finally, in regard to contemporary references, Don Adrian de Armado, who is termed 'a phantasm, a monarcho,' and again, 'a fanatical phantasm', cannot but be identified with a well-known character of the day who went by the title of 'Phantastical Monarcho.' His representation as a Spaniard with the name 'Armado' is the only allusion by Shakspere, a strangely indirect one, to the momentous crisis of 1588. On these points, see further the essay on *Love's Labour's Lost*, by S. L. Lee, in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1880.

instantaneous violation of their vows by the latter, upon the first meeting, is without plausibility. There is, however, fun of a genuine, though not very subtle, kind in the scene where they are in turn discovered to be hypocrites, the King, Longaville, and Dumain, through their overheard avowals and recitations of love-odes, and Biron, through the miscarriage of his amorous missive to Rosaline. A way of retreat has to be found, and the quick-witted Biron is besought by his companions to find 'some salve for perjury.' His answer is the fine speech, far transcending in diction the rest of the play, wherein he maintains that 'the only books are women's looks,' which teach the lore of love, and that this, as shown by its effects, is the one 'study' worthy of the name.

> 'Other slow arts entirely keep the brain,
> And therefore, finding barren practisers,
> Scarce show a harvest of their heavy toil;
> But love, first learned in a lady's eyes,
> Lives not alone immured in the brain,
> But, with the motion of all elements,
> Courses as swift as thought in every power,
> And gives to every power a double power,
> Above their functions and their offices.'

The dynamic quality of love, its power of transforming the whole nature, as opposed to the comparative barrenness of merely intellectual advance, could find no more splendid expression, and the underlying quibble is let pass, as also that of the still more audacious plea founded on a perversion of a scriptural text:

> 'It is religion to be thus forsworn,
> For charity itself fulfils the law;
> And who can sever love from charity?'

Their scruples thus set at rest, the gentlemen resolve to 'lay these glozes by' and win 'the girls of France.' But the wooing is, it must be confessed, a little wearisome. The Muscovite masquerade has lost its special attraction, and the device of 'mistaken identity,' upon which Shakspere relies so much for the fun of his early plays, takes the elementary and somewhat pointless form of an interchange of the ladies' masks. But the salient feature is the 'civil war of wits,' the swiftly bandied set of repartee between wooers and wooed. As the secondary object of the play—more particularly the underplot—is to ridicule affectations of speech, there can be no doubt that these verbal passages of arms are satiric in intention, but the cure is decidedly homoeopathic, and as has been well said, 'the poet has scarcely yet attained the art of exhibiting tediousness to amuse and instruct, without becoming tedious himself.' It is thus a relief when

Biron, whose native good sense never quite deserts him, bids at last farewell to

> 'Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
> Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,'

and trusts for success in his suit to 'russet yeas and honest kersey noes.' But that success is neither for him nor his companions to be too swift or easy. In the midst of fun and frolic there rings a sudden discordant note: the news is brought of the French king's death, and in the serious and 'new-sad' temper begotten of such tidings the Princess cannot be beguiled to surrender at discretion. The lords, however they seek to brave it out, have perjured themselves, and for this they must do penance. The king is to retire for a year to a forlorn and naked hermitage, Biron for a similar space to a hospital, where his wit is to bate its mocking edge in the fierce endeavour 'to enforce the pained impotent to smile.' Those who have lightly embraced, and lightly abjured, a fantastic asceticism, are now to be constrained to face some of life's harder realities. The comedy is not to end 'like an old play' with weddings: 'Jack hath not Jill'; in this sense 'love's labour's lost.' But the time of probation will wear itself out at last, and beyond it there is heard the tinkle of bridal bells.

Such is the youthful Shakspere's handling of a theme, which, in one form or other, is as old as life itself. In our own day it is generally women rather than men whom the poet or the satirist depicts as rebellious against nature's decrees, and intent upon the reversal of the primary social conditions. Foremost among such pictures is Tennyson's *Princess*, which seems to owe some of its machinery to Shakspere's play. The Princess herself with her two chief ladies set over against the Prince and his companions reminds us of the grouping of characters in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the 'College' corresponds to the 'Academe,' and the oath of renunciation is in either case taken for three years. Of course, Tennyson, with 'sweet girl-graduates' as his theme, has opportunities for dainty vignettes, for piquant contrasts between the flush and glow of budding womanhood and the grey tones of academic life, which are denied to Shakspere, but the underlying ideas of both poets that love is greater than learning, and that the one sex cannot do without the other, are absolutely the same.

While thus the main plot of *Love's Labour's Lost* deals with a subject of permanent interest, the underplot ridicules certain affectations of speech peculiar to Shakspere's age. No doubt this satire

was as much appreciated by an Elizabethan audience as burlesques of similar crazes have been in our own day, but for us it has lost much of its savour. It is important to notice that Euphuism, in the strict sense, is not caricatured in the play, the mockery being reserved for other, though kindred, diseases of style[1]. Thus Armado, with 'a mint of phrases in his brain,' 'a man of fire-new words,' despising 'the base and obscure vulgar,' represents the pompous diction and hyperbole affected by the 'imitators of the Spanish fashion. Holofernes, the schoolmaster, is the pedant delighting in the display of his scraps of Latin[2], and of his alliterative faculty. 'I will something affect the letter: for it argues facility.' Sir Nathaniel, the Curate, is a weaker replica of Holofernes, and of them all the quick-witted little page Moth may truly declare, 'They have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps.' The king and his lords make the mistake of exalting learning at the expense of still nobler realities; Armado and Holofernes, with far more contemptible aim, would substitute for even the realities of learning the chaff and husk of barren verbiage.

The underplot, besides its special elements, also includes an intentionally grotesque variation upon the main theme. Don Armado and the 'child of nature,' Costard, in their relations to Jaquenetta, afford a *reductio ad absurdum* of ascetic regulations, and at the close of the play Armado announces that he too has his probation to endure: 'I am a votary; I have vowed to Jaquenetta to hold the plough for her sweet love three years.' Moreover, such slight entanglement as occurs in the drama is due to a complication between the two plots. Costard is entrusted with love-letters from Armado to Jaquenetta, and from Biron to Rosaline, and by transposing them in delivery he causes Biron's hypocrisy to be found out. Finally the underplot introduces a pleasant element of rustic merrymaking, as in the comedy of 'The Nine Worthies,' and the songs of 'Hiems, winter,' and 'Ver, the spring,' which round off the play with so sweet a note.

The **COMEDY OF ERRORS** was, in all probability, written about the same time as *Love's Labour's Lost*. It is plain that Shakspere still had Henry of Navarre in his mind, for the allusion in Act iii. Scene 2 to France 'armed and reverted making war against her heir,' refers to the struggle between the Huguenot king, 'heir' to Henri III, and the Roman Catholic League, which continued from 1589 to 1594.

1 See on this subject Landmann's paper on 'Shakspere and Euphuism,' *New Shaks. Soc. Trans.* 1882

Cf. what has been said on page 100.

The play must therefore have been written between these dates, and probably not long after the earlier of them, as the style shows marked signs of immaturity. Stanzas of alternately rhymed lines occur in the dialogue, doggrel is abundant, as also, though in less proportion than in *Love's Labour's Lost*, passages of bandied repartee, while the blank verse is tame and unvaried in rhythm. 1591 may be set down as the approximate date of the play. With regard to source there is no difficulty. *The Comedy of Errors* is founded upon the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, and following its model it preserves the classical unities. It is possible that Shakspere may have read the *Menaechmi* in Latin, or he may have seen some English translation, though we know of none before 1595, or he may have worked upon some earlier stage-version, perhaps *The Historie of Error*, acted at Hampton Court in 1576. In any case, he has dealt with his materials in a very independent way, taking the hint for the amusing incidents in Act iii. Scene I from another comedy of Plautus, the *Amphitruo*, and making important additions on his own account. The net result of these changes is to transform a purely farcical comedy into a play of varied interest, still farcical in the main, but crossed by threads of sentiment, and woven upon a sombre background. Instead of plunging us at once into a merry imbroglio due to the mistaken identity of twin brothers, Shakspere lifts his curtain upon the pathetic figure of Aegeon, the father of the two Antipholi, standing in peril of his life. He, a merchant of Syracuse, has been discovered at Ephesus, and owing to a quarrel between the two cities, is bound by the law of Ephesus to die unless he can pay a ransom of 1000 marks. There is a special propriety in laying the scene of the drama at Ephesus, instead of at Epidamnum, as had been done by Plautus. Ephesus was notorious as a centre of witchcraft and every kind of juggling art, and thus visitors when confronted by bewildering incidents would naturally believe that enchantment was at work. The dignified narrative of Aegeon before the Court, which practically serves the purpose of a classical Prologue, unfolds before us the strange story of the birth of the twin Antipholi and the twin Dromios, their dispersal in infancy, the search of the Syracusan pair of brothers for the other pair, and the merchant's own quest of the seekers, whereby he has been brought to so perilous a pass. The Duke is touched by the tale, but like all Shakspere's constitutional rulers, he will not wrest the law from its course, though he grants a respite of a day for the merchant to try to find the necessary sum. Thus by a stroke of consummate art the ensuing scenes of farcical entanglement are made the pivot upon which turns a deeply tragic issue. For,

unknown to Aegeon, all his family are gathered within the walls of Ephesus, his long-lost son as a resident, his searching son as a visitor, and his wife Aemilia as abbess of a convent, and while we make merry over their ludicrous adventures, we are continually haunted by the thought, Will Aegeon cross their path and be saved? Humour and pathos could scarcely be combined more effectively, and the comparison of *The Comedy of Errors* with the *Menaechmi* illustrates admirably the advantages of Shakspere's over Plautus' method.

The incidents which make up the body of the play need not be dwelt upon. Farce can be only seen in its true features by the glow of the foot-lights, not by the solitary student's lamp. Yet even the reader cannot but be impressed by the verve and vivacity with which the comic 'business' is sustained, and by the natural entanglement of the incidents. The introduction of twin servants, as well as twin masters, is due to Shakspere, who saw rightly, on this and later occasions, that two improbabilities buttress each other and have a greater plausibility than one. The device, of course, helps to make confusion worse confounded, and the fun never flags for an instant till Antipholus of Ephesus is treated for madness by Dr. Pinch, and thrown with his servant, in chains, into the cellar of his own house, while Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse have to seek shelter from a similar fate in the abbey presided over by Aemilia.

But interwoven with singular skill into these incidents is a domestic drama, which shows that Shakspere's thoughts still lingered over *Love's Labour's Lost,* though now in the special form of the relation between husbands and wives. Adriana, who is married to Antipholus of Ephesus, is of a jealous nature, chafing at what she considers the undue liberty allowed to men, and convinced that her husband puts it to improper use. Reproaches on this head have been 'the copy of their conference' since long, though Adriana's headstrong temper is rebuked by her gentle sister Luciana, who interpreting, without doubt, Shakspere's own feeling, declares that in the animal world the males bear sway, and that *a fortiori*

> 'Men, more divine, the masters of all these,
> Of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls,
> Are masters to their females, and their lords.'

But philosophy is no salve for Adriana's grievances, which through a confusion of the two Antipholi, soon find further apparent warrant, while she herself, through a repetition of the confusion, entertains her brother-in-law at dinner, and bars the door against her husband, thus driving him, out of revenge, into the very conduct of which he

had been unjustly suspected. Her passion reaches its climax when she finds that her supposed husband is making love under her very eyes to her sister, and hence springs the spiteful harshness of her remedy for his alleged lunacy, of which, by the turn of the plot, her real husband becomes the victim. She is put out of countenance for a moment by the reproaches of the abbess, assuring her, in words that seem to quiver with more than merely dramatic intensity, that she is herself the cause of her husband's malady, and that

> 'The venom clamours of a jealous woman
> Poison more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.'

But the real cure of her fault is due to the final unravelling of the 'errors,' when the two Antipholi meet face to face. Adriana, who at heart loves her husband, sees that her charges have been baseless, and henceforward, we feel sure, keeps her tongue and temper under stricter control. Thus farce is made to subserve a moral end in the reconciliation of husband and wife, while it further leads to a family reunion on a wider scale. Aegeon, whose period of grace has run out, as he passes by on his way to execution, catches sight of one of his sons, and feels sure that in the very jaws of death he has found a deliverer. But the son, who is Antipholus of Syracuse, not of Ephesus, fails to recognize the father from whom he has been parted in infancy, and Aegeon's bewildered anguish is set down to dotage. Thus by a masterly stroke the identity of appearance in the brothers, which has hitherto been the mainspring of boisterous merriment, is here productive of the purest pathos. But the agony is only for a moment. Antipholus of Syracuse appears, and mutual recognition takes place, followed by the general reunion of parents with children, brothers with borthers, and husband with wife. Far less significance, however, is given to this scene than to similar episodes in Shakspere's last group of plays, and while in neatness of construction and skill in transforming old materials *The Comedy of Errors* shows splendid dramatic power, the poverty of its dialogue and the thinness of its portraiture prove the hand of the immature artist.

The date of **THE TAMING OF THE SHREW**, which first appeared in the Folio of 1623, is one of the most difficult problems in Shaksperean criticism. It is not metioned by Meres, and if we accept his summary as a complete list of the dramatist's works before 1598, it must necessarily fall after this date. It is possible, however, that Meres, who 'affects a pedantic parallelism of numbers,' in his desire to balance six comedies against six 'tragedies,' may have passed over

one of the former, especially if it was not entirely written by Shakspere[1]. That *The Taming of the Shrew* is not a completely original work is at once evident when it is compared with *The Taming of a Shrew*, an older play printed in 1594, and written by an imitator of Marlowe, who embodied in it a number of passages from his master's writings. This play contains the Induction with Sly as the central figure, the plot of Petruchio (here called Ferando) and Kate, and the underplot of the wooing of Kate's sister by a stranger to the city who courts her in disguise. Here we have the three main motives of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and though the older play may have been in existence some little time before it was printed, Shakspere's adaptation may with sufficient certainty be placed after 1594. When we turn to internal evidence of metre as an aid to fixing the date more definitely we find a further complicating element in the doubts that have been raised whether Shakspere is the sole adapter of the old play or whether a third hand is to be detected, especially in the recast of the underplot. Even if we accept the theory that Shakspere wrote only the revised Induction and the scenes in which Petruchio and Katharine appear, we cannot even from these portions of the work get anything but conflicting metrical evidence. The slight proportion of unstopt lines would suggest a very early date, while the ratio of rhyme to blank verse points to the close of the sixteenth century.

Amidst these uncertainties the safest plan is to judge the play by its general spirit and structure, and these tests are without doubt in favour of an earlier rather than a later date, and point to a place among the first group of comedies and not the second. To *The Comedy of Errors*, in especial, it shows a close kinship in its combination of classical and romantic methods, its use of the motive of mistaken identity, and its treatment of the relation of husband and wife. The latter theme is, of course, made much more prominent in *The Taming of the Shrew* than in *The Comedy of Errors*, but the underlying conception is the same in both cases. The Lord with his hunting-dogs in the Induction resembles Theseus and his hounds in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the way in which the student Lucentio falls in love at first sight with Bianca is very similar to the proceedings of the courtiers in *Love's Labour's Lost*. The character-

1 Hertzberg gets over the difficulty by identifying *The Taming of the Shrew* with *Love's Labour's Won* mentioned by Meres, but not found in the folio edition of Shakspere's works. The majority of critics have thought that *Love's Labour's Won* is an earlier version of *All's Well that Ends Well*, but, as will be shown later, this is a very doubtful theory, and Hertzberg's view is the more plausible of the two. *Love's Labour's Won* is a title that suits both plots in *The Taming of the Shrew* excellently, and in the final scene emphasis is laid throughout on Petruchio's success in 'winning' his wager, and his wife's obedience.

ization, too, is that of Shakspere's earlier period. Apart from the personages in the underplot, who are closely modelled on classical types, Petruchio and Katharine cannot claim to rank among Shakspere's mature comedy figures. Bold and vigorous as they are, and admirably effective for stage purposes, they lack the complexity, the mellow, rich humour of the later creations, and it is practically inconceivable that they should belong, as some critics would have it, to the same period as Beatrice and Benedick. Grumio's fooling is akin to that of the Dromios and has no touch of the finer wit of Touchstone or Feste. Into his mouth is put almost all of what little prose there is in the play, and this is of a colourless, jingling kind. If the work belongs to the end of the sixteenth century, how are we to account for the absence of the brilliant, highly-polished prose which distinguishes the comedies of that period?

On grounds such as these we seem warranted in placing the play as soon after 1594 as possible, though even the less mature hand of Shakspere already shows its transfiguring power. This is clearly seen in the Induction, whose story—the trick played upon a drunken beggar by which he is persuaded that he is a rich lord—is as old as *The Arabian Nights*. The chief improvement made by Shakspere upon the corresponding portion of the earlier play is in the character of Christopher Sly, the victim of the practical joke. In *The Taming of a Shrew* he is a shadowy figure, who says little, and accepts without demur the assurance that he is a lord. Shakspere's Sly is a thoroughly racy type, with genuine Warwickshire blood in his veins, and a glib tongue in his head. He has his own family pride: 'The Slys are no rogues: look in the chronicles, we came in with Richard Conqueror'; and he protests for a time energetically against the titles with which he is saluted:

> 'Am not I Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton Heath, by birth a pedlar, by education a card-maker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present profession a tinker? Ask Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot, if she know me not: if she say I am not fourteen pence on the score for sheer ale, score me up for the lyingest knave in Christendom.'

Besides the heightened vigour of the portraiture of Sly, the Induction, as revised by Shakspere, gains throughout in melody and refinement of imagery, while the interview between the Lord and the travelling players gives a hint of the infinitely more memorable interview between Hamlet and the tragedians of the city at the castle of Elsinore. But on one important point the older writer may claim the advantage of Shakspere, for having brought Sly upon the scene to witness what is technically 'a play within a play,' though it swells

completely out of proportion to its environment, he represents him as commenting at intervals upon the performance till he falls into a drunken stupor, and in this state is cast out again into the street, so that when he wakes all that has passed seems to him only a dream, but with a useful lesson which he hurries off to apply in practice to his own wife. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, on the contrary, as soon as the main story begins, we hear nothing more of Sly, and the Induction is thus left hanging completely in the air.

Of the two parts into which this main story falls, the one relating to the courtship of the Shrew's younger sister undergoes the fuller transformation in the revised version. In fact instead of the simple wooing of Phylemon by the disguised Aurelius, we have a complicated intrigue taken directly from the fourth and fifth acts of Ariosto's *Gli Suppositi*, which Gascoigne had already translated into English prose. Whoever the adapter of this underplot was, whether Shakspere or another, he did his work well [1]. He transferred the scene from Athens to Padua, probably because the latter was better known to an Elizabethan audience as a 'nursery of arts.' Hither comes Lucentio, who in his opening words proceeds to inform his servant Tranio that he is the son of the wealthy merchant Vincentio of Florence, and that he proposes in Padua to study that part of philosophy

> 'that treats of happiness
> By virtue specially to be achieved.'

Lucentio's speech, addressed to a retainer, who had no need to be informed of such facts, is a transparent substitute for a classical prologue, and it is from the drama of Italy that all the personages in the underplot are drawn. Thus Tranio, less a dependant than a comrade, who warns Lucentio not to become a stoic or a stock in his pursuit of virtue, and who at a moment's notice can, by the mere change of dress, play his master's part in society, is a purely Southern type, quite distinct from the Northern clownish servant like Grumio

1 Fleay ascribes the revision of this underplot to another hand than Shakspere's, on the following grounds. Shakspere takes every opportunity of introducing a duke or a lord, and yet the Duke of Cestus of the old play is here replaced by Vincentio, an old gentleman of Pisa Metrical peculiarities occur frequently in these scenes, which are rare in Shakspere's undoubted writings, e.g. lines deficient in various ways, lines in which one syllable forms the first measure, doggrel lines of four feet instead of five or six, and lines in which stress is laid upon unemphatic syllables. We have also an unusually large number of classical quotations, and many words that are not found elsewhere in the dramatist's works, or are employed in a different sense. But the metrical peculiarities are not confined to the underplot, though they are specially frequent there, the classical quotations may be paralleled from *Love's Labour's Lost*, and ἅπαξ λεγόμενα occur in even larger proportion in undoubtedly genuine works. Thus the attempt to detach the scenes of the 'Bianca' intrigue, and to assign them to an anonymous third hand, gives us by no means conclusive results, and in any case Shakspere himself is not likely to have left this part of the play completely untouched. See Fleay's paper and the subsequent discussion in *New Shaks. Soc. Trans.*, 1874.

or the Dromios. To the conventionalities of the Italian drama belongs also the rivalry between the senile suitor Gremio and the younger Hortensio for the hand of Baptista's second daughter Bianca. But the sudden impulse of 'love in idleness' which adds Lucentio, a mere casual onlooker, to the list of the fair one's victims is akin to the similar instantaneous assaults of Cupid, through the eye rather than the heart, in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The ensuing complications are in the wildest spirit of the Southern comedy of intrigue. The 'narrow-prying father,' Baptista, anxious to make as much profit as possible out of the rivalry for Bianca's hand, requests the wooers to furnish him with schoolmasters for his daughters in instruments and poetry, whereupon Hortensio has himself presented in the disguise of a musician by the hero of the main plot, Petruchio, while Lucentio, in the character of a learned student of the Muses, procures an introduction to the fair one through the unsuspecting Gremio himself. Thus a lesson in construing Ovid is turned into a declaration of love by one suitor, and this is matched by an exposition of the gamut in similar terms by another. Meanwhile Tranio, personating Lucentio, announces himself as an additional wooer, and in this capacity helps to outwit both his master's rivals. When Hortensio is disgusted at Bianca's evident preference for her teacher of poetry, Tranio affecting to sympathize with his indignation at the lightness of women, draws him on to a mutual pledge that they will both forswear so inconstant a mistress. When Gremio seeks to dazzle Baptista by a glowing account of the riches that he is ready to pour forth at his lady's feet, Tranio, drawing upon the still more inexhaustible treasures of imagination, easily outbids him and gains old Minola's sanction for his suit, on condition that he procures his father's pledge for this magnificent dowry. Once more the ready-witted factotum is equal to the emergency. He waylays a 'Pedant'—another type taken direct from Italian comedy—who has just arrived from Mantua, and assures him that by order of the Duke it is death for a Mantuan to be found within Padua. On this plea, which forms an additional link with *The Comedy of Errors*, he persuades him to personate, during his stay, Vincentio of Florence, and Baptista, having gained from this 'deceiving father of a deceitful son,' the desired pledge in the all-important matter of dowry, arranges that the legal formalities of affiance shall take place at Tranio's lodgings, whither the disguised Lucentio is bidden bring Bianca. But instead he slips with her into a church, where a priest, who is in readiness, makes them man and wife, and thus united they reappear, only to find that the real Vincentio has arrived at Padua,

and that he is about to be haled off to gaol as a madman for claiming, in opposition to the Pedant, to be his true self, father of his own son, and master of the servant who to all appearance has murdered him and usurped his place. Again the situation has its parallel in the imbroglio at the close of *The Comedy of Errors*, but, here as there, the clue to the mystery is quickly supplied. Lucentio, having attained his aim, throws off his disguise and begs forgiveness, which his father, overjoyed to find him alive after all, is readily persuaded to grant.

In both the old play and the Shaksperean adaptation the point of contact between the major and the minor plot is that Baptista will not hear of his younger daughter being married till her shrewish elder sister has been provided with a husband. The earlier dramatist however introduces Ferando on his way to woo Kate, simply because her father has promised him six thousand crowns in case of success. Shakspere more artistically represents Petruchio, just left heir to his father's property, arriving at Padua in search of a rich wife, and catching readily at his friend Hortensio's proposal that he should lay siege to the young, beautiful, and wealthy, though 'intolerable curst' Katharine Minola. In the older play we get no hint of Ferando's antecedents, but Shakspere, with admirable judgement, shows us that Petruchio's previous career has exactly fitted him for the task of mastering an unruly woman. He has faced danger in every form by land and sea, on battlefield and in wilderness, and the spice of adventure in the suggested courtship attracts him far more than the love in idleness which overpowers a young student like Lucentio. If Kate is to be won, the wooer must be no languishing victim of passion, but a man who can master others, because he is completely master of himself. Katharine is taken over from the old play with less elaboration, but in her case too touches are added which give us clearer insight into her character. She is a spoilt child of fortune, with all the advantages of youth, beauty, and wealth. She has been 'brought up as best becomes a gentlewoman' by an overindulgent father, without a mother's guiding hand, and in the company of a younger sister whose gentle nature makes her completely subservient. Under these conditions her inborn high spirit hardens into a domineering temper, and this in turn defeats its own end, for it prevents Katharine from exercising authority, where a handsome and clever woman would most wish to do so, over the hearts of men. Thus she has the mortification of seeeing Bianca, who is really her inferior in qualities both of head and of heart, surrounded by wooers, while she is apparently confronted with the doom of perpetual

maidenhood, or, as the Elizabethan phrase went 'of leading apes in hell.' The result is that she goes from bad to worse, using downright physical violence to her sister, whose very silence under insult she takes as a flout, and accusing Baptista, who is in fact imperilling Bianca's future on Kate's behalf, of showing an unjust favouritism towards his younger daughter:

> 'She is your treasure, she must have a husband,
> I must dance bare-foot on her wedding-day.'

Of these preliminary incidents there is nothing in the old play, which makes Kate first open her lips when brought face to face with Ferando, and Shakspere adds a further improvement by altering the position of the scene in which she breaks her lute over the head of her music-teacher. In the original this takes place, without special appropriateness, after the wooing, but in the revised work it is introduced just as Petruchio is on the point of seeing the lady, and he thus becomes witness that her nickname of Kate the Curst does her no injustice. But he is only emboldened to proceed with his enterprise, the plan of which he arranges with the cool decision of an experienced strategist. To the headstrong temper of Katharine he resolves to oppose a will even more peremptory than her own, on the principle that

> 'Though little fire grows great with little wind
> Yet extreme gusts will blow out fire and all.'

The self-willed girl, who has hitherto terrified all around her into either submission or flight, is at last to meet with a man who will neither move from her side nor yet give way to her moods. But to dogged stubbornness Petruchio, with the tact of a man of the world, adds finer weapons. Among these is the impudent assumption of an easy familiarity expressed in his first salute, 'Good-morrow Kate.' The haughty rejoinder, 'They call me Katharine, that do talk of me,' is met with the lie direct and a rattling word-play upon the name 'Kate,' followed by a breathless passage of arms which the lady seeks to end by making her exit. But Petruchio seizes her and varies his mode of attack by a speech of ironical compliment, contrasting her gentleness with the slanders of the world. She is not indifferent to his praises, which call up before her the picture of what in her heart of hearts she knows that she might be. This is clearly shown when Petruchio goes on to add that report maligns her by declaring that she limps, though she is in truth as straight as a hazel twig, for she strides up and down the room that he may see her stately

gait. This gives occasion for a deft comparison to Dian, and we note its effect in the part-perplexed, part-pleased query, 'Where did you study all this goodly speech?' Grasping his opportunity he boldly asserts that he intends to marry her, and when her father re-enters, to see how this strange wooing speeds, Petruchio, assuming the girl's consent as a matter of course, announces that they have 'greed so well together that upon Sunday is the wedding day.' Katharine retorts that she will see him hanged on Sunday first, but she is secretly flattered that, having hitherto fought the world single-handed, she has found some one to claim an intimate alliance with her, and she makes no protest while Petruchio unfolds imaginary details of her kisses and caresses, and of their bargain that she 'shall still be curst in company.' The old play represents her as explicitly declaring that she will marry him because she has lived too long a maid, but Shakspere, with infinitely finer psychological insight, makes her give consent only by silence, and it is he who adds the touch whereby Petruchio throws a sop to her feminine weakness, when he announces that he is off to Venice to buy apparel for the wedding day.

All the incidents connected with the marriage—Petruchio's failure to appear till the last moment, his fantastic manner of dress, and his immediate departure with Kate after the ceremony, without waiting for dinner, are borrowed from the old play. But again the art of the greater dramatist shows itself in a number of delicate strokes. We feel how admirably effective is the wooer's plan of keeping the bride in suspense, when we see her weeping with vexation at his absence, and the consequent taunts that she foresees:

> 'Now must the world point at poor Katharine,
> And say—Lo there is mad Petruchio's wife,
> If it would please him come and marry her.'

Under such circumstances she is prepared to welcome him in however outlandish a garb, and to go through the ceremony in spite of his madcap behaviour at church, of which Shakspere alone gives the richly humorous details. Kate once made his own, Petruchio drops the strain of flattery with which he has hitherto leavened his vehemence, and confines himself to the most drastic methods. The scenes laid at his country house are those in which Shakspere most closely follows the earlier play, adopting at times its text practically unaltered. He enforces and expands the idea of the older dramatist that Kate must be tamed in exactly the same way as a falcon, though he makes it clearer that all is done 'in reverent care' of her, and thus

reconciles us to what otherwise might seem excessive outrages, even in the sphere of farce. It is through his wife's physical nature that Petruchio begins his attack. Kate's high stomach is brought down by fatigue, starvation, and want of sleep, and to exasperate her further, all this is done in an overstrained spirit of anxiety about her well-being. So, too, in the scarcely less primary necessity of dress she is tantalized by the sight of caps and gowns of the newest cut, only to see them rejected on the plea that they are not worth the wearing. Through the body the spirit is quickly subdued, and we know that the field is won when on the return journey to Padua we find Katharine ready, at Petruchio's bidding, to call the sun the moon, and to embrace the aged Vincentio as a young, budding virgin. This grotesque incident forms a point of contact between the major and the minor plots, which are effectively merged in the closing scene of the play, where Petruchio, confident of the absolute sway that he has won over his wife, challenges Lucentio and Hortensio (who has consoled himself with a shadowy figure called the Widow) to a trial of marital authority. When the other new-made brides have proved recalcitrant, the Shrew not only amazes the company by her complete docility, but, at Petruchio's bidding, proceeds to read her sister and the widow a lecture on the duties of wives to husbands. Her speech, which points the moral of the story with a definiteness unique in Shakspere's writings, has its basis in the old play, where, however, the Scriptural narrative of the Fall is dragged in to justify woman's subjection. Shakspere characteristically prefers to found his doctrine of the relation of the sexes on their physical natures, though it is noticeable that several of the expressions which he uses are almost identical with those found in the marriage service. This doctrine is set forth by Katharine with something of the blunt vehemence which formerly marked her assertion of her own rights, but it is in essence the traditional principle that man should labour, and woman share the fruits of his labour, rendering in return the tribute of 'love, fair looks, and true obedience.' The present age, with its acute susceptibilities on the question of woman's sphere of influence, will shake its head over so naïvely trenchant a solution of the most complex of problems, but the student will value the play, and the original upon which it is based, less as a brochure upon matrimonial duties, than as a unique and highly instructive combination of four different elements—the refined southern comedy of intrigue, the old English rough-and-tumble farce, the Marlowesque style in strangely perverted shape, and the Shaksperean dramatic method in its vigorous infancy.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM is the crowning comedy of Shakspere's youthful period. Its date is doubtful, but Meres' list places it at least before 1598, and the evidence of style pushes it further back. Titania's speech (Act ii. 2) upon the recent disastrous effects of fog and flood is very probably a reference to the tempestuous seasons of 1593 and 1594, and it is to the latter year that the play may be plausibly assigned. The plot is mainly of Shakspere's own invention, though he may have found the figures of Theseus and Hippolyta in North's translation of Plutarch, or in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale,* which was afterwards to furnish the subject of *The Two Noble Kinsmen.* Pyramus and Thisbe may be taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* and Oberon, as has been seen, had already appeared in Greene's *James IV*; but it was doubtless from the Stratford folk-lore that the young poet drew the hints for his fairy-world, as a whole, while Stratford too may well have supplied originals for Bottom and his companions. But of greater interest than questions of date or source is the fact that the play has a unique character among the dramatist's writings. With its songs and dances and spectacular effects it is almost more of a masque or opera than a comedy in the strict sense, and it makes the impression of having been written in honour of the marriage of some great noble, in which case the bridal blessings with which it closes were doubtless intended to have more than a merely dramatic significance. The Queen herself would seem to have been present at the performance, as otherwise it is difficult to understand why Shakspere, usually so sparing of flattery, should have paid magnificent tribute, through the lips of Oberon, to 'the fair vestal throned by the West,' who, unhurt by Cupid's shaft, passes on 'in maiden meditation fancy free.' Equally significant is the passage in the first scene of the play, where Theseus declares to Hermia that those are 'thrice blessed' who can master their blood to undergo 'the maiden pilgrimage,' even if their wedded sisters be 'earthlier happy.' Nowhere else does Shakspere display any favour to the ascetic ideal for women: Isabella in *Measure for Measure* abandons the life of the convent in order to marry the Duke, and it is only in the bitterest mockery that Hamlet orders Ophelia to a nunnery. Thus, when we find an encomium upon virginity inserted with curious inaptness in a bridal play, we may fairly conclude that Shakspere's 'hedging' was due to a desire to propitiate the Maiden Queen[1].

1 While thus recognizing the play as a marriage-masque, and believing that the transparent compliment to Elizabeth indicates her presence at its production, I consider that the attempts to identify the noble in whose honour it was written, and to interpret the details of Oberon's vision, cannot rank higher than ingenious guesswork. The theory of Tieck, Ulrici, and Massey that the play was composed for the marriage of Southampton—that convenient *deus ex machina* for the solu-

reconciles us to what otherwise might seem excessive outrages, even in the sphere of farce. It is through his wife's physical nature that Petruchio begins his attack. Kate's high stomach is brought down by fatigue, starvation, and want of sleep, and to exasperate her further, all this is done in an overstrained spirit of anxiety about her well-being. So, too, in the scarcely less primary necessity of dress she is tantalized by the sight of caps and gowns of the newest cut, only to see them rejected on the plea that they are not worth the wearing. Through the body the spirit is quickly subdued, and we know that the field is won when on the return journey to Padua we find Katharine ready, at Petruchio's bidding, to call the sun the moon, and to embrace the aged Vincentio as a young, budding virgin. This grotesque incident forms a point of contact between the major and the minor plots, which are effectively merged in the closing scene of the play, where Petruchio, confident of the absolute sway that he has won over his wife, challenges Lucentio and Hortensio (who has consoled himself with a shadowy figure called the Widow) to a trial of marital authority. When the other new-made brides have proved recalcitrant, the Shrew not only amazes the company by her complete docility, but, at Petruchio's bidding, proceeds to read her sister and the widow a lecture on the duties of wives to husbands. Her speech, which points the moral of the story with a definiteness unique in Shakspere's writings, has its basis in the old play, where, however, the Scriptural narrative of the Fall is dragged in to justify woman's subjection. Shakspere characteristically prefers to found his doctrine of the relation of the sexes on their physical natures, though it is noticeable that several of the expressions which he uses are almost identical with those found in the marriage service. This doctrine is set forth by Katharine with something of the blunt vehemence which formerly marked her assertion of her own rights, but it is in essence the traditional principle that man should labour, and woman share the fruits of his labour, rendering in return the tribute of 'love, fair looks, and true obedience.' The present age, with its acute susceptibilities on the question of woman's sphere of influence, will shake its head over so naïvely trenchant a solution of the most complex of problems, but the student will value the play, and the original upon which it is based, less as a brochure upon matrimonial duties, than as a unique and highly instructive combination of four different elements—the refined southern comedy of intrigue, the old English rough-and-tumble farce, the Marlowesque style in strangely perverted shape, and the Shaksperean dramatic method in its vigorous infancy.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM is the crowning comedy of Shakspere's youthful period. Its date is doubtful, but Meres' list places it at least before 1598, and the evidence of style pushes it further back. Titania's speech (Act ii. 2) upon the recent disastrous effects of fog and flood is very probably a reference to the tempestuous seasons of 1593 and 1594, and it is to the latter year that the play may be plausibly assigned. The plot is mainly of Shakspere's own invention, though he may have found the figures of Theseus and Hippolyta in North's translation of Plutarch, or in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, which was afterwards to furnish the subject of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Pyramus and Thisbe may be taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Oberon, as has been seen, had already appeared in Greene's *James IV*; but it was doubtless from the Stratford folk-lore that the young poet drew the hints for his fairy-world, as a whole, while Stratford too may well have supplied originals for Bottom and his companions. But of greater interest than questions of date or source is the fact that the play has a unique character among the dramatist's writings. With its songs and dances and spectacular effects it is almost more of a masque or opera than a comedy in the strict sense, and it makes the impression of having been written in honour of the marriage of some great noble, in which case the bridal blessings with which it closes were doubtless intended to have more than a merely dramatic significance. The Queen herself would seem to have been present at the performance, as otherwise it is difficult to understand why Shakspere, usually so sparing of flattery, should have paid magnificent tribute, through the lips of Oberon, to 'the fair vestal throned by the West,' who, unhurt by Cupid's shaft, passes on 'in maiden meditation fancy free.' Equally significant is the passage in the first scene of the play, where Theseus declares to Hermia that those are 'thrice blessed' who can master their blood to undergo 'the maiden pilgrimage,' even if their wedded sisters be 'earthlier happy.' Nowhere else does Shakspere display any favour to the ascetic ideal for women: Isabella in *Measure for Measure* abandons the life of the convent in order to marry the Duke, and it is only in the bitterest mockery that Hamlet orders Ophelia to a nunnery. Thus, when we find an encomium upon virginity inserted with curious inaptness in a bridal play, we may fairly conclude that Shakspere's 'hedging' was due to a desire to propitiate the Maiden Queen[1].

1 While thus recognizing the play as a marriage-masque, and believing that the transparent compliment to Elizabeth indicates her presence at its production, I consider that the attempts to identify the noble in whose honour it was written, and to interpret the details of Oberon's vision, cannot rank higher than ingenious guesswork. The theory of Tieck, Ulrici, and Massey that the play was composed for the marriage of Southampton—that convenient *deus ex machina* for the solu-

In its main plot the play is akin to *The Comedy of Errors*, for in both cases a humorous entanglement is created out of mistakes. Already, however, Shakspere shows his extraordinary skill in devising variations upon a given theme, for here the mistakes are those of a night and not of a day, and instead of being external to the mind are internal: 'in *The Errors* the feelings of the actors remain constant, but the persons towards whom they are directed take the place, unobserved; one of another; here the persons remain constant, but their feelings of love, indifference, or dislike are at the mercy of mischief-making incident.' As in *The Comedy of Errors*, also, the scene is nominally laid amid classical surroundings, but the whole atmosphere of the play is essentially English and Elizabethan.

Thus Theseus, whose marriage with Hippolyta forms the setting of the story, is no Athenian 'duke,' but a great Tudor noble. He is a brave soldier, who has wooed his bride with his sword, and, strenuous even in his pleasures, he is up with the dawn on May-morning, and out in the woods, that his love may hear the music of his hounds, 'matched in mouth like bells,' as they are uncoupled for the hunt. He is a true Tudor lord also in his taste for the drama, as shown in his request for masques and dances wherewith to celebrate his marriage. He exhibits the gracious spirit common to all Shakspere's leaders of men in choosing, against the advice of his Master of the Revels, the entertainment prepared by Bottom and his fellows:

> 'I will hear that play
> For never anything can be amiss
> When simpleness and duty tender it';

tion of this as of other Shaksperean problems—may be entirely rejected. Southampton's marriage with Elizabeth Vernon was celebrated secretly, through dread of the Queen's displeasure, and was not at all likely to have been accompanied with festivities. Moreover, it took place in the latter part of 1598, and Meres' reference, apart from characteristics of style, presupposes an earlier date for the play. Elze's theory, in his *Essays on Shakspere* (accepted and developed by Kurz in the German Shakspere Society's *Jahrbuch* iv.) that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written for the marriage of Essex, might have more in its favour but that it, on the other hand, pushes the play too far back. Essex's marriage to the widow of Sir Philip Sidney took place in 1590, and as the bride's father had recently died, and as, moreover, the ceremony (as in Southampton's case) was secret, it scarcely seems a suitable occasion for an elaborate theatrical display. But, apart from these considerations, the evidences of metre and style, will not allow us to put *A Midsummer Night's Dream* so early, unless we accept Elze's arbitrary hypothesis that Shakspere's dramatic career began and ended earlier than has been hitherto supposed. Elze founds his theory chiefly on Halpin's ingenious explanation of Oberon's vision. In Lyly's *Endymion* Cynthia may plausibly be identified with the Queen, Tellus with the Countess of Sheffield, Floscula with the Countess of Essex, mother of the young Earl, whom Leicester married after her husband's death, and Endymion with Leicester himself. Halpin, on this analogy, interprets the Moon in Oberon's vision as Elizabeth, the Earth as the Countess of Sheffield, 'the little western flower' as the Countess of Essex, and Cupid as Leicester. He further sees in the allusions to 'a mermaid on a dolphin's back,' and to the 'stars shooting madly from their spheres,' reminiscences of Elizabeth's visit to Kenilworth, where these were amongst the attractions. Elze, accepting Halpin's speculations as 'proved,' argues that these allusions to past love affairs could have had no interest 'except for the families concerned, above all, the Essex family.' He therefore makes the young Earl's marriage the occasion of the play's production. But no such series of conjectures can be allowed to outweigh the internal evidence in favour of a later date.

and though tickled by the absurdities of the performance, he checks more than once the petulant criticisms of Hippolyta, and assures the actors at the close, with a courteous *double-entendre,* that their play has been 'very notably discharged.' But it has been urged that Theseus shows the limitations of nature which are found in Shakspere's men of action. Though dramatic performances serve to while away the time, even at their best they are to him 'but shadows,' and it is he who dismisses the tale of what the lovers have experienced in the wood as 'fairy toys,' and is thus led on to the famous declaration that

> 'The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.'

Only the practical common-sense Theseus, it has been said, would think of comparing the poet or lover to the lunatic, and Shakspere, by putting such words into his mouth, shows by a side-stroke that the man of action fails to appreciate the idealist nature. But such an inference from the passage is hazardous: there is a sense in which Theseus' statement is true, for the artist and the lover do collide, like the madman, with what 'cool reason' chooses to term the realities of life. The eloquent ring of the words is scarcely suggestive of dramatic irony, while the description of the poet's pen as giving to 'airy nothing a local habitation and a name,' applies with curious exactness to Shakspere's own method in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Contrasted with the serene fortunes of Theseus and Hippolyta is the troubled lot of humbler lovers, due, in its origin, to purely human failings. The fickle Demetrius has shifted his affections from Helena to Hermia, whose father Egeus favours the match, but Hermia is constant to Lysander, while Helena still 'dotes in idolatry' upon her inconstant wooer. The Athenian law as expounded by Theseus (for here again law is seen presiding over personal issues), enforces upon Hermia obedience to her father's wishes on pain of death or perpetual maidenhood. But Lysander suggests escape to a classical 'Gretna Green,' seven leagues from the town, where the sharp Athenian law does not run, and fixes a trysting-place for the following night within the neighbouring wood. That Hermia should reveal the secret to Helena, and that she in her turn should put Demetrius on the fugitive's track, merely to 'have his sight thither and back again,' is a transparently clumsy device for concentrating the four lovers on a single spot, which betrays the hand of the immature play-wright. Within the wood the power of human motive is suspended for that of enchantment, and at a touch of Puck's magic herb, Lysander and

Demetrius are 'translated,' and ready to cross swords for the love of the erewhile flouted Helena. Thus all things befall preposterously, and reason holds as little sway over action as in a dream, though it is surely overstrained to find, with Gervinus, a definitely allegorical significance in the comic entanglement, the more so that the dramatic execution is at this point somewhat crude. Lysander and Demetrius are little more than lay figures, and the only difference between Helena and Hermia is that the latter is shorter of stature, and has a vixenish temper, of which she gives a violent display in the unseemly quarrel scene. But at last, by Oberon's command, Dian's bud undoes on the eyes of Lysander the work of Cupid's flower, and the close of the period of enchantment is broadly and effectively marked by the inrush at dawn of exuberant, palpable life in the shape of Theseus' hunting party, whose horns and 'halloes' reawaken the sleepers to everyday realities. But, as in *The Errors*, out of the confusions of the moment is born an abiding result. Demetrius is henceforward true to Helena: the caprice of magic has redressed the caprice of passion, and the lovers return to Athens 'with league whose date till death shall never end.'

Deep reflective power and subtle insight into character came slowly to Shakspere, as to lesser men, but fancy has its flowering season in youth, and never has it shimmered with a more delicate and iridescent bloom than in the fairy-world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Through woodland vistas, where the May-moon struggles with the dusk, elfland opens into sight, ethereal, impalpable, spun out of gossamer and dew, and yet strangely consistent and credible. For this kingdom of shadows reproduces in miniature the structure of human society. Here, as on earth, there are royal rulers, with courts, ministers, warriors, jesters, and, in fine, all the pomp and circumstance of mortal sovereignty. And what plausibility there is in every detail, worked out with an unfaltering instinct for just and delicate gradation! In this realm of the microscopic an acorn-cup is a place of shelter, and a cast snake-skin, or the leathern wing of a rear-mouse, an ample coat: the night tapers are honey-bags of humble-bees lit at the glow-worm's eyes, and the fairy chorus, to whom the third part of a moment is a measurable portion of time, charm from the side of their sleeping mistress such terrible monsters as blindworms, spiders, and beetles black. Over these tiny creatures morality has no sway: theirs is a delicious sense life, a revel of epicurean joy in nature's sweets and beauties. To dance 'by paved fountain or by rushy brook,' to rest on banks canopied with flowers, to feed on apricoks and grapes, and mulberries, to tread the groves

till the 'eastern gate all fiery red' turns the green sea into gold—such are the delights which make up their round of existence. In Puck, 'the lob of spirits,' this merry temper takes a more roguish form, a gusto in the topsy-turvy, in the things that befall preposterously, and an elfin glee in gulling mortals according to their folly. With his zest for knavish pranks, for mocking practical jokes upon 'gossips' and 'wisest aunts,' this merry wanderer of the night is indeed a spirit different in sort from the ethereal dream fairies, and it is natural that Oberon's vision of Cupid all armed should be hid from his gross sight. Moonlight and woodland have for him no spell of beauty, but they form a congenial sphere in which to play the game of mystification and cross-purposes. Thus his very unlikeness to the other shadows marks him out as the ally and henchman of Oberon in his quarrel with the fairy queen and her court. For the love troubles of mortals have their miniature counterpart in the jealousy of the elfin royal pair, springing in the main, as befits their nature, from an aesthetic rivalry for the possession of a lovely Indian boy, though by an ingenious touch, which unites the natural and supernatural realms, a further incitement is the undue favour with which Oberon regards the 'bouncing Amazon' Hippolyta, balanced by Titania's attachment to Theseus. And as the human wooers are beguiled by the power of Cupid's magic herb, the fairy queen is in like manner victimized. But with correct instinct Shakspere makes her deception far the more extravagant. Fairyland is the world of perennial surprise, and it must be a glaringly fantastic incongruity that arrests attention there. But the most exacting canons of improbability are satisfied when Titania, whose very being is spun out of light and air and dew, fastens her affections upon the unpurged 'mortal grossness' of Bottom, upon humanity with its asinine attributes focussed and gathered to a head. To attack his queen in her essential nature, to make her whose only food is beauty lavish her endearments upon a misshapen monster, is a masterpiece of revenge on Oberon's part. And so persuasive is the art of the dramatist that our pity is challenged for Titania's infatuation, with its pathetically reckless squandering of pearls before swine, and thus we hail with joy her release from her dotage, her reconciliation with Oberon, and the end of jars in fairyland, celebrated with elfin ritual of dance and song.

In designedly aggressive contrast to the dwellers in the shadow world is the crew of hempen homespuns headed by sweet bully Bottom. Among the many forms of genius there is to be reckoned the asinine variety, which wins for a man the cordial recognition of his supremacy among fools, and of this Bottom is a choice type. In

the preparation of the Interlude in honour of the Duke's marriage, though Quince is nominally the manager, Bottom through the force of his commanding personality, is throughout the directing spirit. His brother craftsmen have some doubts about their qualifications for heroic rôles, but this protean actor and critic is ready for any and every part, from lion to lady, and is by universal consent selected as *jeune premier* of the company in the character of Pyramus, 'a most lovely gentleman-like man.' Bereft of his services, the comedy, it is admitted on all hands, cannot go forward: 'it is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.' Fostered by such hero-worship, Bottom's egregious self-complacency develops to the point where his metamorphosis at the hands of Puck seems merely an exquisitely fitting climax to a natural process of evolution. And even when thus 'translated,' he retains his versatile faculty of adapting himself to any part; the amorous advances of Titania in no wise disturb his equanimity, and he is quite at ease with Pease-blossom and Cobweb. A sublime self-satisfaction may triumph in situations where the most delicate tact or the most sympathetic intelligence would be nonplussed.

But Shakspere, in introducing his crew of patches into his fairy drama, had an aim beyond satirizing fussy egotism or securing an effect of broad comic relief. It is a peculiarity of his dramatic method to produce variations upon a single theme in the different portions of a play. *Love's Labour's Lost* is an instance of this, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a further illustration, though of a less obvious kind. For in the rehearsal and setting forth of their comedy, Bottom and his friends enter a debateable domain, which, like that of the fairies, hovers round the solid work-a-day world, and yet is not of it. There is a point of view from which life may be regarded as the reality of which art, and in especial dramatic art, is the 'shadow,' the very word used by Theseus in relation to the workmen's play. Thus in their grotesque devices and makeshifts these rude mechanicals are really facing the question of the relation of shadow to substance, the immemorial question of realism in art and on the stage. The classical maxim that 'Medea shall not kill her children in sight of the audience' lest the feelings of the spectators should be harrowed beyond endurance, finds a burlesque echo in Bottom's solicitude lest the ladies should be terrified by the drawing of Pyramus' sword, or the entrance of so fearful a wild-fowl as your lion. Hence the necessity for a prologue to say that Pyramus is not killed indeed, and for the apparition of half Snug the joiner's face through the lion's neck, and his announcement that he is not come hither as a lion, but

is 'a man as other men are.' Scenery presents further difficulties, but here, as there is no risk of wounding delicate susceptibilities, realism is given full rein. The moon herself is pressed into the service, but owing to her capricious nature, she is given an understudy in the person of Starveling carrying a bush of thorns and a lanthorn. It is only the hypercriticism of the Philistine Theseus that finds fault with this arrangement on the score that the man should be put into the lanthorn. 'How is it else the man in the moon?'

The 'tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe,' is a more elaborated specimen of those plays within plays, of which Shakspere had already given a sketch in *Love's Labour's Lost,* and for which he retained a fondness in all stages of his career. It is a burlesque upon the dramas of the day, in which classical subjects were handled with utter want of dignity, and with incongruous extravagance of style. The jingling metres, the mania for alliteration, the far-fetched and fantastic epithets, the meaningless invocations, the wearisome repetition of emphatic words, are all ridiculed with a boisterous glee, which was an implicit warrant that, when the young dramatist should hereafter turn to tragic or classical themes, his own work would be free from such disfiguring affectations, or, at worst, would take from them only a superficial taint. And, indeed, what potency of future triumphs on the very summits of dramatic art lay already revealed in the genius which, out of an incidental entertainment, could frame the complex and gorgeous pageantry of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and which, when denied, by the necessities of the occasion, an ethical motive, could fall back for inspiration on an enchanting metaphysic, not of the schools but of the stage, whose contrasts of shadow and reality are shot, now in threads of gossamer lightness, now in homelier and coarser fibre, into the web and woof of this unique hymeneal masque.

The date of **THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA** cannot be fixed with exactitude. It is mentioned in Meres' list of 1598, but otherwise we have only internal evidence. So inconclusive are the results derived from this, that it has been placed in almost every year between 1590 and 1595 [1].

Whatever its exact chronological position, it may fitly close this chapter, for while reproducing motives from the youthful comedies, it throws out hints of situations or types elaborated later in dramas

1 Delius, Elze, Malone, Furnivall, and Hales are in favour of an early date, 1591, or before; Drake, Fleay and Chalmers of 1595: Fleay *more suo* thinks that Acts i and ii were written between 1593 and 1594, and the other three about 1595; Hertzberg gives 1592 as the date; Dowden suggests 1592-93.

like *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*. In style, also, it marks a transition stage. The doggrel and verbal quibbles of *Love's Labour's Lost*, the rhetoric of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*, the sonnets, quatrains, and rhymed couplets which have hitherto been abundant, are all more sparingly introduced, and Shakspere attains for the first time, to blank verse of sustained and even sweetness, suited to the sentimental nature of his theme. But the metre is monotonous in its silvery regularity of cadence, and bears evident marks of the laborious workman's file.

The plot of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* corresponds in its main features with the story of the Shepherdess Felismena in the Spanish prose pastoral *Diana* by Montemayor. Shakspere may have had access to a manuscript copy of Yonge's translation of the tale, not printed before 1598; or he may have drawn upon an earlier dramatic handling of the subject, *Felix and Philomena*, mentioned in 1584. In favour, perhaps, of the more second-hand source of inspiration, is the fact that the play makes no attempt to reproduce Italian surroundings. What little there is of scenic detail is English, and Verona and Milan, like Navarre, Ephesus, and Athens are merely dramatic spellings of Stratford. Thence are drawn the allusions to the 'uncertain glory of an April day,' to the current that 'gives a gentle kiss to every sedge,' to the schoolboy sighing at the loss of his 'A, B, C,' to the robin red-breast that relishes a love-song, to the 'pageants of delight' played at Pentecost.

But this frank absence of local colour is the more venial in that the theme of the story, love and friendship in a variety of shifting relations, is not of local but of universal significance. It is in effect a stock subject of the novelist and dramatist in every age, and it cannot but be embodied in certain stock characters. The lover and friend who is faithless in both capacities, the man of the world who mocks at passion, but who, when subdued to its sway, is true as steel, the brainless and repulsive but wealthy suitor, as odious in the eyes of the lady as he is acceptable in those of her father, the tender-hearted maiden, loyal to her fickle wooer and forgiving to a fault, the high-spirited girl, single-hearted in her affection and yet with a trace of coquettish pride in the spectacle of rival swains at her feet—all these are familiar types, and they are grouped with the somewhat obtrusive parallelism of Shakspere's early method. But the touch of the master-hand, though yet in its noviciate, makes itself felt in the delicacy with which these types are developed up to a certain point, in the tender grace of the sentiment which steeps the main story, and in the dexterous comic relief.

Decidedly foremost in interest among the characters is Proteus, whose name, in accordance with a device which Shakspere now first used and which he affected till the last, betokens the fickleness of his nature. He is eminently the product of the new age of culture: as described by his friend,

> 'He is complete in feature and in mind,
> With all good grace to grace a gentleman.'

But it is a culture which in his case has developed the sensibilities while relaxing the moral fibre, and has made of him a Renaissance Werther, swept along in pure abandonment of feeling. Whilst uncertain of Julia's answer to his suit, he is plunged in a self-pitying melancholy, 'Poor forlorn Proteus: passionate Proteus': her message of affection draws from his lips, ecstatic invocations, 'Sweet love, sweet lines, sweet life,' but he conceals its contents from his father with a faint-hearted piece of duplicity which only lends itself to Antonio's scheme for sending him to join Valentine at Milan. Even the sentence of separation from his mistress draws from him no manly protest, though he is not at a loss for graceful images to describe his change of state, and though he takes farewell of Julia with exaggerated vows of constancy.

But the moment that he reaches Milan and beholds Silvia, who has taken the heart of Valentine captive, a more novel and intense sensation drives out the sensation that has hitherto been true love's counterfeit within his breast. He is not whirled along by a headlong current of passion which sweeps away the distinctions of right and wrong, nor does he defiantly trample upon moral law. He knows, and indeed with a certain *naveté* confesses, that he is playing the traitor, and he would shun temptation, could it be done without effort. But it is just from the needful effort that sentimentalism recoils; it is so much pleasanter to drift with the stream.

> 'If I can check my erring love, I will:
> If not, to compass her I'll use my skill.'

And thus he is found shortly afterwards arguing with sophistical dialectic that his treachery is justifiable, for Love, in whose name he has sworn, prompts his perjury, and there is, moreover, a sacrifice of self which friendship cannot claim: 'I to myself am dearer than a friend.' So the soft outer husk of the sentimental nature is peeled away, and only the hard, bitter kernel is left, and in the spirit of this declaration Proteus pursues his course. He reveals to the Duke Valentine's plan of elopement with Silvia, and thus procures

his banishment, while by engaging to slander his friend in the interest of Thurio he dexterously gains a vantage-ground for pressing his own suit. But his schemes are shattered against the true-hearted constancy of Silvia, who, loyal to her own love, scorns unfaithfulness in others. The utmost that his abject entreaties can wring from her is her picture, the shadow of herself, and at last she seeks relief from persecution in flight after Valentine. Chance, however, places her for a moment in Proteus' power, and the selfish passion of the sentimentalist is unmasked in its naked hideousness, when he seeks by force to make her his victim. The scene is crude in execution, but it is not wanting in psychological truth. This cannot, however, be said of Proteus' sudden and forced repentance, and his reconversion to love of Julia. The concluding act of the play bears throughout marks of imperfect workmanship, and thus, whether through haste or through incapacity as yet for absolutely finished portraiture, the dramatist blurs in his closing touches the most powerfully conceived character, outside the historical field, that he had hitherto attempted.

Morally and intellectually Valentine is the strongest contrast to his friend. His is the plain, soldier nature that 'hunts after honour,' and sees in love only 'shapeless idleness,' and waste of good days. Youth, with its intoxicating vitality, thrills through his every nerve and limb, as Speed reminds him later, in his mournful glance backwards over this happy time: 'You were wont, when you laughed, to crow like a cock: when you walked to walk like one of the lions: when you fasted it was presently after dinner, when you looked sadly it was for want of money.' It is, however, precisely such a buoyant and self-confident nature that falls in most headlong defeat before some unexpected assault of love, and thus Valentine, when transplanted to the novel surroundings of the Milanese Court, is 'metamorphosed' by the first glance of Silvia's eyes. But he retains the simplicity of his character and the somewhat obtuse perception that goes with it. His own servant Speed has to interpret to him the transparent device by which Silvia volunteers a confession of her love for him, and he falls readily into the trap which the Duke sets for exposing his scheme of elopement. It never crosses his mind that Proteus, his confidant, has broken faith, for when banished from Milan he accepts his offer to be the letter-carrier to his mistress. It is only when, as captain of a band of peculiarly high-toned outlaws, he is a witness of the dastardly attempt on Silvia's honour that he realizes that Proteus is a 'common friend, that's without faith or love,' and renounces all trust in him for ever in words of manly and sorrowful indignation. But a few words of penitence on the part of the wrong-

doer disarm his wrath, and with an incredibly quixotic sacrifice of the claims of love to those of friendship, and with airy indifference to the feelings of Silvia, he hands her over to the man who has just offered her the grossest outrage.

The crudity of the situation is heightened by the character of Silvia, which is as far as possible from lending itself to such a summary disposal. 'Holy, fair, and wise is she': so sing the company of serenaders at her window, and her bearing throughout the drama testifies that it is no idle praise. She is the first and most lightly sketched member of a favourite Shaksperean order of womanhood, which unites outward fairness and transparent purity of soul to keen intellect and resolute will. With good reason do 'all our swains commend her,' and her treatment of the rivals for her hand illustrates her tact and firmness of purpose. To Valentine, the man of her choice, she tenders a proof of her favour which, without compromising her maidenly dignity may give him a hint whereon to speak: Thurio she skilfully keeps at a distance, though she offers him no direct incivilty, and listens with seeming impartiality to the volleys of wit between Valentine and him: Proteus, in spite of his outward gallantry and skill in the game of love, she sees in his true colours and repulses with cutting words of scorn. Difficulties are with her only a spur to action, and as she assents to the elopement with Valentine, in order to checkmate her father's scheme for thrusting her into the arms of Thurio, so she afterwards conceives the plan of following her lover in his banishment, and with discriminating eye picks out Sir Eglamour as her fittest companion and helper. That a woman of such high spirit should, in the closing scene, stand by in dumb resignation, while the man whom she has risked all to find turns her over to the traitor from whom she has fled, is the crowning absurdity in a tangle of psychological impossibilities.

The threatened wholesale catastrophe is averted by Julia's self-revelation. She too has braved danger to follow her beloved, but otherwise she is a complete contrast to Silvia, and belongs to a class of women which occupies a relatively subordinate place in Shakspere's gallery of the sex. The fact that in pursuit of Proteus she dons masculine disguise—a device here used by the dramatist for the first time —suggests a likeness between her and Portia or Rosalind. But the resemblance is superficial, for she entirely lacks the commanding spirit and gaiety of heart of these heroines, and with her pensive, dependent nature is akin in certain aspects to Viola, but finds her true sister in the Euphrasia of Beaumont and Fletcher, who, like her, takes service as a page with the man whom she loves. Self-sacrifice

is the law of her being, as self-love is that of Proteus, and though cut to the very core by his perfidy she can endure, in the strength of her devotion, to be his messenger to her rival, and even to bear between them the ring that had been the pledge of her own troth. The spectacle of such humiliation awakens in us a pity not untouched with contempt, and it is a relief to find that she has yet enough womanly instinct left to draw comparisons, by no means to her own disadvantage, between Silvia's face and hers. Truly feminine, too, is her analysis of her rival's picture, and the consoling reflection that 'the painter flattered her a little,' while even her instinct to 'scratch out the unseeing eyes' on the canvas is natural under the circumstances. But she refrains from such an outrage, for Silvia's loyalty and sweetness have won her tender heart, and buoyed her up with the belief that Proteus' perfidious suit must fail. Thus the crowning blow comes when she sees Valentine himself surrender his betrothed to this perjured wooer, and she sinks fainting to the ground. Then follows the confession that she is Julia in the habit of a page, and Proteus' sudden relapse to his original attachment; and if he wins her pardon on far too easy terms, this is a dramatic flaw which marks not only the hurried close of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but which clung, as will be seen, to Shakspere's method even in the most matured period of his art.

Parallel to the romantic interest, but not so interwoven with it as in *The Comedy of Errors*, runs a humorous underplot, which introduces for the first time the Shaksperean Clown in the stricter sense. The class has here two representatives. Speed and Launce, akin and yet contrasted, as each is contrasted further with the master whom he serves. To the slow-witted Valentine is attached the nimble-tongued Speed, whose plays upon words, repartees, and snatches of doggrel sparkle upon the surface of the main action without stirring its current. Of greater significance is Launce, the attendant on Proteus. His is a richer, more pensive humour, which discharges itself mainly in soliloquies, with his dog Crab as auditor. Round this dumb companion, 'one that I brought up of a puppy,' the thoughts of Launce steadily revolve: we hear, indeed, of a 'milkmaid' who has won his heart, and whose 'items' he discusses with Speed, but her highest praise is, 'She hath more qualities than a water-spaniel, which is much in a bare Christian,' and this does not imply an equality to so unique an animal as Crab. It is only grief over any imperfection in one who is beloved that leads to the assertion, 'I think Crab, my dog, to be the sourest dog that lives,' because 'he sheds not a tear nor speaks a word,' while Launce's household is plunged

in lamentation at his departure for Milan. And Launce's affection is ready to stand the severest test, that of suffering on behalf of its object: 'I have sat in the stocks for puddings he hath stolen: otherwise he had been executed: I have stood on the pillory for geese he hath killed, otherwise he had suffered for 't.' Yet even this friend, for whom he has endured so much, Launce offers to sacrifice in order to do Proteus a service, though he has an instinct that things are not what they should be, 'I am but a fool, look you, and yet I have the wit to think my master is a kind of knave.' And this knavery of the highly-gifted Proteus finds an emphatic though unobtrusive condemnation in the fidelity of his simple servant to the poor cur that has shared his life of hard words and still harder knocks. Thus here, again, the main plot and the underplot, without dovetailing in an elaborate manner, play round the same theme, and embrace, in an unbroken network of relationships, the entire *dramatis personae* from 'the two gentlmen' down to poor dog Crab.

CHAPTER X

SHAKSPERE 'ITALIANATE.' ROMEO AND JULIET AND THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

THE first group of comedies, amidst their varieties of source and theme, have one feature in common. Whether the plot be laid in Navarre, Ephesus, Athens, Padua or Verona, the atmosphere is unmistakably English. It is true, of course, that in *The Errors* and in *The Taming of the Shrew*, typical characters from Latin or Italian comedy are introduced, but they are set amidst surroundings which suggest London or Stratford. In *The Two Gentlemen* Shakspere even makes the elementary geographical blunder of representing Valentine as journeying from Verona to Milan by sea. It is therefore startling, when we turn to *Romeo and Juliet* (drawn, like *The Two Gentlemen*, from the annals of Verona), to find it steeped in distinctively Italian colour, and yet more amazing to see in *The Merchant of Venice* intimate knowledge of the city of the lagoons and its neighbourhood. The most satisfactory way of accounting for the contrast is, as has already been stated, to conclude that Shakspere had in the interval visited the North of Italy[1]. Never again did he so magically reproduce the atmosphere of the South as in these dramas, the fruit, it would thus appear, of his *Wanderjahre*, as the early histories and comedies were of his *Lehrjahre*. So, in later years, *Macbeth*, there is good reason to hold, was written after a recent visit to Scotland. In an age of universal travel, why should Shakspere, of all men, be confined within the narrow seas, and be supposed to have never crossed the Alps or 'swum in a gondola'?

The date of **ROMEO AND JULIET** cannot be exactly determined. It was first published in quarto in 1597, with the inscription 'as it hath been often (with great applause) plaid publiquely by the right Honourable the Lord of Hunsdon his Servants.' The word 'often' opens up an indefinite vista backwards, and makes it certain that the play had been written and acted in some form for an appreciable period before it was printed. How long was that period? Some inquirers base their answer upon the Nurse's words, ''Tis since the earthquake now eleven years,' which in all probability refer to the earthquake of 1580. If the garrulous old lady's chronology is to be

1 See note to pp. 110-111.

trusted, this would give 1591 as the date of the play, and it contains without doubt passages written in rhyme and full of conceits, rhetoric, and verbal quips in the dramatist's earliest manner. But, on the other hand, Shakspere is not likely to have visited Italy at so early a date, and moreover there are features in this first edition of the tragedy, such as the elaborated portraiture of the chief characters and the beauty of much of the blank verse, that point to a period of comparative maturity. The presumption, therefore, is that Shakspere was occupied with his theme during a number of years, and that it took definite literary shape about 1595-6, not long after a continental journey[1].

The story over which the young dramatist thus lingered so lovingly was one which had for already more than a century touched the hearts of men[2]. It has been first told, with Mariotto and Gianozza of Siena as hero and heroine, and with some harshness and extravagance of detail, by the novelist Masuccio of Salerno in 1476. Some sixty years later Luigi da Porto retold the tale in altered and heightened form, introducing for the first time the names of Romeo and Giulietta, and making them children of the rival Veronese houses, Capelletti and Montecchi. In its essential features his romance resembles Shakspere's play, but it differs in one important detail. Romeo, at Juliet's tomb, drinks the poison, but before he is cold in death, his bride awakes, and they have a last passionate dialogue, while folded in each other's arms. In 1554 another novelist, Bandello, included the story in his collection of *Novelle*, and added to it fresh features. He brings into prominence the 'Rosaline' episode, he uses the name Paris for Romeo's rival, and above all he is the first to mention the Nurse as the lovers' go-between. A French translation of Bandello's

1 The further question arises Does this quarto of 1597 do justice to the play as it stood in that year, or is it an imperfect version? For in 1599 appeared a second quarto edition, 'newly corrected, augmented, and amended,' which forms the basis of our present text of the play. In many passages the two quartos are absolutely identical, in others the later edition gives in expanded form speeches which the earlier had only outlined, and in a few scenes, such as the marriage of Romeo and Juliet at the Friar's cell, and the lamentation over Juliet's supposed dead body, they essentially differ At first sight the inference would be that Shakspere, having put into print in 1597 the result of his labours up to that date, had been still attracted by the theme, and had given it further elaboration, which took final form in 1599 But various passages which occur only in the second quarto are not such as Shakspere's more mature hand would have been at all likely to add Among these is Lady Capulet's fantastic description of Paris in rhyming couplets (Act 1. Scene 3) On the other hand, several of the very finest scenes, such as the dialogues between Romeo and Juliet after the ball and at their last interview, are substantially the same in both quartos. There is thus great plausibility in Daniel's conjecture, in his edition of the parallel texts, that the quarto of 1597 is a pirated version 'made up partly from copies of portions of the original play, partly from recollection and from notes taken during the performance' The quarto of 1599 gives the true representation of the play, though it had 'received some slight augmentations, and in some few places' (those where there is a broad difference between the two versions) 'must have been entirely re-written.'

2 An account of the earlier versions of the story is given in Dowden's essay on *Romeo and Juliet* in his *Transcripts and Studies*, to which I am indebted.

romance was issued in 1559 by Pierre Boisteau, who originated the close of the tale afterwards followed by Shakspere, wherein Romeo dies before Juliet awakes from her trance, only to end her life, not through the violence of her grief, as in the earlier versions, but through the self-inflicted stroke of her husband's dagger. Boisteau's tale was soon made familiar to English readers by Arthur Brooke's metrical paraphrase *Romeus and Juliet*, 1562, and William Painter's prose translation, in his collection of novels, *The Palace of Pleasure*, 1567. Brooke declares that he had seen the same argument lately set forth on the stage, and there would thus appear to have been some early dramatic version of the theme which has not come down to us, though it may have been known to Shakspere, and used by him. In any case, Brooke's own poem must have furnished the basis for Shakspere's crowning treatment of the story. It was Brooke who first gave prominence to the character of the Nurse, and put into her mouth speeches which the dramatist followed in parts with curious fidelity. It was Brooke also who invented the scene of Romeo's despair in the Friar's cell after the murder of Tybalt, and it was he who called Friar Lawrence's messenger John instead of Anselm. Nor was *Romeus and Juliet* an unworthy model. It was a well-proportioned narrative, in long flowing couplets, consisting of an Alexandrine followed by a Septenar. This metre, which Surrey had made fashionable, was skilfully handled by Brooke, and in spite of overdone antithesis, and of occasional luxuriance of sensuous description, balanced by a vein of sententious moralizing, the poem was warmed with true pathos, and showed an eye for dramatic types and situations. But dominating every other personality is that of Fortune, who sports with her victims as she pleases, lifting them to a height only afterwards to cast them down in her rage. The same conception of Fortune was inspiring at almost the same date *The Mirror for Magistrates*, and it should certainly be borne in mind in the consideration of the play.

The story, which had run through so many channels before it reached Shakspere, throbbed in every vein with the life of Italy. There alone amorous passion shot up with lightning swiftness into fever heat; there alone the family vendetta drenched the streets with blood; there alone the stiletto and the poison-phial were weapons of daily use. In Shakspere's version this atmosphere is faithfully perpetuated. The season is midsummer, and the fiery sun beats down from a cloudless heaven upon street and square, setting the mad blood astir in the brawler's veins, and making pedestrianism on romantic errands a weariness of the flesh to ladies of ripe years, in

spite of attendant fan-bearers. The nights are only softer days, not made for sleep, but for masque and dance, or for lingering in moonlit gardens, where the fruit-tree tops are tipped with silver, and the nightingale pants forth her song from the deep pomegranate bower. The one hour of coolness is the dawn, when flowers and herbs are still dank with heavy dew, and hermit or lover, who fears the garish eyes of noon, may steal forth into the fields or the sycamore-grove. Under such skies life is lived with an intensity which may compress the passion of years into a few hours. And thus Shakspere, with a masterly innovation upon Brooke and the novelists, shortened the action of the story to little more than four days, from Sunday morning but 'new struck nine' to the dim dawn of Thursday. During that brief tract of time events stride on in such precipitate sequence that we are fain to follow them breathlessly, and it is only when all is over that we pause to ask the meaning of the play as a whole. As soon as we do so, we realize that *Romeo and Juliet* leaves upon different minds the most opposite impressions. By the majority of readers it is regarded as a unique offering laid by the poet on the shrine of Cupid, at once the most musical of paeans over the triumphant glory of love, and the most musical of elegies over its brittleness and briefness in a cold and cruel world. To others the play is a record, pitiful yet inexorable, of the disasters wrought by ill-regulated passion, whether of love or hate, and one more warning that the μηδεν αγαν is the true guiding principle of life. Let us endeavour, by an examination of the drama, to trace these conflicting impressions to their source.

It has been seen that in several of Shakspere's plays there is an enveloping political plot. The peculiarity of *Romeo and Juliet* is that the political plot does not merely form the background to the main action, but is one of its integral elements. The rivalry of the Montagues and the Capulets gives a tragic bias to what would otherwise be a story of youthful love, and it is therefore rightly made the subject of the opening scene. The biting of thumbs by the serving-men, pugnacious within the safe limits of the law, prepares the way for the entrance of Tybalt, the champion of the Capulet claims, the professional duellist with the lore of the fencing school at his finger-tips who 'fights as you sing prick-song, keeps time, distance, and proportion: rests me his minim rest, one, two, and the third in your bosom'. To such a swashbuckler even the mild Benvolio's presence is a call to arms, and the result is speedily a general fray swollen by partisans of either house, and by citizens who hate both equally, till the entrance of the Prince stops the tumult on pain of death. Thus

the rival families are marshalled face to face at the very outset of the action, and the chief of the state, though he is seen for only the briefest interval, launches the edict which is to have fateful consequences hereafter.

From the ranks of the Montague swordsmen there has been one remarkable absentee. The aged head of the house has flourished his blade in defence of the family honour, but Romeo, the son and heir, is nowhere to be seen. His mother's anxious inquiry elicits the news that he has been espied before dawn, stealing alone towards a grove of sycamore, and we further learn that such is his wont, and that at the first streak of light he creeps home to his chamber where he pens himself in artificial night. We are thus warned, before Romeo appears in person, that he is apart from his kinsmen in nature and sympathies. There is a sentimental strain in his character, and at the outset he and Proteus, though they develop so differently, have a certain likeness. His entrance gives the key to his strange humour. He is in love with the lady Rosaline, but his suit is in vain. Hence his passion for solitude, his sighs, and his tears. But neither the love nor the misery, we are persuaded, can be very deep that finds its vent in unmeaning fantastic antithesis, the *reductio ad absurdum* of 'the numbers that Petrarch flowed in.' A heart that is really breaking does not explode in verbal fireworks about 'anything of nothing first created.' This calf-love of Romeo is adopted by Shakspere from Brooke, and it is probably a mistake to invest it with too great significance. That there enters into Romeo's character a vein of weakness, of volatile emotion, cannot be denied, but it is important to notice that whenever Shakspere gives it prominence he is following closely in the wake of Brooke, and that in the scenes due to his own invention the more sterling and genuinely impassioned side of his hero's nature is developed. The retention of the Rosaline episode is very possibly due to the fact that it prepares the way for one of those instances of the irony of fortune which stud the drama. Benvolio bids Romeo attend the feast of the Capulets that he may forget his mistress in the light of other eyes, and Romeo, though he assents, does so with protestations of unswerving fidelity to Rosaline. But even while he is on the way to the palace of the rival house, he is haunted by presentiments that his fate is not in his own hands:

> 'My mind misgives
> Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
> Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
> With this night's revels.'

And so it proves: Romeo has but to change eyes with Juliet, and

his love in idleness for Rosaline is annihilated, only to give place to a far more absorbing passion. Benvolio's well-meant panacea becomes the root of a direr malady than it was devised to cure.

Of Juliet and her surroundings we have had glimpses before this fateful meeting, sufficient to show that she too is apart in temper from her kindred, and that love is something as yet outside her experience or even her vision. She has reached the age where under southern skies girlhood is trembling into womanhood, and those around her are eager to hasten the process. Her father indeed, for the present, looks upon her as a child, 'a stranger in the world'; but her budding beauty has attracted the gaze of the handsome and well-born County Paris, who is anxious to make her his bride. He finds ready allies in Juliet's two female companions, her mother and her nurse. Lady Capulet is the very type of the starched and conventional woman of quality, who having gone through the duties of matrimony and maternity at the regulation age for 'ladies of esteem,' propounds to her daughter 'in brief' that a similar opportunity is now offered to her. But the thin phrases that trickle from her lips are drowned in the torrent of the Nurse's loquacity. The admirable sketch of this personage given by Brooke is developed by Shakspere with the richest humour. Plebeian to the core she has yet caught by long association with people of rank a surface air of importance, and she is given a place in the family council. She is not without genuine affection for her youthful charge, but this is subordinate to a singular interest in Juliet's enjoyment of pleasures that are now beyond her own reach. Her tongue rambles here and there, backwards and forwards, but always dropping concrete phrases of the most suggestive kind. But to the promptings alike of convention and of sensuality Juliet turns a deaf ear. Marriage, even with 'a man of wax' is an honour that she dreams not of; the utmost that she will offer is the non-committing promise: 'I'll look to like, if looking liking move.' Thus if Romeo's false sense of security before the critical moment of his fate is due to his heart being already occupied, Juliet's springs from exactly the contrary reason, that hers is absolutely vacant. They meet, and from that moment they live only in and for each other. It is useless to criticize the plausibility of this instantaneous passion; the reality of love at first sight is an axiom in the Shaksperean drama. That Romeo should at once salute his new mistress with a kiss is in accord with the fashion of the time, as is also the lyrical form and imagery of their opening dialogue, which falls almost into sonnet shape. But the graceful phrases of compliment die down under the horror of the mutual discovery that Romeo

is a Montague and Juliet a Capulet. And instead there rise the passionate protests against the cruel irony of fate:

'*Rom.* Is she a Capulet?
O dear account, my life is my foe's debt.
Jul. My only love sprung from my only hate,
Too early seen unknown, and known too late.'

But destiny, that has produced 'this prodigious birth of love,' is determined to further its growth. Romeo, when the ball is over, takes shelter in the garden of the Capulets, beneath Juliet's window, and under the screen of darkness hears his mistress confess her love for him in a soliloquy to the night-air. With a nature such as Juliet's, passionate in the depths, but proud and steeped in maidenly delicacy on the surface, the first avowal of affection, above all to a hereditary foe, would be hard to make, and could only be the result of long effort. It was thus a stroke of the most delicate insight on Shakspere's part—for the device is his own—to represent Juliet as betrayed by unforeseen chance into the revelation of her new-born feeling. But her confession once taken by surprise, she is too nobly sincere to draw back: she covers her confusion with some charmingly arch sallies, and the protestation that she'll prove more true 'than those that have more cunning to be strange.' And the playful tone soon deepens into that of passionate, unmeasured self-surrender:

'My bounty is as boundless as the sea;
My love as deep: the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.'

But again the presage of woe to come overshadows the scene:

'Although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract to-night:
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be,
Ere one can say it lightens.'

Yet, in spite of forebodings, Juliet knows that there is only one way now by which she and her lover can be united, and this, with quiet resolution, she determines to take. Let him send her word to-morrow where and what time he will marry her, and she will come to him, and be his for evermore.

The simplicity and directness of Juliet's bearing in this scene have been often contrasted with the more brooding emotion of Romeo. His language is certainly fuller of imagery, recalling sometimes in softened form his earlier utterances, and he abandons himself more unreservedly to the luxury of sentiment while forgetting the practical

dangers of his situation. But it is surely going beyond Shakspere's purpose to look upon Romeo as a 'study' in over-luxuriant, half-unreal emotion. The more such a point is pressed, the less justification is there for Juliet's self-surrender, and the less productive of 'pity and terror' is the collision in the drama between the two passions of love and hate. The primary aim of the poet in this his earliest tragedy is neither to give elaborate studies of character, nor to point morals, but to tell in moving fashion an old-world tale of 'star-crossed lovers' and their 'misadventured piteous overthrows.'

It is important to bear this in mind in turning to the scene in Friar Laurence's cell. Of the abrupt transitions that mark the play throughout, the most striking is the change from the passionate interview between the two lovers in the moonlit garden, to the solitary figure of the hermit, with the grey dawn breaking over him, as he sets out, osier-cage in hand, to gather weeds and flowers. These products of the earth suggest to him an analogy in human nature:

> 'Within the infant rind of this weak flower
> Poison hath residence, and medicine power.
> For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part,
> Being tasted, stays all senses with the heart.
> Two such opposed Kings encamp them still
> In man as well as herbs—grace and rude will,
> And when the worser is predominant
> Full soon the canker death eats up the plant.'

Kreyssig and Gervinus find in these words the keynote of the drama, and look upon the Friar as playing the part of the classical chorus, which was the mouthpiece of the poet's own sentiments. Shakspere, according to this interpretation, censures the lovers for yielding to 'rude will' or passion instead of being regulated by 'grace' or gentle moderation. But adherents of the Romantic school from Schlegel onwards, have refused to see in the Friar's words anything more than a suitable dramatic utterance. The problem is, without doubt, perplexing. Though Shakspere never identifies himself absolutely with any single character, yet certain of his creations make the impression of representing him more fully than others, and it must be allowed that the hermit's moralizing phrases are introduced and repeated with what sounds like deliberate emphasis. But this doctrine of moderation in love is nowhere else found in Shakspere's writings. Bassanio, Orlando, and Ferdinand offer whole-hearted, enthusiastic devotion to their mistresses, and no moralist rebukes them for their want of circumspection. Is not the pathetic failure of Ophelia's life owing to her obedience to a shallow worldly wisdom rather than the dictates of her own heart? Why then should Romeo and

Juliet, the glowing creations of the dramatist's youth, alone be condemned out of his own mouth? There is another interpretation which in some degree reconciles the opposing views. All through the drama there runs the note of tragic predestination. It has had utterance from the lips of Romeo and Juliet, but merely as a vague presentiment. In the Friar's mouth it naturally takes a moralizing form and is made the occasion of a sermon on man's unruliness. As the hero and heroine repeat time after time their apprehensions of evil to come, so, after his own fashion, does the Friar. Hence the prominence given to his warnings: they are part of the ever-swelling burden of the drama that the ecstasies of love are brief and brittle: they must not be simply set aside as prosy commonplaces, but they cannot be accepted as the full and final judgement upon love and life by Shakspere, the Shakspere of the Sonnets to Will. And indeed, if Romeo and Juliet, swayed by passion, become the victims of an ironical destiny, is this less true of the cautious Laurence with all his saws and maxims? Romeo bursts into the cell, his tongue on fire with the exciting news of his last night's fortunes. He cannot stop to give details, but blurts out breathlessly his main object:

> 'When, where, and how,
> We met, we wooed, and made exchange of vow
> I'll tell thee as we pass; but this I pray
> That thou consent to marry us to-day.'

The churchman blames the young waverer's precipitancy, but thinks to bring good out of evil: a match between a Montague and a Capulet may turn the households' rancour to pure love. Is not this amiable confidence as bitterly mocked by the sequel as the hopes of the wooers, who that very afternoon are made man and wife? The scene is brief but intensely significant. Romeo's joy utters itself, as usual, in highly-wrought phrase, while Juliet's is too deep for words. Both alike are thrilled in every vein with the passion that speaks in Romeo's adjuration:

> 'Do thou but close our hands with holy words,
> Then love-devouring death do what he dare,
> It is enough I may but call her mine.'

And again in sharpest contrast rings out the Friar's warning:

> 'These violent delights have violent ends,
> And in their triumph die: like fire and powder,
> Which, as they kiss, consume.'

And even as the prophecy is uttered events are taking place, not

far off, which are to hasten their fulfilment. In the town-square, under the noonday sun, there is gathered a crowd of Montague retainers, with Benvolio and Mercutio at their head. Mercutio has already made his appearance on several occasions, but now he first becomes a real factor in the plot. For his character Shakspere found the slightest hints in his originals. Brooke simply speaks of him as 'courteous of speech and pleasant of devise,' with an ice-cold hand. Out of such meagre materials Shakspere created the brilliant figure who forms as admirable a foil to Romeo as, after a different fashion, the Nurse to Juliet. The brooding, emotional temperament of the heir of the Montagues finds its complete antithesis in the sparkling vivacity of his friend, in whom we may detect a touch of likeness to Valentine, while as yet he crowed like a cock and was not 'metamorphosed with a mistress.' But Mercutio's flashing wit and nimble tongue are all his own, and every form of affectation, or what he deems to be such, gets a volley from him in turn. Dreams and omens, over which Romeo ponders, are to him 'the children of an idle brain' to be quizzed away as old wives' tales of Mab and her antics. And as his estimate of dreams thus resembles that of Theseus, so he takes much the same view of the relation of lovers, poets, and madmen, though he throws it into the form of a jest, and not of serious reflection:

> 'Romeo, humours, madman, passion, lover!
> Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh:
> Speak but one rhyme, and I am satisfied.'

But Mercutio's very mockery is not without its poetic note, as his 'brilliant arabesque of fancies about Queen Mab' is sufficient to show. A splendid zest in real life, an ingrained scorn of all affectation, a somewhat distant bowing acquaintance with the proprieties, give salt and savour to his wit, though it be a trifle over-pungent for delicate ears. A 'French slop' and a French salutation equally stir his derision, but what absolutely sticks in his throat is the fantastic etiquette of the fencing-school, of which Tybalt is the professional representative. It is the grudge borne by the mettlesome swordsman against the tactician, the 'villain that fights by the book of arithmetic,' that throws Mercutio, who belongs to neither house, upon the Montague side. Thus when Tybalt appears, he attempts to provoke him into open quarrel, but the Capulet champion is seeking Romeo, who enters immediately afterwards fresh from his marriage with Juliet, and determined not to be drawn into combat with any one of the Capulet name. His refusal to take up the challenge which Tybalt throws

in his teeth so incenses Mercutio that his rapier is out in a moment and crossed with his foe's, and when Romeo seeks to beat the weapons down, Tybalt lunges under his arm and gives Mercutio the wound that, though 'not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door,' makes of him 'a grave man.' And so, game to the last, with jests and maledictions mingling on his lips, the gallant spirit 'aspires the clouds,' and the scene darkens as he disappears. Once again, and the episode is Shakspere's own, fate has made mock of Romeo, but her fury is yet far from spent. Tybalt re-enters in triumph, and Romeo, maddened by the thought of Mercutio slain in his quarrel and through his intervention, turns on the murderer and sends his soul to keep company with his victim's. Then the horror of the situation flashes upon him, and he rushes off with the agonized cry on his lips, 'O, I am fortune's fool.' And, as after the earlier fray, the Prince again enters, with Capulets and Montagues on either hand. Death is too heavy a penalty for so provoked an offence, but the stern alternative is perpetual banishment, and that to Romeo is very death in life.

From the hurtle of steel under the open sky we pass to Juliet's solitary watch-chamber, whence she leans out with eyes fixed on the westward sloping sun, that seems to sink so slowly to his grave. And as she gazes, there floats from the lips of the maiden wife the *epithalamium*, the marriage hymn which no voice save her own could sing over her strange and stolen bridal. Passionate is her invocation, passionate as the blood bating in her cheeks, but pure—pure as her own stainless maidenhood. Love with Shakspere rose from the first high above the level of sense where Marlowe had held it down, but it never floats away into a bloodless abstraction. It is the travail of one being to be united to another in body, soul, and spirit, and this complex longing is frankly made articulate in Juliet's lyric to 'Night.' 'A heart,' it has been finely said, 'may be as pure as snow or as pure as flame, and Juliet's is of the latter kind.'

The reverie is abruptly broken by the entrance of the Nurse with confused babble of lamentation, whence at last there surges to the surface the news of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment. In fierce revulsion of feeling Juliet for the moment launches forth reproaches against her husband, but the frigid chain of meaningless antitheses that issues from her lips proves that her anger has as little pith as Romeo's early love which found similar expression. The instant that the Nurse begins to follow her lead, she recants, and eagerly catches at the proposal to send to him where he is hid at Laurence's cell.

There Romeo lies 'with his own tears made drunk' in the very luxury of woe, hugging, as it were, his sentence of banishment deliriously to him, and battening on its stored up misery. He is utterly unmanned; and those who, like Kreyssig, see in the play a scientific diagnosis of emotion, point to Romeo as the example of the ruin wrought in a life which makes the blunder of taking love as the sum total of existence. But in this scene Shakspere follows Brooke with unusual closeness, and the original responsibility for the not very edifying picture of Romeo in his collapse rests with the poet rather than the dramatist. Indeed Shakspere, as compared with Brooke, takes a more sympathetic view of Romeo's distracted mood, and the Friar's conventional counsels and proffer of 'philosophy' as a balm for the heartache are met with the pregnant rejoinder, 'Thou canst not speak of that thou dost not feel.' But what philosophy cannot do is effected by the thought of a last meeting with Juliet. Over that meeting itself, which Brooke reports in full, Shakspere with fine reticence draws the veil: at the threshold of the marriage chamber his muse ever stays her foot. All that is made known to us, and all that we need to know is the ineffable sorrow of the parting at dawn. Here again Shakspere has chosen a lyric mould, borrowing, perhaps unconsciously, the favourite Provencal 'dawn-song' wherein two lovers debate whether the daylight hour of parting be already come. But though the form be one of Shakspere's many debts to mediaevalism, his alone is the magical melody of lines, which distil at once love's quintessential rapture and its infinite sum of pain. But the bitter-sweet parting is over at last, and Romeo climbs down the rope-ladder. As he touches the ground, again from Juliet's lips rises the presaging cry:

> 'O God, I have an ill-divining soul:
> Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low,
> As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.'

But vague presentiments soon sink in present fear. Lady Capulet enters with the news that Juliet is to be consoled for Tybalt's death by being made the joyful bride of Paris on Thursday next. Barely has the girl-wife time to answer in words of double meaning that when she marries

> 'It shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate,
> Rather than Paris,'

when her father bursts in to hear how she has received his 'decree.' Capulet has hitherto shown no lack of tenderness to his daughter, and

the device of the marriage has been well-intentioned enough, but resistance inflames his autocratic temper into almost frenzied irritability. With volley upon volley of coarse abuse he shouts down the girl, the pallor on whose cheeks earns for her the epithets of 'green-sickness carrion' and 'tallow-face.' In vain Juliet pleads at his feet for mercy; equally in vain she appeals to her mother whose stony silence is as cruel as the lash of Capulet's tongue. Only one friend is left to her, the Nurse, and to her she turns in words of simple, imploring earnestness,

'O God, O Nurse, how shall this be prevented?'

But the sensuous element in the Nurse's affection for her young mistress betrays her at the critical moment; the thought of a second marriage with a lovely gentleman, to whom Romeo is a 'dishclout,' has an irresistible fascination for her; the first husband dead or useless, it is the very height of luck to get another. The Nurse has indeed given Juliet marvellous much comfort: the gross proposal teaches her the secret strength of her own stainless love, and with a solemn 'Amen' she isolates herself from the whole Capulet household for ever. At a single shock the girl is transformed into the heroic woman.

Her instinct guides her to the Friar for help: he who has made her Romeo's wife can surely teach her how to keep this new wooer at bay. At the cell she meets the County himself, who has come to make preparation for the marriage rite, and who with confident familiarity salutes her as 'my lady and my wife.' Steeled to prefect outward self-control she answers with incisive badinage, but the door once shut on Paris, she utters the agonized cry of one 'past hope, past cure, past help.' The breakdown is only for a moment, and the Friar's plan for her salvation, desperate though it be, rekindles her dauntless spirit. Eagerly she grasps the phial with the opiate that is to lull her into the very counterfeit of death. 'Give me, give me! O tell not me of fear.' And with the same unfaltering resolve, in the solitude and silence of her own chamber, she drinks the strange draught. For a brief space her courage falters as she conjures up a vision of the charnel-house and its horrors, but there flashes before her gaze the image of Tybalt's ghost ranging for revenge on Romeo, and she empties the vial with a confused sense that she is rushing to her husband's aid:

'Stay, Tybalt, stay.
Romeo, I come: this do I drink to thee.'

So when the Nurse enters to wake Juliet on Wednesday morning for the bridal with Paris she is found lying in seeming death. And from lips lately so cruel or so perversely kind there rises a chorus of hollow lamentation, couched in that interjectional verbiage which Shakspere uses throughout the play to mark unreal emotion of whatever kind. Amid such a mockery of sorrow Juliet is borne forth to her mock funeral in the vault of the Capulets.

The Friar's plans have been skilfully laid, but it is now his turn, for all his craft, to become 'fortune's fool.' His messenger to Romeo is accidentally delayed, and meanwhile Balthasar hastens to Mantua. Once again, as on the eve of his first meeting with his love, Romeo has had a dream, but now—and it is fortune's most satiric stroke—it presages joyful news at hand. In answer to this presage comes Balthasar's announcement that Juliet 'is well,' for her body sleeps in Capulet's monument, and her immortal part is with the angels. The malice of fortune has dealt its most exquisite blow, and the wretched man whom it has hunted from point to point now at last turns to bay: *'Is it e'en so? then I defy you, stars!'* To-night he will lie with Juliet: a poison phial will invalidate all decrees of banishment. But Fortune does not leave her victim's challenge unanswered. At the door of the Capulets' monument (and again the episode is Shakspere's addition) Romeo chances upon Paris, who has come to strew flowers by his lady's bier. Gentle appeals to fly are met with violence, and again Romeo is fain to redden his sword with an adversary's life-blood. He has come to offer Death a second victim, but its detestable maw has claimed a third. The young, the fair, the loving—these are they for whom its jaws gape widest, and as Romeo turns to gaze on the face of his bride, with 'beauty's ensign' yet crimson in her lips and in her cheeks, one last gorgeous flash of the old fancy leaps up in the thought that Death, not Paris, is his rival for Julia's hand:

> 'Shall I believe
> That unsubstantial death is amorous,
> And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
> Thee here in dark to be his paramour?'

Juliet had drained her phial, that she might hasten between her lover and Tybalt's angry ghost; so Romeo tosses off the poison to shield his wife from the caresses of the grim power that reigns in 'this palace of dim night.' The drugs are quick, and with but one kiss Romeo shakes off 'the yoke of inauspicious stars' for ever.

Yet his death itself is a counter in Fortune's malignant game, which a few added moments of life would have spoilt. Juliet awakes only

to hear from the lips of the Friar the confession that old heads as well as young hearts may be baffled in their purposes:

> 'A greater Power than we can contradict
> Hath thwarted our intents.'

Her husband indeed lies in her bosom, but his immortal part has gone the way that she had only feigned to go. She has wakened to find the world empty of all that gave it glory: there is nothing left but to sink back into sleep, the self-sought ever-lasting sleep of death. And when all is over, as the grey dawn begins to glimmer in the sky, again and for the last time, Montagues and Capulets meet face to face, and gaze upon the ruin that the hate of the houses has wrought. In the infinite pity of the spectacle even mourning is hushed: the fiery greybeards bow the head in silence, while the Prince sternly upbraids them with the tragic issue of their strife. The friar too, when he has briefly told his tale, is dumb; moralizing maxims can avail nothing in the sight of those fair young bodies stretched in death. But sentimental elegiacs would be equally out of place. The story unfolded has been one of destiny. No *a priori* ideas that Shakspere is pre-eminently the poet of free will as opposed to necessity should prevent us recognizing that in *Romeo and Juliet*, following the steps of Brooke, and treating a characteristically mediaeval theme, he has given to Fate a prominence unique in his writings. The lovers have been 'star-crossed,' and in their 'misadventured piteous overthrows' they merit neither blame nor praise. Still less does Shakspere explicitly strike the transcendental note of the modern poet that 'Love is all, and Death is nought.' Yet he does not leave us bowed in barren sorrow. Over the dead bodies of their children, Montagu and Capulet clasp hands, and the family vendetta is stayed for ever. The love of 'true and faithful' Juliet and her Romeo has been the love spoken of in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

> 'Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,
> Brief as the lightning in the collied night
> That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
> And ere a man hath power to say, Behold!
> The jaws of darkness do devour it up.'

But lightning, the elemental force, though it carry death and terror with it, purges and purifies the world's atmosphere. So is it with the equally elemental force of love.

The date of **THE MERCHANT OF VENICE** has not been accurately fixed. Two quarto editions were printed in 1600, and Meres men-

tions the play in his list, so that it must be earlier than 1598. Henslowe, in his diary, mentions under the date August 25, 1594, *The Venesyon Comedy,* but the mere title, when so many dramas dealt with Italy, does not warrant the inference that this was Shakspere's play. The internal evidence is inconclusive. There is a considerable percentage of rhyming lines, including one quatrain and a few cases of doggrel, but they are used in almost every case with a specific purpose, and are by no means necessarily signs of immaturity. They occur chiefly in the 'scrolls' hidden within the caskets, and in the short *staccato* speeches which these suggest to the wooers, or in the epigrammatic utterances which bring a scene to its close. The play is allied to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in the prominence given to the theme of friendship between men, as also in the resemblance of Launcelot and Nerissa to Launce and Lucetta, while the dialogue between Portia and her waiting-woman about the suitors is a wittier and more elaborate version of that between Julia and her maid. But the style marks a considerable advance upon that of *The Two Gentlemen,* for the blank verse is fuller in tone and more varied in cadence, and for the first time prose is used in serious scenes. The play, moreover, is almost entirely devoid of the interest of 'mistaken identity' which distinguishes the earliest group of comedies. Instead of this somewhat primitive device, we have a highly elaborate plot, or combination of plots, introducing, besides minor figures, two full-length portraits, conceived and executed with masterly insight and vigour. If we assume further that the play was written after a visit to Venice, and that incidents in the year 1594, of which we shall have to speak, influenced its composition, we can scarcely be far wrong in dating it about 1595.

The story, or rather the group of stories, which Shakspere used in *The Merchant of Venice* had had a long literary history[1]. Probably Shakspere found them already combined and worked up in dramatic

1 The tale of the Bond, with a pound of flesh as the forfeiture, has been variously traced back to Eastern, Teutonic, and Roman sources. It had entered English literature as early as the thirteenth century, for Miss Toulmin Smith has pointed out a version of it in the *Cursor Mundi,* the Northumbrian religious poem of that date. The usurer is a Jew, who, however, is forgiven his offence on promising to point out where the Holy Rood is hid. The story is found at the end of the fourteenth century in the Anglo-Latin (not the somewhat earlier original Latin) version of the *Gesta Romanorum,* the great mediaeval collection of tales, translated into English about 1450. In this the usurer, instead of a Jew, is a merchant at Rome, but we have a lady introduced, who by her pleading saves the victim. It is, however, in another collection of romances, *Il Pecorone,* by Ser Giovanni, a notary of Florence, about 1378, that we find the version of the story most akin to that used by Shakspeare. Here the usurer is a Jew of Venice; it is a lady from Belmont who devises the plan for avoiding the forfeiture, and the incident of the ring is introduced. A ballad of uncertain date, 'showing the cruelty of Gernutus a Jew,' makes no mention of a lady, but in some minor details, e.g., the representation of the bond by the usurer as a jest, the allusion to the debtor's ships as being all at sea, and the sharpening of the knife, it shows such a curious resemblance to *The Merchant of Venice* that some critics have supposed that it was suggested by the play. The story of the caskets is first found

form; for Gosson, in his *Schole of Abuse*, 1579, excepts from his splenetic criticisms a few plays, including '*The Jew*, shown at the Bull, representing the greediness of wordly chusers, and the bloody minds of usurers.' This brief *précis* of the plot proves that the work must have included the two main stories found in *The Merchant of Venice*, and, to earn Gosson's admission that it was 'tolerable at some time,' it must have had unusual merits. Had it been preserved we should have very possibly found that it bore somewhat of the same relation to *The Merchant of Venice* as *The Taming of a Shrew* to *The Taming of the Shrew*, or the old *King John* to Shakspere's play of like name. But however this may be, there can be no doubt that in Marlowe's Barabas he found the literary prototype of the main figure in the play. Of the relation between Barabas and Shylock something has been already said[1], and here therefore it is chiefly necessary to emphasize the fact that the whole episode of Jessica and her Christian lover, of which there is no hint in *Il Pecorone*, is obviously modelled upon that of Abigail and Don Matthias in *The Jew of Malta*.

But Shakspere was probably influenced by other than purely literary precedents. The long-prevalent tradition that Jews were unknown in England between the time of Edward I and the Protectorate, and that thus Shakspere must either have been entirely unacquainted with them, or have met them abroad, has been completely disproved from examination of the State papers and other authoritative sources. A tract written between 1600 and 1625 expressly declares 'a store of Jewes we have in England; a few in court; many i' th' Citty, more in the countrey.' Furthermore, as has been shown by Mr. S. L. Lee[2], during the earlier years of Shakspere's London life, a Jewish doctor—Roderigo Lopez by name—held a very prominent position in the capital, and must have been well known to many members of the theatrical profession. He was physician to Lord Leicester, and at a later date to the Queen herself. He thus formed an intimacy with the general body of the courtiers, among whom the young Earl of Essex was the rising leader. Essex, with whom Shakspere's friend Southampton was so closely connected, employed Lopez, who was a

in the mediaeval romance *Barlaam and Josaphat*, written in Greek by Joannes Damascenus, about 800. The device is there used by a king to teach his courtiers the vanity of appearances. In Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and likewise in Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, there is a story of a king who uses caskets to point a moral, but merely that of the capriciousness of fortune. The *Gesta Romanorum* contains the version which Shakspere adopted with modifications in his play. An emperor of Rome, in order to test the character of the lady whom his son is to marry, makes her choose one of three caskets, of gold, silver, and lead, with inscriptions almost the same as those in *The Merchant of Venice*.

1 See pp. 50-52. See also Elze's *Essays on Shakspere*, pp 72-79.

2 *In The Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1889.

master of foreign languages, as interpreter in his communications with Antonio Perez, a Portuguese refugee at the English court. Perez was a pretender to the throne of his native land, which Philip of Spain wished to annex to his dominions, and he naturally received support from the Queen and her advisers. He showed, however, little capacity for his part, and Lopez gradually became estranged from him and his patron Essex. The doctor even agreed with agents of Philip to poison Perez, and overtures were made to him to put Elizabeth out of the way by similar means. This he emphatically refused to do, but Essex, discovering that a plot against the Queen was in progress, succeeded, by threats of torture, in implicating Lopez, who was tried before a special commission in the Guildhall, and executed amidst the jeering execrations of the city crowd at Tyburn in the spring of 1594. Even after his death the popular excitement was kept alive by the publication of five official accounts of his treason. It can therefore be no mere chance that Henslowe, in his diary, mentions no less than twenty representations, between May, 1594 and the end of the year, of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. The 'groundlings,' with the execution of Lopez fresh in their minds, would appreciate with more than usual zest plays which introduced members of his race in an odious light, and it is in the highest degree probable that it was under these influences that Shakspere began *The Merchant of Venice*. There is furthermore great plausibility in Mr. Lee's ingenious conjecture that the name Antonio for Shylock's victim, which is not found in the earlier stories, and which is Portuguese rather than Italian, was taken from Antonio Perez, who after the execution of the doctor became a popular hero. But even if this be considered doubtful, it is perfectly certain that Shakspere had opportunities of acquiring first-hand knowledge of Jewish life without leaving England, and it must assuredly be counted as part of the tragic inheritance of the Hebrew race, that it should have attracted Shakspere's gaze at the moment of its deepest degradation, when for it alone the Renaissance was in no sense a 'new birth,' and when Luther himself had only sought to rivet faster its chains; and it is perhaps the most convincing proof of Shakspere's almost superhuman plastic power that for the majority of modern readers Shylock, a product of the dramatic imagination, has supplanted the great historical figures of law-givers and prophets as the type of the sons of Israel.

The play, which has had so transcendent an influence on the popular mind, presents a problem of the utmost difficulty to critical students. It has already been shown that there runs through many

of Shakspere's dramas a leading theme which appears, with variations, in the several sections of the plot. Thus there is nothing *a priori* inadmissible in the many attempts that have been made to discover such a theme in *The Merchant of Venice*, and thereby to fix a central point round which the whole action revolves. But each of these solutions has been in turn found inadequate, for it has failed to embrace some important element in the play. Thus Ulrici, Horn, Simrock, and Rötscher base the ideal unity of the work on the maxim *Summum Jus Summa Injuria*, i.e., abstract legal right, when pushed to its extremity, becomes heinous moral wrong. Of this they find illustrations in Shylock's insistence upon the letter of his bond, and in the arbitrary exercise by Portia's father of his testamentary powers, while conversely Jessica, in her flight from Shylock, commits a breach of legal obligation, which is in reality the assertion of a moral right. From this point of view Portia's speech, magnifying mercy at the expense of abstract justice, strikes the keynote of the play. But, as a matter of fact, the designs of Shylock are defeated by a no less rigid insistence upon the letter of the law than his own, nor are we made to feel that the strange provisions of the will by which Portia is bound inflict upon her any real injury. Another view of the play is that which, with some modifications in detail, is supported by Gervinus, Hebler, and Elze. This finds in Bassanio's speech, when he is choosing the casket, the fundamental idea of the play, namely, the contrast between appearance and reality, and above all, between the inward things of true price and the god of this world, the symbol of all external things—money. Thus in Gervinus' pithy phrase the aim of the poet was to delineate 'the relation of man to property,' and this he illustrates by the different methods in which Antonio, Shylock, Portia, Bassanio, and Jessica handle wealth. But we do not think of Portia primarily in relation to her possessions; in the underplot of the elopement the idea of wealth and its true use is entirely subordinate, and in the episode of the Rings it is completely absent. Kreyssig, who emphasizes the inadequacy of all attempts to sum up the doctrine of the play in a formula, yet lets himself be drawn into the statement that the most constant and definite underlying idea is that 'lasting prosperity, sure and practical success, can only be attained by moderation in all things, by the skilful employment and cheerful endurance of given circumstances, equally removed from defiant opposition and cowardly submission.' Such an interpretation is too much of a truism to be very enlightening, and a study of the rival theories leads to the conviction that while each throws light on important aspects of the play, not one of them covers,

nor, from the nature of the piece could cover, the whole of its complex issues. To borrow an illustration from the work itself, many of the commentaries on *The Merchant of Venice* are as caskets over which flourishes the scroll of *Summum Jus Summa Injuria,* or *The relation of man to property,* or μηδεν αγαν, but when enticed by the inscriptions we open the caskets expecting to find therein the 'heavenly picture' of the genius of the play, we suffer disappointment. Warned by this experience, let us proceed after another fashion. Let us recognize that in this drama, which introduces semi-mythical incidents and carries us to the very borderland of the possible, Shakspere has cared less than usual about unity of design, and has expended his power upon brilliant portraiture of character, whereby he has minimized the inherent improbabilities of the story, and upon equally brilliant technique, in the manipulation of an intricate series of far from ductile plots.

In the forefront of the play stands the figure from whom it takes its name, and who is the hero of the Bond-story, Antonio, the Merchant of Venice. His character is summed up in the words applied to him at a later period by Bassanio; he is one in whom

> 'The ancient Roman honour more appears
> Than any that draws breath in Italy.'

He is a member of one of those patrician families in which still ran the blood of the republican rulers of the world, and, though bowing to the circumstances of his age, he has embarked in commerce on a princely scale, he carries into the financial sphere the spirit of the senate-house of the forum. In the most material of occupations, it has been aptly said he remains an idealist, 'a Brutus of the counting-house and the exchange.' In him, even before the era of the Roman plays, Shakspere shows his power of grasping the essentials of the 'antique Roman' character—its power and its weakness. Antonio, conscious of his lofty standard of rectitude, exhibits from the first that fault of self-sufficiency which is the besetting temptation of the righteous. It appears in every word of his opening dialogue with the two young fashionable loungers, Salarino and Salanio, who are suggesting reasons for the fit of 'sadness' from which Antonio admits himself to be suffering. It is in reality one of those hypochondriacal seizures to which the favourites of fortune are at times subject, though here it serves as a presentiment of evil to come. The foppish young gentlemen, whose own financial cares are doubtless confined to the problem of making two ends meet, naturally enough set down Antonio's seriousness to anxiety about the safety of his

world-wide ventures, and they draw fancy-pictures of what tremors they themselves would go through under similar conditions. But Antonio stiffly repels the suggestion:

> 'Believe me, no: I thank my fortune for it,
> My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
> Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate
> Upon the fortune of this present year:
> Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.'

Such a haughty assumption of unassailable solidity by a merchant, who, above all other men, is exposed to constant risks, has in it the ring of a challenge to destiny, which, we instinctively feel, will sooner or later be taken up. In a similar spirit of grave disdain he sets aside, with a curt 'fie, fie,' the suggestion that love is the cause of his melancholy, and indeed this dignified man of affairs is the most unlikely of victims to sentimental passion. Emotion with him—and in this again he is a true type of the antique Roman—takes the more masculine and solid form of friendship, especially for his kinsman Bassanio, who at this moment appears on the scene with two of his intimates, Lorenzo and Gratiano. With deferential flourishes the pair of satellites bow themselves out of the presence of their superiors, and the topic of Antonio's 'sadness' is now taken up by Gratiano, a typical society humourist, who, with good-natured badinage, seeks to rally the merchant into a more cheerful mood. Antonio listens with dignified composure while he runs on, but makes no answer to his 'exhortation,' and is manifestly relieved when the garrulous wag goes off with Lorenzo, for he at once turns to Bassanio, and broaches an entirely new subject. We now learn that Bassanio, though he stands 'within the eye of honour,' and thus satisfies Antonio's lofty moral standard, is the very antithesis of his friend and kinsman in temperament and manner of life. A man of fashion and a spendthrift, to repair his broken fortunes he has determined to venture for the hand of Portia, the wealthy heiress of Belmont. Though he gives Antonio to understand that there have been previous passages of love between them, and extols the lady's virtues and beauty, Bassanio's scheme, as he unfolds it, is rather too much of a financial enterprise to quite suit our taste. Like other speculations it needs capital, and for this he now appeals to Antonio, on the plea that it will be an investment which may recoup the merchant for former losses. Antonio, with limitless generosity, places at his friend's disposal his purse, his person, his extremest means; but after his lofty protestations to Salarino and Salanio it is surprising to hear him confess that all his fortunes are at sea, and that he can-

not himself furnish the money. Thus to serve his friend he has to stoop from his pedestal of financial purity, which forbids borrowing or lending, and to send Bassanio forth to raise a loan upon his credit. The young nobleman goes at once to the most notorious money-lender in the city, Shylock, the Jew.

Had Bassanio been as familiar with the Rialto as with the haunts of the gay world, he would have sought relief in some other quarter. For between Antonio and Shylock there was an ancient grudge, rooted in deep-seated antipathies, national, religious, and professional. The Italian patrician, a native of the mighty Venetian republic, would naturally scorn the alien, admitted into the state only on sufferance, confined to his *ghetto,* and marked off from the rest of the community by a peculiar dress. The orthodox Christian, belonging to that well-defined type of prosperous men of the world who have in all ages tended to be more clerical than the clergy, loathes the misbeliever. The member of *la haute finance,* exporting valuables to all quarters of the globe, despises the local money-lender who locks up his savings in cash or precious stones. This feeling is intensified by the attitude of the age towards usury, which was condemned as sinful by the Church, and confined to those who like the Jews were outside its pale. Antonio, prodigal in hate, as in friendship, has showered upon Shylock every form of insult in the most public fashion, and the latter has borne it outwardly with a patient shrug. But within him too there burns the scorn of the Jew, the member of the sacred nation, for the Gentile, and of the shrewd bargainer for the simple-minded man who

> 'Lends out money gratis and brings down
> The rate of usance here with us in Venice.'

It is thus a moment of keen personal triumph to Shylock when Bassanio's impulsive action puts his enemy for the first time within his power, and disregarding the young nobleman's impatience to have the business settled out-of-hand, he makes the most of this unexpected advantage, slowly pondering over the nature of the security offered, and emphasizing the risks to which Antonio's seemingly solid fortunes are exposed. At this juncture the merchant himself enters, and like his kinsman tries to drive matters at once to a point, but all the more Shylock persists in prolonging the interview. Every word that he speaks flashes a light upon some national peculiarity: his affection for his 'tribe,' his distinctive diet, his familiarity with the Old Testament. And with marvellous skill Shakspere makes one of the Jew's scriptural allusions

the starting-point of a discussion, which helps to account for the proposal of such an unheard-of forfeiture as a pound of flesh[1]. Shylock, in defence of usury, cites the patriarchal example of Jacob, and the profit that by his clever trick he made out of Laban's flock. Antonio's retort 'Is your gold and silver ewes and rams?' is entirely in the spirit of his age, whose hostility to usury was based on the idea that metal, unlike living creatures, had no natural power of increase. Shylock does not vex himself with such metaphysical distinctions: he only knows that he can make money breed as fast as cattle. But the ironical query has suggested to him a grimly humorous form of retaliation, which however he prefaces by a contrast between Antonio's former persecution and his present appeal for money. Stung out of his self-control the merchant turns upon him fiercely:

> 'I am as like to call thee so again,
> To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.
> If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
> As to thy friends; for when did friendship take
> A breed for barren metal of his friend?
> But lend it rather to thine enemy;
> Who if he break, thou mayst with better face
> Exact the penalty.'

Thus once again, and yet more defiantly than before, Antonio in his self-sufficiency throws out a challenge to fortune, and in the very moment of borrowing denounces anew the iniquity of making barren metal 'breed.' But Shylock is ready with the soft answer that turns away wrath: he will adopt the merchant's principles, and take no 'doit of usance,' but instead, 'in a merry sport,' Antonio must agree, in case of default, to the forfeiture of a pound of his flesh—flesh, on his own showing, being the only legitimate form of interest. The financial purist cannot well demur to conditions which by ironical logic spring from his cherished precepts, and, in spite of Bassanio's protests, the momentous bargain is struck.

To fill up the interval between the signature of the bond and its forfeiture, Shakspere has introduced the underplot of Jessica and Lorenzo, which further serves to throw a harsh light upon Shylock's domestic relations. Though the dramatist had, as has been shown, opportunities for studying Judaism from the outside, it is unlikely that he can have known much of its family life, and his picture of it is strangely untrue to facts. Through the centuries of persecution the Jewish home maintained much of its scriptural

1 See Moulton's *Shakspere as a Dramatic Artist*, pp. 61-64.

beauty, and was the focus of affections all the more intense because confined to this narrow radius. It has been argued that Shakspere was aware of this, and that he purposely represented Shylock as devoid of the distinctive virtues of his race, in order to heighten the impression of his villainy. But this seems an over-refinement of criticism, and had such been the dramatist's aim, he would scarcely have admitted the one saving touch of tenderness in the reference to Leah and her cherished gift of a turquoise ring. But however Shylock may have treated his dead wife, to his daughter and his servant he makes his home a 'hell,' and they are both preparing to give him the slip. Launcelot, whom his master grudges food, clothing, and sleep, transfers his services after a comical exercise in casuistry to the open-handed Bassanio, while Jessica makes an assignation with Lorenzo, a member of the same fashionable set. When she asserts, in defence of her conduct to Shylock, that though she is a daughter to his blood she is not to his manners, she doubtless speaks a truth. But in her own way Jessica is no less distinctively Jewish than Shylock. She belongs to the artistic type of the Hebrew race, which has given so many poets and musicians to the world, and she is steeped in Oriental opulence of sensibility and dreamy voluptuous charm. Such a nature recoils instinctively from the harsh surroundings of a home, unsweetened by feminine influences, darkened by the spirit of mistrust, and bare of every element of beauty. Yet modern sentiment finds it more difficult than Elizabethan prejudice to condone her filial breach in the elopement with Lorenzo, and even if her flight be excused, the theft of her father's stones and ducats jars unpleasantly with preconceived ideas of the conduct proper to a heroine of romance. It has been said that the episode of the elopement was inserted in order to create a partial revulsion of feeling in favour of the Jew. 'Jessica at home makes us hate Shylock: with Jessica lost we cannot help pitying him.' But we believe that no such effect was intended by Shakspere, and that, in any case, it would have failed with an audience of his day. The groundlings were far more likely to yell with vociferous laughter as they listened to Salanio's account of the dog Jew flying through the streets, with all the boys of Venice at his heels, and lamenting with 'confused passion' the double loss of his ducats and of the daughter whom he ranks on the identical level of a property.

It is to be noticed that Shylock at this crisis at once puts the law in motion against the runaways, and that the Duke, on his appeal, hurries to the harbour to seek for them on board of Bassanio's ship.

This procedure naturally reminds Antonio's friends that in case of his default, the same engine of the law will be at Shylock's service, and that the Jew has now fresh reason for seeking revenge upon his Christian foes. Salanio murmurs anxiously,

> 'Let good Antonio look he keep his day,
> Or he shall pay for this;'

and Salarino's answer contains the first hint of the merchant's losses at sea. In a subsequent conversation between the two quidnuncs we hear more definitely of the wreck of one of Antonio's ships on the Goodwins, and we are prepared for yet further disaster in Salarino's ejaculation, 'I would it might prove the end of his losses.' All the more short-sighted is it of the pair at this juncture to irritate Shylock into fury by taunting him with Jessica's elopement, and then to question him about Antonio's misfortunes. Writhing under the sense of accumulated insults and wrongs, the down-trodden man may well glut himself with the prospect of a terrible revenge, should the merchant fail to meet his bond. And in justifying that revenge, by Christian example Shylock rises to the dignity of a well-nigh tragic figure. The magnificent outburst in which he vindicates against a brutal fanaticism the essential equality of human conditions in Jew and Christian is born of the blood and tears of centuries of martyrdom: it is the exceeding bitter cry, not so much of the solitary usurer as of the entire Hebrew race turning on its bed of pain. It is wrung forth not only by the taunts of Antonio, but

> 'By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
> By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
> By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
> By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
> By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
> And the summons to Christian fellowship.'

It must have sounded strangely in the ears of those who had shrieked, as the noose tightened round the neck of Dr. Lopez, 'He is a Jew.' Indeed it scarcely harmonizes with the general impression which the character of Shylock is intended to leave, or with his treatment at the close of the play. But the inconsistency is the measure of Shakspere's greatness. Marlowe and others found it easy to fall in with the standard of their age, and to draw Jews who were monsters in human form. Shakspere too was sufficiently a man of his time to gratify the popular taste by the spectacle of a Jewish villain, but, as is the case with consummate genius, he was

carried beyond himself by the irresistible sway of his own creation. Shylock is no automaton, but a being of flesh and blood, and the fierce pressure of his agony forces to the surface from depths still unpetrified by wrong done or suffered this swollen gush of elemental human passion.

With the entry of Tubal however, and the announcement that Jessica has not been overtaken at Genoa, Shylock sinks back into the stony-hearted usurer, and the sympathy that has been aroused by his majestic vindication of Judaism is quenched by the unutterble horror of his imprecation: 'I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! Would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin!' Tubal, who for no very apparent reason enjoys torturing Shylock as much as his avowed enemies, keeps him swaying between hysterical grief and joy as he plies him alternately with anecdotes of Jessica's wanton extravagance and news of fresh disasters to Antonio. The mention of divers of the merchant's creditors that swear he cannot choose but break, prepares us for his complete ruin, and Shylock's commission to his tribesman to fee him an officer a fortnight before the day, with the savage declaration that he will have the heart of Antonio if he forfeit, shows us the Jew battening on the prospect of the bloody revenge that is all but within his grasp.

At this point it is necessary to turn back and trace briefly the progress of the other main plot. Hitherto the two stories have rather run side by side than been blended, yet Antonio's danger springs directly out of Bassanio's scheme to win Portia, the heiress of Belmont, and heroine of the tale of the caskets. Portia, like the merchant who, on her account, though without her knowledge, has been brought to the edge of destruction, is the owner of vast wealth. But while the commercial magnate has to risk his treasure on the high seas, the mistress of a landed estate can encircle herself with all the visible emblems of wealth—a stately palace, spreading gardens, the refinements of music and of art. Amidst such surroundings Portia's nature has expanded into a rich and rounded fullness which draws tributes of admiration from all who behold her. Bassanio compares her to Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia; Morocco speaks of her as this shrine, this mortal breathing saint, and Jessica protests that the poor rude world hath not her fellow. Throughout the drama she shows that she is worthy of these lofty eulogies. To other women Shakspere has given in large measure some single quality of head or of heart, but none unites so many and such opposite gifts in harmoniously balanced perfection. She is

overflowing with light-hearted mirth, and yet rises to the full height of the most solemn issues. She combines deep sensibility with stately reserve, and incisive wit with poetical ardour of imagination. She has the shrewdness of a woman of the world, and the bashful delicacy of a maiden. She is equally unfaltering in passive submission to an arbitrary decree, and in the energetic action that cuts the knot of an unexampled crisis.

A woman so favoured by fortune and of such rare parts would naturally draw many suitors to Belmont, even if by the strange terms of her father's will every wooer had not an equal chance of winning her. For the future of this incomparable creature has been seemingly placed at the mercy of capricious fate. Whoever can choose aright among three caskets of gold, silver, and lead, is to have her to wife. Such a decree seems the very climax of lunacy, and yet Nerissa is the poet's interpreter when she speaks of it as an inspiration of a holy man before his death. There can be little doubt that Shakspere, as *Romeo and Juliet* shows, was more affected by the mediaeval idea of the influence of fortune upon human affairs than has generally been allowed. Nerissa is again his mouthpiece in the words:

> 'The ancient saying is no heresy:—
> Hanging and wiving goes by destiny.'

This idea appears in contrasted forms in the two main plots. Antonio defies fortune and is punished for his presumption: Portia bows cheerfully to her authority, and has an ample reward. Yet the goddess is not here represented as acting in arbitrary defiance of the laws that govern human conduct. Rather we are shown how a result, apparently dictated by mere chance, may yet, when narrowly tested, prove to be due to the working of permanent moral principles. The choice of the suitors for Portia's hand, though the element of luck is allowed to count for something, is regulated in the main by their characters. A large group of them, in fact, never go so far as to risk the choice at all. Of these we hear in the opening dialogue between Portia and Nerissa. They are representatives of six different nations, and in every case they are merely types of the peculiar foibles of their countrymen. Not one of them has enough of manly resolution to venture on an experiment which, in case of failure, debars them from marriage for ever. Morocco is made of sterner stuff and is not daunted by these stringent conditions. With the characteristic disdain of a Sultan for 'shows of dross' he turns hurriedly from the leaden casket;

he pauses long before the silver, with its motto, 'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves,' and barbarian pride is just turning the scale against a lingering relic of modesty, when his eye is caught by the gold with its offer of 'what many men desire.' At once his glowing Oriental imagination is captivated by the vision of Portia as the world's desire, and with grandiloquent figures upon his lips he unlocks the casket, only to learn that 'all that glitters is not gold.' Arragon is the typical Spanish Don steeped in the prejudices and pride of his class. He too at once sets aside the leaden casket, and instead of being fired by the wish to possess what men desire, he scorns 'to jump with common spirits,' or to bow before the idols of the crowd. He loftily decides to 'assume desert,' and opens the silver casket, to find in it a fool's head. Both these suitors are treated by Portia with calm and stately courtesy, but when Bassanio, who has already won her heart, arrives at Belmont, she cannot hide her agitation. Though she does not swerve an inch from her rigid fidelity to the terms of the will, her appeals to her lover to delay his choice, her partial confession of her feelings, and her excited plays upon words are all significant of her inward tumult. The music that she calls for, though she is at pains to defend it on other grounds, is really meant to allay by its soothing strains the riot of her own heart, during the interval of suspense. But her trust that the character of the chooser dictates the choice finds expression in the word: 'If you do love me, you will find me out.' Bassanio's meditations are partially drowned by the music, but, from what we overhear, the gold suggests to him the deceitfulness of 'outward shows' or ornament in every sphere of life. The silver is rejected for the not very cogent reason that it is a 'pale and common drudge 'tween man and man.' But the meagre lead appeals to the plain, straightforward soldier who, in spite of superficial follies, is sound at heart, and whose professional instinct is stirred by the threatening challenge to give and hazard all he hath. Portia's trust proves to be not misplaced, and she is at last free to bestow herself, and all that is hers, upon Bassanio. Her speech might serve as the 'great charter' of that conception of married life according to which woman stoops to conquer, and secures most complete emancipation by submitting herself to her husband to be directed 'as from her lord, her governor, her king.'

In this ideal self-surrender the 'caskets' episode reaches its climax, and at this crisis it is brought into direct relation with all the other stories combined in the play. It puts forth the germ of a fresh underplot, which is to be developed later, in Portia's

gift of her ring to Bassanio, and it annexes, as it were, the earlier underplot of the elopement through the arrival at Belmont of Lorenzo and Jessica. But, above all, it enters into the closest union with the other main plot of the Pound of Flesh, for at this moment the news is brought of that complete ruin of Antonio to which we have been so skilfully led up. All his ventures have failed; his bond to the Jew is forfeited, and his only wish is to see Bassanio before his death. Thus Bassanio's love for Portia has been the cause of Antonio's downfall: it is therefore in the strictest poetic justice that Portia's love for Bassanio should be the means of his salvation. In the ecstasy of that new-born joy, which is wont to deaden the ear to all echoes from the outer world, she has the rare self-forgetfulness to realize that there are crises in which the call of friendship is imperious, and she bids Bassanio hasten to his friend's side, with gold to pay the debt twenty times over. But the woman upon whom the law of inheritance had laid so inexorable a hand, who, in her own phrase, had 'stood for sacrifice' while her fate was being decided, is impelled by a passionate feeling of sympathy for another victim of the law to throw herself in person between him and his doom. In her execution of this enterprise she shows to the full the perfect balance of her qualities. She enters with zest into the fun of the adventure in her wager with Nerissa, that when they are accoutred like young men she'll prove the prettier fellow of the two, but she lays her plans in the most business-like spirit when she fortifies herself by an opinion on the case from Bellario, the learned jurist of Padua.

Yet Antonio is, to all appearance, beyond help. The Duke, who had already, on Shylock's demand, attempted the arrest of Lorenzo and Jessica for theft, is equally bound, as a constitutional ruler, to entertain his plea against the merchant. The foundations of Venetian prosperity, based upon international traffic, would be shaken, if partiality were shown in a suit between a native and an alien. Appeals to mercy, offers of twice the principal, are in vain. The passion of revenge has triumphed over the meaner passion of avarice in Shylock's breast, and with the inbred Jewish worship of legalism he takes his stand with fanatical tenacity upon the city's charter. He has the law upon his side, and that is enough. The only reason that he will condescend to give for his eagerness, to have 'a weight of carrion flesh,' is that it is his 'humour,' which is an unaccountable element in all men. There is nothing, he claims, to choose between him and those who appeal to him for mercy: slave-owners are estopped from raising objections to the doctrine of

property in dearly bought human flesh. The Duke has no answer to this overhelming *argumentum ad hominem,* and Antonio shows that he has given up all hope. The merchant is an apt illustration of Bacon's dictum, that 'prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue.' The weight of his misfortunes has crushed out of his nature the arrogant self-sufficiency that was its single blemish, or rather this has been softened into dignified readiness to meet his fate. What a change from the supercilious tone of the merchant's earlier speeches to the humble confession :

> 'I am a tainted wether of the flock,
> Meetest for death: the weakest kind of fruit
> Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me.'

It is at this stage that Portia enters the court in disguise, with her letter of recommendation from Bellario. She knows that she is mistress of the situation, and she does not precipitate the *dénouement.* On the contrary, she multiplies Shylock's opportunities of retreat from the position that he has taken up. She renews the appeal for mercy in a strain of majestic eloquence whose echoes have swelled throughout the world. She tenders him thrice the value of his loan. But Shylock is inflexible, and Portia, after searching the bond for a possible flaw, declares that the law must take its course. Yet even after this she still prolongs the strain of suspense, and the treatment of the whole situation, as Moulton has well pointed out, is highly characteristic of Shakspere. The dramatist never emphasizes in his tragedies the physical horrors of death, or harrows the audience with the spectacle of long-drawn agony. But in the present case the result is not to be tragic, and thus Portia is allowed to linger over the details of the judicial murder in a way that would be intolerable were the crime actually committed. She bids the merchant lay bare his bosom for the knife: she asks if there are balances ready to weigh the flesh, and a surgeon to stop the wounds. She calls upon Antonio for his last speech—a noble expression of contentment with his fate and unfaltering love to his friend. But with marvellous art the exquisite pathos of the merchant's words is made the source of a humorous relief. For Bassanio is so affected by Antonio's farewell that he protests his readiness to sacrifice everything, even his wife, in order to save his friend. The mock-lawyer catches at the opening for a piece of unprofessional merriment,

> 'Your wife would give you little thanks for that
> If she were by, to hear you make the offer.'

And Nerissa follows suit in respect of a similar declaration by Gratiano. But these gay sallies have a reflex serious effect. They deepen Shylock's distrust of Christian husbands, and recall the bitter memory of his daughter's flight. Impatiently he demands sentence. With due legal formality Portia awards him the pound of flesh, but as he swoops upon his victim, knife in hand, she stays the uplifted stroke by the condition that he must not shed a drop of blood. Shylock had appealed to the letter, and by the letter he shall be judged.

The tables are thus completely turned, and the dramatic effect is overwhelming. But the plea is so transparent a quibble that it has been by no means universally upheld in posterity's court of appeal. To maintain that Shylock's defeat is the triumph of Christian conciliatory love, of mediating mercy over law, is absurd. Rather it may be said that the issue over the body of Antonio is fought out between the two great legal systems of antiquity. Shylock's claim is urged in the stubborn spirit of the narrowest Jewish legalism; Portia's saving plea is grounded upon the equally slavish letter-worship of the Roman law, though, as Simrock has pointed out, this verbalism pushed 'to the extreme of *jus strictissimum*' was often made, as in the case before us, the agent of *aequitas* in opposition to *jus strictum*. Further, it is in the spirit of Roman law and not of Christianity, that as Shylock is about to leave the court, without either his forfeiture or his principal, Portia confronts him with the statute, doubtless unearthed by Bellario in his legal researches, which enacts that an alien convicted of an attempt against the life of a citizen incurs the forfeiture of all his goods and the capital penalty. Nor is the 'mercy' extended to Shylock such as to convince him of a fundamental difference of spirit between the old and the new dispensations. His 'life' is indeed 'pardoned,' but he has to hand over one half of his fortune to Antonio 'in use' for Lorenzo and Jessica, and further to record a gift in their favour of all that he leaves at death. Yet more cruel is his enforced immediate conversion to Christianity. 'This,' as Elze has well said, 'is no longer poetic justice or tragical retribution, it is mental and moral annihilation, the inevitable consequences of which must lead to physical death as well.' In including this among the articles of Shylock's pardon, Shakspere has shown himself scarcely at all in advance of his age, whose average attitude is faithfully reflected in Gratiano's brutal jeers and suggestion of 'a halter gratis' as the only mercy fit for the Jew. The crowd in the Globe theatre doubtless roared hilariously as the baffled

wretch slunk out of the court, but Shakspere has had to pay the penalty of what can be at best called a concession to the bigotry of the day. His other villains, Richard III, Iago, meet, as all the world acknowledges, no more than is their due, but in the case of Shylock there are many who agree with the young lady who, according to Heine, cried out at the end of this act, 'The poor man is wronged.' To adopt a phrase lately used in a different connexion, Shylock stands at the bar of poetic justice 'half-way between a martyr and a criminal,' and in the unsatisfactory impression left on modern readers at the close of the trial-scene, Shakspere has suffered the nemesis which in the long run always overtakes the artist who from conviction or opportunism ministers to the prejudices of his age.

The relief needed after the prolonged tension of the battle for the merchant's life, has been provided in the merry episode of the rings which Portia and Nerissa wheedle out of their husbands, as reward for their legal services. The bantering reproaches that follow, on the return to Belmont, bring into prominence again the lighter side of Portia's nature, repressed during the solemn crisis in the court-house. The heroine drops again into the gay girl-wife, and the perfect balance of her character is thus preserved. But even more restful than the silvery ripple of Portia's laughter is the lyrical softness of the moonlight confidences between Lorenzo and Jessica in the gardens of Belmont. It would almost seem as if in *The Merchant of Venice* Shakspere was intent on drawing materials from every race and epoch. From the passionate strife between the spirit of Jewish and Roman codes, he bears us into the very heart of Greek romance, flinging its choicest secrets, like waters from a classic fountain, into the spiced air of the Italian night. And when music, breathed to the stars, adds the last touch of enchantment to the scene, it is the voice of Greek philosophy in its most sublime flight that speaks through Lorenzo's lips:

> 'Sit, Jessica. Look, how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims.'

The discords of human life are heard no more, as we linger on the moonlit bank at Belmont, and seek to catch the faint echoes upon earth of the choral music of the spheres.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHIEF GROUP OF CHRONICLE-HISTORY PLAYS

DURING the years that Shakspere had been elaborating into its final shape the tragedy of the Veronese lovers, he had been engaged also on other work, demanding different powers. The closing period of the sixteenth century saw the development to a brilliant climax of the branch of dramatic art in which he had made his first tentative efforts. It has been shown how in conjunction with other playwrights, or under the inspiration of their methods, he had completed the tetralogy dealing with the Wars of the Roses. Fired with the patriotic interest of the theme, he now turned back to the period whence the issues, decided at so dear a cost of English blood and treasure, had taken their rise, and he included in his survey a single more remote epoch which presented similar dynastic problems. Thus there came into being, the second tetralogy of *Richard II*, *Henry IV* (Parts I and II), and *Henry V*, and the play of *King John*, which is a self-contained whole. Towards the close of his career Shakspere began, but had to hand over in unfinished form to Fletcher, a final historical drama, *Henry VIII*, one of whose motives was to glorify the Tudor monarchy, and the blessings of concord in the State. Thus, viewed in one aspect, the whole of Shakspere's historical plays form, in Schlegel's phrase, a great 'dramatic epopee,' tracing the current of the national life through the mingled storms and sunbursts of the later Middle Ages to the steady splendour of the Renaissance. Of this epopee no Richard or Henry is the true protagonist, but England, an omnipresent and immortal figure, with the divine ichor, though often spilt and wasted, never exhausted in her veins, and bubbling up afresh in a perpetual renewal of youth.

But while the historical dramas, from this aspect, form a whole, there are aesthetic considerations which mark off the group which we have now reached, and give it exceptional significance. Shakspere's share in the three Parts of *Henry VI* can only be surmised by the aid of plausible, but never quite conclusive, internal evidence, and in *Richard III* the special nature of the theme, and the dominating influence of Marlowe's method, led to a treatment bordering upon the purely tragic. For *King John* and the Lancastrian tetralogy Shakspere partly used old plays as models, but he

was no longer overshadowed by a mighty personality, and his individual genius had full scope. It is therefore this group that gives the clearest evidence of the mode in which he considered that historical material could be used for artistic purposes. He never confounded the functions of the poet and the annalist. He accepted the traditions given in Holinshed's Chronicle without any inquiry into their truth, and he did not scruple to add or alter in matters of secondary importance. Schlegel therefore was far from accurate when he asserted that 'in Shakspere's *Histories* the leading features of events were so faithfully conceived, their causes and even their secret motives so clearly penetrated, that the truth of history might be learned from them.' In order to disprove such a statement it is only necessary to contrast Shakspere's Henry V, overflowing with gracious *bonhommie*, the Tudor type of monarch lovingly idealized, with the actual historical prototype whose orthodox zeal in sending Lollards to the stake had won a cordial encomium from the contemporary poet, Occleve, in his *De Regimine Principum*. On the other hand, Shakspere, with characteristic sobriety and respect for realities, did not interweave with his historical groundwork purely imaginary incidents, and represent them as affecting the actual connexion of events. The comedy scenes in *Henry IV* do not confuse the historical perspective of the main action, in so far as this is in itself correct.

The function of the dramatic poet in dealing with history was, in Shakspere's eyes, not to fabricate or falsify, but to interpret and select. From the mass of details preserved by the chronicler he disentangled and emphasized those which carried forward the true life of the nation, as he conceived it. If, in certain important aspects, his conception differed from ours, this depended upon differences between the Elizabethan and the present age. But while events chiefly required skilful grouping in order to make their full impression, historical characters offered a more difficult, but also more attractive problem. In endowing these figures with renewed vitality, Shakspere sought to make each representative of some normal human type. The personages in the historical plays are wanting in the infinite complexity of the tragic creations. 'They are conceived,' as Dowden has said, 'chiefly with reference to action'; they are measured by 'positive achievements and results.' Their dramatic dignity and value spring rather from the width of radius within which they operate than from their own inherent force. The aphorism of Matthew Arnold, 'Not deep the poet sees, but wide,' misleading in its general application, defines accurately

enough Shakspere's attitude in the historical plays. He does not peer with microscopic gaze into the penetralia of individual hearts, but he surveys energies for good or evil radiating from the throne to the extreme confines of the national life. The shifting of the centre of gravity in the body politic since the Elizabethan era must modify the application of Shakspere's philosophy of history to modern circumstances, but the fundamental conviction that inspires his glowing pages, that individual character reacts with potent effect upon the life of the State, is true for every age and country.

But while Shakspere's historical plays are thus a unique memorial of his patriotism and political insight, from a purely artistic point of view they are not without shortcomings. Facts are stubborn things, and the effort to subdue them to the service of the Muse is seldom entirely successful. It is true that in handling the material supplied by the national annals the dramatist gradually purged his imagination of those frothier elements that had floated to the surface in the early comedies. His verse gained in volume and stateliness, and ran with a richer music. But his fidelity to historical fact, or what he took to be such, handicapped him in one direction, and that of capital importance. The besetting danger of Romantic drama, the danger that Sidney had sought to avoid by a still more dangerous remedy, is its tendency to become invertebrate. In the Chronicle-history play this tendency is aggravated by the nature of the theme, which adapts itself more easily to epic than to dramatic treatment. It must be admitted that Shakspere failed as signally as smaller men to overcome this stumbling-block. The Aristotelian canon that every drama must comprise an entanglement and its solution, applies with equal force to Romantic and Classical plays, and Shakspere's *Histories* do not satisfy this test. Nor has this violation of cardinal dramatic laws gone unpunished. Neither patriotism nor poetic eloquence can propitiate, in the long run, the inexorable demand of the theatre for a carefully articulated plot, and thus, while Shakspere's chief tragedies and comedies still hold the stage, the *Histories*, for the most part, have been banished to the library, where their exceptional popularity has largely fostered the prevalent idea that a dramatist, whose finest plots are miracles of constructive genius, was lacking in the playwright's special faculty. Literature has its Nemeses no less than history.

The date of **KING JOHN** and its place in the historical series, cannot be exactly determined. It was first printed in the folio of 1623, but is mentioned by Meres in 1598. How long it had been

then in existence is matter of conjecture, but it is reasonable to suppose that it was written between the two tetralogies. In its main subject it recalls *Richard III*, while the character of Constance anticipates that of Richard II. It resembles *Richard III* also in the prominence given to rivalries of women, but the grouping is less studiously monumental, and the curious strophic balance of lamentation has disappeared. The blank verse is still overloaded with rhetoric, which has however lost the peculiar lurid tinge of the earlier play. Rhyme is almost entirely confined to the pithy rejoinders and epigrams of the Bastard, in whose person the element of popular humour enters for the first time an entirely Shaksperean historical play. There is as yet, however, no hint of the use of prose as the fittest vehicle for this humour. Thus the internal evidence stamps *King John* as a link between the earlier and later *Histories*, and it may be assigned to about the year 1595.

The eventful reign of John had already been utilized for dramatic purposes. It had been the subject of a play by Bishop Bale, written probably in Edward the Sixth's reign, which is a singular mixture of a Chronicle-history and a Morality. This was followed, at a considerable interval, by *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, a work of unknown authorship, the first extant copy of which dates from 1591. This play was taken by Shakspere as the original of his own drama, and it was not unworthy of the distinction. It contained the outlines, sketched with a good deal of vigour, of all the principal characters, and it was inspired by a genuinely national anti-papal and anti-French feeling. But divided, as it was, into two Parts, it was rambling and loosely jointed, and Shakspere rightly compressed the subject-matter into the bound of a single piece. He omitted altogether several scenes, including one which represented Faulconbridge's spoliation of a monastery, and which ridiculed in not very seemly fashion the abuses of life within the cloister walls. In other cases he condensed into a phrase or passing allusion what had been set forth in the earlier work with tedious prolixity, and he remedied a number of inconsistencies in characterization. But though the play thus gains in symmetry, pathos, and poetical depth, it still falls short of being a rounded dramatic whole. The threads of personal and political interest run, to some extent, crosswise, and the central theme of the story, the murder of Arthur, is not in sufficiently organic connexion with either the opening or the closing scenes. An examination of the character of King John will reveal the chief of these inconsistencies, while throwing light on Shakspere's patriotism and on his psychological insight.

It is evident from the first that John, though his situation bears some resemblance to that of Richard III, is designed on no similar scale of lonely grandeur in crime. He has usurped the throne belonging by right to his nephew Arthur, but he has been instigated to the step by his mother Elinor, who realizes far more energetically than John himself that what force has seized force alone can hold. To the French ambassador's challenge on Arthur's behalf he opposes 'our strong possession and our right,' but Elinor is prompt with her whisper in his ear:—

> 'Your strong possession much more than your right:
> Or else it must go wrong with you and me.'

Well may Chatillon speak of her as 'an Ate, stirring him to blood and strife.'

For a time, indeed, John plays the part of a vigorous and able soldier. He crosses to France with a speed that disconcerts his enemies, and the fact that he is followed by a brave 'choice of dauntless spirits' shows that he can attract supporters to his cause. Shakspere himself, fully alive to the national dangers involved in the succession of a minor, is inclined to weigh in equal balance the claims of uncle and nephew. If John has an evil angel in his mother, so has Arthur, for the hysterical passion of Constance is as dangerous as Elinor's unscrupulous ambition, and her appeal to foreign aid in support of her son's rights estranges from her all national sympathies. The equality of the rival claims is dramatically set forth in the scene before the walls of Angiers, where, after a debate in which neither side has the definite advantage, Philip of France calls upon the citizens of the besieged town to declare whose title they admit as king of England, and is answered that they will open the gates to him who can prove himself king. But even the ordeal of battle is invoked in vain: neither side can prevail over the other, and the citizens of Angiers still stoutly man the walls, and proclaim their oracular allegiance to 'the king of England, when we know the king.' Threatened, however, by a combined attack from the two opposing powers they suggest a league of peace, by which Blanche, the niece of John, shall marry the French Dauphin, and to this they win the sovereigns' assent. Thus John betrays the interests of his country, of which he has hitherto posed as the zealous champion. Conscious of the weakness of his claim, he seeks to buy off the hostility of Philip by surrendering all England's possessions in France to her hereditary foe. As Faulconbridge declares,—

'John, to stop Arthur's title as a whole,
Hath willingly departed with a part.'

But the 'mad composition,' as Shakspere is careful to emphasize through the Bastard's mouth, is equally dishonourable to Philip, who having been brought into the field by 'zeal and charity' is turned aside by the promptings of 'commodity' from 'a resolved and honourable war' to a base, self-interested peace. But a league cemented on the one hand by the surrender of national territory, and on the other by the sacrifice of a widow's and an orphan's rights, is too unstable to stand the severe strain to which it is at once subjected. A third power appears on the scene in the person of Pandulph, the Papal Legate, who charges John with contumacy against the Holy See in refusing to ratify the appointment of Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury. Once again the king is given an opportunity of playing a patriotic rôle, and his spirited protest against the claim of 'an Italian priest' to tithe or toll in England, his denunciation of the system of pardons, and his vigorous assertion of the regal supremacy in Church as well as in State, all express the attitude of the Tudor monarchy even more decisively than that of the Angevin. That they reflect in the main Shakspere's own sentiments, as those of every Protestant Englishman of the Elizabethan era, is scarcely open to doubt. Yet no religious partisanship blurs the masterly presentation of the Papal envoy. Shakspere in *Romeo and Juliet* had proved his power of interpreting sympathetically the life of the cloistered devotee. Here, with equal power, he portrays a Churchman of a diametrically opposite type, the ecclesiastical statesman who meets kings on equal terms, and awes them into submission. With practised skill Pandulph wields the various weapons in his armoury; now he hurls at John the bolt of excommunication, now with hair-splitting casuistry he proves to Philip that in breaking his oath or alliance he will not be forsworn, now he threatens him with a curse unless he takes up arms in the Church's cause. Balanced between conflicting interests, the French king at last obeys the Papal mandate, and a battle follows, in which he is defeated, and Arthur taken prisoner. Philip and the Dauphin are overcome with shame and despair at the disaster, but the cool sagacity of Pandulph foresees ultimate advantage in the present loss. John, with Arthur once in his power, will be driven by his fears to put him out of the way, only to find that

'He that steeps his safety in true blood
Shall find but bloody safety and untrue.'

The people, outraged by this deed of violence, will revolt from their allegiance, and the Dauphin will find them eager in his support, if, in virtue of his marriage with Blanche, he stands forth as heir to Arthur's claim.

Pandulph's prophecies are speedily fulfilled. But the portraiture of John in the earlier scenes of the play, where in spite of duplicity and self-seeking he shows a certain soldierly dignity, scarcely prepares us for the revelation of craven cruelty in his dealings with his captive nephew. This partial inconsistency, however, overlooked, John's attitude in his interview with Hubert is portrayed with wonderful subtlety. In a similar situation Richard III had blurted out his purposes to Tyrrel with almost cheery frankness. John stealthily approaches the theme of Arthur's murder by tortuous paths, advancing and retreating by turns; he pauses just long enough at his goal to drop monosyllabic hints of 'death' and 'a grave,' and then, as if terrified at the sound of his own voice, slinks hurriedly away. Thus, when the report of Arthur's death by violence is noised abroad, alienating the nobles and stirring the populace to disaffection; when the conscience-striken king realizes that 'there is no sure foundation set on blood,' he can turn upon his agent with base reproaches for having translated a momentary hint into a fixed warrant for the fatal deed. The discovery that the child's life has been spared lights up his terrified soul with a ray of hope, but the disastrous consequences of his purpose are beyond recall. The air is full of strange rumours and prophecies greedily caught up in the streets; the Dauphin with a French army sets foot in Kent, and is joined by the revolted English lords, with the patriotic Salisbury at their head. John, bereft of his ablest counsellor—for his mother is dead—grasps at feeble expedients. He has himself recrowned, and he orders the execution of a wandering prophet of ill.

But it has attracted universal notice that Shakspere passes very lightly over those misdeeds of the king which have given him so sinister a prominence in history. His extortions from clergy and laity are merely touched upon incidentally, and not the faintest allusion is made to the constitutional struggle which ended in the grant of the Great Charter. Startling as it sounds to modern ears, it is almost certain that Shakspere had small knowledge of that document, and a very inadequate sense of its importance. A strong monarchical rule was the ideal of the Tudor period, and the power of the Crown was limited not by strictly defined clauses, but by hearty popular sympathies in the sovereign. It was only under the Stuarts, when this communion of feeling between ruler and ruled

ceased to exist, that the champions of national liberty were forced to entrench themselves behind their traditional rights, and drag again into prominence the parchment-scrolls wherein these were embodied. Thus the significance of John's reign for Shakspere lay far less in constitutional struggles than in foreign relations, and its supreme event was not the signing of the Charter, but the surrender of the English crown, when the recreant king, eating all his brave words of an earlier date, resigned the symbol of royalty into the hands of Pandulph, to receive it back again as a vassal of the Pope.

As the price of this submission, the Holy See orders the Dauphin to lay down his arms; but the French prince, in patriotic contrast to John, defies the ecclesiastical mandate, and continues his advance. Faulconbridge seeks to stir up the king to bold resistance, but his soldierly skill and activity are now outworn, and the Bastard has virtually to supplant him as chief of the English forces. While the issue yet hangs in the balance, he is called upon to make a second and more irrevocable surrender of his crown. Poisoned by a monk, he dies at Swinstead Abbey, in torturing pain which wrings from him agonized cries unworthy of a soldier and a king. But the scene would make a deeper impression were it in more organic connexion with what has gone before. In the old play, where so much prominence had been given to the attack upon the religious houses, the death of John at the hands of a monk was a dramatically fitting Nemesis. But one of the very few mistakes made by Shakspere in working up older materials was that he here retained the original version of John's murder, while omitting all that had led up to it. We feel that the king's ignoble end should have had more intimate relation to his design upon Arthur, or some other misdeed emphasized in the play.

Thus the intermixture of historical and political considerations with those of a purely dramatic kind makes Shakspere's picture of John the least consistent in his gallery of English kings. He was more unfettered in his treatment of lesser personages, at whose head stands Constance, mother of the rival claimant to the throne. Constance is drawn with far more delicate insight than any of the women in *Richard III,* and is the most highly elaborated female figure in the historical plays. She is another of that numerous company in Shakspere's earlier dramas whose sensibilities are developed to an extravagant degree. Her instinct of maternal affection is not chastened by reason into a moral principle, but is inflamed by an imagination of hectic brilliance into an abnormal passion that swallows up every thought and energy. It is this exaggerated imagination, as Mrs. Jameson has rightly insisted, that is the controlling force in the nature

The people, outraged by this deed of violence, will revolt from their allegiance, and the Dauphin will find them eager in his support, if, in virtue of his marriage with Blanche, he stands forth as heir to Arthur's claim.

Pandulph's prophecies are speedily fulfilled. But the portraiture of John in the earlier scenes of the play, where in spite of duplicity and self-seeking he shows a certain soldierly dignity, scarcely prepares us for the revelation of craven cruelty in his dealings with his captive nephew. This partial inconsistency, however, overlooked, John's attitude in his interview with Hubert is portrayed with wonderful subtlety. In a similar situation Richard III had blurted out his purposes to Tyrrel with almost cheery frankness. John stealthily approaches the theme of Arthur's murder by tortuous paths, advancing and retreating by turns; he pauses just long enough at his goal to drop monosyllabic hints of 'death' and 'a grave,' and then, as if terrified at the sound of his own voice, slinks hurriedly away. Thus, when the report of Arthur's death by violence is noised abroad, alienating the nobles and stirring the populace to disaffection; when the conscience-striken king realizes that 'there is no sure foundation set on blood,' he can turn upon his agent with base reproaches for having translated a momentary hint into a fixed warrant for the fatal deed. The discovery that the child's life has been spared lights up his terrified soul with a ray of hope, but the disastrous consequences of his purpose are beyond recall. The air is full of strange rumours and prophecies greedily caught up in the streets; the Dauphin with a French army sets foot in Kent, and is joined by the revolted English lords, with the patriotic Salisbury at their head. John, bereft of his ablest counsellor—for his mother is dead—grasps at feeble expedients. He has himself recrowned, and he orders the execution of a wandering prophet of ill.

But it has attracted universal notice that Shakspere passes very lightly over those misdeeds of the king which have given him so sinister a prominence in history. His extortions from clergy and laity are merely touched upon incidentally, and not the faintest allusion is made to the constitutional struggle which ended in the grant of the Great Charter. Startling as it sounds to modern ears, it is almost certain that Shakspere had small knowledge of that document, and a very inadequate sense of its importance. A strong monarchical rule was the ideal of the Tudor period, and the power of the Crown was limited not by strictly defined clauses, but by hearty popular sympathies in the sovereign. It was only under the Stuarts, when this communion of feeling between ruler and ruled

ceased to exist, that the champions of national liberty were forced to entrench themselves behind their traditional rights, and drag again into prominence the parchment-scrolls wherein these were embodied. Thus the significance of John's reign for Shakspere lay far less in constitutional struggles than in foreign relations, and its supreme event was not the signing of the Charter, but the surrender of the English crown, when the recreant king, eating all his brave words of an earlier date, resigned the symbol of royalty into the hands of Pandulph, to receive it back again as a vassal of the Pope.

As the price of this submission, the Holy See orders the Dauphin to lay down his arms; but the French prince, in patriotic contrast to John, defies the ecclesiastical mandate, and continues his advance. Faulconbridge seeks to stir up the king to bold resistance, but his soldierly skill and activity are now outworn, and the Bastard has virtually to supplant him as chief of the English forces. While the issue yet hangs in the balance, he is called upon to make a second and more irrevocable surrender of his crown. Poisoned by a monk, he dies at Swinstead Abbey, in torturing pain which wrings from him agonized cries unworthy of a soldier and a king. But the scene would make a deeper impression were it in more organic connexion with what has gone before. In the old play, where so much prominence had been given to the attack upon the religious houses, the death of John at the hands of a monk was a dramatically fitting Nemesis. But one of the very few mistakes made by Shakspere in working up older materials was that he here retained the original version of John's murder, while omitting all that had led up to it. We feel that the king's ignoble end should have had more intimate relation to his design upon Arthur, or some other misdeed emphasized in the play.

Thus the intermixture of historical and political considerations with those of a purely dramatic kind makes Shakspere's picture of John the least consistent in his gallery of English kings. He was more unfettered in his treatment of lesser personages, at whose head stands Constance, mother of the rival claimant to the throne. Constance is drawn with far more delicate insight than any of the women in *Richard III*, and is the most highly elaborated female figure in the historical plays. She is another of that numerous company in Shakspere's earlier dramas whose sensibilities are developed to an extravagant degree. Her instinct of maternal affection is not chastened by reason into a moral principle, but is inflamed by an imagination of hectic brilliance into an abnormal passion that swallows up every thought and energy. It is this exaggerated imagination, as Mrs. Jameson has rightly insisted, that is the controlling force in the nature

of Constance. The impetuous ardour of her fancy gives a special quality to her maternal love. The very attribute that is wont to be the source of all that is tenderest in womanhood breeds in her ambition, scorn, and hysterical passion, till at last it consumes her in its fires.

But her imaginative sensibility, though the deepest element in her nature, is not made prominent at first. In the quarrel scene between her and Elinor she figures as a genuine vixen, whose bitter rush of invective amply earns the abusive epithets of her foes, and even irritates her friends. Her imperious temper on this occasion augurs ill for her future bearing in the event of fortune favouring her cause, but the disappointment of her hopes turns her emotion into a more seductive, though no less vehement course. When she hears from Salisbury that Philip has been false to his oath, there sweeps over her the overwhelming sense of her powerlessness, shaking her as a reed before the wind:

> 'For I am sick, and capable of fears;
> Oppressed with wrongs, and therefore full of fears;
> A widow, husbandless, subject to fears.'

Yet out of this weakness is born a strange grandeur. The imagination of Constance playing upon her misery wraps her, as it were, in a haze whence she looms large upon our view. The 'unadvised scold' of the earlier scene rises to wellnigh tragic stature as she flings herself on the ground and cries aloud:

> 'To me, and to the state of my great grief,
> Let kings assemble; for my grief's so great
> That no supporter but the huge firm earth
> Can hold it up: here I and sorrows sit;
> Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it.'

In a similar vein, half-tragic, half-grandiose, is her appeal to the heavens to be the widow's husband, and to arm against the perjured kings. And when the heavens are deaf to her cries, with still more daring luxuriance of imagery she invokes 'amiable lovely Death' to be her mate, whom she may 'buss' as wife.

It is remarkable throughout these speeches how seldom the thoughts of Constance are turned directly towards Arthur; it is her own widowed lot which forms the centre of her exuberant riot of fancy. This is in itself proof that her maternal impulse does not well up, pure and strong, from unfathomable depths in her being. How largely it is fed from merely æsthetic sources is shown by her own declaration that had Arthur been ugly, 'slanderous' to her womb,

she would not have loved him, or deemed him worthy of a crown. And when the fortune of war tears him from her arms, her grief at his loss is strangely mingled with the fantastic thought that sorrow will so despoil him of his beauty that she will not know him when they meet in heaven. King Philip's rebuke, 'You are as fond of grief as of your child,' is well deserved, but Constance catches in self-defence at the implicit personification of sorrow and expands it, with pathetic rhetoric, into the picture of grief filling up the room of her absent child, and acting his every part. But the vehemence of her passion powerless against others, reacts with deadly shock upon her frail nature, and the spectral bridegroom whom she has so passionately invoked, claims her as his own.

In the world of intrigues, ambitions, and passions Arthur shines forth as a being from another sphere. In depicting the boy, Shakspere was met with the difficulty that in the young princes in *Richard III* he had already drawn types of youthful innocence cruelly done to death. But his exquisite tact in the variation of details prevents all monotonous repetition. The nephews of Richard were marked by an ability and spirit beyond their years, and the elder already bore himself with a true touch of regal dignity. Arthur is of an essentially different nature. He is a saintly, gentle child, without a spark of worldly ambition. The passionate altercation between his mother and grandmother draws tears from his eyes, and forces from his lips the plaintive murmur that he is not worth the coil that is made for him. So when Constance is heaping frenzied reproaches upon those who have broken faith with her, Arthur beseeches her to be content, and, when he is taken captive, his one thought is that his mother will die of grief. Prison itself would have no terror for him, were it not for fear of some feller evils lurking in the background, and if he covets freedom, it is only that he may keep sheep. His gentle heart goes out to his gaoler Hubert, and shows its love in numberless tender offices. It is the memory of these that pleads most powerfully on his behalf against the savage warrant for the branding of his eyes. The boy's recital of his past deeds of loving kindness, his terror at the entry of the attendants bearing the instruments of torture, his entreaty not to be bound, his offer to sacrifice his tongue, if so he may keep his eyes, are all touches of the purest, deepest pathos which have lost no jot of their moving power. But less happy in the eyes of an age more realistic than the Elizabethan, are those appeals of Arthur, in which, showing himself a true son of his mother, he speaks in metaphors and figures unsuited to his years or to the fierceness of the crisis. Thus, when Hubert prepares to heat the

iron, he declares that the fire is dead with grief, and that to revive its glow will be but to make it blush with shame of these proceedings. The innocence of boyhood does not need to borrow such weapons from the rhetorician's armoury; it has a more potent advocate in its own inherent charm. Arthur escapes the cruel doom of blinding but we feel instinctively that he is one of the saintly creatures who are not long for this world. Thus Shakspere showed his usual fine tact in choosing the tradition which represented him as perishing in an attempt to leap from his prison walls. With a last flash of precocious fancy he finds his 'uncle's spirit' in the stones upon which he sinks in death.

How cheerless a panorama has been unfolded before us! On the one hand a group of highly-placed personages, John, Philip, Pandulph, Constance, swayed by passion or self-interest; on the other an innocent child crushed beneath the iron forces of the world. Is there no middle path in which the man of sturdy morality and truth may walk with safety? The answer is given in the elaborate portrait of the Bastard, Faulconbridge. From the purely dramatic point of view his figure is scarcely necessary, but morally he is the very salt of the play. At first that salt would seem to be of somewhat coarse savour. The scene in which he discusses the question of his legitimacy in the presence of John and the Queen-mother is undeniably pungent, though Shakspere, with greater delicacy than the elder dramatist, excludes the lady whose honour is at stake. It is characteristic of Faulconbridge that he decides to reject legitimacy and the material advantages that go with it, in order that he may claim descent from the heroic Richard. He disdains a father who can only transmit 'a half-face' like his brother's instead of his own 'large composition,' even though it be derived 'something about, a little from the right.' Thus throughout he prefers what is substantial and genuine, even if it will not stand the most delicate scrutiny, to all that smacks of conventionality or artifice. His character is in entire accord with the origin to which he lays claim. His royal blood gives him his daring in battle, and his stern fidelity to duty in the crisis of his country's fortunes; while from his mother's side he draws his hearty, practical common-sense, and his thoroughly popular turn of humour. The latter qualities are shown especially in his soliloquies, as when after being dubbed knight he moralizes on his unfitness for this new honour, because he doth not 'smack of observation' according to the prescribed standard of fashion; or when he rails against the 'mad kings,' John and Philip, with their 'mad composition' against Arthur's interests. It is here that he unfolds his practical political

philosophy, in which he traces all errors in the well-peised world to the 'vile-drawing bias,' the 'daily break-vow,' commodity. With bluff sincerity he admits that, with similar temptation, he would similarly fall, though we feel that in this he does himself a wrong. He would never compromise his honour, though his morality is far from thin-skinned. He proposes to the kings a combined assault upon Angiers, because its scroyles flout them, and he makes no scruple of carrying out John's behest to shake the bags of hoarding abbots. But that he has at bottom a tender heart is shown in his words to Hubert, as they stand together over Arthur's body:

> 'Knew you of this fair work?
> *Beyond the infinite and boundless reach*
> Of mercy, if thou didst this deed of death,
> Art thou damned, Hubert.'

This crowning catastrophe, and the revolt of the nobles for which it gives the signal, perplex the honest soldier. This child of nature loses his way amidst the thorns and dangers of the world. He is confronted by intricacies which demand an intellect more subtle than his. He feels darkly that all is not well with John and the English cause, but he has too much patriotism to imitate the nobles and join his country's foes. Rather, the blacker the dangers that threaten, the higher does his spirit mount, till in the end he fills the rôle, vacated by John's poltroonery, of national leader and hero. It is he who seeks to stir the recreant king to be 'great in act,' in face of the invader, and who bids him 'away and glister like the god of war.' It is he who, giving voice to the popular instinct, pours contempt upon the 'inglorious league' which John makes with Pandulph, in order to buy off the assault of a beardless boy. And when the Dauphin refuses to be bound by the compact made over his head, it is the Bastard who, clothing the king in attributes borrowed from his own high-souled temper, describes him as an eagle towering o'er his aiery, 'to souse annoyance that comes near his nest.' The 'pigmy arms' of the French he ridicules with much of the old saucy insolence, and for the revolted lords he has epithets of burning indignation. How far his sturdy patriotism transcends their disloyalty, springing though it does from a moral motive, is made palpable when on the field of battle the dying Count Melun reveals the treacherous doom with which the Dauphin purposes to reward their treacherous aid. Under such sharp stimulus they rally again to the cause which the Bastard has so gallantly upheld, and, though John pays the last penalty of his misdeeds, the nation renews its youth. The foreigner retreats; unity is re-established, and the

accession of the young Prince Henry marks the dawn of a nobler era thrilled by the spirit of the Bastard's closing words, which strike the very keynote of the whole group of historical plays.

> 'This England never did, nor never shall
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
> But when it first did help to wound itself.
> Now these her princes are come home again,
> Come the three corners of the world in arms,
> And we shall shock them. Naught shall make us rue,
> If England to itself do rest but true.'

RICHARD II cannot be dated with absolute accuracy. It must have been written at least before 1597, when a quarto edition appeared, and we cannot be far wrong in assigning it to about 1594. In spite of its containing a larger number of rhymed lines, it almost certainly comes after *Richard III*, for it shows a finer ear for rhythm, and is free from luridly melodramatic touches. Like *Richard III*, however, it shows the influence of Marlowe, for if the hunchback king resembles the earlier dramatist's Tamburlaine and Barabas, his Edward II, as has already been shown, supplied hints for the picture of Richard II. Whether the play is to be placed before or after *King John* is doubtful. It is designed on a slighter scale; it is wanting in the humorous element supplied by Faulconbridge, and it contains several immature episodes. These indications point to its being the earlier of the two dramas, but, on the other hand, the portrait of Constance seems to be a preparatory sketch for that of Richard II, and the play, as a whole, is linked indissolubly to the other portions of the Lancastrian tetralogy.

The material of the drama is taken almost entirely from Holinshed, with some additional hints from Stowe, though a few episodical scenes such as the death of John of Gaunt and Richard's last interview with his Queen are of Shakspere's own invention[1]. The period covered by the drama extends from September, 1398 to February, 1400.

1 Dr. Forman mentions in his diary the performance at the Globe on April 30, 1611, of a *Richard II* whose incidents were taken chiefly from the early years of the reign, and thus differed essentially from those handled by Shakspere Gervinus is therefore probably wrong in identifying this play with the one performed by order of the friends of Lord Essex in the streets of London, on the afternoon preceding his revolt Bacon describes the piece bespoken by the conspirators at 'the play of deposing Richard II,' and this applies better to Shakspere's drama than to the one seen by Forman Moreover, as is clearly shown in the Calendar of State Papers 1591-1601, p. 578, the actor with whom Essex' supporter, Sir Gilly Merrick, negotiated, was Augustine Phillips, servant to the Lord Chamberlain and one of his players, i e the member of Shakspere's company. It is therefore highly plausible that the play performed by Phillips and his associates was the one written by their fellow-actor and already presented by them on the boards To this it has been objected that the lines 154-318 in Act IV, Scene I, describing the deposition of Richard, are absent in the quartos of 1597 and 1598, and only appear in the third edition of 1608 But the words of the abbot, 'a woeful pageant have we here beheld,' which appear in the earlier quartos, have no meaning apart from the deposition scene, and the inference is that the missing lines were, from the first, part of the play, and were spoken on the stage, but were omitted from the versions published

Its stirring events had influenced the contemporary poetry of Gower, Langland, and others, but of this Shakspere was doubtless ignorant. The subject attracted him because it offered another opportunity of dealing with the problem of hereditary claim versus personal fitness as a title to sovereignty. We are shown, as in *King John,* the fatal results of weak government, but here internal discontent is emphasized rather than foreign humiliation; while the failure of the ruler has its root not in a criminal, but a diseased, will. The sentimentalist, in Shakspere's view, is always a dangerous factor in society; in Richard II we see him enthroned, and the result is national disaster, till a deliverer arises in Bolingbroke, the iron-willed man of affairs. In the detailed contrast of character between the two men lies the cardinal interest of the play.

This contrast is made prominent in the opening episode. There is no more decisive test of a king's quality than his method of dealing with the great subjects who stand nearest to the throne. The fierce party-struggles among the nobility which had marked Richard's entire reign culminate in a violent outbreak between Henry Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk. In the royal presence Bolingbroke 'appeals' Mowbray of peculation, treason, and the main share in the death of the Duke of Gloucester, Richard's uncle, who had been mysteriously murdered. But Richard himself, as appears from subsequent words of John of Gaunt, was believed to have instigated the crime, and Bolingbroke in bringing the charge against Mowbray gives the first proof of his far-sighted diplomacy, for his blow is in fact aimed at the king, and is intended to stir up the popular fury less against Norfolk than the real author of the deed of blood. That Richard is alive to the true issue is proved by his troubled aside 'How high a pitch his resolution soars,' and his anxiety to hush up the matter is shown in his endeavour to reconcile the opponents. He bids each throw down the other's gage, and his command takes the form of a picturesque metaphor, 'Lions make leopards tame.' Those few words are an index to Richard's whole habit of mind. His effeminate outward beauty, which wins for him the title of 'sweet lovely rose,' is matched by a puerile grace of fancy that tinges the facts of life with an unreal, pseudo-poetic glow. Instead of grappling with its stern necessities, he takes an æsthetic

during Elizabeth's reign, as likely to give offence at Court. Another objection has been founded upon the avowed reluctance of Phillips and his fellows to perform the play because it was 'so old, and so long out of use that they should have a small company of it.' But actors might well hesitate to revive a piece which had first seen the light about seven years ago, and which can scarcely ever have had the elements of great success on the stage. It would be going too far to say that the play commissioned by Merrick was undoubtedly Shakspere's, but there is more reason for thinking so than a good many critics allow. See Hales' *Notes and Essays on Shakspere.*

delight in the 'situations' which it provides. His whole attitude is that of an onlooker, a dilettante whose will has never been braced to mould and fashion circumstances; he is, as Dowden has summed it up, 'an amateur in living, not an artist.' Thus, on an occasion which requires the resolute exercise of authority, he is satisfied with making a grandiloquent comparison, while he suffers his command to be defied, and is forced to fix a day for the ordeal of battle between the rival lords. But in the lists at Coventry he gives more signal proof of impulsive weakness. Before the combatants can close, he flings down his warder, stops the tourney, and banishes Bolingbroke for six years and Mowbray for life. This act, as Mowbray's son asserts at a later period in *Henry IV*, Part II, was the beginning of all the evils that befell him later:

> 'O when the king did throw his warder down,
> His own life hung upon the staff he threw,
> Then threw he down himself:'

For Richard, alarmed at the popular manifestations in Bolingbroke's favour, sends to perpetual exile the man whom he loves, and who would have proved faithful to him, while he inflicts a lighter and yet exasperating penalty upon the aspiring lord whom he secretly fears. Amid the prayers and blessings of the multitude, and with patriotic sighs of farewell to the 'sweet soil' of England, Bolingbroke departs to bide his time beyond the seas.

It is the natural mistake of a weak nature to think that it is enough to banish a dangerous enemy without striking at the real source of his power, which lies in the wide-spread popular disaffection. A vivid glimpse into Richard's maladministration is given in his interview with the parasites, Bagot and Green, before he sets out for the Irish war. The realm is let out to farm; blank charters are issued for the levy of 'benevolences'; the news of John of Gaunt's approaching death is hailed with delight as making his coffers, private property though they be, an easy prey. But before the head of the house of Lancaster, the last survivor of the great age of Edward III, passes away, he lifts up his voice in a final paean over England, 'this other Eden, demi-Paradise,' and in a prophecy of impending doom upon her degenerate lord who, to feed 'his rash fierce blaze of riot,' has leased her out 'like to a tenement or pelting farm.' But Richard, though he quails before the lofty words of rebuke, which, as he complains with a characteristic flourish, chase 'the royal blood' from his cheek, gives no ear to their stern significance. He dismisses them as the vapourings of

'A lunatic lean-witted fool
Presuming on an ague's privilege,'

and his practical retort, the moment the breath is out of the old hero's body, is to seize

'The plate, coin, revenue, and movables
Whereof our uncle Gaunt did stand possessed.'

Such a wanton invasion of the rights of inheritance is too much for even the pliant York—last left of Richard's uncles—who plucks up heart to point out that he is setting a suicidal precedent by his violation of 'fair sequence and succession,' upon which his own royal title rests. But again Richard is deaf to good counsel, though with singular lack of judgement he appoints this very York, unstable as water, and chagrined by his nephew's contempt for his warning words, to be governor of England during the Irish campaign. Thus, with a mere figurehead presiding over the realm, with the Commons alienated by oppressive imposts, and the nobles alarmed at the illegal outrage upon the rights of one of their order, England, during Richard's absence, lies at the mercy of a bold aspirant to the throne. With characteristic promptitude Bolingbroke seizes his opportunity. He lands at Ravenspurgh with a convoy from overseas, and is at once joined by Northumberland, Worcester, and other powerful English lords. He advances southwards, announcing that he comes but to claim in person the title and property of which he has been unjustly deprived, and York, powerless to cope with such a crisis, virtually submits to the invader, whose ultimate aims are clear enough to him, by deciding to 'remain as neuter.' But Bolingbroke preferring to keep so impartial a personage under his own eye, carries him in his train to Bristol, where he gives proof that his objects are not merely private by sending to their death Richard's favourites, Busby and Green, or, in his own phrase, weeding the commonwealth of its 'caterpillars.' In executing such summary justice Bolingbroke is already exercising the functions of an uncrowned king.

Meanwhile the titular king has remained overlong beyond the seas on his fruitless Irish expedition. He leaves his friends at home without tidings, and the superstitious Welshmen who, on news of Bolingbroke's invasion, had rallied to the royal cause, are alarmed by portents in the sky into a belief in Richard's death, and carry over their forces to his rival. When at length he sets foot again on English soil, he does not follow the advice of Aumerle and the sagacious Bishop of Carlisle by making an energetic dash upon Bolingbroke, and seeking to crush him before he can consolidate his power. It

delight in the 'situations' which it provides. His whole attitude is that of an onlooker, a dilettante whose will has never been braced to mould and fashion circumstances; he is, as Dowden has summed it up, 'an amateur in living, not an artist.' Thus, on an occasion which requires the resolute exercise of authority, he is satisfied with making a grandiloquent comparison, while he suffers his command to be defied, and is forced to fix a day for the ordeal of battle between the rival lords. But in the lists at Coventry he gives more signal proof of impulsive weakness. Before the combatants can close, he flings down his warder, stops the tourney, and banishes Bolingbroke for six years and Mowbray for life. This act, as Mowbray's son asserts at a later period in *Henry IV*, Part II, was the beginning of all the evils that befell him later:

> 'O when the king did throw his warder down,
> His own life hung upon the staff he threw,
> Then threw he down himself:'

For Richard, alarmed at the popular manifestations in Bolingbroke's favour, sends to perpetual exile the man whom he loves, and who would have proved faithful to him, while he inflicts a lighter and yet exasperating penalty upon the aspiring lord whom he secretly fears. Amid the prayers and blessings of the multitude, and with patriotic sighs of farewell to the 'sweet soil' of England, Bolingbroke departs to bide his time beyond the seas.

It is the natural mistake of a weak nature to think that it is enough to banish a dangerous enemy without striking at the real source of his power, which lies in the wide-spread popular disaffection. A vivid glimpse into Richard's maladministration is given in his interview with the parasites, Bagot and Green, before he sets out for the Irish war. The realm is let out to farm; blank charters are issued for the levy of 'benevolences'; the news of John of Gaunt's approaching death is hailed with delight as making his coffers, private property though they be, an easy prey. But before the head of the house of Lancaster, the last survivor of the great age of Edward III, passes away, he lifts up his voice in a final paean over England, 'this other Eden, demi-Paradise,' and in a prophecy of impending doom upon her degenerate lord who, to feed 'his rash fierce blaze of riot,' has leased her out 'like to a tenement or pelting farm.' But Richard, though he quails before the lofty words of rebuke, which, as he complains with a characteristic flourish, chase 'the royal blood' from his cheek, gives no ear to their stern significance. He dismisses them as the vapourings of

'A lunatic lean-witted fool
Presuming on an ague's privilege,'

and his practical retort, the moment the breath is out of the old hero's body, is to seize

'The plate, coin, revenue, and movables
Whereof our uncle Gaunt did stand possessed.'

Such a wanton invasion of the rights of inheritance is too much for even the pliant York—last left of Richard's uncles—who plucks up heart to point out that he is setting a suicidal precedent by his violation of 'fair sequence and succession,' upon which his own royal title rests. But again Richard is deaf to good counsel, though with singular lack of judgement he appoints this very York, unstable as water, and chagrined by his nephew's contempt for his warning words, to be governor of England during the Irish campaign. Thus, with a mere figurehead presiding over the realm, with the Commons alienated by oppressive imposts, and the nobles alarmed at the illegal outrage upon the rights of one of their order, England, during Richard's absence, lies at the mercy of a bold aspirant to the throne. With characteristic promptitude Bolingbroke seizes his opportunity. He lands at Ravenspurgh with a convoy from overseas, and is at once joined by Northumberland, Worcester, and other powerful English lords. He advances southwards, announcing that he comes but to claim in person the title and property of which he has been unjustly deprived, and York, powerless to cope with such a crisis, virtually submits to the invader, whose ultimate aims are clear enough to him, by deciding to 'remain as neuter.' But Bolingbroke preferring to keep so impartial a personage under his own eye, carries him in his train to Bristol, where he gives proof that his objects are not merely private by sending to their death Richard's favourites, Busby and Green, or, in his own phrase, weeding the commonwealth of its 'caterpillars.' In executing such summary justice Bolingbroke is already exercising the functions of an uncrowned king.

Meanwhile the titular king has remained overlong beyond the seas on his fruitless Irish expedition. He leaves his friends at home without tidings, and the superstitious Welshmen who, on news of Bolingbroke's invasion, had rallied to the royal cause, are alarmed by portents in the sky into a belief in Richard's death, and carry over their forces to his rival. When at length he sets foot again on English soil, he does not follow the advice of Aumerle and the sagacious Bishop of Carlisle by making an energetic dash upon Bolingbroke, and seeking to crush him before he can consolidate his power. It

suits him better to delay, while his fancy runs its extravagant riot. He has not in him a spark of true patriotism, but his return to English soil excites him to a hysterical outburst of smiles and tears, and of 'favours,' as he terms them, to the ground from his 'royal hands.' There is, in his opinion, no need for him to deal vigorously with the foe. As robbers are aghast at the light of day, so Bolingbroke will tremble when he sees Richard rising in sunbright majesty:

> 'Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm from an anointed king.
> The breath of worldly men cannot depose
> The deputy elected by the Lord.'

For every soldier of Bolingbroke

> 'God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
> A glorious angel.'

But, while he is buoying himself up with these fancies of celestial succour, prosaic tidings begin to pour in of the loss of earthly auxiliaries. Salisbury enters to tell of the defection of the Welsh, and ere the blood which the news drives from Richard's cheek can return, Scroop announces the general uprising of the Commons, and the execution of the favourites at Bristol. Richard's mercurial sensibility now rushes down to the lowest depths of artificial despair. He would fain have all 'sit upon the ground, and tell sad stories of the death of kings,' and he revels in every gloomy detail with which he can trick out the theme. Again the Bishop of Carlisle warns him that wise men do not 'sit and wail their woes,' and Aumerle suggests that his father York has a force at the royal service. Then the heaviest blow falls, for Scroop tells that York has joined Bolingbroke. Once more Richard's spirits, which had momentarily swept upward, sink to the very nadir of depression. He abandons all hope, discharges the forces under him, and sets out for Flint Castle, where he can pine away and submit himself to 'kingly woe.'

But this mood is as transient as all others, though its practical consequences are beyond recall. Bolingbroke with his followers appears before the Castle, and when Richard shows himself on the walls, the grace and charm of his bearing force an eloquent simile even from his austere rival's lips, while York, anxious to show that his sympathies are not all in one camp, cries with enthusiasm:

> 'Yet looks he like a king; behold, his eye,
> As bright as is the eagle's, lightens forth
> Controlling majesty.'

Richard indeed can always 'look like' a king: to borrow a theatrical phrase which fits his theatrical nature, he can 'dress the part' of sovereign to perfection, and he delights in its ceremonial show. Thus when Northumberland is sent by Bolingbroke as envoy, Richard flares up in indignant rebuke because he omits the fearful bending of his knee to his lawful king, consecrated of God, Who is mustering 'armies of pestilence' on his behalf. But a few moments afterwards, with kaleidoscopic shift of emotions, this very king by divine right is suggesting his own deposition, and the exchange of his

> 'Large kingdom for a little grave,
> A little, little grave, an obscure grave.'

And stimulated by the incontinent imagination which revels in every possible detail of abasement, Richard commits the incredible folly of bestowing the ironical title of 'King Bolingbroke' on his rival, who has hitherto claimed only his private rights, and who, when Richard descends to the base court of the castle, meets him with bended knee, and with the dutiful declaration 'My gracious lord, I come but for mine own.' To Richard's irritable fancy the words are pregnant with meaning, and he replies with undignified repartee, 'Your own is yours, and I am yours, and all!' And when Bolingbroke puts a courteous gloss upon this retort, Richard expands the idea with infatuated emphasis:

> 'They well deserve to have,
> That know the strong'st and surest way to get.
> Cousin, I am too young to be your father,
> Though you are old enough to be my heir.
> What you will have, I'll give, and willing too.'

Thus he lays down a doctrine of possession which entirely invalidates his own right, and hands over his inheritance, though with ironical intent, to this cool, reserved rival. Even had Bolingbroke's original aims been simply those he avowed, Richard himself would have helped to thrust him into the kingly seat.

At the opening of Act IV we see Bolingbroke already practically enthroned, and the situation is a designed counterpart to the earliest scene of the play, that the contrast may be enforced between the new rulers and the old. A number of lords accuse Aumerle, as Bolingbroke had formerly accused Norfolk, of having had the chief hand in the death of Gloucester. As Aumerle had been Richard's most faithful follower, it would have been to Bolingbroke's interest to let him fall beneath the swords of the accusers, but he is determined that full justice shall be done. Norfolk has been adduced as a witness

of Aumerle's guilt, and Bolingbroke decrees that no further step shall be taken till the banished Duke can be recalled: even when he learns that this ancient adversary is dead, he orders that all differences shall 'rest under gage' till due day of trial can be appointed. Such a spectacle of justice, clemency, and firmness awes the turbulent assembly into obedience. The usurper at this crisis displays the kingly qualities which are so wanting in him who is still in name the king. But the outward patent of power is no longer to be separated from its reality. York, to whom the office of go-between naturally appeals, enters to formally announce that 'plume-plucked' Richard surrenders his sceptre to 'Henry, fourth of that name,' and, with a laconic appeal to Heaven, Bolingbroke mounts the regal seat. But one voice rises in protest. The Bishop of Carlisle, careless of his own safety, boldly denies the right of subjects to sit in judgement on their prince, and foretells that, if this foul traitor Hereford is crowned, intestine war with all its horrors will sweep over the land, till it be called 'the field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls.' This prophecy of the civil strife, consequent on the Lancastrian accession, is so explicit that it cannot be dismissed as merely a dramatic utterance. It is true that in Shakspere's eyes the cardinal title to kingly rank is the possession of kingly qualities. He lays bare, as with a surgeon's scalpel, the fatal defects, moral or intellectual, which unfit a lineal holder of the sceptre for his high vocation. Neither Henry VI nor Richard II escapes a damning indictment. But the poet with his instinctive reverence for inherited rights, his tenacious grasp of the principle of stability in the social order, could not view without the gravest concern the overthrow of an established dynasty, however deeply at fault, by rebellious subjects. Such a revolutionary course, though prompted in the main by patriotism, would necessarily have an alloy of the baser motives of self-seeking and ambition, and these would entail a righteous Nemesis. Of the divine right of kings in the Stuart or Legitimist sense Shakspere could never have been the champion, but he was keenly alive to the 'seamy side' of rebellion, and through the lips of the brave Bishop of Carlisle, on whom Bolingbroke with generous statesmanship takes no revenge, he sets forth its disastrous consequences.

While the misdeeds of the new master of England arouse this voice of eloquent protest, Richard is left to a more merciless condemnation out of his own mouth. Summoned before Bolingbroke, that in the very presence of the usurper he may formally resign the crown, he runs through the whole range of feelings for which the situation can be made to give the cue. He revels in epigrams, and imagery. To

his adversary's cold, sharp queries, whether he is willing to resign, he gives in a breath contradictory answers, 'Ay, no; no, Ay,' words which, as Kreyssig has suggested, form the motto of his character. At one moment he renounces the emblems and prerogatives of kingship with legal amplitude of detail, setting the seal thereto by the cry 'God save King Harry'; at another he calls himself a traitor for making such a surrender, and bewails that he has now 'no name, no title,' not even that given him at the font. This final touch of exaggeration expresses Richard's feeling that his very personality is oozing away under the pressure to which it is subjected; a feeling which finds utterance in the fantastic outburst:

> 'O that I were a mockery king of snow,
> Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke
> To melt myself away in water-drops!'

Northumberland harshly seeks to cut short Richard's riot of fancy by urging him to read a list of accusations framed against him, but Bolingbroke saves him from this indignity, and grants with imperturbable calm his request for a mirror wherein to view his face. The glass reflects the old outward beauty, for it takes a heartfelt grief to write wrinkles on the brow, while Richard's is but a phantom sorrow; and cheated of the æsthetic satisfaction of poring over the outward marks of woe, the petulant man dashes the mirror to the ground, crying, as it shivers:

> 'Mark, silent king, the moral of this sport,
> How soon my sorrow hath destroyed my face.'

And Bolingbroke, who has hitherto watched Richard's parade of emotion with speechless disdain, at last utters a retort of pregnant irony:

> 'The shadow of your sorrow hath destroyed
> The shadow of your face.'

Even at this tragic crisis Richard's passion is without substance; it is a mere mirrored reflex of true grief, suited to some brittle image-world, not to the sphere of stern and solid fact.

While Richard's bearing earns the contempt of the practical statesman, it is not without a certain wistful charm that appeals especially to those of his nearer private circle. At intervals during the progress of the drama the Queen has been shown in the background, and her tender feeling for her 'sweet' lord proves his attractive power. As she sees him pass on the way to confinement, by Bolingbroke's order, she weeps to see her 'fair rose wither,' though mingled with her sorrow is an indignant feeling that 'pupil-like' he

takes his correction mildly, and kisses the rod. But it is impossible to shame Richard out of his luxury of grief into manly self-reproach, and it is with conceits and flourishes on his lips that he takes his last farewell of his faithful bride. Faithful too is the poor groom who visits him in prison, though his loyalty towards his master is strangely mingled with affection for roan Barbary, his master's horse. But even captivity cannot quench the pyrotechnic blaze of Richard's fancy. He peoples his prison with thoughts, each resembling some dweller in the world; a strain of music played out of time jars on his sensitive ear and forces him to reflect how he failed to note 'broken time' in the concord of the State, and then, with an abrupt turn of the metaphor, he sees in himself time's 'numbering clock,' and revels in an ingenious elaboration of this idea. It may truly be said that, to Richard, 'stone walls do not a prison make'; the feverish working of his fancy shuts out all sense of actual hardship. But his dream is rudely shattered. Bolingbroke, though he has no personal malice against him, feels his seat unsteady while Richard lives. He lets fall hints which find ready interpreters, and the captive king, fighting with one strange flash of latent valour, dies by a murderer's hand. The deed arouses no unseemly exultation in Bolingbroke's breast; he protests, and without hypocrisy:

> 'My soul is full of woe
> That blood should sprinkle me to make me grow.'

He is already beginning to feel the first strokes of Nemesis. An abortive conspiracy is formed at Oxford for his overthrow, and he has to sentence his brother-in-law to death for taking part in it. Nor is this his only domestic trouble. He is cut to the heart by the riotous conduct of his 'unthrifty son,' the haunter of taverns and stews, though he sees in him 'some sparks of better hope.' Bolingbroke has won the wished-for crown, but it has brought him no truce from care, and with a grave heart he turns to the thought of a voyage to the Holy Land, to appease the wrath that is yet to come.

HENRY IV, Parts I and II, forms in reality one play in ten Acts, which directly continues *Richard II.* Part I was registered with the Stationers' Company on February 25, 1598, and Part II, though not registered till August 23, 1600, was evidently written before the earlier entry, for the name of the fat knight which had originally been Oldcastle in both Parts, already appears as Falstaff. Meres mentions *Henry IV* in 1598, and in the same year a quarto edition appeared of Part I, which was followed by several others, Part II being published

in similar form in 1600. In 1599 Ben Jonson, in *Every Man in his Humour,* mentions Silence, who first appears in Part II. The date of the two parts must thus lie between 1597 and 1598. Shakspere found his materials almost exclusively in Holinshed's Chronicle, which he followed with great fidelity, even in its errors. For the comic scenes he drew hints from an old play, *The Famous Victories of Henry V,* which dealt in rough fashion with Prince Hal's youthful escapades and suggested the names of Eastcheap, Gadshill, and Sir John Oldcastle. That the fat knight was originally called Oldcastle is evident. In the quarto edition of Part II the prefix *Old* (i.e. Oldcastle) occurs before a speech of Falstaff. In Part I, Act i, Scene 2, Prince Henry calls Falstaff 'my old lad of the castle,' and in Part II, Act iii, Scene 2, Shallow speaks of Falstaff having been page to Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, a post which had been held by the historical Oldcastle. This Sir John Oldcastle, better known as Lord Cobham, had been burnt for Lollardry under Henry V, and the use of his name by Shakspere delighted the Roman Catholic party, who saw in the reprobate knight a portrait of the detested heretic. Cobham's descendants were equally incensed at the apparent insult to their relative, and with characteristic good feeling, and desire to lift the drama above the region of controversy, Shakspere in the Epilogue to Part II formally repudiated the identification: 'Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man.' He changed the name of his knight to Sir John Falstaff, modified probably from Sir John Fastolfe, who had been introduced as playing a cowardly part in *Henry VI,* Part I. But even this did not entirely allay the feeling that had been aroused, and controversial passion certainly contributed to the unprecedented popularity of *Henry IV.* Like Tamburlaine, about ten years before, Falstaff took the dramatic world by storm, and furnished a type upon which succeeding playwrights produced numerous variations. Shallow and Pistol were also hailed with enthusiastic appreciation, and became stock humorous characters. The originality and breadth of Shakspere's genius were universally recognized.

Part I covers a period of rather less than a year, from the battle of Holmedon, September 14, 1402, to that of Shrewsbury, July 21, 1403. It thus is fairly compact, and leads up to a catastrophe of some moment. Part II comprises the remaining years till Henry's death in 1413, and includes no events of first-rate importance. Thus the ten-act play, instead of working to a climax, dwindles as it proceeds in purely dramatic interest, and has a decidedly tame ending. At first sight it seems also lacking in any principle of unity. Historical and comic scenes alternate, without apparent connexion, and the

presence of Falstaff, an offspring of the dramatic imagination, amidst the figures of national tradition, is a puzzling problem.

But on a closer view we recognize the underlying unity of the whole. It has been shown that Shakspere in his historcial plays deals with two themes, interrelated yet distinct—the development of individual character, and the progress of the national life. In *King John* the political interest tended to overshadow the personal; in *Henry IV*, on the other hand, it is subordinate. The unity of the play does not lie in incident nor in political tendency, but in the relation of the leading personages to certain elementary principles of life and action. What is their idea of 'honour' and its value? This is the chief touchstone by which the various characters are tried. As the embodiment of Shakspere's own view stands Prince Henry, with Falstaff in glaring opposition; while Hotspur and Glendower,—the King, Northumberland and Prince John,—and even Shallow, Silence and Pistol, form intermediate groups.

Thus the King, though the titular hero, is not the dramatic centre of the play. He claims precedence, however, as the main link with *Richard II*, and how close Shakspere meant the connexion between the two pieces to be is shown by the fact that the one opens, as the other closed, with Henry's avowal of an intended crusade. Under the royal robe and crown we see the figure of the old Bolingbroke, in all essentials unchanged. But while hitherto he has been shown in contrast to characters who threw his higher qualities into effective relief, henceforward he is tried by harder tests. Diplomacy and determination enabled him to wrest the crown from Richard's feeble hands, *and they enable him to keep it firmly in his grasp. But they cannot* make him successful in the highest sense, either as a man or as a king; and they cannot, above all, yield him the inward peace for which he sighs. The usurper has to suffer a Nemesis in no wise arbitrary, but the inevitable result of his own nature and actions. As he confesses on his death-bed, it was by 'by-paths and indirect crook'd ways' that he 'met' his crown, only to find it sit troublesome upon his head. Richard's prophecies of woe to come are fulfilled. The shrewd, self-reliant politician cannot blossom into a benignant sovereign, loving and beloved. With all his talents and virtues, he lacks the integrity of nature and the personal magnetism which rivet permanently the attachment of men. The opening scene shows him already at fault both as a father and a king. 'The pragmatic man,' as Gervinus has said, 'knows only his own ratio: he knows not how to estimate natures which lie beyond his range of vision.' Thus he completely misunderstands his eldest son, and

we hear him lamenting that unkind fate has given him as heir his young Harry instead of Hotspur. But, in spite of this, he treats Hotspur with almost equal lack of insight. To him and to his father, Northumberland, Henry had in great measure owed his crown. Nor have their services ended there. The play opens with the account of Hotspur's victory over a formidable Scotch invading force, headed by the valiant Douglas. Henry has every motive to treat the Percys, and especially this gallant scion of the house, with whole-hearted trust and gratitude. But he is a prey to the fear that those who have set him up in place of their lawful lord may at any moment turn against the ruler of their own making. Hence he seizes on what seems a favourable opportunity for humbling their pretensions. He peremptorily orders Hotspur to deliver to him his Scotch prisoners, but the Percy refuses, till Henry has ransomed his brother-in-law, Mortimer, Earl of March, who has just been captured by the Welshman, Owen Glendower. Mortimer, however, is another object of suspicion to Henry, for Richard, had proclaimed him his heir; and Hotspur is stirred to frenzy, as he hears the king denounce his kinsman as a rebel and a traitor. With a last significant threat Henry quits the council-chamber, and the Percys, father and son, are left alone, to be speedily joined by Northumberland's brother, Worcester, who had been dismissed from the royal presence for wearing 'the moody frontier of a servant brow.' Well may they contrast the insults of this arrogant master with the 'candy deal of courtesy' shown to them at Ravenspurgh. Was it not foolishness

> 'To put down Richard, that sweet, lovely rose,
> And plant this thorn, this canker, Bolingbroke?'

Will this 'king of smiles' ever be content till he has answered all the debt he owes them, 'even with the bloody payment' of their deaths? To forestall this there is no way but the sword. Thus Henry's own conduct stirs up the formidable rebellion which unites against him the Percys, the Archbishop of York, the Welsh under Glendower, whose daughter Mortimer has married, and the Scots headed by Douglas, whom Hotspur has converted from friend to foe. But if the king is to blame that the rising should take place at all, he displays in coping with it all his former skill and resolution. He concentrates his forces against Hotspur without a moment's delay; but, anxious as ever to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, on the eve of the battle at Shrewsbury he offers a pardon and friendship to the rebels, if they will lay down their arms. When his offer is rejected, he fights

bravely amidst his troops, though with characteristic 'policy' he sends into the field a number of counterfeit kings. The battle won, he shows clemency to all but the chief offenders, and at once divides his army to encounter fresh foes in the North and West. The dauntless, unwearied spirit of the man rings in his cry to Warwick:

'Are these things then necessities?
Then let us meet them like necessities.'

But he is not called upon for further personal effort against the rebels. The death of Glendower brings the Welsh rising to a close, and the Archbishop with his allies in Yorkshire is opposed by Prince John, who procures their submission by a disgraceful act of treachery. This young prince is a characteristic product of the atmosphere of Henry's court. He has his father's bravery and reserve, but he is more unsympathetic and limited in range. His very likeness to the king throws the grander outlines of the latter into relief. An even more effective foil to Henry is provided in Northumberland, who should have been the directing head of the rebellion, but in whom caution and policy degenerate into selfish cowardice. He contributes in large measure to Hotspur's defeat by failing to join him on the plea of sickness, and he afterwards deserts the Archbishop of York and his allies by fleeing to Scotland, whence he sends pious hopes for their success.

The rebellion is thus crushed, and Henry sits more firmly than ever on the throne. But not for one moment has he the ease of mind which might have been the portion of either a better or a worse man. Throughout the political convulsion he has been haunted by the bitter thought of his eldest son's misdoings, which his irritable conscience interprets as the retribution upon his own sins. And what rankles most is the apparent similarity of Prince Henry's conduct to that of Richard, while in Hotspur he sees the image of his younger self. The view is short-sighted but natural, and Henry, whose own claim to the throne is founded upon personal fitness and not upon descent, mourns that his son is merely 'the shadow of succession.' The statesman trembles for the future of his kingdom under such keeping, but the father's heart bleeds with a yet keener pang: for deep down in that stern nature, and forming one of the factors in its strength, there is a vein of tenderness, which gushes forth in the yearning cry:

'Not an eye
But is aweary of thy common sight,
Save mine, which hath desired to see thee more:
Which now doth that I would not have it do,
Make blind itself with foolish tenderness.'

Yet, a moment afterwards, he shows his complete misjudgement of the prince by charging him with a desire to fight under Percy's pay, and even after being rescued from death by him at Shrewsbury, he cannot yield him perfect trust. The strain of the situation is more than he can bear. His health gives way; sleep forsakes his wearied eyelids; he has periods of depression, when an inert fatalism seems the only wisdom. The news of the final overthrow of the conspiracy finds him sick, with failing sight and giddy brain, and the cry of disappointment rises from his lips, 'Will fortune never come with both hands full?' At last the hour had arrived when he was free to carry out the long meditated crusade, but his trembling frame needs support even into the neighbouring chamber. There he undergoes one last trial. Prince Henry entering sees him in a sleep that *is apparently the sleep of death, and hastens to place the crown upon* his own head. The king wakes to find the emblem of royalty filched from him by his son, and to see in this a proof of his worst suspicions:

> 'Thy life did manifest thou lov'dst me not,
> *And thou wilt have me die assured of it.*
> Thou hid'st a thousand daggers in thy thoughts.
> Which thou hast whetted on thy stony heart,
> To stab at half an hour of my life.'

But the prince's tearful prayers for pardon and protestations of a 'true and inward duteous spirit' bring about a reconciliation, and, now that they are about to be separated for ever, father and son for the first time seem to stand truly face to face. The dying king looking back upon his own troubled career, predicts for his heir a more unruffled lot, and, steeped in statecraft to the very last, gives the shrewd counsel 'to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels.' With this characteristic legacy he passes from the scene where he has been so masterful a figure. A man of the world in the fullest sense, he has known how to wield worldly forces and to win worldly rewards. Not honour, but self-interest has been his guiding principle, yet the interest of the sagacious statesman has coincided at many points with that of his country. The usurper has been in no way a tyrant, yet his heart has been lacerated by not a few of those unseen stripes and scars which, according to the famous Tacitean description, are the tyrant's portion. For it is one of Shakspere's great though unobtrusive triumphs to have shown in Bolingbroke's career that material success, exclusively pursued, turns to bitterness even in the hands of those best equipped to achieve it.

When we turn from the court to the camp of the conspirators we plunge into a strangely different atmosphere. The soul of the

rebellion is the youngest of its leaders, Harry Percy, the 'Hotspur' of the North. His picture is drawn for us in affecting words by his wife after his death. His honour

> 'Stuck upon him as the sun
> In the grey vault of heaven: and by his light
> Did all the chivalry of England move
> To do brave acts.'

Honour is to Hotspur the end and aim of life; honour blazes on his brow, and makes him the lode-star of all the noble youth of the time. Henry enviously speaks of him as 'the theme of honour's tongue,' and Douglas addresses him as 'the king of honour.' He himself bids danger come 'from the east upto the west, so honour cross it from the north to south.' He thinks it an easy leap to pluck honour from the pale-faced moon, or from the bottom of the deep. Honour is thus the very law of his being, and it becomes essential to understand in what sense he conceives of it, and how it affects his actions. That it implies personal heroism is shown in the opening scene, where we hear of his victory over the redoubtable Douglas, and throughout the play he is the very model of gallantry in all his actions. Prince Henry does him no more than justice when he cries:

> 'I do not think a braver gentleman,
> More active-valiant, or more valiant-young,
> More daring or more bold, is now alive,
> To grace this latter age with noble deeds.'

His spirit inspires the very peasants in the rebel camp, and as he rides into the battle at Shrewsbury in all the prodigal exuberance of early manhood, with the thrilling watchword of the Percys, *Espérance,* upon his lips, he is the very ideal of a knight *sans peur et sans reproche.* How is it then that his death at the hands of Prince Henry does not jar upon our sense of poetic justice? The answer is that Hotspur's honour is based upon a selfish principle, which never hesitates to sacrifice the general good to his sense of personal dignity, while this sense is apt to be constantly inflamed by the play of an impetuous imagination. After the victory at Holmedon he refuses to deliver up his Scotch prisoners till Mortimer has been ransomed. The king's charge of treachery against his kinsmen rouses him to a white heat of rage. He must ease his heart, though at hazard of his head. He chafes at the thought that he and his relatives should have brought a blot upon their name by helping this 'king of smiles' to the throne, and that they should

now incur the further infamy of insult from his lips. He is thus easily won over when his uncle proposes the conspiracy, though, with his imagination all on fire, he gives at first no ear to the details of the plot, but revels in 'a world of figures' conjured up by his own brain. The rebukes of his father and uncle at last compel his attention, and this knightly Paladin does not scruple, for the sake of avenging private wrongs, to enter into a league with his country's hereditary foes. He consents to see England broken up, and claims a third share of the booty; he even gives way to one of his ungovernable transports, because he thinks that Glendower's slice of territory is larger than his own. The quarrel is soon made up, but Hotspur is never really in harmony with his confederates. Though there is in his own nature a highly imaginative vein, it plays round the one subject of honour, and for all that is sentimental, exaggerated, and artificial, he has a soldier's contempt. This appears in the first words that he utters, giving the account of the 'popinjay' courtier, who pestered him with 'holiday and lady terms' as he leant breathless on his sword after the fight at Holmedon. The dialogue with Lady Percy at Warkworth shows how he dislikes all outward signs of emotion, or tender confidences between husband and wife. To Lady Kate's anxious queries about his projects he has only jesting answers: there is no lady closer—but the only secrets that she is safe not to utter are those that she does not know; he loves her not, yet let him but have his roan, and when he is o' horseback, he will swear he loves her infinitely. This scene excites enthusiasm in certain German critics, who see in the attitude of Percy and his wife a healthy contrast to the sentimentality of Wertherism. But though beneath the banter there is full proof of genuine affection, can it be supposed that Shakspere, the writer of the Sonnets, intended this decidedly Philistine relationship to be the ideal of married intercourse?

With this disdain of sentiment and unreality Hotspur is utterly unfitted to be a confederate of Glendower. Even the bond of common interest cannot stifle the instinctive antipathy of the Anglo-Saxon and the Celt. Glendower is not without considerable mental gifts and culture, but these are made to minister to a diseased vain-glory, which seems almost a caricature of Hotspur's exaggerated passion for honour without its ennobling effects. The countryman of Merlin, fed from his birth on legends and prophecies, covets above everything the reputation of supernatural powers. He boasts, and probably has brought himself to believe, that at his nativity the heavens were on fire, and the earth trembled; that he can raise

spirits from the deep, and even command the devil himself. All this 'skimble-skamble stuff' meets with merciless derision from Hotspur, who gives rationalistic explanations of the Welshman's portents, and bids him seek not to command but 'shame the devil' by telling truth. Equally unbearable to the hot-headed youth is the overstrained refinement of Glendower's surroundings. For himself he prefers the sound of 'a brazen canstick turned' to mincing poetry, and he mocks at the sentimental passages between Glendower's daughter and Mortimer, who, having no common language, are fain to make tears, and kisses, and music the messengers of love.

Hotspur has, in the sequel, good cause to rue Glendower's vapourings about his supernatural powers, for the Welshman lets himself be 'o'erruled by prophecies,' and does not bring up his forces to join the rebel army at Shrewsbury. Northumberland also, as has been seen, fails at the rendezvous, and Hotspur's shrewdest advisers counsel delay. But the fiery Percy will not listen. He hazards the success of his enterprise to gratify his personal eagerness for an encounter with the sword-and-buckler Prince of Wales, of whom he is so jealous that in a fit of ungenerous spleen he had wished to have him poisoned in a pot of ale. Too much must not be made of such an outburst, but it is a singular comment on Hotspur's idea of honour, and when the two Harries at last meet, hot horse to horse, on the battlefield, we feel that victory rightly rests with the champion whose heroism is less highly coloured, but substantial and selfless to the core. Hotspur is the principal figure drawn by Shakspere from that world of chivalry, which was still furnishing Spenser with ideal types of manhood. But while the poet of *The Faerie Queene* fixed his gaze solely upon those elements in the feudal standard of life which tended 'to fashion a noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline,' the dramatist, while recognizing these elements, and in no way undervaluing the brilliant, high-souled figures which they produced, yet laid bare the fatal flaw of the medieval system—its glorification of individual 'honour' and prowess at the expense of national well-being. The champion of chivalry fascinates all eyes, but the moral order of society demands that he should go down before the patriot prince.

Yet when we turn our attention to the victor in this decisive contest, we may at first be inclined to question his superiority over his vanquished foe. Prince Henry's career has hitherto for the most part appeared a deliberate defiance of that principle of honour which had animated Hotspur's whole being. The first action reported of him (at the close of *Richard II*) is a coarse and wanton travesty of

the customs of chivalry, and when he appears in person in *Henry IV* he seems to fully merit his father's curt censure, 'as dissolute as desperate.' We see him the hail-fellow of a crew of roisterers; his first words smack of the tavern and the stews; and he unblushingly asks, 'Where shall we take a purse to-morrow?' He does not disdain the title of one of 'the moon's men,' and he shares in an exploit whereby peaceable travellers on the king's highway are beaten and robbed. He enters with unalloyed zest into the humours of low Eastcheap life, becoming 'sworn brother to a leash of drawers,' who tell him flatly that he is 'a Corinthian, a lad of mettle,' and on one of whom he plays a boyish practical joke. Constituted authority in all its forms he treats with scant respect. He does not hesitate to burlesque his father in an ale-house; he is removed from the council for an insult to the Chief Justice; and he tells a lie to the sheriff to screen Falstaff from punishment for the robbery. When the outbreak of the rebellion summons him from his haunts, he parodies military discipline by strutting along in marching order with Poins, while he plays on his truncheon like a fife.

How does Shakspere succeed in securing our sympathies for such a character, and redressing the moral balance completely in his favour? How is it that Henry's cry,

> 'If it be a sin to covet honour,
> I am the most offending soul alive,'

rings perfectly genuine, and that we feel his conception of honour to be truer and nobler than Hotspur's? The answer is that the prince's real nature does not show itself in this Bohemian existence, to which he is driven by the conditions which surround him. As heir to the throne he finds that his choice of occupation lies between statecraft and arms. But the subtle policy of a Bolingbroke, dealing with men as counters in a game, and the high-flown military ardour of a Hotspur are equally impossible to the young prince, whose character is simple and genuine to the core. He therefore flies from court and camp into the London streets and taverns, where he sees life as it is, without veneer. Shakspere, like Milton, gave little for 'a fugitive and cloistered virtue,' and Henry dips into the most turbid social depths. That he rises absolutely unspotted, is perhaps questionable by an age more censorious than the Elizabethan on the point of personal purity. But at worst his nature takes a superficial stain, and is at its centre wholly sound and unspoilt; while the breadth of his experience gives him the sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men, which is invaluable to a ruler. Henry, indeed, in

a monologue soon after the play opens, takes credit to himself for a more calculating design in his wild manner of life: it is intended to serve as a foil to his 'reformation,' when he thinks it time to 'throw off his loose behaviour,' and shine forth like the sun breaking through ugly mists. But this Pharisaical declaration need not be taken too literally, as it is probably meant for little more than a dramatic 'aside' to the audience, assuring them that Henry is in reality not what he appears, and indeed Shakspere is at pains to show that the prince stops short of serious misdoing, and is prompted to his escapades by a spirit of reckless hilarity. Thus when he is asked to take part in the robbery at Gadshill, he starts back in indignation. 'Who, I rob? I a thief? No, by my faith;' he is only brought to countenance the exploit that he may turn the tables upon Falstaff, and he takes care that the merchants shall have their money paid back again with advantage. When he is summoned to take his part in the struggle with the rebels, he goes forth with cheerful alacrity, not a whit daunted by Falstaff's blood-curdling picture of 'that fiend Douglas, that spirit Hotspur, and that devil Glendower.' So on the eve of the campaign he can stand in his father's presence, and while entreating pardon for those things wherein his 'youth hath faulty wandered and irregular,' truthfully declare that he is sound at heart, and that the time is at hand when he, the 'unthought of Harry,' will

> 'Redeem all this on Percy's head,
> And, in the closing of some glorious day,
> Be bold to tell you that I am your son.'

Henry is completely without jealousy of Hotspur, yet there is a somewhat ostentatiously self-confident note in his description of the knightly hero as a 'factor,' who is engrossing up glories to be afterwards surrendered to him, and a severely realistic criticism might even be tempted to doubt whether the madcap of Eastcheap could be transformed in a moment into 'the feathered Mercury' of Vernon's glowing description, and to inquire which among his 'comrades that dashed the world aside' could bear comparison in their panoply of war to estridges and eagles. But in the day of trial Henry makes his promises absolutely good. He saves his father from the onslaught of the Douglas, and when he at last meets Hotspur face to face he proves victor in the combat. But he shows no ungenerous exultation, for his feeling of triumph is stifled in his mourning over the fall of this 'great heart,' and he takes so little thought for honour in the sense of outward glory, that he is willing to let Falstaff bear away

the credit of his own brilliant feat of arms. The only 'honour' valued by this genuine, unpretentious nature is that highest form which lies in the inward conviction of duty done in a rightful and patriotic cause.

It is thus very characteristic of Henry that when we next see him after his great achievement, he should be confessing to exceeding weariness and to a desire for small beer. He has returned for a time to the old haunts and boon-companions, but it is partly to seek relief from sorrow at his father's sickness, which makes his heart bleed inwardly, but which he cannot confess without seeming a hypocrite. There is a final outburst of the madcap mood when, disguised as a drawer, he goes with Poins to the Boar's Head to catch Falstaff with Doll Tearsheet on his knee. But just when this frolic is at its height, he is summoned away by news of danger abroad, and we do not see him again till he enters the chamber of his dying father, and places the crown upon his own head. The incident was found by Shakspere in Holinshed, and he could not well pass it over, but it scarcely heightens our conception of Henry. The haste with which he seizes on the symbol of royalty, immediately he thinks his father dead, is somewhat irreverent, and there is a touch of sophistry in his subsequent plea for pardon. But no doubt is left of the nobly unfaltering spirit in which he will enter upon his new responsibilities.

> 'My due from thee is this imperial crown,
> Which, as immediate from thy place and blood,
> Derives itself to me. Lo! here it sits,
> Which Heaven shall guard: and put the world's whole strength
> Into one giant arm, it shall not force
> This lineal honour from me.'

Henry feels that the crown comes to him by an inviolable title. As he declares to his father in the precious moments of mutual confidence which follow the final burst of suspicion:

> 'You won it, wore it, kept it, gave it me.
> Then plain and right must my possession be.'

And when Bolingbroke at last passes in reality away, it is in the confidence of 'plain and right' possession that Henry mounts the throne: strong in this confidence he rises at once to the height of his great station. He assures his trembling brothers that he will be their father and their brother too; he confirms in his seat the Chief Justice who had punished him in his younger days, and when Falstaff hails him familiarly, as he comes from the scene of his coronation, he turns upon the fat knight with the scathing rebuke, 'I know thee not,

old man,' and banishes him ten mile from his person on pain of death. This rigorous measure is doubtless a political and, as will appear, a moral necessity; but the world always eyes jealously a breach between old associates in mirth, and Henry's abrupt dismissal of his boon-companion seems unpleasantly like the practical complement of his self-righteous soliloquy in earlier days. But to appreciate fully the significance of the incident we must turn our attention to Falstaff himself.

The fat knight is by universal consent the greatest comic figure of ancient or modern literature. He is so however because, like his chief rival for this place of honour, Don Quixote, he is by no means purely a humorous creation. He is in fact one of the most complex of beings, and can only be described in seemingly contradictory antitheses. 'He is man,' to use the words of the eighteenth century essayist, Maurice Morgan, 'at once young and old, enterprising and fat, a dupe and a wit, harmless and wicked, weak in principle and resolute by constitution, cowardly in appearance and brave in reality, a knave without malice, a liar without deceit, and a knight, a gentleman, and a soldier, without either dignity, decency, or honour.' Such a series of paradoxes proves beyond doubt that Falstaff's character presents a baffling problem which even the most subtle analysis can only in part hope to solve.

It is essential to recognize that, though Sir John is seen from the beginning of the play amidst low surroundings, yet he belongs by birth to the world of breeding and culture, and its marks are visible on him to the last. He was page in his youth to the Duke of Norfolk, and he may well have been then a slim enough stripling to give some justification to his boast, 'I was not an eagle's talon in the waist; I could have crept into any alderman's thumb-ring.' That he mixed with men of the highest rank is shown in his reminiscence of the pun he made to John of Gaunt in the tilt-yard, when he hit Shallow on the head. His talk is full of allusions only possible to a man of education, even though he applies them in a perverse way. He quotes readily from the Bible; he has read the cause of apoplexy in Galen, and can discourse thereof to the Chief Justice; in his letters he imitates 'the honourable Romans in brevity.' He is familiar with the drama, and his burlesque of Henry IV reproving the prince is done 'in King Cambyses' vein'; while it further shows an acquaintance with the literary peculiarities of Euphuism, and the ceremonial etiquette of Court. Nor does Falstaff forget his social superiority to his companions, even when he has flung away every remnant of true dignity

The drawers at the Boar's Head speak of him to Henry as 'a proud Jack,' and when he is deluding Mistress Quickly with promises of marriage, he desires her 'to be no more so familiarity with poor people,' as ere long they will call her 'madam.' His very signature shows him to be punctilious as to degrees of intimacy. He is 'Jack Falstaff with my familiars, John with my brothers and sisters, and Sir John with all Europe.'

How comes it that a man, with the accomplishments of a gentleman and a scholar, and with no small share of class pride, should be found, when his hair is white, as the centre of a crew of roisterers in a tavern? The answer is contained in Falstaff's soliloquy on honour, 'What is honour? A word. What is that word, honour? Air. A trim reckoning... Therefore I'll none of it; honour is a mere scutcheon, and so ends my catechism.' We have seen the various modes in which Hotspur, Glendower, and Prince Henry pursued honour. To Falstaff they are all alike foolishness. Honour is in his eyes an impalpable figment, which has no place among the solid realities of life. For to him nothing is real of which the senses do not give direct evidence; he is a materialist to the finger-tips, and his whole existence is based on the denial of moral law. For this his corpulence must be held partly responsible; it would need an unusually spiritual nature not to adapt itself to such an environment, and there is truth in Falstaff's plea that he has 'more flesh than another man, and therefore more frailty.' One who is so physically clogged in the struggle for the ideal may well refuse even to enter the arena, and be content to take his ease at his inn.

But Falstaff finds that the moral law which he ignores is recognized by the world at large, and he therefore turns against it an apparently irresistible weapon—his humour. Laughter is the solvent by which he seeks to get rid of all awkward facts which clash with his theory of existence. Here again his bodily appearance is a factor, for it irresistibly provokes mirth. As he himself declares, 'Men of all sorts take a pride to gird at me; the brain of this foolish-compounded clay man is not able to invent anything that tends to laughter more than I invent or is invented on me. I am not only witty myself but the cause that wit is in other men.' It gives him infinite delight to be able to make Prince Henry 'laugh without intervallums,' while he cannot abide the sober-blooded Prince John, 'for a man cannot make him laugh.'

But Falstaff's power of exciting laughter depends far more on his mental than his bodily characteristics. The play of his intellect is as nimble and keen as the movements of his unwieldy bulk are lethargic.

It is the delight in this play of his faculties that, far more than any deliberate attempt to deceive, leads to his stupendous lies, while in case of detection he always makes sure of escaping discomfiture by some ingenious, unlooked-for manœuvre. Thus in recounting how he was set upon at Gadshill, he gradually expands the disguised Prince and Poins into eleven men in buckram suits with three in Kendal green. At this point the Prince confronts Falstaff with the true facts, and thinking that he has trapped him, cries, 'What trick, what device, what starting-hole canst thou now find out to hide thee from this open and apparent shame?' But Falstaff doubles upon his enemy with marvellous skill. He had known him from the first, but was it for him to kill the heir-apparent? He had shown the instinct of the valiant lion which will not touch the true prince. So afterwards on the field of Shrewsbury, when he claims to have killed Hotspur, Henry answers incautiously, 'Percy I killed myself, and saw thee dead.' Falstaff at once seizes on the handle given him by the last words, 'Didst thou? Lord, Lord, how this world is given to lying. I grant you I was down and out of breath, and so was he, but we rose both at an instant and fought a long hour by Shrewsbury clock.' (And Sir John's monstrous lies have the slight kernel of justification that he is not a coward in the strict sense. He may run away in the presence of danger, but he never loses his self-command.) Thus, even after the exploit at Gadshill, Henry has no hestitation in procuring him a charge of foot in the royalist army. (It is true that all sense of soldierly duty is so dead in him that he misuses 'the king's press' for his personal profit, and finally gathers together such a crew of tattered prodigals that he is ashamed to march through Coventry with them. Nor in the battle itself is it the part of a captain to lead his ragamuffins where they are so peppered that but three are left alive, while he turns tail with a bottle of sack in his pocket. Yet even to have time for thoughts of self-indulgence at such a crisis argues considerable presence of mind, which is further shown when he counterfeits death to escape the attack of Douglas. And it is noticeable that Falstaff acquires a reputation for knightly service at Shrewsbury, which can scarcely spring entirely from the fable of his having killed Hotspur.) He is sent with Prince John against the northern rebels; as he boasts himself, 'There is not a dangerous action can peep out his head but I am thrust upon it.' And though he again makes use of the muster-roll to fill his pockets, and arrives at the camp when all is over, yet he has sufficient reputation with the enemy for the valorous Sir John Coleville of the Dale to think no shame of surrendering to him.

Falstaff's cowardice thus springs less from 'instinct' than from a desire to ridicule that idea of honour which he looks upon as an airy nothing. It is only part of the vast system of imposture by which he seeks to utterly reverse facts. Thus he, who is written down old with all the characters of age, cries to the merchants at Gadshill, 'What! ye knaves, young men must live,' and parries the rebukes of the Chief Justice with the retort, 'You that are old consider not the capacities of us that are young: you measure the heat of our livers with the bitterness of your galls.' He, the corrupter of youth, reproaches the Prince with having done 'much harm' upon him, and cries out indignantly, 'Company, villainous company hath been the spoil of me.' He, who takes purses on the highway, complains of having his pockets picked in the tavern. He, whose bulk is due to unlimited consumption of sack and sugar, invokes 'a plague of sighing and grief; it blows a man up like a bladder.'

Such a power of turning realities topsy-turvy is a complete defence against prickings of conscience. Sir John indeed at times talks of repenting, but this is merely an additional instance of his method of utterly reversing facts. And thus, as the play progresses, he gradually sinks lower and lower. The scenes in which he appears in Part II have lost much of the earlier Bacchanalian brilliancy. We feel the atmosphere grow ranker as we see Falstaff arrested for a beggarly debt at the suit of mine hostess of the tavern, or cuddling Doll Tearsheet and courting her for busses. Even in his intercourse with Justice Shallow, Sir John's rapacity appears in a more undisguised and cynical form than before: 'If the young dace be a bait for the old pike, I see no reason in the law of nature, but I may snap at him.' Yet to the end Falstaff exercises a fascination even over his victims. Mistress Quickly breaks down when she bids him farewell, as he goes off to the wars; and Doll, who loves him 'better than e'er a scurvy young boy of them all,' cannot speak for emotion. Bardolph is content to be the butt of his wit for two and thirty years, and Master Shallow is so delighted with his company that he forbids him to take his leave. Therefore when Pistol brings the news that the old king is dead, Sir John has reason to think that Harry the Fifth will be to him all that Prince Hal has been, and that the laws of England are now at his commandment. He is sternly and speedily undeceived. The new king casts him off before the world, and for the first time Falstaff finds no retort spring to his lips. He deludes himself for a moment with the idea that he will be sent for in private, but this hope is quickly dispelled, and the hitherto invincible Sir John is borne away crushed. Pistol is not far wrong

when he declares a little later, 'his heart is fracted and corroborate.' Falstaff had laughed conscience out of existence, but at his heart, unknown to himself, there lurked one vulnerable spot—his affection for his 'tender lambkin,' sweet Hal. Through that spot he is now mortally pierced, and hence it is that the new king's attitude seems harsh and ungenerous. But it is founded upon an imperious necessity. Falstaff's whole career has been an attempt to defeat moral laws and facts by the resources of infinite humour, while Henry's main characteristic is his loyal, instinctive fidelity to those very facts and laws. Thus though the knight fascinates the 'son of England' for a time, their cardinal principles of life are diametrically opposed, and the crisis that calls Henry to a throne cannot but sever him from a companion so 'surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane. Yet while we feel that Falstaff meets with a just condemnation, we find it difficult to part with him for ever. There is in every man, however strenuous and serious, a touch of Falstaff, a germ of rebellious temper against the stern immutability of moral law, and a longing for a world with a less remorseless logic of facts than our own. It is this instinct that makes us lenient to Sir John; and that Shakspere himself wished us not to think unkindly of him at the last is evident from the pathetic account of his death by Mistress Quickly in *Henry V.* ''A went away, an it had been any christom child,' playing with flowers, smiling on his finger ends, and babbling o' green fields. At last Sir John was once more what he had so long pretended to be—young, with the youth of second childhood. And with the name of his childhood's God upon his lips, the great Reality recognized for one brief closing moment, Sir John goes to 'Arthur's bosom.'

The mighty personality of Falstaff dwarfs the subordinate comic characters of the play, but this is a calculated effect, for just when Sir John grows completely bankrupt in reputation and in fortune, Pistol, Shallow, and Silence make their appearance, and, in contrast with this pack of boobies, the knight, even when most deeply degraded, maintains something of heroic proportions. It is a steep descent from Falstaff's magnificent duel with honour, and his Titanic mendacities, to the puny impostures of these swaggerers and poltroons. Ancient Pistol is one of that small class of Shaksperean figures who do little more than caricature some passing fashion of the Elizabethan age, and who have therefore lost something of their original interest. An abject coward, who 'will not swagger with a Barbary hen, if her feathers turn back in any show of resistance,' he seeks to cloak his poverty of spirit with grandiose phrases borrowed

from the most bombastic Elizabethan tragedies, and strung together with an utter disregard of sense. We are reminded of Moth's epigram in *Love's Labour's Lost*: 'He has been at a feast of learning, and has stolen the scraps,' though it is the learning not of the study, but of the playhouse, where the ears of the groundlings were tickled with rhodomontade. A meaningless medley of classical allusions to Caesars, Cannibals and Trojan Greeks, King Cerberus, and fell Alecto's snake, pours from his lips, but this parody of culture fails to impose even on the most ignorant. Doll Tearsheet herself cannot abide this 'mouldy rogue,' whom she has abandoned in favour of Falstaff, and whose noisy vapourings cause him to be thrust out of the far from select company at the Boar's Head tavern. Even the addle-pated Shallow grows restive under Pistol's preliminary flourishes about 'Africa and golden joys,' when he arrives in Gloucestershire with tidings of the king's death: 'If, sir, you come with news from the Court, I take it there is but two ways; either to utter them or conceal them.' Yet Shallow as critic of Pistol presents an edifying picture of the blind leading the blind, for the Gloucestershire justice of the peace is a match with Falstaff's ancient in vainglorious loquacity. With him it takes the form of a tiresome reiteration of commonplace phrases, as if there was a leakage in his speech, and of imaginary reminiscences of dare-devil doings in his youth, when he lay at Clement's Inn with Falstaff, and was called mad Shallow. But Sir John is too great an expert in the art of lying to be deceived by such feeble braggadocio; he 'sees the bottom of Shallow,' and determines to 'snap at him' for his own ends, and indeed the fussy justice who lets Falstaff 'misuse the king's press damnably,' and who gives corrupt countenance in a lawsuit to William Visor of Wincot, though he knows him to be an arrant knave, amply deserves to be fleeced by his shrewd visitor. But on the ladder of inanity there are many descending steps, and below even Shallow stands his cousin and colleague Silence, a laconic echo of his garrulous kinsman, save when the sack mounts to his brain and he proves his mettle by trolling forth boisterous snatches from tavern-tunes. Yet it is hard to look askance at the foolish pair, for Shallow's house and garden, where the most agitating topics are the price of a good yoke of bullocks at Stamford fair, and whether the headland shall be sown with wheat, form a pleasant resting-place after the dust and din of camps and battlefields, or the reeking atmosphere of the Boar's Head. We partake with grateful imagination of the pastoral fare of 'some pigeons, a couple of short-legged hens, a joint of mutton, and any pretty little tiny kickshaws which William cook has ready,'

followed by a last year's pippin of Shallow's own graffing, eaten in the orchard, with a dish of caraways, and then to bed.

HENRY V is the fulfilment of a promise made in the epilogue to *Henry IV*, Part II, and doubtless followed immediately upon that play. Two important pieces of evidence fix its date with unusual certainty. It is the first play which Meres does not mention, and it must therefore have appeared later than 1598. But still more decisive is the allusion in the chorus before Act v to the campaign of Essex in Ireland, and the prophecy that he would return in good time 'bringing rebellion broached on his sword[1].' These words, destined to be so bitterly mocked by the event, could only have been written between April and October, 1599, and the play thus belongs to the earlier part of that year. A quarto edition appeared in 1600, followed by two others in 1602 and 1608, but these make the impression of pirated and fragmentary versions of the genuine text, which is given for the first time in the folio of 1623[2]. The sources of the play are, as in the case of *Henry IV*, Holinshed's Chronicle and *The Famous Victories of Henry V*. Shakspere again follows Holinshed with singular fidelity in the serious parts of the action, while he adds comparatively little comic relief, and this of curiously unequal quality. Thus the play fulfils stringent dramatic requirements even less than *Henry IV*. It lacks both plot and conflict of passion, and it does not compensate for these defects by a rich variety of characters. The creative power that had been expended with equal lavishness upon a Prince Hal, a Hotspur, and a Falstaff is now massed upon one central overshadowing figure, that of King Henry V. Shakspere's aspiration in the opening lines of the chorus to 'ascend the brightest heaven of invention' is far from fulfilled in the purely dramatic sphere. The plane of interest is in fact less dramatic than epic, as the use of elaborate narrative prologues is enough to prove. The underlying theme of the whole series of historical plays, the greatness of England, here rises to the surface, and sweeps before it all minor motives. The King himself towers in the forefront of the scene less as a gigantic

1 Simpson, in his paper 'On the political use of the stage in Shakspere's time' (*New Shakspere Society*, 1874), seeks to prove that the play is intended to support the policy of Essex.

2 The quarto of 1600 (of which the later ones are reprints) contains 1,623 lines, while the folio has 3,379, i.e. more than double the number. The quarto omits the prologues and the epilogues, Act i. 1, Act iii. 1, and Act iv. 2 besides about 500 lines in various scenes of the play. Moreover, through changes in the distribution of the parts, Ely, Westmoreland, Bedford, Macmorris, Jammy, and other minor characters disappear from the dialogue. This is evidently due to the desire to limit the number of rôles for theatrical purposes. The quarto is thereofre taken from a stage version, abridged either by Shakspere himself, or, as is more probable, by another hand. Of this version it is a corrupt and probably surreptitious reprint.

personality like Richard III than as the embodiment of national strength and glory. He is even more than the 'mirror of all Christian kings,' he is the personified genius of his race. What Achilles is to the Greeks, Roland to the Franks, Arthur to the Celts, that Shakspere's Henry V is to the Anglo-Saxons. And, like these kindred heroes, he is typical of his folk in its hour of triumph over a dangerous foe. Thus the three elements of interest in the drama are the King himself, the nation whom he leads to victory, and the rival nation whom they jointly overthrow.

Henry V is, in all essentials, Prince Hal grown to maturity and seated on a throne. The abandonment of the looser habits of his youth, which had been in progress during *Henry IV*, Part II, has now been completed. The Archbishop of Canterbury shows some lack of insight when he declares of the King, after his father's death:

> 'Never was such a sudden scholar made;
> Never came reformation in a flood,
> With such a heady currance, scouring faults.'

His brother of Ely is more penetrating when he compares Henry to the strawberry that grows underneath the nettle: 'so the prince obscured his contemplation under the veil of wildness.' But if Henry has shaken off his youthful follies, he has retained his faculty for adapting himself to all sorts and conditions of men. As in Eastcheap he had caught the very spirit of ale-house freemasonry, so in his altered sphere he excites the wonder of all hearers by discoursing upon divinity, war, and statecraft, as if each had been his peculiar and lifelong interest. The charm that had formerly been left by roistering 'Corinthians' is now exercised over grave prelates, who vote him an unprecedently large subsidy for an expedition against France. In entering upon this foreign quarrel Henry is carrying out his father's death-bed counsel, but from the first he shows that his policy is to be swayed, not by Machiavellian canons of self-interest, but by principles of equity. Henry's moral integrity deepens, after his coronation, into profound religious feeling, while his modesty takes the form of humble dependence upon God, whose name is henceforth constantly upon his lips. Thus, before waking the sleeping sword of war, he asks the Archbishop of Canterbury whether he may, 'with right and conscience,' make the claim to the French throne, handed down from his heroic ancestors, the two Edwards. The Archbishop's lengthy exposition of the Salic law may neither satisfy the strict requirements of poetry nor of accurate historical jurisprudence, but it is sufficient to convince Henry of the justice of his cause, and stirred by appeals from prelates and nobles alike, he bursts forth exultingly:

'France being ours, we'll bend it to our awe,
Or break it all to pieces: or there we'll sit,
Ruling in large and ample empery,
O'er France, and all her almost kingly dukedoms,
Or lay these bones in an unworthy urn,
Tombless, with no remembrance over them.'

The king, in such a mood, may well feel stung to the quick by the Dauphin's mocking present of tennis-balls, to remind him of the giddy courses of his youth, though his irritation does not find entirely happy expression in words which seem to cast a slur on his own court:

'We never valued this poor seat of England;
And therefore, living hence, did give ourself
To barbarous licence. . .
But tell the Dauphin I will keep my state,
Be like a king, and show my sail of greatness
When I do rouse me in my throne of France.'

But vainglorious thoughts are checked in a moment by the humble reflection, 'This lies all within the will of God, to whom I do appeal.' Henry's trust in heaven is not the nerveless pietism which merely waits upon Providence; if he and his nation are to be the instruments of God, they must be equipped for the divine service. Thus zealous preparation is made for the great enterprise, and 'honour's thought reigns solely in the breast of every man'—or almost every man. For the conspiracies of the previous reigns have a last echo in the plot of Cambridge, Grey, and Scroop to kill Henry before he embarks at Southampton. The discovery of their disloyalty, especially that of his familiar friend, Lord Scroop, rouses him to eloquent wrath, not on personal grounds, but because such treachery in one who seemed the embodiment of every virtue leaves a blot upon humanity at large:

'I will weep for thee;
For this revolt of thine, methinks, is like
Another fall of man.'

The shattered ideal of friendship claims a meed of tears, but the stern sense of justice, as formerly in the case of Falstaff, prevails over private feelings, and the traitors who have plotted their country's ruin are dismissed to their doom.

The scene shifts to Harfleur, and while the siege is in progress we have our first glimpse of the interior of the English camp. Among its 'culled and choice-drawn cavaliers' we are surprised to find Pistol and Bardolph, but Shakspere probably consulted the

wishes of his audience in prolonging the careers of these low-comedy figures, and in adding to them a third of like kidney, Corporal Nym. Pistol, who has married Mistress Quickly, follows the camp as a sutler, 'to suck, to suck, the very blood to suck.' Nym and Bardolph are his sworn brothers in filching. 'They will steal anything, and call it purchase.' But this trio of 'swashers,' still steeped in the atmosphere of Eastcheap, only throws into more vivid relief the true-hearted soldiers, more expert with the sword than with the tongue, who form the majority of the invading hosts. Scotch, Irish, and Welsh, who in former reigns had been found in rebellion against the throne of the Plantagenets, are now, under Henry's auspicious leadership, banded together with the English in its support. Captain Jamy, the Scotchman, has the taciturnity and dogged resolution of his race; 'Ay'll de gud service, or ay'll lig i' the ground for it.' Macmorris, the Irishman, by his manner of speech, suggests that Shakspere had but scant familiarity with Hibernian dialects, but he is a true son of Erin in his hot-headed impulsiveness ('so God sa' me, 'tis shame to stand still; it is shame, by my hand; and there is throats to be cut, and works to be done'), and in his readiness to come to blows with Fluellen over a question of personal dignity. Fluellen, the Welshman, is a more elaborate and original type. In quaint, pedantic fashion he is a personification of that spirit of discipline which gives strength to the invading force. Military operations, in his eyes, must be conducted according to the 'true and ancient prerogatives and laws of the wars,' which are chiefly to be found 'in the disciplines of the pristine wars of the Romans.' But his martinet exterior barely hides a sound simplicity of nature, which is imposed upon for a time by the swaggerer Pistol, whom he takes to be as valiant a man as Mark Antony. Yet when Pistol begs him to intercede for Bardolph, who has crowned his career by the robbery of a church, and has been sentenced to death, Fluellen sturdily refuses, 'for if, look you, he were my brother, I would desire the Duke to use his good pleasure, and put him to execution: for discipline ought to be used.'

Bardolph's fate illustrates the stringent code maintained within the English camp, but Henry knows well that there are moments when an excited soldiery is deaf to the word of command, and, by a highly-coloured description of the horrors attendant on a successful storm, he induces the Governor of Harfleur to surrender the town. His forces, however, have been weakened by sickness, and he determines to fall back upon Calais, but is met upon his march by the French king's ambassador, bearing an insolent defiance from his master.

Henry's attitude at this crisis shows a noble simplicity, worthy of the hero of Shrewsbury. Scorning all politic artifices, he confesses that his army is reduced in numbers and enfeebled; he is not seeking an enemy, but should he find one in his path he will not turn back:

> 'We would not seek a battle as we are;
> Nor, as we are, we say we will not shun it:
> So tell your master.'

Such an answer scarcely serves as an *eirenicon*, and on the plains of Agincourt the slender English force finds itself hemmed in by a mighty hostile array.

In his description of the French host and its leaders, Shakspere gives another masterly study of the decadent chivalry of the later Middle Ages. The weaknesses which had caused Hotspur's fall are here exhibited in broader working, and in aggravated form, with but a wan reflection of the lustre shed round that brilliant figure. In the English camp burghers and yeomen are prominent, but with their opponents the common soldier is a cypher, and all attention is focussed on the 'high dukes, great princes, barons, lords, and knights,' whose grandiloquent muster-roll flows from the King's lips. The general impression created is of a society, not without touches of high spirit and polish, though taking fantastic forms, but arrogant, frivolous, and lacking in moral fibre. Shakspere, however, shows his usual instinct for gradation, and of the three figures whom he singles out from the rest, the Constable falls least completely short of the true standard of knighthood. He shows appreciation of his royal foe, and recognizes the stubborn courage of the English soldiery: 'Give them great meals of beef, and iron and steel, they will eat like wolves, and fight like devils.' It is in his favour also that he can pierce through the bravado of the Dauphin, and is not afraid to speak his mind about so exalted a personage. For in the heir to the French throne all the defects of the moribund mediaeval system of arms appear in intensified and contemptible form. The affection of the gallant rider for his gallant steed, which is a touching feature in genuine chivalry, is parodied by the high-flown passion of this carpet-knight for his horse, whom he styles his mistress, and in whose praise he indites a sonnet. With insolent levity he under-rates his foes: Henry is in his eyes 'a vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth,' for whom tennis-balls are a fitting tribute, while his followers are as little to be feared as if they were merely busied with a whitsun morris-dance. On the eve of the battle he chafes at the delay in his expected triumph, 'Will it never be day? I will trot to-morrow a mile,

and my way shall be paved with English faces.' Yet even the Dauphin may perhaps rank above his admirer, the Duke of Orleans, who extols him 'as simply the most active gentleman of France,' and who in virtue of a superficial smartness in repartee despises the fat-brained followers of the English king.

The contrast between the two opposing armies finds its culminating expression in the majestic piece of descriptive verse which forms the prologue to Act iv:

> 'From camp to camp, through the foul womb of night,
> The hum of either army stilly sounds,
> That the fixed sentinels almost receive
> That the secret whispers of each other's watch:
> Fire answers fire, and through their paly flames
> Each battle sees the other's umber'd face.
> . . . . . .
> The confident and over-lusty French
> Do the low-rated English play at dice.
> . . . The poor condemned English,
> Like sacrifices, by their watchful fires
> Sit patiently, and inly ruminate
> The morning's danger. . . O! now, who will behold
> The royal captain of this ruined band
> Walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent,
> Let him cry "praise and glory on his head!"
> For forth he goes and visits all his host,
> Bids them good morrow with a modest smile,
> And calls them brothers, friends, and countrymen.'

The passage has inevitably suggested comparison with those imperishable pictures by Herodotus and Aeschylus of the flaunting splendour of the Persian array, and the modest steadfastness of the Grecian levies before Thermopylae and Salamis. But another even closer parallel, and one of peculiar interest, has escaped notice. The fourteenth century Scotch poet, Barbour, in his poem, *The Bruce,* gives a vivid description of the campaign which ended at Bannockburn. In the scenes preceding the battle Robert Bruce plays the part of Shakspere's Henry, and is knit to his followers by similarly close bonds, while the English host anticipates in its bearing the forces of the Dauphin. Shakspere far excels Barbour in splendour of diction, but both poets have fastened with kindred instinct upon the thrilling conflict between a citizen militia captained by a patriot king, and a feudal array, gorgeous in the outward pageantry of war, but ineffective against its humbler foe. Indeed, it is not altogether fanciful to see in this magnificent battle-piece the consummation of that predominant element in the old English epic, which celebrates the mighty deeds of the chief at the head of his folk weaponed for the fray.

But Henry is something more than a pagan 'war-lord'; he is a

soldier of God, who at this supreme crisis can cheerfully discover 'a soul of goodness in things evil,' and point out to his brother Bedford that their bad neighbour makes them 'early stirrers,' besides acting as an 'outward conscience' to admonish them to be prepared for their end. And the same note is struck when, moved by the impulse of his earlier days, he mingles in disguise just before dawn with a group of common soldiers, who are discussing the king's responsibility for the souls of his subjects cut off by war in the midst of their sins. Throwing himself into the argument, he maintains that the king is guiltless in the matter, and that war is often God's 'beadle' wherewith He arrests and punishes men for the unrequited crimes which they have committed in peace. 'Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed—wash every mote out of his conscience: and dying so, death is to him advantage; or not dying, the time was blessedly lost wherein such preparation was gained.' This serious vein is interrupted for a moment by an outburst of the old jocular spirit, when he takes up a formal challenge to quarrel from the rough-tongued Williams, and exchanges gages with him; but as soon as he is left alone, he unpacks his heart in words that show this strong man staggering under the burden of his great office. Nowhere does Shakspere emphasize so unmistakably his cardinal conception of kingship as involving duties rather than privileges. The ruler must miss the 'infinite heart's-ease' that other men enjoy, and wins in exchange only 'thrice-gorgeous ceremony,' which cannot charm to the bed of state the sound repose granted to the meanest son of toil. Thus Henry, like his father, envies his poorest subjects the blessing of sweet slumber; but remorse and fear helped to drive sleep from Bolingbroke's eyes, while with the younger king this is solely due to his overwhelming sense of responsibility. He feels indeed the burden of his own and his father's trespasses, but with practical religious ardour he has done what he can to make amends by reinterring the body of King Richard, building two chantries where the priests sing for his soul, and keeping in yearly pay five hundred poor who intercede for the divine mercy. With characteristic humility, he crowns these 'good works' with the offering of a contrite heart, entirely in the spirit of his counsel to the soldiers:

> 'All that I can do is nothing worth,
> Since that my penitence comes after all,
> Imploring pardon.'

And thus with purged conscience he can appeal to the God of battles to steel his soldiers' hearts, and, trusting to the goodness of

his cause, can cheerfully rebuff Westmoreland's wish for ten thousand men from England:

> 'God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour
> As one man more, methinks, would share from me,
> For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!'

Yet the honour which Henry wins upon the field of battle is not completely untarnished. Shakspere, by too strict fidelity to Holinshed's narrative, casts a stain upon his hero's character. While the fight is still raging, though the English have had the advantage, Henry orders a massacre of all his prisoners[1]. It is true that he had declared before Harfleur that in time of war a man 'must imitate the action of the tiger'; but this cannot excuse such an atrocity in the hero of Agincourt, who, as the hero of Shrewsbury, had wept tears of generous pity over a fallen foe. Apart from this, Henry proves himself a peerless leader of men on this day of days, when 'in plain shock and even play of battle' his army with the most trifling loss, slays ten thousand Frenchmen. But the greatness of his triumph lights no spark of egotism in his breast; it deepens his sense of dependence on the divine will:

> 'O God! thy arm was here;
> And not to us, but to thy arm alone
> Ascribe we all.'

And in similar spirit he afterwards, on his entry into London, forbids 'his bruised helmet and his bended sword' to be borne before him through the city:—

> 'Giving full trophy, and ostent,
> Quite from himself to God.'

Intermingled with the stately battle scenes are humorous episodes, falling however very far short of the brilliant comedy of *Henry IV.* The insipid dialogue between Pistol and his prisoner, of which the sole object seems to be the ridicule of French pronunciation, is perhaps the feeblest which the dramatist ever penned. More interesting are the scenes which develop the character of Fluellen and increasingly reveal the good sense and good heart which underlie the Welshman's uncouth forms of speech. The comparison between

1 Shakspere goes even further than Holinshed, for he ascribes the order merely to Henry's alarm at a reinforcement of the enemy, and not to his indignation at the cowardly slaughter by some French fugitives of the boys who were guarding the baggage and the royal tent. This incident, which the chronicler assigns as the original cause of the savage command, is only mentioned by Fluellen and Gower in a characteristic conversation *after* the order has been given, and in any case such a bloodthirsty retaliation does not suit the character of Shakspere's Henry.

Alexander the Great and Henry is ludicrous, on the score that there is a river in Macedon and a river at Monmouth, and there are salmons in both; but there is wonderful shrewdness in the observation that 'as Alexander killed his friend Cleitus, being in his ales and his cups; so also Henry Monmouth, being in his right wits and his good judgements, turned away the fat knight with the great belly-doublet.' The sturdy Welshman is irresistibly attracted by the integrity of the king, whom he claims to be of his own blood. 'By Jeshu, I am your majesty's countryman. I care not who know it: I will confess it to all the 'orld. I need not be ashamed of your majesty praised be God, so long as your majesty is an honest man.' Such a declaration, however 'out of fashion' in its form, is a sterling diploma of merit which Henry is the very man to appreciate, and he soon turns this free-spoken loyalty to humorous account by persuading Fluellen to wear Williams' glove, on the plea that it was plucked from Alençon, and that any one who challenges it is an enemy of the king. The Welshman receives Williams' blow, and plumes himself upon having brought to light 'a most contagious treason,' but as soon as the situation is explained, he bears no malice against an assailant who has 'mettle enough in his belly'; and when Henry fills the soldier's glove with crowns, he follows with an offer of twelve pence, and the precept to serve God and keep out of 'prawls and prabbles.' How differently does he deal afterwards with Pistol, when he makes the swaggerer, who on Davy's day has given him bread and salt wherewith to eat his leek, himself swallow the despised vegetable, with a good cudgelling as sauce. And what characteristic breadth of mind does Shakspere show, what superiority to petty racial prejudices, when, in this play, devoted above all others to the glorification of England, he defends an ancient Welsh tradition, begun upon an honourable respect, and through the mouth of Gower warns the mocker to 'henceforth let a Welsh correction teach you a good English condition.' If in Glendower the dramatist portrayed the weaknesses of the Celts, he has redressed the balance in Fluellen, who is a type of their shrewd mother-wit, their loyalty to a leader, and their martial valour.

Thus even the humorous episodes have an underlying seriousness of purpose, and it is therefore disappointing to find that, in the final scene of the drama, Shakspere, by an unseasonable display of his comic power, lowers in some degree the dignity of his hero. The Princess Katharine of France had already been introduced in an unpleasantly suggestive dialogue in broken English with her waiting-woman, and we now find Henry paying her court in terms that

remind us of Hotspur's conversations with his wife. One does not expect Henry to indulge in the ardent protestations of a Romeo, to 'look greenly nor gasp out his eloquence,' but there is a mean between amorous rhapsodies and the 'down-right oaths' of this very 'plain soldier' manner of wooing. Simplicity and sincerity are the basis of Henry's character, but these alone do not give his figure its massive proportions. For this there is something more needed—a grandeur and glow of soul which shine forth in him as king, warrior, and judge, but which fail him as a lover. In wooing Katharine, Henry is wooing France, which he loves so well that he will not part with a village of it, and in the midst of his somewhat highly flavoured banter, he keeps a vigilant eye on the articles of alliance. This mixture of jocoseness and shrewdness is scarcely the fitting final attitude of the hero of the great historical trilogy, the character whose development from youth to manhood Shakspere has traced with such loving care. But the dramatist in this closing scene is perhaps occupied less with personal than with national considerations; and from the latter point of view there could be no more appropriate climax to the historical plays than this marriage treaty, whereby England, at unity with herself, is joined in 'incorporate league' to France, and the enemies of a hundred years are brought together—though for but a short time, as *Henry VI* had already shown—under one imperial sway.

CHAPTER XII

THE GOLDEN PRIME OF COMEDY

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR forms the obvious link between the main historical group and the brilliant comedies of Shakspere's maturity. Its date cannot be fixed with absolute certainty, but in all probability it followed closely upon *Henry V.* It is not mentioned by Meres in 1598, but a quarto edition appeared in 1602, which is, however, very imperfect when compared with the folio text of 1623. Analogies to incidents in the drama have been found in a story from the *Pecorone*, in *The Two Lovers of Pisa*, and other works, but in dealing with stock comic situations it is not necessary to suppose that Shakspere borrowed them. The bulk of the play, in any case, is of Shakspere's own invention, and consists in large part of characters and themes which had already done duty, but are here further developed. Falstaff and Shallow are taken from *Henry IV*, Part II, Nym and Pistol appear in much the same light as in *Henry V*, and, what has perhaps not been so fully noticed, Dr. Caius and Sir Hugh Evans, with their broken English, are the counterparts of the Princess Alice and Fluellen. But while there is this obvious general correspondence between *The Merry Wives* and the immediately preceding historical plays, all attempts to dovetail them in particulars prove unsatisfactory. Apart from the problem of the relation of Falstaff in this play to the earlier Falstaff, there are numerous minor difficulties. As Sir John still seems to maintain his credit at the court, we are forced to put his amorous adventures before his banishment by Henry V, and we think of them as taking place during the period of his intercourse with Shallow after the northern war. But while in *Henry IV*, Part II, Shallow treats Falstaff with effusive cordiality, here we find him and his nephew Slender abusing the knight and his followers for all manner of trespasses. Again, if the withered serving-man Bardolph is dismissed in this play by Falstaff to become tapster to mine host of the Garter, how is it that in *Henry V* he is sufficiently vigorous to take part in the French campaign? And, strangest of all, the Mrs. Quickly of the play, the servant of Dr. Caius, is evidently an entirely different personage from the genial hostess of the Boar's Head tavern. It is thus clear that Shakspere was by no means at pains to secure harmony of detail between *The Merry Wives* and the kindred scenes in the historical

plays, and this may be partly due to the fact that the piece was apparently written haste. The well-known tradition mentioned by Dennis in 1702 asserts that it was composed in fourteen days to please Elizabeth, who wished to see Falstaff in love; and this is supported by the unique preponderance of prose over poetry in the play. Almost the only scenes written in blank verse are those in which Fenton appears, while rhyme is not used except for the dialogue of the counterfeit elves in Act v. Even the prose approaches more nearly to a purely conversational level than in any other of Shakspere's works.

Apart, however, from this lack of elevation in style, and from a certain slenderness in the drawing of characters, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is an admirable farcical comedy, breezy in its movement, full of capital situations, and, at the same time, satisfying strict literary requirements with a skilfully interwoven major and minor plot. It deals purely with *bourgeois* life, and critics have seen in this an additional evidence that it was prepared for the special benefit of Elizabeth and her train, who would relish this vigorous sketch of middle-class society, with its manners and morals so entirely at variance with those of a refined and dissolute court. The allusions in Act v. to Windsor Castle, and to the chairs and insignia of the Knights of the Garter, seem even to suggest the scene of the first performance, though it is questionable whether Elizabethan gallants could have entirely enjoyed the spectacle of one of their own order, however degraded, suffering discomfiture at the hands of citizens' wives. Nor is it true to say that *The Merry Wives* is Shakspere's only play of middle-class life. *The Comedy of Errors*, in spite of its classical source and names, deals with exactly the same social grade; and indeed the two plays are akin in their unflagging bustle and wealth of humorous incident, which produce, besides other results, in one case the cure of a jealous wife, and in the other, of a jealous husband.

In itself the play offers few difficulties, but as soon as we begin to compare the Falstaff, who is the centre of its main plot, with the Falstaff of *Henry IV*, we are perplexed, not merely on matters of detail, but on the broad issue of the identity of the two characters. Hazlitt, Hartley Coleridge, Hudson and Dowden concur in repudiating this indentity, which other critics—among them Gervinus and Kreyssig—unhesitatingly maintain, asserting that in *The Merry Wives* we see the climax of that degeneration in Sir John which had been going on during *Henry IV*. According to this view, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, whether written at the Queen's request or not, is no accidental offshoot from the historical plays, but is an integral part of

Shakspere's scheme, for whose fulfilment it was necessary, not only to cast round Henry V the true halo of heroism, but to strip Falstaff of that false halo which his wit had shed over his evil life. If this was Shakspere's aim, it must be admitted that he carried it through unflinchingly. Falstaff, as he now appears, is hard put to it to eke out existence upon an income of ten pounds a week. Far more to fill his purse than to sate his lusts, he determines to pay court to Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, the wives of wealthy burghers, in whom he sees sources of revenue: 'they shall be my East and West Indies, and I will trade to them both.' He writes them each identical love-letters, which Nym and Pistol, in a sudden fit of honour, refuse to carry, and which have to be delivered by the boy Robin. Dismissed, in consequence, from the knight's service, the pair revenge themselves by informing Ford and Page of the plot against their household peace. Ford, who is of a jealous nature and who wishes to put his wife's fidelity to the test, seeks out Falstaff under the name of Brook, to encourage him in his wooing, and at the same time to learn the exact hour of assignation between the couple. Thus, self-betrayed, Falstaff finds his interviews with Mistress Ford cut short by the entry of her infuriated husband. Once he escapes by creeping into a buck-basket full of foul linen, where he is half stewed in his own grease, and then abruptly cooled by a plunge into Thames waters. Tempted to try his fortune a second time, he has to hurry into the gown and hat of the witch of Brentford, only to find himself unmercifully be laboured by Ford's cudgel. And when finally, in the disguise of Herne the hunter, and crowned with the horns that he had intended for others, he proves punctual to a rendezvous in Windsor forest, he mistakes a group of dressed-up children for fairies, and suffers himself to be scorched and pinched by them as long as they please. At last, convicted of his blunder, he confesses that he is 'an ass,' and makes no attempt to answer the gibes and insults showered upon his head: 'Well, I am your theme: you have the start of me: I am dejected. Ignorance itself is a plummet o'er me: use me as you will.'

But the very extremity of Falstaff's humiliation inevitably raises the question, Can this be the man who formerly triumphed over every foe, and was only crushed at the last by the irresistible weight of moral reality embodied in *Henry V*? The simplest and most attractive solution of the difficulty is that adopted by the critics who deny the identity of the two Falstaffs. But a minute comparison of the characters will scarcely sustain so sweeping a generalization. It is not only that the Sir John of *The Merry Wives* retains all the physi-

cal features of the earlier Sir John, nor that he displays the same sins of lust and greed. There is a more subtle affinity in the contempt of the courtier, however false to his own class-standard, for the citizen, the 'peasant, the mechanical salt-butter rogue,' and in the strange medley of refinement and vulgarity that flows from his lips. Do we not hear the voice of the old Sir John in the description of Mistress Page, the purse-bearer, 'a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty,' who 'examined my parts with most judicious œilliades: sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly'; or in the adroit compliments to Mistress Ford: 'Thou wouldst make an absolute courtier; and the firm fixture of thy foot would give an excellent motion to thy gait in a semi-circled farthingale?' And have we not the same perverted scriptural and classical reminiscences, as in the account to 'Master Brook' of his second encounter with Ford; 'He beat me grievously in the shape of a woman; for in the shape of man, I fear not Goliah with a weaver's beam, because I know also life is a shuttle'; or when, horned as a stag, and waiting for Mistress Ford in Windsor Park, he invokes the assistance of Jove, who became a bull for the sake of Europa's love? In face of these and similar passages it is impossible to set down the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives* as merely 'a big-bellied impostor assuming the name and style' of the Falstaff of Eastcheap. Are we then to adopt the edifying view of the chief German critics, that here at last we see the true Falstaff, stript of the distorting haze which his humour had thrown round him, and that the object of the play is to show 'how wit may be made a Jack-a-Lent, when 'tis upon illemployment?' But here again we meet with difficulties, for the two Falstaffs are at once the same and not the same. We have seen that the Sir John of Eastcheap was not in the strict sense either a liar or a coward; in the present play he is both. Formerly his humour had made its most brilliant strokes in extricating him from apparently hopeless defeats; but now it forsakes him on every emergency, and delivers him into the hands of his enemies, to be misused in the grossest fashion. The erewhile unmatched gladiator in the combats of wit, the triumphant rival of Prince Hal and the Chief Justice, has forgotten the very elements of fence, and every puny whipster gets his sword. But it is neither moral nor intellectual inferiority that most completely sunders the earlier and the later Sir John. It might be urged that we merely see here completed the deterioration that had begun in *Henry IV*, Part II, though the change has become one of kind rather than of degree. But the crucial, difference between the two Falstaffs goes deeper still, down

to the very roots of personality. Out of every man there goes forth a 'virtue,' the product of his sum of qualities. The 'virtue' of the original Falstaff was *fascination,* depending indeed primarily on his wit, but almost equally on the peculiar balance of the other elements in his nature. This fascination, it should be observed, is as all-powerful in *Henry IV,* Part II, as it is in Part I, though it is exerted less over Prince Hal, and more over subordinate figures, like Mistress Quickly, Doll, and Shallow. But the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives* is absolutely devoid of this 'virtue.' In the very first scene, Shallow, who in *Henry IV* had begged Sir John to be his guest for another day, turns upon him with reproaches, and threatens to make a Starchamber matter of his misdoings. Even his closest associates forsake him. Bardolph gladly leaves his service to become a tapster, and Nym and Pistol, in a sudden access of virtue, refuse to carry his letter to Mistress Ford. The Merry Wives do not see in him a seductive tempter against whose assaults virtue will have to arm herself in complete steel, but merely a gross compound of animalism, 'a whale, with so many tuns of oil in his belly,' thrown ashore at Windsor. But the true Falstaff is no such mere monster of the slime. Mingled with his earthiness are the air and fire of genius, and had *he* been the wooer, Master Ford would have had real cause to tremble for his household honour, and would have had to defend it with finer weapons than a cudgel. It seems therefore impossible to uphold the judgement of the critics who see in the play a profound moral aim of exhibiting vice in its nakedness, stripped of distorting charms—and equally impossible to agree with those who applaud Shakspere for having, to all appearance, [illegible]noured Elizabeth's wish to see Falstaff in love, and yet made a [illegible]ure do duty for the knight whom he had already sent to [illegible]r's bosom.' The two Falstaffs are too different to suit the [illegible]heory, and too alike to suit the second. Rather it might be [illegible]ested that the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is [illegible]kspere's literary crime; his caricature (for whatever reasons) of [illegible]e of the mightiest of his own creations, to which a parallel would [illegible]ave been supplied had Cervantes subjected the Knight of la Mancha during a part of his career to the odious indignities heaped at a later date on Butler's Hudibras.

But if the main plot of the play yields only a qualified pleasure, ample compensation is found in the underplot, which shows the defeat of a second mercenary intrigue against loyal love. The connexion between the plots is of the closest, for two of Falstaff's intended victims, Page and his wife, are now seen as ready, in their

turn, to victimize their own daughter for selfish ends. Sweet Ann Page, 'which is pretty virginity,' with brown hair, and 'good gifts, and seven hundred pounds and possibilities,' is the natural magnet to all wooers and match-makers in Windsor. Such a girl may well aspire to marry somewhat above her station, and thus Sir Hugh Evants, the Welsh parson, suggests her to Justice Shallow as a suitable bride for his kinsman, Master Slender. Shallow, who has left his Gloucestershire seat to complain of Falstaff to the Council, is, apart from his altered relation to Sir John, the same vainglorious blockhead as before, though he now prates less of his wildness and more of his valour in the past. 'I have seen the time with my long sword, I would have made you four tall fellows skip like rats.' But it is Shallow's good fortune to be always accompanied by a foil in the shape of a satellite yet more brainless than himself, and now that Silence is gone, Slender, with a little wee face and a little yellow beard, is a more than sufficient substitute. For in Slender not only do we see intellect flickering with its last feeble glimmer, but the will attenuated almost to vanishing-point. Palpitating on the brink of nonentity, he clings for support to the majestic personality of Shallow, 'justice of peace, and *coram*,' who seeks to explain to him Sir Hugh's suggestion on his behalf, and to learn from him whether he can love and marry Anne Page. But Slender has no self to assert even on so momentous a matter: 'I will marry her, sir, at your request—I will do a greater thing than that, upon your request, cousin, in any reason.' When he sees the lady, he is at a complete standstill for lack of his Book of Songs and Sonnets, and his Book of Riddles; and when, a little later, she reappears to bid him to dinner, he cannot, even on her invitation, summon up sufficient appetite to overcome an aversion to the smell of hot meat, though finally he yields to the peremptory command of her father, and lets himself be driven into the house. Page thinks that three hundred pounds a year cover all Slender's deficiencies, and he favours his suit, but it is a very labour of Hercules to stiffen this invertebrate wooer sufficiently for a formal declaration of his passion. Even when Shallow gives the cue with the words, 'Mistress Anne, my cousin loves you,' he echoes with inane impartiality, 'Ay, that I do: as well as I love any woman in Glostershire.' And when Shallow is told to let him woo for himself, and Anne asks, 'What would you with me?' he serenely disclaims any personal desires or designs whatsoever: 'Truly, for my own part I would little or nothing with you. Your father and my uncle have made motions: if it be my luck, so; if not, happy man be his dole.'

It is well for Slender that he is securely armed in vapid cheerfulness against the buffets of fortune, for Mistress Page is determined not to have him as a son-in-law, and smiles upon the suit of Dr. Caius, the French physician who has friends potent at court. Caius, with his broken English, interlarded with snatches from his mother-tongue, is another of the few Shaksperean figures designed chiefly to tickle the ears of the groundlings. Yet he is a skilfully drawn type of his race, excitable, garrulous, and fantastically sensitive on the score of honour, but a valiant swordsman withal. It was a delightful thought to embroil him with Parson Evans for furthering the suit of his rival, Slender, and thus to bring Celt into collision with Celt. How delicately discriminated are these two representatives of kindred stocks, 'Guallia and Gallia, French and Welsh!' Sir Hugh, who must be Fluellen's twin-brother in gown and cassock, is to the full as heady and mettlesome as the doctor, and shows himself, when challenged, to be a clerical fire-eater, ready to wipe out an insult with the sword. But mingled with this vehemence is a vein of poetic melancholy which, on the very duelling-ground, finds vent in snatches of pastoral song and in 'a great dispositions to cry.' Deeper, however, than all else is a genial and shrewd moral sense, which shines forth even through quaintly cumbrous trappings of speech, as when he declares to the unhappy Ford, 'You suffer for a pad conscience: your wife is as honest a 'omans as I will desires among five thousand, and five hundred too'; or when he draws the appropriate lesson from Falstaff's adventure in Windsor forest: 'Sir John Falstaff, serve Got, and leave your desires, and fairies will not pinse you.' It is strange that he was not sharp enoungh to see that Anne Page, for all her demure manner, was too quick-witted to put up with the brainless Slender for a husband. While others have been scheming around her, Anne has chosen for herself. The favoured youth, Master Fenton, is the typical successful comedy lover. He is highly born, and has spent his substance in riotous living, as an associate of the Prince and Poins; but he has all the attractions and accomplishments that win a maiden's heart. 'He capers, he dances, he has eyes of youth, he writes verses, he speaks holiday, he smells April and May.' That, however, he is not merely an elegant trifler is shown in his manly confession to Anne that while he first wooed her for her father's wealth, he has learnt to value her above 'stamps in gold,' and now aims at the riches of herself. These riches Anne soon finds an opportunity of entrusting to his guardianship. The fairy-masquerade, designed for the final chastisement of Falstaff, has a second, less laudable, purpose in the back-

ground. Page has arranged that Anne in her disguise shall be carried off by Slender and forthwith married, while his wife has laid a similar plan in favour of Dr. Caius. The small-voiced maid meekly consents to both schemes, and then, when the critical moment comes, elopes with Fenton, leaving his rivals to the embraces of two lubberly boys. Thus by an innocent deceit in the minor as in the major plot, mercenary and self-interested intrigues against true love are foiled, and the deepest note of the play is struck in Fenton's spirited defence of his new-made bride:

> 'The offence is holy that she hath committed,
> Since therein she doth evitate and shun
> A thousand irreligious cursed hours,
> Which forced marriage would have brought upon her.'

The parents accept the inevitable with a good grace; and the consciousness that they have not only given, but also received a lesson, makes them the more ready to be reconciled with Sir John and to bid him home with the others, to 'laugh this sport o'er by a country fire.' Thus amid a general atmosphere of good fellowship, and with the prospect of further merriment in store, this healthy, homely comedy is brought to an end.

The connexion of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* with the historical plays, and the special conditions under which there is good reason to suppose that it was produced, make it different in character from the group of comedies which, in all probability, followed immediately upon it. This group, which exhibits Shakspere's humorous genius in its perfection, includes *Much Ado about Nothing, As You Like It,* and *Twelfth Night.* These comedies are marked by common features of style and spirit, distinguishing them from all other writings of the dramatist. The verbal extravagances of the earlier period, the puns, the doggrel, the insipid 'sets' of merely surface wit, have almost entirely passed away. We have instead dialogues in matchless prose, with the clear-cut edge and sparkle of a diamond, or in verse mellow with musical charm and alit with imaginative glow. The plots are taken, as before, from romances and pastorals, in themselves often of no striking merit. But the handling of the material is far firmer, and, above all, the power of drawing character has made such strides, that not only are the principal figures flung forth in buoyant vitality, with the creative dew fresh for evermōre upon their brows, but each subordinate personage is touched with delicate instinct for gradation into distinctive life. It is, however, even less in finish of style and richness of

portraiture that these plays are united than in the peculiar atmosphere which is thrown around them all. They are comedies in the finest sense—not mere collections of mirth-provoking incidents, but pictures of life in its sunnier aspects, its sparkling and vivacious moods, though leavened with enough of mischance and misdoing to not lose a hold of realities.

Of the three plays, **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING** alone appeared in quarto form. The edition was dated 1600, and the entry in the Stationers' Register describes it as 'sundry times publicly acted.' As, however, it is not mentioned by Meres, it can scarcely have been written before 1598, and it may therefore, with almost complete certainty, be ascribed to 1599. For his main plot Shakspere is indebted to a French translation by Belleforest in his *Histoires Tragiques* of a novel by the Italian writer Bandello, who had already helped to supply the materials for *Romeo and Juliet*[1]. The comic underplot, in which Benedick and Beatrice are the principal figures, was, as far as we know, invented by Shakspere[2]. The idea underlying this underplot, which far surpasses in interest the main story, had been already more than once handled by the dramatist. The attempt of one sex to declare social war against the other had been the theme of both *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. The sallies between Berowne and Rosaline are a faint prelude to the brilliant thrust-and-parry of Benedick and Beatrice; and the character-contrast of Katharine and Bianca is reproduced with more delicate finesse in Hero and her cousin.

But though certain 'motives' from former plays thus reappear, they find an entirely new setting in this brilliant comedy, which was the most signal illustration of his mastery over the technique of stagecraft that Shakspere had hitherto given to the world. Marvellous as had been his manipulation of a highly involved plot in *The Merchant of Venice*, it had consisted in interlacing the threads of strongly contrasted tales, and in creating an organic whole out of

1 A still earlier version of the tale of the lovers parted by the stratagem of a villainous rival was told by Ariosto in the *Orlando Furioso*, Book V, translated by Harington in 1591. Shakspere may possibly have been acquainted with the episode in this form, or with Spenser's rendering of it in *The Faerie Queene* (Book II, canto 4). He may even have had before him a dramatized version of the story, for a play, *Ariodante and Genevra*, was performed in the presence of Elizabeth in 1583.

2 In the German dramatist Ayrer's *Die Schone Sidea*, founded on Bandello's novel, we have the introduction of a pair of humorous lovers and the discomfiture of the man. The couple are, however, on a far lower and coarser level than Benedick and Beatrice; and, in any case, it is impossible to say whether Shakspere borrowed from Ayrer, or vice versa; whether both drew from a common unknown source; or whether, finally, the resemblance may have been merely fortuitous.

superficially discordant elements. But in the present play the ye greater triumph is achieved of producing the most subtle variation upon a single idea, so that the comedy may be aptly termed a fugu upon the theme of *Much Ado about Nothing*. The title is admirably suggestive of the character of the piece, which introduces us to a society whose atmosphere is one of perpetual holiday; where everybody, from high to low, having time enough on hand and to spare indulges in leisurely, circuitous fashions of speech and action, productive of mistakes and misapprehensions—in short, of much ado which, in the long run, always proves to be about nothing.

The brilliant stagecraft shown in the play will be made clearer if, instead of separating the plots for analysis, we follow their interaction. The scene opens in front of the house of Leonato, Governor of Messina, who, accompanied by his daughter Hero, and his niece Beatrice, is receiving from a messenger, the account of a wellnigh bloodless victory just won by Don Pedro of Arragon. Special mention is being made of a favourite of Don Pedro, a young Florentine called Claudio, who has done 'in the figure of a lamb the feats of a lion,' when Beatrice bursts in with the query, 'I pray you, is Signior Mountanto returned from the wars or no?' The term, drawn from the fencing school, is used, as Hero explains, of Signior Benedick of Padua, and we infer that the lady who drags him into the conversation, though under cover of a jesting soubriquet, is not indifferent to his safety. It is significant also that she should continue to ply the messenger with satirical questions, which only draw forth testimonies to Benedick's valour and virtues; and, above all, that she should be inquisitive about the company he keeps, and declaim against his fickleness in having every month 'a new sworn brother.' Thus, before Benedick appears on the scene, we see clearly that Beatrice has an interest in him, to which she gives expression by making 'much ado' about his non-existent faults. We surmise that the 'merry war,' which has long gone on between them, is, on the lady's side at least, a mask for emotion which she has special reason for wishing to conceal. The entrance of Benedick with Don Pedro, Don John, and Claudio gives us a clearer insight into the situation. He converses with Leonato and Don Pedro, and ignores Beatrice till she draws his attention with a gibe: 'I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you.' Whereupon he retorts with a thrust, implying that he had hitherto been unaware of her presence: 'What! my dear Lady Disdain, are you yet living?' This he follows up with the complaint that he is loved of all ladies, only her excepted; but that for himself he has

such a hard heart that truly he loves none. Beatrice, with suspicious haste, avows that she is of the same humour for that, and that she would rather hear her dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves her.

This passage of arms between the pair is sufficient to explain the behaviour of Beatrice in the scene with the messenger. Benedick, a favourite of nature and of fortune, 'of noble strain, of approved valour and confirmed honesty,' with a piercing wit and a ready tongue, has adopted an attitude of hostility to women, and of cynical contempt for love and marriage. By an irresistible impulse he pours his views chiefly into the ear of Beatrice, who is his feminine counterpart in character and intellect, and whom he singles out as certain above all others to resent the outrage to her sex. In some aspects Beatrice cannot but recall Katharine in *The Taming of the Shrew,* though the comparison illustrates the great advance that Shakspere had made in his art. Here, as there, a motherless girl, in a luxurious household, with an indulgent guardian, and a single pliant relative of her own sex, develops an exaggerated self-will and self-love that go far to obscure a radically sound nature. Beatrice is indeed quite free from Katharine's worst faults of jealousy and acrid ill-humour. She is on the most affectionate terms alike with her uncle and her cousin, and her heart keeps on the windy side of care, so that she is 'never sad but when she sleeps, and not ever sad then.' But she is too proud to acknowledge that there is any lack in her nature which marriage would fill, and she cannot endure to hear tell of a husband. This instinct has been strengthened by her encounter with Benedick, who poses as 'an obstinate heretic in the despite of beauty.' She is piqued into the resolution to outdo him with his own weapons, to answer scorn with yet greater scorn. Hence, as Leonato declares, they never meet but there is a skirmish of wit between them. But yet deeper, and unacknowledged even to herself, lies a resolution of another kind: to bring to her feet this sworn foe of her sex, whose brilliant qualities she cannot but recognize, and whose powerful personality has a magnetic influence upon her own.

That her design is not as hopeless as at first sight it might appear is quickly made manifest, when Benedick, pressed by Claudio for his opinion of Hero, draws a distinction between his 'simple true judgement' and his customary verdicts in the capacity of a 'professed tyrant to their sex.' He cannot discuss Hero without dragging in the name of Beatrice (as she had done with his, when the talk ran on Claudio), and proving that he is by no means insen-

sible to her charms: 'There's her cousin, as she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December.' Such a hint discounts beforehand all his railings against marriage, ending with the declaration that the savage bull may in time bear the yoke, but never the sensible Benedick. With similar emphasis Beatrice, a little later, protests to her uncle that she is at God upon her knees every morning and evening not to send her a husband till He make men of some other metal than earth. She will have none of them, for Adam's sons are her brethren, and she holds it a sin to match in her kindred. But the exaggerated vehemence with which the pair are constantly repudiating the idea of matrimony proves that it is always uppermost in their thoughts, and gives more than an inkling that this much ado will prove to be about nothing.

Meanwhile they see their most intimate companions advancing, under their very eyes, towards the consummation of which they affect such a horror. Claudio had become attached to Hero before the war, and now that he has returned, with military honours thick upon him, and signalized by the favour of Don Pedro, he considers that he may aspire to her hand. Brave, honourable, and pure in heart, he is so far fitted to be the wooer of the gentle and modest Hero. But his sudden elevation has dazzled his somewhat superficial nature, and even in speaking of his love to Don Pedro and Benedick he lets fall the ominous conditional clause, 'if my passion change not shortly.' Moreover, the rise in his own fortunes has made him keenly alive to the outward advantages of wealth and position. So before taking any steps to secure Hero as his bride he is careful to satisfy himself that Leonato has no son, and that hi daughter is the only heir. His devotion is thus not so intense bu that it can find utterance through other lips than his own, and h readily falls in with Don Pedro's proposal that at the masked ball which is to be held that night, Pedro should woo and win Her under the disguise of Claudio, and on his behalf. Such a round about proceeding is a minor case of much ado about nothing, whic brings others in its train. For this conversation is partially over heard by a servant of Leonato's brother Antonio, who reports tha Don Pedro is in love with Hero and means to woo her for himself whereupon Leonato hurries off with the news to his daughter, tha she may be the better prepared with an answer. A more correc version is retailed by another eavesdropper, Borachio, the servan of Don John, and from this more serious consequences spring.

Don John is another of the Shaksperean villains whose natur

such a hard heart that truly he loves none. Beatrice, with suspicious haste, avows that she is of the same humour for that, and that she would rather hear her dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves her.

This passage of arms between the pair is sufficient to explain the behaviour of Beatrice in the scene with the messenger. Benedick, a favourite of nature and of fortune, 'of noble strain, of approved valour and confirmed honesty,' with a piercing wit and a ready tongue, has adopted an attitude of hostility to women, and of cynical contempt for love and marriage. By an irresistible impulse he pours his views chiefly into the ear of Beatrice, who is his feminine counterpart in character and intellect, and whom he singles out as certain above all others to resent the outrage to her sex. In some aspects Beatrice cannot but recall Katharine in *The Taming of the Shrew,* though the comparison illustrates the great advance that Shakspere had made in his art. Hero, as there, a motherless girl, in a luxurious household, with an indulgent guardian, and a single pliant relative of her own sex, develops an exaggerated self-will and self-love that go far to obscure a radically sound nature. Beatrice is indeed quite free from Katharine's worst faults of jealousy and acrid ill-humour. She is on the most affectionate terms alike with her uncle and her cousin, and her heart keeps on the windy side of care, so that she is 'never sad but when she sleeps, and not ever sad then.' But she is too proud to acknowledge that there is any lack in her nature which marriage would fill, and she cannot endure to hear tell of a husband. This instinct has been strengthened by her encounter with Benedick, who poses as 'an obstinate heretic *in the despite of beauty.*' *She is piqued into the resolution to outdo* him with his own weapons, to answer scorn with yet greater scorn. Hence, as Leonato declares, they never meet but there is a skirmish of wit between them. But yet deeper, and unacknowledged even to herself, lies a resolution of another kind: to bring to her feet this sworn foe of her sex, whose brilliant qualities she cannot but recognize, and whose powerful personality has a magnetic influence upon her own.

That her design is not as hopeless as at first sight it might appear is quickly made manifest, when Benedick, pressed by Claudio for his opinion of Hero, draws a distinction between his 'simple true judgement' and his customary verdicts in the capacity of a 'professed tyrant to their sex.' He cannot discuss Hero without dragging in the name of Beatrice (as she had done with his, when the talk ran on Claudio), and proving that he is by no means insen-

sible to her charms: 'There's her cousin, as she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December.' Such a hint discounts beforehand all his railings against marriage, ending with the declaration that the savage bull may in time bear the yoke, but never the sensible Benedick. With similar emphasis Beatrice, a little later, protests to her uncle that she is at God upon her knees every morning and evening not to send her a husband till He make men of some other metal than earth. She will have none of them, for Adam's sons are her brethren, and she holds it a sin to match in her kindred. But the exaggerated vehemence with which the pair are constantly repudiating the idea of matrimony proves that it is always uppermost in their thoughts, and gives more than an inkling that this much ado will prove to be about nothing.

Meanwhile they see their most intimate companions advancing, under their very eyes, towards the consummation of which they affect such a horror. Claudio had become attached to Hero before the war, and now that he has returned, with military honours thick upon him, and signalized by the favour of Don Pedro, he considers that he may aspire to her hand. Brave, honourable, and pure in heart, he is so far fitted to be the wooer of the gentle and modest Hero. But his sudden elevation has dazzled his somewhat superficial nature, and even in speaking of his love to Don Pedro and Benedick he lets fall the ominous conditional clause, 'if my passion change not shortly.' Moreover, the rise in his own fortunes has made him keenly alive to the outward advantages of wealth and position. So before taking any steps to secure Hero as his bride, he is careful to satisfy himself that Leonato has no son, and that his daughter is the only heir. His devotion is thus not so intense but that it can find utterance through other lips than his own, and he readily falls in with Don Pedro's proposal that at the masked ball, which is to be held that night, Pedro should woo and win Hero under the disguise of Claudio, and on his behalf. Such a roundabout proceeding is a minor case of much ado about nothing, which brings others in its train. For this conversation is partially overheard by a servant of Leonato's brother Antonio, who reports that Don Pedro is in love with Hero and means to woo her for himself; whereupon Leonato hurries off with the news to his daughter, that she may be the better prepared with an answer. A more correct version is retailed by another eavesdropper, Borachio, the servant of Don John, and from this more serious consequences spring.

Don John is another of the Shaksperean villains whose nature

has been warped by their circumstances. He is a bastard brother of Don Pedro, and the stinging sense of his shameful origin has turned him into a social Ishmaelite, who sees in every man a natural enemy. Scowling and laconic amidst the merry company gathered under Leonato's roof, he is a very death's head at a feast. He has lately become reconciled with his brother after a quarrel, and even his servant advises him to improve the occasion, but he sullenly prefers to be a canker in the hedge than a rose in Don Pedro's grace. Amongst Shakspere's malefactors he is distinguished by his complete lack of humour and of the kindred power to dissemble his real nature. As he says himself, 'I cannot hide what I am ... it better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any.' It would seem as if the dramatist in this most radiant of comedies had not wished to focus our attention upon the villain by investing him with the fascination which underlies evil-doing masquerading under the guise of good-humoured honesty. Moreover, we are not inclined to augur very disastrous results from the *schemes of a mischief-maker who wears his heart upon his sleeve* in so transparent a fashion, and who seems so ill-fitted for an intriguer's part.

To his original bitterness against society as a whole there is at present added a peculiar grudge against the young 'start-up' Claudio who, as he thinks, has been his successful rival. He thus catches eagerly at Borachio's tale of the Count's intended marriage, and of the part that Don Pedro is to play in the wooing. Herein he sees a way of crossing the Count, and he puts his plan into execution that same evening at the masked ball arranged by Leonato in honour of his guests. He assures Claudio that the Prince is enamoured of Hero and is wooing her for himself. The credulous youth at once swallows the bait, and lending an easy ear to the insinuations against his kind-hearted patron, moralizes on the inconstancy of friendship in offices of love, and bids farewell to Hero as a bride. His readiness to be duped on this occasion prepares the way for the more disastrous instance thereof that is to follow, though it appears immediately that he has been making much ado about nothing; for Don Pedro is proved to have fulfilled his office loyally, and to have won the consent of Leonato, who proffers Hero to Claudio, and with her all his fortunes. The Count is apparently dumbfounded at finding himself an accepted suitor after all, for he does not utter a word till prompted by Beatrice. Hero is similarly mute, which is not surprising, when we remember that, after being carefully prepared for a declaration of love from the

elderly Don Pedro, she now finds herself consigned to the arms of the youthful Claudio.

While thus by a roundabout process the hero and heroine of the main story are being brought together, the gulf between Benedick and Beatrice is widening till it seems impassable. At the masked ball he takes advantage of his disguise to whisper in her ear that he has it on authority that she has her good wit out of *The Hundred Merry Tales*. The insinuation that her *bon-mots* are borrowed cuts the lady's pride of intellect to the quick, and assuming at once that Benedick is at the bottom of so malicious a report, she retaliates by a description of him as 'the prince's jester: a very dull fool; only his gift is in devising impossible slanders.' The thrust goes home and wounds his self-love, as is seen from his indignant outburst when he is left alone: 'The prince's fool! Ha! it may be I go under that title because I am merry. Yea, but so I am apt to do myself wrong; I am not so reputed: it is the base though bitter disposition of Beatrice that puts the world into her person, and so gives me out.' And henceforth he exhausts his whole vocabulary of vituperation in abuse of her. She is an infernal Ate in good apparel, a harpy, who speaks poniards, and every word stabs. But voluble as he is in reviling her behind her back, he knows that she can outmatch him face to face, and as soon as he spies her returning to the ball-room he flies precipitately from the presence of 'my Lady Tongue.'

Thus the quarrel has been wrought up to the acute stage, and all is now rife for the transformation. The very extremity to which the pair have pushed their hostilities provides a piquant suggestion for the onlookers, who have to while away a week between Hero's betrothal and her marriage. The amiable Don Pedro, who has already shown a weakness for match-making, proposes to fill up the interim by undertaking 'one of Hercules' labours, which is, to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection the one with the other.' The elaborate plot that follows is another modified case of much ado about nothing. For Beatrice and Benedick, in spite of their war of wits and tongues, have been shown to be far from mutually indifferent; and Don Pedro's stratagem, though necessary to provoke an avowal of their affection, is not, as he supposes, the means of creating that affection itself. Benedick indeed at this crisis seems to block up all chance of retreat, to burn his very boats, by a last philippic against the follies of love, and by the proclamation that till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in his grace. But the train is already fired for his

overthrow, or rather the overthrow of the disguise with which he has cloaked his true nature, in part even from himself. Yet with delicate tact the poet takes care that the transition shall not be too abrupt. A pause is made in the action of the story while Balthazar, who contributes his quota of much ado about nothing by his preliminary flourishes of pleas for indulgence, sings his ditty, 'Sigh no more, ladies.' Our spirits are thus attuned to changes of sentiment and situation, while the burden of the ballad strikes the keynote of the dialogue that follows. Don Pedro and his friends, in the hearing of Benedick, discourse upon 'the enraged affection passing the infinite of thought' with which Beatrice loves him, and agree that it were better for her to sigh no more, but to seek to suppress her passion. Benedick is thus attacked through his weakest point—his excessive self-appreciation, which has hitherto prompted his rebellious attitude towards love. He now pays the full penalty, for it is this very failing that delivers him into the hands of the conspirators. The idea that he is being duped passes through his mind only to be instantly dismissed, and, confessing that he must not seem proud, he declares that he will be horribly in love. He foresees that his inconsistency will make him a butt for the world's ridicule, but he parries its shafts in advance with an ingenuity worthy of Falstaff: 'When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.'

Beatrice in her turn is easily trapped by Hero and Ursula, who lament in her hearing that so rare a gentleman as Benedick should have given his heart to one so self-endeared that she disdains lovers in every form. But if she has played the part of Lady Disdain towards 'Signior Mountanto,' it has been through pique at his seeming indifference to her charms, and as soon as she hears that this is merely counterfeit, she is ready to give over hostilities—the more so that her self-love is mortified by hearing herself censured for scorn and pride of wit. Less self-conscious, however, than Benedick, and with a deeper emotional nature, she surrenders at discretion, without any quibbling pleas on her own behalf. We realize what a change has come over her, when she ceases to speak poniards and actually declares her feelings in verse. Thus the two birds are limed; the net has not been spread in sight of them in vain. Of the pair, Benedick, who has been the more stalwart rebel against love, goes through the more open and humiliating transformation. He dresses in outlandish fashions, studies the niceties of his toilet, is sad and silent in company, and puts it down to the toothache. Beatrice too sighs and speaks in the sick tune, and lets herself be outmatched in

repartee by Hero's waiting-women. The jesters *par excellence* have to submit to a brief period of not unmerited chastisement, till the turn of events shows that they are sounder of heart and keener of penetration than those who for the moment have the laugh of them.

Don Pedro's merry device for filling up the interval before the marriage has had a criminal counterpart in an infamous scheme of his brother, who, foiled in his first effort at mischief-making, has sought the ruin of Claudio's happiness by more desperate means. With the aid of his servant Borachio he arranges a plot, in which Hero's maid is an accomplice, whereby the Count, through overhearing and misinterpreting a midnight dialogue between the pair, is to be persuaded that Hero is unchaste. Monstrous as is the charge, and tainted the source whence it springs, Claudio, as soon as it is suggested, shows his former frivolous credulity in intensified degree, and with an added strain of vindictive bitterness. 'If I see anything to-night why I should not marry her to-morrow, in the congregation, where I should wed, there will I shame her.' With such a disposition he falls an easy dupe to the imposture, and, what is more surprising, Don Pedro lets himself be equally deluded. But far from reproaching Shakspere for an extravagant violation of probability in representing the lover and his patron as convinced of so heinous an offence on such slender evidence, we should recognize that this is in strict accord with the genius of the play, where, throughout, the most momentous inferences are built upon overheard scraps of dialogue, and much ado thus results about nothing.

A similar answer may be made to Kreyssig's criticism that Shakspere has neglected the necessary dramatic sequence of cause and effect in his account of the discovery of the plot. This, it is maintained, should have resulted from some false step on the part of Don John, and not, as is the case, from a casually overheard dialogue between his subordinates. But this roundabout method in which the conspiracy comes to light is entirely in harmony with the tortuous direction that events take throughout the play, while it serves as the source of further complications, and introduces new actors on the scene in the shape of the city watch, headed by master-constable Dogberry and his colleague Verges. The long-winded charge in which Dogberry instructs his subordinates in their duties is a fresh instance of much ado about nothing, for it amounts to an elaborate exhortation to leave everything undone that they are appointed to do. Happily, however, neighbours Seacoal and Oatcake do not act up entirely to the spirit of this charge, for chancing to overhear a rambling confession of his crime by Borachio to Conrade,

they have wit enough to arrest them, though, with a characteristic misconstruction of a whispered phrase, they believe that they are on the track of 'one Deformed,' a fictitious personage about whom they make much ado. Thus the conspiracy is unmasked apparently in time to frustrate its evil aim—but this to reckon without Dogberry and Verges. It is strange that Coleridge should have spoken of them 'as forced into the service of the plot when any other less ingeniously absurd watchmen would have answered the mere necessities of the action.' On the contrary, the necessities of the action absolutely demand these twin specimens of blundering officialdom, for had they been less given to illogical and perverse circumlocution of speech, the exposure of Hero would have been avoided, and, with it, the occasion that finally unites Beatrice and Benedick. With the *secret already in their possession the two worthies wait on Leonato* on the very morning of the marriage; but they are so occupied in each taking the word out of the other's mouth, and in 'bestowing all their tediousness' upon his worship, that before they can come to the point of their story he has to hurry off to the church.

The reader, however, more fortunate than Leonato, knows that Don John's agents are already in custody, and is thus less pained than he would otherwise be by the wellnigh tragic situation in the church, when Claudio with foul calumny casts back the innocent Hero into her father's arms. This is the crowning instance of much ado about nothing, which finds yet another illustration in Leonato's hysterical lamentation over his daughter's supposed shame. But the friar, who had been ready to perform the nuptial rite, sees in the maiden's face the witness of her innocence. He counsels that she should be secretly kept in and given out as dead, that Claudio may thus be moved to remorse. Two other friends are faithful to Hero in her hour of need, Benedick and Beatrice. The former bids Leonato cease from his frantic outcries, and it is he who sagaciously fixes on John the bastard as the author of the mischief, while Beatrice champions her cousin's innocence with generous, wholehearted ardour. Thus at this crisis the deeper nature of each leaps into sudden, unashamed light, and through the very catastrophe that has overwhelmed Hero the way is made easy for a mutual confession of love. Beatrice weeping! At such a sight must not Benedick's lips shape themselves into the avowal, 'I do love nothing in the world as well as you?' And there is only one answer that can come back through the tears, 'You have stayed me in a happy hour: I was about to protest I loved you.' But with characteristic vehemence she at once tests her wooer's devotion to the uttermost by the

command to kill Claudio. When he refuses, she mounts through ever-rising stages of passionate indignation at the Count's misconduct to the final outburst, 'O God, that I were a man. I would eat his heart in the market-place.' Mrs. Jameson shows little of her usual insight in setting down this speech to temper. It springs rather from 'a noble and righteous fury, the fury of kindled strength'; but in the very measure of her strength the woman is made, with the finest truth, to find the measure of her weakness, and Beatrice, in this hour of her self-revelation, cries aloud for the powers of the sex that has hitherto been the butt of her scorn. Benedick can supply what she lacks, and, the triumph of the thought sweeping away his scruples, he goes forth to challenge Claudio. He is forestalled by Leonato, who, in passionate reaction from his credulity within the church, dares the Count to combat for having slandered his child to death; while his brother Antonio, who a moment before had been playing the moralist, takes up the family quarrel with even more unrestrained vehemence. It is another case of much ado about nothing, for the greybeards cannot persuade Claudio to cross swords with them, and the news of Hero's death, announced after this fashion, fails to produce the effect intended by the friar. Thus when Benedick appears upon the scene, he finds Claudio in a mocking, light-hearted mood, which is glaringly unseasonable, and which finds only matter for additional mirth in the formal delivery of this challenge.

But a change is at hand. The examination of Borachio and Conrade has happily not been conducted by Dogberry and Verges alone. They have a colleague in the sensible Sexton; and while Dogberry is making much ado about nothing by bewailing that Conrade's words have not been put on paper, and that he has not been written down an ass, the Sexton hurries off with proofs of the plot to Leonato. Borachio, knowing that his villainy is on record and that the game is up, confesses his misdoings to Don Pedro in the presence of Claudio. Now at last the Count is struck with remorse, but his is not a nature to be agonized even by the consciousness that he has done his affianced bride a fatal wrong. With frivolous disloyalty to her memory he accepts at once Leonato's offer of a niece, 'almost the copy of his child that's dead.' He hangs with elaborate funeral pomp the prescribed elegy upon Hero's cenotaph, only to find it a case of much ado about nothing. For when, on the morrow, his new-made bride unmasks, she is seen to be no other than Hero—dead only as long as her slander lived. If she thus seems to pardon her lover with unnatural promptitude, it must be remembered that

they have wit enough to arrest them, though, with a characteristic misconstruction of a whispered phrase, they believe that they are on the track of 'one Deformed,' a fictitious personage about whom they make much ado. Thus the conspiracy is unmasked apparently in time to frustrate its evil aim—but this to reckon without Dogberry and Verges. It is strange that Coleridge should have spoken of them 'as forced into the service of the plot when any other less ingeniously absurd watchmen would have answered the mere necessities of the action.' On the contrary, the necessities of the action absolutely demand these twin specimens of blundering officialdom, for had they been less given to illogical and perverse circumlocution of speech, the exposure of Hero would have been avoided, and, with it, the occasion that finally unites Beatrice and Benedick. With the secret already in their possession the two worthies wait on Leonato on the very morning of the marriage; but they are so occupied in each taking the word out of the other's mouth, and in 'bestowing all their tediousness' upon his worship, that before they can come to the point of their story he has to hurry off to the church.

The reader, however, more fortunate than Leonato, knows that Don John's agents are already in custody, and is thus less pained than he would otherwise be by the wellnigh tragic situation in the church, when Claudio with foul calumny casts back the innocent Hero into her father's arms. This is the crowning instance of much ado about nothing, which finds yet another illustration in Leonato's hysterical lamentation over his daughter's supposed shame. But the friar, who had been ready to perform the nuptial rite, sees in the maiden's face the witness of her innocence. He counsels that she should be secretly kept in and given out as dead, that Claudio may thus be moved to remorse. Two other friends are faithful to Hero in her hour of need, Benedick and Beatrice. The former bids Leonato cease from his frantic outcries, and it is he who sagaciously fixes on John the bastard as the author of the mischief, while Beatrice champions her cousin's innocence with generous, wholehearted ardour. Thus at this crisis the deeper nature of each leaps into sudden, unashamed light, and through the very catastrophe that has overwhelmed Hero the way is made easy for a mutual confession of love. Beatrice weeping! At such a sight must not Benedick's lips shape themselves into the avowal, 'I do love nothing in the world as well as you?' And there is only one answer that can come

command to kill Claudio. When he refuses, she mounts through ever-rising stages of passionate indignation at the Count's misconduct to the final outburst, 'O God, that I were a man. I would eat his heart in the market-place.' Mrs. Jameson shows little of her usual insight in setting down this speech to temper. It springs rather from 'a noble and righteous fury, the fury of kindled strength'; but in the very measure of her strength the woman is made, with the finest truth, to find the measure of her weakness, and Beatrice, in this hour of her self-revelation, cries aloud for the powers of the sex that has hitherto been the butt of her scorn. Benedick can supply what she lacks, and, the triumph of the thought sweeping away his scruples, he goes forth to challenge Claudio. He is forestalled by Leonato, who, in passionate reaction from his credulity within the church, dares the Count to combat for having slandered his child to death; while his brother Antonio, who a moment before had been playing the moralist, takes up the family quarrel with even more unrestrained vehemence. It is another case of much ado about nothing, for the greybeards cannot persuade Claudio to cross swords with them, and the news of Hero's death, announced after this fashion, fails to produce the effect intended by the friar. Thus when Benedick appears upon the scene, he finds Claudio in a mocking, light-hearted mood, which is glaringly unseasonable, and which finds only matter for additional mirth in the formal delivery of this challenge.

But a change is at hand. The examination of Borachio and Conrade has happily not been conducted by Dogberry and Verges alone. They have a colleague in the sensible Sexton; and while Dogberry is making much ado about nothing by bewailing that Conrade's words have not been put on paper, and that he has not been written down an ass, the Sexton hurries off with proofs of the plot to Leonato. Borachio, knowing that his villainy is on record and that the game is up, confesses his misdoings to Don Pedro in the presence of Claudio. Now at last the Count is struck with remorse, but his is not a nature to be agonized even by the consciousness that he has done his affianced bride a fatal wrong. With frivolous disloyalty to her memory he accepts at once Leonato's offer of a niece, 'almost the copy of his child that's dead.' He hangs with elaborate funeral pomp the prescribed elegy upon Hero's cenotaph, only to find it a case of much ado about nothing. For when, on the morrow, his new-made bride unmasks, she is seen to be no other than Hero—dead only as long as her slander lived. If she thus seems to pardon [illegible] with unnatural promptitude, it must be remembered that

with her the will of her father is law, and that furthermore this phenomenal facility of forgiveness is a peculiarity which she shares with several other Shaksperean heroines. Beatrice and Benedick next step forth to claim the friar's good offices, only, however, to find that they love each other no more than reason, and that they have been mutually misled. But their own poetical effusions are called to witness against them—their hands against their hearts—and thus at last the whirligig of time brings in its revenges, and presents us with the spectacle of 'Benedick, the married man.' And the critics who, with singular lack of penetration, seek to mar our satisfaction at the union of this delightful couple by dismal predictions of a stormy matrimonial career, may be confidently assured that they have caught the infection of the play, and are supplying an additional instance of much ado about nothing.

Though **TWELFTH NIGHT** was probably written just after rather than just before *As You Like It*, it connects more closely in general tone and structure with *Much Ado about Nothing* than the pastoral play, and may therefore be treated first. The earliest text is in the folio of 1623, and the absence of all external evidence led critics like Tyrwhitt and Malone on the slenderest of internal hints to assign the play to the final period of Shakspere's career. But the discovery by Hunter in 1828 of Manningham's diary put an end to this theory. From the diary we learn that a play called *Twelfth Night, or, What you Will*, was acted on Feb. 2, 1601-2, in the Middle Temple Hall, and from the brief analysis given of the plot there can be no doubt that it was Shakspere's comedy. As it is not mentioned by Meres, it must have been later than 1598, and its style and general atmosphere fully support the conclusion that it belongs to the end of the dramatist's second period. The more exact date cannot be fixed with certainty, though various indications point to its being about 1601[1]. The name of the comedy, as Pepys complained when he saw this 'silly play' in 1662, has no relation to its subject, and is probably due to the fact that it was first played on Twelfth Night. If this be so, we may plausibly assign its original performance to Twelfth Night, 1601-2.

Manningham in describing the play spoke of it 'as much like *The Comedy of Errors*, or *Menaechmi* in Plautus, but most like and

1 The song, 'Farewell, dear heart,' of which fragments are sung in Act II. Scene 3, first appeared in that year in Robert Jones' *Book of Airs*; and 'the new map with the augmentation of the Indies' (Act III. Scene 2), which Steevens thought had reference to the map in the translation of Linschoten's *Voyages* (1598), has been recently shown to be more probably the map in the complete edition of Hakluyt's *Voyages* (1599-1600).

neere to that in Italian called *Inganni.*' These comparisons, however, are not specially felicitous, for the resemblance to the *Menaechmi* goes no further than the use of mistaken identity as a motive, while the Italian play to which *Twelfth Night* is most closely allied is not the *Inganni* (*The Cheats*) of Secchi nor yet the play of the same name by Gonzaga, but another comedy, *Gl' Ingannati* (*The Deceived*), printed at Venice in 1537, with a poetical introduction *Il Sacrificio.* The plot of this piece, dealing with the fortunes of Fabritio and Lelia, a brother and sister separated at the sack of Rome in 1527, is exactly similar to that of the serious portion of *Twelfth Night*, while the introduction supplies the name, though nothing but the name of Malevolti or Malvolio. But Shakspere probably drew upon more than one version of what was a popular and widespread story[1]. He turned the shadowy figures of Italian romance into living consistent types, though still true to their origin in their luxuriant fancy and sensibility; and he added a contrasting group of actors of coarser grain, with the realistic temper of the Teutonic stock. Thus in *Twelfth Night*, as in *Much Ado about Nothing*, we have in harmonious union dramatic elements drawn from the north and from the south; and as *Much Ado about Nothing* reproduces motives from earlier plays with heightened effect, so *Twelfth Night* handles more artistically themes already used in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and in *The Comedy of Errors.* The likeness to the latter play is, however, of a superficial kind. In both cases mistaken identity is an element in the plot. But in *The Errors* the complications thence arising form the staple of the play, and give it the character of a comedy of incident. In *Twelfth Night* the confusion does not begin till the piece is more than two-thirds over, and, though it provides some highly amusing episodes, is subordinate to the main scheme of the work, for it helps ultimately to afford a way out of an apparently hopeless *impasse*, created by the strange cross-purposes of human hearts. The relation between *Twelfth Night* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is of a more intimate kind, for in both plays the dramatist is chiefly occupied with the same fundamental theme of love in its

1 The story is told, with different names, by Bandello in one of his novels (translated by Belleforest into French in the *Histoires Tragiques*), and with considerable alteration of detail in the *Hecatommithi* of Cinthio, who is the first to lay the scene of the story in Illyria, and to introduce the incident of a shipwreck. Cinthio's version is followed in its main features by Barnabe Riche's story of Apolonius and Silla in his *Farewell to the Militarie Profession*, 1581. Another possible source of the play has been recently suggested in Emanuel Forde's *Parismus, the renowned Prince of Bohemia*, 1598, which contains some incidents similar to *Twelfth Night*, and employs for the first time the names Olivia and Violetta. This enumeration of the many kindred shapes through which the story passed is enough to prove how idle is the attempt to identify the precise original of the play.

varied manifestations. But the crude colouring of the earlier work has now been replaced by a delicate and subtle gradation of tints that melt into a perspective of harmonious beauty.

In the Duke Orsino, who marches at the head of this masque of Cupid, we recognize at once a kinsman of Proteus and of Romeo, in the days of his love for Rosaline. As Olivia, the object of his fruitless adoration, fully admits, he is possessed of many gifts and graces. He is noble, virtuous, of stainless youth, learned, valiant, handsome in form, and of great estate. It seems unnatural that so richly endowed a wooer should lavish his whole wealth of affection in vain. But the passion of Orsino does not spring from those inmost recesses of the heart whence alone love draws its irresistible spell; it is a nursling of the fancy, and in its lack of fibre and of magnetic force betrays but too clearly the source of its being. It is probably not without a touch of half-conscious irony that Viola describes the Duke to Olivia as worshipping her,

> 'With adorations, fertile tears,
> With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire.'

It is not with such sentimental weapons that love achieves its conquests, and the Duke reveals how his passion preys merely upon itself when he declares that he is turned into a hart, whom his desires pursue like fell and cruel hounds. Such exaggerated sensibility finds its best antidote in resolute grappling with the realities of life, but from this healthful discipline Orsino, after the manner of his kind, shrinks back. Even the chase, the favourite exercise of his class, has no attraction for him. He cares only to steep himself in an atmosphere of voluptuous languor, with music as the chosen food of his love. The minstrelsy that he cultivates is of the melting kind that nourishes his already far too melting mood; he encores a strain, whose dying fall is of such liquid sweetness that it cloys even in repetition, and he is swayed to ecstasy by the tender, indefinable charm of old-world songs, haunted by the echoes of the days that are no more. That he himself is dimly conscious that his passion is dreamlike in its nature appears in his declaration to Viola, that the fancies of men are more giddy and unfirm, sooner lost and won than those of women. Yet a moment after, in one of his rhapsodical flights, he insists that

> 'There is no woman's sides
> Can bide the beating of so strong a passion
> As love doth give my heart.'

His love, he declares, is more noble than the world, more

hungry than the sea. Indeed, it is highly remarkable how he continually wears his heart upon his sleeve. It needs only three days for him to unclasp to Viola 'the book even of his secret soul,' and all who surround him, of whatever rank, seem to be equally favoured. The only person, strange to say, who makes an exception is the lady who is the object of his suit. He sends to her time after time embassies of love, but his own foot does not cross her threshold. Had his passion been of sterling quality, it would have driven him by an irresistible impulse into her presence, and Olivia is justified in turning coldly from addresses that she never hears but at second-hand. Viola glances pointedly at Orsino's lethargy in his love-making when she declares to Olivia that were she the wooer she would make

> 'A willow cabin at your gate,
> And call upon my soul within the house;
> Write loyal cantons of contemned love,
> And sing them loud even in the dead of night.'

When at last he nerves himself to plead his suit in person it is too late, for Olivia is already contracted to Sebastian, whom she has mistaken for Viola. For a moment Orsino betrays the heartless selfishness that, in Shakspere's view, always lurks just below the seductive surface of the sentimental nature. He thinks of death as a meet doom for Olivia, and then for Viola, in whom he recognizes a triumphant rival. But the reappearance of Sebastian and the revelation of Viola's true sex suggest a more satisfactory solution of the entanglements of the situation. Orsino now finds the clue to the enigmatical speeches of his supposed page on the subject of love, and with one of the sudden, overwhelming changes of feeling, to which Shakspere's sentimentalists are peculiarly liable, he transfers his affections wholesale to Viola, and proclaims her his mistress and his fancy's queen. Though he seems to be favoured beyond his deserts in carrying off so lightly a far richer prize than that for which he had long sighed in vain, the chastened tone of his utterances encourages the hope that his dilettante love-in-idleness has been but the prelude to a genuine manly devotion, driving its roots deep into the secret places of the soul.

Olivia, at first sight, seems scarcely suited to attract, except by the power of contrast, the sentimental nature of Orsino. Young and beautiful she indeed is, but the serious tendency of her mind has been aggravated by the death in quick succession of her father and her brother, and she has shut herself up for seven years in cloistral seclusion to nurse her grief. Everything in her surroundings bears

witness to her austere temper. Her household is governed by a puritanical steward on rigid principles of order, and though her unusually strong sense of the ties of relationship leads her to entertain a roystering kinsman, she seeks to confine his licence within endurable limits. She is an enemy to all false show, inward or outward. No paint contributes to the red and white of her cheeks, and she scorns overstrained praise or 'lowly feigning' from the lips of others. It is not strange that this 'mouse of virtue,' as the Fool aptly calls her, whose very seal bears the image of the chaste Lucrece, should shrink back in disgust from the cloying incense of Orsino's adoration, and (in a phrase that drops naturally from the mouth of a recluse) should term his love 'a heresy.' But the icy manner which she rejects his addresses shows that she pushes austerity to a point where it becomes indifference to the sufferings of others, and she pays a full penalty when, at the first sight of the disguised Viola, her heart overflows with a passion for the servant, as intense and as fruitless as that of the master for herself.

Our age has lost the peculiar Elizabethan delight in the entanglements arising from confusion of sex, and the 'extracting frenzy' (to use her own phrase) of Olivia for Viola strikes us as pushed to unnatural limits. Vows of seclusion, dignity of rank, reserve of womanhood are all flung to the winds, and her passion utters itself in ardent phrases, which, unlike Orsino, she pours not into the ears of every hearer, but into those of her beloved alone. Coldness only moves her to greater fervour; even scorn, she declares, looks beautiful on the adored one's lip, and such a fiend might carry her to hell. It is just because Viola is not what she seems that Shakspere permits the infatuation of Olivia to be carried to such grotesque lengths: so persistent a pursuit of a real man by a woman would have been unendurable, even in the eyes of an Elizabethan audience, which had laxer ideas than our own on the respective spheres of the sexes in love-making. But when Olivia has sufficiently expiated her scorn by suffering equal scorn at the hands of another, the appearance of Sebastian makes it possible for her to be extricated from her humiliation, and to reap a reward befitting the merits of her intrinsically sterling nature. A strain is indeed put upon our credulity when we see Sebastian yielding so promptly to the solicitations of the unknown fair one who flings herself at his head. But the strange behaviour of the Fool, followed by that of Sir Andrew and Sir Toby, has already prepared him for surprises, and that he is not unused to ardent demonstrations of attachment from strangers is shown by the conduct of his rescuer,

Antonio, who, at the peril of his life, becomes his guide to Orsino's court. In welcoming the advances of Olivia he is unconsciously giving effect to her maxim, that 'love sought is good, but given unsought is better'; and it is a further recommendation that fortune makes him the chastiser of the two foolish knights who have been marring her household peace. Thus all bodes fair for the future, and now that her devotion, instead of foaming itself away against a strong barrier, can pour its flood through a receptive channel, the Duke's prophecy may at last come true:

> 'She that hath a heart of that fine frame
> To pay this debt of love but to a brother,
> How will she love, when the rich golden shaft
> Hath killed the flock of all affections else
> That live in her.'

Equally removed from the Duke, with his dreamy languor of desire, and from Olivia, tossed between the frozen and the torrid zone of emotion, stands the figure of Viola, perfect in its balance of sensibility, gaiety, and strength. In her Shakspere has united qualities which he usually tends to divide between two different types of women. She has the softness of Hero and Bianca, combined with the resolute will and ready tongue of Portia and Rosalind. No womanhood less exquisitely poised could have glided with such sure footing through the bewildering mazes into which she is thrown. The disguise in man's attire, whence these complexities mainly spring, is forced upon her by the needs of her situation. Shipwrecked on the inhospitable coast of Illyria, she finds that she can only take shelter with the Duke, of whom she has heard her father speak, and that yet she cannot enter the court as an unprotected girl. Throughout she shows nothing of Portia's or Rosalind's roguish pleasure in playing the part of a youth. The equivocal phrases, in which she so often hints that she is not what she seems, disclose the trembling woman's heart beneath the page's doublet, and when she first realizes Olivia's passion she confesses that 'disguise is a wickedness wherein the pregnant enemy does much.' Had Orsino been less absorbed in his self-pitying melancholy he might have guessed the real sex of his page; for he notes that she has Diana's lips, and a maiden's shrill, small voice, and that all is semblative a woman's part. Even as it is, in the golden hours of unreserved confidence her image steals, though he knows it not, into his soul; and while she listens, more privileged than Olivia, to the story of his sorrow from his own lips, her tender heart goes out towards this love-lorn wooer, who charms her with his affect-

ing eloquence. But hers is the 'love indeed' that, born in the silent depths of the spirit, cannot blazon itself upon the tongue. It is of herself she speaks when she tells of the pretended sister whose history was a blank:

> 'She never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought,
> And with a green and yellow melancholy,
> She sat like Patience on a monument,
> Smiling at grief.'

Yet in Viola's attitude, though she is scarcely aware of it herself, there is something more than mere mute resignation. She carries out in the spirit, if not in the letter, her own plan for those who sue in vain: she makes a willow cabin at the loved one's gate, and calls upon her soul within the house. Hopeless as her passion may seem, her exquisite insight may have revealed to her the touch of hollowness in Orsino's adoration for Olivia, and indeed she vaguely hints at this when, in her assumed character, she declares:

> 'We men may say more, swear more; but indeed
> Our shows are more than will; for still we prove
> Much in our vows, but little in our love.'

Yet she loyally performs her part as Orsino's advocate, and takes no denial of admission in Olivia's presence. Doubtless an eagerness to see her rival mingles with her fidelity to her trust, and the bantering tone with which she at first mask the tumult of her heart changes to one of impassioned earnestness when she beholds her beauty. The dignity that prevents her deep tenderness of nature from ever slipping into weakness shows itself when she rejects Olivia's proffered fee, and with infinite delicacy she safeguards the Countess' reputation by leaving Malvolio in the belief that it is Orsino's ring with which he is sent in quest of her. Though her purse is but light, she generously shares it with her brother's friend, Antonio; and while repudiating with high-spirited scorn the charge of ingratitude, she is led by her quick wit to the conclusion that she is being mistaken for Sebastian. Her masculine shrewdness and decision throw into delightful relief the thoroughly feminine lack of merely physical courage and the horror of bloodshed, which appear in the irresistibly comic affair of honour with Sir Andrew. Yet this same timorous maiden, who nearly swoons at the sight of cold steel, is ready a few

minutes later, at Orsino's bidding, to offer her bosom to the sacrificial knife:

> 'I, most jocund, apt, and willingly,
> To do you rest, a thousand deaths would die.'

But her devotion to the Duke is to prove itself not in death, but in life. The turn of fortune at last draws them into each other's arms, and we know that Viola is speaking the unaffected language of the heart when she declares that she will guard her vows of love as securely as the sun his fires. How far finer is such a consummation in its poetic justice than that which is meted out to Viola's twin-sister, Euphrasia, in the *Philaster* of Beaumont and Fletcher! Nowhere have the disciples more nearly approached their master than in this exquisite creation, who in character and fortunes irresistibly recalls the heroine of *Twelfth Night*. But the tender loyalty of Euphrasia is not vivified by the quick salt of Viola's wit. She is a more perfect ideal of self-sacrificing love, and she can even look on contentedly while her heart's idol is united to another woman. Of Viola no such supreme self-renunciation is asked, but if her brow lacks the aureole of a living martyrdom, there is shed round it the softer, more pervasive light from

> 'A countenance in which did meet
> Sweet records, promises as sweet;
> A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food.'

From love in its sentimental excess and in its silent strength, we turn to love in its grotesque insufficiency, born not of the heart, nor even of the fancy, but of inflated self-conceit. Malvolio, as we learn from the testimony of Leonard Digges in 1640, was one of the stage-figures who extended the popularity that Shakspere had won with Falstaff, and who was always safe to draw a crowded house to 'Cockpit, Galleries, and Boxes.' The sustained attraction of the character through the period preceding the Civil War is natural, for in Malvolio we have the only specimen of a Puritan whom Shakspere satirized for the benefit of his theatrical patrons. Even on this theme he avoided the temptation to caricature. The Tribulation Wholesome, the Ananias, the Rabbi Zeal of the Land Busy of Ben Jonson remain as types of the Puritan, seen through the jaundiced eyes of Shakspere's dramatic friends. They are, one and all, unctuous, illiterate rascals who, under a show of zeal, hide low vices of gluttony or covetousness. And similar has been the treatment of kindred types in later times, as is sufficiently shown by the

Thwackum of Fielding, and the Chadband and Stiggins of Dickens. Shakspere's satiric method is incomparably more subtle and convincing, for it covers its object with ridicule, while admitting its merits, and without ascribing to it a single hateful or hypocritical vice. It is only the lost sheep of Puritanism that become the prey of the wolfish desires of the flesh; but it is its choicer spirits that are most prone to be the victims of the narrow brain and the still narrower heart. Lamb therefore rightly insisted, as against the prevailing stage-tradition of his day, that the character of Malvolio was not essentially ludicrous, and that an air of dignity should be thrown round the part. 'He might have worn his gold chain with honour in one of our old Roundhead families, in the service of a Lambert, or a Lady Fairfax.' Such a service is that of Olivia, and, as she says herself, he suits well with her fortunes, for he is 'sad and civil.' That he acquits himself worthily of her trust is shown by her confession that she would not have him miscarry for half her dowry, and indeed had she not shown him unusual favour, the trick so successfully practised on him would have been impossible. But Malvolio's virtues have their shadow in an intolerable self-sufficiency, to which Olivia shows herself alive when she accuses him of being sick of self-love and tasting with a distempered appetite. This self-love takes the aggressively pharisaical form of hostility towards all the amusements of the children of this world by whom he is surrounded. He thinks that because he is virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale. Not only does he stop Sir Toby's midnight revels with a haughtier reproof than is becoming from a *major-domo* to his lady's kinsman, but he puts Fabian out of favour on account of a bear-baiting. He finds matter of offence in the sallies of Feste, whom he terms 'a barren rascal,' and he looks upon the wise men who crow at fools as no better than the fools' zanies. This self-esteem is encouraged by his position, for there is no class more ridiculously inflated, more contemptuous of inferiors, than the upper servants of a great house. The ceremonial of society is aped by them, without the refinement which is the breath of its life, and vulgarity under its varnish of etiquette becomes doubly offensive. Thus in dress and deportment Malvolio cultivates what he fondly imagines to be the grand style. He wears yellow stockings and cross-garters, he plays with his chain of office, he practises behaviour to his shadow in the sun, and 'cons state without book, and utters it by great swarths.' Thoroughly in love with his own excellences, he is easily led to believe that others are equally in love with them, and a hint from the mischievous Maria has been enough to encourage the idea that

Olivia's feeling for him is of a tenderer kind than that of a mistress for a faithful servant. The idea brings with it a rapturous vision of Count Malvolio in his branched velvet gown, lording it over his officers and patronizingly rebuking his 'kinsman Toby.' The vision seems to gain full warrant from the forged letter that Maria lays in his path. The missive is cunningly drawn up, for it contains just enough of transparent mystery to flatter him with his penetration in piecing out its meaning. There can be no doubt now that his lady loves him, and he hastens at her desire to cast his humble slough, and to be point-devise the very man. With the stoical fortitude of martyrdom in a worthy cause he parades before his mistress in his cross-garters, though they do make some obstruction in the blood, and he forces his austerely set countenance into the curves of an unnatural smile. It seems almost too pitiable a catastrophe that these gallant efforts to enter into the golden castle of his dreams should win for him only the cruel realities of the madman's dark room and bonds. And insult is indeed added to injury when the Fool, under the disguise of Sir Topas, affects to lay the fiend who has harboured himself in this godly heart, or when he makes it a test of the Puritan's sanity that he should hold the opinion of Pythagoras concerning the transmigration of souls. His release only brings with it the fresh mortification of learning the trick that has been played upon him, and of seeing Olivia united to Sebastian. In the bitterness of disillusion he strides away with threats of revenge on 'the whole pack' of his tormentors, and we scarcely share the Duke's trust that he may be entreated to a peace. The self-love of natures such as his cannot be humbled by outward defeat. He belongs to the stiff-necked generation, which learns nothing and forgets nothing.

Yet Malvolio, affectioned ass though he be, stands head and shoulders over another rival for Olivia's hand. In Illyria at least it cannot be said that the children of this world are wiser than the children of light, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek is Shakspere's compensation for Malvolio. This lank-haired knight, with whom 'Brownists' are in very ill favour, and who, without any 'exquisite reason,' would beat a Puritan as a dog, is a type of the cavalier in his most fatuous form. According, indeed, to Sir Toby, who for his own purposes wishes to make a match between him and his niece, 'he is as tall a man as any's in Illyria: he hath all the good gifts of nature, speaks three or four languages, and plays o' the viol-de-gamboys.' But Sir Andrew has only to be seen and heard for a moment to prove the falsehood of these flatteries. To do him justice, he has but a poor

opinion of his own capacities, believing that he has no more wit than a Christian or an ordinary man, though this comes from his being a great eater of beef. He is conscious too of lost opportunities, of hours given to fencing, dancing, and bear-baiting that would have been better bestowed upon the arts. And with the curious glimmer of instinct which survives even in the most hopelessly brainless gentleman, he realizes that his wooing does not speed, that it is four to one Olivia will not have him, and that he had best be off home at once. But a word from Sir Toby is always enough to put him in a good conceit of himself, for not even Slender shows a more touching trust in his kinsman Shallow than does Sir Andrew in his brother knight. He imitates his every action and echoes his every word, inanely confident that in this boisterous boon companion he has found an infallible social model. Even in Feste he sees attractions to which he would fain soar: 'I had rather than forty shillings I had such a leg, and so sweet a breath to sing, as the fool has.' And when Viola scatters her flowers of speech on the Duke's behalf before Olivia's feet, Sir Andrew seizes and stores them for future use. But the favour shown by the Countess to the messenger stirs the knight's infinitesimal drop of spleen, and at Sir Toby's instigation he sends a challenge to his rival. The wording of this missive is an evident caricature of the fashionable jargon of the 'duello' with its fine-spun niceties of insult, and it is noticeable that Sir Andrew 'keeps on the windy side of the law,' and stops short of using the phrase which, according to the etiquette of the day, would have necessitated the taking up of his challenge. He makes indeed a poorer show, if possible, in the service of Mars than in that of Venus, and he puts it out of doubt that he has not so much blood in his liver as 'would clog the foot of a flea' when, rather than draw sword, he proffers his grey horse as satisfaction to his foe. The providence, however, that watches over fools finds a match for the poltroonery of the knight in the natural timidity of the virgin, and the spectacle of the unwilling combatants trembling like aspen-leaves before each other is irresistibly diverting. Sir Andrew would have done well to rest upon his laurels, and to have contented himself with the action at battery against his enemy provided by the indulgent law of Illyria. But his evil genius, Sir Toby, persuades him to tempt fortune a second time, with the result that he falls into the hands of Sebastian, and carries off a broken head for his pains. Yet even this cannot shock him out of his simple faith in his boon companion, which is as unassailable as Malvolio's faith in himself. A wound

that Sir Toby shares is robbed of half its anguish by the joy in prospect of their being able to be 'dressed together.'

Loyalty in its most asinine aberration is preferable to heartless self-seeking, and the gull Sir Andrew is less odious than Sir Toby the blood-sucker. Olivia's uncle is not without a family likeness to Falstaff, but it is to Falstaff in his decadence. His treatment of Aguecheek is the practical application of Sir John's doctrine of the dace and the pike, as set forth at the house of Shallow. There is the same contempt of the man of birth for his inferiors, as seen in the retort to Malvolio, 'Art any more than a steward?' There is the same faculty of turning culture to perverse uses, and there is even a trace of Falstaff's genius for repartee, as when he sets down his drunkenness to drinking healths to his niece, or meets Malvolio's homilies with the unanswerable plea, 'Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?' One advantage indeed Sir Toby has over the fat knight in a talent for song, and the cozier's catches which he and his fellows roar forth at dead of night, 'without mitigation or remorse of voice,' mingle an element of Bacchic fire with the potations of sack and canary. But his joviality covers a malevolence and meanness of spirit of which Falstaff knew nothing, at any rate in his palmy days. He uses his niece as a decoy, even while he is battening on her hospitality, and makes a laughing-stock of the simpleton whose ducats are going to swell his purse. But even with this crafty self-seeker Cupid plays his pranks, and presents us with the edifying spectacle of the biter bit. In spite of his class pride, Sir Toby is captivated by the ready tongue and wit of the waiting-woman, Maria. Their association in the plot against Malvolio entangles him deeper in her toils, and at the close she secures him as her husband. He, who has been so busy in gulling others, ends by exposing himself to the permanent derision which accompanies a *mésalliance.*

Amidst this tangle of human passions one figure trips in light-hearted irresponsibility. Feste is a being of far finer clay than the clowns of the earlier comedies; whose portion has been chiefly one of blows and buffets, and whose stock-in-trade has consisted of a homely monotony of mother-wit. But Olivia has secured a jester who can act up to the ideal of his office.

> 'He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
> The quality of persons, and the time,
> And, like the haggard, check at every feather
> That comes before his eye.'

As he declares himself, '*cucullus non facit monachum,*' and he

wears not motley in his brain. He is sharp enough to see into the minds of the most different characters, and to skilfully adapt himself to their varying moods. He even takes advantage of the principle that 'there is no slander in an avowed fool though he do nothing but rail' to shrewdly rebuke the failings of his superiors. He deftly draws Olivia into the admission that her extravagant mourning is for a brother whom she knows to be in heaven, and he suggests to the Duke a cure for his melancholy absorption in his passion. He has a natural antipathy to the pompous Malvolio, who scorns him and his class, and he takes part in the plot against his self-love. But it is the spirit of fun rather than of spite that prompts him, and he helps to bring about the prisoner's release. He joins Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in their midnight catches, and his gift of song throws round his figure a soft lyrical charm. It is as if the spirit of the early English ballad-poetry stood embodied before us, masquerading in cap and bells. And it is highly significant of the way in which old and new mingle in the Shakspercan drama that this most refined of jesters should take leave of Malvolio in a jingling stave, recalling the relation of the Devil and the Vice in the Morality Plays. But for more sensitive ears he has sweeter music. He enchants Sir Toby and Sir Andrew as he carols of love and youth in their brittle rapture of possession, and he pierces Orsino's very soul with the elegiac tenderness of the swan-song of a broken heart. Thus by an exquisite artifice it is the fool, himself untouched by passion, who lets us hear across the pealing melodies of this jocund Twelfth-Night pageant the faint undertone of 'the thousand, thousand sighs' breathed over the grave of a hopeless love.

AS YOU LIKE IT first appeared in the folio of 1623. It was entered on the Stationers' Register together with *Henry V*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*, 'to be staied,' i.e. not printed. The date is August 4, but the year is not mentioned. The previous entry is dated May, 1600, and as the other plays were printed in 1600 and 1601, we infer that the August is that of the year 1600. The play cannot have appeared before 1598, for it is not mentioned by Meres, and the quotation from the 'Dead Shepherd,' Marlowe, 'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?' is taken from his *Hero and Leander*, published in that year. It may be dated with practical certainty about 1599 or 1600, and, as already suggested, it probably just preceded *Twelfth Night*. It has, however, features which make it peculiarly representative of Shakspere in the most joyous period of his art, and it may therefore fittingly stand as

the climax of his greater comedies, though in compact structure of plot it cannot vie with *Twelfth Night*, and still less with *Much Ado about Nothing*. This looseness of texture is due to the source of the play, a novel by Thomas Lodge, called *Rosalind, Euphues' Golden Legacy*, printed in 1590. Lodge's story is founded in its turn upon *The Tale of Gamelyn*, wrongly ascribed in several MSS. to the Cook in *The Canterbury Tales*, but in all probability dating from the middle of the fourteenth century. The mutual relation of the Middle-English poem, the Euphuistic novel, and the Shaksperean comedy is in the highest degree significant. *The Tale of Gamelyn* belongs to the cycle of rude ballad-poetry which formed almost the earliest expression of the reviving Anglo-Saxon national consciousness after the shock of the Norman Conquest. This species of literature, belonging to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, takes as its favourite type of hero a man of extraordinary physical power and bravery, who as a rule has met with some form of injustice, and who has consequently withdrawn into an open-air retreat, whence he defies constituted authorities, and acts as the good genius of the poor and the oppressed. Hereward of the Fens, Guy of Warwick, and, above all, Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest, are specimens of these doughty popular champions, and the fame of the two latter in especial was closely connected with the midland district. Greene had already made use of the Robin Hood legend for dramatic purposes, and that Shakspere had it in his mind while writing *As You Like It* is plain from the description given of the banished Duke: 'They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England.' Gamelyn is a hero of exactly similar type [1]. The youngest son of a dead knight who has favoured him in his will, he is maltreated by his elder brother till he grows stout enough to rebel and chastises his brother's servants. After defeating a mighty champion at a wrestling match, he falls again through treachery, into his brother's power, and would have been starved to death had he not been delivered by Adam Spencer, his father's old servant, the very type of the devoted Teutonic retainer. With their good oaken staves they cudgel the elder brother and a body of Churchmen whom he was feasting in his hall, and they serve similarly a company of four and twenty young men sent by

1 In fact, as Skeat points out, Gamelyn is the same person as Gamwell, who in the ballad of *Robin Hood and The Stranger* is Robin's nephew, and is made one of his chief men under the name of Will Scadlock or Scailet.

the sheriff to capture them. They then ride off to the forest, where they join a company of merry outlaws, of whom Gamelyn becomes king. He is indicted by his elder brother, who is sheriff; but he turns the tables upon him, and hangs sheriff, judge, and jury. In spite of this he makes his peace with the king, who creates him 'chief justice ot all his free forest.'

Here we have a thoroughly naive popular tale, glorifying a strong arm and a stout heart, regardless of nice moral scruples, and without a tinge of sentiment. The pastoral background is the simple greenery of the forest glades, such as the writer of the ballad and his hearers had themselves known. But in the Elizabethan age this homely native product became associated in the hands of Lodge with a completely different literary growth—the conventional Renaissance pastoral. In contrast to the mediaeval English folk-poetry this was the outcome of a superfine and 'decadent' culture. It had originated with the Sicilian Greeks in the days when the glories of Hellenic thought and action were things of the past, and when weary of the complexities, 'the fever and the fret,' of city life, men turned with a sigh of relief to nature. In the primitive occupations of the shepherd class, and in their simple joys and sorrows, these sophisticated worldings found the most piquant of contrasts to the problems of their own existence. The fiercer the whirl of real life the more alluring was the vision of an Arcadia peopled by nymphs and swains, tending their flocks by cool streams, or resting beneath leafy boughs, while they piped aloud in innocence of heart, or bewailed the bitter-sweet troubles of love. Thus it was natural that the Roman poets should follow in the track of Theocritus and Bion just when the republic was in its death-throes, and that Virgil should sing of the Mantuan fields and Horace of his Sabine farm when Italy was still gaping with the wounds of the civil wars. And not dissimilar were the conditions in the sixteenth century. It was a time of violent fermentation in religion and morals, of complicated political intrigue, of elaborate ceremonialism in society, and once again men sought an asylum in the dreamy lotos-land unfolded to their view by the newly rediscovered pastoral poetry. In Italy and Spain this impulse was first and most strongly felt, and writers of verse and prose alike clothed their creations in rustic garb, and set them down amidst meadows, flocks, and sheepcotes. The *Aminta* of Tasso and the *Pastor Fido* of Guarini in the sphere of the drama, and the *Arcadia* of Sanazzaro and the *Diana* of George of Montemayor in that of the novel, were amongst the most brilliant results of this prevailing fashion, and their influence quickly extended to northern lands.

In England Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* in 1579 was the first important pastoral poem, and in the following year Sidney was at work on his pastoral romance, the *Arcadia,* though it did not appear till 1590. It was in this year that Lodge published his *Rosalind,* which, though in style a direct imitation of the *Euphues,* was in subject a novel not of town but of country life. Here Gamelyn reappears under the heroic name of Rosader, still attended by the faithful Adam Spencer, and in the earlier part of the story he performs exactly the same feats as in the old ballad. But the scene of the tale is shifted to France, and overlying and almost concealing the original framework is a typical Arcadian story. The misfortunes of Rosader have their counterpart in a higher sphere in those of Gerismond, the lawful king of France, banished by his usurping rival, Torismond, to the forest of Arden. In this forest gradually congregate Rosader and his elder brother Saladin, and the daughters of the rival kings. The bulk of the tale consists in their love-making, with an added element that specially appealed to the taste of the times in the hopeless passion of the shepherd Montanus for Phebe, requited by Phebe's frenzied adoration of the disguised Rosalind. At the close the love entanglements are happily solved, and instead of Gamelyn's vengeance on his brother, we have the defeat and death of the usurper, Torismond, at the hands of Rosader and Saladin, aided by 'the twelve peers of France.'

The incidents of this narrative Shakspere adopted for his drama with a few changes. The rival kings become brother dukes, in order that their relation may be more closely assimilated to that of Rosader and Saladin, who in the play are known as Orlando and Oliver. The violent feuds between these two, with their rude glorification of Rosader's muscular prowess, are almost completely omitted. Alinda, who now becomes Celia, follows Rosalind to the forest of Arden out of pure love, and not because she is included in her father's decree of banishment. Within the forest itself Shakspere would allow of no incident ruffling the golden calm of this sylvan Paradise. He thus omits the rescue of the ladies by Saladin from robbers, and the final war against the usurper, whom he prefers to represent as voluntarily laying down his ill-gotten power. These changes all tend to greater naturalness and unity of design, but they are not in themselves of the first importance, and they leave untouched the cardinal fact that Shakspere has followed the framework of Lodge's attractive though somewhat prolix tale with unusual fidelity. All the more remarkable therefore is it that by readjustments of the perspective, and by the addition of a series of entirely

novel creations, the dramatist has given to his work a profoundly original and, in respect of his epoch, unique character. For the broad result of his treatment is to substitute for the artificial atmosphere of the Renaissance pastoral the open-air freshness, the breeze and blue of the old English ballad-poetry, which sent its breath through the rough tale of *Gamelyn*. But, by a masterstroke of skill, a single episode, that of Silvius and Phebe, is worked up into an exaggerated form of the conventional pastoral method, so that the contrast between it and the natural charm of the simple woodland life is the most effective satire upon this growth of the literary forcing-house. Thus Shakspere preserves all that is really true in the contrast between town and country while parodying its exaggerations. Not indeed that *As You Like It* takes us back to the homely, realistic Warwickshire or Windsor scenery of *Love's Labour's Lost* or *The Merry Wives*. Rather we find ourselves in an atmosphere akin to that of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, truly English in the main, but with added features unfamiliar to the traveller's eye. As in the earlier play, the action begins not within the greenwood, but at the court of the neighbouring town, and in a few pungent strokes the vices of city life are laid bare. A usurper who, having seized his brother's throne, drives his niece into banishment for fear of a popular rising in her favour; an elder brother who robs a younger of his inheritance, and who, hating him because he is 'of all sorts enchantingly beloved,' seeks to compass his death—these are the figures who are brought into prominence. The wicked prosper, while the good can but display the virtues of patient endurance or of loyalty, or find, like Orlando and Rosalind, in the kinship of their fortunes an all-powerful stimulus to love. In this prologue, if we admit Shakspere's postulate of love at first sight, and if we grant that, in the case of Celia, cousinly affection has warrant for overriding filial duty, we see human motives in their ordinary action.

But as soon as the scene shifts to the forest of Arden there is a change, and we feel that the air of this sylvan retreat has a subtle effect on all who breathe it. There are no elves playing their tricks on mortals with wonder-working herbs, but there is evidently some mystic influence present in a wood which, along with the *flora* and *fauna* of a more temperate clime, produces the lions, serpents, and palm-trees of the tropics. This influence steals with soothing balm into troubled hearts, and bathes them once more in the dewy freshness of their prime. Its effect is most clearly seen in the banished Duke and his 'co-mates and brothers in exile.' Far from looking back longingly to their former splendour, they find this forest life 'more sweet

than that of painted pomp,' and they have learnt to discover

> 'Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything.'

Sweet in truth are the uses of adversity when it enables the sufferers to translate 'the stubbornness of fortune into so quiet and so sweet a style.' Indeed it is hard to realize that this jocund company have ever known real adversity. There are the lingering echoes of past sorrows in the references to man's ingratitude and envy, which bite more keenly than the winter wind and freezing sky. But even of these we hear chiefly in songs, and the forest life is one of unruffled calm and content. To lie beneath the greenwood tree, turning a merry note unto the sweet bird's throat, or to kill the deer and to bear his body with a lusty chorus to the festal board—these are the occupations with which the Duke's followers 'fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world.' All the detail of these delightful scenes is Shakspere's own, with scarcely a hint from Lodge, and their spirit, as has been said, is that of the old English popular poetry. The sentimentality of the orthodox pastoral is entirely absent, and in its place we have the ruddy vigour, the leaping pulse and play of the open-air life that 'loves to live i' the sun.' Never has the indescribable charm of outdoor existence found more matchless expression, and as we let it penetrate us in all its power, we apply to the dramatist the words used of Wordsworth by Matthew Arnold:

> 'He laid us as we lay at birth
> On the cool flowery lap of earth.
> Smiles broke from us, and we had ease;
> The hills were round us, and the breeze
> Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
> Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.'

On Orlando also the air of the forest acts as a tonic. At the moment of leaving his home he had needed comfort and counsel from Adam, but within the wood the parts are reversed. He cheers the fainting old man, and with his drawn sword, at peril of his life, seeks for him food and shelter. As soon as he finds that he has fallen in with the banished Duke and his companions, the gentleness of his nature breaks through his show of violence, and henceforward he displays an unaffected gaiety of heart. When Jaques proposes that they should sit down together and 'rail against our mistress the world, and all our misery,' Orlando rebukes such unreasonable pessimism: 'I will chide no breather in the world but myself, against whom I know most faults.' It fits better with his sunny humour to roam the forest glades, hanging upon every tree verses in praise of

the incomparable Rosalind, which atone by their ardent sincerity for their 'very false gallop' and jingling rhymes. It must be set down partly to the peculiar influences of the locality that even with the eagle-eye of love he cannot recognize in the saucy page-boy, Ganymede, the mistress of his heart. In the scenes between the two Shakspere has departed largely from the example of Lodge, who assigns to them almost equal shares of the dialogue. The dramatist, who never drew the *jeunes premiers* of his comedies with the elaborate finish of his heroines, lets Orlando play an almost passive part in the interviews with the disguised Rosalind. He even throws into the background his exploit of saving his sleeping brother's life from a lioness by not exhibiting it before our eyes, but narrating it through the mouth of the rescued man. Rosalind's swoon at the recital probably reveals her secret to Oliver. Hence his exclamation, 'You a man? You lack a man's heart,' and his refusal to believe that 'this was counterfieit.' What Oliver knows cannot be a secret from Orlando, as the latter hints when he declares that his brother has told him of even 'greater wonders' than the counterfeited swoon. Thus when the final disclosure of Ganymede's real sex is made, her lover does not utter a single word of surprise, but silently takes his mistress to his heart. Perhaps, were his nature less equably cheerful, he might plead that from being in his character of Gamelyn the original centre of the story, he had been reduced by Lodge, and in still further measure by Shakspere, to a relatively less important position. But what he loses in prominence of speech or action he gains in sunny charm of character, which makes him a pervasive presence in this golden Arcadia, and endears him to us above all other heroes of his special type.

Oliver's part in the story is curtailed to a still greater degree. In Lodge's romance, after he has been saved from the lion by Orlando, and thus turned to repentance, he helps to rescue Rosalind and her cousin from a band of robbers. This is the origin of his love for Celia, the progress of which is gradually unfolded in lengthy speeches. But in the play the episode of the robbers is omitted, and Oliver, without having performed any action which redeems his past misdeeds, wins in one short interview Celia's whole heart.

The subordination of these personages by the dramatist allows him to lift into bold relief the figure of Rosalind, who in the romance had been on much the same level of interest as the other characters. He doubtless singled her out in this way for two reasons. Lodge's sketch of her contained the germ of much that Shakspere most loved in womanhood; while his delight in confusion of iden-

tity was gratified to the full by such incidents as her courtship by Orlando, in the belief that she is merely personating in play the Rosalind who in very truth she is, and her simultaneous courtship by Phebe, who takes her in reality for the handsome boy that she appears to be. Yet from the earlier scenes we should scarcely guess that the dramatist destined her for so pre-eminent a part. In the palace of Duke Frederick she is overshadowed by Celia, and her fits of melancholy, coupled with the sudden surrender of her heart to the scarcely seen Orlando, might seem to indicate that in her we have yet another of Shakspere's sentimentalists. But from the moment that she arrays herself in her masculine attire, with a gallant curtle-axe upon her thigh, and a boar-spear in her hand, she seems transformed, though in truth it is her real nature that now displays itself under the shelter of her disguise. Henceforth it is she who takes the lead; though she is as wearied as Celia by the journey to the forest, she feels that she 'must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat.' On no one does the air of Arden work so powerfully. The very spirit of the woodlands seems to enter into her being, and to throng her pulses with its glad fulness of life. Her speech throws off the deadweight that clogs human utterance in this workaday world, and, catching the secret of the thrush's 'fine careless rapture,' becomes a jubilant carol. Yet beneath her outward gaiety she preserves her deep sensibility, as we see in her 'petitionary vehemence' to Celia to declare the name of the bard who hangs her praises on the trees. When she hears that it is Orlando, how instinctive is her lament, 'What shall I do with my doublet and hose?' and with what eagerness do her questions about him tumble headlong from her lips! When, however, her wooer appears, she seems resolved to atone for her earlier frank confession of her feelings by ridicule of all amorous passion, though her feigned derision is intended to draw from Orlando renewed protestations of his loyalty, which may thus reach her in spite of her disguise. It is in these forest dialogues between the lovers that Shakspere's skill in transforming Lodge's romance is most decisively shown. The novelist had put into the mouth of Rosalind moralizing reflections on the dangers of love, containing some pretty turns of phrase, but growing oppressive in their heavy Euphuistic brocade. For this Shakspere substituted a gushing stream of wit that carries foam and freshness into the close atmosphere of the conventional Arcadia. But this wit of Rosalind is of peculiar quality. Unlike that of Beatrice, it is lambent rather than pungent, and does not spring so much from a penetrating intel-

lect as from a fertile fancy.' It shows a far-off touch of kinship in its prodigal use of metaphor to the Euphuistic passion for similes, which appears indiscriminately in the speeches of all Lodge's characters. This leisurely forest life allows ample time for weaving imaginative embroidery round not too serious themes, and thus we get Rosalind's charming little lecture on the divers paces in which time travels with divers persons, and her comparison of love to a madness, which deserves a dark house and a whip, and only escapes because the whippers share the lunacy. In a similar vein is her modernized version of the romantic stories of Troilus and Cressida, and Hero and Leander, in support of her assertion that 'men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love.' Of this painful raillery it may be said in her own words that it would not kill a fly. It is a weapon merely of self-defence, and the pictures that she draws for Orlando's benefit of the changeable humours of a coquette and of a wife's wayward moods are in ironical antithesis to the passionate devotion with which her own heart swells almost to bursting. How eagerly she longs to hear her lover's pleadings is seen in her suggestion that he should woo her under her disguise, in the name of Rosalind, in order to be cured of his love. When he is not punctual to his appointment she weeps with vexation, and declares that Cupid has merely clapped him o' the shoulder, but that he is heart-whole. And when, after the mock marriage, he takes his leave for two hours, she confesses to Celia that she is fathom deep in love. By her swoon at Oliver's story she involuntarily makes the same confession to him, and thus the way is prepared for the final solution of entanglements in the marriage masque, which here, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ends the play, and which suggests that it was produced in honour of some magnate's wedding. The masque is short, but exceedingly to the purpose, for it introduces the figure of Hymen in person, and it raises a jubilant paean in his praise:

> 'Honour, high honour and renown
> To Hymen, god of every town.

Amongst the couples whom Hymen unites are Silvius and Phebe, who had already made their appearance in Lodge's romance. The novelist had censured Phebe for her excessive scorn, and had emphasized the retribution in kind that falls upon her head. But his picture of the self-forgetting devotion of Silvius was, on the whole, sympathetic, and neither of the characters moved in a different plane from the remaining figures in the story. But in the drama

this is exactly what they do, for, by a number of minute touches, Shakspere transposes them into the region of caricature. Unlike the other lovers, they speak uniformly in verse instead of prose, and this in itself gives a distinctively idealistic flavour to their sentiments. Silvius' recital in strophic form to Corin of the signs of true love, ending with the triple invocation of the name of Phebe, prepares us for the pageant played between him and his disdainful mistress. Phebe has all the 'regulation' charms of a pastoral nymph —inky brows, black silk hair, bugle eyeballs, and cheeks of cream; but these are turned into burlesque by the addition of 'a leathern hand, a free-stone coloured hand.' She has been allowed a very pretty gift of language, and her process of proof to Silvius that eyes, 'the frailest, softest things, who shut their coward gates on atomies,' cannot be called butchers or murderers, is a charming piece of filigree logic. But her dainty terms become ridiculous when they are used to express her love for Ganymede; and the poetical epistle in which she questions the supposed youth whether he is a 'god to shepherd turned,' and promises, if her passion is fruitless, to 'study how to die,' is a glaring travesty of the sentimental effusions of the conventional love-lorn Phyllises and Chloes. Similarly the 'tame snake,' Silvius, who is satisfied to live upon a 'scattered smile' loosed now and then by his mistress, and who bears her letter to Ganymede in the fond belief that it has an angry tenor, is a parody of that true loyalty of heart which, as seen in Orlando, is no enemy to either cheerfulness or self-respect. At the end of the comedy, when they have served the dramatist's purpose, they are united in marriage like the other lovers; but this similarity of fate does not annul the contrast between the Dresden-china couple, and the true children of nature, Orlando and Rosalind.

To throw Silvius and Phebe into yet bolder relief Shakspere has set beside them one or two genuinely rustic figures, drawn probably from his personal observations in Warwickshire. Corin, the shepherd to a churlish master, had already appeared in Lodge's novel. With his primitive philosophy, that 'good pasture makes fat sheep, and that a great cause of the night is lack of the sun,' he puts to shame the extravagances of morbid fancies, and instead of sighing and weeping after the fashion of mock swains, he finds in the honest toil of a country life an abiding content: 'I earn that I eat, get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness; and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck.' He does not aspire to the refinements of a more elegant society than his own, but on the other hand he does not imagine that

the Arcadian standard of taste is to be everywhere followed: 'those that are good manners at the court, are as ridiculous in the country as the behaviour of the country is most mockable at the court.' To the same genuinely rustic species, though of coarser mould, belongs Audrey, a creation completely of the dramatist. She is, as she does not hesitate to admit, an ill-favoured thing, without any touch of the beauty in which the idyllic shepherdess is habitually arrayed. And that she is better versed in a plain country morality than in lyrical flights of passion is sufficiently proved by her inquiry what it is to be poetical. 'Is it honest in deed and word? Is it a true thing?' This bucolic simplicity delivers her completely into the hands of the artful Touchstone, for whom apparently she forsakes a former lover William.

Touchstone is another figure due to Shakspere's invention, and together with Feste he stands far above the other Fools in the comedies. He entirely lacks Feste's tender lyrical vein, and the few snatches of rhyme that fall from his lips are only jingling parodies. Feste's good humour had not been seriously ruffled even by the contemptuous ill-will of Malvolio, but Touchstone's wit takes always and with every one a caustic turn, and though he gives practical proof of his attachment to Celia by following her to the forest, he spares her with his tongue as little as the rest. Thus while, like Feste, he has to do with each of the characters in turn, he notes their special disposition, not in order to chime in with it, or to gently hint a cure for its defects, but to throw it up in all its worst lights. The acid flavour of his wit is another of the ingredients with which Shakspere tempers the lusciousness of the conventional pastoral, and his readiness to rail against both town and country goes far to keep the balance evenly swung between the two. He thus acts in some degree, as critics have pointed out, the part of 'The Chorus' in a classical play, and through the lips of a number of the characters we are expressly told that his foolery has a hidden depth of meaning. Rosalind declares that he is wiser than he is ware of; Jaques speaks of the strange places in his brain crammed with observations, which he vents in mangled forms; and the Duke asserts that he uses his folly like a stalking-horse, and under the presentation of that shoots his wit. Nothing certainly could be more effectively pointed than his ridicule of a courtier's complete vocation in the boast that he belongs to the charmed circle. 'I have a trod a measure; I have flattered a lady; I have been politic with my friend, smooth with mine enemy; I have undone three tailors; I have had four quarrels, and like to have fought one.' Thereupon follows his inimitable exposition of

the catechism of courtly quarrelling through its seven degrees, from the 'retort courteous' up to the 'lie direct,' with its tremendous consequences, unavoidable save by the help of your only peace-maker, an 'if.' We are reminded of the discreet terms of Ague-cheek's challenge to Viola, and Sir Andrew might have served as hero of Touchstone's other anecdote of the knight, who swore by his honour they were good pancakes, and the mustard was naught, and who, though he spoke the opposite of truth, was not forsworn, for he never had any honour. Love is equally unmercifully ridiculed in Touchstone's narrative of his courtship of Jane Smile, with the follies into which it led him, while his wooing of Audrey, of whom he hopes shortly to get rid, is a parody upon Silvius' protestations of eternal fidelity to Phebe. Though he makes mock of courtly etiquette, yet in his intercourse with Audrey and the other natives of Arden, he plumes himself upon his superior breeding, and it is highly diverting to see this manikin in motley posing as the apostle of refinement among boors, or, in his own phrase, as Ovid among the Goths. To have not been at court is, as he assures Corin, to be 'damned like an ill-roasted egg all on one side'; and when he introduces his rustic bride-elect to the Duke, it is with the condescending tone of a patrician who is marrying outside of his caste. 'A poor virgin, sir, an ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own.' Yet on occasion Touchstone can be less entirely supercilious towards a shepherd's life, as when he declares, 'In respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respects that it is private, it is a very vile life. Now, in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious.' This may be, as Kreyssig urges, only sublime nonsense out of which Shakspere did not intend us to draw any moral, yet it is none the less one of the cases in which Touchstone is wiser than he is ware of, and it expresses, however grotesquely, the truth that every fashion of life has its balance of pleasures and of pains.

The addition of a Fool to the personages found in the original romance is in no way surprising, but far different is it with another Shaksperean creation whom we encounter within the groves of Arden. What has the melancholy Jaques to do there, and why is he drawn with such elaborate finish? In him, from yet another and more subtle point of view, the dramatist makes war against the idea that in an idyllic life every nature will find an anodyne for its peculiar malady. Under the influences of Arcadia the unhappy may become cheer-

ful, and even the wicked may turn to good, but real sorrow and real evil imply stability of character, and a recognition of the facts and laws of life. There is one type of nature which never for a moment plants its foot on the solid rock-bed of things as they are, but which sees in existence only a constant flux of sensations after which it constantly flies. Of this type Jaques is the consummate representative, and to him Arcadia is merely a fresh field for the chase of new experiences. In men of his class the inward fever begets a corresponding physical restlessness which drives them from pole to pole in search of an elusive satisfaction—with the result of profound *ennui*. Thus it is that Jaques explains his melancholy to Rosalind, distinguishing it from all other species: 'It is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels; which, by often rumination, wraps me in a most humorous sadness.' Even Jaques' melancholy is infected by the unreality of his general attitude to life; in Dowden's words it 'is not grave and earnest, but sentimental, a self-indulgent humour, a petted foible of character, melancholy prepense and cultivated.' As he says himself, he loves it better than laughing, and it never costs him a single heartfelt sob or tear. He has experimented on life under all its phases, and this, as we gather from the Duke, has included a deep plunge into vicious pleasures; but we think of him as merely a dilettante libertine, who has gone through a course of iniquity that he may be more qualified to inveigh against the dark side of all things human. Everywhere and always he pores morbidly upon the hollow and petty phases of existence. The world to him is a stage, and nothing more: the men and women are merely players, with their exits and their entrances, mechanically regulated movements, in an ephemeral pageant. The life of man, as he pictures it, reproduces the condition of the imaginary state of nature described by Hobbes: it is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and' (in the sense that it has no outlook into the future) 'short.' From infancy to age it is a succession of contemptible 'parts,' culminating in 'mere oblivion,' when man dwindles to a very cypher, 'sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.' It is natural that this world-wearied moralist, compact of jars, should shun the society of his fellows, and thus Jaques avoids the Duke, and curtly severs company with Orlando. But however deeply he plunges into the forest glade, he carries with him his inexhaustible curiosity and faculty for squandering unsubstantial sentiment, and these he sates upon the spectacle of the wounded deer. Its sobs draw from him tears; but there is an acid

humour mingled with the drops, for while he weeps, he moralizes the incident into a thousand similes wherewith

> 'Most invectively he pierceth through
> The body of the country, city, court.'

Such capricious tears have their natural counterpart in equally capricious laughter, and thus Jaques when he meets with Touchstone bubbles over with ecstatic glee. 'A fool, a fool! I met a fool in the forest!' And when the fool begins to moralize, the delicious incongruity of the affair so tickles Jaques that he crows like a chanticleer, an hour by the dial. It is, at bottom, the same passion for whatever is unusual and piquant that drives him later to seek out Duke Frederick, who, through the combined influences of the air of Arden and the counsel of an old religious man, undergoes a miraculously swift conversion. All is fish, to use the homely phrase, that comes to the net of the sentimentalist, but the meshes are so wide that they cannot hold their booty long. Thus we leave the melancholy man in eternal pursuit of ever fugitive phantoms of joy and truth; and while we linger for a last moment on the outskirts of Arden, with the 'hey ding a ding, ding' of the birds in our ear, from the depth of the forest glades shrills Jaques' mocking cry, '*Ich auch in Arkadien.*'

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROBLEM-PLAYS

THE opening of the seventeenth century coincides almost exactly with a sharp turning-point in Shakspere's dramatic career. On one side of the year 1601 lie comedies of matchless charm and radiance, and histories which are half comedies. On the other appear plays, in which historical matter is given a tragic setting, or in which comedy for the most part takes the grim form of dramatic satire. The change has been compared to the passage from a sunny charming landscape to a wild mountain-district whose highest peaks are shrouded in thick mist. The causes of this startling alteration in the poet's mood are, as has been shown, in great measure obscure. He was in the full tide of outward prosperity, and though his father died in 1601, this event could not have brought a keener pang than the loss of his only son in 1596, which seems to have left no shadow on his work. The Sonnets, with their record of mental anguish and disillusion, give a partial clue, but it must be acknowledged that the evidences of date tend to place the estrangement between Shakspere and Will during the period of the brightest comedies, and their reconciliation just before the production of the graver plays. Another cause that has been suggested for the dramatist's change from gaiety to gloom, is the failure of the conspiracy of Essex, followed by the execution of the Earl and the imprisonment of Shakspere's friend Southampton. To this we might find a parallel in Spenser's *Complaints*, whose pessimistic tone is largely due to his grief at the death of Sidney and Leicester. It can scarcely be a mere coincidence that *Julius Caesar* immediately follows the Earl's tragic end, and it is remarkable that most of the plays which with more or less warrant may be assigned to the last three years of Elizabeth's reign, contain painful studies of the weakness, levity, and unbridled passion of young men. This is especially the case with *All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida,* and *Hamlet.* The last-named play is, of course, distinguished from the others by its tragic ending, but it is akin to them in its general temper and atmosphere. All these dramas introduce us into highly artificial societies, whose civilization is ripe unto rottenness. Amidst such media abnormal conditions of brain and of emotion are generated, and intricate cases o

conscience demand a solution by unprecedented methods. Thus throughout these plays we move along dim untrodden paths, and at the close our feeling is neither of simple joy nor pain; we are excited, fascinated, perplexed, for the issues raised preclude a completely satisfactory outcome, even when, as in *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure,* the complications are outwardly adjusted in the fifth act. In *Troilus and Cressida* and *Hamlet* no such partial settlement of difficulties takes place, and we are left to interpret their enigmas as best we may. Dramas so singular in theme and temper cannot be strictly called comedies or tragedies. We may therefore borrow a convenient phrase from the theatre of to-day and class them together as Shakspere's problem-plays.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL is probably the earliest of this group[1], and may be conjecturally dated about 1601-2. The source of the play is Boccaccio's novel of *Giglietta di Nerbona,* which had been translated by Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure.* Here, as in other cases, notably *The Merchant of Venice,* Shakspere seems to have been attracted by the problem of working back from a traditional plot, full of anomalous incidents, to the motives that would render such incidents possible, or even probable. This he accomplishes in two ways: by giving to the puppet-like figures of the original story the special type of heart and brain from which certain actions necessarily flow, and by adding new characters who stand in some vital relation, whether of analogy or of contrast, to the central theme. Thus in the play before us, the hero, the heroine, and the King of France are taken from Boccaccio's tale, while the Countess of

1 The play first appears in the folio, and we have only internal evidences to go on. The percentage of double endings (20) points to the date mentioned above, as do a number of minor resemblances to *Hamlet* (e.g. the Countess' precepts to her son on his departure to Paris recall those of Polonius to Laertes; Hamlet calls Denmark 'a prison,' Parolles calls France 'a stable,' a 'dog-hole.') The only feature that seems to suggest an earlier date is the occurrence in the dialogue of numerous rhymed passages, some of them of considerable length, e.g. I. i. 231-244; II. i. 133-213; and II iii 78-111 and 132-151. On the strength of such passages, and some minor links with *Love's Labour's Lost,* many critics have supposed that *All's Well* is a recast of an earlier play, probably *Love's Labour's Won,* mentioned by Meres in 1598. This theory has been stated in its most positive form by Fleay (*New Shaks. Soc Trans* 1874) But Hertzberg, in his introduction to the German Shakspere Society's edition of Schlegel and Tieck's translation, contends that this view is false. He identifies (as already stated) *Love's Labour's Won* with *The Taming of the Shrew,* and argues that *All's Well* was entirely written at one period, sometime between 1600 and 1603. He shows with great force that the rhyming lines, like the rest of the play, have often the break in the sense in the middle of the verse, instead of at the end, and that their frequently harsh rhythm and elliptical construction are quite different from the smooth, transparent couplets of the early comedies. He might have added that the rhyming lines occur chiefly, according to a familiar usage in Shakspere, in passages of sententious reflection, or of interchange of repartee, as between Helena and the king. Another consideration which deserves more weight than is generally given to it, is that Shakspere, in his first joyous period, would scarcely have handled a theme with such sombre features as the plot of *All's Well.* I therefore incline to Hertzberg's view, while admitting that the question has not been quite conclusively settled Elze, in his interesting essay on the play, gives up all attempt to fix the date.

Roussillon, Parolles, Lafeu, and the Clown are inventions of the poet.

It was in the character of Helena, or Giglietta, as she is called in the romance, that Shakspere, as Elze has well brought out, found the chief temptation to dramatize the story. From his conception of this leading figure everything else springs by strict psychological necessity. The problem was to turn a woman, who in the novel is merely an adventuress, into an ideal of feminine strength and devotion, capable of saving the man she loves from the consequences of a nature at once stubborn and volatile. Thus Shakspere here treats the same subject as in *The Taming of the Shrew*, but with the parts reversed. There the man of firm will by heroic remedies forms a wayward girl into a devoted wife: here a woman of similar mould by remedies still more heroic shapes a husband of potential excellence out of a headstrong youth. In the one case we have a wellnigh burlesque handling of the natural relation between the sexes: in the other an abnormal relation is prevented from becoming repulsive by being elevated almost into the tragic sphere.

Helena in the drama, as in the novel, is the child of Gerard de Narbon, physician to the Count of Roussillon, who on her father's death had reared her as a foster-daughter along with his own son Bertram. The Count has himself just died, and Bertram, who is now left in ward to the French king, is setting forth for the Court at Paris. Of the tears shed at his departure, the bitterest flow from the eyes of Helena, who has formed a deep, silent love for her early playmate. This love is rooted in humility. The poor dependant—for Shakspere has rightly made Helena poor instead of rich, as in the novel—looks up to the scion of the great feudal house as a being of another sphere:

> 'It were all one
> That I should love a bright particular star
> And think to wed it, he is so above me.'

The imagery that she uses in speaking of their relation is borrowe from the most abject forms of worship:

> 'Now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy
> Must sanctify his relics;'

and again,

> 'Indian-like
> Religious in mine error, I adore
> The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
> But knows of him no more.'

Similarly she compares herself to the hind that would be mated to the lion, and whose fate is to die for love. The very existence of her passion needs an apology, 'It hurts not him that he is loved of me.' Her highest gratification has been the bitter-sweet indulgence of gazing constantly upon her heart's idol—so near her and yet so infinitely removed. ''Twas pretty, though a plague, to see him every hour.' Thus Shakspere has emphasized the womanly self-abasement of Helena to a degree where it borders on servility, in order to prove that, in her own words, she does not 'follow him with any token of presumptuous suit,' but with the sacred zeal of a divine mission. Her penetrating insight has revealed to her that there are spots in the sun that she so ardently worships, and she fears that in the 'learning-place' of the court they may grow bigger and darker. She feels within herself, humble though she be, a power to arrest that growth, and for this she is eager to spend herself to the utmost. Nothing is further from her mind than her own worldly advancement:

> 'My master, my dear lord he is: and I
> His servant live, and will his vassal die.'

But the dramatist has hit upon a device for convincing us of Helena's single-mindedness far more effective than any sentiments from her own lips. A mother has proverbially the quickest eye for spying out a design against her son's happiness, and is the severest critic of any claimant to the love that has hitherto been hers alone. Thus our sympathies are warmly aroused in Helena's favour when we find that she is loved by the Countess of Rousillon, as if she were her own child. The Countess, who is purely a creation of Shakspere, is the most engaging type of French character that he has drawn. She is, in the very best sense, a *grande dame* of the *ancien régime.* She has the aristocratic virtues without their defects. Her rich experience of life has taught her valuable lessons, in which she schools her son before he plunges into the temptations of the Court. To a high-bred graciousness of speech and bearing, she unites that dislike of outward emotional display, that repose of manner which stamps her caste. She has felt too many 'quirks of joy and grief' to be readily demonstrative, but her sympathies are wonderfully keen and alert; she is one of the women who never break with the memory of their own past, and who thus, with the silvered hair and the faded cheek, preserve the secret of perpetual youth. She had long half divined Helena's secret, and when she gets

accidental confirmation of it, she is stirred by the deepest fellow-feeling:

'Even so was it with me when I was young:
If ever we are nature's, these are ours; this thorn
Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong;
Our blood to us, this to our blood is born:
It is the show and seal of nature's truth,
Where love's strong passion is impress'd in youth:
By our remembrances of days foregone,
Such were our faults; or then we thought them none.'

The woman who is unassailable by the deadening influences of old age is equally proof against the exclusive spirit of exalted rank. She knows the sterling worth of the girl reared under her own eye, and she recognizes in her, in spite of the difference in station, the fittest bride for her son. She forces her into a shamefaced avowal of her passion, and smooths the way for the enterprise by which she seeks to win him in his own interest. Gervinus however, in his desire to emphasize the difference between Helena and the scheming Giglietta of the novel, goes too far when he asserts that it is the Countess who first suggests to the girl the idea of making her journey to Paris for the cure of the invalid king, a means to the acquisition of Bertram. Helena avows with absolute candour:

'My lord your son made me to think of this;
Else Paris, and the medicine, and the king,
Had from the conversation of my thoughts
Haply been absent then.'

She is not, in the bad sense, a schemer, but, on the other hand, she is no idle waiter upon Providence, and she seizes, now and hereafter, with tactical promptitude, upon the chances thrown in her way. Hers is the deliberate creed of self-help, specially appropriate on the lips of an orphan:

'Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to Heaven: the fated sky
Gives us free scope; only, doth backward pull
Our slow designs, when we ourselves are dull.'

The healing of the king's body is evidently intended by Shakspere to foreshadow the healing of Bertram's spirit. In both cases the patient is unwilling to submit to the cure; in both Helena prevails by her profound conviction of a heaven-sent mission, and by the sacrificial ardour that is ready to stake life itself. To such a nature the end sanctifies the means, and Shakspere, with dramatic consistency, makes Helena bluntly demand a husband in return for her

services, though in the novel the offer of this reward comes from the king. But, on the other hand, the strangeness of the situation, where the woman chooses her life-partner from among the young nobles at the Court, is tempered by a number of subtle touches. We see the disappointment of lord after lord as she passes them by, and we hear the muttered complaints of the experienced Lafeu that he is too old to take his chance with the rest. We get a further hint of the spirit in which Helena is acting from the words which she addresses to one of the lords:

> 'Be not afraid that I your hand should take,
> I'll never do you wrong for your own sake.'

If she is about to do a wrong in the sense of making an unnatural claim, it is to be for the benefit of the person seemingly injured. And this is yet more directly stated when she pauses before Bertram:

> 'I dare not say, I take you: but I give
> Me and my service, ever whilst I live
> Into your guiding power.—This is the man.'

Thus at the supreme moment when she claims Bertram for her own, Helena repeats that she offers him 'service.' She has already spoken of herself to the Countess as his 'servant' and 'vassal.' These words are not to be taken merely as metaphors. United to the semi-religious element in Helena's mission, there is another which may easily be overlooked, as it is foreign to modern ideas. She feels throughout that as a dependant of the great house she stands in a feudal relation to Bertram, and that in return for the protection extended to her, she owes him, in the technical sense, 'service.' Here once again Shakspere uses for dramatic purposes a distinctively mediaeval conception, and Gervinus misses this point when he asserts that 'the difference of blood and rank has no importance for Helena.' It would be truer to say that she never forgets it, and that the spirit of her relation to Bertram is almost identical with that of the lowly Griseldis to Count Walter, though in the one case service is shown by passive endurance, and in the other by strenuous action. Indeed, as soon as Helena has won Bertram's hand, she sinks back into a slavish submission to his authority, unparalleled save by Count Walter's bride. She obeys his cruel orders without a murmur, and departs homeward unkissed. His curt and icy letter decreeing eternal separation between them till seemingly hopeless conditions are fulfilled, wrings from her only a few sharp twitches of pain, 'This is a beautiful sentence,' and ''Tis bitter.'

Unlike the Giglietta of Boccaccio she does not at once begin to consider how these conditions may be met. The thought that drowns all others is that through her Bertram has been driven to the Italian wars, where he is in danger of his life. Once more she must sacrifice herself for his sake, and fly the home to which he will not return while she is there. It is appropriate to her religious nature that her flight should take the form of a pilgrimage, though with the lurking hope that some means of deliverance may be forthcoming, she breaks her journey at Florence. Here Bertram's infatuation for Diana, the daughter of her hostess, enables her in the most unforeseen fashion to comply with his conditions. Once again she seizes with swift decision the opportunity placed in her way; once again she does Bertram 'wrong for his own sake,' by this plan which, in her own words,

> 'Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed,
> And lawful meaning in a lawful act,
> Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact.'

She achieves her object, and her husband, with a cry for pardon and promise of stedfast love, throws himself at her feet. Thus 'all ends well,' and we feel that Helena deserves her triumph, yet her fortunes do not awaken our keenest sympathies, like those of Portia, Viola, and Rosalind. Coleridge has called her 'the loveliest of Shakspere's women,' but no chorus of general acclaim echoes the critic's judgement. Helena exercises over the majority of readers a less powerful charm than over the personages in the play. She lacks the superb air of distinction which stamps other of Shakspere's heroines. She is, to say the truth, in the eyes of a generation unfamiliar with her feudal doctrine of service, a trifle *bourgeoise*. She has all the virtues of the missionary type of character, the courage, the self-sacrifice, the faith that moves mountains. But what her nature thus gains in intensity it loses in breadth. She is Puritan in her poverty of interests and of culture, and in her narrow concentration upon a single aim. Shakspere achieved a triumph in making the woman who had to play so strange a part entirely worthy of our admiration, but even he could not gain for her our love.

The character of Helena necessarily determines that of Bertram. A man grown to maturity, schooled, for good or for evil, in the ways of the world, could not have been moulded by a girl. Bertram is little more than a boy, on the threshold of life's responsibilities and [illegible] been in his favour. His

mother's character we know, and the king gives an equally attractive picture of his dead father. From him Bertram inherits 'his arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls,' as well as his valour and passion for material glory. It speaks well for him that the novel attractions of the court should not temper his impatience at being held back from the Italian campaign:

> 'I shall stay here,
> Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry,
> Till honour be bought up, and no sword worn,
> But one to dance with.'

But this high spirit has another, less worthy side, in Bertram's pride of birth, wherein he differs as far as possible from his parents. Youth is always apt to judge by externals, and the heir to material advantages of rank and wealth is easily blinded to the value of the less concrete treasures of the mind and heart. Love as a rule is the first influence to bring a clearer vision, and love is to Bertram as yet unknown[1]. It is this haughty, hot-blooded boy who now by the arbitrary fiat of the king finds himself constrained to take to wife a woman, separated from him by caste, robbed by familiarity of the magical charm of the unknown, and whose very claim to his hand violates the elementary relations of man and woman. So gross is this invasion of primary personal right that our sympathies lean strongly to Bertram's side. But once again it is needful to remember that the story moves in a semi-mediaeval atmosphere, and that feudalism did not recognize the claims of the individual in the same degree as modern theories of life. The king had the power of regulating the marriage of his wards, and Bertram's disobedience to his command would have far less warrant then than now. Moreover there is an unworthy element of mere class-pride in his disdainful rejection of Helena, which merits and receives severe rebuke from his sovereign's lips:

> 'From lowest place when virtuous things proceed,
> The place is dignified by the doer's deed:
> When great additions swell's, and virtue none,
> It is a dropsied honour. Good alone
> Is good without a name: vileness is so:
> The property by what it is should go,
> Not by the title.'

Thus here, as so often, Shakspere contrasts external show with real

[1] The theory of Hertzberg, founded upon an obscure passage in the fifth act, that Bertram is attached to Maudlin, the daughter of Lafeu, is, as Elze has conclusively shown, quite untenable. Apart from the other difficulties which it would raise, it is disproved by the conduct of Lafeu himself, who could never have been so enthusiastic about a woman who was robbing his daughter of her lover.

worth, and it is beyond question that partician scorn of lowly merit aroused in him the poet's 'scorn of scorn.' But it is inconsistent with all that we know of him personally, and with the general tone of his writings, to suppose that he had modern doctrinaire views about the equality of all men, or that the play before us is intended as a protest against social distinctions. The whole attitude of Helena, as we conceive of it, is based upon the recognition of the difference in rank between herself and Bertram. Moreover the king's enforcement of an arbitrary right is by no means in accord with democratic ideas, nor is his further exercise of prerogative in ennobling Helena on the spur of the moment. If any social doctrine is to be drawn from the scene it is that all men are equal—before the throne, which indeed was the view of the Tudor sovereigns.

That even after Helena's elevation Bertram will not consent to be her husband, save in name, proves that class-pride is not his only reason for rejecting her. From the insufferable prospect of 'the dark house and the detested wife' he flies with Parolles to the Italian wars. His native bravery gains him brilliant distinction on the battlefield, but he is led away by his worthless companion into the coarsest sensual pleasures. The family pride, which had stood in the way of his union with Helena, is trampled under foot at the demand of 'the important blood,' and the ancestral ring denied to his wife is granted to a paramour:

> 'Here, take my ring:
> Mine house, mine honour; yea, my life be thine,
> And I'll be bid by thee.'

By his surrender he forfeits the right to further urge the claims of rank against Helena, and it is in the strictest poetic justice that he should in this very way enable her to fulfil the conditions that he has imposed upon her. At the same time he learns from his mother that Helena is dead, and the news, accompanied by the Countess' reproofs, affects him strongly. We are told that on the reading of the letter 'he changed almost into another man.' Yet there is little proof of this in the concluding scene of the play. His military services, backed by letters of recommendation from the Duke of Florence, have regained him the favour of the king, who is about to give him in marriage to Lafeu's daughter. But the ring which he unwittingly has received from Helena suddenly rises in witness against him, and to screen himself he lies unblushingly. Then follows Diana's accusation, which he meets with further lies, and the result is that the king, who throughout the play acts with despotic

impetuosity, orders Diana to prison, and Bertram to be seized on suspicion of Helena's murder. The Count's over-ingenious devices recoil upon his own head, and when, at the height of the mystification, Helena herself appears, Bertram may well hail her as a deliverer. The dramatic entanglement in this scene is highly ingenious—more so than has been generally recognized—and it no doubt appealed strongly to the peculiar Elizabethan delight in 'mistaken identity.' But psychologically the treatment is very unsatisfactory. Bertram, with his sins of lust and lying still green upon him, without penance or repentance, vows eternal fidelity to Helena, and on this brittle foundation we must build our trust that 'all ends well.' Once again Shakspere reminds us that there is no situation which he handles so crudely as the reunion between an injured woman and her faithless lover or husband.

The most favourable omen for the future is that Bertram has learnt the worthless character of his evil genius Parolles. This personage of Shakspere's creation is introduced as the complete contrast to Helena, and as a foil, in certain respects, to Bertram. The heroine proves her quality throughout by deeds; Parolles, as his name implies, is the empty spinner of words. He is another variation on the type of the *Miles Gloriosus,* which the Elizabethan drama borrowed from Roman comedy. Don Armado, Pistol, and, from one point of view, Falstaff, all belong to the species, as well as the Bobadil and Tucca of Ben Jonson, and the Bessus of Beaumont and Fletcher. In Parolles we have the consummate union of the braggart and another classical type, the parasite. He thus is a product of the comedy of manners, and is far more nearly akin to Pistol, that strange offshoot of the comedy of humours, than to Falstaff who, in his deepest essence, is a profoundly serious rather than merely humorous figure. From the vagueness of outline of the mere type Parolles is delivered by a strong dash of national colour. As the Countess is the noblest of Shakspere's French creations, Parolles is the vilest. The Dauphin and Orleans in *Henry V* are caricatures of true chivalry, but even a caricature retains a distorted trace of likeness to its original, which is utterly wanting in this liar, pandar, and sneak. A superficial showiness and glib volubility are the capital elements of his slender stock in trade. By most of those who come near him, this 'window of lattice' is seen through at a glance. Helena knows his 'fixed evils,' though her passion for Bertram makes her tender to them. The Florentine women hiss out in the open street their curses upon this 'vile rascal,' this 'jack-an-apes with scarves.' The sharp-sighted Lafeu—and indeed it is the chief reason

for his presence in the play—never tires of covering him with 'most egregious indignity.' 'I did think thee for two ordinaries to be a pretty wise fellow: thou didst make tolerable vent of thy travel: it might pass: yet the scarfs and bannerets about thee, did manifoldly dissuade me from believing thee a vessel of too great a burden.' He warns Bertram that 'there can be no kernel in this light nut: the soul of this man is in his clothes.' But it neither wants the instinct of a woman nor the trained sagacity of a statesman to see through this dressed-up impostor. The French lords, his companions-in-arms, have found him out to be a 'hilding,' a 'bubble,' 'a most notable coward, an infinite and endless liar, a hourly promise-breaker.' It is they who prepare the stratagem for exposing him in his true colours before Bertram, who alone has been dazzled by the garish trappings of this pretender, this 'gallant militarist that had the whole theoric of war in the knot of his scarf and the practice in the chape of his dagger.' The exposure is so overwhelming in its merciless completeness that laughter is stifled at its source by the sting of shame at the spectacle of humanity wallowing in such a slough of mud. Truth, military honour, patriotism, friendship, are all sacrificed with equal readiness in order that Parolles may keep a whole skin. It is the complete realization of the Roman satirist's ideal of infamy, *propter vitam vivendi perdere causas,* and it finds its climax in the dastardly cry, 'Let me live, sir, in a dungeon, i' the stocks, or anywhere, so I may live.' A last touch is added, after the trick has been revealed, in the caitiff's deadness to his shame:

> 'Yet am I thankful: if my heart were great
> 'Twould burst at this. Captain I'll be no more;
> But I will eat and drink, and sleep as soft
> As captain shall: simply the thing I am
> Shall make me live.
> Rust, sword! cool, blushes! and Parolles, live
> Safest in shame!'

The tartness of scenes such as these is not tempered by comedy of sweeter flavour. The clown Lavache is one of Shakspere's most insipid jesters, and his coarse jokes about women and marriage are scarcely suitable to the ears of the stately and virtuous Countess. Yet he lets drop a phrase which Dowden has happily chosen as a motto for the play, 'That man should be at woman's command, and yet no hurt done!'

MEASURE FOR MEASURE, which first appeared in the folio of 1623, may be conjecturally assigned to about 1604. The revival in that year of a statute, which punished with death any divorced person

who married again while his or her former husband or wife was living, is strikingly akin to the incident with which the play opens. According to an ingenious theory of Malone, two passages, Act i. 2. 67-72 and ii. 4. 27-31, are intended as a 'courtly apology for King James I's stately and ungracious demeanour on his entry into England,' which gave great offence to a people accustomed to the Tudor *bonhommie*. The date to which these references seem to point is supported by internal evidence. The perfect balance between thought and language, which marks the final group of historical plays and the joyous comedies, is replaced by a compression of style which often makes the rhythm harsh and sense obscure. The play has practically the same percentage of lines with double ending as *All's Well* (21), but is without the rhyming passages distinctive of that work. As in *All's Well*, we have the rescue of a brother by a sister, though Shakspere shows his usual skill in producing variations. The tie is here one of blood, not of adoption, and it is physical instead of moral death from which the strong-willed woman delivers the weak man. The repulsive instance of mistaken identity, which gave Helena to the arms of Bertram instead of Diana, is repeated in the case of Mariana and Isabella, although in the source from which Shakspere took the plot of *Measure for Measure* there is no suggestion of this device. With *Hamlet* the play is linked by its deeply reflective tone, its brooding sense of the pollution spread by lust in the single soul and in society at large, and the shivering recoil of the man of phantasies from the mystery of the unknown hereafter. Claudio's gloomy meditations on death sound like an echo from the soliloquies of the Danish Prince. It is this wealth of philosophic thought, this concern with the deepest issues of life here and beyond the grave, that give the play a massive weight which the original framework of plot might well have seemed too slight to bear.

The story was first told by the Italian novelist Cinthio in his *Hecatomithi*. There Ludovico is sentenced to death for seduction by Juriste, the Emperor's deputy in Innspruck. Ludovico's sister Exitia pleads for his life, and the deputy becoming enamoured of her, succeeds, by a promise of marriage and pardon to her brother, in making her yield to his desires. He thereupon violates his double pledge, but the lady appeals to the Emperor, who forces Juriste marry her and then condemns him to death. At Exitia's intercession however he is pardoned, and henceforward lives a reformed life. This story was dramatized in 1578 by George Whetstone in his *Promos and Cassandra*. Whetstone's play was in two parts, containing ten Acts, of which the first five deal with the iniquity of the deputy, and

the latter with its discovery by the king, who now first appears in person. The work was written in a curious medley of metres, from ballad-lines to blank verse, and, besides introducing a comic underplot from low life, it modified the original story. The brother, here called Andrugio, is not executed, but set at liberty by the governor of the prison, who sends the head of a criminal in his place. Thus, when the lady marries the deputy at the close of the play, we are spared the revolting spectacle of a heroine's union, not only with her own seducer, but with her brother's judicial murderer.

This grim use of mistaken identity to save the brother's life may have suggested to Shakspere another more repulsive use of the same device to save the sister's honour. Hence the introduction in *Measure for Measure* of Mariana, whose relation to Angelo further serves to throw a strong light upon the deputy's character. Besides this cardinal change the dramatist made a number of minor alterations, all adding to the plausibility and moral significance of the plot. Yet in spite of these improvements, *Measure for Measure* has never won the suffrages of the majority of readers, and has been condemned by a number of critics, including Coleridge, who calls it 'the most painful—say, rather, the only painful—part' of Shakspere's genuine works, and who speaks of the comic scenes as disgusting, the tragic as horrible. Such criticism, besides entirely passing over the wonderful technical skill which has smoothed away most of the difficulties in peculiarly stubborn materials. is grossly unjust to the spirit of the play. Such epithets as 'disgusting' and 'horrible' can only be fairly applied to scenes which violate aesthetic decencies from sheer love of the foul or the barbarous. In *Measure for Measure,* though undeniably strong meat is served up, the most repulsive details have all their place in the general scheme, which is indisputably noble, while numberless lustrous shafts of poetry and thought pierce the sombre atmosphere in which the action moves.

The general effect of that atmosphere has been vividly caught by Watkiss Lloyd in an otherwise singularly inappreciative study of the play: 'We never get into the free, open, joyous atmosphere so invigorating in other works of Shakspere: the oppressive gloom of the prison, the foul breath of the brothel, are only exchanged for the chilly damp of conventual walls or the oppressive retirement of the monastery.' Vienna, wither Shakspere shifts the scene, is, as here portrayed, a city of dreadful night, wherein

> 'Corruption boils and bubbles
> Till it o'errun the stew.'

Lust holds its shameless saturnalia in the open, and society is perishing of inward corruption. Beneath the mild sway of a shy, meditative ruler, animal instincts have broken loose in uncurbed riot. For fourteen years the 'strict statutes and most biting laws' designed for the restraint of these evils have been let sleep. Justice, like the rod hung up in the child's sight, but never used, is mocked at rather than feared; liberty plucks it by the nose; the law is as a scarecrow, which has kept one shape so long that it has become a perch for the birds of prey, instead of their terror. The Duke's sluggish temperament has at length been aroused to the gigantic proportions of the disease, and he determines to set the rusty machinery of the law once more in motion. But with the sensitiveness of a finely-strung nature he shrinks from the tyranny of rigorously punishing sins to which his own laxity had granted a 'permissive pass,' and he withdraws for a time into seclusion, whence, in the disguise of a friar, he can watch the progress of events. The Duke's scruples, as he himself confesses, are not his only, perhaps not his chief, motive for this retirement. Otherwise it would have sufficed to appoint as his deputy the experienced and capable Escalus, who has the prior claim to this office. But 'with a leavened and prepared choice' he gives the first place on the commission to a younger man, Angelo, and we gradually realize that the desire to test this man's character has at least as much to do with the Duke's strange course as his dislike of inconsistency. Angelo is the product of an age of licence—generated by a process of recoil. In this mediaevel Sodom he is determined that there shall be at least one righteous man. While others dally along the primrose path, he walks straight on in the narrow way. He subdues the flesh by a system of penitential discipline, and even libertines, who do not hesitate to talk scandal of the Duke, admit that Angelo is

> 'A man whose blood
> Is very snow-broth; one who never feels
> The wanton stings and motions of the sense,
> But doth rebate and blunt his natural edge
> With profits of the mind, study and fast.'

Escalus is the spokesman of public opinion when he asserts that Angelo is worthy beyond all others to fill the office of deputy. But the deep-sighted Duke is suspicious of virtue so entirely self-concentrated, and there is a flavour of irony in the solemn address with which he prefaces the appointment:

the latter with its discovery by the king, who now first appears in person. The work was written in a curious medley of metres, from ballad-lines to blank verse, and, besides introducing a comic under-plot from low life, it modified the original story. The brother, here called Andrugio, is not executed, but set at liberty by the governor of the prison, who sends the head of a criminal in his place. Thus, when the lady marries the deputy at the close of the play, we are spared the revolting spectacle of a heroine's union, not only with her own seducer, but with her brother's judicial murderer.

This grim use of mistaken identity to save the brother's life may have suggested to Shakspere another more repulsive use of the same device to save the sister's honour. Hence the introduction in *Measure for Measure* of Mariana, whose relation to Angelo further serves to throw a strong light upon the deputy's character. Besides this cardinal change the dramatist made a number of minor alterations, all adding to the plausibility and moral significance of the plot. Yet in spite of these improvements, *Measure for Measure* has never won the suffrages of the majority of readers, and has been condemned by a number of critics, including Coleridge, who calls it 'the most painful—say, rather, the only painful—part' of Shakspere's genuine works, and who speaks of the comic scenes as disgusting, the tragic as horrible. Such criticism, besides entirely passing over the wonderful technical skill which has smoothed away most of the difficulties in peculiarly stubborn materials, is grossly unjust to the spirit of the play. Such epithets as 'disgusting' and 'horrible' can only be fairly applied to scenes which violate aesthetic decencies from sheer love of the foul or the barbarous. In *Measure for Measure,* though undeniably strong meat is served up, the most repulsive details have all their place in the general scheme, which is indisputably noble, while numberless lustrous shafts of poetry and thought pierce the sombre atmosphere in which the action moves.

The general effect of that atmosphere has been vividly caught by Watkiss Lloyd in an otherwise singularly inappreciative study of the play: 'We never get into the free, open, joyous atmosphere so invigorating in other works of Shakspere: the oppressive gloom of the prison, the foul breath of the brothel, are only exchanged for the chilly damp of conventual walls or the oppressive retirement of the monastery.' Vienna, wither Shakspere shifts the scene, is, as here portrayed, a city of dreadful night, wherein

> 'Corruption boils and bubbles
> Till it o'errun the stew.'

Lust holds its shameless saturnalia in the open, and society is perishing of inward corruption. Beneath the mild sway of a shy, meditative ruler, animal instincts have broken loose in uncurbed riot. For fourteen years the 'strict statutes and most biting laws' designed for the restraint of these evils have been let sleep. Justice, like the rod hung up in the child's sight, but never used, is mocked at rather than feared; liberty plucks it by the nose; the law is as a scarecrow, which has kept one shape so long that it has become a perch for the birds of prey, instead of their terror. The Duke's sluggish temperament has at length been aroused to the gigantic proportions of the disease, and he determines to set the rusty machinery of the law once more in motion. But with the sensitiveness of a finely-strung nature he shrinks from the tyranny of rigorously punishing sins to which his own laxity had granted a 'permissive pass,' and he withdraws for a time into seclusion, whence, in the disguise of a friar, he can watch the progress of events. The Duke's scruples, as he himself confesses, are not his only, perhaps not his chief, motive for this retirement. Otherwise it would have sufficed to appoint as his deputy the experienced and capable Escalus, who has the prior claim to this office. But 'with a leavened and prepared choice' he gives the first place on the commission to a younger man, Angelo, and we gradually realize that the desire to test this man's character has at least as much to do with the Duke's strange course as his dislike of inconsistency. Angelo is the product of an age of licence—generated by a process of recoil. In this mediaevel Sodom he is determined that there shall be at least one righteous man. While others dally along the primrose path, he walks straight on in the narrow way. He subdues the flesh by a system of penitential discipline, and even libertines, who do not hesitate to talk scandal of the Duke, admit that Angelo is

> 'A man whose blood
> Is very snow-broth; one who never feels
> The wanton stings and motions of the sense,
> But doth rebate and blunt his natural edge
> With profits of the mind, study and fast.'

Escalus is the spokesman of public opinion when he asserts that Angelo is worthy beyond all others to fill the office of deputy. But the deep-sighted Duke is suspicious of virtue so entirely self-concentrated, and there is a flavour of irony in the solemn address with which he prefaces the appointment:

> 'Angelo . . . thyself and thy belongings
> Are not thine own so proper, as to waste
> Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee.
> Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
> Not light them for themselves: for if our virtues
> Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
> As if we had them not.'

And the Duke's distrust of this precisian, who thanks God that he is not as other men are, yet values above all things his reputation in their eyes, is more explicitly avowed to Friar Thomas:

> 'Lord Angelo scarce confesses
> That his blood flows, or that his appetite
> Is more to bread than stone: hence shall we see,
> If power change purpose, what our seemers be.'

The Duke thus acts on the principle of the Greek proverb, ἀρχὴ δείξει ἄνδρα, but his deputy's private life has already given a significant hint of what may be looked for from him in his wider sphere. He had been affianced to Mariana, sister of the great soldier Fredrick, but between the time of contract and the appointed day of nuptial, Fredrick had been lost at sea, and with him had gone down Mariana's dowry. Whereupon this 'well-seeming Angelo,' pretending discoveries of dishonour in her, had swallowed all his vows and left her in her tears. The virtue which does not shrink from cold-blooded treachery may well be suspect, and is deservedly exposed to the searching ordeal of irresponsible sway.

The moment Angelo feels the sword of justice in his grasp he proves to the world that it is no longer to be borne in vain. The 'drowsy and neglected act' punishing immorality with death is revived. The officers of justice hale with new-born zeal suspected offenders before the deputy and his colleague. Draconian severity is substituted for the laxity of the previous *régime*. Yet the results of this rigid censorship are decidedly equivocal. While the suburban dens of iniquity are demolished, those in the city are allowed to 'stand for seed,' because 'a wise burgher put in for them.' It is the opinion of experts that the sin aimed at will not be 'extirped till eating and drinking be put down,' and that if men lose their heads for it, in ten years there will be wanted a commission for more heads. Moreover there are divided counsels on the judgement-seat, as appears in the examination of Froth and the disreputable clown Pompey. Angelo, irritated by the blundering charge of constable Elbow, who is evidently next of kin to Dogberry, and by the realistic circumlocution of Pompey's defence, hurries abruptly away, with the grim wish that his colleagues may find good cause to whip them all. Escalus conti-

nues the investigation with imperturbable patience and good humour. He laughs at Elbow's mistakes, pulls Pompey up short in his long-winded digressions, by concise, leading questions, scans Froth narrowly for signs of his character, and in the end delivers an impartial but merciful judgement. Froth is discharged with a few kindly words of caution, Pompey is threatened with a whipping should he appear at the bar again, and the constable, whose own private life has proved not to be beyond reproach, is warned that it would be advisable for him to pass on his office to some other sufficient man in his ward.

This divergent conception which Angelo and Escalus hold of their duties is yet more clearly illustrated in the case of a more highly-placed offender, Claudio. With deliberate distinctness, which hasty reading must not be allowed to blur, Shakspere has set forth the circumstances which bring this young man, who in Whetstone's version was an ordinary libertine, within the scope of the terrible statute. He had been contracted to Juliet, and had lived with her as his wife, though the outward form of marriage had been postponed, because Juliet's dowry remained in the coffer of her friends, whose favour had yet to be gained for the union. A contracted couple, from the Elizabethan point of view, were looked upon as joined in wedlock, and thus Claudio's sin was merely one in name. Moreover—and it is one of the dramatist's most subtle and original uses of parallelism—Claudio's relation to Juliet had been almost of a piece with that of Angelo to Mariana. But where the one had for worldly reasons left his already affianced bride in the lurch, the other with generous impetousity had preferred disregard of an outward form to heartless desertion. Thus Claudio's transgression is in itself most venial, and Angelo is the last man justified in visiting it with condign penalties. The humane Escalus pleads the mitigating effect of circumstances, the infirmity of human nature, the unsullied record of Claudio's house. He upholds that the true function of law is to cure, not to destroy, to 'rather cut a little than fall and bruise to death.' But Angelo is remorseless. He is the consummate type of the martinet official whose circle of vision is bounded by the narrow horizon of his department, who drives a code mercilessly through the delicately complex mechanism of society, and to whom the claims of red-tape are more sacred than those of human flesh and blood. The one imperious idea that the law must take its course fills his mind to the exclusion of all else, and Escalus' appeal is met with the dry, pitiless formula, 'Sir, he must die.'

In his desperate strait, with less than twenty-four hours between

himself and death, Claudio sends for help to his sister Isabella. There is flagrant irony in the fact that he must choose as messenger the dissolute Lucio, who had seduced a maid under promise of marriage, and shaken himself free of her by perjury. And it heightens the irony that this libertine should have to seek Isabella within the convent of Saint Clare. For Claudio's sister is about to turn her back upon the world, and to become a votarist. The travail of the senses, which is convulsing the social fabric of Vienna, is absolutely stilled within this retreat, where the nuns may speak with men only in the presence of the prioress, and may not speak and be seen at the same time. Yet even these privileges are too large for Isabella, and she would fain be subjected to a more strict restraint. Like Angelo she disciplines her nature by austerity of life, but instead of starving body and soul alike, she subdues the flesh to the service of the spirit. Her virtue is not an external property laboriously won, a distinguishing badge, a phylactery made broad to be seen of all men. It is the bloom and fruitage of noble energies, of a life fed from the inexhaustible depths where all sense of self is lost. 'Isabella,' it has been said, 'is the only one of Shakspere's women whose heart and eyes are fixed upon an impersonal ideal, to whom something abstract is more, in the ardour and energy of her youth, than any human personality.' Helena had been stirred by missionary ardour, but its concentration upon one object had robbed it of the impressiveness which catholicity alone can bestow. Isabella's gaze is not thus narrowed: it is fixed full upon the surpassing splendour of the beatific vision, and her face, as the virginal 'cheek-roses' testify, is luminous with the reflected glow. Yet this rapture of the spirit has not deadened her to sweet earthly affections. She prizes the memory of her father; she speaks of her school-fellow Juliet under a tender fiction of kinship, and she holds her brother very dear. Though mistrusting her own power, she answers at once to his call for help, and hastens to the deputy. At first it would seem that her lack of confidence in herself is but too well-grounded. Her brother's vice is abhorrent to her; she is 'at war 'twixt will and will not,' and she petitions for condemnation of the sin, but mercy on the sinner. As Lucio declares, she could not plead more tamely for a pin, and it needs all the pressure that he can bring to bear to prevent her withdrawing upon Angelo's first refusal of her suit. But the frozen surface of her vestal nature gradually thaws, and the imprisoned eloquence streams from the depths beneath. Though acknowledging the justice of the statute, she pleads for mercy in words that recall those of Portia, but, as befits her character, she anchors her claim more avowedly upon divine precedent:

'Why all the souls that were were forfeit once,
And He that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy.'

Angelo is sufficiently moved to offer a justification of his rigour, and even to cloak it under the semblance of pity. But the flimsy covering shrivels in the white flame of Isabella's scorn, as she reminds the deputy that 'it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but tyrannous to use it like a giant.' And autocratic officialism, exultant in the exercise of its short-lived power, meets its annihilating indictment in the majestic irony of the supposition:

'Could great men thunder
As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet,
For every pelting, petty officer
Would use his heaven for thunder; nothing but thunder.'

Angelo visibly wavers beneath this attack, and Isabella presses home her advantage by a personal appeal. She bids the deputy knock at his own bosom, and ask of his heart if it confess a natural guiltiness like Claudio's: in that case he must 'sound no *thought' against* her brother's life. Escalus had already used the same argument in vain, but on the lips of this saintly advocate it has a novel power. The die is cast, when he utters the simple words: 'I will bethink me—Come again to-morrow.' Isabella has prevailed, but not through the avenue of which she thought. She has not softened Angelo's heart, or convinced his reason, but inflamed his desire. His nature has just kinship enough with her own to feel the full seductive charm of her immaculate purity. He recognizes in her the ideal which all his efforts reproduce, but in distorted and fragmentary form, and he covets its possession. Thus he is attacked through the very virtue in which he fancied himself so securely entrenched, and the man whose blood had never been stirred by wanton allurements, finds in the chastity of a vestal a more subtle and irresistible snare. As he cries in the moment of self-revelation,

'O cunning enemy, that to catch a saint
With saints dost bait thy hook! Most dangerous
Is the temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in loving virtue.'

But it is not easy, when Isabella returns, to put his thoughts into words. He discloses himself by riddling questions, whence she only gradually gathers his purpose. She thinks at first that he is merely making trial of her virtue, and the martyr-spirit that welcomes pain as the deliverance from dishonour leaps out to meet the challenge:

> 'Were I under the terms of death,
> The impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies
> And strip myself to death, as to a bed
> That longing have been sick for, ere I'd yield
> My body up to shame.'

But Angelo takes advantage of her confession that women are 'ten times frail' to return to the attack. He bid her be what she is—a woman, for, if she is more, she is none, and he declares his passion in unequivocal terms, with her brother's pardon as the reward of her compliance. Her infinite scorn can only find voice in the repetition of the single epithet 'seeming, seeming,' though with feminine readiness she at once assays to turn to Claudio's profit the tactical advantage given her by the deputy's proposal. But she now learns the unscrupulous meanness of this cold-blooded calculating man of affairs. To her threats of denunciation the would-be sensualist opposes the bulwark of his 'unsoiled name,' and in a brutal outbreak of the cruelty which in Shakspere's eyes is the reverse side of lust, he proclaims that, in case she resists his suit, Claudio shall suffer torture as well as death. But the pain which Isabella does not dread for herself, she does not dread for others. She carries in her breast, as Kreyssig has said, 'the categorical imperative' which forbids her, under whatever pressure of circumstance, to swerve an inch from the rigid line of inexorable moral law.

Yet even the most unfaltering virtue, in the hour of its probation, welcomes the fellowship of another human heart, and Isabella hurries away to the prison in the hope of hearing her resolution endorsed from Claudio's lips. She finds him in the company of the friar-duke, who is seeking to make death less terrible to him by fixing his gaze upon all that is mean, paltry, and pestilent in life. But, though Claudio murmurs assent to these platitudes, his personality gives them the lie. The floral grace of this youth jars with the blackness of the condemned cell, the yet pitchier blackness of the sepulchre. Though at Isabella's first mention of the price by which he may be saved, delights her by the brave ring of his protest, yet the passionate instinct of the living to clasp life, by whatever means, proves itself too strong. 'Death is a fearful thing,' moans the quaking wretch, who already feels its chill hand upon his brow. With panic-born eloquence he gives voice to the mutiny of the warm tingling flesh and of 'the delighted spirit' against the terrors of the impenetrable Beyond, with its vista of charnel-house pollution for the body, and infernal tortures for the soul. In the paroxysm of his despair he can only grasp the one fact—that his sister's honour may be flung as a sop to the grisly shape that hovers over him, and imploringly he

pleads for its sacrifice. A modern dramatist would doubtless have here seen the materials for a theatrically effective situation, in which the heroine was torn by the conflict between sisterly love and her ideal of duty. But Shakspere did not consider that the drama's function was to elaborate such a situation, with the inevitable result of blurring the line between right and wrong. Isabella's recoil is instantaneous, absolute, final. 'The swift vindictive anger leaps, like a white flame, into this white spirit[1],' and if her wrath is stern, well-nigh savage, it is the elemental rage of unsophisticated purity against sin.

Up to this point, which forms the exact centre of the play, all has been wrought in Shakspere's mightiest manner, but henceforward, through the remainder of Act iii and Act iv, the workmanship flags. The scenes are writtten chiefly in prose of a comparatively tame character, and the rapidity with which they succeed one another is confusing. But the action advances in a number of material points. Isabella proves that her outburst of defiance to Claudio does not spring from callousness to his sufferings, for she lends herself to the Duke's stratagem whereby her seeming assent to Angelo's overtures is to save her brother and secure the happiness of the forsaken Mariana. The glimpse of the lonely woman at the moated grange gives the outline which the Lincolnshire poet of our own day was to fill in with sombre detail from the landscape of the fens. A pleasanter glimpse is that of Angelo's brick-walled garden, abutting on a vineyard with a planched gate. But the scene lies for the most part in the prison and its precincts, where the disguised Duke adds hourly to his experiences of criminal life, and gathers fresh evidence of the results of his deputy's administration. Once having entered upon the downward path, Angelo finds himself driven ever lower and lower. Having secured, as he believes, the fruits of his nefarious compact, he violates it from fear of after-consequences, and he even orders Claudio's execution at an illegally early hour.

The threads thus somewhat loosely scattered are gathered into a knot in the fifth act. This act in its structure closely resembles the final scene of *All's Well that Ends Well*. The ruler again sits in judgement, and there are the same charges, arrests, and threats of death, the same deliberate mystification before guilt is brought home to the evil-doer. But the *dénouement* is more impressive in the present play, which rises once again to something of its earlier power. The Duke's proclamation of redress to petitioners on his re-

1 See Walter Pater's essay on *Measure for Measure* in his volume of *Appreciations*.

entry into the city has disquieted Angelo, and his worst fears are fulfilled when Isabella steps forth to accuse him in the open street. Yet outwardly he maintains his composure, and even when Mariana denounces him, he seeks to quell her with a sneer. But the discovery that the Duke, 'like power divine,' has beheld his 'passes,' completely crushes him, and he begs for immediate sentence and sequent death. The shrine of outward respectibility at which he had worshipped so zealously is shivered, and in the agony of his humiliation he may well crave to be buried among its ruins. Coleridge deplores that he is not taken at his word, that he is not sacrificed to 'the strong indignant claim of justice.' But Angelo's character is not conceived of as irredeemably vile. It was the previous austerity of his life, and the overstrained self-confidence which this begot, that left him prone to the overwhelming temptation that burst upon him from the most unforeseen quarter. Isabella herself admits that 'a due sincerity governed his deeds' till he looked upon her, and though she believes that Claudio has died by his command, instead of clamouring for vengeance she petitions Angelo's pardon on the ground that he has sinned but in intent. Mariana, with whom he has been constrained to fulfil his marriage-contract, sues for his life on the plea that 'best men are moulded out of faults.' The Duke for a time poses as inflexible:

> 'An Angelo for Claudio, death for death!
> Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure,
> Like doth quit like, and Measure still for Measure.'

But the spirit of the play is in reality the negation of the maxim which serves as its title. Even while the Duke thus pronounces judgement he knows that Claudio is alive, and that the capital sentence on Angelo is merely a feint. The deputy is saved by that humane interpretation of the law against which he had battled so tenaciously. In the years passed since *The Merchant of Venice* was written Shakspere had reached a loftier conception of justice. The earlier play had furnished an ideal illustration of 'measure for measure.' Shylock took his stand upon the letter of the law, and by the letter he was overthrown. But here the fanatical worship of the letter is shown to conflict with the genuine principle of equity, and we realize that codes and charters may become a curse instead of a blessing to society, unless they are applied in a remedial and not a nakedly retributive spirit. That such will henceforth be the case in Vienna is guaranteed by Isabella's elevation to a share in the ducal seat. She does not return to the nunnery, yet in her cloistral whiteness of soul she bears abroad the stamp and seal of her noviciate.

Her leavening presence at the core of the state promises a speedier regeneration of the devotees of *Venus genetrix* in her impure form than the most Draconian enactments. In her we salute what Angelo had so miserably failed to become, a 'saviour of society,' and if the light that streams from her countenance is at first dazzling in its pure severity, it turns if we gaze but long enough into a soft, benignant glow.

The date of **TROILUS AND CRESSIDA** is one of the most puzzling problems in Shaksperean chronology. The work was published by Bonian and Walley in two quarto editions in 1609. The first of these contains a very remarkable preface. 'Eternal reader, you have here a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the hands of the vulgar . . . Refuse not nor like this the less for not being sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude: but thank fortune for the scape it hath made amongst you, since by the grand possessors' wills I believe you should have prayed for them rather than been prayed[1].' We thus learn that *Troilus and Cressida* had not hitherto been acted, and that by 'the grand possessors' (i.e. probably the Globe Theatre company's) 'wills' it would not have been printed. The publishers must therefore have got hold of the MSS. surreptitiously, and issued a pirated edition. Its circulation in printed form evidently hastened its production on the stage, for in a second quarto of 1609 the preface is omitted, and instead we have the words, 'as it was acted by the King's Majesty's Servants at the Globe.' In the Stationers' Register, February 7, 1603, there is an entry of 'The Book of *Troilus and Cressida* as it is acted by my lord Chamberlain's Men.' This cannot be Shakspere's play if the statement in the preface to the first quarto be true that it had never been 'staled with the stage'; nor is it likely to be the drama written to Henslowe's order in 1599 by Dekker and Chettle, which could scarcely have passed into the hands of Burbage's company. The entry in the register may possibly refer to a first sketch of Shakspere's play, and there are a few passages in the main-plot which look as if they had been written earlier than the rest (e.g. i. I. 94-109). But such

1 This preface contains one of the most glowing contemporary tributes to Shakspere's genius: 'This author's comedies are so framed to the life that they serve for the most common commentaries of all the actions of our lives, showing such a dexterity and power of wit that the most displeased with plays are pleased with his comedies. So much and such savoured salt of wit is in his comedies that they seem, for their height of pleasure, to be born in the sea that brought forth Venus. Amongst all there is none more witty than this; and had I time I would comment upon it, though I know it needs not for so much as will make you think your testern well bestowed; but for so much worth as even poor I know to be stuffed in it, it deserves such a labour as well as the best comedy in Terence and Plautus. And believe this, that when he is gone and his comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition.'

an inference is highly conjectural. In any case, if metrical evidence is to be trusted, the play must have been completed several years before it was piratically published. The percentage of lines with double endings (20) would place it about 1603-4, and the fact that it has only six light endings, and no weak ones, is a strong argument against a later date. Why it should have been kept so long unacted by the Globe company is a mystery which we have no means of solving.

But the difficulties about the date of the play are insignificant compared with the difficulties of its interpretation. The story of Troilus and Cressida, though the titular plot, occupies less space than the rivalry of the Trojan and Greek forces, and the internal disunion within the opposing camps. It is in the purpose of this secondary plot, and its relation to the love-story, that the crux of the play lies. An attempt to read the riddle necessitates an inquiry into the growth of the Troilus romance, and of the mediaeval additions to the original tale of Troy.

Troilus is only once mentioned by Homer, as a son of Priam, and a dauntless charioteer, who was cut off in his youth. Cressida does not appear at all in the *Iliad*, but her name is probably derived either from Chryseis, the daughter of Chryses, a priest of Apollo, or from Briseis, the beautiful captive of Achilles. In the sixth century A.D. there appeared a Latin prose work *Historia de Excidio Trojae*, which purported to be a translation of a journal kept during the siege by an eyewitness, Dares the Phrygian. This work was entirely favourable to the Trojans, and appealed to the peculiar superstition of the chief western nations that they were descended from the people of Priam. Dares portrays Troilus as a youth of beauty, courage, and passion for glory. He also describes the appearance and character of Briseida, but he does not bring her into any relation with Troilus. The idea of connecting them by a love-affair originated with Benoît de Sainte-More, a Norman *trouvère* of the twelfth century, who wrote *Le Roman de Troie*, a French poem whose materials were chiefly taken from Dares. But Benoît added considerably from other sources or from his own invention, and the episode of Troilus and Briseida is the most important of his embellishments. Briseida is drawn as an attractice coquette, with a quick and ready wit and a changeable heart. She is the daughter of Calchas, already represented by Dares as a Trojan priest, who through foreknowledge of what was to come had taken refuge in the enemy's camp. She is beloved by Troilus, but one day Calchas reclaims his daughter, and she is conducted in the deepest grief

within the Greek lines, where she soon forgets her former wooer, and consoles herself with Diomede. Benoît's poem was rendered into many different languages, the most successful version being the Latin prose novel by the Sicilian Guido Colonna. Guido's novel in its turn became the source upon which Boccaccio drew in the fourteenth century for his epic poem the *Filostrato,* 'the man overthrown by love.' The genius of the great Italian transformed the naïve story of Benoît into a highly-wrought epic, steeped in the passion of the South. In fact Boccaccio, in the person of Troilus, tells the tale of the joys and sorrows inspired by his own love for La Fiammetta, and hence Griseida (as the name now appears) is changed from a girl to a young widow. A new character is added in the person of Pandaro, Griseida's cousin, who is the bosom-friend and confidant of Troilus, and who helps him to surmount all the difficulties in his path. It was doubtless on one of his visits to Italy that Chaucer read the *Filostrato,* and shortly after 1380 he put forth his English version of it, *Troylus and Cryseyde.* The poem is his masterpiece of narrative art, and is executed in a spirit widely different from that of its model. Boccaccio had brought into bold relief his heroine's disloyalty with Diomede, and had drawn from this the moral of the changeable nature of women. Chaucer is repelled by this portion of the tale, and his active sympathy ends with the separation of the lovers. His Troylus is a young man who has mocked at the victims of Cupid and who is overtaken by Nemesis when the first sight of Cryseyde plunges him into amorous frenzy. Cryseyde, as in the *Filostrato,* is a young widow, but otherwise she is greatly changed. She is not a siren of passionately sensuous nature who meets her wooer's advances more than half way, but a modest, tender-hearted, winning woman. Her surrender to Troylus is only made inch by inch, and is largely due to the direct agency of Fate. Her subsequent disloyalty is almost incredible to Chaucer; he passes over it as lightly as possible, with the excuse that she was 'so sorry for her untruth.' This modification of the heroine's character necessarily gives a greater importance to the part of the go-between, and thus in Chaucer's version Pandarus becomes a figure of the first rank. He is no longer a young knight, cousin to Cryseyde, but her elderly uncle, an experienced man of the world, who volunteers his good offices to Troylus in this delicate affair of the heart. The spectacle of a greybeard busying himself in such fashion would be in the highest degree offensive were it not robbed by Chaucer's art of much of its grossness. Pandarus, in fact, with his frankly materialistic view of life, his incomparable resource and

versatility, his rich humour, his culture perverted to unworthy uses, his delight in youthful associates, is in many respects a prototype of Falstaff.

Shakspere may have used Chaucer's poem, but the whole spirit in which he treats the romance is essentially different from that of his great predecessor. Indeed, paradox as it may sound, *Romeo and Juliet* is more akin to *Troylus and Cryseyde* than is *Troilus and Cressida*. Alike in the tragedy and the poem, a passionate love-story is acted out against a background of feud and bloodshed. In both Fate helps to throw two lovers into each other's arms, and then cruelly separates them by a mischance springing from the hostility of their kinsfolk. Troylus, with his union of sentimentality and bravery in action, resembles Romeo; Cryseyde, at once modest and ardent in her love, till her departure from Troy, is allied to Juliet, and the garrulous good-natured Pandarus plays a part curiously akin to that of the Nurse. Above all, in lyrical intensity, in passionate pulse and swing, the two works strike a similar note.

But Shakspere's lyrical period lay far behind him when he was attracted to the story of Troilus and Cressida. He saw in it the materials for a merciless satire of the high-flown ideal of love, fostered by the mediaeval cycle of romance, whence the tale had sprung. The absolute devotion of a gallant to his mistress, which this form of literature had glorified, is transformed into the delirious passion of a youth for a mere wanton. The knightly love which Spenser had sung of in *The Faerie Queene* as a sublime and half-unearthly rapture, the all-powerful stimulus to the practice of every virtue, is here exhibited as an intoxication of the senses, paralyzing the will, blinding the gaze, and sapping manhood at its source. Troilus, apart from his infatuation, is a model of youthful heroism. Ulysses, the critical observer, grows eloquent in his praise:

> 'The youngest son of Priam, a true knight:
> Not yet mature, yet matchless; firm of word,
> Speaking in deeds, and deedless in his tongue;
> Not soon provoked, nor being provoked, soon calmed:
> His heart and hand both open and both free;
> For what he has, he gives; what thinks, he shows;
> Yet gives he not till judgement guides his bounty,
> Nor dignifies an impure thought with breath.
> Manly as Hector, but more dangerous.'

Throughout the play he justifies this lofty tribute. He is foremost in the field, and if Pandarus is to be trusted, returns with his sword bloodied, and his helm more hacked than Hector's. In the council which debates the restoration of Helen as the price of peace, he displays a passion for glory which recalls Hotspur:

'Worthy Hector,
She is a theme of honour and renown,
A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,
Whose present courage may beat down our foes,
And fame, in time to come, canonize us:
For, I presume, brave Hector would not lose
So rich advantage of a promis'd glory,
As smiles upon the forehead of this action
For the wide world's revenue.'

Yet this pattern of chivalry bemoans, in the paroxysm of his amorous frenzy, that he is

'Weaker than a woman's tear,
Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,
Less valiant than the virgin in the night.'

So hoodwinked is he by passion that he misreads the transparent characters of Pandarus and Cressida. In his eyes, and his alone,

'He 's as tetchy to be woo'd to woo,
As she is stubborn-chaste against all suit.

When at last he stands on the threshold of attainment, his brain reels in the dizzying vortex of his rapture:

'I am giddy: expectation whirls me round.
The imaginary relish is so sweet
That it enchants my sense. What will it be
When that the watery palate tastes indeed
Love's thrice-reputed nectar? death, I fear me,
Swounding destruction, or some joy too fine,
Too subtle-potent, and too sharp in sweetness
For the capacity of my ruder powers.
I fear it much, and I do fear besides
That I shall lose distinction in my joys;
As doth a battle, when they charge on heaps
The enemy flying.'

Never has there been a more exact and subtle analysis of the delirious ecstasy that chokes in its own surfeit. And all this is for a shallow wanton in whom this heroic greenhorn, himself 'as true as truth's simplicity', looks to find 'a winnowed purity in love' equal to his own. He is ready to throw his glove to Death on behalf of her constancy, and if his heart flutters at her departure from Troy, it is only through dread that her faith should be corrupted by the insidious arts of Greek courtiers. When Ulysses leads him to Calchas' tent, and his own eyes and ears bear witness to the perjury of his idolized mistress, he seeks to discredit the evidence of his senses:

'This she? no; this is Diomed's Cressida.
If beauty have a soul, this is not she.
If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimony,
If sanctimony be the god's delight,
If there be rule in unity itself,
This is not she.'

But the bitter truth cannot be thus kept at bay, and Troilus is startled out of his callow optimism into a stern realization of the falsehood and wickedness of the world. His nature is however too sound for him to sit whimpering over his disenchantment. He seeks refuge from his heartache in strenuous achievement on the field of battle, and when we take leave of him, he is planning exploits of revenge for the death of Hector, whose fall has left him the foremost hope of Troy.

Shakspere's treatment of the story involves the degradation of Cressida. The charming coquette of Benoît, the voluptuous court-lady of Boccaccio, the tender-hearted widow of Chaucer, becomes in the play a scheming cold-blooded profligate. Such a woman does not need to have Troilus' suit pressed upon her by Pandarus, and if she 'holds off' for a time, it is merely, as she frankly confesses, to gratify her vanity and eagerness for despotic sway over her lover:

'Women are angels, wooing:
Things won are done, joy's soul lies in the doing.
That she beloved knows nought, that knows not this:
Men prize the thing ungained more than it is:
That she was never yet, that ever knew
Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.'

This is not the language of passion, whether pure or unholy, but of that calculating wantonness which prefers the feeling of mastery even to sensual gratification. Yet when the confession of her partiality for Troilus cannot be any longer delayed, she cleverly poses as the deeply enamoured woman whose lips have hitherto been sealed by modesty. She affects a fear that, in her rapture, she will betray her emotion too unreservedly, and with an ambiguous request to stop her mouth, she draws him into kissing her. Then, with the artfulness of a consummate flirt, she pretends to be eager to hide her confusion in solitude, and can only be prevailed on to stay by a passionate declaration of Troilus' eternal fidelity. She protests her own unswerving loyalty with equal ardour, and crowns this mockery of genuine devotion by yielding to his wishes. When afterwards she hears that she is to be exchanged for Antenor, she declares that she will never leave Troilus, that she has forgotten her father, and that whatever extremes 'time, force, and death' may do to her body, 'the strong base and building' of her love

'Is as the very centre of the earth
Drawing all things to it.'

This expression, as Gervinus has noted, is ominous, and on her arrival in the Greek camp she at once shows herself in her true colours. She allows herself to be 'kissed in general' by all the chiefs, and she gets the laugh of Menelaus by an equivocal jest. She does not gradually fall away from loyalty to Troilus, for of loyalty her shallow nature is incapable; she simply throws herself with redoubled zest into her old game in this new field. In Diomed, who has been her escort between the hostile lines, she spies, as she thinks, a fully qualified substitute for Troilus. But she has mistaken her man, and in the scene between the two in Act v, Shakspere has, with a few pungent strokes, delineated the Nemesis upon the heartless coquette. Diomed is no raw youth, dwelling in a fool's paradise, and seeing life and love through a rose-coloured haze. He is an experienced soldier and man of the world, who takes at a glance the measure of the woman with whom he has to deal. He 'tames' her by a method as suited to her character and as effective as Petruchio's with Kate. When she tries on him her accustomed trick of holding off, instead of pleading for her favours, he taunts her with being forsworn, and turns his back upon her with a curt good-night. It is she then who, to keep him by her side, has to use entreaties and caresses, and even to offer him in pledge of her faith the sleeve given her by Troilus. The shallow coquette pays a heavy yet just price for her selfish levity, when she exchanges a chivalrous adorer for a harsh and imperious taskmaster.

The dramatist's conception of Cressida's character necessarily limits the function of her uncle, and the Pandarus of Shakspere is of far less importance in the development of the plot than his namesake in Chaucer's poem. It is difficult to see why some critics should speak of the later Pandarus as a more finished type than the earlier. We find in him not a trace of the fascination, the high-bred polish, the stores of humour and worldly wisdom which distinguish Chaucer's masterly portrait. We see instead a cringing hanger-on of the court and of great houses, whose conversational stock-in-trade consists of honeyed, scented phrases, and gossip of the boudoir. Chaucer's Pandarus has a real affection for his friend, and takes care that his affairs of the heart shall be kept a secret from the world. But in the play he is simply a busybody, who revels in holding the threads of a fashionable intrigue, and who is at trouble, by sly looks and hints, to make it plain to outsiders that he knows more than he cares to speak of. But we get a hint that his evil courses are not without their punishment. In the brief glimpse that we get of him in Act v he is

complaining of his ill-health. He is suffering from the retribution with which age pays for youthful excesses, and added thereto is social degradation, when Troilus dismisses him contemptuously to eternal ignominy and shame.

It is however when we turn to the secondary plot, introducing the chief heroes of the rival hosts, that we have to face the main difficulty of the play. That the creator of a Prince Henry and a Hotspur should bring on the stage in travestied form the glorious paragons of antiquity, an Achilles and an Ajax, is at first sight one of the most startling phenomena in literature. It looks as if Shakspere, conscious that he was wrestling with Homer for the supreme poetic crown of all time, thought to secure victory by heaping ridicule upon his rival. Or, to put it in a more symbolical manner, the genius of Romantic drama might seem to be taking its revenge upon the classical ideals which had sought to strangle it in its cradle. But for such a view there is not the slightest solid foundation. The sources of the secondary plot, like those of the main story, are not classical but mediaeval. The precise original upon which Shakspere drew cannot be determined: it may have been Caxton's translation of Raoul le Fcbvre's *Recueil des histoires de Troie*, or some similar work, in which the Homeric story was overlaid by a fantastic embroidery of feudal ideas. It is this cycle of chivalric romance that supplies the many details in the play of which the *Iliad* knows nothing—the love of Achilles for Polyxena, the relationship between Hector and Ajax, the dream of Andromache, Hector's visit to the Greek camp, the name of his horse Galathe, the dreadful Sagittary, and Margarelon, the bastard son of Priam. It has been asserted that Shakspere could have found the figure of Thersites nowhere save in the Homeric poem, but this is far from being the case. In any case the majesty, the severe and sculpturesque beauty of the Greek epos, cannot have been revealed to him. For the only form in which he could have become familiar with the *Iliad* was Chapman's version of the first seven books, published in 1598. This version had great and unique merits, but its use of quaint conceits prevented it from reproducing the massive simplicity of the original. Moreover it should not be forgotten that in all probability Chapman was the rival poet who ousted Shakspere from his patron's favour, and that this translation seems to have been one of the causes of his triumph. It is therefore a highly plausible conclusion that Shakspere in this travesty was attacking not Homer but Chapman. The personages for whom Chapman stood as chief literary sponsor would have, in the dramatist's eyes, nothing of the sacrosanct inviolability with which they are clothed for all who have bowed in the temple of Greek

art. The original classic story and the mediaeval embellishments would seem to him to stand on an exactly similar footing, and he would feel no more scruple in debasing Ajax and Achilles than Pandarus and Cressida.

In the *Lucrece* Shakspere had introduced an elaborate description of the siege of Troy, and had there referred to Helen as 'the strumpet that began this stir.' The phrase gives us an important clue to Shakspere's motive for combining in one play the story of Troilus and Cressida and the broader theme of the conflict between Greece and Troy. Helen and Cressida are made to figure in exactly the same light. Both are heartless and disloyal, yet they awake a devotion of which they are utterly unworthy. The infatuation of Troilus is paralleled by that of Menelaus and Paris, whom Diomed cynically classes together as equally deserving of Helen:

> 'He merits well to have her, that doth seek her,
> Not making any scruple of her soilure,
> With such a hell of pain and world of charge.
> And you as well to keep her, that defend her,
> Not palating the taste of her dishonour,
> With such a costly loss of wealth and friends.'

But Helen not only throws a spell over her individual lovers; she brings two nations into conflict for the sake of her *beaux yeux.* As Diomed asserts:

> 'For every false drop in her bawdy veins
> A Grecian's life hath sunk: for every scruple
> Of her contaminated carrion weight
> A Trojan hath been slain.'

Hector makes a similar statement in the Trojan council when he urges the surrender of Helen as the price of peace. In his eyes 'she is not worth what she doth cost the holding':

> 'Tis mad idolatry
> To make the service greater than the god,
> And the will dotes, that is inclinable
> To what infectiously itself affects
> Without some image of the affected merit.'

These lines strike the very keynote of the play, and knit together the two plots. The 'mad idolatry that makes the service greater than the god' is exemplified in the one on a personal, in the latter on a national scale. Troilus is infected by the mania as virulently in his public as in his private character. His rhapsodies over Cressida are not more glowing than over Helen, the

'Grecian queen, whose youth and freshness
Wrinkles Apollo and makes stale the morning.'

For her sake he, and, as is natural, Paris, are eager to risk the welfare of the entire Trojan state, and Hector, though he holds that 'the moral laws of nature and of nation' demand her restoration, yields to the impetuous counsels of his younger brothers, and confesses that he has already sent a 'roisting challenge' among the Greeks. The debate moves throughout in the circle, not of antique, but of mediaeval ideas. It illustrates and implicitly condemns the quixotic sacrifice of great national interests to a fantastic code of exaggerated gallantry. Even the challenge of Hector, in spite of his attitude at the council, strictly conforms to chivalric usage. The Trojan offers to make it good that 'he hath a lady wiser, fairer, truer,' than any among the Grecian dames. And Agamemnon retorts in exactly similar spirit:

'We are soldiers,
And may that soldier a mere recreant prove
That means not, hath not, or is not in love.
If then one is, or hath, or means to be,
That one meets Hector: if none else, I am he.'

Even the veteran Nestor prepares to gird on his armour as the champion of his countrywomen. And if Achilles, for whom the challenge is especially meant, fails to answer it, the reason is that he is involved in an amour with Hector's sister Polyxena, and to this he sacrifices every instinct of a patriot and a soldier:

'Fall, Greeks: fail, fame; honour, or go, or stay,
My major vow lies here, this I'll obey.'

Thus in both camps sentimental gallantry is the ruling motive, with disastrous results to true national interests.

But on the Grecian side this is not the only anti-social force. Exaggerated self-love is as fatal to the success of the common enterprise as exaggerated idealization of the bond between the sexes. As Ulysses declares, in a speech full of the ripest political wisdom, 'the specialty of rule has been neglected,' and every tent is become a faction. 'Degree,' that principle of the subordination of the lower to the higher, upon which the whole visible universe depends, and which is the base of social life in all its forms, has been rudely shaked. The result is anarchy:

'The general's disdain'd
By him one step below; he, by the next:
That next, by him beneath: so, every step,
Exampled by the first pace that is sick
Of his superior, grows to an envious fever
Of pale and bloodless emulation.'

The mightiest makes himself the centre of an ever-spreading contagion:

> 'The great Achilles, whom opinion crowns
> The sinew and the forehand of our host,
> Having his ear full of his airy fame
> Grows dainty of his worth, and in his tent
> Lies mocking our designs.'

As Pandarus inflames the passion of Troilus by depreciating the charms of all the Trojan ladies except Cressida, so Patroclus flatters Achilles' infatuated self-esteem by parodying all the other Grecian commanders. Ajax is similarly infected; he bears his head as proudly as Achilles,

> 'Keeps his tent like him,
> Makes factious feasts; rails on our state of war,
> Bold as an oracle, and sets Thersites
> To match us in comparisons with dirt.'

This diseased self-love, an exaggeration of Hotspur's passion for honour, blinds the judgement no less than the diseased sentimentality of Troilus. The two commanders scorn every element of warfare save the brute strength in which they personally excel; the finer strategy which taxes the brain they sneeringly dub 'bed-work, mappery, closet-war.' How disastrous this factious arrogance is to the main enterprise is made clear by Hector's challenge. Achilles would be the natural champion of the Greeks in the duel with the foremost warrior of Troy, and in Nestor's eyes it is essential for him to take the field, as the result of this combat will influence the entire campaign. But Ulysses demurs:

> 'What glory our Achilles shares from Hector,
> Were he not proud, we all should wear with him,
> But he already is too insolent;
> And we were better parch in Afric sun
> Than in the pride and salt scron of his eyes.'

It will therefore be wiser to choose the Greek champion by lot, and to arrange that it shall fall to Ajax. This will give an opportunity for exalting the latter above Achilles, and thus 'physicking the great Myrmidon who broils in loud applause.' To yet further 'physic' him, the adroit Ulysses devises the incident of the Greek chieftains passing their haughty colleague as he stands at the door of his tent, with curt, disdainful greeting. Ulysses himself brings up the rear, and interprets to him the effects of his scornful withdrawal from the fray. He demonstrates that abilities, however pre-eminent, are practically non-existent, unless they are exercised on the general behalf

and receive their recognition in the grateful applause of the multitude:

> 'That man, how dearly ever parted,
> How much in having, or without, or in,
> Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
> Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection;
> As when his virtues shining upon others
> Heat them, and they retort that heat again
> To the first giver.'

Achilles' arrogant self-idolatry has thus a suicidal effect on his glory, and it has allowed Ajax to supplant him in the eyes of mankind, which fixes its gaze solely on present achievements. Ulysses thus plays the reverse rôle to Pandarus. The latter uses his knowledge of the world, in the lowest sense, to inflame the delirious passion of Troilus. Ulysses uses his far loftier experience of men and things to cure the self-love of Achilles. But his exhortations have little effect. A letter from Polyxena is enough to keep Achilles still back from the fray, and he is only roused to action by the death of Patroclus at the hand of Hector. Careless as ever of the general interest, he seeks no foe but the slayer of his friend. At their first meeting, Hector, with overstrained chivalry, forbears to strike because Achilles is fatigued: at their second it is the Trojan who is at the disadvantage, but generosity has no place in the Grecian's breast; he hounds on his Myrmidons against his defenceless enemy, and when he is dead drags him brutally at his horse's tail. Thus the scene closes in an atmosphere of squalid atrocity. With truth it has been said that in this play 'we are introduced to heroic personages in order to be cured for ever of hero-worship.'

But whatever rag of nobility still clings to the chief actors in the drama is pitilessly stripped off by Thersites, who to some of his original Homeric characteristics, now adds those of the Shaksperean fool. The result is a loathsome creation, who has enough of coarse plebeian insight to spy out all that is bestial beneath the fair shows of human life, and enough licence of speech to vent the leprous scum of his brain where he will, with nothing worse to fear than a cudgelling. The war on his lips sinks to the level of a brawl in the vilest of resorts. The combatants on either side are 'all incontinent varlets.' Agamemnon 'has not so much brain as ear-wax'; Menelaus is both ox and ass, and, rather than be he, Thersites would conspire against destiny; Achilles is a 'valiant ignorance, with a great deal of his wit in his sinews.' But the main gush of his vitriolic abuse is reserved for the 'elephant Ajax,' the 'sodden-witted lord, Mars'

idiot.' He parodies his pompous bearing before the duel for the benefit of Achilles, though in an angrier mood he classes them together as draught-oxen, whom Ulysses and Nestor yoke, and make plough up the wars. But even this more mentally-gifted pair comes in turn under his lash, 'the policy of those crafty swearing rascals, that stale old mouse-eaten dry cheese, Nestor, and that same dog-fox, Ulysses, is not proved worth a blackberry.' They have sought to strike at Achilles through Ajax, and the only result is to have made the one as supercilious as the other.

Whatever Thersites touches he leaves polluted with slime. Mankind as viewed by him does not belie the description of it in *Gulliver's Travels* as 'the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the face of the earth.' And indeed the spirit in which Shakspere conceived the character of Thersites is akin to that in which Swift drew the appalling picture of the Yahoos. Not that this nauseating figure is to be taken as the 'chorus' of the play. His profanation of all things human is as far removed from the sane, equitable worldly wisdom of Ulysses as are the delirium of Troilus, the self-love of Achilles. They are dazzled to realities by the false glitter of fantastic ideals; Thersites is blinded to them by a congenital disease of moral vision. But only in a mood of bitterest disenchantment with the world could such a character have been conceived. Even were he removed, the atmosphere of the play would still be black with the shadow of a great eclipse. And in this case the flight of time has added to, instead of, as often, taking away from the effect of the work. The reader of to-day mourns the degradation of the mediaeval romance of love and chivalry into a satire, however legitimate in itself, of the mediaeval ideals. It is turning the swords of the offspring against their mother's breast. And even if this be pardoned, we shudder, as an Elizabethan would never have done, at the spectacle of the god-like creations of the Greek Muse being dragged through the dirt. It scarcely soothes our pain, though it rectifies our judgement, when we realize that the Achilles of Shakspere is not 'the great Achilles whom we knew,' that his Ajax is simply a *magni nominis umbra.* They are mediaeval figures decked out in borrowed trappings, and the shafts that riddle them glance harmless from the glorious forms under whose titles they masquerade. But even as a satire of chivalry, *Troilus and Cressida* overshoots the mark. The feudal code of love and honour, artificial though it be, deserves better than to be made the butt of savage scorn. Cervantes, within almost the same hour, had discovered a more excellent fashion of smiling it away.

The atmosphere of obscurity which wraps the group of plays belonging to this period closes most thickly round HAMLET, and criticism has at times failed to realize that its baffling mystery is no isolated portent, but the cardinal expression of a mood which has left its trace on the other works treated in this chapter. Like them it presents difficulties of date, but a consideration of the evidence suggests that Shakspere's first sketch of the play was written in 1601, and that this was expanded into the present form in 1603-4[1].

The story of Hamlet is told in the *Historia Danica* of Saxo Grammaticus, who wrote about 1180-1208. It appeared in French prose in Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, 1570. The only extant English translation, *The Historie of Hamblet*, dates from 1608, but there may have been earlier versions, now lost. The tale in its original form is thoroughly characteristic of the age and country that gave it birth. It belongs to that Anglo-Danish cycle of legends, of which *King Horn* is a specimen which celebrates the prowess of a national hero.

1 Nash, in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, 1587 or 1589, speaks of 'whole Hamlets, I should say, handfulls of tragical speeches,' and Lodge, in his *Wit's Misery*, alludes to 'the visard of the ghost which cried so miserably at the Theatre, like an oyster wife, "Hamlet, revenge."' These references prove the existence of a drama on the subject of Hamlet at least as early as 1589, and Henslowe mentions in his diary, June 9, 1594, the performance of a play *Hamlet* by the Lord Chamberlain's company at the Newington Theatre. It is probable, as already suggested (p. 52, that this work was from the hand of Kyd. It cannot have been Shakspere's play, for had it been in existence, in however imperfect a form, before 1598, it must have been mentioned by Meres in preference to *Titus Andronicus*, as an example of his tragic power. The first certain reference to Shakspere's play is the entry in the Stationers' Register, July 26, 1602, of 'A book, *The Revenge of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, as it lately was acted by the Lord Chamberlain his servants.' The book was printed in quarto form in the following year, and on the title-page we learn that it had been acted divers times in the City of London, 'as also in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford and elsewhere.' In 1604 appeared another quarto, *'The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, by William Shakspere. Newly inprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect copy.' The claim was substantially accurate, for this Q. contained fifty leaves instead of thirty-two, and in it the play appeared, except for a few passages added in the folio, as we know it now. The relation between the two Q.s is a difficult problem. The Q. of 1603 is so mutilated and corrupt that in all probability it was printed from shorthand notes taken down during a performance. The question then arises, Was it an imperfect report of the play as it appears in the quarto of 1604? This is most unlikely, for there are differences between the Q.s which imply a revision of the play by the author between the two issues. The names Polonius and Reynaldo are substituted for Corambis and Montano. The scene with Ophelia is shifted from Act ii. 2 to Act iii. 1. The dialogues between Hamlet and Horatio in Act iii. 2 and in Act v. 2, Hamlet's short soliloquy at the close of Act iii. 2, his encounter with Fortinbras and the important speech that follows in Act iv. 4, all appear for the first time in the quarto of 1604. These passages combine to throw greater light upon Hamlet's motives and mental characteristics, and it is incredible that their absence from Q. 1 should be due merely to the accident of faulty reporting. It is in the three later Acts that Q. 2 shows the greatest advance upon the first, and it has been conjectured by Aldis Wright that Shakspere, as in the case of *King John* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, was working in *Hamlet* upon an older play; that in the Q. of 1603 we have this play retouched chiefly in its earlier portions, while in the Q. of 1604 we have the completely revised version. The researches of Gregor Sarrazin (*Kyd und sein Kreis*, 94-122) have tended to confirm this theory. It is highly probable that Q. 1 contains fragments of Kyd's play, and even in its final form *Hamlet* shows the influence of Kyd's semi-Senecan dramatic method. It is likely that Shakspere wrote his first draft in 1601, while the Lord Chamberlain's men were travelling, because they were for the time being out of favour at Court, on account of their connexion with the Essex conspiracy (hence the allusion ii. 2 to the 'inhibition' of the players to perform in the city owing to the late innovation), and that he revised and enlarged the work after his return, about 1603. For a fuller discussion of these last points, see E. K. Chambers' Introduction to his edition of *Hamlet* in The Warwick Shakspere, and his appendix D.

Hamlet's father Horwendil is murdered by his brother Fengo, who seizes the throne and marries his victim's widow, Gerutha. The Prince summoned to revenge by his father's ghost, feigns madness and is narrowly watched by his uncle and a courtier. The murder of this courtier by mischance, Hamlet's voyage to England, and the death of his companions, follow as in the drama, but the original version then takes a quite independent course. Hamlet marries in England the king's daughter and returns to Denmark, where he kills his uncle and is chosen king in his stead. He then visits England again, where he marries two wives, by one of whom he is finally betrayed to his doom.

It is evident that in this rude tale of treachery and bloodshed Shakspere found only the roughest materials for his drama, yet it was a happy accident that led him to choose this Scandinavian saga as the framework of his most representative play. For thus the English Muse in her full-grown maturity turns her face again towards the region where she was cradled in infancy. Hamlet the Dane claims kinship with Beowulf, and in the space of a thousand years that separates them the surrounding features of nature have bu little changed. The air that blows over the platform at Elsinore i as nipping and eager as when it bellied the sails of the Vikings galleys, and the opposite cliff with dreadful summit still beetles o'e his base into the sea. Echoes of the primitive age reach us in sucl episodes as the 'angry parle,' in which Hamlet's father smote th sledded Polacks on the ice, and the sea-fight wherein Hamlet himsel is taken prisoner. But as many later critics, e.g. Kreyssig, Werner and Dowden[1] have clearly shown, Gervinus was entirely at faul in declaring that the play 'transports us to a rude and wild perioc from which Hamlet's whole nature recoils and to which he falls a sacrifice because by habit, character, and education he is alienated from it, and like the boundary-stone of a changing civilization, touches a world of finer feeling.' On the contrary, Shakspere represents not only the Danish prince, but all who surround him as members of a highly cultured and refined society, decadent through its own effeteness. Marcellus' words, 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark,' strike the true key-note; the court of Elsinore is suffering from the corruptions of a highly artificial civilization, not from the untamed riot of barbarian violence. '*Hamlet* is a picture of the same society as is reflected in Spenser's *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, and in some of Bacon's most typical Essays. But if Gervinus

1 I am indebted to these critics in especial for valuable suggestions in my study of the play. It will be seen, however, that my interpretation of the relations of Hamlet and Ophelia differs materially from Dowden's.

errs in treating Hamlet as the man of culture who falls a victim to the brute force of a wild epoch, Werner is scarcely less mistaken in speaking of him as the representative of a decaying society, who perishes and cannot but perish in its general wreck. 'Hamlet's is a tragic doom from which he can as little deliver himself as Oedipus from his fate. Here appears, what the poet wished to show, the power of society over the individual: the latter is the product and image of his time, his race, his surroundings, whose course he cannot break, and which, let him do what he will, make of him what they please.' Such an interpretation may save Hamlet's character from the charge of weakness by the heroic method of robbing him of all responsibility for his deeds, but it throws the play into entirely wrong focus. It is primarily a study of a human soul, not a fragment of political philosophy. Hamlet's fall has its origin not in irresistible external pressure, but in his own breast. Yet, as Dowden has rightly insisted, Werner's interpretation, though misleading when offered as a solution of the total problem of the play, emphasizes an aspect of it which, under the influence of Goethe's criticism in *Wilhelm Meister* (Lehrjahre, bk. iv. 13), has been too much put out of sight. 'To me,' wrote Goethe in words that remain for ever classic, 'it is clear that Shakspere meant, in the present case, to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul unfit for the performance of it. In this view the whole piece seems to me composed. There is an oak-tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom; the roots expand, the jar is shivered. A lovely, pure, noble, and most moral nature without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden which it cannot bear and must not cast away.' Here we have the root of the matter, the truth—but not the whole truth. Hamlet is too completely sundered from his environment, and no weight is attached to the conspiracy of circumstances which furthers, though it does not necessitate, his downfall. The stars in their courses fight against him by thrusting him amidst conditions fatally apt to develop the inherent weakness of his nature. Another man than Hamlet might have set right the world that was out of joint around him: he himself might have overcome his deep-seated malady in another and sounder world. But his inward disease is ever fed from the rank poison that circulates through the body politic around him. Rightly does he, who could be bounded in a nut-shell and count himself a lord of infinite space, call Denmark a prison, for whenever he seeks to escape from his weakness he is clogged and thrown back by the system of things wherein his lot is cast.

If thus an element of truth lies in a theory which would make of Hamlet a symbolic historical figure, may not a similar element be found in the completely opposite theory which identifies him with the dramatist himself? It has been shown that all attempts to reconstruct the personality of Shakspere by a combination of the known facts of his career with inferences drawn from the complete body of his writings are, at best, only partially convincing. *A fortiori* it would be absurd to seek in a single figure from a single play the dramatist's portrait drawn by his own hand. Yet the most objective of writers cannot help entering into more vital communion with certain of his creations than others, and the popular instinct which has fastened upon the Danish Prince as, in a unique sense, the mouthpiece of Shakspere is not to be contemptuously brushed aside. Careful study of the play in its relation to the original story tends in fact to reinforce the traditional view, though in modified form. Nowhere has Shakspere departed so widely from the spirit of his sources as in this play; the Hamlet of the saga and of the drama have little in common beyond their name, and instead of seeking, as usual, to work back from given data of plot to the inner motives from which they would inevitably arise, Shakspere here makes the impression of choosing a theme as the vehicle of thoughts which were surging in his own breast. It may be confidently maintained that only out of an overwhelming subjective impulse could *Hamlet* have arisen. For it is a unique, a paradoxical phenomenon in the sphere of the drama. Tragedy from time immemorial has shown the ruin of mighty natures through action that brought them into collision with the iron forces, moral or natural, of the world. But it was an unprecedented venture, and one that naturally threw criticism for long on a false scent, to make the incapacity for action the source of the tragic *nodus*. The inference is irresistible that Shakspere at some time must have felt himself in a peculiar degree susceptible to Hamlet's weakness, even though the composition of the play proves that he was now wholly or partially delivered from it. But it is not merely the singularity of the dramatic theme that justifies us in regarding Hamlet as in a special sense the embodiment of a side of Shakspere's complex nature. The soliloquies in which the Danish Prince unpacks his heart bear at times no very close relation to the actual progress of events in the play, and seem to be the poet's own reflections[1]. Nor should it be overlooked in attributing to Hamlet an exceptional significance that he is allotted

[1] The most famous of them all, on the question of 'to be or not to be,' stood in the quarto of 1603, in Act II. instead of, as now, in Act III. Nor does this medi-

exceptional treatment. In the other masterpieces the interest is equally divided between two or more characters, but here, though the minor figures are drawn with consummate skill, they owe their importance almost entirely to their relation to the hero, so that *Hamlet* minus the Prince of Denmark has become a proverbial illustration of an object robbed of its essential feature.

Thus the figure of Hamlet, as we gaze upon it, melts with kaleidoscopic swiftness from one shape to another—now a symbolic historical personage, now an embodied fragment of autobiography, now a purely imaginary type of manhood. It is because he is at once all and none of these that the Danish Prince remains a mystery, eternally fascinating, eternally inscrutable. Mystery is the atmosphere which wraps the play; its brooding presence fills the opening scene. The change of guard at midnight, the whispered allusions to 'the thing' which twice has struck a chill into the sentinels' hearts, its reappearance 'in the likeness of the king that's dead,' harrowing even the rationalist Horatio with fear, its silence when charged to speak, its startled flight at cockcrow—all this is weirdly impressive and is ominous of strange revelations to come. A comparison of this scene with the episode of the ghosts in *Richard III* proves the extraordinary advance of Shakspere's art in dealing with the supernatural, and it is to be noted that the apparition here is no mere birth of a disordered conscience, seen only by the victim whom it haunts. Three unimpressionable witnesses are forced to testify to its reality. But it would be idle to conclude from this that Shakspere believed in the 'objective' existence of ghosts. Probably like most great artists he held that the spiritual and material worlds bordered closely and that influences passed easily from the one to the other. But the emphasis laid upon the reality of the apparition in this scene is dictated by dramatic necessities; were it possible to believe that this spectral visitant was only a creature of hallucination, the ground would be cut from under the plot, and the problem of Hamlet's career would be utterly unmeaning.

tation on suicide fall very aptly from Hamlet, just when he is occupied with the congenial task of arranging a trap for the King in the play of Gonzago. Moreover, there is no reason why the Danish prince should complain of 'the proud man's contumely, the pangs of despised love, the law's delay.' But these are evils to which Shakspere himself was subject, and in a group of the Sonnets, especially in 66, he bewails them in words which are almost an echo of Hamlet's monologue. Nor again is Hamlet's lecture on the art of acting vitally related to the plot of the piece. The Prince is made the mouthpiece of criticisms of which the theatrical company at the Globe had doubtless often had the benefit, while the allusion in the dialogue with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to 'the aery of children' of the Queen's Revels, who were proving successful rivals of the Lord Chamberlain's men, puts out of court all *a priori* theories of Shakspere's pure objectivity.

To rightly appreciate that problem we must realize what manner of man Hamlet is, as he stands in the presence of his uncle and his mother. Like the heroes of the allied group of plays, he is young. He has passed the boyish stage of a Bertram and a Troilus, but he has not entered upon the duties and responsibilities of manhood. At thirty years of age he is still in the 'undergraduate' temper of mind. In the academic seclusion of Wittenberg he has found a congenial atmosphere, which he has only quitted to attend his father's funeral, and to which he is anxious to return without delay. He has saturated himself with culture in all its forms. Philosophy has evidently been his principal study, but law and history have not been neglected. He has mastered the theoretical principles of the fine arts, especially the drama, and can, on occasion, turn poet himself. He is an adept at oratory in all its branches, from the loftiest declamation to the most acid repartee. Nor though he is fat and scant of breath, is he devoid of physical accomplishments. He is a skilful swordsman, who is equally able to prove his mettle on the duelling ground or in a hand-to-hand grapple with pirates. Nor does he quail before the terrors of the supernatural; when even the blood of soldiers runs cold, Hamlet does not blench. A man of such versatile genius can scarcely lack the personal magnetism which draws to him devoted friends and followers. Despite his shrinking from publicity, he is idolized by the multitude, and in Horatio he finds a comrade whom he can wear in his 'heart of heart.' It is strange that Shakspere, who knew nothing of the Universities, save what he could glean upon chance professional visits, should have left this typical picture of a college friendship between the brilliant highly-strung scholar and the plain man with limited ideas and unimpassioned sturdiness of temper. (Horatio's inflexible loyalty is as a rock where Hamlet stands firm among the quicksands of life.) For Hamlet's self-culture has issued in a species of misanthropy: his idealism has taken the form of pessimism; his will and his emotions are alike diseased. (The metaphysics of Wittenberg have dwarfed and dimmed for him the practical world of facts and events, and have sapped his power of acting energetically within that world. He has allowed his uncle to secure the sceptre to which he had a presumptive claim, and which at the cost of a little exertion he might have made his own. But the melancholy with which Hamlet is afflicted when the play opens, does not spring so much from lassitude of the will as from a profound emotional shock.) Like Troilus he has idealized the sexual bond, but as between husband and wife, instead of lover and mistress. (In the mutual love of his parents he has seen

the consummate pattern of such a union—and now, with his father not two months dead, his mother has married his uncle,) declining with most wicked speed from Hyperion to a satyr. (In the agony of his disillusion, life seems to him a mass of hollowness and corruption, the world an unweeded garden that grows to seed. He already lets his mind run on the idea of suicide, but the canon of the Everlasting against self-slaughter bars the way. He must at least, fly from the polluted family hearth and the pestilential atmosphere of Elsinore, back to Wittenberg, to the academic seclusion where the distracting voices of the world are shut out. But at this point Hamlet's wishes conflict with those of the King and Queen, and pliant from the first where action is concerned, he yields to their entreaties, and remains at court.)

(Had Claudius but known it, he would have been furthering his own safety by letting Hamlet depart. But a criminal never feels secure save when he can keep his eye on all whom he mistrusts, and it is a criminal who wears the crown of Denmark.) 'A vice of kings,' 'a king of shreds and patches,' Hamlet names him afterwards, and except that he is not devoid of ability, he is the most beggarly counterfeit of all that royalty should be. He recalls King John, but he lacks even the patriotism and soldiership which did something to redeem John in his earlier days. (Incest and fratricide have paved his way to the throne, and the instrument of his crime has not even been the dagger, which demands strength and courage, but 'the leperous distilment' of hebenon stealthily poured into the ears of a sleeping victim. A 'serpent' had figured in the official bulletins as the cause of Hamlet the elder's death, but that serpent now wears the crown.) And the reptile nature, though cloaked under the glittering show of royalty, manifests itself in sinuous, fawning methods of address, utterly unlike the genuine *bonhommie* of the true ruler of men. Such a nature finds in diplomacy a congenial weapon, and the warlike preparations of young Fortinbras against Denmark are not met by a display of force or even an imperious summons to disarm, but by an embassy to his bed-rid uncle praying his interference. (Peace at any price, wherein to enjoy the ill-gotten pleasures of his new position as king and husband—this is the be-all and end-all of Claudius' foreign policy. But he cannot feel at rest while there is a perpetual death's head at the feast in the shape of Hamlet, with his clouded brow and inky cloak. A little flattering tribute to his nephew's laudable exhibition of filial grief prefaces a long-winded series of commonplaces on the topic that every son in turn must lose a father, and that therefore mourning unduly prolonged shows 'a will most incorrect to Heaven.' Simi-

lar conventional phrases for the solace of the bereaved fall from the lips of the Queen, and to these Hamlet retorts with natural testiness. For the woman who can thus bury the memory of her first husband under a cover of platitudes had been cherished by him so tenderly that he would not 'beteem the winds of heaven visit her face too roughly,' and in return she had given him the appearance of a true and ever-strengthening love.

But hers is a sensuous, self-indulgent nature, ready to cling where it finds support, but powerless to grow incorporate with another life. There is in her nothing of the integrity of devotion which is proof against a seducer's blandishments and bribes. Pliant and impressionable, she had been fascinated by the 'witchcraft' of Claudius' wit, and lured on to sin. Her shallow capacity probably found in the adroit, obsequious intriguer more 'warmth and colour' than in the heroic form

> 'Where every god did seem to set his seal
> To give the world assurance of a man.'

Yet she cannot have been an accomplice in the plot against her first husband's life; her sins are not premeditated outrages, but the transgressions into which weakness drifts. Nor has her disloyalty to the father stifled her affection, such as it is, for the son. She cares for Hamlet enough to have a sentimental longing to assist at his bridal, but not enough to divine with a mother's instinct when danger threatens him at Claudius' hands. As we look into Gertrude's unstable, volatile nature, we realize that her son's vacillation of will is in part a heritage from the cradle.

When the current of a nation's life is poisoned at the source, the social waters will be turbid far and wide. The family of Polonius presents a suggestive study of an aristocratic Danish 'interior.' The head of the house is chief court functionary, Lord Chamberlain, and cabinet councillor in one. Claudius pays a tribute to the organic bond between him and the throne, and he is indeed a minister after the new king's heart, though we wonder in passing how the elder Hamlet could have promoted him to the office which he has evidently long filled. For in Polonius is embodied all that has made the term 'diplomatist' a by-word for narrowness of vision, pompous self-sufficiency, and ignorance of the human heart. His whole life long he has been hunting the trail of policy, seeking to get at truth by 'windlasses and assays of bias.' He has stalked it like a piece of big game, and he is mightily satisfied with his bag. But truth is not thus to be captured, and Polonius has only a stock of shallow worldly lore to

show for his pains, with just here and there a fragment of higher verities. The garrulous old gentleman is at the moment enjoying an unequalled opportunity of unlocking his treasure-house of wisdom, for his son is just returning to Paris, and the paternal blessing on the voyager would be incomplete without some words of paternal exhortation. Polonius' 'few precepts' are a guide to the whole duty of a young man of fashion away from home. They contain irreproachable counsel on the management of the tongue, the purse, and the apparel, but the sententious form in which they are uttered proves that they are little more than copy-book maxims, amidst which, as Dowden has well said, the noble exhortation 'To thine own self be true' is brought in 'as if it were a little bit of hard unvital wisdom like the rest.' How lax an interpretation is put by Polonius on his own code of morals is seen a little later in his instructions to the confidential agent whom he sends to Paris as a spy upon his son. It is no very exacting rule of life which includes among the venial slips of youth 'gaming, drinking, fencing, swearing,' and worse; nor is it a scrupulous sense of honour which originates the idea of manufacturing aspersions on a son's character as baits to draw from strangers whatever they know to his discredit.

As a fact, Polonius has no cause to be dissatisfied, for Laertes is a decidedly favourable specimen of the school in which he has been brought up. Plunged from the corruption of Elsinore into the yet deeper corruption of Paris, whose demoralizing influence had been so fatally proved on Bertram in *All's Well that Ends Well*, he does not degenerate into the mere professional *roué*. He is at pains to perfect himself in the elegant accomplishments befitting a man of station. He plies his music; he cultivates a rhetorical gift; he becomes a complete master of fence. But of a world governed by loftier ideals, by more elemental passions than those which are current in 'good society,' he knows nothing. Thus the news that the young lord Hamlet has been paying attentions to his sister Ophelia merely rouses his fears of a breach of social decorum; it is not *comme il faut* for the heir-apparent to be on tender terms with a subject, and Laertes proceeds to read the girl a lecture on the proper regulation of her affections. She listens meekly to his reproof, and then hastens to take up her parable in turn, whereupon Laertes finds that it is time for him to be going. If mutual exhortation can avail anything, the family of Polonius is not likely to wander from the narrow way. Laertes gone, the Lord Chamberlain himself takes his daughter to task. The shrinking girl is forced to unbosom the secrets of her shy little heart, to admit her incapacity to judge of the worth of

Hamlet's tenders. When she ventures to plead his holy vows as proof of his good faith, they are scornfully dismissed as springes to catch woodcocks, and she is forbidden henceforth 'to slander any moment leisure' by talking with him. Not a word of protest, or even of entreaty, falls from Ophelia's lips, only the dutiful little sentence: 'I shall obey, my lord.' Her docility is without bounds. She delivers up her letters, she returns her gifts. It would be profanation to call a feeling which can thus surrender at discretion by the sacred name of love. Ophelia is a sensitive plant nurtured in the hothouse atmosphere of Elsinore, with a pallid fragile beauty, opening instinctively to warmth and light, and closing as instinctively at the first chill touch upon its leaves. Such a wellnigh automatic process exhausts the capabilities of Ophelia's heart. She is no Juliet to deny father and mother for the sake of her wooer, no Helena to energetically surmount the obstacles of birth. Yet Ophelia is not entirely to blame if she does not bring strength and joy into Hamlet's life. From the first, in spite of his 'holy vows,' his love for her is cankered by the disease which is ravaging his emotional nature. We do not see them together till after the convulsion in Hamlet's whole being, caused by the apparition of his father, but the letter recited by Polonius is a memorial of their attachment in earlier days. Is it to be believed that the serious passion of a man so richly endowed as the Prince of Denmark could find utterance in such phrases as 'To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia, in her excellent white bosom, these,' or 'Thine evermore, most dear lady, while this machine is to him, Hamlet?' We have said that Hamlet is still in the undergraduate stage of existence: his feeling for Ophelia, if it may be judged by its expression on paper, is rather a sentimental vacation dalliance than a genuine outflow from the depths of his heart. It is questionable if Hamlet, in his emotional and mental chaos, was capable of a deep, steady love for any woman, and still more questionable whether he could have been steeled by feminine influence into strong, beneficent energy. Is it so certain, after all, as some would have it, that even a Juliet could have exorcised his deep-seated and complex malady? It was the very malignity of fortune that threw an Ophelia across his path.

To complete our view of the society in which Hamlet's lot is cast we must include three other figures whom the course of the story brings on the scene. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern recall the Salanio and Salarino of *The Merchant of Venice*. It is a law of their existence for such personages to hunt in couples. Each seeks to compensate for an entire lack of individuality by an alliance with the other.

Together they bow themselves in and out, they bandy tittle-tattle and compliments, they smirk and wheedle, and fetch and carry in general. They are the indispensable quidnuncs and hangers-on of the polite world. A yet hollower counterfeit of true good-breeding is Osric, the grandiloquent phrase-monger who 'did comply with his dug before he sucked it,' and who is ready to assent in one and the same breath to contradictory statements about the weather from Hamlet's mouth.

Amid this world of shams the ghost of the murdered king, phantom though it be, can claim, as Werner has pointed out, a unique reality. For it rises from the grave with a purely moral purpose—to secure the punishment of guilt. News has been brought to Hamlet that it is abroad, and with his friends he awaits its reappearance on the platform at midnight. He does not watch in vain, and the spirit, dumb to others, speaks to him—and in what words! How harrowing are the glimpses of the prison-house, with its purgatorial fire, how moving the appeal,

> 'List, O list!
> If thou didst ever thy dear father love.'

How soul-shattering the awful injunction thundered on the mid-night air, 'Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder,' and how vividly impressive the story of the crime, how, heart-rending the cry of the tortured soul:

> 'Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand,
> Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatched;
> Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
> Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd,
> No reckoning made, but sent to my account
> With all my imperfections on my head.
> O horrible! O horrible! most horrible!'

After all this, are the Ghost's farewell words necessary, 'Adieu, adieu, adieu! remember me?' But the father knows his own son. At the first mention of murder, Hamlet is all on fire to act:

> 'Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift
> As meditation or the thoughts of love,
> May sweep to my revenge.'

From the table of his memory he will wipe away 'all trivial fond records' that the Ghost's commandment may alone dominate his brain. And how does he begin? He draws out his 'tables' (as if he were taking notes of a philosophical lecture at Wittenberg) and jots down the commonplace 'that one may smile, and smile, and be a

villain,' at any rate in Denmark. And the Ghost's farewell words, they too go down, as if they were a peroration in danger of being forgotten, unless put on paper offhand. But this is not one of the crises where the pen is mightier than the sword. Hamlet's proper course would be to at once share his secret with his friends, to rouse the populace, and execute summary justice on Claudius. Nor is he held back, as is sometimes suggested, by moral scruples; not only was the duty of private revenge for the blood of a kinsman a maxim in primitive societies (and on this point Shakspere was faithful to the spirit of the original saga), but Hamlet, as son of the late king and presumptive heir to the throne, was the representative of national justice, and in punishing Claudius would have been the organ of the community at large. It is not scruples of conscience that come between Hamlet and his mission, but his aversion to deliberate action. Instead of hurrying back to his friends, he leaves them to find out him, and then greets them with 'wild and whirling words,' and hysterically repeated conjurations to secrecy. He feels that, under the awful shock of the revelation just made to him, he has lost the full control over his own faculties, and in order to cover this partial mental disorder he suddenly resolves 'to put an antic disposition on,' to assume the disguise of actual madness. This is not part of a deep-laid scheme of revenge, as in the original saga. It is a device to gain breathing-space. Hamlet's 'immediate need is to calm himself, to escape into solitude, there to recover self-mastery, and come to a clear understanding of the altered state of things.' But in resorting to this disguise Hamlet enters upon a false track. The saviour of society in Denmark, who is to set right the time that is out of joint, must be transparently sincere and direct in his methods. In posing as a madman, Hamlet catches something of the infection of the age, its preference for roundabout, disingenuous dealings. The man who is himself shamming is not on the way to overthrow a world of shams. Moreover Hamlet becomes absorbed in the intellectual fascination of his rôle; he revels in the opportunities it gives him of bewildering those about him, of letting fly shafts of mockery, here, there, and everywhere. But these verbal triumphs are Pyrrhic victories, which draw him further and further from his legitimate task.

And his interview with Ophelia in her closet—is this purely the last despairing endeavour of a lover, at the crisis of his fate, to find strength and comfort in the woman of his heart? Is there not an histrionic element in the proceeding, of a piece with the half-unreal courtship to which it forms the close? The disordered dress, the knocking knees, the pallid face, the long silent stare, the forlorn

gestures, the deep-drawn sigh—all these are unpleasantly suggestive of attitudinizing. Hamlet, in his turmoil of soul, may be groping for latent sources of support in Ophelia's nature, but his method of inquisition seems deliberately arranged for the purpose of startling the timid girl out of her wits. It is not to be wondered that she flies in terror to her father, or that he should conclude from her narrative that rejected love is the cause of Hamlet's transformation. Here is the key to the mystery which has been taxing the court for the last two months, and flushed with the excitement of his discovery, Polonius hurries to the presence-chamber. He is far too much a master of his trade to out with his secret at once. He keeps expectation on tip-toe, while the envoys from Norway make a business-like report on their mission: then, after a long-winded prologue to demonstrate that 'brevity is the soul of wit,' he defines the case under investigation:

> 'Your noble son is mad.
> Mad call I it: for to define true madness
> What is't but to be nothing else but mad?'

The problem thus lucidly set forth, there remains to

> 'Find out the cause of this effect,
> Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
> For this effect defective comes by cause.'

Before pronouncing judgement, Polonius with diplomatic caution puts in documentary evidence in the shape of Hamlet's letter and only then, after a further digression on the correctness of his own conduct, does he announce that the Prince is mad for Ophelia's love. He stakes his reputation, even his head, on the truth of his diagnosis; but the King's uneasy conscience asks for further proof, whereupon Polonius suggests the device of 'loosing' Ophelia to Hamlet in the lobby where Claudius and he may act as eavesdroppers. Ophelia, with her customary docility, lends herself to the stratagem, and even agrees to a hypocritical pretence of devotion. A high-spirited woman would not play such a part, yet it is easy to exaggerate the girl's offence. She is acting in obedience to the double mandate of her father and her king; she is encouraged by Gertrude to think that her action may forward Hamlet's recovery, and in any case she believes that she is furthering a legitimate attempt to find out the cause of his malady. Hamlet enters lost in thought. He is again meditating on suicide, and, as has been said, his indictment of the evils from which death is a tempting refuge seems to spring rather from the poet's own

mood than from the particular dramatic situation. Hamlet must have forgotten all about his father's ghost, when he speaks of 'the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns,' but he is true to his character when he emphasizes the paralysis of the will produced by reflection on the terrors that may await us beyond the grave. In the midst of these thoughts he suddenly beholds Ophelia at prayer, and still brooding on the perils of the world to come, he instinctively cries,

> 'Nymph, in thy orisons
> Be all my sins remembered.'

Intent on his meditations, he answers absently her inquiry as to how he fares, 'I humbly thank you, well, well, well,' and when she offers to return his gifts he seems at first not to realize the situation: 'I never gave you aught.' But the sight of his tokens recalls to him the present with all its bitterness. He remembers that Ophelia has denied his suit, he possibly suspects that in the atmosphere of espionage which surrounds him she is being used as a tool, and he turns upon her abruptly with the mocking query, 'Ha! ha! are you honest?' The flood of invective that follows has been thought by Coleridge and others to be directed mainly to the eavesdroppers whom Hamlet has guessed from Ophelia's manner to be within earshot. But there is no proof that the Prince has made this discovery, and his tirade is more like the swollen gush of the bitter waters in which his heart is rotting away. To pour this vitriolic abuse upon the gentlest of maidens seems to be wantonly breaking a butterfly upon the wheel, but Hamlet, in the hysterical sweep of his indignation, is generalizing Ophelia into a symbol of her sex, and he is arraigning not the cowering girl before him, but 'the eternal feminine' as it appears to him, the frailty whose name is woman. Claudius, listening behind the arras, is convinced that the source of his nephew's disorder is not love but 'something in his soul, o'er which his melancholy sits in brood.' With the penetration of guilt he scents danger in the 'hatch and disclose,' and he settles on the spot to send him to England—and to death.

But while the King plays the spy on Hamlet, the latter is engaged in reversing the parts. The one uses Ophelia as a decoy, and the other a travelling company of actors. Into the heart of the drama Shakspere introduces a typical group of his professional brethren, and stays the progress of the story to concentrate attention upon them and their art. What is the motive for this? Is it merely to show how Hamlet forgets his mission, while occupying himself with

the congenial functions of dramatic critic and stage-manager? This is part of the answer, but far from all. Here, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakspere approaches the problem of dramatic art as part of the broad problem of reality and show. From the first appearance of the Ghost the contrast between these two elements has underlain the play. A visitor from the world of shadows enters the solid, material world; in this material world itself all is show—the appearance, without the substance, of kingship, wifehood, wisdom, chivalry, love; even Hamlet who sees through and hates this world of imposture, who justly claims that he has 'that within which passeth show,' is drifted into the limbo of unrealities by the perpetual action of his reflective faculty dissolving facts into a train of ideas. And now into the midst of this society masquerading with realities step the tragedians of the city to whom masquerade is the serious business of life. Hamlet begs their star-actor for a taste of his quality, and gives him the lead in a passionate speech on the murder of Priam by Pyrrhus. The theme is highly characteristic, for it is the ferocious revenge of the son of Achilles on the king who, as lord of Troy, is responsible for his father's death. Hamlet can revel in the theatrical declamation of such a deed while taking no steps to accomplish it in the field of action. The player losing himself in his subject turns colour, and has tears in his eyes as he enlarges in his recital on Hecuba's grief. The rest of the world puts sham in the place of reality; this man in the sincerity of his art clothes fiction with the living power of fact over his hearers and himself. Hamlet's penetrating intelligence fastens immediately on the contrast and its application to his own case:

> 'What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba
> That he should weep for her? What would he do
> Had he the motive and the cue for passion
> That I have? . . . Yet I,
> A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
> Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause.
> And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
> Upon whose property and most dear life
> A damned defeat was made.'

Hamlet, however, can *say* only too much, and this very paroxysm of self-reproach effervesces in a torrent of imprecations upon his uncle. But he checks himself:

> 'This is most brave,
> That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
> Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
> Must fall a-cursing, like a very drab,
> A scullion!'

Does he, any the more, sweep to his revenge? No, he sees in the arrival of the actors a means of satisfying a scruple which is suddenly started, and which helps to stave off the dreaded hour of action. The Ghost may have been the devil, and its tale untrue. A play on a subject like his father's murder, acted before the king, will serve as touchstone to his conscience. If he blench, Hamlet 'knows his course.' The performance takes place, and the king's conduct establishes his guilt beyond a doubt. Now is the moment for Hamlet's course, for summary vengeance in the face of the whole court upon the culprit who has delivered himself into his hands. But Claudius is let slip away untouched, while the Prince breaks into hysterical, incoherent snatches of rhyme, followed by a call for music, as if he felt the need of calming the tumult of his soul. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear, and afterwards Polonius, to summon him to his mother's closet. In the peculiar exaltation of his mood he takes an exquisite pleasure in putting them to confusion, and then goes forth to Gertrude.

Fortune seems to play into his hands, for in the lobby he discovers his uncle at prayer. Now might he 'do it pat,' and the sword is half drawn, and then rammed back into the scabbard. He has found another plea for delay. To kill Claudius thus would be to send him to heaven, and this would be 'hire and salary, not revenge.' He must wait till he can catch him at some act with 'no relish of salvation' in it, and then hurl him straight to hell. The pretext is so specious that some of Hamlet's critics have thought it a genuine scruple, instead of a fine-spun excuse to shuffle off the duty for the accomplishment of which this is the all-propitious hour. In this crisis of his fate the Prince is unfaithful to his mission, and Nemesis henceforward dogs his every step. It is written that they who draw the sword shall perish by the sword, but there are times when the opposite holds good, that they who draw *not* the sword shall perish by the sword, and drag down alike the innocent and the guilty to share their doom. The weapon that Hamlet could not steel himself to lift against the King is driven a moment afterwards, in an impulse of hysterical excitement, through the heart of Polonius, as he lurks behind the arras, and the deed of blood draws from him nothing but a few contemptuous jeers at 'the rash intruding fool' who has thus met his fate. For Hamlet is now absorbed in the one overmastering object of bringing home to his mother the sense of her wrong-doing. The Queen's frailty had cast a blight on creation for him, even before he knew of the King's villainy, and of the two it seems to move him far the more deeply.

In brooding over the wantonness and weakness of woman, he dissipates the energies that were needed to avenge masculine misdeeds. Was this what the Ghost foresaw when he warned Hamlet to contrive naught against his mother? How then can he rest in his grave when his commands are being doubly violated, when Claudius is spared and Gertrude pilloried? So again he rises at dead of night to whet his son's almost blunted purpose. Hamlet confesses that, 'lapsed in time and passion,' he has neglected to fulfil his task, but even after this visitation he is as far from deliberate action as ever. He abandons himself to a fatalism which recognizes in the seeming accidents of life instances of divine intervention, and which therefore reduces human forethought and purpose to cypher value. In the death of Polonius he sees the direct agency of heaven; he lets himself be shipped off for England without protest, for he believes that there is a special providence watching over his fortunes; and he ascribes to inspiration from above the impulse which moved him to open his companions' paper of instructions, and thus to frustrate the design upon his life. In a similar spirit he complacently disavows all responsibility for the fate to which he sends the unsuspecting Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

> 'They are not near my conscience:
> 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
> Between the pass and fell incensed points
> Of mighty opposites.'

Once only, after encountering Fortinbras and his army on the march to do battle for a little patch of ground, does he feel driven to chide himself for his lethargy. In the conduct of the soldiers, as before of the actors, he sees a rebuke. Twenty thousand men for an eggshell, 'a fantasy and trick of fame,' go to their graves like beds, while he through

> 'Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
> Of thinking too precisely on the event'

will not stir, though he has 'a father killed, a mother stained.'

But the irony of retributive justice provides Hamlet with a more stinging contrast than Fortinbras and his men. By taking the life of Polonius he has placed Laertes in a position exactly parallel to his own, and the latter 'sweeps to his revenge' for his murdered father. He hastens from Paris to Elsinore, stirs up the populace to rebellion, and bursts, at the head of an angry mob, into the royal presence, clamouring for instant retribution:

'To this point I stand,
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged
Most throughly for my father.'

There is, however, a windy passion in Laertes' heroics which argues a shallow soul beneath, and family pride rather than filial love spurs him on. He seems almost less concerned at his father's death than at the slur of his obscure burial:

'No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble rite nor formal ostentation.'

Yet this cavalier, who sets such store by heraldic parade, and whose own bearing is marked by a showy pomp, stoops immediately afterwards to complicity in an unknightly and treacherous design. Chance has landed Hamlet again on the Danish shore, and Laertes greedily catches at the King's suggestion of a fencing match, in which the Prince, 'most generous and free from all contriving,' will not peruse the foils, and will thus give his foe the opportunity of striking at him with an 'unbated' weapon. Laertes even betters his instructor in mean villainy by proposing to dip his sword-point in venom 'bought of a mountebank,' whereupon Claudius, to make assurance doubly sure, adds the device of the poisoned bowl.

The histrionic passion of Laertes is a less genuine tribute to the memory of Polonius than Ophelia's madness. The girl had looked to her father in all things; her individuality was scarcely so much her own as a subordinate part of his. The breach of her relations with Hamlet and the spectacle of his seeming lunacy had caused her nothing more than a few sighs and tears, but the loss of the parent on whom her life had hung crushes her being. The frail will snaps, and the feeble wit flickers out: Ophelia is henceforth merely a 'wandering voice,' a creature 'incapable of her own distress,' till she sinks gently, with music on her lips, beneath the river-waves. But the voices of the world that had made life hard for her rage round her even in death. The harsh rubric of a merciless, letter-bound Church, exactly such a Church as we should expect in Elsinore, grudges Christian burial to the maiden who falls under suspicion of having sought her own end. Had priestcraft had its way, uncontrolled by the civil power,

'She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the last trumpet; for charitable prayers,
Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her.'

Even the populace, as represented by the captious, logic-chopping grave-diggers, see in her 'bringing home with bell and burial' an abuse of class privilege. Laertes, on the other hand, the worshipper of pageantry, is infuriated by denial to his sister of complete funeral rites, and seeks to compensate for their absence by an ostentatious display of grief. With hyperbolical invocations he leaps into Ophelia's open grave. Hamlet, just returned from his voyage, has been lingering in the churchyard brooding on the vanity of all human things. Laertes' words fall on his ears like a challenge, and in a moment he too is in the grave, vociferating:

> 'I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
> Could not with all their quantity of love
> Make up my sum.'

But what weight can such a declaration have from the lips of a man who had made light of killing her father, and had not given a thought to the daughter's grief? Is, then, this and the phrases that follow, as the Prince himself declares, a parody of Laertes' mouthing? The impulse to ridicule hollow protestations may fire the train of Hamlet's rhetoric, but once alit it passes out of his control, and consumes his whole being in its blaze. Then follows the cold fit, with its abrupt change to entreaty, followed by a relapse into his normal fatalism:

> 'Hear you, sir;
> What is the reason that you use me thus?
> I loved you ever; but it is no matter.
> Let Hercules himself do what he may,
> The cat will mew and dog will have his day.'

The fatalistic note is struck once again shortly before the duel when Horatio seeks to dissuade his friend, with whom all is ill about the heart, from taking part in the encounter. 'We defy augury' is the rejoinder; 'there is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all.' The presentiment of evil at Hamlet's heart is fulfilled. The plot of his enemies claims its intended victim, but chance adds the Queen and Laertes to the sacrificial roll, and in a moment of hectic energy, before 'the fell sergeant death' completes his arrest, Hamlet at last sends Claudius to his account. The *Manes* of the murdered King had demanded a life for a life; the son who had been unequal to the burden of a just revenge crowns with his own body the heaped-up 'quarry' of the slain. Hamlet has, of a truth, not set right the

times that were out of joint. The story that his apologist, Horatio, is left to tell is one

> 'Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
> Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters;
> Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
> And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
> Fall'n on the inventors' heads.'

But with the nomination of the heroic Fortinbras to the vacant throne we foresee the dawning of a new era, sounder than the old, when the leaven of a young and vigorous stock will slowly regenerate all that is rotten in the state of Denmark. Thus, as ever, Shakspere leaves us with hope for the future, and even the tragedy of Hamlet's fall is lightened as we see him borne to a soldier's grave, amid 'the drums and tramplings' of armed battalions, and the roar of artillery speaking to the northern sky.

No critic of Hamlet can ever hope to satisfy any other, least of all, perhaps, himself. How can outsiders grasp the secret of a life that was a mystery to the man who lived it? No Shaksperean character opens his heart so freely in words as the Danish Prince, yet none leaves us so ignorant of his real nature. In the day when the abysmal depths of personality unclose their shyest and most shadowy recess, where a water-shed, minute as a needle's point, only just severs genius and madness, love and cruelty, truth and falsehood, then, and not till then, will the world 'know the stops' of Hamlet. The guess hazarded here is that he is a man of genius, with will atrophied through an abnormal development, not only of the reflective but of the emotional faculties. Potentially he is an idealist, but never in fact, for the world around him is base, and his generalizing instinct, united to the hysterical sweep of his passion, magnifies its faults. His whole view of woman in particular is diseased. Gertrude is false, Ophelia feeble, but it is only mental disorder that leaps from these examples to the dogmatic conclusion, 'Frailty, thy name is woman.' Thus, when he should be sweeping to his revenge, he finds a bitter pleasure in mocking Ophelia, and disobeys the Ghost by wringing his mother's heart. Here, almost as much as in his lassitude of will, lies the root of his inaction against the King. The more he delays, the harder action becomes, except in hysterical outbursts whose results he can afterwards ascribe to agency from above. Hence his indifference to the fate of Polonius, his callous dispatch of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to an unearned doom. Hamlet's paralysis of will culminates in partial paralysis of the moral sense. In this even more than in

'the quarry that cries on havoc,' surrounding him in death is seen the Nemesis on his procrastination. But it is only a Polonius of criticism who would seek to exhaust the significance of the drama by drawing from it a neat little lesson on the value of dispatch in practical life. (In mystery it opens, and in mystery it ends.) Yet, if after groping in a twilight region we feel the need of some sure foothold, we may find it in the broad historical contrast of the infant and the full-grown Teutonic consciousness as unfolded respectively in the Saga of Beowulf and the anglicized story of Hamlet the Dane.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CLIMAX OF TRAGEDY

HAMLET, with its tragic close, is the connecting-link between the problem-plays and the tragedies in the stricter sense, whose theme is the downfall of a noble nature through some ruinous sin. The change from the one group to the other is as the passage from a valley swathed in fold of mist into a bare, storm-swept upland. The baffling obscurity of *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida*, the perplexing moral entanglements of *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*, no longer confront us. The issues now awaiting solution are plain from the outset, and the catastrophes are too appalling to have an enigmatical significance. The change of theme and of treatment is accompanied by a change in the character of the leading figures. In the problem-plays the heroes had been young men reared amidst highly artificial social conditions. The tragic protagonists are beings of wellnigh superhuman stature, recalling the creations of Marlowe. They are mature in years, and they belong to races or to epochs distinguished by colossal passion and energies. A Celtic Chieftain and a Celtic King, both looming gigantic through the haze of tradition, a Moorish Commander and an Egyptian Queen, a primitive Roman warrior who is a veritable Mars in earthly mould,—such are the forms which stride in majestic procession before our eyes, and the spectacle of whose ruin convulses our inmost being with pity and terror. In *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* the dead-weight of historical material hampered the free movement of the tragic spirit, but in *Macbeth, Othello,* and *King Lear* it had unshackled sweep, and wrought itself into forms of unique sublimity.

The date of **MACBETH** cannot be fixed with complete certainty. The play first appeared in the folio of 1623. It must, however, be at least earlier than April 20, 1610, for on that day Dr. Forman saw it performed at the Globe, and recorded the main outlines of the plot in his Diary. On the other hand, it must be later than the accession of James I in March, 1603, for a number of passages are evidently intended as compliments to the sovereign who had shown special favour to the 'Globe' Company. Among these are Macbeth's vision of kings (Act iv. Sc. 2), including some 'that two[illegible] balls

and treble sceptres carry,' and the incident (Act iv. Sc. 3) of touching for the king's evil, which James claimed as hereditary in the Stuart house[1]. *Macbeth* may therefore be placed without doubt between 1603 and 1610. Its precise date must be conjectural, but it is probably about 1606[2]. The metrical characteristics are those of a late, but not the latest, period. Light endings appear for the first time in considerable number, but weak endings are still almost entirely absent. The style has many of the characteristics, in intensified form, of portions of *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida.* It is pregnant, and elliptical often to the point of obscurity. The difficulties which it presents are, however, probably not entirely due to Shakspere. The earliest text, that of the first folio, is very unsatisfactory, and suggests that it has been taken from a stage-version. This would help to account for the unusual shortness of the play, and the number of incomplete lines. It has been conjectured that this stage-version is due to Middleton, who wrote for the King's Company between 1615 and 1624, and one of whose plays was called *The Witch.* The theory is that Middleton condensed *Macbeth* for theatrical purposes, inserting at the same time passages of his own, some of which resemble scenes in *The Witch.* The balance of evidence is in favour of the view that the play has been 'edited' in all likelihood by Middleton, but that the interpolations are far fewer than some critics have asserted, and are to be found chiefly in the passages in the witch-scenes where Hecate appears[3]. The story of Macbeth had been poetically treated during Elizabeth's reign, but

1 The repeated references to witchcraft are similarly inspired, for it was a subject in which James had a peculiar interest. In 1589 the fleet in which he was bringing home his bride, Anne of Denmark, had been dispersed by a violent storm, and in the belief that this was due to sorcery, he had taken vigorous proceedings against witches. In 1599 he had published his tract *Demonologie*, maintaining against sceptical attacks the reality of possession by evil spirits, and in 1604, the year after he came to the English throne, a new statute was passed against witchcraft. A play in which witches gave awful proof of their malign power would thus be peculiarly attractive to a monarch who believed himself to have been the victim of their baneful influence.

2 In Act iv. Sc. 1 of *The Puritan*, published in 1607, the words, 'Instead of a jester we'll have a ghost in a white sheet sit at the upper end of the table,' seems to be an allusion to Banquo's ghost, and if so, 1606 or the early part of 1607 would be the latest date for the tragedy. The bestowal of Cawdor's honours on Macbeth may have been suggested by the investiture of Sir James Murray on April 7, 1605, with the dignities of Scone forfeited by the Earl of Gowry for conspiracy against James.

3 The theory of extensive interpolations in *Macbeth* has been chiefly advocated by the Clarendon Press editions and Fleay. The former ascribe to Middleton (*a*) portions of the witch-scenes, i. 3. 1-37; iii. 5; iv. 1. 39-47, 125-132. (*b*) The Porter scene, ii. 3. 1-46. (*c*) The Sergeant scene, i. 2. (*d*) A number of miscellaneous passages, including the 'King's evil' scene, iv. 3. 140-159. Fleay accepts the Porter scene as genuine, but adds to Middleton's contributions in the witch-scenes, i. 1, iv. 1. 71-72, 79-81, 89-103, as also iii. 4. 130-144. He has a further theory that the 'weird sisters' of i. 3, the Scandinavian Norns or goddesses of destiny, are distinct from the 'witches' of iv. 1. But he has to confess that Shakspere calls these 'witches' in iv. 1. 136 'the weird sisters.' This is fatal to his theory, which moreover draws distinctions of which Shakspere knew nothing.—The whole question of the interpolations is well discussed by E. K. Chambers in appendices E, F, G, to his edition of the play in the 'Warwick' Series. I agree substantially with his conclusion that the only passages which we have any warrant

Shakspere's sole authority was Holinshed's Chronicle. He follows closely the account there given of the reigns of Duncan and Macbeth, though the central episode of the play, the midnight murder of Duncan, is based on Holinshed's earlier narrative of the assassination of King Duffe by Donwald, the governor of his castle, and his wife.

Thus, in *Macbeth* as in *Hamlet,* Shakspere sought his materials in the records of a semi-historic past. But, instead of Scandinavian saga, he now quarried in the richer mine of Celtic legend. The significance of *Macbeth* as a novel point of departure in English literature has scarcely been fully enough recognized. Now for the first time did the southern country levy a return for the toll which Scotch bards had taken from it for so long. During the fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries the poets north of the Tweed, from King James to Sir David Lyndesay, while showing a sturdy patriotism in the spirit of their verse, had borrowed its forms almost exclusively from Chaucer. Hitherto England had received no equivalent, but the balance was more than redressed when the annals of 'Caledonia, stern and wild' furnished Shakspere with the materials of one of his mightiest creations. He may have visited Scotland as a member of the company of which Laurence Fletcher, one of the Lord Chamberlain's Servants, was the head, and whose presence at Aberdeen is recorded in the register of the Town Council for October, 1601. But, however this may be, he pierced, with an intuition that in an Elizabethan Englishman was wellnigh miraculous, into the very heart of Highland romance. The desolate storm-swept heaths, where the evil powers of earth and sky may fittingly meet and greet in hideous carnival; the lonely castles, where passions of primaeval intensity find their natural home, and where, at dead of night, murder may stealthily move to its design; the eerie atmosphere, where the hoarse croak of the raven and the scream of the owl, the fatal bellman, foretell the impending doom, and where the ghost of the victim stalks to the head of the board in the assassin's banqueting-hall—every detail is steeped in the peculiar genius of Celtic Scotland. Hitherto this fertile poetic material had found its chief expression in ballads of weird imaginative power, but these, though of supreme excellence in their kind, were only *Volkslieder,* and had no more than a local circulation. But now Shakspere

for ascribing to another hand are three: iii. 5, iv. 1. 39-43, iv. 1. 125-132. These are distinguished from the genuine witch-scenes by (1) the introduction of a superfluous character, Hecate; (2) Iambic instead of trochaic metre; (3) a lyrical element alien to the original conception of the witches.—For a defence of the genuineness of the Porter scene, which Coleridge had rejected before the C. P. editors, see Hales' paper *The Porter in Macbeth* in his *Notes and Essays on Shakspere.* Compare De Quincey's *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth.*

claimed for universal purposes what had hitherto been the monopoly of the clans. His mighty art preserved all the mysticism and elemental passion of the Highland story, while investing it with a stupendous moral significance of which its Celtic originators had never dreamed. So Titanic is the theme as handled by the dramatist that, contrary to his usual practice, he does not complicate it with episodes, but develops it in its isolated grandeur. Thus *Macbeth* is, of all the great tragedies, the simplest in structure. It was requisite to know society at Elsinore through and through before we could grasp the problem of Hamlet's career; but to judge of the Thane of Cawdor and his wife, we need only focus our gaze upon the lurid revelations of their own hearts.

But Shakspere never entirely isolates the individual from his environment, and in the opening scene of the play mysterious agents hover through the air, sinister in aspect and in speech. These witches or weird sisters are the embodiment, in visible form, of the malignant influences in nature which are ever on the alert to establish an unholy alliance with the criminal instincts of the human heart. Dowden rightly dismisses as inadequate Gervinus's interpretation of them as simply the embodiment of inward temptation. These 'posters of the sea and land' are not merely concrete symbols of a mental process; nameless and sexless though they be, theirs is an independent vitality of evil whirling through the universe till it finds asylum in a soul where germs of sin lie ready to be quickened into life. That a subtle reciprocity already exists between Macbeth and these demoniacal forces is emphasized at the outset by Shakspere, for the witches' anarchical formula, 'Fair is foul and foul is fair,' is echoed in the Thane's first words on the heath near Forres, 'So foul and fair a day I have not seen.' Yet to outward appearance Macbeth is not the man in whom the Powers of Darkness could claim an ally. As we first see him, he is returning from a well-foughten field where, by brilliant feats of arms against his country's foes, without and within, he has proved himself 'valour's minion, Bellona's bridegroom lapped in proof.' In gratitude for his loyal services his sovereign has, on the first tidings of victory, sent to greet him with the title of the traitor whom he has overthrown in battle. But the weird sisters are more lynx-eyed than the meek, unsuspicious Duncan. The hero whom the king delights to honour already cherishes a fell design against his royal master's life and throne. He has 'broken' this enterprise to his wife at some period earlier than the opening of the play, but hitherto his criminal impulses have remained latent, partly through lack of opportunity for their exercise,

partly through an innate reluctance to adapt means to ends. For Macbeth, as Gervinus has well brought out, resembles Hamlet in his tendency to procrastination, though with the Danish prince this has its root in excessive reflection, while in Macbeth's case it springs from morbid imaginings and aversion to the instruments by which alone his desires can be compassed. His wife, in her cold-blooded dissection of his character, declares:

> 'I fear thy nature;
> It is too full o' the milk o' human kindness
> To catch the nearest way: thou would'st be great,
> Art not without ambition, but without
> The illness should attend it: what thou would'st highly,
> That thou would'st holily; would'st not play false,
> And yet would'st wrongly win: thou'ldst have, great Glamis,
> That which cries, "Thus thou must do, if thou have it":
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do
> Than wishest should be undone.'

Thus with Macbeth 'murder is yet but fantastical' when the witches greet him with their three 'Hails,' as Glamis, Cawdor, and King in the hereafter. The third 'Hail' startles him into a rapture of meditation; the prediction in itself would not fully account for this, as Macbeth is a near kinsman of Duncan, and the crown might fall to him according to primitive usage in preference to young Prince Malcolm. But what plunges Macbeth into his reverie is the discovery that his own guilty aspirations find an echo in the voices of these mysterious creatures. Their salutation goes far to turn the criminal *in posse* into the criminal *in esse*, especially when he gets on the spot an earnest of their supernatural foresight in Ross' announcement that he has been created Thane of Cawdor. He feels assured that 'the greatest is behind,' but the imaginative terrors which beset him at the prospect of action plunge him back into the fatalistic policy of merely waiting upon circumstances.

> 'If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me
> Without my stir.'

How different is the effect of the witches' prophecy upon Banquo. He is to Macbeth what Horatio is to Hamlet. He is the unimaginative, limited, but upright man of affairs, in whose breast evil stimuli from without provoke no sympathetic thrill. The oracular declaration that he is 'lesser than Macbeth and greater,' that he shall get kings though he be none, leaves him quite unmoved. He discusses the appearance of these strange creatures in a matter-of-fact way, and when they vanish he dismisses them contemptuously as bubbles of the earth. When the fulfilment of their 'Hail' of Macbeth as

Cawdor proves that they cannot be thus lightly set aside, he is thrown on his guard against impending mischief.

> 'Oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
> The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
> Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
> In deepest consequence.'

In the train of accidents that follows may we not see in part the machinations of those 'goddesses of destiny,' as the chronicle calls the witches, who, by smoothing the path of crime for Macbeth, were, as Banquo feared, to beguile him to his doom? Duncan in the flush of victory nominates Malcolm as his heir, and Macbeth now learns for certain that chance will not crown him, without his stir. But in the same breath Duncan facilitates such 'stir' by offering himself as his thane's guest at his castle in Inverness. How utterly unexpected is his visit is shown by Lady Macbeth's cry of incredulous exultation to the bearer of the news, 'Thou'rt mad to say it.' To find that the destined victim is actually thrusting himself upon his doom—that is a grace of fortune which startles into momentary self-betrayal the woman who has brought her nature completely under the dominion of her will. It is no longer needful to labour the point that Lady Macbeth is not a Northern Fury, a virago of abnormal depravity and forbidding aspect. Perhaps, indeed, the pendulum has swung too far the other way, and some recent estimates of her character have been 'sympathetic' to a degree which Shakspere would not have countenanced. It is plain, however, that the woman who is addressed by her husband as 'my dearest chuck,' and who talks of her 'little hand,' must have been feminine in feature and in bearing. Dr. Bucknill, as the fruit of his medical experience, declared that she 'was a lady beautiful and delicate, whose one vivid passion proves that her organization was instinct with nerve force, unoppressed by weight of flesh. Probably she was small, for it is the smaller sort of woman whose emotional fire is the most fierce.' She had felt the softening influences of motherhood. She is knit to her husband by the closest bond, and lives but for and in him. She is not a tigress like Regan, a she-wolf like Margaret of Anjou, but a woman with the instincts of womanhood, which she cannot crush without a deliberate effort of will:

> 'Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull
> Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,

> Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose.'

Her will responds to the demand made upon it; it subdues her sensitive organism into a machine exquisitely adjusted to the execution of the dark design which her husband has been the first to broach, and which she is bent upon carrying to its issue. Duncan's visit is a chance that must not be let slip; as she proclaims, with grimly pregnant equivocation, 'he that's coming must be provided for.' Yet even with his victim at his mercy Macbeth still hesitates. Of moral scruples, in the strict sense, he knows nothing. In their place crowds a medley of motives, among which the sheer dread of earthly retribution on crime counts for much.

> 'That but this blow
> Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
> But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
> We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
> We still have judgement here; ... this even-handed justice
> Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
> To our own lips.'

This fear is quickened by a forecast of the universal indignation which the 'taking-off' of the blameless Duncan will excite; but a worthier bar to action is the reluctance, so natural in a Highland chief, to tarnish his honour by violating the laws of hospitality, loyalty, and kinship. Thus when his wife brings her dialectic to bear upon his wavering purpose, her tactics are to show that honour incites him to the deed, and that it may be accomplished safely. It is only a coward who can let 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would'; and failure is impossible with a victim sunk in the lethargy that follows travel, and with attendants drugged into drunken stupor, upon whom the guilt may be laid. Macbeth is overmastered by her practical logic, and even suggests fresh precautionary details—the use of the grooms' daggers, and the smearing of their persons with Duncan's blood. But as the moment of the deed draws nigh Macbeth's heated fancy usurps entire sway over his nature. The moral world has scarcely more reality for him than for Richard III or Iago, but he dwells almost habitually in a region of the imagination which is shut to them. The wild poetry of barbarism is in his blood, and it steeps even his crimes in a crimson splendour. From the riot of emotion within his breast is born the midnight vision of the air-drawn dagger marshalling him towards his goal, and as he strides upon his errand he looms gigantic through the lurid haze of his own imaginings.

The scene that follows is written with a pen of fire, and we seem eye-witnesses of the deed of death, though it is transacted off the stage. Macbeth acts with energy at the critical moment, and Duncan is quickly despatched, but a trifling incident precipitates the emotional reaction which in a nature like his was inevitable. Duncan's sons in the adjoining room wake for an instant and mutter a prayer. The 'amen' with which the murderer seeks to answer the 'God bless us' sticks in his throat. And, the dagger yet in his hand, he is panic-stricken because he cannot pronounce 'amen,' though the utterance of a single word might mean detection. His fears of the plot miscarrying are for the moment forgotten, yet it is not conscience that wrings him; it is the shuddering realization that he is henceforth an outcast, for ever beyond the reach of the 'blessing,' of which he has such need. Nor is it conscience that thunders in his ear 'Sleep no more'; it is the warrior's shame at having violated Nature's armistice, and the sense that never again can he claim its shelter as his due. In the fierce tumult of his feeling he rushes from the chamber, without taking the steps which were to incriminate the grooms. Even at his wife's bidding he refuses to return, and Lady Macbeth has to go in his place. Supernatural terrors have no power over her; 'the sleeping and the dead' are to her 'but as pictures.' Yet all that is womanly in her revolts from the task. She had lacked the heart to kill Duncan herself because he resembled her father in his sleep, and the sight and smell of blood are loathsome to her delicate sensibilities. But her imperial will asserts its mastery, and with a ghastly jest, in which her pent-up feeling forces for itself relief, she hurries out to finish the half-done work.

The clamorous urgency of the knocking at the castle-gate signalizes realistically the invasion of the blood-stained penetralia by the importunate forces of the outer world. Even then Macbeth's fears are of the imaginative kind, while his wife's single anxiety is to get rid of all incriminating conditions. Yet with the actual entrance of Macduff and Lennox, and the growing light and stir of daybreak, Macbeth regains his composure. His indignation at the crime that has taken place under his roof-tree is admirably feigned, and his sudden murder of the grooms, on the plea of the uncontrollable fury aroused by their treason, imposes for the time upon the Scottish lords. Lady Macbeth, on the contrary, is beginning to feel the physical reaction that follows an acute strain on the will, and her husband's startling announcement of his second deed of blood makes her faint away. But even her weakness turns to good account. In the

confusion caused by her swoon Duncan's sons, alarmed for their own safety, hurriedly agree to take flight, Malcolm to England, Donalbain to Ireland. They thus rid Macbeth of the embarrassing problem of inventing motives for the grooms' murder of Duncan; he has now only to give out that they were suborned by the fugitive princes. Accident has again befriended the Thane by at once giving plausibility to his tale and by removing his rivals. As Duncan's cousin he naturally mounts the vacant throne. The witches' threefold hail is fulfilled.

But Macbeth's is 'the vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself.' The weird sisters when they hailed him as king, hailed Banquo as the father of kings. The rapid fulfilment in so unforeseen a way of the one prophecy should have taught him the futility of seeking to frustrate the other. But logic is far less potent with a man of Macbeth's nature than fear. Of what avail is the crown to him, while Banquo is a perpetual death's head at the feast—dangerous in the present, and of evil omen for the future? 'To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus.' It is with Banquo that his alarms begin, but they do not stop there. His spies are in every household, he eats his meals in fear, he is shaken nightly by the affliction of terrible dreams. The joy of the successful criminal, as it is known by Richard III and Iago, is denied even for a moment to Macbeth. He has put 'rancours in the vessel of his peace,' and his own terrors drive him inexorably into deeper guilt. He contrives the murder of Banquo only to find that even 'when the brains are out' the man does not die, but rises with gory locks and glaring eyes to push him from his stool in the banqueting-hall. The apparition is not, like the ghosts that throng to the tent of Richard III, the offspring of a moral revolt. It is born of the fevered blood, not of the conscience, and though it turns Macbeth's cheek white with terror, it stirs in him no feeling of remorse.

So transcendently convincing is the dramatist's art in this scene that, in a sense, it defeats his further purposes. All other tortures that Nemesis can inflict upon Macbeth seem superfluous after this apocalypse of the inward hell which is devouring him. But the stern Shaksperean ethics demand a double retribution upon the sinner, at the bar of the world, as well as in his own breast. *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht,* and the dramatist therefore makes the crowning outrage against Banquo not only a source of mental torture to Macbeth, but the beginning of his fall from power. For Fleance, whom Macbeth had marked for death along with his father, escapes, and the strong points of coincidence between this

murder and that of Duncan arouses, as is seen from the ironical speech of Lennox, Act. iii. 6, suspicions which had been hitherto latent[1]. Accident which has till now befriended Macbeth has begun to turn against him. Beset by terrors on every side he seeks counsel of the weird sisters, resolved to know, 'by the worst means, the worst.' The ghastly incantation-scene, when the witches fling, one by one, into the bubbling cauldron the loathsome ingredients of their hell-broth, strikes the note of the coming doom. As they had before hastened his rise by inflaming his master-motive of ambition, so now they accelerate his fall by ministering to what has become his cardinal passion—the yearning to feel himself secure. In each case they embody the treacherous sycophancy of evil which feeds the mind with its favourite nourishment, knowing it to be a poison at the core. Macbeth's ambition had welcomed the stimulant of the triple hail; his fears call for an opiate, and this is provided by the supernatural guarantee of safety until apparently impossible conditions are fulfilled. But one caution is appended. Macbeth is bidden beware Macduff, the Thane of Fife, and in this, too, the witches are 'harping' his pre-existent dread. After Banquo's fall Macduff has become his chief terror, and he now resolves to seize him at once. But the news comes that the Thane has fled to England; accident has again played Macbeth false. In baffled rage he falls on Macduff's castle, and puts his wife and babes to the sword. This, the most wanton outrage of his reign, is turned by ironical destiny into an instrument for the satisfaction of the seemingly impossible conditions necessary to his overthrow. Macduff, strictly speaking, has not been born of woman; he therefore alone has the power to harm Macbeth. But the Thane, on his arrival at the English court, is checked in his design of a campaign against the tyrant by the singular conduct of Malcolm, who at first views his motives with suspicion. While he is still hesitating he gets tidings of the butchery of his loved ones, and it is this that decides him to take up arms against the fiend of Scotland. Thus the bloody sequel to the witches' caution about Macduff is a main agent in annihilating the illusory guarantees which they had given for Macbeth's safety. Well may he cry out later against

> 'These juggling fiends
> That palter with us in a double sense;
> That keep the word of promise to our ear,
> And break it to our hope.'

1 This is well brought out by Moulton, *Shakspere as a Dramatic Artist*, chap. 6.

It is part of the Nemesis that Macbeth has to face the approaching doom alone. The bond of crime between him and his wife slowly cancels all the holier ties that knitted them together at the first. The murder of Duncan had been their joint enterprise, but Banquo's death and the outrages that follow are planned solely by Macbeth. Once only, in the apparition-scene, do we again see the lady at her husband's side, trying to steel him into calm by the overmastering energy of her will, and with consummate self-control combining the parts of the solicitous hostess and the reproving wife. Thenceforth Shakspere never shows us the twain together; with averted faces each passes to an uncompanioned doom. It has become customary of late among Lady Macbeth's apologists to speak of her as suffering from remorse, but it is not easy to find the justification of such a view. From her lips, as from her husband's, no word of contrition for the past ever falls. She is simply the prey of her delicate sensibilities as Macbeth of his flushed imagination. The 'eternal feminine' in her nature rises in triumphant mutiny against the will that for a space had wrestled it down. It is in sleep that this will is entirely subdued, and then the liberated instincts of womanhood are so tumultuous that they force her in 'slumbery agitation' from her bed. Macbeth has murdered sleep, and sleep has forsaken his eyelids, but it is a still direr curse to have sleep without its attendant balm. A midnight wanderer with memory zig-zagging through the horrors of the past, and stimulating the senses into mock activity, the woman of royal will reduced to an automaton helplessly babbling its secrets to all who have ears to hear—such is Lady Macbeth in her last state, whence death is a self-sought release.

The loss of her who had once been his 'dearest partner of greatness' is powerless to rouse Macbeth from the callous apathy into which he has sunk. After the witches' assurances of safety, his imagination ceases to torture him with supernatural terrors, but it haunts him with the contrast between his life as it is and as he had longed for it to be. His had been the clan-chieftain's ideal of feudal glory, with its appurtenances of honour, love, obedience, troops of friends; and instead he has for portion 'curses not loud but deep.' He drags out a solitary, sombre existence; the rhythm of life is dulled for him into a meaningless monotone; the procession of the hours becomes merely a vapid pageant ushering mortality on its way to 'dusty death.' Yet the approach of his enemies stirs in him the instinct of self-preservation which the most complete world-weariness cannot extinguish. He hangs out his banner on the walls of Dunsinane, and

buckles on his harness for the fray. He is still in point of mere physical courage the 'brave Macbeth.' Yet, as it has been said, 'he fights now not like "Bellona's bridegroom lapp'd in proof," but with a wild and animal clinging to life':

> 'They have tied me to a stake: I cannot fly,
> But, bear-like, I must fight the course.'

He is unnerved, however, by the discovery that the witches have played him false, and he soon falls beneath Macduff's avenging sword. Thus the long-drawn agony ends, for here, as always, it is the glory of the Shaksperean drama that death assuages, and does not intensify the tragic pain.

Macbeth, if compared with *Richard III,* marks the marvellous advance of the dramatist's art in subtlety and impressive power. In both plays criminal ambition with its consequences forms the central theme. The hunchback king, at the crisis of his fate, feels the avenging power of the conscience which he had so long deliberately set at defiance. But the career of Macbeth and his wife presents a far more complex problem. Of conscience, in the strict sense, neither is possessed. And the dramatic crux was to exhibit the action of Nemesis in characters of this type. The conditions are satisfied by making the man the victim of his self-torturing imagination and the woman of her acutely nervous sensibilities. We thus realize that nature has reserve forces for the punishment of sin, when she cannot call conscience to her aid. So awful, indeed, is the retribution upon the guilty pair that it avails them as a partial atonement for their misdeeds. The criminal who cannot snatch even *a moment of precarious joy from his crime, with whom the offence* and the misery of it are simultaneous, has not reached the lowest depths of degradation. Hence it is that the career of Macbeth and his wife becomes fit material for tragedy, and that the contemplation of it purges the emotions through pity and terror. In chastened mood we look forward to the dawning of a new era for Scotland when Malcolm has been crowned at Scone.

OTHELLO was first published in quarto form in 1622, but the text is imperfect as compared with that of the folio version. The evidences of the date are purely internal, and certainty on the point is impossible. But the small proportion of rhyme and the frequency of 'run-on' verse are signs of maturity, while, on the other hand, the practically total absence of light and weak endings and the percentage of double endings (26) show that the play does not

belong to the latest period. In all probability it dates from the first years of James' reign, 1604 or 1605. The plot is taken from the same source as *Measure for Measure*, Cinthio's *Hecatomithi*. Shakspere followed closely the incidents of the Italian tale till the murder of the heroine, but he profoundly modifies the relations of Othello and Iago, and adds the new figures of Roderigo and Emilia[1]. The novel reads like a page out of a Venetian 'Newgate Calendar,' and the heroine's fate is held up as a fearful example to self-willed damsels who put their trust in fascinating strangers. 'I fear,' says the ill-starred bride, 'that I must serve as a warning to young maidens not to marry against the will of their parents; an Italian girl should not wed a man whom nature, heaven, and mode of life have wholly separated from her.' It is Shakspere's glory that out of this crude record of atrocities, with its moralizing tag, he should have constructed one of the world's most stupendous tragedies.

This result is due, as always, to the consummate psychological insight with which Shakspere, from a given set of events, reasons back to the mental conditions in which they must have originated. The horrors of the story, which the dramatist reduced, but which were, in part, essential to it, become endurable when we realize that they flow inevitably from the collision of two such characters as Othello and Iago. They cease to be mere outbreaks of the beast in man, and become fraught with profound moral significance.

In this play Shakspere returns for his dramatic background to the city of the lagoons, which had already furnished the setting to *The Merchant of Venice*. But the peculiar local colour of the earlier work is missing, partly because the scene, after Act i, is shifted to Cyprus[2], partly, perhaps, because Shakspere's genius was so concentrated upon the development of the personal issues that he paid little heed to atmospheric detail. Yet, as in *The Merchant of Venice*, we are made to realize vividly the international position of the

1 In Cinthio's tale Desdemona marries the Moor against her family's wishes. The ensign, who corresponds to Iago in the play, loves Desdemona wrongfully. She gives a friendly preference to the lieutenant who is degraded for wounding a soldier on the guard, and for whose restoration she pleads to her husband. In revenge for Desdemona's coldness the ensign steals the Moor's handkerchief from her, leaves it on the lieutenant's bolster, and then tells Othello that it was given by his wife to her lover. At the Moor's request he undertakes to murder the lieutenant, but only succeeds in wounding him, and afterwards, with the husband's help, smashes in Desdemona's skull with a stocking full of sand. The two then quarrel, and the Moor on the ensign's accusation is tried for the murder, which he denies even on the rack. He is banished, and afterwards is killed by one of Desdemona's relatives. The ensign is somewhat later put to the torture for another offence and dies in agony.

2 On the insoluble problem of the time which the action in Cyprus is intended to cover, see the paper by Wilson (Christopher North), reprinted from *Blackwood* in *New Shakspere Soc's Trans.* 1875. Two days only seem to be required, yet a number of passages suggest a period of indefinite length. Hence Wilson's theory of 'a tremendous double-time' at Cyprus, a theory which he applies also to *Macbeth*

Republic, though here it is in its military, instead of its commercial, aspect. The Teutonic poet seems indeed to have welcomed the unique opportunity which the cosmopolitan relations of the island-city afforded him of bringing into dramatic collision strongly contrasted racial types. In *The Merchant of Venice* representatives of many countries, including a Moor, had made their appearance, while East and West stood arrayed against each other in the duel between Shylock and Portia. In Othello the violent catastrophe springs from the contact between a 'supersubtle Venetian' and a grandly simple but hot-blooded son of the desert.

The African commander whom the Republic has taken into its service, and who yields it in return a chivalrous loyalty, is yet as much a stranger in a strange land as Shylock. He is not a Pariah like the Jewish usurer, but he is none the less an alien, tolerated solely as an invaluable mercenary. It is the sword of Othello, not his person, that is precious to the magnificoes, who, with the exclusiveness of *Autochthones*, have scant love for 'an extravagant and wheeling stranger of here and everywhere.' The Moor is the typical Renaissance soldier of fortune who, since his arms had 'seven years' pith,' has had no home but the tented field, and whose career has been a series of moving accidents by land and sea. This 'unhoused free condition' of life, with its disastrous chances and hairbreadth 'scapes has been exactly fitted to expand the barbaric strength and simplicity of the Moor's nature. The romance of war and of travel has filtered into his blood, and lends him a grandeur of which he is all unconscious. Though, as he confesses, he is rude of speech, the poetry of great adventure thrills through his words, and makes him an orator in his own despite. But this primitive fashion of life has unfitted him to face the problems presented by more complex social conditions. The warrior who has been wont to carve his way clear by the sword's edge will find himself baffled by a situation which cannot be solved through force, and in his perplexity will be liable to be whirled into irremediable disaster by the maddened rush of the fierce tropical blood, which soldierly discipline has hitherto held in check.

Among the Venetian homes to which Othello's office procures him the *entrée* is that of the wealthy senator, Brabantio. But he is admitted less on the footing of a friend than of a 'lion' (the colloquialism is here specially apt), who is expected to entertain his host with a collection of stirring reminiscences. There is, however, another listener whose interest in the tales speedily deepens into an interest in their teller. It does not seem to have occurred to Braban-

tio to place any bar on the intercourse between his motherless daughter, Desdemona, and Othello. He took it for granted that a modest, gentle girl, who had refused in marriage 'the wealthy curled darlings' of her own nation would be prevented by a *horror naturalis* from running to the sooty bosom of such a thing as the Moor. But the astute Venetian for once trips in his calculations. He forgets that in the affairs of love it is the unexpected that usually happens, and that radical unlikeness between two natures often acts as an incentive to their union. Desdemona, quietly busied with her music and her household duties in her wealthy father's home, had turned a deaf ear to the suit of the frivolous gallants who had pestered her with their conventional adoration. But the swarthy, battered man-at-arms, rehearsing at her side the epic of his eventful life, is as a being dropped from another world than her own. All that in her maiden dreams she has pictured of heroism and romance clusters round this impressive figure who bears about him the superlative fascination of the unknown. His exotic birth and hue thus cease to be repellent, and are accepted by her as elements in the unique marvel of his whole career. As she declares later to the Duke,

> 'I saw Othello's visage in his mind,
> And to his honours, and his valiant parts
> Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.'

Thus Desdemona's love for the Moor, as Kreyssig has rightly insisted, is born less of the heart than of the imagination. It is as an ideal of heroic manhood that he takes her fancy by storm. She knows nothing of his nature 'save what pertains to feats and broils and battles,' and is incurious as to its other possibilities, from whose revelation she might perchance have turned shuddering away. To Othello, the hero-worship of this gracious maiden appeals with irresistible power. His barbaric pride finds the most delicious flattery in the thought that the pure and gentle creature, who has turned away from suitors of her own race, should lavish such a wealth of sympathy upon him. She is a vision of angelic tenderness who has floated into the circle of his stern existence, and the man of blood and iron surrenders to the spell. Othello sums up the whole story of their wooing when he tells the Duke

> 'She lov'd me for the dangers I had passed,
> And I lov'd her that she did pity them.'

A union thus based upon mutual fascination rather than mutual knowledge of character has in it the seeds of a bitter disenchantment,

a violent catastrophe. It is the disastrous fortune of Othello and Desdemona that there are those about them who are interested in quickening these seeds into precipitate growth.

The Moor has in his service as 'ancient' a young venetian, Iago, of tried military capacity, cheerful temperament and bluff honesty of bearing. No one, to outward seeming, could be less of a villain, and yet this plausibly respectable exterior covers a fiend in human shape. Iago is the arch-criminal of Shaksperean drama—'more fell than anguish, hunger and the sea.' Richard III is in many features his prototype, but the hunchback king is incited to his unnatural deeds by the consciousness of his physical deformity. Moreover, though he has taken 'Machiavel' as his master, he is after all an 'Italianate' Englishman, not an Italian, and though he crushes conscience, as he believes, out of existence, it asserts its power at the last. But in Iago conscience is completely wanting. He is, as Coleridge has said, 'all will in intellect.' He is the incarnation of absolute egotism, an egotism that without passion or even apparent purpose is at chronic feud with the moral order of the world. His mind is simply a non-conductor of spiritual elements in life. 'Virtue' is to him a 'fig,' love 'a lust of the blood, and a permission of the will'; reputation, 'an idle and most false imposition,' whose loss is a trifle compared with a bodily wound. Hamlet in the agony of disillusion had compared the world to an unweeded garden, occupied solely by things rank and gross in nature. This is Iago's habitual view, and to him it causes no particle of pain. Evil is his native element, and the increase of evil an end in itself. It is, therefore, unprofitable to discuss in detail the grounds of his hatred towards Othello or his other victims. His is at bottom, to use Coleridge's phrase, a 'motiveless malignity,' and he can scarcely be in earnest with the pretexts which he urges for his misdeeds, and which vary from day to day. Othello's advancement over his head of Cassio, a Florentine who knows nothing of war but 'the bookish theoric,' might seem a genuine grievance, yet it is noticeable that after the first few lines of the play Iago scarcely alludes to this, and makes more of what are evidently imaginary offences by Othello and Cassio against his honour as a husband. In one passage he hints vaguely that he loves Desdemona, and it is significant that this is the only trace left of the ensign's motive for revenge in Cinthio's novel. That Shakspere departed so widely from his original proves that he meant Iago to be actuated by nothing but sheer *diablerie*.

The contemplation of such unmixed wickedness would be unendurable were not our moral pain relieved by the intellectual delight

of watching the marvellous skill and coolness with which this incarnate Mephistopheles carries out his purposes. Hence Shakspere makes us eye-witnesses of every stage in Iago's scheme, from its origin to its climax. We see him roughly outline his plan of operation, and we stand fascinated while he fills in its details by turning to account every weakness in his victims, and every advantage that chance throws in his way. Money is a scoundrel's first necessity, and, before the play opens, he has got hold of a dupe whom he can 'bleed' to an unlimited extent. This is the brainless young landowner, Roderigo, one of 'the curled darlings' whom Desdemona has rejected. Brabantio, doubtless at his daughter's request, has forbidden him his house, but, with a greenhorn's infatuation he persists in his forlorn hope. It is this obstinacy as a suitor which distinguishes Roderigo from Slender and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, to whom he is otherwise akin; and it is this that delivers him into the hands of Iago, who hoodwinks him into the belief that he can help him in his amorous campaign, as long as his purse-strings are wide enough open. Even Roderigo's credulity is staggered by the news that the lady of his hopes has been carried off by his agent's own commander, but Iago adroitly cuts short his remonstrances by bidding him rouse the injured father, and start a hue and cry in the streets. The moment, however, is not opportune for a display of hostility towards the Moor. A midnight meeting of the council of state has been hurriedly summoned to take measures against a threatened invasion of Cyprus by the Turks, and Othello is the indispensable leader of the Venetian forces. The Duke, therefore, gives a somewhat impatient hearing to Brabantio's charges of witchcraft against his son-in-law, and the assembly is visibly relieved when Othello's round, unvarnished tale of his whole course of love, followed by Desdemona's declaration of allegiance to her lord, procures his honourable acquittal. But as Brabantio goes out in baffled rage, he lets fly a parting shaft which, scarcely marked at the time, is found later to have inflicted a rankling wound:

> 'Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:
> She has deceived her father, and may thee.'

Othello's committal of his wife to Iago's care during the voyage to Cyprus proves how accurately the ancient gauges his master's character:

> 'The moor is of a free and open nature,
> That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
> And will as tenderly be led by the nose
> As asses are.'

For Iago has already planned to use Desdemona as an engine against her husband by representing her as too familiar with Cassio, the lieutenant whose post he covets. Cassio's disposition lends itself readily to Iago's designs. He is brimfull of enthusiastic loyalty to his chief and the lovely bride whom he has won; he has, in fact, been Othello's confidant throughout his wooing, and he adopts towards Desdemona the frankly intimate bearing of a privileged friend. To Iago's foul imagination this chivalrous gentleman becomes 'a knave very voluble, no further conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for the better compassing of his salt and most hidden loose affection.' The courtesies between the pair on their arrival at Cyprus confirm him in this view, and in the even more gratuitous assumption that Desdemona returns the supposed passion:

> 'That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it;
> That she loves him, 'tis apt, and of great credit.'

It is superfluous to ask whether Iago's suspicions are a reality or a pretence. His is the very wantonness of malice, where the wish to believe becomes equivalent to the belief itself. The gross nature spies carrion everywhere, and nothing is clean to the disciple of the dung-hill philosophy which he expounds for the benefit of the unsophisticated Roderigo. The most uncompromising modern realism cannot improve upon this bestial theory of love, which persuades the poor wretch, who had been ready to drown himself on the failure of his hopes, to put money in his purse and follow the wars, in the hope of yet enjoying his lady's favours. Thus Iago brings his 'fool,' with well-lined pockets, to Cyprus, and he there turns him to account in other than purely financial ways. It is essential to his plan of campaign that Cassio should be dismissed from his post for some breach of military discipline, and Roderigo proves a useful tool for this purpose. The lieutenant, who has very poor and unhappy brains for drinking, is tempted by Iago to go too deep in his cups at the festival in honour of Othello's nuptial and the perdition of the Turkish fleet; he is then, while in command of the guard, provoked to fury by taunts from Roderigo, and a scuffle follows which rouses Othello from his marriage-bed. As the Moor vainly questions the brawlers in turn as to the origin of the fray, we get for the first time a glimpse of the tumultuous depths beneath his habitual self-restraint:

'Now, by Heaven,
My blood begins my safer guides to rule:
And passion, having my best judgement collied,
Assays to lead the way.'

Then, with well-feigned reluctance in the guise of Cassio's apologist, Iago gives his version of the affair. Othello's rejoinder is the stern, decisive sentence:

'Cassio, I love thee;
But never more be officer of mine.'

The Moor does not let his affections stand in the way of summary justice upon his own familiar friend; how will it be if hereafter one still dearer to him should seem to merit a more rigorous penalty?

Cassio's dismissal completes one stage in Iago's scheme and begins another, for at his instigation the lieutenant determines to sue through Desdemona to Othello for pardon. The young bride's utter innonence of evil, as the ancient sees, will lead her into an equivocal position, and he will thus have the exquisite joy of making the unearthly perfection of her goodness minister to her own and her husband's ruin. It is the very triumph of Iago's malignity that he thus discovers a suicidal property in virtue itself, and that he can claim for his scheme a curiously plausible aspect of good-faith:

'And what's he then, that says I play the villain?
When this advice is free I give and honest,
Probal to thinking, and indeed, the course
To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy
The inclining Desdemona to subdue
In any honest suit: she's fram'd as fruitful
As the free elements. And then for her
To win the Moor...
His soul is so enfettered to her love,
That she may make, unmake, do what she list.
...How am I then a villain
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!
When devils will the blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows
As I do now; for while this honest fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes,
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
I'll pour this pestilence unto his ear,
That she repeals him for her body's lust,
And, by how much she strives to do him good,
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all.'

If one were venturesome enough to single out Shakspere's crowning dramatic achievement, it might be found in the scenes that follow. And it is noticeable that their overpowering effect depends extremely

little upon poetical embellishment. In many passages the language keeps almost at conversational level, even when blank-verse is being used. The most magnificent series of speeches that could be gathered from Shakspere's plays would not be so unique a testimony to his dramatic genius as the homely unadorned dialogue which is here sufficient for tragedy in its culminating form.

Iago had spoken of putting the Moor 'into a jealousy so strong that *judgement cannot cure,' but, as Coleridge was the first to point out, it* is not jealousy in the strict sense that he awakens in Othello's breast. The Moor speaks truly of himself as 'one not easily jealous,' and the feeling which takes such irresistible hold of him is a 'solemn agony' that the woman who had been to him the ideal of purity should prove, as he thinks, to be a wanton. He had enshrined her as a sainted presence in his heart, and it tortures him to have to cast her forth as an unclean thing. Had his love been grounded in experience it would have been proof against all the ancient's stratagems; but it is fed mainly from the imagination, and it is into the imagination that Iago pours his poison. Even so he would have plotted in vain had Desdemona had a share of Portia's or Rosalind's tact and resource. But we begin to be anxious about the effects of her intervention when we hear her promise Cassio:

> 'My lord shall never rest;
> I'll watch him tame, and talk him out of patience;
> His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift;
> I'll intermingle everything he does
> With Cassio's suit.'

So, when Othello has just been perturbed by Iago's first venomed *hints, she pleads with unseasonable persistence for the lieutenant's* immediate restoration, and maladroitly reminds her husband that he had been his constant companion throughout his wooing. This gives Iago an incomparable opening for fresh insinuations, which are conveyed chiefly by the repetition of Othello's own uneasy queries, with carefully studied emphasis, and by a refusal to disclose his own thoughts. Then, when his victim has been wrought to the requisite pitch of agitation, he plays his master-card. The nature of jealousy is such that the effort to fight against it almost inevitably strengthens its hold upon the sufferer, and it is with diabolical ingenuity that Iago proceeds to caution the Moor against the passion into which he is bent on plunging him,

> 'O! beware, my lord, of jealousy:
> It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock
> The meat it feeds on.'

Othello's answer is that of a 'free and noble nature' which prefers even a horrible certainty to the wretchedness of doubts and fears:

> 'Why? why is this?
> Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,
> To follow still the changes of the moon
> With fresh suspicions? No: to be once in doubt
> Is once to be resolved... No, Iago;
> I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
> And, on the proof, there is no more but this,—
> Away at once with love or jealousy.'

Iago declares that he is emboldened by this avowal to show his 'love and duty' with franker spirit. He now openly bids Othello watch his wife with Cassio, and insinuates that it needs one of their own countrymen to take the measure of a Venetian bride's duplicity. He reminds him, as Brabantio had already done, that her marriage had shown her capacity for deceit, and, feeling his ground sure, he ventures on his crowning stroke of urging that it was the sign of a diseased condition of mind from which a recovery was to be anticipated:

> 'Ay, there's the point: as, to be bold with you,
> Not to affect many proposed matches
> Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
> Whereto, we see, in all things nature tends:
> Foh! one may smell in such, a will most rank,
> Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.
> But pardon me: I do not in position
> Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear
> Her will, recoiling to her better judgement,
> May fail to match you with her country forms,
> And, happily, repent.'

The feature in Desdemona's love which above all others had made it irresistible to the Moor—her preference of him to suitors of her own race—is thus turned into a source of alarm; and Iago, having brought matters to this point, thinks it time to take his leave. Fate proves his friend by throwing in his way at this moment the handkerchief which had been Othello's first gift to Desdemona—the precious heirloom in whose magical virtues the imaginative African has unquestioning belief. The ancient settles to leave it at Cassio's lodgings, and he is thus armed with exactly the sort of evidence that he now needs. For the Moor, when his tropical fancy has once been excited, is whirled into such a frenzy of suspicion that he cannot rest till he has convincing demonstration of his wife's guilt. Therefore, on his next meeting with the ancient, he turns upon him with the furious demand for 'ocular proof,'

> 'Make me to see 't: or, at the least, so prove it
> That the probation bear no hinge nor loop
> To hang a doubt on: or woe upon thy life.'

Iago, by way of satisfying him, tells his realistic story of Cassio's dream, and ends by declaring that he has that very day seen the lieutenant wipe his beard with the handkerchief given to Desdemona by the Moor. This damning piece of evidence, as it appears to Othello, completes the convulsion of his whole nature. As we listen to his maddened roar for 'blood, blood, blood,' it is as if we heard some wild beast of his native desert bellowing aloud in its rage. Yet it is with a solemn protestation to heaven, as of one entering upon a sacred task, that he dedicates himself to a 'capable and wide revenge.' In his most furious transports of passion he clings to the idea that he is an agent of justice. Vengeance upon Cassio is a secondary matter and may be left to Iago, but it is his own mission to free the world of the 'fair devil[1]', who is ruining the souls of men.

If Othello needed further provocation, Desdemona goes the way to supply it. The Moor, when he next meets her, clamours frantically for the charmed handkerchief, and the timid girl, cowering beneath this unlooked-for storm, takes refuge in a little white lie: 'It is not lost, but what an if it were?' Then as Othello, with a monomaniac's infatuation, merely continues to yell unceasingly, 'The handkerchief, the handkerchief,' she blunders into the idea that it is a trick to prevent her pleading for Cassio; and, thinking to match him at his own game, she retaliates by harping with equal persistence upon the theme that is uppermost in her mind. Othello hears her bear witness against herself, and, with assurance thus made doubly sure, he rushes angrily away.

The violence of his delirium reacts even upon the veteran's hardened frame, and Iago's additional lie about Cassio's confession of guilt throws him into an epileptic fit. It is before he has fully recovered the command of his faculties that he is victimized by a transparent trick, which could only have been imposed upon a diseased mind. Cassio had lent the handkerchief to a courtesan, Bianca, who follows him about with embarrassing attentions. Iago arranges that the Moor shall hear Cassio making merry over this creature's infatuation for him, and shall think that it is Desdemona whose favours are being turned to scoff. Chance again plays into his hands, for at this moment Bianca enters and flings back the handkerchief to Cassio. She is a victim to jealousy, in the strict sense, and she scorns to meddle with some minx's gifts to the man

[1] It is worth noticing that Othello's name for Desdemona here is almost the same as 'The White Devil,' Webster's title for his Vittoria Corombona. When we realize that Desdemona seemed to Othello to be what Vittoria was in fact, we can appreciate better his transport of rage.

on whom she dotes. Othello thus suffers the shame of shames, as he sees the first priceless token of his love made the plaything of a wanton's mood. There is nothing for it after such a spectacle but to do the guilty wife to death that very night. And yet, even yet, he can scarce steel himself to the task. The 'pity of it' almost overpowers him, the pity of the need to annihilate what has been to him the paragon of all created things. But a moment later, in a paroxysm of fury, he showers upon her indescribable epithets. A woman of the world would be roused to indignant rage, but Desdemona merely cowers beneath the abuse whose foulness her innocence cannot grasp. She is 'a child to chiding,' and she weeps that her lord is angry, and hastens, at his bidding, to bed. The shock of fear on her bewildering experiences turns her thoughts back to the placid home of her girlhood, and she is haunted by the 'song of willow' wherewith her mother's love-lorn maid, Barbara, had soothed a broken heart. As she softly croons the lullaby in the chamber where she is to die a horrible death, it is as if some gentle echo of a maiden's sadness had fluttered down from earth to the gates of hell.

Then comes the end. It is the potential tragedy of every union of the sexes that the physically weaker being surrenders herself into the power of the stronger. Thus in the last resort the man, by superiority of brute force, can always destroy the woman. But civilization has provided a thousand safeguards against such an *ultima ratio,* and where every higher motive fails, the fear of her kinsmen's vengeance, or the penalties of the law, paralyzes the husband's arm. But in this case the usual deterrents do not act. For Desdemona has isolated herself from her family, and the African gives no heed to the law of a community in which he is an alien. Thus the problem is reduced to its primitive conditions, and it has the primitive result. But here we have to do not only with the duel between sex and sex, but the equally elemental duel between the black man and the white. The murder of a European by a negro is an outrage from which the caste-pride of the dominant race turns agonized away; all the more marvellous, therefore, is the dramatic impartiality that shows us the Moor not as a monster, but as the reluctant instrument of doom upon the being whom he cannot choose but love. As he kisses her in her sleep he cries:

> 'O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
> Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.
> Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee
> And love thee after. One more, and this the last!
> So sweet was ne'er so fatal.'

It is the fear lest delay should unnerve him for his task that makes him inexorable to his victim's piteous plea for one half-hour of life. When all seems over the door is unbarred, and Emilia rushes in shrieking, 'Yonder's foul murder done'. The words must seem to Othello the outcry of the world against his own deed. But the spirit of murder has been abroad that night, and Desdemona is not its only victim. Iago, finding that Roderigo has begun to grow restive, and fearing that he may call him to a restitution large of gold and jewels, incites him to assassinate Cassio, who has been appointed Governor in place of the Moor. The infatuated youth, hoping to keep Desdemona longer in the island, waylays the lieutenant, but is wounded for his pains. Iago strikes at Cassio from behind, and then stabs Roderigo to death. Chance again befriends him by bringing Bianca upon the scene. As Cassio has been supping at her house, it is easy to charge her with being a party to his injury, and thus avert suspicion from himself.

But murder will out, and Iago's elaborately-calculated scheme is suddenly thrown into confusion through his neglect of one essential factor—his wife. As Emilia bursts into the bedchamber with tidings of the bloody work outside, her mistress' seemingly lifeless lips, in a last flicker of vitality, gasp out the glorious lie which makes her 'kind lord' guiltless of her death. 'The Accusing Spirit which flew up to Heaven's chancery with' the lie, 'blushed as he gave it in, and the Recording Angel, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word and blotted it out for ever.' But Othello spurns the shelter of his wife's sacred forgiveness. Strong in his sense of right, he calmly confesses his deed, and cites Iago's testimony to Desdemona's guilt. Then the honest indignation of a commonplace woman reveals to the Moor the diabolical fraud which has caught him in its toils. There is only one way—and that comes too late—by which the ancient can stop Emilia's mouth. He stabs her; and so at last, but in a manner far different from his anticipation, he is 'evened' with Othello, 'wife for wife'.

There is but one thing left to the Moor. The mighty voyager has reached the limit of his wanderings for evermore:

> 'Here is my journey's end, here is my butt
> And very sea mark of my utmost sail.'

A sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper is in his hand, and with a last proud thought of his services to the Republic, a last plea for himself as one that loved not wisely but too well, he plunges the blade into his bosom, and dies upon the body of

his wife. We look on 'the tragic loading' of the bed, and our one dark consolation is the sight of the arch-villain in the hands of his captors, awaiting the terrible penalty of his crimes. There is no ray of light, as at the close of Shakspere's other tragedies, heralding the dawn of a happier era. Yet we feel that it is better to be a Desdemona or an Othello than an Iago, and we are persuaded that there is an atoning efficacy in the death through which the husband passes to join his wife. Before the Moor, in his supreme agony, had risen an awful vision of the Judgement Day:

> 'When we shall meet at compt
> This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven
> And fiends will snatch at it.'

But the lips that had pardoned him in this life will not plead against him in the next; and in that world where men see not as through a glass, darkly, but face to face, Othello and Desdemona may yet find

> 'That ruined love when it is built anew,
> Grows fairer than at first, more strong, more greater.'

KING LEAR was entered on the Stationers' Register November 26, 1607, and the entry states that it had been acted 'upon St. Stephen's day at Christmas last,' i.e. December 26, 1606[1]. This performance was before the King at Whitehall, and it gives the end of 1606 as a downward limit for the play. An upward limit is supplied by the publication in 1603 of Harsnet's *Declaration of Popish Impostures*, from which the names of the devils in Edgar's speeches are derived. 1605 is the probable date of the tragedy, for in that year, owing very likely to the success of Shakspere's works on the boards, the old chronicle-history of *King Leir* was printed, and may have been passed off on the reading public as the play acted at the Globe. The reference in Act i. Scene 2 to *'these late eclipses'* must have been suggested by the great eclipse of the sun, October, 1605, preceded by an eclipse of the moon in

1 Two quarto editions, with elaborate title-pages, were issued in 1608 by Nathaniel Butter. These editions are full of mistakes, and it is probable that they were hastily printed from MSS. surreptitiously obtained. They omit a number of passages essential to the plot, which must have belonged to the original version of the play. The folio text of 1623 give us in the main the original version, with the countless blunders of the quartos corrected, and the omitted passages restored. But the folio, on the other hand, leaves out a number of passages found in the quartos. These 'cuts' seem to have been made for stage purposes, and care was taken, as a whole, only to leave out 'such passages as are merely ornamental, and are not necessary for the plot or the development of the characters.' There is no need to suppose that Shakspere himself had a hand in the abridgement, or that the folio is his revised version of an earlier text.

September. The metrical evidences, which present the same general features as in *Othello*, agree well with the external testimony in favour of 1605.

The source of the main plot is Holinshed's Chronicle, but Shakspere completely changed the end of the story as given by the annalist, and reproduced by Spenser and the writer of the old play. In the original version the army of Lear and his French allies is victorious, Lear is reinstated in his kingdom, and on his death is succeeded by Cordelia, who is afterwards made prisoner by her nephews, and kills herself in despair. *Hamlet* was the only play in which Shakspere had hitherto departed so boldly from supposed historical *data*, and the overwhelming horror of the final scene becomes immeasurably more significant when we realize that it did not spring naturally out of the dramatist's materials, but that it is the result of a revolutionary alteration in them. Shakspere, when he wrote *King Lear*, was not in the mood that welcomes a smooth close to an eventful history. He wished to see the destructive forces of the universe pushing their ravages to the most malignant extreme, and over the widest possible area. Thus, not content with turning the story of Lear into tragic channels, he added to it from an independent source a minor plot dealing with a parallel theme, and equally sombre in complexion. This is the story of the Duke of Gloucester and his sons, apparently suggested by that of the blind King of Paphlagonia in Sidney's *Arcadia*. But here, as in the main plot, Shakspere substituted a tragic for a happy ending. The union of these two tales widens the poet's canvas till it seems of illimitable extent. 'The picture,' as Schlegel has said, 'becomes gigantic'; we seem to be onlookers 'at a great commotion in the moral world,' and we are filled with such alarm as we should entertain at the idea that the heavenly bodies might one day fall from their appointed orbits. It is to these analogies from the physical world that critics are driven in the attempt to interpret the play. 'What is *Lear*?' asks Coleridge. 'It is storm and tempest—the thunder at first grumbling in the far horizon, then gathering around us, and at length bursting in fury over our heads—succeeded by a breaking of the clouds for a while, a last flash of lightning, the closing in of night, and the single hope of darkness.' But it is the paradoxical greatness of the play that the seeming chaos of the elements into which it plunges us is not a chaos after all. While everything seems in the wildest confusion, a plot of labyrinthine intricacy is steadily being unravelled, and the majesty of moral law sits as unseen arbiter over the tumultuous strife of passion.

This unique mixture of Titanic vastness and passion with orderly elaboration of detail has led a number of critics to place *King Lear* at the head of Shakspere's writings. Hazlitt asserts that 'to attempt to give a description of the play itself, or of its effect on the mind, is mere impertinence.' Gervinus calls it an epic tragedy, and compares it to the classical and mediaeval tragic epics, whose object it realizes with smaller means. Ten Brinck declares that, 'taken as a whole, it is the mightiest work that Shakspere has created.' Dowden speaks of it 'as the greatest single achievement in poetry of the Teutonic or northern genius.' In spite of this weight of authority, the verdict is not one that can pass unchallenged. Judged purely as a drama, *King Lear* cannot rank with *Othello,* or even with *Macbeth. Othello,* as has been already suggested, is the high-water mark of the art of Shakspere, the playwright. Tried by every test, that tragedy is supreme. It has a main plot of absorbing interest, into which minor plots, which are variations on the leading theme of jealousy, dovetail with exquisite nicety. The interest, instead of culminating in the third Act, as is often the case in the dramatist's works, grows with every scene, and we are enthralled by a spectacle which strains our capacity for feeling to breaking-point. The character-drawing is equally plastic and subtle, and the figures range through all gradations from angelic virtue to fiendish villainy; as a study in perspective, the play is a masterpiece. Finally, the language reaches that ideal union of simplicity and nervous intensity in which we catch the native accent of the tragic Muse.

Can all this be truly said of *King Lear*? Its overwhelming horror stuns instead of stirring the feelings. We grope our way through thick darkness, broken now and then by sudden rifts through which we see the shining of far-off stars. The figures that crowd round us are scarcely human; they are, with few exceptions, monsters of cruelty and lust, or sainted forms of more than earthly tenderness. The contrasts are too unqualified, and the parallelism of the twin plots is too absolute, for the most consummate effects, of a purely dramatic kind, to be attained. Tragedy cannot be reduced to a study in black and white. Hence it is that *Lear,* of all Shakspere's mightiest works, has had least theatrical success. Lamb declared that it was 'essentially impossible to be represented on a stage.' This was meant as a tribute to its intellectual and poetical grandeur, but nevertheless, it is, from one point of view, a condemnation. A drama which it is 'essentially impossible' to act has outstepped the legitimate bounds of its genus.

show, which had been so worthless in the eyes of a Henry V. One voice rises in protest against 'the hideous rashness' of this settlement. In Kent we have Shakspere's most elaborate picture of the ideal liegeman, who holds his life 'but as a pawn to wage' against his king's enemies, yet who is not afraid to protest when he sees him rushing blindly to his own destruction. When his master turns a deaf ear to his warnings, the trusty courtier, who is not without his share of Celtic impetuosity, gives his tongue very free rein:

> 'Revoke thy doom;
> Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
> I'll tell thee thou dost evil.'

He can be only silenced by a decree of banishment—an arbitrary enactment which proves that Lear, even after his abdication, does not hesitate at a despotic exercise of the power which he has formally renounced. Immediately afterwards Cordelia departs with the King of France, who realizes the worth of 'this unprized precious maid,' and Lear, with his retinue of a hundred knights, is left to the alternate hospitality of Goneril and Regan.

These two terrible figures are by far the most revolting creations of the dramatist. They are not simply unsexed women, they are Gorgons, monsters in female shape, whose look turns us to stone. With all the motiveless malignity of Iago, they are wanting in his genius, his humour, his magnificent audacity. The exploits of a devil dazzle us into a reluctant and horrified admiration, but we are sickened by the brutal havoc wrought by beasts of prey. 'The two terrible creatures,' as Dowden has said, 'are, however, distinguishable. Goneril is the calm wielder of a pitiless force, the resolute initiator of cruelty. Regan is a smaller, shriller, fiercer, more eager piece of malice. The tyranny of the elder sister is a cold, persistent pressure as little affected by tenderness or scruple as the action of some crushing hammer; Regan's ferocity is more unmeasured, and less abnormal or monstrous.' It is Goneril who begins the campaign of persecution by suggesting to Regan that they should 'do something, and i' the heat,' and it is under her roof that the old king is first taught to smart for his folly. The insolence of Oswald is the prelude to the crueller discipline that is to follow. But the time-serving steward meets more than his match in Kent, who has entered Lear's service in disguise, and who teaches him 'differences' in characteristically rough-and-ready fashion.

Another, far humbler retainer, clings with equal fidelity to his master. This is the Fool, 'who hath much pined away since my young lady's going into France.' The Fool in *King Lear* is the only

specimen of his class who appears in Shaksperean tragedy, and he fills a unique rôle. The typical Fool, as has been seen in the case of Feste, is 'all things to all men,' and it is his office to bandy words with every chance comer on any topic that turns uppermost. But the Fool in this play has a curiously specialized function. The one theme upon which he harps without rest is the egregious folly of Lear in parting with his crown, and in putting his neck under Goneril and Regan's yoke. Hence it is that, unlike his fellows in other plays he is nameless, with no more distinguishing badge of individuality than plain 'Fool.' For he is scarcely a person, a unit to be counted in a census of population. He is a wandering voice—the voice of Lear's conscience taking outward form in this grotesque yet wistful figure, 'the soul of pathos in a comic masquerade.' The workings of his mind show that strange mixture of simplicity and acuteness which is so often the birthright of 'a natural.' The flickering light of his intellect has a curiously penetrating power. The sphere in which he is most at home is that which contains the lowest forms of animal life. The snail, the eel, the oyster, the hedge-sparrow all furnish him with illustrations of Lear's helpless position. With doggrel snatches, with conundrums, with epigrams, he over and over again returns to the attack. Lear 'has banished two on 's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will'; he had little wit in his bald crown when he gave his golden one away; he has made his daughters his mother and put the rod into their hand.

The entrance of Goneril speedily demonstrates that 'this is not altogether fool.' Doubtless Lear, who will not 'stay a jot for dinner,' and who is free with his tongue and his arm on the faintest provocation, is by no means an easy guest, and on the principle of 'like master, like man,' it is quite credible that his knights 'do hourly carp and quarrel,' turning the place into 'a riotous inn.' But Goneril's reproof is brutal in its icy calm, and it ends with the pitiless threat:

> 'Be then desired
> By her, that else will take the thing she begs,
> A little to disquantity your train.'

Lear does not dream of excusing himself or his followers. His amazement at first takes the form of ironical ejaculations: 'Are you our daughter?' 'Your name, fair gentlewoman?' but the lash of Goneril's tongue soon stirs him to an ungovernable transport of rage.

> 'Darkness and devils!
> Saddle my horses; call my train together
> Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee:
> Yet have I left a daughter.'

As he begins to realize his folly in casting off Cordelia for her 'most small fault,' while favouring to the utmost this 'detested kite,' he beats his head in impotent fury. Then he wheels round again upon Goneril, and he goes far to forfeit the sympathy which his situation arouses by the unnatural horror of the curses which he thunders at her. He still feels sure that Regan, whose eyes seem to have had a delusive softness, will prove 'kind and comfortable,' and he sends Kent to her palace to announce his coming. Goneril meanwhile dispatches Oswald with a letter dissuading her from receiving the king, and the result is that Regan and her husband, with the rival messengers in their train, hurry off to the castle of the Earl of Gloucester.

In this castle an underplot has been developing parallel to the events at court. A father has been led to cast off a devoted child, and to advance one whose love is mere pretence. But, as usual, Shakspere has avoided monotony by a skilful variation in details. An elder son replaces a younger daughter as the good genius of the story, while instead of two elder daughters as evil-doers we have a younger son. This son, Edmund, is a bastard, and this fact is the key to his conduct throughout. His illegitimate birth puts him, he holds, outside the pale of ordinary moral obligation. He is a child of nature; therefore nature is his goddess, and to her law his services are bound. Richard III's deformity had driven him into a similarly anti-social attitude, and we hear the echo of the hunchback's cry, 'I have no brother, I am like no brother,' in Edmund's phrase: 'Brother, a word; descend: brother, I say.' In power of dissimulation and of turning opportunities to instant account Edmund further recalls Richard, but he lacks entirely his superstitious strain, and laughs at Gloucester's belief that the late eclipses in the sun and moon are portents of evil. His is the self-reliant creed that scorns 'the excellent foppery of the world,' whereby 'we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on.' He finds it easy to persuade his credulous father that his elder brother is plotting against his life, though, even allowing for Celtic impulsiveness, Gloucester's instant conviction of a favourite son's guilt on the flimsiest evidence is wanting in plausibility. Very thinly motived too is Edgar's conduct in not seeking an interview with his incensed father, and in taking flight at the suggestion that the object of Cornwall and Regan's approaching visit may be to arrest him as a partisan of Albany, who is already at feud with his brother-in-law. Edgar's

flight confirms Gloucester's worst suspicions, and the plotter has his reward when the Earl proclaims a hue and cry against the absconder, and declares that he will work the means to make Edmund 'capable' in his stead.

It is at this moment that Cornwall and Regan arrive at the castle, and henceforward the main and minor plots begin to mingle, and finally become almost indistinguishable. Whatever chance there might have been of Lear faring better at the hands of Regan than of Goneril is destroyed by the aggressive vehemence of Kent, who, without provocation, abuses Oswald in unmeasured terms, and then beats him black and blue. He turns a scarcely less rough tongue upon Cornwall himself, and is set in the stocks for his pains. Thus when Lear enters the courtyard of the castle, he is greeted by the incredible sight of his messenger in this degrading position, and the still more incredible news that Regan and her husband are the authors of the outrage. A wave of hysterical passion sweeps over him, but he forces it down, and goes indoors to demand explanations. Here another shock awaits him. Cornwall and Regan refuse to see him, and Gloucester meets his expostulations by reminding him of

> 'The fiery quality of the duke;
> How unremovable and fix'd he is
> In his own course.'

Lear's imperious nature cannot brook in others 'the fiery quality' which is predominant in himself. The long-ingrained instincts of absolutism are roused into passionate activity by such contumacy in those who have been wont to tremble at his nod:

> 'The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear father
> Would with his daughter speak, commands her service:
> Are they inform'd of this? My breath and blood!
> Fiery? the fiery duke? . . . . .
> Go tell the duke and 's wife I 'ld speak with them,
> Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,
> Or at their chamber-door I 'll beat the drum
> Till it cry sleep to death.'

At last the pair are induced to appear, but it is frosty comfort that the king gets from Regan's lips. He is reminded that he is of an age to be ruled and led, and is bidden return to Goneril and beg her forgiveness. At that moment Goneril herself enters, and as the sisters take each other by the hand, Lear realizes their unholy alliance against his white locks. Turn by turn they mercilessly beat down the number of his followers, the sole relic of his former great-

ness, till Regan presents an ultimatum in the query, 'What need one?' Tears threaten, at first, to be the answer, but the old man summons his scanty remnant of strength for one final outburst of vaguely terrible denunciation.

> 'No, you unnatural hags,
> I will have such revenges on you both,
> That all the world shall—I will do such things—
> What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep;
> No, I'll not weep:
> I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
> Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
> Or ere I'll weep.'

But the strain of closing up Nature's outlet for emotion reacts disastrously upon the enfeebled mind of Lear, and shrieking, 'O fool, I shall go mad!' he rushes wildly out into the night and storm. Henceforth, whatever his infirmities, he is 'a man more sinned against than sinning.'

In the scenes that follow, Shakspere's imaginative genius soars to its most sublime height. The primitive poetry of the elements, the poetry coeval with the laying of the earth's foundations, sweeps through the lines whose majestic cadence reverberates to the roll of cataracts and hurricanoes and all-shaking thunder. The solid globe rocks to its centre, and the 'high-engendered battles' of rain, wind and fire shake the vault of heaven. Chaos is come again, and 'man's nature cannot carry the affliction nor the fear.' But this colossal panorama of a world in upheaval is the setting to a centrepiece of a single human figure.

> 'For tho' giant ages heave the hill
> And break the shore, and evermore
> Make and break, and work their will;
> Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll
> Round us, each with different powers,
> And other forms of life than ours
> What know we greater than the soul?'

The words of the modern poet interpret Shakspere's attitude here, as elsewhere, and the dislocation of the cosmos is treated as subordinate to the tumult in the breast of Lear, who,

> 'Strives in his little world of man to outscorn
> The to-and-fro conflicting wind and rain.'

As with royal eloquence he arraigns the elements for leaguing themselves with two pernicious daughters against his white hairs, he is still, though outcast and impotent, every inch a king. But his physical suffering disorders further a mind already weakened by

hysterical passion. His wits begin to turn, and soon he is driven completely mad by an incident which links together the major and minor plots. Kent leads him for shelter to a hovel, whence rushes out Edgar in the disguise of a Tom of Bedlam, or village idiot, which he has adopted to escape arrest. He is naked, save for a blanket round his loins, and his talk is a strange gibberish in which the fear of foul fiends and the memory of bodily hardships are the most coherent threads. The contact with this apparent lunatic, through the operation of a familiar law, produces total insanity in Lear, and the limits of tragic horror are reached in the wild trio of madness that follows—the ravings of Lear, the feigned frenzy of Edgar, and the babbling of the Fool. Coleridge did not exaggerate when he cried, 'O, what a world's convention of agonies is here!'

Yet there is one ray of light through the blackness. Cordelia, informed of the growing feud between Albany and Cornwall, and alarmed on Lear's behalf, lands at Dover with a French force. Kent sends her news of the king's condition, and Gloucester, whose kindly though weak nature has rebelled against Goneril and Regan's savagery, seeks out Lear amidst the storm, and, fearing for his life, bids Kent hasten with him to the camp of the invaders. The sight of the king's sufferings makes his own misery more acute, and in the hearing of the disguised Edgar he cries to Kent:

> 'I had a son,
> Now outlaw'd from my blood; he sought my life.
> But lately, very late: I loved him, friend;
> No father his son dearer: truth to tell thee,
> The grief hath crazed my wits.'

Thus Edgar learns that his father has been alienated from him by slanderous reports, and he is ready a little later to become his protector in his sore need. For the action which alleviates the Nemesis on the central figure of the main plot, precipitates the Nemesis on the corresponding figure in the minor plot. Gloucester has informed Edmund of his plan for rescuing Lear, and the villain straightway discloses it to Cornwall. Thus when the Earl returns from his mission of mercy he is seized and bound, and his eyes are plucked out. Mutilation is always more horrible than murder, and in this scene Shakspere, for the first and only time since *Titus Andronicus*, oversteps the limit that separates the tragic from the μαρον. For the blinding of Gloucester upon the stage, unlike the 'sacrifice' of Desdemona, is merely a barbarous outrage, that violates our emotions instead of purging them through pity and terror. But, in partial amends, our instinct of justice is at once satisfied by the

instantaneous punishment of the crime. One of Cornwall's servants, with Celtic impetuosity, turns upon his master and gives him a death-wound. The Duke's fall brings in its train a complicated Nemesis upon all the other wrong-doers. For the widowed Regan determines to mate with Edmund, but finds a rival in Goneril, who, grown weary of her mild husband Albany, has chosen the handsome villain as her paramour. Thus the pair of monsters whom hate had joined in unnatural league are now driven into unnatural conflict by love.

But the end is not yet, and meanwhile the two aged sufferers pass through affliction to peace—one for ever, the other for a time. Gloucester is guided to Dover by Edgar, who through a ruse prevents him from taking his own life. He learns to accept his fate not as a wanton visitation from above, but as a just decree to be borne with meekly till the appointed end.

> 'You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;
> Let not my worser spirit tempt me again
> To die before you please.'

And, at the last, the joyful shock of discovering in his saviour his much-wronged son makes his flawed heart burst smilingly. Lear, too, amidst the fantastic flights of his madness, shows that his physical and mental sufferings have taught him his helplessness, and his folly in taking outward shows for realities: 'To say "ay" and "no" to everything that I said! "Ay" and "no" too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men o' their words: they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof.' With a confused memory of his passionate wilfulness and injustice he is ashamed to come into Cordelia's presence till he is led thither by her messengers. Then when nature's foster-nurse, repose, has done its merciful work, the 'great rage' is killed in him, and through the hell-black night that is fast closing in on every side, we have one heavenly vista in the scene of reunion between Lear and the daughter whom he had declared a stranger from his heart for ever. Cordelia's breast burns with as pure a flame of seraphic love as if she were already a soul in bliss, which Lear in the dim interval between sleep and waking takes her to be. All record of injury done to her in the past is blotted from her memory, and the only 'violent harms' to which she gives a thought are those which her sisters have inflicted on this 'child-changed father.' As she hangs

over his bed, her voice is soft and low as ever, and her words as few. But kisses and tears are the fitting language for a tenderness so divine, and the old king has at last learnt to value aright these noiseless tokens of true love. He too weeps, but they are the tears of a contrite heart; and we know that suffering has had its sacramental efficacy on Lear, as we behold him on his knees before his daughter, faltering forth that he is 'a very foolish, fond old man,' and praying for forgiveness.

But repentance does not annul the past, and evil once set in motion cannot be arrested at the fiat of its originator. The hoary-headed king has still to see the ultimate outcome of his sin in the catastrophe that swallows his entire household. Cordelia's army is defeated, and she, with her father, taken prisoner and sentenced to death. But the divisions in the British camp make victory no less costly than defeat. Goneril is as ruthlessly energetic in her amorous intrigue as in her persecution of Lear. She poisons Regan, and she sends Edmund instructions to cut off her husband. Her missive is intercepted by Edgar, who delivers it to Albany. Edmund, after the battle is won, is arrested on the charge of treason, and is fatally wounded by his brother, who appears in arms to make good the charge. Goneril, in desperation, plunges a dagger into her own heart, and follows her victim Regan out of life. The three great wrongdoers bring about one another's ruin. As Edmund, with a last touch of cynical humour, cries:

> 'I was contracted to them both: all three
> Now marry in an instant.'

In a flash of penitence, before his lips close for ever, he countermands the order for the execution of Lear and Cordelia. But it is too late. The horrors that have gone by seem to fade into insignificance as the white-haired king totters into the midst of the petrified onlookers, with his daughter dead in his arms, and the long-drawn monotone of lamentation on his lips. There is a momentary thrill of hope as he bends down to catch a fancied murmur of that still small voice. But it is hushed for ever, and the silence on the loved one's lips, more potent than all the thunders of heaven, cracks the heart of Lear. As his glazing eyes take their last look of the martyr-form in his arms, the whole riddle of life and death is compressed into the anguished cry,

> 'Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life
> And thou no breath at all? Thou 'lt come no more.
> Never, never, never, never, never!'

And thus, with the quintessence of negation rattling in his throat, Lear dies.

What are we to make of it all? Was Gloucester right when he spoke of humanity as the quarry of malignant, irresponsible deities?

> 'As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;
> They kill us for their sport.'

Is the dead march with which the play closes not only the dirge over the bodies of those that are no more, but over the futility of human ideals, over fruitless loyalties, and martyrdoms in vain? Is it all one to be a Cordelia or a Goneril, since in death they are not divided? Is that Shakspere's 'message' to the world, and was the eighteenth century right after all when it rejected such a cheerless conclusion, and showed us Cordelia victorious and happily wedded to Edgar?

No! this most representative of Shaksperean tragedies is not born of the pessimism that despairs of all things human, nor of the facile optimism that thinks everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. It is, as Kreyssig has called it, 'the tragedy of the categorical imperative.' It boldly recognizes that in the sphere of outward circumstances virtue is not always triumphant nor vice cast down. Amidst the clash of the iron forces of the universe, love and purity are often crushed.

> 'Streams will not curb their pride
> The just man not to entomb,
> Nor lightnings go aside
> To give his virtues room;
> Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's barge.'

But there is an inner sanctuary inviolable by these shocks from without. In the kingdom of the spirit nothing matters except 'the good will,' and there Cordelia's ardour of love is justified of itself. It exists, and in its existence lies its triumph. But, even on the sternest interpretation of Shaksperean ethics, such glorious self-abandonment wins a benediction from above:

> 'Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
> The gods themselves throw incense.'

And may we not even venture to interpret Lear's own words as a prophetic salutation, and to think of her as 'a soul in bliss,' one of 'the just spirits that wear victorious palms?'

CHAPTER XV

The Plutarch Series of Plays

It is characteristic of Shakspere that the problem-plays and the three tragedies, in which his genius had taken its most unfettered flights, should be flanked on either side by dramas which clung, with unexampled fidelity, to historical tradition. In 1579 Sir Thomas North had translated into English Amyot's French version of Plutarch's *Lives*. We do not know when North's book first fell into Shakspere's hands, but probably he did not make use of it for dramatic purposes till after 1600, when he had finished his group of plays dealing with the English Civil Wars. About 1601 he wrote *Julius Caesar* which, as Digges testifies, was very successful on the stage, but, instead of at once taking other subjects from Roman history, he went elsewhere for plots. It may be, as Dowden suggests, that the historical connexion was now a connexion too external and too material to carry Shakspere on from subject to subject, as it had sufficed to do while he was engaged upon his series of English historical plays. Thus, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* were not written till about six or seven years afterwards, and hence they differ greatly in style from their forerunner. But, in spite of this, the three plays are alike in their unique relation to the text upon which they are based, and in their mode of handling themes borrowed from antiquity.

We have seen that Shakspere, in dramatizing Holinshed's narrative of the Civil Wars, kept loyally to the main lines of the Chronicle, and took care that his humorous additions should not distort what he accepted as historical truth. His treatment of Plutarch was even more scrupulous, and not without reason. For while Holinshed was a mere annalist, whose work was chiefly an unpretentious record of tradition, the Greek historian was a literary artist of a high order, with a method that specially fitted his writings to become a dramatic storehouse. Imperfectly acquainted with the political issues of the epochs which he describes, he had a keen eye for character in its multifarious varieties, and the incidents which specially attracted him were those which threw light upon some notable personality. Thus, as he tells us, he seeks 'the distinctive marks of the soul in the smallest facts, in witty answers and lively off-hand remarks, which often show a man's character more clearly than murderous

combats, or great battles, or the taking of towns[1].' This psychological method of interpreting history, equally removed from that which simply records occurrences and that which investigates complex social phenomena, is the one most fruitful for dramatic purposes. The playwright finds that the historian has come half-way to meet him by singling out precisely those episodes which are the distinctive marks of the soul. Thus, while Holinshed supplied rough ore which had to be carefully sifted and refined, Plutarch's material had already gone through these processes, and only needed the crowning embellishment of poetic handling. Hence page after page out of the 'lives' of Caesar, Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus is, with curiously slight modifications, transposed by Shakspere into dramatic form. His genius finds its scope not in invention, but in animating Plutarch's narrative with the vivid life and play of dialogue. As illustrative of the magical change produced by a fresh setting of the same incident, contrast Plutarch's bald account of the portents that heralded Caesar's death with the impassioned interview by night between Casca and Cassius when, with the tempest roaring overhead and an answering tumult in their own breasts, they breathlessly debate the meaning of these prodigies. Similar examples of marvellously heightened effects may be found in the dialogue between Caesar and Decius Brutus regarding Calpurnia's dream, and in the episode of Portia's suspense on the day of the murder. In the quarrel-scene between Brutus and Cassius the dramatist achieved a yet more signal triumph, for here he combined into one profoundly moving episode a number of hints scattered through Plutarch's narrative. The chief passages for which he is not indebted to the biographer are the great speeches of Brutus and Antony to the citizens, the death-bed dialogue between Cleopatra and her waiting-women, and the witticisms of Menenius Agrippa.

But the qualities of Plutarch's work that made it so invaluable as a dramatic treasury prevented it from being an accurate picture of the Republic in its later, and still less in its earlier, days. The moralizing Greek, who looked on Italian affairs with the eyes of a foreigner, sentimentally prejudiced in favour of republican heroes, was not a first-rate authority upon classical antiquity. Nor was his account, such as it was, accessible to Shakspere in the original; it was known only at third-hand, through a translation of a translation. As has been seen, the dramatist's Latin reading did not include much historical matter, so that his knowledge of Roman annals was

1 See Stapfer's *Shakspere and Classical Antiquity*, chapter 16. I owe several suggestions in this chapter to this interesting book.

not supplemented to any great degree from other sources. It is therefore only natural that he should go entirely astray in his conception of some leading features of ancient civic life. It is not merely that, as is his custom, he arrays his characters in the dress of his own time, but he throws a misleading light upon the social and political conditions of Rome. The *plebs* becomes a rabble, after the fashion of an Elizabethan mob; the tribunes are turned into demagogues of the modern type, and the Senate into an assembly of 'greybeards' with very indefinite functions. If nevertheless Shakspere's pictures of classical life do not jar violently upon the historical sense, this is due largely to the kinship between Roman and English types of character, and to certain parallel features in the epochs of Caesar and Elizabeth. By the Thames, as by the Tiber, a centralizing despotism resting upon popular sympathies was in conflict with the inherited rights of an aristocracy and an elective assembly. The fashionable life of the old capital and the new had much in common, while Puritanism offered to serious and introspective minds the refuge supplied by Stoicism in the last days of the Republic. If Ascham and Gosson had bewailed the pernicious influence of Italy upon English morals, did not this exactly correspond to the corruption of antique civic simplicity by Oriental luxury and vice? That the steadfast integrity of the ideal Roman type of character had deeply impressed Shakspere is shown by allusions outside the Plutarch group of plays. It is Antonio's highest praise that in him 'the ancient Roman honour' is perpetuated, and Horatio is extolled as 'more an antique Roman, than a Dane.' Hence the most genuinely classical attribute of Shakspere's 'classical' plays—at least of *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*—is the large simplicity of so much of the portraiture, united to a corresponding simplicity in the sweep of the plot, and to a diction suitably bare of all rhetorical ornament.

The most perfect of the Roman plays is **JULIUS CAESAR**, the earliest of the three. It first appeared in the folio of 1623, but several converging lines of evidence fix its date with practical certainty as 1600 or 1601. In Weever's *Mirror of Martyrs*, 1601, are the lines:

> 'The many-headed multitude were drawne
> By Brutus' speech that Caesar was ambitious;
> When eloquent Mark Antonie had showne
> His vertues, who but Brutus then was vicious?'

This refers to the orations of Brutus and Antony, which are not found

in Plutarch, and only occur, as far as we know, in Shakspere's play. It exactly tallies too with Digges' account of the 'drawing' quality of the speeches in the piece, and it makes 1601 the downward limit. On the other hand the play cannot be put much earlier. It is not mentioned by Meres, and it is not likely to have been written till the English historical series was finished. The use of 'eternal' for 'infernal' in the phrase 'the eternal devil' (Act i. 2) may be paralleled after 1600, but not before. The frequent references to Caesar in *Hamlet* indicate that Shakspere had recently been dwelling on the dictator's career, and the kinship of character between the Danish Prince and Brutus suggests that they were created about the same time. The style of the drama is similar to that of the best comedies and English history-plays. Thought and expression are adjusted with exquisite nicety, and the lines run with a full yet liquid music that captivates the ear. The conceits of the early days have fallen away, and the pregnant obscurity of the final period is still to come. There is little rhyme, and a very small proportion of weak and double endings. Thus 1600-1601 may be confidently accepted as the date.

It is a paradox that this drama, so limpid in style, so symmetrical in plot, and so clear-cut in portraiture, should yet present, at first sight, an amazing enigma which reminds us that it belongs to the period of the problem-plays. Allusions elsewhere to the great dictator as 'mightiest Julius' and 'broad-fronted Caesar' prove that Shakspere did not under-estimate the man whose place in the sphere of action is perhaps the closest parallel to his own in the sphere of intellect. Yet when we open the drama, of which he is the titular hero, we find that he appears in only three scenes, and that he is killed before the play is half over. The plot covers almost three years, from February, 44 B.C., to the battle of Philippi in the latter part of 42 B.C., but during only the first month of this period was Caesar alive. Moreover, on the few occasions when he does appear, he is shown in an unfavourable or, at least, an equivocal light. We see him first on the way to the festival of the Lupercalia, superstitiously bidding Antony touch Calpurnia in his holy chase as a cure for barrenness. Yet arrogantly indifferent to auguries of ill concerning himself, he dismisses as a dreamer the soothsayer, who bids him 'beware the Ides of March.' His speech has the imperious tone of a Sultan, whose lightest word is law, and he constantly talks of himself in the third person, as Caesar, 'as of some power above and behind his consciousness.' He is already, it is clear, an uncrowned king, and at the Lupercalia Antony presses upon him the crown itself,

which he reluctantly puts by from fear of popular indignation. According to Casca's mocking account of the episode he could not endure the foul breath of the hooting rabblement, but fell down in the market-place and foamed at mouth. Nor is this falling-sickness his only infirmity. He had never, even in his best days, had the wiry physical endurance of Cassius, as the anecdote of the swimming-match in the Tiber proves, but now he is enfeebled by the rigours through which he has passed, and he is deaf of one ear—a serious handicap for a leader of men. When we next see him in his own house on the morning of the Ides of March, superstition and arrogance are united to vacillation of purpose. Alarmed by Calpurnia's evil dreams, he has sent to consult the augurs, but without waiting for their report he declares that he will go forth. When the answer is unfavourable, he still refuses to be kept at home:

> 'No, Caesar shall not: danger knows full well
> That Caesar is more dangerous than he:
> We are two lions littered in one day,
> And I the elder and more terrible:
> And Caesar shall go forth.'

Yet in spite of this grandiloquent metaphor, he yields a moment afterwards to Calpurnia's entreaties, and bids Antony tell the Senators that he is not well. But when Decius Brutus comes to fetch him he substitutes for this excuse the barefaced avowal of a tyrant's whim:

> '*Caes.* Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come.
> *Dec.* Most mighty Caesar, let me know some cause,
> Lest I be laugh'd at when I tell them so.
> *Caes.* The cause is in my will: I will not come;
> That is enough to satisfy the Senate.'

Yet when Decius gives a favourable interpretation of the dream, and points out how Caesar's fears will be scoffed at by the senators, he once more changes his mind and goes forth. Such vacillation is a ridiculous prelude to the attitude of inflexibility that he adopts at the Capitol. There is a trace of the sublime in his declaration, 'What touches us ourself shall be last served,' though it argues an inflated sense of the distance between himself and his fellows. But it is the very intoxication of absolutism that claims to be 'constant as the northern star,' or as immovable as Olympus; and the death-blows of the conspirators are a tragically ironical retort to such pretensions of superiority to human weakness.

What is the meaning of all this? Are we to conclude that Shakspere deliberately intended to turn Caesar into a laughing-stock for the benefit of the groundlings in the Globe, or that he had radically

misconceived his true character? Is Boswell right when he says, 'There cannot be a stronger proof of Shakspere's deficiency in classical knowledge than the boastful language he has put in the mouth of the most accomplished man of all antiquity, who was not more admirable for his achievements than for the dignified simplicity with which he has recorded them?' It has been shown, however, that Shakspere did realize Caesar's greatness, and he could have had no motive for wilfully misrepresenting him. The fact is that Caesar is the hero of the play, but not the Caesar whom we see passing across the stage, weak in bodily presence and in will. The result shows that there was something more than mere arrogance in the dictator's conception of himself as a colossal, superhuman force. Whatever his personal limitations, he is a transcendent power in the world, because he focusses in himself the inevitable tendencies of his age.

This is illustrated in the opening scene, which, after Shakspere's fashion, strikes the keynote of the play. The citizens, erewhile the partisans of Pompey, are now with fickle hero-worship preparing an ovation for the man 'that comes in triumph over Pompey's blood.' They disperse at the rebuke of the tribunes, but they evidently have no loftier political ideal than a readiness to huzzah and throw up their caps in honour of any one who will provide the occasion for popular holidays. They are already infected with the spirit that, under the Empire, craved nothing but bread and the shows of the circus. Thus even their applause when Caesar refuses the crown does not spring from genuine republican conviction; it is the mere unintelligent, boisterous demonstration of a rabble, that treats a solemn constitutional proceeding as if it were a piece of stagey heroics. The populace is, in fact, weary of a liebrty that means nothing to it, and what it wants is an idol—crowned or uncrowned—whom it may worship. It is this need that Caesar satisfies, and while it exists, he is strong with a strength that death only multiplies a hundredfold. The conspirators strike down the man Julius, but they cannot kill 'Caesar.' The 'spirit of Caesar' or (to use the modern phrase) of Caesarism, survives, and the latter half of the play is the exhibition of its complete triumph. The infirmities of the dictator in the flesh are merely the foil to his irresistible might when set free from physical trammels. What picture of Caesar, as conqueror or statesman, could have left so ineffaceable an impression of his unique place in the world's history, as this awe-inspiring spectacle of his spirit, a silent, impalpable force, scattering destruction among his foes?

In the portraiture of the men who thus, to their own undoing, kill Caesar, and thereby set free his spirit to range for its revenge, Shaks-

pere's plastic art has achieved one of its most consummate triumphs. Brutus and Cassius are fashioned on somewhat too simple lines to be completely representative of that complex world of tortuous political intrigues and personal rivalries, whose chronicle, day by day, remains to us in Cicero's letters. But what they lose in historical accuracy, they gain in pure, essential humanity, and they thus become ideal exemplars of the cardinal revolutionary types in all ages and countries. Plutarch had marked the distinction between the two men clearly when he wrote, 'It is reported that Brutus could evil away with the tyranny, and that Cassius hated the tyrant,' while he further states that Cassius was a choleric man, hating Caesar privately more than he did the tyrant openly.

From such hints Shakspere has developed with unerring truth of detail the character-contrast between the idealist driven into revolution by his allegiance to an inflexible code of right, and the genuine political conspirator, the man of mixed motives and elastic morality. It is Cassius who hatches the plot against Caesar. Physically and mentally he is suited to the part of a ringleader. He is a spare man, with a lean and hungry look. He seldom smiles, loves no plays, and hears no music, being thus fit (as Shakspere had declared in *The Merchant of Venice*) for 'treasons, stratagems, and spoils.' On the other hand he reads much, and is a great observer, who looks quite through the deeds of men. Caesar's instinct is not at fault when he labels him 'dangerous' on the ground that

> 'Such men as he be never at heart's ease
> When they behold a greater than themselves.'

His attitude towards the dictator thus springs in part from personal jealousy, and mortification at being outstripped by a rival in the political race. But this is mingled with a sincere republican passion, which gives dignity to a character lacking in moral elevation. The distinction between Brutus and Cassius is thus not simply that between the idealist and the man of affairs. Cassius is an idealist in his own way. The principle of the equality of all men is as dear to him as abstract right is to his kinsman. Liberty, as he declares over and over again, is more to him than life:

> 'I had as lief not be as live to be
> In awe of such a thing as I myself.
> I was born free as Caesar.'

Or, as he cries later in words of melancholy grandeur:

'Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius:
Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong;
Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat:
Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;
But life, being weary of those worldly bars,
Never lacks power to dismiss itself.'

Cassius' doctrine of liberty rests upon the simple axiom that every man, by the mere *fact of his existence, is equal to every other.* This finds its extreme expression in his singular piece of reasoning that Brutus and Caesar must be on all points on a par because there is nothing to choose between their names as examples of the proper noun.

'Brutus and Caesar: what should be in that "Caesar"?
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
Write them together, yours is as fair a name;
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;
Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em,
"Brutus" will start a spirit as soon as "Caesar".'

Such an argument is an unconscious *reductio ad absurdum* of Cassius' own theory, and it is needless to say that, from a historical point of view, this decidedly primitive conception of democracy is curiously inapt on the lips of a Roman of the first century B.C. With Cassius' passionate conviction of the divine right of republicanism, he sees in Caesar's ascendency nothing but a proof of the degeneracy of the times.

'Age, thou art shamed!
Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!
When went there by an age, since the great flood,
But it was famed with more than with one man?'

Caesar has become a wolf, because the Romans are sheep; a lion, because they are hinds. Let the brood of Romulus recover its ancient spirit, and all will yet be well.

'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.'

He, at least, is determined not to be one of the petty men walking under the legs of the Colossus, and he starts the conspiracy for his overthrow. He is ready, if need be, to die in the cause of liberty, but he will first try what killing can do on its behalf.

His initial step is to secure the adhesion of his kinsman, Brutus. A Stoic philosopher, habitually absorbed in meditation and in moral self-culture, Brutus has hitherto kept outside the sphere of practical

politics in Rome. His devotion to the highest ideal of conduct has so impressed his fellow-citizens that his approval of any course of action is taken as a guarantee of its rectitude. As even the cynical Casca confesses:

> 'He sits high in all the people's hearts:
> And that which would appear offence in us,
> His countenance, like richest alchemy,
> Will change to virtue and to worthiness.'

It is to give the conspiracy a plausible look in the eyes of the world that Cassius spares no pains to draw Brutus into its ranks. The general *malaise* of the times has so far affected him that he is vexed with an inward trouble of mind, which makes him neglectful of social amenities towards his kinsman, but he has had no intention hitherto of actively opposing Caesar, whose greatness he realizes, and who is his personal friend. When he hears the shouting at the Lupercalia, he quietly remarks: 'I do fear the people choose Caesar for their king.' And when Cassius eagerly breaks in—

> 'Ay, do you fear it?
> Then must I think you would not have it so,'

he answers meditatively: 'I would not, Cassius; yet I love him well.' The only way of stirring up such a man to violent action is by convincing him that it is a duty which it is dishonouring to shun. This is Cassius' method, and its effect on Brutus is at once apparent. But he needs a night's interval for reflection, and he spends the time meditating in his orchard alone. The torture of this period of suspense, while the idealist is groping his way through conflicting issues to a definite resolve, cannot be better expressed than in his own words:

> 'Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar,
> I have not slept.
> Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the first motion, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:
> The Genius and the mortal instruments
> Are then in council; and the state of man,
> Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
> The nature of an insurrection.'

To facilitate Brutus' deliberations Cassius does not scruple to throw in at his window forged letters, which are ostensibly appeals from Roman citizens urging him to strike for his country's welfare. But this external stimulus has only a small part in influencing his decision. The philosopher treats the question of Caesar's assassination

as if it were a problem in abstract thought, to be isolated from all complicating factors. He does not take into account the far-reaching practical consequences of such a deed, nor does he even seem swayed by a passionate detestation of absolutism as such. His interest is focussed upon the hypothetical effect of Caesar's elevation on his moral nature. Hitherto he has had no reason, either public or private, to complain of the dictator. But what of the future?

> 'Since the quarrel
> Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
> Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented,
> Would run to these and these extremities;
> And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
> Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind, grow mischievous,
> And kill him in the shell.'

It is the tragic counterpart to Touchstone's burlesque disquisition on the virtues of 'your If.' The murder of Caesar is a concession to the claims of a dialectic operating *in vacuo*. It is the conclusion of what has been called 'a fanatical sequence of thought.' But the individual undertakes a Titanic responsibility who presumes, in obedience to what, in his private judgement, are the dictates of a transcendental morality, to override the positive enactment of society against murder, and the scarcely less positive obligations of friendship. It is this perilous venture that Brutus makes, and the result is catastrophe to the state, and the ruin of his own fortunes, though his character rounds into more perfect beauty at every stage in his downfall. Like Hamlet, he is summoned from the seclusion of the study to undertake an uncongenial task, and like Hamlet he fails. But while the Prince of Denmark suffers from a syncope of the will, Brutus, once his decision is made, acts with energetic promptitude. Where he errs is in his complete misconception of the forces which sway average humanity. Because he acts from the loftiest motives himself, he takes it for granted that all men are equally disinterested, and he fondly believes that it is possible for confederates in assassination to keep their hands undefiled by minor breaches of the moral code. It is an evil hour for the conspiracy when he elects to join its ranks, for a revolution conducted on such unimpeachable principles is foredoomed to disaster[1].

1 It has not, as far as I know, been noticed that Cicero's words about *Cato* in a letter to Atticus define with the utmost exactitude the character of Shakspere's Brutus and its political results: *Ille optimo utens et summa fide nocet interdum rei publicae: dicit enim tamquam in Platonis πολιτεία, non tamquam in Romuli faece sententiam.* Thus Addison, however inferior to Shakspere as a dramatist, showed a correct historical instinct in making Cato, instead of Brutus, the incorruptible hero of the dying republican cause. Cicero's account of Brutus' attempt to exact usurious interest for a loan to the Salaminians is in startling contrast to the idealized picture of 'the noblest Roman of them all' which Shakspere found in the pages of Plutarch.

While Brutus has been meditating in his orchard alone, Cassius has been very differently occupied. It is a night of tempest and thunder, of apparitions and prodigies. All nature is convulsed in anticipation of the terrible deed that is to be wrought on the morrow. Cassius, with his emotions at fever-heat, revels in this electrical atmosphere:

> 'For my part, I have walk'd about the streets,
> Submitting me unto the perilous night,
> And, thus unbraced, Casca, as you see,
> Have bared by bosom to the thunder-stone;
> And where the cross blue lightning seem'd to open
> The breast of heaven, I did present myself
> Even in the aim and very flash of it.'

The unnatural disturbance of the elements seems to his excited fancy to be the counterpart of the abnormal political situation:

> 'Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man
> Most like this dreadful night,
> That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars
> As doth the lion in the Capitol.'

Even Casca is moved by this awful spectacle of 'a civil strife in heaven.' He drops his accustomed tone of mockery, and dilates eloquently on the significance of the portents which 'do so conjointly meet.' It is a favourable moment in which to broach the plot to him, and at the first hint of it, he pledges himself to set his foot 'as far as who goes farthest.' Other accomplices have already been secured by the energetic Cassius, and as the first grey streak of dawn shows above the Capitol on the Ides of March, 'the faction' assembles at the house of Brutus. The choice of this rendezvous is a tribute to Brutus' pre-eminent authority, which he at once uses to hamstring the conspiracy. He objects to Cassius' proposal that the confederates should take an oath, which, in his eyes, is a stain on the purity of their enterprise. He is equally averse to the suggestion that Cicero should be brought into the plot. Because the orator is vain and disinclined to 'follow anything that other men begin,' Brutus sacrifices the advantages which lie in his silver hair and eloquent lips. With yet more fatal lack of insight he resists Cassius' final proposal that Antony should be killed as well as Caesar. Brutus knows that Antony is far from irreproachable in private life, that he is given to sports, to wildness, and much company, and he therefore assumes that he is a negligible quantity in politics:

> 'For Mark Antony, think not of him:
> For he can do no more than Caesar's arm
> When Caesar's head is off.'

Moreover, additional bloodshed is abhorrent to the man who has taken up arms against an abstraction and not a personality.

> 'Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
> We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar;
> And in the spirit of men there is no blood:
> O then that we could come by Caesar's spirit
> And not dismember Caesar!'

How unsuited Brutus is for the task in hand is shown yet more clearly when the conspirators have taken their leave, and his wife Portia enters. In this daughter of Cato the idealist had found a worthy consort—one who realized to the full the Roman jurist's definition, *'uxor socia humanae rei atque divinae.'* Schooled like himself in the stern Stoic creed, she had given proof in earlier days of her indifference to pain by wounding herself in the thigh. But fortitude and self-control are in her, as in her husband, the cloak of an inward tenderness, which suffuses their relationship with a fullness of warmth and glow denied to a more superficially romantic passion. What words could express with terser eloquence the ardour of a flawless wedded love than Brutus' cry to Portia:

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

This absolute communion of soul is in designed contrast to the shallow relation of Caesar and Calpurnia. The dictator treats his wife as a child to be humoured or not according to his caprice, but Portia assumes that, 'by the right and virtue of her place,' she is entitled to share her husband's inmost thoughts. Brutus discloses to her the secret which lies so heavily upon his breast, and we know that this secret is inviolably safe in her keeping. But for all her self-command, she has a woman's highly-strung sensitiveness, and when Brutus has gone forth to the Capitol on his dread mission, her agitation is so overwhelming that it almost betrays her, in her own despite, to the boy Lucius. This agitation communicates itself to the reader of the play, and it is intensified by the momentary uncertainty whether Caesar will read Artemidorus' warning before listening to petitions from other suitors. There is a second interval of suspense while Popilius Lena whispers in Caesar's ear, and it seems likely that the plot has been discovered. The excitable Cassius for an instant loses his nerve, but Brutus keeps calm enough at this crisis to gather from the expression of Caesar's face that the alarm is unfounded. Then Casca strikes the first blow, and pierced

through and through by the conspirators' weapons, Caesar falls, a 'bleeding piece of earth,' at the foot of Pompey's statue. The tyranny seems ended for ever, and Brutus is eager to signalize the great deliverance by an impressive public demonstration.

> 'Stoop, Romans, stoop,
> And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
> Up to the elbows, *and besmear our swords:*
> Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,
> And, waving our red weapons o'er our heads,
> Let 's all cry "Peace, freedom, and liberty".'

But Brutus is now to learn that Caesar's spirit cannot be annihilated by the sword, and that when Julius has fallen it can turn into potent instruments those who have hitherto seemed of little account. The austere moralist has despised the gamesome Antony as 'but a limb of Caesar,' and up to this point he has in effect been little more than a lay figure in the drama. But he has reserves of power, which the crisis produced by Caesar's murder is exactly fitted to call into play. Lax in conduct, and unstable in principle he is completely wanting in Brutus' moral idealism, and in Cassius' devotion to an abstract political theory. But with acute aesthetic sensibilities, he is readily fascinated by the glamour of an imposing personality. Caesar has been in his eyes 'the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times,' and he has lavished upon him a loyalty perfectly genuine, though fed from the imagination rather than the heart. Moreover, a monarchy with the ceremonial that accompanies it, and the stimulus it gives to social gaiety, suits his fashion of life, and thus he had taken the lead in pressing the crown upon Caesar. He knows that the mob of Rome does not care a jot about forms of government, and he is confident that an appeal to their self-interest and their hero-worship will provoke an outburst before which the conspirators will be powerless. Having obtained a safe-conduct, he enters the presence of assassins, ostensibly to

> 'Be resolved
> How Caesar hath deserved to lie in death,'

and thereafter to follow 'the fortunes and affairs of noble Brutus' with all true faith. Brutus takes him at his word, but Cassius, profoundly suspicious of his intentions, makes a bid for his support by the naked offer of a share in the spoils:

> 'Your voice shall be as strong as any man's
> In the disposing of new dignities.'

Moreover, additional bloodshed is abhorrent to the man who has taken up arms against an abstraction and not a personality.

> 'Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
> We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar;
> And in the spirit of men there is no blood:
> O then that we could come by Caesar's spirit
> And not dismember Caesar!'

How unsuited Brutus is for the task in hand is shown yet more clearly when the conspirators have taken their leave, and his wife Portia enters. In this daughter of Cato the idealist had found a worthy consort—one who realized to the full the Roman jurist's definition, *'uxor socia humanae rei atque divinae.'* Schooled like himself in the stern Stoic creed, she had given proof in earlier days of her indifference to pain by wounding herself in the thigh. But fortitude and self-control are in her, as in her husband, the cloak of an inward tenderness, which suffuses their relationship with a fullness of warmth and glow denied to a more superficially romantic passion. What words could express with terser eloquence the ardour of a flawless wedded love than Brutus' cry to Portia:

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

This absolute communion of soul is in designed contrast to the shallow relation of Caesar and Calpurnia. The dictator treats his wife as a child to be humoured or not according to his caprice, but Portia assumes that, 'by the right and virtue of her place,' she is entitled to share her husband's inmost thoughts. Brutus discloses to her the secret which lies so heavily upon his breast, and we know that this secret is inviolably safe in her keeping. But for all her self-command, she has a woman's highly-strung sensitiveness, and when Brutus has gone forth to the Capitol on his dread mission, her agitation is so overwhelming that it almost betrays her, in her own despite, to the boy Lucius. This agitation communicates itself to the reader of the play, and it is intensified by the momentary uncertainty whether Caesar will read Artemidorus' warning before listening to petitions from other suitors. There is a second interval of suspense while Popilius Lena whispers in Caesar's ear, and it seems likely that the plot has been discovered. The excitable Cassius for an instant loses his nerve, but Brutus keeps calm enough at this crisis to gather from the expression of Caesar's face that the alarm is unfounded. Then Casca strikes the first blow, and pierced

through and through by the conspirators' weapons, Caesar falls, a 'bleeding piece of earth,' at the foot of Pompey's statue. The tyranny seems ended for ever, and Brutus is eager to signalize the great deliverance by an impressive public demonstration.

> 'Stoop, Romans, stoop,
> And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
> Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords:
> Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,
> And, waving our red weapons o'er our heads,
> Let 's all cry "Peace, freedom, and liberty".'

But Brutus is now to learn that Caesar's spirit cannot be annihilated by the sword, and that when Julius has fallen it can turn into potent instruments those who have hitherto seemed of little account. The austere moralist has despised the gamesome Antony as 'but a limb of Caesar,' and up to this point he has in effect been little more than a lay figure in the drama. But he has reserves of power, which the crisis produced by Caesar's murder is exactly fitted to call into play. Lax in conduct, and unstable in principle he is completely wanting in Brutus' moral idealism, and in Cassius' devotion to an abstract political theory. But with acute aesthetic sensibilities, he is readily fascinated by the glamour of an imposing personality. Caesar has been in his eyes 'the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times,' and he has lavished upon him a loyalty perfectly genuine, though fed from the imagination rather than the heart. Moreover, a monarchy with the ceremonial that accompanies it, and the stimulus it gives to social gaiety, suits his fashion of life, and thus he had taken the lead in pressing the crown upon Caesar. He knows that the mob of Rome does not care a jot about forms of government, and he is confident that an appeal to their self-interest and their hero-worship will provoke an outburst before which the conspirators will be powerless. Having obtained a safe-conduct, he enters the presence of assassins, ostensibly to

> 'Be resolved
> How Caesar hath deserved to lie in death,'

and thereafter to follow 'the fortunes and affairs of noble Brutus' with all true faith. Brutus takes him at his word, but Cassius, profoundly suspicious of his intentions, makes a bid for his support by the naked offer of a share in the spoils:

> 'Your voice shall be as strong as any man's
> In the disposing of new dignities.'

Brutus, meanwhile, is beating the air in an elaborate disquisition to Antony upon the excellence of his motives for the murder:

> 'Our reasons are so full of good regard
> That were you, Antony, the son of Caesar,
> You should be satisfied.'

So confident is he in the irresistible influence of these 'reasons' on Antony, that he grants his request to speak at Caesar's funeral. Cassius remonstrates with such an impolitic concession, but Brutus has an unassailable faith in the efficacy of his own logic on the popular mind:

> 'By your pardon;
> I will myself into the pulpit first,
> And show the reason of our Caesar's death.'

Thus he addresses the throng of citizens in a cold formal *apologia*, composed of carefully balanced antitheses, and nice distinctions between the various aspects of Caesar's career. But the crowd cares for none of these dialectical refinements. It has lost its hero, and it wants another in his place. Hence, as Brutus steps down from the *rostrum*, he is greeted by the cry, annihilating in its unconscious irony, 'Let him be Caesar.' It is the first revelation, all the more bitter because of its complimentary intent, that 'Caesar' has developed into a permanent constitutional factor, indestructible by the cancelling of an individual life. It is, in effect, the proclamation, *Le roi est mort, vive le roi.*

But even this perverted form of popular enthusiasm for the would-be liberator vanishes before the insidious assault of Antony's oratory. The aristocrat with popular sympathies, real or assumed, has always been the most effective of demagogues, and Antony's address is an unparalleled masterpiece of rhetorical art. To the modulation of flawless verse it unites the lucidity and breadth of ideal 'platform' oratory, and the tactical adroitness of a first-rate debating speech. He begins by an ironical show of deference to the 'honourable' assassins with their plea that Caesar was ambitious, and then skilfully glances at incidents which give the lie to such a contention. After a pause, to note the effect of this opening upon his hearers, he introduces a new topic—Caesar's will, and hints alluringly at its munificent provisions. The crowd, wild with excitement, insists that the will shall be read, and Antony, stepping down from the 'pulpit,' bids them first make a ring about the corpse of Caesar, that he may show them their benefactor. It is a superb piece of stage-management, paving the way for the final *coup*—a direct appeal

to the emotions of the populace through the eye as well as the ear. He points to Caesar's mantle, associated with one of his glorious victories in the field, but now gashed and crimsoned by countless strokes, including that 'most unkindest cut of all' dealt by 'Caesar's angel,' Brutus. Then, as tears begin to flow from the beholders, he plays his trump card by snatching the covering from the body, and displaying it, 'marred with traitors,' to the gaze of the throng. The effect is electrical. A confused, hoarse clamour for 'revenge' mounts from a hundred throats, and, in the tumultuous eagerness to hunt down the conspirators, and burn the house of Brutus, the rabble forgets all about the will which a moment ago it had been clamouring to hear read. No more vivid picture has ever been drawn of the fickle, inflammable temper of a crowd. But a piece of deadlier irony follows. The citizens, in their stampede through the streets in quest of the 'traitors,' run across Cinna, the poet. He protests that he is a different person from Cinna, the conspirator, but the infuriated populace will listen to no explanations, and treats his name as a sufficient reason for tearing him to pieces. Such is the mob's interpretation of Cassius' theory that every name entitles its owner to equal privileges in the commonwealth.

The end of the matter is that the liberators have to ride 'like madmen through the gates of Rome,' while Caesar's beneficent despotism is replaced by the sanguinary persecution of the Triumvirate. Civil war follows, but the conspirators are handicapped in the struggle by the disunion that attends on a failing cause. Cassius knows that their desperate strait calls for desperate expedients, and he is not over-scrupulous about corruption in himself or his subordinates. But Brutus will make no allowance for the slightest deviation from his own immaculate ideal. In his tent at Sardis he turns reprovingly upon his companion-in-arms:

> 'Remember March, the ides of March remember:
> Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?
> What villain touch'd his body, that did stab,
> And not for justice? What! shall one of us,
> That struck the foremost man of all this world
> But for supporting robbers, shall we now
> Contaminate our fingers with base bribes?'

This is the very fanaticism of righteousness, and it stirs Cassius to an outbreak of choler, which Brutus answers in kind. Indeed, it is not the idealist who shows to the greater advantage in this scene. Brutus, precisian in morals though he be, forgets that accuracy is of the essence of justice, and puts words into Cassius' mouth that he had never used. Moreover, though he scorns to raise money by

vile means, he finds that this exalted conduct will not of itself provide the sinews of war, and he is reduced to reproaching his kinsman for withholding from him the supplies which he has been too scrupulous to raise himself. But the estrangement between the pair is soon over, and Brutus' unwonted irritability is explained by his quiet announcement, 'Portia is dead.' The heroic wife, overcome by the ruin of her husband's fortunes, had sought her end by swallowing fire! Brutus' grief is too deep for words, but Portia's presence seems to brood over the solemn reconciliation between the kinsmen.

> '*Bru.* Speak no more of her. Give me a bowl of wine,
> In this I bury all unkindness, Cassius.
> *Cas.* My heart is thirsty for that noble pledge.
> Fill, Lucius, till the wine o'erswell the cup;
> *I cannot drink too much of Brutus' love.*'

If Brutus, 'sick of many griefs,' has shown a momentary flash of anger, he atones for it by his exquisite tenderness towards his servants, especially the page Lucius. The man who had slain his best friend 'for justice sake' has not the heart to wake a sleeping boy. But gentle words and actions avail nothing against big battalions, and in the contests of this world Brutus is doomed to defeat. The apparition of Caesar's ghost, with its menacing prophecy that they shall meet at Philippi, warns him that the 'spirit' which he had hoped to annihilate is still active, and is dogging the conspirators to destruction. And so it proves on the day of battle. Cassius is the first victim—stabbed by the very weapon that he had used against the dictator; and Brutus, as he looks on the face of his dead kinsman, utters the pregnant cry which strikes the keynote of the play:

> 'O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!
> Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords
> In our own proper entrails.'

A moment afterwards he, too, falls, pierced by his own sword, and the republican cause is crushed for ever. The idealist, blind to the facts of life, closes his career in disaster. But his is the glorious blindness that springs from excess of light. He fails as a leader of men, because his eye is for ever fixed on the radiant vision of Man as he ought to be. And thus with characteristic felicity Antony, in his farewell tribute, gives him the praise that he would have coveted most, of being a pattern specimen of humanity:

> His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a man!"'

Dante, with his keen imperialist sympathies, consigns Brutus and Cassius to the lowest circle of the Inferno, with Judas as their companion in torture. Shakspere, on the contrary, exhibits their motives and aims in the most favourable light. Yet the play is a demonstration throughout of the inevitable triumph of Caesarism. The dramatist knew nothing of the breakdown of the Roman provincial system, and next to nothing of the constitutional problems within the city itself. The more marvellous, therefore, is the sagacity which led him, on the broad issue of Republicanism versus Caesarism, to anticipate the verdict of the greatest modern historian of Rome.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA was probably written about 1607. A 'booke called *Antony and Cleopatra*' was entered on the Stationers' Register in May, 1608, by Blount, afterwards one of the publishers of the first folio. This may have been Shakspere's play, whose metrical characteristics in any case, assign it to near that date. It contains seventy-one light and twenty-eight weak endings, making together a percentage of just over three and-a-half. The language has the pregnant compression and boldness of construction that mark the later tragic period. Coleridge declared that it was unique in its 'happy valiancy of style.' Thus, though historically the play is a sequel to *Julius Caesar*, it differs from it widely in metrical qualities, and no less widely in its general spirit. The transition from the one to the other produces in us, as Dowden has said, 'the change of pulse and temper experienced in passing from a gallery of antique sculpture to a room splendid with the colours of Titian and Paul Veronese.' This change is due in large measure to Plutarch, whose Greek origin gave him a special insight into the social conditions of the semi-Greek city of Alexandria, and whose *Life of Antonius* is a brilliant historical romance, full of glow and movement. Shakspere never had more attractive material to work on, and, in the main, he turned his opportunities to magnificent account. Coleridge said that *Antony and Cleopatra* was by far the most wonderful of Shakspere's historical plays, and that 'in all exhibitions of a giant power in its strength and vigour of maturity' it was a formidable rival to the chief tragedies. Certainly in consummate delineation of character, and in the superb rhythmical swell of many passages, the work is unsurpassed. But it has a grave share of the defects to which Romantic drama had been liable from the first, especially when it was drawing upon historical materials. The play covers a period of more than ten years, from the spring of 40 B.C. to the summer of 30 B.C., and the scene shifts from one end of the

vile means, he finds that this exalted conduct will not of itself provide the sinews of war, and he is reduced to reproaching his kinsman for withholding from him the supplies which he has been too scrupulous to raise himself. But the estrangement between the pair is soon over, and Brutus' unwonted irritability is explained by his quiet announcement, 'Portia is dead.' The heroic wife, overcome by the ruin of her husband's fortunes, had sought her end by swallowing fire! Brutus' grief is too deep for words, but Portia's presence seems to brood over the solemn reconciliation between the kinsmen.

> '*Bru.* Speak no more of her. Give me a bowl of wine,
> In this I bury all unkindness, Cassius.
> *Cas.* My heart is thirsty for that noble pledge.
> Fill, Lucius, till the wine o'erswell the cup;
> I cannot drink too much of Brutus' love.'

If Brutus, 'sick of many griefs,' has shown a momentary flash of anger, he atones for it by his exquisite tenderness towards his servants, especially the page Lucius. The man who had slain his best friend 'for justice sake' has not the heart to wake a sleeping boy. But gentle words and actions avail nothing against big battalions, and in the contests of this world Brutus is doomed to defeat. The apparition of Caesar's ghost, with its menacing prophecy that they shall meet at Philippi, warns him that the 'spirit' which he had hoped to annihilate is still active, and is dogging the conspirators to destruction. And so it proves on the day of battle. Cassius is the first victim—stabbed by the very weapon that he had used against the dictator; and Brutus, as he looks on the face of his dead kinsman, utters the pregnant cry which strikes the keynote of the play:

> 'O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!
> Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords
> In our own proper entrails.'

A moment afterwards he, too, falls, pierced by his own sword, and the republican cause is crushed for ever. The idealist, blind to the facts of life, closes his career in disaster. But his is the glorious blindness that springs from excess of light. He fails as a leader of men, because his eye is for ever fixed on the radiant vision of Man as he ought to be. And thus with characteristic felicity Antony, in his farewell tribute, gives him the praise that he would have coveted most, of being a pattern specimen of humanity:

> 'His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a man!"'

Dante, with his keen imperialist sympathies, consigns Brutus and Cassius to the lowest circle of the Inferno, with Judas as their companion in torture. Shakspere, on the contrary, exhibits their motives and aims in the most favourable light. Yet the play is a demonstration throughout of the inevitable triumph of Caesarism. The dramatist knew nothing of the breakdown of the Roman provincial system, and next to nothing of the constitutional problems within the city itself. The more marvellous, therefore, is the sagacity which led him, on the broad issue of Republicanism versus Caesarism, to anticipate the verdict of the greatest modern historian of Rome.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA was probably written about 1607. A 'booke called *Antony and Cleopatra*' was entered on the Stationers' Register in May, 1608, by Blount, afterwards one of the publishers of the first folio. This may have been Shakspere's play, whose metrical characteristics in any case, assign it to near that date. It contains seventy-one light and twenty-eight weak endings, making together a percentage of just over three and-a-half. The language has the pregnant compression, and boldness of construction that mark the later tragic period. Coleridge declared that it was unique in its 'happy valiancy of style.' Thus, though historically the play is a sequel to *Julius Caesar*, it differs from it widely in metrical qualities, and no less widely in its general spirit. The transition from the one to the other produces in us, as Dowden has said, 'the change of pulse and temper experienced in passing from a gallery of antique sculpture to a room splendid with the colours of Titian and Paul Veronese.' This change is due in large measure to Plutarch, whose Greek origin gave him a special insight into the social conditions of the semi-Greek city of Alexandria, and whose *Life of Antonius* is a brilliant historical romance, full of glow and movement. Shakspere never had more attractive material to work on, and, in the main, he turned his opportunities to magnificent account. Coleridge said that *Antony and Cleopatra* was by far the most wonderful of Shakspere's historical plays, and that 'in all exhibitions of a giant power in its strength and vigour of maturity' it was a formidable rival to the chief tragedies. Certainly in consummate delineation of character, and in the superb rhythmical swell of many passages, the work is unsurpassed. But it has a grave share of the defects to which Romantic drama had been liable from the first, especially when it was drawing upon historical materials. The play covers a period of more than ten years, from the spring of 40 B.C. to the summer of 30 B.C., and the scene shifts from one end of the

Roman empire to the other. Shakspere seems to have felt a conscientious obligation to introduce every incident, political or private, mentioned by Plutarch, and the result is a loss of dramatic unity and perspective. The multiplicity of details is bewildering, and no single event stands out boldly as the pivot on which the catastrophe turns.

But this artistic defect is here in part the outcome of a significant peculiarity in Shakspere's treatment of love as a dramatic theme. Sexual passion is the immediate subject of only three plays, *Romeo and Juliet, Troilus and Cressida,* and *Antony and Cleopatra.* In each case the emotional interest is interwoven with elements of a political nature—the civil strife of Montagues and Capulets, the war between the Greeks and the Trojans, the struggle for the lordship of the Roman world. Thus Shakspere, even when making an elaborate study of amorous passion, does not isolate it from the wider, more material, issues of surrounding civic or national life. He thus avoids the disastrous pitfall of treating love as the exclusive factor in existence—a method which, according to the nature of the love chosen for analysis, tends to produce an unwholesome sentimentality or a still more unwholesome prurience. Shakspere opens to our view hearts aflame with chaste affection or with sensuous desire, but he never cheats himself or others into the belief that sexual relationship is the solitary, imperious concern of all mankind. From the kaleidoscopic changes of Cleopatra's moods he turns our gaze to the legions tramping in solid array through the uttermost parts of the earth, or to the council-chambers where the destinies of kingdoms are being decided by the stroke of a pen. We are shown in turn every aspect of the most materialistic age in the world's history, the age when Roman civic virtue was, in its death-throes, suffocated by the plethora of its golden spoils from the South and the East. The spirit of the period has been finely interpreted by Matthew Arnold:

> 'In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
> The Roman noble lay;
> He drove abroad, in furious guise,
> Along the Appian way.
>
> He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
> And crown'd his hair with flowers—
> No easier nor no quicker pass'd
> The impracticable hours.
>
> The brooding East with awe beheld
> Her impious younger world.
> The Roman tempest swell'd and swell'd,
> And on her head was hurl'd.

> The East bow'd low before the blast
> In patient, deep disdain;
> She let the legions thunder past,
> And plunged in thought again.'

But the East, as beheld in Shakspere's play, instead of being plunged in thought, is holding revel amidst her palaces, and the opening scenes transport us into the centre of a society whose sole divinity is the pleasure of the passing hour. Waiting-women, loose in morals and free of tongue, soothsayers, eunuchs,—the whole motley rout that makes up an Oriental court,—these are the ministers of the sacred orgies, whose high-priestess is the Egyptian queen, 'the incarnate poetry,' as she has been called, 'of a world deserted by the loftier forces of life.'

Cleopatra is among Shakspere's women what Falstaff is amongst his men. Both have the same infinite complexity of nature in which seemingly contradictory qualities are reconciled, and both the same paradoxical grandeur compounded out of all that is most morally worthless. Fascination radiates equally from either personality, and as Falstaff, when completely bankrupt in honour and fortune, is still the knight and the gentleman, so Cleopatra, guilty of the most detestable and squalid forms of misconduct, remains every inch a queen. In the Boar's Head tavern and in the palace at Alexandria a similar struggle is being waged: the venue is changed, and the weapons, but an identical principle is at stake. Falstaff had sought to defeat moral facts by the dazzling play of an inexhaustible humour; Cleopatra substitutes the no less dazzling play of an inexhaustible personal charm, wherein beauty, as Plutarch expressly states, was only a minor element. Perfect beauty could indeed scarcely be the portion of this 'gipsy,' with 'Phoebus' amorous pinches black,' but she has the more talismanic gifts of perennial youth and endless versatility of attraction. Antony cries to her that she is one

> 'Whom everything becomes, to chide, to laugh,
> To weep; whose every passion fully strives
> To make itself, in thee, fair and admired.'

And the dispassionate judgement of Enobarbus pronounces the same verdict:

> 'Age cannot wither her,
> Nor custom stale her infinite variety: . . .
> For vilest things become themselves in her,
> That the holy priests bless her when she is riggish.'

Antony's names for her, 'serpent of old Nile,' and 'great fairy, testify to a spell that seems wellnigh more than human. Yet its

potency really springs from her unabashed revelation of a womanhood dowered with every captivating attribute save those which have a moral source. The Cleopatra of Shakspere, and indeed of Plutarch, anticipates a type of which the modern stage is often supposed to be the originator. This *demimondaine* born in the purple, with her hot and cold fits, her mingled restlessness and languor, her passion at once false and true, her lavishness and her avarice, her seductive wiles varied by outbursts of ferocity or coarseness—what essential aspect of courtesan-nature has the realism of to-day discovered which is not to be found in his wonderful picture? Fate provides for a unique manifestation of the myriad possibilities of Cleopatra's character when it throws Antony into her toils. In her youth she had been Caesar's paramour, but to the conqueror and statesman this dalliance had been only an interlude amidst the serious work of war and government. Antony is of other mould, and is in fact, as completely the masculine counterpart of Cleopatra as Benedick was of Beatrice. The emotional homage which in earlier days he had lavished on Caesar is now poured forth yet more unreservedly at the feet of the Egyptian Queen. In her Antony finds a being who satisfies the boundless craving of his richly endowed sensuous nature. Eternity, as he tells her, is in her lips and eyes, and bliss in her brow's bent. With her as partner, the infinite of pleasure seems within mortal grasp.

> '*Cleo.* If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
> *Ant.* There 's beggary in the love that can be reckoned.
> *Cleo.* I 'll set a bourn how far to be beloved.
> *Ant.* Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.'

As he folds her to his breast, he cries:

> 'The nobleness of life
> Is to do thus: when such a mutual pair
> And such a twain can do 't, in which I bind,
> On pain of punishment, the world to weet
> We stand up peerless.'

And the passion of Antony and Cleopatra is the more royal in its superb prodigality, because it is not the brittle rapture of adolescence, but the quintessential bliss of riper years:

> 'What, girl? though gray
> Do something mingle with our younger brown,
> Yet ha' we a brain that nourishes our nerves,
> And can get goal for goal of youth.'

Yet this passion, so mutually enthralling, so opulent of delight, is not, in any true sense, love. The souls of Antony and Cleopatra

have never for one moment mingled. The gorgeous fabric of their bliss totters from hour to hour on an unstable foundation. Antony is always on the watch for treachery on the part of the 'gipsy,' and Cleopatra is ever fearful that her paramour will be drawn from her side by his bond as a husband, or his ambition as a ruler. Nor are there wanting counsellors eager to deliver the Roman from his 'dotage.' Philo, in the opening words of the play, deplores the spectacle of

> 'The triple pillar of the world transformed
> Into a strumpet's fool.'

And Enobarbus, while recognizing that Cleopatra is 'a wonderful piece of work,' ridicules her artifices to his master with caustic irony. At last news comes which stirs Antony for a space out of his voluptuous languor. His wife, Fulvia, who in his absence had begun war against Octavius Caesar, has died, and Sextus Pompeius, the son of the great Pompey, has obtained the empire of the sea, and is threatening the ascendency of the triumvirate. Cleopatra's behaviour at this crisis is an apt illustration of the inimitable strategy by which she seeks to keep Antony perennially ensnared. She has mastered, down to its minutest details, the coquette's prime secret of drawing a captive into stricter bondage by crossing his humour at every turn.

> '*Cleo.* See where he is, who's with him, what he does.
> . . . If you find him sad,
> Say I am dancing: if in mirth, report
> That I am sudden sick: quick, and return.
> *Char.* Madam, methinks, if you did love him dearly,
> You do not hold the method to enforce
> The like from him.
> *Cleo.* What should I do I do not?
> *Char.* In each thing give him way, cross him in nothing.
> *Cleo.* Thou teachest like a fool; the way to lose him.'

Thus when Antony is anxious for sport, she bids him listen to the ambassadors from Rome, and when he wishes to impart to her their grave intelligence, she meets him with playful mockery, aimed in especial at her rival, Fulvia:

> 'What says the married woman? You may go:
> Would she had never given you leave to come!
> Let her not say 'tis I that keep you here—
> I have no power upon you: hers you are.'

Even the announcement of Fulvia's death only turns her banter into a new channel. She jeers at him for not weeping at his bereavement, and professes to believe that he would mourn her own loss

as little as he does his wife's. Yet beneath this frivolous mummery, Cleopatra does cherish an unbounded emotional enthusiasm for her heroic paramour, 'the demi-Atlas of this earth.' When he has departed, she dwells comfortless under the shadow of a vast eclipse. She begs for a draught of mandragora that she may sleep out 'this great gap of time' her Antony is away. Her thoughts follow him everywhere, and she sends him each day a separate greeting. When Alexas brings the report that in his absence from her, he is neither sad nor merry, she twists these colourless tidings into a shape that flatters both herself and him, and asks in passionate tones, 'Did I, Charmian, ever love Caesar so?' Charmian, an apt pupil in her mistress' methods, merely cries, 'O! that brave Caesar.' Instantly we see a flash of the coarse and cruel temper that lies just beneath the seductive surface of the 'gipsy's' nature.

> 'By Isis, I give thee bloody teeth
> If thou with Caesar paragon again
> My man of men.'

This prepares us for the paroxysm of rage with which she overwhelms the unhappy messsenger who brings her the news that Antony, to cement his alliance with Octavius, has married the triumvir's sister. She strikes him again and again, hales him up and down, threatens him with excruciating tortures, and even draws out a knife wherewith to murder him. Yet a moment afterwards she repents of her undignified violence, and she has, at least, the excuse that Antony's faithlessness has wounded to the quick whatever of genuine devotion there is in her mercurial nature. Disillusion, petty jealousy, and the longing for a renewed hold over her captive are strangely blended in her words:

> 'Lead me from hence;
> I faint:—O Iras! Charmian!—'tis no matter.—
> Go to the fellow, good Alexas; bid him
> Report the feature of Octavia, her years,
> Her inclination; let him not leave out
> The colour of her hair:—bring me word quickly.
> [*Exit* Alexas.]
> Let him for ever go:—let him not—Charmian!—
> Though he be painted one way like a Gorgon,
> The other way 's a Mars.—[*To* Mardian] Bid you Alexas
> Bring me word how tall she is.—Pity me, Charmian,
> But do not speak to me. Lead me to my chamber.'

And [illegible] farcical supplement to this serio-comic scene is the [illegible] of Cleopatra with the messenger, when she [illegible] without disguise at hearing that Octavia is a widow, 'dull of tongue and dwarfish,' with a round face and a low forehead.

The queen's confidence that Antony cannot like his wife long is echoed by less prejudiced observers. The union has been contracted for political ends, and the shrewd judgement of Enobarbus prophesies its failure, even as a link between the two generals:

'*Eno.* You shall find the band that seems to tie their friendship together will be the very strangler of their amity: Octavia is of a holy, cold, and still conversation.

Men. Who would not have his wife so?

Eno. Not he that himself is not so; which is Mark Antony. He will to his Egyptian dish again: then, shall the sighs of Octavia blow the fire up in Caesar; and, as I said before, that which is the strength of their amity shall prove the immediate author of their variance.'

But, for the moment, there is concord among the triumvirs, and they even come to terms with Sextus Pompeius, the last representative, as his father's son, of the republican cause. Sextus, though not of much dramatic importance, is interesting as the only figure in Shakspere's works who recalls the Elizabethan sea-dogs who fought and plundered on the Spanish main. The banquet on his galley, in celebration of the treaty, is just such a carousal as must often have taken place on a vessel of Drake or Hawkins, when she came into port after a successful raid. But this revel is something more than a realistic sketch of naval manners under the Tudors. Shakspere fills in Plutarch's meagre account with such elaborate detail because the episode is intended to be symbolical of a world-wide condition of things. Paganism, shorn of all its loftier elements, is dancing with uproarious merriment to its destruction, and the scene in the galley is a miniature of this gigantic catastrophe. The world, we feel, must in truth be tottering, when we see its 'third part,' Lepidus, reeling from side to side till he is borne off dead drunk, while his companions take hands and whirl madly in a circle, shrieking the Bacchanal chorus:

'Cup us, till the world go round;
Cup us, till the world go round.'

And what a grim background to this orgie is supplied by Menas' whispered advice to Sextus to cut the ship's cable, and then 'fall to the throats' of the triumvirs. Sextus is too scrupulous to act on the hint, and thus throws away the lordship of the world; but how infinite is the irony of a situation in which the safety of the joint-rulers of Rome and its empire depends on a corsair's honour and a ship's rope.

The league of peace so boisterously celebrated is soon broken. Caesar with the aid of Lepidus overthrows Sextus Pompeius, and then turns upon his wretched colleague, whose unfitness for the dig-

nity to which circumstances have raised him is jeered at by the very soldiers and serving-men. Octavius' strong measures infuriate Antony, and his wife undertakes a mission of reconciliation between the brothers-in-law. But Antony's passion for Cleopatra triumphs over his political instinct, and he wrecks his future by taking advantage of Octavia's absence to fly once more to the Egyptian's arms. Octavius finds in his sister's wrongs specious pretext for his ambitious designs, and equips instantly an expedition against the faithless husband and his paramour. Yet the fortune of war might have inclined to Antony's side had he challenged it on land, with the advantages of a veteran soldiery and his own unrivalled skill in leadership. But against the advice of his lieutenants, the infatuated Roman yields to Cleopatra's capricious eagerness to fight by sea, though he has only raw and scanty crews wherewith to oppose the victors in the naval warfare against Sextus. Yet even under these conditions neither side wins a decisive advantage, till in the very crisis of the action, Cleopatra, swayed by a recklessly frivolous impulse, hoists sail and flies with her sixty galleys. Then follows the incident that forms the tragic *nodus* of the drama, in so far as there is one at all. Antony, says Plutarch,

'was so carried away with the vain love of this woman as if he had been glued unto her, and that she could not have removed without moving of him also: for when he saw Cleopatra's ship under sail, he forgot, forsook, and betrayed them that fought for him, and embarked upon a galley...to follow her that had already begun to overthrow him, and would in the end be his utter destruction.'

Shakspere scarcely betters this in his version through the lips of Scarus, how Cleopatra

> 'I' the midst o' the fight . . .
> Hoists sails, and flies! .. She once, being loofed,
> The noble ruin of her magic, Antony,
> Claps on his sea-wing, and like a doting mallard,
> Leaving the fight in height, flies after her.
> I never saw an action of such shame:
> Experience, manhood, honour, ne'er before
> Did violate so itself.'

Antony has at least the redeeming quality of frankly recognizing his own shame. He confesses that he has 'offended reputation—a most unnoble swerving,' and bids his friends fly from a leader who has himself fled, and make their peace with Caesar. But Cleopatra's prayers for pardon are as balm to his wounded self-esteem; one of her tears 'rates all that is won and lost.' Yet the consequences of his infatuated action cannot be thus undone. So completely is his judgement demoralized that he challenges his cool, politic rival, who

has now the big battalions entirely on his side, to a single combat. It suits Octavius' methods much better to intrigue with Cleopatra for Antony's overthrow, and he sends Thyreus as his ambassador to the queen. She receives him with effusive protestations of submission to his master, whose star is now in the ascendant, and she allows him to kiss her hand. Antony, entering suddenly, is maddened by the sight of such a familiarity. He orders this 'Jack of Caesar's' to be whipped, and rates Cleopatra fiercely for 'mingling eyes' with menials. The infatuation which in a moment can be transformed into a frenzy of the vilest suspicion and abuse would merely profane the name of love. Cleopatra astutely bows before the storm, and Antony is soon pacified. With a relic of the old frolicsome spirit he determines on a last carouse before the battle that awaits him on the morrow:

> 'Come,
> Let's have one other gaudy night: call to me
> All my sad captains; fill our bowls; once more
> Let's mock the midnight bell.'

Cleopatra helps to buckle on his armour for the fray, wherein Antony for a last brief spell tastes the sweets of victory. It is the sunset glory of his career, and it tinges his passion, as he clasps his 'great fairy' to his breast, with a belated flush of the old gorgeous splendour:

> 'O thou day o' the world,
> Chain mine armed neck! leap thou, attire and all,
> Through proof of harness to my heart, and there
> Ride on the pants triumphing.'

But it is the dying flame that shoots across the sky before the blackness of night settles over the horizon. In the sea-fight that follows Cleopatra's galleys desert to the enemy, and Antony finds, like others before him, that Egypt is a reed which, if leant on, pierces a man's hand.

> 'Betrayed I am:
> O this false soul of Egypt! this grave charm,—
> Whose eyes becked forth my wars, and called them home—
> Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end—
> Like a right gipsy, hath, at fast and loose,
> Beguiled me to the very heart of loss.'

Once again he virulently abuses his betrayer, who in terror locks herself in a monument that she had built, whence she sends news to Antony that she has died with his name upon her lips. But the cunning actress overreaches herself at last. Antony has already

resolved to escape from his shame by suicide, and the tidings that Cleopatra has forestalled him precipitate his deed. An entrancing vision floats before his eyes of a triumphal progress with his paramour across the Elysian fields:

> 'I come, my queen! Stay for me:
> Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
> And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze:
> Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
> And all the haunt be ours.'

With this rapturous outlook upon a peerless supremacy of bliss among the shades, Antony seeks his doom. But death tarries long enough for him to learn the Egyptian's deceit. He is past surprise at her arts, past anger: he begs to be borne into her presence, and when she dare not leave the monument, he suffers himself to be drawn up thither. His last words are tender counsels to the queen, and proud recollections of the days when he was 'the greatest prince o' the world.' Thus he passes from the scene where he has been so resplendent a figure, and Cleopatra is oppressed, as of old, by the dull mediocrity of all things when 'the crown o' the earth' is taken away:

> 'Young boys and girls
> Are level now with men; the odds is gone,
> And there is nothing left remarkable
> Beneath the visiting moon.'

She will not linger behind her hero among the petty figures that now make up the world. And her resolve to die is quickened by her aesthetic horror of being exhibited in Caesar's triumph, and made mock of by the Roman populace with their greasy aprons and foul breath. Yet even when she has determined to take her own life, the courtesan's instincts of venality and falsehood still assert their sway. She hands to Caesar what purports to be a 'brief' of all her possessions, and she appeals to her treasurer as a witness that she has kept back nothing. When Seleucus exposes her fraud, with sublime audacity she chides him for his ingratitude, and moralizes to Octavius on the humiliation that fallen greatness has to endure from its dependents. But she is to cheat her captor of what is more precious to him than all the wealth of Egypt. The 'pretty worm of Nilus,' that kills and pains not, sets her free from Caesar's bondage. Her death is not 'after the high Roman fashion' that she had predicted. It is a painless εὐθανασία:

> 'Peace, peace
> Dost thou not see my baby at my breast
> That sucks the nurse asleep?'

Such a death, as Dowden has said, has in it 'something dazzling and splendid, something sensuous, something theatrical, something magnificently coquettish, and nothing stern.' Its only bitterness is the jealous pang at being outstripped by Iras in the flight to the underworld:

> 'If she first meet the curled Antony,
> He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss
> Which is my heaven to have.'

Even in the Elysian fields the queen must compete for her lover's embrace with her own waiting-woman! It is a transcendent touch giving a glimpse into a vista of amorous rivalry amid other than earthly haunts. For the passion of Antony and Cleopatra, cloying for the moment in its voluptuous fullness, carries at its heart the secret of an eternal unrest. The palace of pleasure in which they have lain at ease melts into a cloud-land castle, drifting and dissolving for ever before a chill night-wind.

CORIOLANUS probably followed *Antony and Cleopatra* directly, and dates from 1608 or the earlier part of 1609. In Ben Jonson's *Silent Woman,* 1609, Dauphine is declared to have 'lurched' his friends of 'the better half of the garland' by concealing part of his plot. As there are other instances in which Jonson ridiculed expressions in Shakspere's later plays, it is probable that he is here travestying the singular phrase used by Cominius of Coriolanus, 'He lurch'd all swords of the garland.' Apart from this, we have only internal evidence. The play contains sixty light, and forty-four weak, endings, a large percentage of both than in *Antony and Cleopatra,* but less than in the final group of dramas. The language is often elliptical and obscure, and the rhythm harsh. But this suits the harshness of the theme, the most uninviting, as a whole, of the materials treated by Shakspere. The same temper of mind which had singled out the story of Lear from the mythical annals of early Britain now led the dramatist to handle an episode from the semi-mythical annals of early Rome. In both cases the centre of the action is a mighty figure ruined by passionate self-will and pride. But the furious outbursts that are natural on the lips of the Celtic king seem less suited to the Roman patrician, and Lear has excuses for his rage which Coriolanus almost entirely lacks. Yet the invective of the latter is shriller and more prolonged, and dominates the drama with a persistence that tends to forfeit the sympathy which a tragic hero should always retain. In fact, in order to preserve for Coriolanus at least a measure of that sympathy, Shakspere is led into

the most serious falsification of fact that occurs in any of the plays purporting to rest on a historical basis. He sins partly through ignorance, partly through wilfully shutting his eyes to some of Plutarch's statements. He represents the plebeians of the early Republic as if they were the rabble of the Rome of the Caesars. The London mob of his own day served him as model for both, and in this case with grievously misleading results. He would, in many respects, have reached a truer conception of the class-struggle which forms the setting to the play if he had sought for an analogy in the history of his native town, where the citizens had gradually risen from a state of villeinage to the position of a self-governing corporation. It is such a process that Plutarch describes in his account of the secession of the Plebs to the Mons Sacer, where they abode for four months, 'offering no creature any hurt or violence, or making any show of actual rebellion,' till they were granted a number of privileges, including the right to elect tribunes. This orderly and impressive demonstration, to secure certain well-defined ends, is degraded by Shakspere into a street riot, and is made a subordinate episode in a rising (which Plutarch assigned to a later date) caused by a dearth of corn. The tumult is at its height when the play opens, and the famished citizens, who regard Caius Marcius as their chief enemy—'a very dog to the commonalty'—are clamouring for his blood, that they may have corn at their own price. What does this rabble of 'apron-men' with unwashed faces and soiled teeth care about political privileges? All they want is food:

> 'They said they were an-hungry: sigh'd forth proverbs—
> That hunger broke stone walls, that dogs must eat;
> That meat was made for mouths; that the gods sent not
> Corn for the rich men only.'

Even this most elementary of rights Marcius denies them, but to fully appreciate his attitude we must turn from the plebeians to the aristocratic caste in whose bosom he has been reared.

Among its members it counts no grander figure than Volumnia, Marcius' mother, 'the most noble mother of the world.' No creation of the dramatist is so genuinely antique as this ideal Roman matron. Patriotism is with her a religion, and virtue is summed up in the valour which is eager to bleed for its country on the battle-field. Thus her pride in her only son is less a purely maternal feeling than the exultation of the lion-hearted dame who has given to Rome a champion of unrivalled prowess. There is a metallic clang about the very words in which she recounts her loyalty to her conception of a patriot-mother's duty:

'When yet he was but tender-bodied and the only son of my womb, when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way, when for a day of kings' entreaties a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding, I, considering how honour would become such a person, that it was no better than picture-like to hang by the wall, if renown made it not stir, was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man. Hear me profess sincerely: had I a dozen sons... I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.'

In a similar spirit she dwells triumphantly on the number and position of Marcius' wounds, and while he is at the wars she gloats in imagination over his bloody exploits in the field. But it is no mere brute courage that she has instilled into him; it is the heroism that looks on 'extremity' as the trier of spirits; and that takes with a smile fortune's blows, 'when most struck home.' But along with these 'precepts that would make invincible the heart that conn'd them,' Volumnia had taught her son less salutary lessons. Her patriotism, measureless in its depth, is narrowed by her class feeling, and does not embrace the plebeians, whom she has instructed Marcius to consider

> 'Woollen vassals, things created
> To buy and sell with groats, to show bare heads
> In congregations, to yawn, be still and wonder,
> When one but of [his] ordinance stood up
> To speak of peace or war.'

The seed thus sown falls on ground that is only too receptive, and there is no one to arrest its malignant growth. For Coriolanus, as is the wont of men of mighty strength, has chosen a gentle, timid wife, whose influence is too slight to counterbalance that of Volumnia. Her mother-in-law's melodramatic imaginings make Virgilia's blood run cold, and she turns pale at the mention of wounds. Even Coriolanus' triumphant restoration to her arms draws only tears from her 'dove's eyes.' Such a bride will cling to her husband with affectionate loyalty, but she will not be a curb upon his passions. Nor outside of his family are there counsellors to guide him into more moderate courses, with the doubtful exception of Menenius Agrippa. This character is practically a creation of Shakspere. All that Plutarch tells of him is that he was chief among 'the pleasantest old men' of the Senate who were sent to treat with the revolted plebeians, and that it was he who related to them the fable of the belly and the members. Shakspere drew the ingenious inference that the man who used an apologue in which the belly figured as the most important of human organs, doubtless fully

recognized its claims in his own daily life. Hence Menenius is represented as an indolent epicure, 'one that loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of alloying Tiber in 't.' He is entirely lacking in genuine popular sympathies, but civil broils disturb his easygoing mode of existence, so he tries, in a spasmodic way, to quiet them. The rôle of mediator appeals to his garrulous vanity, though he relieves his feelings, whenever a chance offers, by gibes at the expense of the tribunes, 'the herdsmen of the beastly plebeians.' Marcius, he tells them, is, in a cheap estimation, worth all their predecessors since Deucalion, and it is evident that the one passion that really stirs his lethargic temperament is his hero-worship for the mighty warrior whom it is his foible to look on as a son. Equally lavish is the adulation offered to Coriolanus by his patrician companions-in-arms. Titus Lartius cries that 'a carbuncle entire' were not so rich a jewel as this 'soldier even to Cato's wish,' and Cominius, his superior in command, delivers before the Senate a glowing panegyric on his exploits.

Amidst such conditions, it is inevitable that Coriolanus should develop an exaggerated pride of class, and an equally exaggerated self-esteem. At the opening of the play the former is the more conspicuous, but the course of events subordinates it entirely to his personal arrogance. With this change our sympathetic interest in the hero dwindles, for class-pride, however unreasonable, is not a purely selfish principle; it testifies to a genuine, though restricted, idealism of nature, and it is the source, especially in young communities, of many virtues, public and private. Thus Coriolanus is a pattern of domestic excellence. He reverences his mother, as if she were of more than human mould, and he is bound to his wife by a flawlessly loyal affection. He has a fond pride in his little son, who, as the anecdote of the 'mammocked' butterfly shows, has inherited his own spirit. He is gallant to noble ladies, like Valeria, and shows kindly consideration to Menenius, whom he gratifies by a letter from the wars, and to spare whose feelings at the crisis of the action he uses a delicate artifice. But these courtesies are rigidly confined to members of his own class. Once, after the capture of Corioli, he begs a favour for a poor man who had used him kindly, but, by an extremely subtle touch which Shakspere added to Plutarch's story, he cannot be troubled to remember his enefactor's name.

But it is on the battlefield that Marcius gives most signal proof of the ennobling effect of Volumnia's training From his boyhood he had fought beyond the mark of others, and in the critical conflicts

of the infant republic with its neighbours he had shown himself a hero, not to be 'singly counterpoised,' throughout the world. His crowning achievement, which wins him the title that henceforward clings more closely to him than his own name, is the capture single-handed of the Volscian stronghold of Corioli, when his followers have basely left him in the lurch. The sense of the measureless gulf between his heroic valour and the poltroonery of the plebeians is indeed the most reasonable element in that colossal disdain with which he regards his inferiors; but even cowards have a claim to be treated as within the pale of humanity.

> 'You souls of geese,
> That bear the shapes of men, how have you run
> From slaves that apes would beat! Pluto and hell!
> All hurt behind; backs red, and faces pale
> With flight and agued fear! Mend and charge home,
> Or, by the fires of heaven, I'll leave the foe
> And make my wars on you.'

Here, in the extremity of his rage, Marcius threatens that desertion to the enemy which he afterwards carries out, and this is not the only hint that patriotism is far from being the main incentive to his unparalleled feats of arms. Like Hotspur, he cares far more for personal glory than for the triumph of a common cause, as is shown by his declaration about the Volscian general, Tullus Aufidius:

> 'I sin in envying his nobility,
> And were I anything but what I am
> I would wish me only he.
> Were half to half the world by the ears and he
> Upon my party, I'ld revolt, to make
> Only my wars with him.'

This is to treat war merely as a gigantic duel between rival champions, and to ignore those patriotic aspects of it which alone give it a moral justification. It is the same exaggerated passion for solely personal distinction that makes Coriolanus reject all material rewards for his services. He feels that the glory of achievements such as his is tarnished by the acceptance of spoils, however splendid, and similarly he refuses to listen to any laudation of his deeds, not from humility, but because he deems them above the reach of due recognition by the voices of his fellow-men.

There must, however, be always a broad line of cleavage between the general and the private, and had Coriolanus' arrogance shown itself only in the camp, no irremediable harm would have been done. But he carries this imperious spirit into civil life, as appears in his very first words to the people.

'What would you have, you curs,
That like nor peace nor war? the one affrights you,
The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;
Where foxes, geese.'

Coriolanus, in fact, treats the populace throughout as a wild animal, as Hydra, 'the beast with many heads[1].' He would keep it chained up, and even, if he had his way, get rid of it by starvation or by a murderous onslaught. The tribune is justified in his rebuke:

'You speak o' the people,
As if you were a god to punish, not
A man of their infirmity.'

But the real condemnation of Marcius' attitude is found in the conduct of this 'monster' towards himself. With a generosity that puts the patrician to shame, the 'rank-scented many' are ready to forgive him his past injustice for the sake of his brilliant exploit at Corioli, and they welcome him back to Rome with acclamation. When at Volumnia's desire he reluctantly stands for the consulship, he turns all the customary ceremonial of petition into mockery, and begs for their 'voices' in bitterly ironical phrases. Yet the citizens good-humouredly give him their votes, and cry with one accord, 'God save thee, noble consul.'

But the populace, as represented by Shakspere, though it has generally good impulses, is pliable as wax in the hands of demagogues, and the tribunes go at once to work to undo this novel *entente cordiale* between Coriolanus and the plebeians. The dramatist, as was natural, had formed an entirely mistaken view of the tribunate, the most unique constitutional office that the world has ever seen. He confounded its holders with the mob-orators of his own day, and in Brutus and Sicinius he has drawn biting sketches of a pair of self-seeking, crafty, voluble 'friends of the people.' They remind the citizens that Coriolanus has always been their enemy, and censure them for their 'childish friendliness' in giving him their votes without exacting guarantees for a change in his treatment of them. The crowd instantly swing round and take back their votes, while the tribunes, with adroit knavery, suggest that this reversal of opinion should be set down to a spontaneous popular reaction against their personal advocacy of Marcius' claims. Stopping him on the way to the market-place, they announce the repeal of the election,

[1] In this connexion it is worth noticing that the names of animals are introduced with the same frequency in this play as in *Lear*. It is one of the many points of contact between the two works.

and Coriolanus, maddened at such an insult from the objects of his scorn, bursts into a furious harangue against the claims of 'the mutable, rank-scented many.' He ends by calling upon the nobility to 'pluck out the multitudinous tongue' by the abolition of the tribunate, whereupon Sicinius declares him a traitor, and seeks to arrest him in the name of the people. A tumult follows, in which Coriolanus and his friends have the upper hand, but the cooler heads among the patricians are alarmed at his irreconcilable attitude, and try to come to terms with the plebeians. Menenius reappears in his rôle of mediator, and even Volumnia condescends to political opportunism at this crisis. It is somewhat startling to find the inflexible matron so apt a mistress of diplomatic methods, and her doctrine of legitimate dissimulation is better suited to the Italy of Machiavelli than to the primitive morality of Rome in the fifth century B.C. Even her authority cannot at first induce Marcius to play the penitent before the citizens, but she finally prevails by an appeal to his veneration for herself:

> 'At thy choice, then:
> To beg of thee, it is my more dishonour
> Than thou of them.'

He goes forth on his detested errand, and Volumnia's triumph at this stage preludes, according to a favourite principle of Shakspere's plot-construction, her infinitely more momentous triumph at the end of the play. But though Coriolanus has promised to answer 'mildly' the accusations of the tribunes, he gives way under the sharp ordeal. For the popular leaders, knowing that a taunt will set his inflammable temper in a blaze, fling the charge of traitor in his teeth. Curses and passionate words of defiance at once leap to his lips, and while he is still fuming, Sicinius, amidst shouts of approval from the citizens, pronounces upon him the sentence of banishment. Thereupon he retorts with a counter-sentence, in which the entire scorn of his haughty nature is concentrated:

> 'You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
> As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
> As the dead carcases of unburied men
> That do corrupt my air, I banish you.'

Rome's is the loss, not his—that is the conviction with which he turns his back upon the city, to seek shelter with its deadliest foes. For his desertion by 'the dastard nobles' in the hour of his need has incensed him as bitterly against his own order as against the plebeians; and the victor of Corioli, with patriotism dead in his breast, carries his sword over to the Volsces, and engages to fight

against his 'cankered country with the spleen of all the under-fiends.' His ancient enemy, Tullus Aufidius, welcomes him with eloquent rapture, and hands over to him the supreme command of half the Volscian forces. Under this joint leadership a hostile array marches against Rome, and the news of its advance startles the tribunes out of their fond dream that they have inaugurated a golden era in the city. They attempt to dispose of the unpalatable fact by the illogical process of whipping the messenger who announces it, but this sorry expedient is of no avail. Yet the tribunes appear in no worse light at this crisis than the rest of the community. The citizens, when they hear that the exile has returned for his revenge, straightway begin to shift all responsibility for his banishment from off their own shoulders:

'*First Cit.* For mine own part, when I said banish him, I said 'twas pity.
Sec. Cit. And so did I.
Third Cit. And so did I; and, to say the truth, so did very many of us: that we did, we did for the best; and though we willingly consented to his banishment, yet it was against our will.'

In the extremity of their panic they turn fiercely upon their leaders—the idols of an hour ago—and, seizing Brutus, threaten him with death by inches if Rome is destroyed. But the patricians show to quite as poor advantage as their inferiors. It might be expected that, when the whole city was threatened with fire and sword, they would have rallied all classes for common defence against the common foe. But they content themselves with cheap sneers at the tribunes for the 'good work' that they have wrought. Even Cominius, the valiant generalissimo of the Roman forces in the earlier campaign, instead of taking the field once more, plays the unheroic part of unsuccessful pleader for mercy from his former subordinate. Menenius is then induced to try his persuasive powers, and he builds his hopes of success on a characteristic piece of strategy. Believing that dinner is as entirely the pivot of other men's existence as it is of his own, he fancies that if he can approach him when suitably 'dieted,' he may prevail. But he, too, is sent back foiled, and then, as a forlorn hope, the mother and wife of Coriolanus, with his little boy, enter the Volscian camp. The exile has resolved to trample on every human tie:

'Out, affection!
All bond and privilege of nature, break!
....I'll never
Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand
As if a man were author of himself
And knew no other kin.'

But in the presence of all those round whom his affections have been twined, he cannot maintain this attitude of Coriolanus *contra mundum*:

> 'What is thy curtsy worth? or those doves' eyes
> Which can make gods forsworn? I melt, and am not
> Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows,
> As if Olympus to a molehill should
> In supplication nod; and my young boy
> Hath an aspect of intercession, which
> Great nature cries, "Deny not".'

Plutarch's art had achieved a supreme triumph in the description of this interview, and Shakspere, with the finest instinct, followed his original almost word for word. The result is a scene unequalled throughout the dramatist's writings for its strictly classical feeling. The voice of Volumnia, pleading with austerely majestic eloquence on behalf of her country, is not so much the voice of the human mother as the voice of Rome speaking through her lips. All personal feeling is annihilated in the absolute self-surrender to the welfare of the state. The Roman who can wound Rome is to Volumnia an alien, though he be born of her own body:

> 'Come, let us go:
> This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
> His wife is in Corioli, and his child
> Like him perchance.'

This terrible renunciation by the being whom he reveres above all else on earth overpowers the warrior's stubborn purpose of revenge. Volumnia wins a happy victory for Rome, but one, as he himself foretells, most mortal to her son. He has been saved from complete moral ruin, but the penalty of his averted crime recoils upon himself. Aufidius, who has grown jealous of his ascendency over the soldiers, charges him, on their return to Antium, with treachery in sparing Rome, and mockingly names him a 'boy of tears.' At the taunt there is an instant flash of the old imperious passion:

> '"Boy"! False hound!
> If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
> That, like an eagle in a dovecote, I
> Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli:
> Alone I did it! "Boy"!'

In a moment the swords of the Volscians are in his bosom, and the tumult of his rage is quenched in the everlasting calm of death. But to the lonely exile his fate comes as a release, and no other tokens of mourning need follow him to the grave than the trailing of the

soldiers' pikes in the dust, and the sullen roll of the Volscian drums beating a funeral march.

TIMON OF ATHENS may be conveniently included in the Plutarch series of plays. Its chief source is a passage in the biographer's life of Antony, where he compares the triumvir's conduct after the battle of Actium to that of Timon, 'a citizen of Athens that lived about the war of Peloponnesus.' In Plutarch's pages Shakspere found a brief account of Timon's self-banishment from his ungrateful fellow men, of his relations to Alcibiades and Apémantus, and of his burial on the sea-shore. A fuller narrative of the misanthropist's career had been given in one of Lucian's dialogues, and though, as far as we know, this had not yet been translated into English, details from it probably reached Shakspere through some intermediate source. One of these may possibly have been the MS. play *Timon*, which, though containing matter more suited to an academic than a popular audience, anticipates a number of leading incidents in Shakspere's drama, especially the mock farewell banquet to the false friends, and the fidelity of the steward to his fallen master. *Timon of Athens* appeared first in the folio of 1623, but it may be dated in all probability about 1607-1608. Not only were its materials taken, in part, from the same source as *Antony and Cleopatra*, but its lurid atmosphere, and its central theme of ingratitude repaid by hatred and curses link it with *Coriolanus* and *King Lear*. Metrical evidence confirms the date suggested, though its value is lessened by the unsatisfactory condition of the text of the play. For *Timon of Athens*, as it stands, cannot represent a complete, genuine Shaksperean work. The contrast between the noble verse and imagery in the finer scenes, and the halting metre and insipid dialogue of other parts, is too striking to be entirely attributed to the dramatist in the maturity of his powers. Yet these inequalities have been exaggerated, and all attempts to rigidly separate the genuine from the spurious parts of the work must be viewed with suspicion.

The play, as it has come down to us, has, apart from faults of detail, to cardinal defects. Its main plot lacks sufficient action, and dwindles in its latter stages into mere passionate declamation. As *King Lear* by introducing a plethora of incidents becomes epic rather than dramatic in structure, so *Timon* through an insufficiency of incidents verges towards the close on lyrical method and temper. Secondly, its underplot with Alcibiades as hero, though its subtle variation on the main theme is essentially Shaksperean, is not closely enough interwoven into the texture of the piece. Yet, in spite of

these weaknesses, *Timon* is a notable and highly characteristic product of the tragic period, of which it is the fiercest as *Lear* is the most stupendous expression.

Though the scene is laid in Athens, Shakspere shows as little power of creating a Greek environment for his story as he had done years ago in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Except for a brief allusion to the 'great towers, trophies, and schools,' which Alcibiades is begged to spare, there is not a hint to show that the dramatist had any conception of the artistic and intellectual glories of Athens in its prime. He was evidently as unfamiliar with the conditions of Periclean Greece as of Homeric. We are introduced, it is true, into a cultured and wealthy society, but its features are in no way distinctive, and it might belong to any age or nation which had advanced to a certain stage of material refinement. The representatives of its art are not sculptors or dramatists, but a painter, and a poet who has allegorized for Timon's benefit the commonplace moral of the fickleness of fortune. The philosopher Apemantus is not a product of the Hellenic schools, but is a specimen of the ubiquitous curmudgeon type that from native perversity delights to snarl at the heels of humanity. The young lords who are Timon's associates, with their presents of four milk-white horses and two brace of greyhounds, remind us, like Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, of Tudor nobles rather than genuine Athenian aristocrats. But though Shakspere does not transport us back into the atmosphere of the fifth century B.C., he achieves his purpose of placing before our view an idle, luxurious society, of which Timon is the leading figure. The rich lord, a spoiled child of fortune from his cradle, holds a court among parasites and fair-weather friends. He keeps open house for all and sundry, and scatters his gifts with reckless prodigality. The meanest offering to him, as his associates soon discover, he regards as a challenge to his own generosity:

> 'If I want gold, steal but a beggar's dog
> And give it Timon, why, the dog coins gold;
> If I would sell my horse, and buy twenty more
> Better than he, why, give my horse to Timon,
> Ask nothing, give it him, it foals me, straight.
> And able horses.'

As he declares himself, he could deal kingdoms to his friends and ne'er be weary. And this lavishness does not spring from ostentation, but from genuine goodwill towards all mankind. He is as ready to bestow upon his servant the wherewithal to contract an advantageous marriage as to shower jewels or plate upon his equals.

But this munificence has its seamy side in a criminal indifference to the elementary duty of balancing income and expenditure. It is in vain that the faithful steward, Flavius (who like Adam in *As You Like It* is a Teutonic, and not a classical type), warns his master, account-book in hand, that bankruptcy stares him in the face, and that when his wealth is flown, his friends will take flight too:

> 'Who is not Timon's?
> What heart, head, sword, force, means, but is Lord Timon's?
> Great Timon, noble, worthy, royal Timon!
> Ah! when the means are gone that buy this praise,
> The breath is gone whereof this praise is made:
> Feast-won, fast-lost; one cloud of winter showers,
> These flies are couch'd.'

But Timon turns a deaf ear and 'plunges' more wildly than ever in his rôle of universal benefactor. He lives in a fool's paradise, and believes that he can, at will, whistle back riches to any extent, because friendship establishes a community of goods: 'We are born to do benefits; and what better or properer can we call our own than the riches of our friend? O what a precious comfort 'tis to have so many, like brothers, commanding one another's fortunes.' In this lax idealism lies the seed of Timon's material and moral ruin. He needs a Polonius to sound in his ear the warning:

> 'The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
> Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
> But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
> Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comrade.'

Friends are not to be won by indiscriminate bounty and entertainment. For this, as for any other worthy end, the exercise of will and judgement is necessary. The man who begins by taking all his fellow men, without reserve, to his bosom, is wellnigh certain to end in the other extreme of a loathing for the whole of human kind. Thus it fares with Timon.

The scenes describing his disillusionment have been rejected by many critics, but though they may have come to us in an imperfect condition, the skilful variation of details, as one friend after another fails Timon at his need, is distinctively Shaksperean. The reply of the Senate, as a body, to Flavius' intercession for his master, is indeed too characteristic of the dramatist's pregnant style to have fallen under suspicion:

> 'They answer, in a joint and corporate voice,
> That now they are at fall, want treasure, cannot
> Do what they would; are sorry—you are honourable.
> But yet they could have wish'd—they know not—

Something hath been amiss—a noble nature
May catch a wrench—would all were well—'t is pity;
And so intending other serious matters
After distasteful looks, and these hard fractions,
With certain half-caps, and cold-moving nods,
They froze me into silence.'

The scene with Lord Lucullus is an equally caustic sketch of selfishness cloaking itself under forms of polite commiseration, and it is quite worthy of Shakspere's pen. Lucullus, taking it for granted that Timon's messenger brings a gift, welcomes him with effusive politeness, and peeps under his coat for the expected silver basin and ewer. To his dismay, Flaminius produces an empty box which his master has sent, nothing doubting that Lucullus will be pleased to drop fifty talents into it. What a revelation of sordid ingratitude is there in his lordships answer!

'La, la, la, la,—nothing doubting, says he? alas, good lord! a noble gentleman 't is, if he would not keep so good a house; many a time and often I have dined with him, and told him on 't; and come again to supper to him, of purpose to have him spend less; and yet he would embrace no counsel, take no warning by my coming. Every man has his fault, and honesty is his: I have told him on 't, but I could ne'er get him from it. . . Draw nearer, honest Flaminius. Thy lord 's a bountiful gentleman; but thou art wise, and thou knowest well enough, although thou comest to me, that this is no time to lend money, especially upon bare friendship, without security. Here 's three solidares for thee: good boy, wink at me, and say thou saw'st me not. Fare thee well.'

Lucius proves an equally weak reed. Though a minute ago he has been protesting before the gods that he is ashamed of Lucullus' behaviour, he follows suit in his refusal to help the needs of his 'very exquisite friend.' But instead of posing as a good counsellor whose advice has been neglected in the past, he bemoans his unlucky fate in just being prevented from rendering a service which he would otherwise have been delighted to perform. But the climax of hypocritical meanness is attained by Sempronius, who affects a righteous indignation at not having been applied to in the first instance, and makes this an excuse for drawing his purse-strings tight. The whole gang of voluble knaves get their deserts when Timon bids them to the mock farewell banquet, and dashes in their faces the tepid water, an apt symbol of their lukewarm friendship.

But Timon's fatal error at this crisis is that he does not stop to consider how far he is himself accountable for what has happened, and whether there is any surer way into men's hearts than prodigal hospitality. His idealism of nature proves his ruin, for, wrenched out of its original shape, it recoils in the form of savage hatred of humanity. With bitter curses he turns his back upon the whole race:

'Be abhorr'd
All feasts, societies, and throngs of men!
His semblable, yea, himself, Timon disdains:
Destruction fang mankind!'

He plunges into forest solitudes, and lives upon roots, but Shakspere, as appears from *As You Like It*, had no illusions about the healing properties of Nature on a radically diseased mind. Indeed, Timon himself, with a curious anticipation of modern scientific doctrines, realizes that Nature is 'one with rapine,' that the struggle for existence produces war and treachery in the animal world, and that one primordial matter breeds humanity and the lower forms of life. The 'self-same mettle, whereof'

'Arrogant man is puff'd,
Engenders the black toad, and adder blue,
The gilded newt, and eyeless venom'd worm,
With all the abhorred births below crisp heaven.'

Even the inanimate world is one wide area of mutual pillage:

'The sun 's a thief, and with his great attraction
Robs the vast sea; the moon 's an arrant thief,
And her pale fire she snatches from the sun;
The sea 's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves
The moon into salt tears; the earth 's a thief,
That feeds and breeds by a composture stolen
From general excrement; each thing 's a thief.'

Thus Timon's rage, though it has man for its prime object, includes in its comprehensive sweep the whole universe. This Titanic passion, the agonized outburst of a noble nature shattered to its base, is thrown into splendid relief by being contrasted with the mean, venomous ill-humour of the professional cynic. Apemantus, doomed from his birth to a dog's life, tries to avenge himself by mocking at all the gifts which fortune showers upon her favourites, and from which he is for ever shut out. The grapes are hung well beyond his reach, and it gives him a sinister satisfaction to make them out as sour as possible. When Timon turns his back upon the world, Apemantus hurries to the forest to claim him as a disciple, and to pour fresh poison into his wounds. But the man who has been driven to hatred of his fellows by a convulsion of his moral being, turns with scorn from this petty-minded railer at society, whose cynicism is as truly the veneer of selfish hardness of heart as the jovial good-fellowship of Timon's former boon-companions. He exposes his

sham philosophy in all its nakedness, as he overwhelms him with bitterly truthful words:

> 'I, to bear this,
> That never knew but better, is some burden:
> Thy nature did commence in sufferance, time
> Hath made thee hard in 't. Why should'st thou hate men?
> They never flatter'd thee: what hast thou given? . . .
> Poor rogue hereditary. Hence! begone!—
> If thou hadst not been born the worst of men,
> Thou hadst been a knave and flatterer.'

How completely Timon's is a noble rage, born of moral indignation and not of rancorous spleen at the loss of his wealth and position, is proved by his conduct after he has by chance dug up gold in the forest. The glittering metal is his again in abundance, and he is free once more to resume his part of social dictator. But the iron has entered too deeply into his soul for him to henceforth value at a pin's worth the homage of his fellows. The gold that formerly he had lavished to further the well-being of men he now devotes solely to their destruction. He gives it to thieves and courtesans, to encourage them in their nefarious occupations, and to Alcibiades to pay the soldiers, who are marching to lay Athens in the dust. His malady is too incurable for it to be affected even by the discovery that righteousness is not entirely extinct upon earth. The faithful Flavius follows him to his cave, and begs to be his steward still. Timon, in his own despite, has to award him the diploma of honesty, but he sees in him (to use a hackneyed formula in its precise meaning) only the exception that proves the rule about mankind as a whole:

> 'Forgive my general and exceptless rashness,
> You perpetual-sober gods! I do proclaim
> One honest man,—mistake me not,—but one;
> No more, I pray,—and he 's a steward.—
> How fain would I have hated all mankind!
> And thou redeem'st thyself: but all, save thee,
> I fell with curses.'

Thus, though he rewards him bountifully for his fidelity and bids him live rich and happy, it is on condition that he shall 'build from men; hate all, curse all.' The hostility towards the human race that is not softened by Flavius' devotion naturally does not relent at the appeal of the senators, who, in their alarm at Alcibiades' threatened assault, seek to tempt Timon back to be their captain. His answer is an outburst of savage rage and irony. But the fury of his passion

atters his being, and with words of solemn farewell the misanthro-
ɜt sinks into the inviolable asylum of the grave:

> 'Come not to me again; but say to Athens,
> Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
> Upon the beached verge of the salt flood:
> Whom once a day with his embossed froth
> The turbulent surge shall cover: thither come,
> And let my grave-stone be your oracle.'

It is meet that one who had found life so bitter should lie in death beneath the bitter wave, and that, scorning the tribute of human tears, he should make 'vast Neptune weep for aye' on his 'low grave, on faults forgiven.'

Plutarch had mentioned that Timon, when he had forsaken all other men, made a companion of Alcibiades, because he knew that one day he would do great mischief unto the Athenians. From this slender hint Shakspere developed a highly characteristic underplot. He represents Alcibiades (who recalls the historical figure in nothing but name) as undergoing an experience akin to that of Timon, and meeting it in a diametrically opposite way. The two plots are not sufficiently interwoven, but their mutual bearing is quite clear, and it is strange that so many critics should have rejected Act iii. scene 5, where we learn the reason of Alcibiades' wrath against his native city. One of his friends has, in sudden rage, killed a man who had traduced his honour, and thus lies under sentence of death. Alcibiades begs the senate for mercy, and his speech is an echo of the solemn pleadings of Portia and Isabella. Like them it appeals from the merciless written law to that higher principle of equity in which law has its true sanction. But the senators, a body of cold-blooded men of the world, have no spark of sympathy for the pride of reputation, which, feeling a stain like a wound, strikes out too vehemently in self-defence. As they had denied all help to Timon when his high-souled generosity brought him to ruin, so now they refuse all mercy to the victim of the chivalrous principle of honour. And in both cases they are ungrateful as well as hard-hearted, for, like Timon, the condemned man has done the state good service, and Alcibiades throws his own deserts as an additional weight into the scale. But to all entreaties the senators make the icy rejoinder: 'We are for law: he dies.' Then follows a scene so strikingly parallel to the central situation in *Coriolanus* that its rejection by critics is incomprehensible. Alcibiades, like the Roman hero, feels a patrician's and soldier's shame in stooping to beg of his inferiors, and the rejection of his suit stirs him to an outburst, which is a mild echo of Coriolanus' fury when he is refused the consulship.

'*Alcib.* Must it be so? it must not be. My lords,
I do beseech you, know me.
2 *Sen.* How!
Alcib. Call me to your remembrances.
3 *Sen.* What!
Alcib. I cannot think but your age has forgot me:
It could not else be I should prove so base,
To sue, and be denied such common grace.
My wounds ache at you.
1 *Sen.* Do you dare our anger?
'T is in few words, but spacious in effect:
We banish thee for ever.
Alcib. Banish me!
Banish your dotage, banish usury,
That makes the Senate ugly.'

The way in which he flings the word 'banish' back into his judge's teeth, and his resolve to destroy his native city, remind us yet further of Coriolanus. It is at this point that his conduct contrasts so vividly with Timon's. Instead of retreating into the wilderness and unpacking his heart in idle execrations, the energetic soldier gathers an army and threatens Athens with fire and sword. The Senate (and again the situation recalls *Coriolanus*) sues humbly for peace, which Alcibiades grants on condition that he may impose such terms as he pleases. So that while Timon 'lies a wretched corse' upon the 'hem o' the sea,' Alcibiades enters Athens in triumph. It is the contrast, already drawn in *Hamlet* and elsewhere, between the idealism that is often the source of its own ruin, and the practical nature that succeeds largely by virtue of its limitations. But it is one of the weaknesses of the play that our sympathies do not swing as instinctively as heretofore to the side of the idealist, grand even in his fall; Alcibiades, though a sketch rather than a full portrait, is almost too honourable and forgiving to be a foil to Timon. We turn with relief from dissonances of the main plot to the spectacle of the soldier-statesman using the 'olive' with the sword, and inaugurating a new and sounder era in the Athenian commonwealth.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DRAMATIC ROMANCES

ABOUT 1609 the temper of Shakspere's work underwent an abrupt change. For seven years the dramatist had gazed into that seething whirlpool of passion, which sucks into its vortex the mighty ones of the world, who have slipped from their moral foothold, and who but too often drag down with them the innocents thrown by cruel destiny within their grasp. The last state of Timon is symbolical of the doom of all the tragic heroes. They lie buried 'wretched corses' under the 'turbulent surge' of their own fierce and restless desires. From this terrible spectacle Shakspere at length averts his eyes, and mounts into a serene region, over which broods the spirit of atoning love, and which is luminous with the tender glow of a tranquil evening sky. We see him (to apply the words in which Milton sang of his own more immeasurable ascent),

> 'Escap't the Stygian pool, though long detain'd
> In that obscure sojourn . . .
> Taught by the heavenly Muse to venture down
> The dark descent, and up to reascend.'

It can scarcely be an accident that the change in Shakspere's mood coincides with his retirement to Stratford. Amidst the fields and glades of Warwickshire, the darker problems of life must have thrust themselves less imperiously within his ken than in the crowded society of the capital, and the adventurer restored to the home of his youth found his natural theme in tales of reunion between long-parted kindred, of penitence and forgiveness for wrongs done in distant years. Thus this final period of Shakspere's dramatic work brings entirely new groups of actors on the scene. There pass before us, as in the tragedies, figures ripe in years, and cast by nature and fortune in majestic mould, but instead of being consumed by the fires of their own volcanic passions, they suffer the extremity of wrong at the hands of others, and attain through trial and endurance to godlike charity and calm. Such are Hermione and Prospero, Pericles and Queen Katharine; such, though lacking the stately composure of these mellower natures, but with a more complex charm of her own, is Imogen. In delightful contrast to these world-worn sufferers, statuesque in their self-control, is a band of youths and maidens blithe with that infinite gaiety of heart, which is the portion of the

innocents round whom the shades of life's prison-house have not yet begun to close. This group, to which belong Miranda and Perdita, Florizel, Ferdinand, and the boys of Cymbeline, is unique among the dramatist's creations. These gracious beings are equally distinct from the precocious, thoughtful children of the earlier plays, like Arthur or Richard III's princely nephews, and from the brilliant, full-blooded figures, in the hey-day of life, who sparkle through the comedies. They breathe the air of poetic wonderlands, a wave-washed Bohemia or an enchanted isle, and they bear about them a more than earthly charm. Their fortunes are such as befall the natives of a world which goes a less jog-trot pace than our own. They are torn in infancy from home and (except Miranda) from parents; they are exposed to the perils of the ocean or of mountain solitudes; they grow up ignorant of their true birth and rank, and only after years of parting are they restored to their kindred and to their rightful station.

Such material is suited to the romantic novel or the romantic epic rather than to the drama, and Shakspere's instinct as a playwright had gone partly astray when it led him to handle themes more fitted to the methods of Spenser and Sidney than to his own. The looseness of structure, which has been noted as the principal defect in the English history-plays, reappears in this last group of dramas in intensified degree. *The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles*, in particular, which cover a period of about sixteen years, during which infant princesses grow to marriageable age, would have earned, and not without justice, the adverse criticism of Sidney and Gosson, had they still been alive. Moreover incidents occur, like the repentance of Iachimo, which are inadequately motived, while among the subordinate figures, as in *The Tempest*, there are found shadowy types, lacking the distinctive vitality of the minor characters in earlier plays. We find too, Shakspere, after a prolonged spell of independent achievement, once more, as in the first days of authorship, collaborating at times with other men. Thus the general impression left upon us by the work of the final period is that the dramatist, exhausted by the gigantic creative effort of the preceding years, was writing in leisurely fashion, not swept along, as before, by the irresistible might of his own imagination, but content to glide by gentle stages down the slow-moving stream of romance. It is a return in part to the method of Greene, the method of the story-teller rather than the playwright, and we shall be truer to the spirit of these last products of the Shaksperean muse, if we call them dramatic romances rather than dramas. Setting aside for the moment the works of which

Shakspere was not soul author[1], we have three of these dramatic romances, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*, illustrating the final phase of his art and outlook on life.

CYMBELINE may be taken first, as, in spite of the complete alteration in tone, it has numerous links of detail with the tragedies and the Roman plays. Forman records in his MS. *Booke of Plaies* (1610-11) that he saw it performed. Though he does not give the exact date, 1609 or 1610 cannot be far wrong, as is proved by the metrical characteristics. The percentage of light and weak endings is 4·83, and of double endings is 32. In Holinshed's Chronicle Shakspere found mention of Cymbeline and his two sons, and of the demand for tribute from Britain by the Roman emperor Augustus. But the idyllic episode of the theft of the boys in infancy, by Bellarius, and their upbringing among the mountains, is of Shakspere's own invention. The main plot of Posthumus and Imogen is taken from a story in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and it is connected with the historical background by Imogen (the Lineora of the novel) being made Cymbeline's daughter, and her husband his adopted son. It would seem as if Shakspere, even while setting his fancy free for its most adventurous flights, cast a lingering glance back at the solid historical material upon which he had been working so long.

Cymbeline, like *Lear*, carries us back to Celtic Britain, but it is a milder era than that which confronted us in the earlier play. As in *Lear*, the country has to face the ordeal of foreign invasion, though now the enemy is not France but imperial Rome. Thus *Cymbeline*, by virtue of its enveloping political plot, puts the finishing touch to the Plutarch series of plays. We have glimpses of Julius Caesar in his rôle of conqueror of Britain, and, as in the drama named after him, we see him even after death a mighty force among men. The empire whose bounds he had stretched to the limits of the world is now organized by Augustus Caesar, and we appreciate the results of that astute politician's triumph over 'Cleopatra and her Roman' (a picture of whose meeting at Cydnus adorns Imogen's chamber-walls) when we witness the legionaries enforcing the imperial claims from Britain to Pannonia. But this segment of historical fact stands out awkwardly amidst the fine-spun tissues of the principal action, and it was a sense of this incongruity that led Johnson into his trenchant condemnation of the drama, when he declared 'the fiction foolish, the events impossible, the conduct absurd, the faults of the drama too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.'

1 On *Pericles*, *Henry VIII*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, see Appendix B.

Gervinus has set himself to demonstrate the injustice of such a verdict on a work which is to be compared, in his opinion, 'with the most excellent of all that Shakspere has produced.' He assigns to it an epic character, and asserts that 'not alone in its whole inward' bearing, but even in its outward construction, it appears as a companion piece to *Lear*, as the *Odyssey* to the *Iliad*. Gervinus, however, in his anxiety to vindicate the claims of a play which had been unduly depreciated, has overshot the mark. *Lear* does combine epic and dramatic features: its two kindred plots deal with actions and passions of colossal proportions, and the workmanship never slackens for a moment in its Titanic energy. But the fortunes of Imogen belong to the sphere of romance, and the pastoral idyll claims Guiderius and Arviragus for its own. Ingenious criticism may discover a relation between the plots, but it certainly is not visible on the surface, and neither can, without an abuse of terms, be brought within epic scope. Nor is all the diversified material equally caught up into the poetic heaven of Shakspere's invention. The perspective is at times confused by the bewilderingly rapid succession of incidents, and speeches are introduced more to enlighten the spectators than to satisfy a stringent dramatic demand. But *Cymbeline*, when extravagant claims have been set aside, is a work of singular interest and charm. The idyllic scenes are bathed in the dewy freshness of the mountain side; the *dénouement* unravelling the tangled skein of the various intrigues is a masterpiece of dramatic skill; and in Imogen, the heroine of the main plot, Shakspere has drawn so exquisite a picture of womanhood, that her presence goes far to blind us to the repulsive features of Boccaccio's tale.

The opening dialogue between two gentlemen of the British court (which is, in effect, an extra-dramatic prologue) informs us of the state of Imogen's fortunes, and of the peculiar domestic situation within the palace walls. Cymbeline, the king, whose weak dependence is a complete contrast to the imperious self-will of Lear, has lately taken as his second wife a beautiful and clever, but absolutely unscrupulous widow, to whom he is enslaved by an excess of uxorious infatuation. To please her he has pressed on a match between her son Cloten, a high-placed boor, a swaggering, dissolute blockhead, 'a thing too bad for bad report,' and Imogen, his only daughter, who has been left heir to the throne by the mysterious abduction of her two brothers twenty years ago. Imogen has, however, foiled this scheme by a marriage with Leonatus Posthumus, a poor but well-descended gentleman, who had been left an orphan

in infancy and had been reared by the king. In her own phrase, she 'chose an eagle and did avoid a puttock.' The courtiers, though for politic reasons they curve their faces into frowns, are secretly rejoiced at the event, for Posthumus has

> 'Liv'd in court
> (Which rare it is to do) most prais'd, most lov'd;
> A sample to the youngest, to the more mature
> A glass that feated them.'

The king, furious at the defeat of his plans, sentences Imogen to imprisonment (though the penalty proves very nominal) and banishes Posthumus from the court. The artful stepmother, pretending to pity the pangs of barred affections, gives the lovers an opportunity for a last interview, but only that she may inflame Cymbeline's fury by leading him to the spot where they are locked in each other's arms. Imogen bears her father's reproaches with calm dignity, and declares that it is he who is responsible for her choice of a husband:

> 'Sir,
> It is your fault that I have lov'd Posthumus:
> You bred him as my playfellow; and he is
> A man worth any woman; overbuys me
> Almost the sum he pays.'

Thus the love of Imogen is the growth of years of familiar companionship. It is not the sudden flame of youthful passion, as with Juliet, nor the fruit of the imagination, as with Desdemona. Therefore even the critics who trace the misfortunes of these tragic heroines to their filial disobedience have to admit that Imogen has a warrant for her conduct, though they think it necessary to add that she proves her sense of family obligation by remaining at the court, instead of accompanying Posthumus. But this is special pleading. Imogen's sentence of imprisonment is a bar to her leaving the palace, where it is intended that, in spite of her previous marriage, Cloten should secure her as his bride. And apart from this, Imogen's separation from her husband is so essential to the cardinal incident in the story, that it is quite beside the mark to invest it with special significance.

Pisanio's account of his master's departure on board ship, and of his signalled farewells, forms a charming picture of loyal affection turning its last lingering gaze towards all that it is dearest to it on earth:

'So long
As he could make me with this eye or ear
Distinguish him from others, he did keep
The deck, with glove, or hat, or handkerchief,
Still waving, as the fits and stirs of his mind
Could best express how slow his soul sail'd on,
How swift his ship.'

Yet Posthumus' behaviour when he reaches Rome seems strangely out of keeping with these tender demonstrations, or with the glowing eulogies of his friends. He enters into a wager which involves an attack on his wife's honour, and no consideration of the peculiar conditions can entirely overcome our instinctive repugnance to such an act. But Shakspere found the incident in Boccaccio's novel, and all that he could do was to make it as credible and inoffensive as might be. He thus represents it as the outcome of an earlier, more chivalrous challenge in France, when Posthumus had offered to maintain Imogen's superiority to the rest of her sex at the sword's point. There chances to be in Rome an eyewitness of this scene, who recalls it to Posthumus, whereupon Iachimo, one of the company present, a typical Italian profligate, undertakes to corrupt the honour of this 'unparagoned mistress.' As he protests to Posthumus, he is not animated by any personal motive against Imogen, but by the desire to expose the frailty of the female sex. 'I make my wager rather against your confidence than her reputation: and to bar your offence herein too, I durst attempt it against any lady in the world.' Thus, as Gervinus has justly said, 'it is the deep indignation of Posthumus' moral nature which inclines him to accept the offered wager'; in doing so he is the champion of the honour of womanhood against the slanders of a shallow sensualism.

At first sight of Imogen Iachimo's insolent self-confidence deserts him:

'All of her that is out of door most rich!
If she be furnish'd with a mind so rare,
She is alone the Arabian bird, and I
Have lost the wager. Boldness be my friend!
Arm me, audacity, from head to foot!
Or, like the Parthian, I shall flying fight;
Rather, directly fly.'

Boldness is certainly his friend in inspiring his fancy sketch of Posthumus as 'the Briton reveller,' who amidst his licentious enjoyments has entirely forgotten his bride. And still more audacious in his immediate dedication of himself to Imogen's 'sweet pleasure, that she may revenge herself on this runagate to her bed.' The base proposal betrays to the noble woman the falsehood of this 'saucy stranger's' tale, and she spurns him from her with righteous fury.

But the crafty Italian, realizing that his tactics have miscarried, dexterously pretends that his slander of Posthumus was devised to test her constancy to her husband, whom he now extols as 'a descended god' amongst men. Imogen, easily duped by praises of her lord, readily pardons the offender, and even grants him a favour, which enables him to effect an undiscovered entrance into her bedchamber. The scene in which Iachimo at dead of night creeps from his hiding-place to survey the room, and snatch from the sleeping woman's arm the apparent evidences of her guilt, recalls the passage in *Lucrece* where Tarquin strides towards his victim's bed. But the pregnant compression of the description in the play, with such lifelike touches as the book folded down midway in the tale of Tereus and Philomel, shows a marvellous advance on the studiously elaborate workmanship of the poem. The details of the room's furniture and ornamentation are, with true dramatic instinct, not recorded at this moment of breathless suspense, but are reserved till Iachimo's lying narrative, on his return to Rome, of his triumph over Imogen's honour. The bracelet and the ring which he produces play the same part in convincing Posthumus of Imogen's guilt as the handkerchief in the case of Othello. But Posthumus, though, unlike the Moor, he has learnt to know his bride's nature through years of unchecked communion, is won far more quickly than the tragic hero to a belief in her unchastity. The paroxysm of fury in which he is eager to 'tear her limb-meal' has in it nothing of Othello's solemn, sacrificial resolve. It is merely the wild thirst for vengeance on one whose seeming frailty has shattered at a blow his belief in the virtue of her sex:

> 'There 's no motion
> That tends to vice in man, but I affirm
> It is the woman's part: be it lying, note it
> The woman's; flattering, hers; deceiving, hers;
> Lust and rank thoughts, hers, hers; revenges, hers;
> . . . . . .
> All faults that may be nam'd, nay, that hell knows,
> Why, hers, in part or all: but rather, all.'

Even had Imogen been guilty of the foulness laid to her charge, the stratagem by which Posthumus seeks to secure her punishment would alienate all sympathy from him. To write to his wife announcing his return to Milford Haven, and urging her to meet him there, while he at the same time orders his servant to murder her on the journey, is an act of infamy which Shakspere found in Boccaccio's narrative, and whose repulsive features, it must be admitted, he has not in the least softened down. Indeed, Posthumus' treachery

is thrown into the darkest relief by the innocent, girlish glee with which Imogen receives her husband's message:

> 'Say . . . how far it is
> To this same blessed Milford: and by the way,
> Tell me how Wales was made so happy, as
> To inherit such a haven: but, first of all,
> How we may steal from hence; and, for the gap
> That we shall make in time, from our hence-going
> And our return, to excuse:—but first, how get hence?'

Her eagerness to fly to Posthumus on 'a horse with wings' is quickened by the longing to be free of the hateful suit of Cloten, which is to her 'as fearful as a siege.' Beside this lout, the other rejected wooers in Shakspere's plays, Aguecheek, Slender, and Roderigo, show like gallants of the finest water. Asinine though they be, they have the saving grace of disbelief in their own capacities, but Cloten is a bullying coxcomb, insanely puffed up by his sudden elevation to princely rank. He goes in constant fear of doing something that will be a 'derogation' to his novel dignity, and his version *noblesse oblige* is summed up in the words, 'it is fit I should commit offence to my inferiors.' At bowls and cards, which are his chief occupations, his anxiety is to win the stakes, and it is in a similarly mercenary spirit that he pays court to Imogen. His amorous tactics are as inept as the rest of his conduct. He wakes her with a serenade because he has been 'advised to give her music o' mornings,' and with brazen effrontery tries to bribe one of her waiting women to be his accomplice. Imogen meets his advances with a studied attempt at politeness till he begins to abuse Posthumus as 'a base slave, a hilding for a livery,' whereupon, angered beyond control, she retorts in kind, and ends with the scathing outburst,

> 'His meanest garment
> That ever hath but clipp'd his body, is dearer
> In my respect, than all the hairs above thee,
> Were they all made such men.'

Thus the prospect of getting beyond the reach of this odious persecution gives added keenness to Imogen's rapture at the thought of meeting Posthumus at Milford. How agonizing then is the reaction when she discovers that his message is a feint to lure her to destruction! As Pisanio, when he shows her Posthumus' letter, cries,

> 'What shall I need to draw my sword? The paper
> Hath cut her throat already.'

Indignantly she repels the charges against her honour, and then, content to lose a life that has been robbed of all its sweetness, she

plucks from before her heart the 'scriptures' of her husband, now 'all turned to heresy,' and bids Pisanio strike at it.

> 'Look!
> I draw the sword myself; take it, and hit
> The innocent mansion of my love, my heart.
> Fear not, 'tis empty of all things but grief;
> Thy master is not there, who was, indeed,
> The riches of it. Do his bidding; strike.'

But the faithful servant, sure that Posthumus is the victim of some fraud, has devised a plan for his mistress' safety. He provides her with a boy's apparel, and counsels her in this disguise to seek service with the Roman ambassador, who is about to re-embark at Milford, and who will carry her in his train to the imperial city, where she may learn how matters go with Posthumus in his exile. Thus the dramatist ingeniously links together the main-plot and the enveloping political action, and provides a motive for the introduction of the under-plot. For Imogen, losing her way to Milford, is brought by chance to the cave where her brothers Guiderius and Arviragus dwell with their foster-father, Belarius.

Ten years had passed since Shakspere had handled an idyllic theme in *As You Like It,* but his treatment is marked by the same breadth and originality as before. Belarius, a soldier who had done splendid service in the Roman wars, had been banished twenty years ago by the hasty-tempered king upon a false charge of treachery. In revenge he had stolen Cymbeline's infant sons, and fled with them to mountain solitudes, where he rears them in the belief that he is their father, and teaches them to scorn the life of court and camp, whose hollowness he has himself proved.

> 'O! this life
> Is nobler than attending for a check;
> Richer than doing nothing for a bride;
> Prouder than rustling in unpaid-for silk.
> . . . . . .
> No life to ours!'

But in characteristic opposition to the conventional Tudor pastoralism, Shakspere makes the princely youths dissatisfied with their mentor's one-sided doctrines, and eager to taste the forbidden fruit of worldly experience[1]. As Guiderius trenchantly retorts to his foster-father's lecture

[1] Contrast Spenser's treatment in the conventional pastoral style of a similar situation. In *The Faerie Queene,* Bk. VI. 9, the old shepherd Meliboee, who had spent ten years of his life at court and seen its 'vainness,' discourses to Sir Calidore on the superiority of the 'lonely, quiet life' of the country. The knight hangs on his words, and at once resolves to abandon the world's gay shows and betake himself to this 'safe retire.'

'Haply this life is best,
If quiet life be best; sweeter to you
That have a sharper known, well corresponding
With your stiff age; but unto us it is
A cell of ignorance, travelling a-bed;
A prison for a debtor, that not dares
To stride a limit.'

Similarly Arviragus laments that their uneventful life will provide them with no stock of memories for old age, and that, bred among beasts, they have a share in none but 'beastly' qualities. Belarius has to own that instinct is more powerful than discipline:

'Though train'd up thus meanly
I' the cave wherein they bow, their thoughts do hit
The roofs of palaces; and nature prompts them,
In simple and low things, to prince it much
Beyond the trick of others.'

These words guide us to what is (more than any other) the central idea binding together the two sections of the play. Nature will have her rights, and it is useless to seek to arbitrarily override them. The princely youths, though reared in a cave, pine for the court, which is their native air, while Imogen, whom the accident of their abduction has made heiress to the throne, yearns for the seclusion of domestic life, and thus has chosen a man of humble fortunes as her husband. She had even longed, in the pain of separation from Posthumus, to be 'a neat-herd's daughter,' with him as their neighbour shepherd's son. Her wish is, in essence, fulfilled when, in her disguise, she enters Belarius' cave, and is made a member of the rustic household. She feels drawn by a subtle spell towards the two youths whose noble bearing belies their surroundings, and she takes part with zest in the simple duties of this primitive life. Guiderius is enthusiastic about her neat cookery, which cuts their roots in character, and sauces their broth till it is a diet for the gods. How happy could she be with such companions, were it not for the sorrow that wrings her heart and eats her strength away! To cure her feebleness, she partakes of a potion for whose virtue Pisanio has vouched, but which has the effect, unknown to him, of producing for a time the appearance of death. Thus Arviragus, returning from the hunt, finds her stretched, stark, with pillowed cheek, and arms 'leagued' across her breast. He bears her forth reverently to burial, and in a scene of exquisite elegiac tenderness vows to sweeten her sad grave with summer's fairest flowers, pale primrose, harebell, and eglantine. And the climax of idyllic beauty is reached when the princely pair 'sing to the ground' the 'brother' who has been taken

from them, while the white-haired Belarius throws 'strewings' into the open grave. But the lovely ceremonial is not all in vain, for fortune has given Imogen the strangest of partners in these obsequies. Cloten, arrayed in a garment of Posthumus, had pursued her to Milford, bent on carrying out an odious scheme of revenge, but had fallen in with Guiderius, who, provoked to an encounter by his ribaldry, had cut off his head. Belarius, recognizing in him the queen's son, bids him be buried as a prince, and thus he is laid in the same grave as Imogen. When the latter wakes from her trance, it is to find herself lying, as she thinks, beside the headless body of her husband, and in a not very consequential monologue she charges Pisanio with being his murderer. In the midst of her frantic outcries she is found by the Roman ambassador, of whom she had formerly been in search, and who takes this supposed page, mourning for a dead master, into his service.

But it is no longer needful that, to be near her husband, Imogen should be carried to Rome. Cymbeline's refusal of tribute has produced an invasion of Britain by the imperial troops, with Iachimo as leader, and Posthumus enrolled as a volunteer. The latter (whose complete disappearance from the scene during Acts iii. and iv. is a serious defect in plot-construction) has repented of his outburst of murderous fury against his wife, and is now anxious to atone for it as best he may. Thus, though he has enlisted in the Roman ranks, he arrays himself before the battle as a British peasant, and in this disguise seeks an inglorious death, while fighting on behalf of his country. But the heroic exploits of Guiderius and Arviragus, and of their foster-father whom they have persuaded to join in the fray, give victory to Cymbeline's forces, whereupon Posthumus, bent on courting his expiatory doom, resumes his Roman uniform, and lets himself be captured by his countrymen. The vision which appears to him in prison, introducing a *deus ex machina* of the most frigid type, and bequeathing the material legacy of an oracular scroll, is a strange excrescene, unworthy to precede the marvellously dexterous final scene in which all the tangled knots are untied. The deathbed confession by the queen at this crisis of her nefarious purposes has perhaps too much the air of a theatrical coincidence; and Iachimo's similar repentance is curiously sudden. But his open recital of his misdeeds in the presence of his two disguised victims is intensely dramatic, as is Posthumus' sudden, fierce outcry of self-accusation and agonized mourning over his lost Imogen, 'his queen, his life, his wife.' Then follows the supreme stroke of the play, when Imogen flings herself with an appealing cry upon her husband's breast, and,

maddened by what he deems the mocking play of a 'scornful page,' he strikes her to the ground. But Pisanio is at hand to tell his master, he 'ne'er killed Imogen till now,' and in a moment Posthumus' arms are around the bride, whose forgiveness he has done more to earn than most of Shakspere's erring lovers. The sky is again for an instant overcast by the sentence of death that follows Guiderius' confession of having slain Cloten. But Belarius reveals the identity of the princely youths, and Cymbeline's joy is only surpassed by that of Imogen, who thus 'loses,' as she had longed to do, 'a kingdom,' and gets instead 'two worlds.' The whole situation is summed up in Cymbeline's graphic description:

> 'See,
> Posthumus anchors upon Imogen;
> And she, like harmless lightning, throws her eye
> On him, her brothers, me, her master, hitting
> Each object with a joy: the counterchange
> Is severally in all.'

The scene of reconciliation and reunion is crowned when Posthumus, the forgiven, forgives in turn Iachimo, and Cymbeline, carrying out his maxim that 'pardon's the word for all,' grants his prisoners their liberty. Even the political issues are affected by the prevailing spirit of harmony, and Cymbeline, though victor on the field, submits to Caesar, and agrees to pay the tribute which had been withheld at the instigation of the dead queen. So quixotic a surrender of the fruits of a hard-fought campaign is a fitting close to a work whose fantastic remoteness from ordinary experience gives it much of its peculiar charm—a charm which is ill-served by the criticism that seeks in this dramatic romance the same profound moral significance as in the tragedies or historical plays[1].

1 Thus Gervinus asserts that the play 'treats uniformly throughout two opposite ideas or moral qualities, namely, truth in word and in deed (fidelity), and untruth and faithlessness, falseness in deed or perfidy, falseness in word or slander.' He illustrates this at length, with much ingenuity, and it is true that it is one of the recurring motives of the play. But it is only by a forced method of interpretation that the idyllic under-plot can be brought to centre round the principle of fidelity, apart from the fact that Gervinus' analysis gives an exaggerated importance to Pisanio. Kreyssig finds the key to the play in the principle that motive rather than outward character determines the moral worth of an action. Thus Imogen disobeys her father about her marriage, to preserve her nature from the violation of an odious union; the court physician deceives, with good intent, the queen who has bidden him prepare poison; Pisanio disobeys his master's instructions to murder Imogen, and is thus more faithful than if he carried out his orders; Imogen gives a feigned account of herself to the Roman ambassador, and trusts the gods to pardon a harmless falsehood. Similarly, in the under-plot, Belarius steals the boys of Cymbeline, to bring them up in heroic virtue; the boys commit the apparent offence of loving Imogen, their true sister, better than their supposed father, and they disobey Belarius when he tries to keep them away from the battle where their true duty lies. But though Kreyssig's principle of interpretation thus embraces much of the play, it does not cover what is the chief incident—the wager on Imogen's chastity. Another connexion of idea between the plots has been suggested in the text, but it does not extend over all parts of the play. In fact, *Cymbeline*, like *The Merchant of Venice*, introduces variations on more than one theme, but it is useless to seek for a single dominant motive giving complete moral or dramatic unity to its composite materials.

THE WINTER'S TALE, which was first printed in the Folio of 1623, was seen by Forman at the Globe on May 15, 1611. He does not say that it was a new piece, but its metrical characteristics assign it to this or the preceding year. It has no rhyme in the dialogue, the percentage of double endings is 31·09, and of light and weak endings together is 5·48. It was probably the last complete play that Shakspere wrote, though it is convenient to treat it before *The Tempest*, in which the dramatist's final mood finds its ideal expression. The source of the drama is Greene's novel *Pandosto*, or, as it was afterwards named, *Dorastus and Fawnia*. It is a piquant coincidence that Shakspere should thus, at the close of his career, have again 'beautified himself' with his old rival's 'feathers.' It looks like a farewell demonstration of his supremacy by the 'upstart crow' of twenty years back, which must have been enough to make Greene turn in his grave. The unfortunate 'Roberto' has not however gone quite unavenged. His story, in spite of its great popularity with the reading public, was in many respects a *damnosa hereditas* to a dramatist, and even Shakespere could not transform it into a play with unity of motive or of action. In fact his alterations have gone far to rob the tale of such cohesion as it possessed in its original shape, for the charm of numerous scenes must not blind us to the violation of all structural principles in a play made up of two totally dissimilar parts united by a merely mechanical bond. *The Winter's Tale* exhibits, beyond any work of Shakspere, the characteristic defects of Romantic drama, and it could not have been written at the period when he was working with energies strung to their highest intensity. The original of *As You Like It*, as of *The Winter's Tale*, was a novel combining the pastoralism made fashionable by the *Arcadia* with the Euphuistic sententiousness and mannerism of speech. But how unequal is the power shown in dramatizing the two tales! *As You Like It* is wanting in incident, but it is a piece of exquisitely harmonious design, flawless in its perspective, and steeped throughout in one atmosphere. Yet Shakspere departs from the original story less than he does in *The Winter's Tale*, where more drastic changes fail to produce an equally successful result. In Greene's novel Egistus, King of Sicily, visits Pandosto, King of Bohemia, who is inflamed with a sudden jealousy of his guest and his own wife Bellaria. Egistus escapes his fury, but his wife dies in consequence of the treatment to which she has been subjected. Her new-born child, Fawnia, has meanwhile been committed to the waves and winds, and is borne to the coast of Sicilia, where she is reared up by honest shepherds. It is with her subsequent fortunes

that the main part of Greene's narrative deals. Dorastus, Egistus' son, is destined by his father to marry a Danish princess, but he sets love at defiance, and Cupid, in revenge, leads him, when hawking, into the presence of Fawnia. He becomes enamoured of her, and before his father has discovered their attachment, escapes with her on board ship. On the same ship is the shepherd, carrying trinkets that prove her true origin. A storm drives them to Bohemia, where Pandosto falls in love with his own daughter. When all is explained, he commits suicide in despair.

Shakspere, to whom unnatural complications of passion were abhorrent, eliminates the entire episode of Pandosto's (Leontes') incestuous love, and substitutes his reunion with Bellaria (Hermione), who, in the play, does not die, but lives concealed for sixteen years. Such an ending is far more satisfactory to our moral sense, and the scene where the living statue steps down from the pedestal into her husband's arms is one of the most beautiful in the dramatist's writings. Yet the change is not altogether an artistic improvement. In Greene's story the jealousy of Pandosto towards his queen had been the prologue to the main narrative, of which Fawnia is the centre. In the course of her tangled love-romance, the girl not only secures happiness for herself, but is made by destiny, who is the presiding genius of the story, the instrument of vengeance for her mother's wrongs. This effective bond between the opening incidents of the tale and its later stages is lost in Shakspere's version, where the relations between the jealous king and his wife are lifted into the foreground of the action, and the fortunes of their daughter become a subordinate and almost entirely detached episode.

It is on the count of faulty general design that *The Winter's Tale* must make its serious reckoning with criticism, which will grant it a ready absolution for its audacious defiance of historical and geographical proprieties. In that continent unknown to map-makers where Bohemia has a sea-shore, and Delphos is an island, the daughter of the Russian emperor may well have her statue carved by the Italian Julio Romano, and the oracles of Greece may flourish side by side with the Warwickshire Whitsun pastorals. Such a fantastic medley of periods and places is one of the recognized 'properties' of the romance-writer, and to solemnly assail it is merely to tilt at windmills, especially as Shakspere does not here repeat the error made in *Cymbeline* of introducing a section of real history which fits awkwardly into the rest of the airy fabric.

It is only a region outside the normal conditions of human life that the jealous passion of Leontes could originate. Othello's antece-

dents and the circumstances of his marriage conspired with Iago's fiendish arts to plunge him into an agonized frenzy of suspicion. Even Posthumus has some plausible grounds for his loss of faith in Imogen's virtue. But Leontes' jealousy is sheer midsummer madness. Because Polixenes, his friend from childhood, after having refused his request to tarry longer in Sicily, yields to the entreaties of Hermione, he concludes that the pair are guilty of misconduct, and lets his fancy run riot in sensual imaginings for which there is no shadow of a pretext[1]. The courtesies of intimate friendship he wilfully misconstrues into lascivious dallyings, though the woman whom he thus insanely suspects of dishonouring herself and him has given every hostage of chaste fidelity in love. The daughter of an emperor, she has the stately composure of one born in the purple, though she can unbend in playful merriment with those who are dear to her. 'Her passions,' as Mrs. Jameson has said, 'are not vehement, but in her settled mind the sources of pain or pleasure, love or resentment, are like the springs that feed the mountain lakes, impenetrable, unfathomable, and inexhaustible.' She had not been quickly moved to bestow the treasure of her heart's loyalty upon Leontes. As he himself reminds her,

> 'Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death
> Ere I could make thee open thy white hand,
> And clap thyself my love: then didst thou utter,
> "I am yours for ever."'

Thus the pledge of her troth was, with a nature like hers, no impulsive outburst, but the solemn, irrevocable surrender of her whole being. She may with right claim that she loves her husband 'not a jar o' the clock behind what lady she her lord.' All about her feel the singular spell of her character, which blends in such rare perfection majesty and sweetness. The terms by which she is addressed 'most sacred lady' and 'dread mistress' tell of the reverence in which she is held by the members of the court, and Paulina in the closing Act gives voice to the common judgement when she cries,

> 'If one by one you wedded all the world
> Or from the all that are took something good
> To make a perfect woman, she you kill'd
> Would be unparallel'd.'

Hence when Leontes suddenly blurts out the foulest accusations

[1] The origin of the king's jealousy is far less plausible in the play than in Greene's novel, where we are told of Egistus and Bellaria's constant intercourse while Pandosto was occupied with state affairs. 'They grew to such a secret uniting of their affections that the one could not well be without the company of the other.'

against this high-souled matron, even his regal authority cannot overawe his subjects into assent. The old lord Camillo roundly declares that he would not stand by to hear his sovereign mistress clouded so without taking instant vengeance. He is aghast at Leontes' suggestion that he should poison Polixenes, and merely feigns compliance that he may warn the intended victim of the plot, and hasten his departure before his life is taken.

Leontes instantly concludes that Camillo, who has joined Polixenes in flight, has been an agent in the intrigue between his visitor and the queen. He bursts into the chamber where Hermione is making merry with Mamilius, and in the presence of her boy and her waiting-women flings the vilest epithets in her face. Hermione does not cower, like Othello's timid bride, under the torrent of her husband's calumny, nor does she flash out into indignant recrimination. She meets his gross charges with dignified calm:

> 'How will this grieve you
> When you shall come to clearer knowledge that
> You thus have publish'd me! Gentle my lord,
> You scarce can right me throughly then to say
> You did mistake.'

Even the heartless and insulting order for her imprisonment cannot break down her stately self-restraint. Her eyes do not moisten with 'vain dew,' but lodged at her heart is the honourable grief 'which burns worse than tears drown.' Nor would she have her women bewail her fortunes:

> 'Do not weep, good fools;
> There is no cause: when you shall know your mistress
> Has deserv'd prison, then abound in tears
> As I come out.'

But though Hermione disdains to plead her own cause, she has eager advocates in the Sicilian court, whose singularly wholesome and genuine atmosphere—the very antithesis to that of the palace at Elsinore—makes Leontes' paroxysm of jealousy all the more wanton. An unnamed lord offers to stake his life on the queen's innocence, and Antigonus roundly asserts that

> 'Every inch of woman in the world,
> Ay, every dram of woman's flesh is false,
> If she be.'

But Hermione's most energetic champion is Antigonus' wife, Paulina. She is entirely a creation of Shakspere, and were she not warranted a Sicilian, we should take her to be a kinswoman of Kent

dents and the circumstances of his marriage conspired with Iago's fiendish arts to plunge him into an agonized frenzy of suspicion. Even Posthumus has some plausible grounds for his loss of faith in Imogen's virtue. But Leontes' jealousy is sheer midsummer madness. Because Polixenes, his friend from chidhood, after having refused his request to tarry longer in Sicily, yields to the entreaties of Hermione, he concludes that the pair are guilty of misconduct, and lets his fancy run riot in sensual imaginings for which there is no shadow of a pretext[1]. The courtesies of intimate friendship he wilfully misconstrues into lascivious dallyings, though the woman whom he thus insanely suspects of dishonouring herself and him has given every hostage of chaste fidelity in love The daughter of an emperor, she has the stately composure of one born in the purple, though she can unbend in playful merriment with those who are dear to her. 'Her passions,' as Mrs. Jameson has said, 'are not vehement, but in her settled mind the sources of pain or pleasure, love or resentment, are like the springs that feed the mountain lakes, impenetrable, unfathomable, and inexhaustible.' She had not been quickly moved to bestow the treasure of her heart's loyalty upon Leontes. As he himself reminds her,

> 'Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death
> Ere I could make thee open thy white hand,
> And clap thyself my love: then didst thou utter,
> "I am yours for ever."'

Thus the pledge of her troth was, with a nature like hers, no impulsive outburst, but the solemn, irrevocable surrender of her whole being. She may with right claim that she loves her husband 'not a jar o' the clock behind what lady she her lord.' All about her feel the singular spell of her character, which blends in such rare perfection majesty and sweetness. The terms by which she is addressed 'most sacred lady' and 'dread mistress' tell of the reverence in which she is held by the members of the court, and Paulina in the closing Act gives voice to the common judgement when she cries,

> 'If one by one you wedded all the world
> Or from the all that are took something good
> To make a perfect woman, she you kill'd
> Would be unparallel'd.'

Hence when Leontes suddenly blurts out the foulest accusations

[1] The origin of the king's jealousy is far less plausible in the play than in Greene's novel, where we are told of Egistus and Bellaria's constant intercourse while Pandosto was occupied with state affairs. 'They grew to such a secret uniting of their affections that the one could not well be without the company of the other.'

against this high-souled matron, even his regal authority cannot overawe his subjects into assent. The old lord Camillo roundly declares that he would not stand by to hear his sovereign mistress clouded so without taking instant vengeance. He is aghast at Leontes' suggestion that he should poison Polixenes, and merely feigns compliance that he may warn the intended victim of the plot, and hasten his departure before his life is taken.

Leontes instantly concludes that Camillo, who has joined Polixenes in flight, has been an agent in the intrigue between his visitor and the queen. He bursts into the chamber where Hermione is making merry with Mamilius, and in the presence of her boy and her waiting-women flings the vilest epithets in her face. Hermione does not cower, like Othello's timid bride, under the torrent of her husband's calumny, nor does she flash out into indignant recrimination. She meets his gross charges with dignified calm:

> 'How will this grieve you
> When you shall come to clearer knowledge that
> You thus have publish'd me! Gentle my lord,
> You scarce can right me throughly then to say
> You did mistake.'

Even the heartless and insulting order for her imprisonment cannot break down her stately self-restraint. Her eyes do not moisten with 'vain dew,' but lodged at her heart is the honourable grief 'which burns worse than tears drown.' Nor would she have her women bewail her fortunes:

> 'Do not weep, good fools;
> There is no cause: when you shall know your mistress
> Has deserv'd prison, then abound in tears
> As I come out.'

But though Hermione disdains to plead her own cause, she has eager advocates in the Sicilian court, whose singularly wholesome and genuine atmosphere—the very antithesis to that of the palace at Elsinore—makes Leontes' paroxysm of jealousy all the more wanton. An unnamed lord offers to stake his life on the queen's innocence, and Antigonus roundly asserts that

> 'Every inch of woman in the world,
> Ay, every dram of woman's flesh is false,
> If she be.'

But Hermione's most energetic champion is Antigonus' wife, Paulina. She is entirely a creation of Shakspere, and were she not warranted a Sicilian, we should take her to be a kinswoman of Kent

in *King Lear*, whom she resembles alike in her loyalty and her unbridled freedom of speech. She bears into the king's presence the daughter born before its time to Hermione in prison, and heedless of his threats and appeals to her husband to silence her, she speaks her mind with an intemperate candour that stirs Leontes to yet more ungovernable rage. In his frenzy of suspicion he charges Antigonus with having incited his wife to this hot-headed outburst, and orders him, as a penalty, to carry the new-born babe to some desert place, beyond Sicilia's borders, 'where chance may nurse or end it.' In one respect only does Leontes' conduct support his statement that he is not a tyrant. He consults the oracle of Delphi on the question of his wife's guilt[1], and in open court whither he hales her

> 'To prate and talk for life and honour 'fore
> Who plea to come and hear,'

he bids Apollo's message be unsealed and read aloud. The god does not, after his wonted fashion, take refuge in ambiguities, but pronounces an unequivocal verdict in the queen's favour. Leontes, in baffled rage, denies the truth of the oracle, and bids the sessions proceed. But his impiety is swiftly punished. A servant rushes in with the news that Mamilius, who had pined away through grief at the dishonour done to his mother, has that moment died. Leontes sees in this the judgement of the powers above upon his profane defiance of their declared will:

> 'Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves
> Do strike at my injustice.'

He repents of his insane suspicions as impetuously as he had conceived them, and thinks to repair quickly the evil that he has wrought. He will be reconciled to Polixenes, 'new woo' Hermione, and recall the good Camillo. But the path of repentance is not made so smooth for wrong-doers in these last plays as in the comedies, and Leontes, in especial, has to atone for his misdeeds by the long-drawn discipline of a 'saint-like sorrow.' Hermione has fainted at the news of Mamilius' death, and has been borne off in her swoon. Paulina

1 Greene with greater consistency makes Pandosto consult the oracle not of his own initiative but at Bellaria's entreaty. Shakspere probably felt that such an entreaty would not come appropriately from the lips of the stately Hermione. The dramatist has however made great improvements on the novelist's account of the announcement of the oracle. Greene makes Pandosto at once repent, when Apollo's message has been read, and shortly afterwards tidings come of the death of his son Garinter. How infinitely finer is Shakspere's version, where Leontes at first defies the oracle, and is only made to bow to the divine verdict, when the news is brought of Mamillius' death.

declares that the shock has been fatal to her, and bids the king betake himself to nothing but despair. But it is a device of the quick-witted woman to wring Leontes' heart with the extremity of repentant anguish. Hermione is still living, and is destined to a reunion with her lord, though sixteen years must first roll over their heads. If the incidents of the play were supposed to conform to any standard of probabilities, we might wonder not only how the queen's presence close to the palace could be so long entirely concealed, but how Paulina's impulsive nature could bear the burden of her momentous secret till after Perdita's recovery. Shakspere, however, is not concerned to give plausibility to these strange events of his own devising, and all curious questionings are stilled in our rapt concentration upon the impressive closing scene. Hermione's stately repose of bearing fits her in unique degree to impersonate her own statue, and the dramatist has heightened the effect of the episode by the most subtle strokes of his art. Leontes' criticism that Hermione was not so wrinkled, as she appears in stone, and Paulina's answer that the sculptor has carved her as she would look had she lived; his instinctive desire to kiss her hand, checked by the warning that the statue is but newly fixed, and the colour not dry; his growing wonder at this mockery of life by an art so rare that it can counterfeit breath and the motion of the eye;—all these touches intensify the agitation of the scene, and prepare us for the startling climax, when the statue steps down from the pedestal, and proves capable of movement and of speech. But with fine instinct Shakspere does not lengthen out this episode. After Hermione's long seclusion few words befit her lips, and a silent surrender to her husband's embrace, followed by a prayer of blessing on her daughter's head, are sufficient tokens to those who know her nature of the measureless joy that floods her being at this reunion with those she loves.

The idyllic episode of Perdita's fortunes is on an entirely different plane from the wellnigh tragic history of her parents. Antigonus, whom Shakspere substitutes for the blind agency of fate in Greene's romance, carries the babe to Bohemia, because a dream has led him to believe that Polixenes is its father. His mission ended, he is got rid of by a bear which opportunely appears, while his companions meet their fate in an equally seasonable storm. Thus Perdita is abandoned, and is found by honest shepherds, who, enriched by the treasure left for her support, grow prosperous and rear her in the simple graces and enjoyments of the country-side. But though this 'queen of curds and cream' is the most purely pastoral figure amongst Shakspere's characters, the dramatist has not here, more

than elsewhere, transported us into a conventional atmosphere. Greene, in spite of fresh and natural touches which are never wanting in anything that he wrote, portrayed Fawnia and Dorastus as the typical Arcadian nymph and swain, whose long-drawn amorous soliloquies and dialogues leave little room for the more matter-of-fact concerns of rural existence. But the love-story of Florizel and Perdita is played out against a background which is borrowed in the main from the realities of Warwickshire life. Thus Perdita's foster-father's description of his old wife's conduct at a sheep-shearing feast suggests to us no sylph, but a buxom dame ready to turn her hand to anything, and showing the effects of ale and exercise:

> 'She was both pantler, butler, cook;
> Both dame and servant; welcom'd all, serv'd 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 his; her face o' fire
> With labour and the things she took to quench it,
> She would to each one sip.'

Dorcas and Mopsa with their free tongues and ready trust in the marvellous, so it be set down in print, are typical country wenches, and the clown, Perdita's supposed brother, is a thick-witted yokel, who cannot do a simple sum without counters, and who loves a 'ballad but even too well; if it be doleful matter merrily set down, or a very pleasant thing indeed and sung lamentably.' It is small wonder, and no such great pity, that he and his like should be eased of their spare cash by so bewitching a rascal as Autolycus, who skips nimbly in the rear of the long line of Shakspere's merry-makers. The purses of country bumpkins are the natural perquisite of this inimitable rogue, of whom Gervinus is far too harsh a censor when he declares that the gallows were his due. Dowden treats him with more discriminating leniency: 'the art of thieving as practised by him is no crime, but the gift of some knavish god. He does not trample on the laws of morality, but dances or leaps over them with so nimble a foot that we forbear to stay him.' He has qualified for his avocation of 'a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles' by an apprenticeship to varied crafts. He has been servant to Prince Florizel, and when whipped out of court has been ape-bearer, process-server, and bailiff. One trade is as good as another to this light-hearted and light-fingered vagabond, who just at present finds a pedlar's pack the most convenient introduction into those circles of rustic society where purses are to be had for the picking. What door is there that can remain shut against so welcome an intruder, who 'hath ribands of all the colours i' the rainbow, inkles, caddisses, cambrics, lawns,'

and who sings them over, as they were gods or goddesses? Who can withstand an invitation to buy, so musically warbled, or when all the other senses 'are stuck in ears,' can be aware of nimble fingers stealing in and out of well-filled pockets?

It is amidst these fresh and breezy surroundings that Shakspere has set the idyll of Perdita's wooing. Even this he has shorn of its more artificial elements. The preliminary sighings and searchings of heart which fill so many pages of Greene's romance have but the faintest echo in the drama, and the lovers are shown to us at once in the fulness of their bliss. The sheep-shearing feast, of which Perdita is the queen, is an exquisitely appropriate addition to the story. It is in this dainty ceremonial rites that rural life catches a transient tinge of Arcadian hues; and Perdita, 'most goddess-like pranked up' in her festal weeds, belongs alike to the real and the idyllic worlds. As she scatters her flowers among the guests at the feast, she seems to us, as to her lover, 'no shepherdess, but Flora peering in April's front,' and the inmost spirit of the English woodlands haunts the lines in which she bewails her lack of the springtide blossoms:

> '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 Phoebus in his strength.'

So fond is she of these lovely children of Nature that she will not plant gillyvors among them, because they owe their piedness partly to art. What, we wonder, would she have said to the tree 'alphya,' the herb 'anita,' the herb 'ephemera,' and the similar portentous botanical species, which, following the precedent of Lyly, Greene strewed plentifully through his novel. We doubly enjoy the fragrant charm of Perdita's woodland posies when we realize that they are Shakspere's substitute for the bastard growths of the Euphuistic forcing-house.

The mixture of dignity, modesty, and tact with which the mistress of the feast plays her part impresses even those who have come to it with wrath against her in their breasts. Polixenes and Camillo attend the gathering in disguise, to entrap Florizel in the company of his humble mistress, but they are fain to admit her charm:

> 'This is the prettiest low-born lass, that ever
> Ran on the greensward: nothing she does, or seems,
> But smacks of something greater than herself:
> Too noble for this place.'

How fully she merits such praise is shown when Polixenes reveals himself and denounces Florizel for proving false to his duty as a sceptre's heir. Her high spirit resents the slur which the king casts on the shepherd class, to which, as she thinks, she belongs:

> 'I was not much afeared: for once or twice,
> I was about to speak, and tell him plainly
> The selfsame sun that shines upon his court
> Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
> Looks on all alike.'

Yet she has no wish to be wedded to a lover whose fortunes she will mar. She bids Florizel be gone, and leave her to milk her ewes and weep. But with the fine disregard of a true hero of romance for everything but the promptings of his heart, he clings closer to his mistress in adversity, and, careless of all other ties, takes flight with her over seas. At Camillo's suggestion he puts in at Sicilia, where Perdita's true origin is speedily revealed, and the lovers united amid paternal benedictions. In Greene's novel Dorastus had to pay for his escapade by a period of imprisonment, but Shakspere spares Florizel this ordeal. Kreyssig is, in fact, scandalized that a youth who has thrown to the winds his filial and princely obligations should be so richly rewarded, but romance has its own standards of right and wrong, and within its borderlands the lover who, come foul, come fair, is true to his heart's queen, has performed the whole duty of man.

THE TEMPEST was probably written towards the close of 1610. In the summer of 1609 a fleet under the command of Sir George Somers had been overtaken by a storm, and the admiralship the 'Sea-Venture' had been separated from the other vessels, and driven on the Bermuda coast, where it became fast lodged and locked between two rocks. The crew escaped, and having built themselves two boats of cedar, set sail for Virginia, where they re-embarked for England in June 1610. An account of the wreck entitled *A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Ile of Divels,* was written by Sylvester Jourdan, one of the survivors, and published in October 1610. So many passages in *The Tempest* recall Jourdan's descriptions that Shakspere must have had them before him. Thus we have the allusion to the 'still-vexed Bermoothes' (Act i. 2); the question of Stephano on his first encounter with Caliban, 'Have we devils here?' the separation of the King's ship from the rest of the fleet, and the miraculous preservation of the shipwrecked mariners. These and similar coincidences between play and pamphlet cannot

have been accidental, and *The Tempest*, it is reasonable to conclude, was written while Somers' perilous adventure was still an eager topic of discussion. The internal evidence supports this view. The style and metre have all the characteristics of Shakspere's last period. The percentage of double-endings is 33, as compared with 31 in *The Winter's Tale*; of light and weak endings together it is 4·59, while in *The Winter's Tale* it is 5·48. Probably *The Tempest* is slightly the earlier of the two plays[1].

Besides the hints in Jourdan's pamphlet we do not know of any source for the incidents of *The Tempest*, though Shakspere probably found the name Setebos in Eden's *History of Travaile*, and he may have borrowed details in his description of the enchanted island and its inhabitants from Hakluyt's collection of *Voyagers' Tales*. There is, however, a remarkable similarity between the main plot of *The Tempest* and a German play, *Die Schöne Sidea*, by Jacob Ayrer of Nürnberg, who died in 1605. English actors were in Nürnberg in 1604 and 1606, and performed a *Sedea* 'in good German' in 1613. Thus it is by no means unlikely that Shakspere heard an account of Ayrer's play from some member of a travelling company, and made use of it for his own purposes.

The Tempest is akin in theme to the other dramatic romances. It tells of cruel wrongs from kinsman to kinsman, of exile and severance, of strange reunions after many years. But in form and method it is a singular contrast to *Pericles* or *The Winter's Tale*. In these dramas romantic licence is pushed to its extreme limits; the scene shifts across long leagues of sea, and Act is parted from

1 An ingenious argument in favour of this view was first stated by Collier. In *The Winter's Tale* Shakspere does not represent the infant Perdita as set adrift at sea in a rudderless boat, though this incident occurs in Greene's novel. The plausible inference is that, having used this device in *The Tempest*, the dramatist did not care to repeat it, and introduced a variation in the later work. In any case the two plays are not far apart in date, and they are classed together by Ben Jonson in his sarcastic references in *The Induction* to *Bartholomew Fair* (1614): 'If there be never a *Servant-monster* i' the *Fayre* who can helpe it, he sayes: nor a nest of *Antiques*? He is loth to make Nature afraid in his *Playes*, like those that beget *Tales, Tempests*, and such like *Drolleries*.' Another quotation from Ben Jonson, has been made by Elze (*Essays on Shakspere*, pp. 1-29) the starting-point of an elaborate attempt to prove that *The Tempest* was written not in 1610 or 1611 but in 1604. In *Volpone* (Act. iii. 2) acted 1605, an allusion is made to thefts by English authors from Montaigne. The principal passage in Elizabethan literature borrowed from the French essayist is Gonzalo's speech in *The Tempest* (Act. ii. 1) describing his ideal Utopian commonwealth. Elze considers that Jonson is alluding to this passage, which Shakspere had found in Florio's translation of Montaigne, 1603. In support of his theory that the play dates from 1604 he points to the similarity between Prospero's prophecy beginning 'like the baseless fabric of this vision' and some lines in *Darius*, a tragedy by the Earl of Stirling, 1603. He asserts that Stirling's lines made a great impression upon Shakspere and 'involuntarily dropped from his pen while still fresh in his memory.' But this parallelism may easily have been accidental, for the transitoriness of all earthly things is a commonplace of thought; and with regard to the argument from *Volpone*, it is most unlikely that Jonson, in speaking of thefts from Montaigne, could have been alluding to a passage in which the essayist's description of an ideal commonwealth is finally turned into ridicule. Elze is obliged to allow that the play must have belonged to the period when Shakspere was severing his connexion with the stage; but to escape the consequences of this admission, he arbitrarily antedates Shakspere's retirement to Stratford.

How fully she merits such praise is shown when Polixenes reveals himself and denounces Florizel for proving false to his duty as a sceptre's heir. Her high spirit resents the slur which the king casts on the shepherd class, to which, as she thinks, she belongs:

> 'I was not much afeared: for once or twice,
> I was about to speak, and tell him plainly
> The selfsame sun that shines upon his court
> Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
> Looks on all alike.'

Yet she has no wish to be wedded to a lover whose fortunes she will mar. She bids Florizel be gone, and leave her to milk her ewes and weep. But with the fine disregard of a true hero of romance for everything but the promptings of his heart, he clings closer to his mistress in adversity, and, careless of all other ties, takes flight with her over seas. At Camillo's suggestion he puts in at Sicilia, where Perdita's true origin is speedily revealed, and the lovers united amid paternal benedictions. In Greene's novel Dorastus had to pay for his escapade by a period of imprisonment, but Shakspere spares Florizel this ordeal. Kreyssig is, in fact, scandalized that a youth who has thrown to the winds his filial and princely obligations should be so richly rewarded, but romance has its own standards of right and wrong, and within its borderlands the lover who, come foul, come fair, is true to his heart's queen, has performed the whole duty of man.

THE TEMPEST was probably written towards the close of 1610. In the summer of 1609 a fleet under the command of Sir George Somers had been overtaken by a storm, and the admiralship the 'Sea-Venture' had been separated from the other vessels, and driven on the Bermuda coast, where it became fast lodged and locked between two rocks. The crew escaped, and having built themselves two boats of cedar, set sail for Virginia, where they re-embarked for England in June 1610. An account of the wreck entitled *A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Ile of Divels,* was written by Sylvester Jourdan, one of the survivors, and published in October 1610. So many passages in *The Tempest* recall Jourdan's descriptions that Shakspere must have had them before him. Thus we have the allusion to the 'still-vexed Bermoothes' (Act i. 2); the question of Stephano on his first encounter with Caliban, 'Have we devils here?' the separation of the King's ship from the rest of the fleet, and the miraculous preservation of the shipwrecked mariners. These and similar coincidences between play and pamphlet cannot

have been accidental, and *The Tempest*, it is reasonable to conclude, was written while Somers' perilous adventure was still an eager topic of discussion. The internal evidence supports this view. The style and metre have all the characteristics of Shakspere's last period. The percentage of double-endings is 33, as compared with 31 in *The Winter's Tale*; of light and weak endings together it is 4·59, while in *The Winter's Tale* it is 5·48. Probably *The Tempest* is slightly the earlier of the two plays[1].

Besides the hints in Jourdan's pamphlet we do not know of any source for the incidents of *The Tempest*, though Shakspere probably found the name Setebos in Eden's *History of Travaile*, and he may have borrowed details in his description of the enchanted island and its inhabitants from Hakluyt's collection of *Voyagers' Tales*. There is, however, a remarkable similarity between the main plot of *The Tempest* and a German play, *Die Schöne Sidea*, by Jacob Ayrer of Nürnberg, who died in 1605. English actors were in Nürnberg in 1604 and 1606, and performed a *Sedea* 'in good German' in 1613. Thus it is by no means unlikely that Shakspere heard an account of Ayrer's play from some member of a travelling company, and made use of it for his own purposes.

The Tempest is akin in theme to the other dramatic romances. It tells of cruel wrongs from kinsman to kinsman, of exile and severance, of strange reunions after many years. But in form and method it is a singular contrast to *Pericles* or *The Winter's Tale*. In these dramas romantic licence is pushed to its extreme limits; the scene shifts across long leagues of sea, and Act is parted from

1 An ingenious argument in favour of this view was first stated by Collier. In *The Winter's Tale* Shakspere does not represent the infant Perdita as set adrift at sea in a rudderless boat, though this incident occurs in Greene's novel. The plausible inference is that, having used this device in *The Tempest*, the dramatist did not care to repeat it, and introduced a variation in the later work. In any case the two 'plays are not far apart in date, and they are classed together by Ben Jonson in his sarcastic references in *The Induction* to *Bartholomew Fair* (1614): 'If there be never a *Servant-monster* i' the *Fayre* who can helpe it, he sayes: nor a nest of *Antiques*? He is loth to make Nature afraid in his *Playes*, like those that beget *Tales, Tempests*, and such like *Drolleries*.' Another quotation from Ben Jonson, has been made by Elze (*Essays on Shakspere*, pp. 1-29) the starting-point of an elaborate attempt to prove that *The Tempest* was written not in 1610 or 1611 but in 1604. In *Volpone* (Act. iii. 2) acted 1605, an allusion is made to thefts by English authors from Montaigne. The principal passage in Elizabethan literature borrowed from the French essayist is Gonzalo's speech in *The Tempest* (Act. ii. 1) describing his ideal Utopian commonwealth. Elze considers that Jonson is alluding to this passage, which Shakspere had found in Florio's translation of Montaigne, 1603. In support of his theory that the play dates from 1604 he points to the similarity between Prospero's prophecy beginning 'like the baseless fabric of this vision' and some lines in *Darius*, a tragedy by the Earl of Stirling, 1603. He asserts that Stirling's lines made a great impression upon Shakspere and 'involuntarily dropped from his pen while still fresh in his memory.' But this parallelism may easily have been accidental, for the transitoriness of all earthly things is a commonplace of thought; and with regard to the argument from *Volpone*, it is most unlikely that Jonson, in speaking of thefts from Montaigne, could have been alluding to a passage in which the essayist's description of an ideal commonwealth is finally turned into ridicule. Elze is obliged to allow that the play must have belonged to the period when Shakspere was severing his connexion with the stage; but to escape the consequences of this admission, he arbitrarily antedates Shakspere's retirement to Stratford.

Act by the interval between infancy and maidenhood. For this extravagant looseness of structure *The Tempest* substitutes the compact framework of a classical play satisfying the strictest demands of the 'Unities.' The action occupies about three hours, and takes place within the narrow bounds of a desert island. We are almost tempted to believe that Shakspere was bent on demonstrating by a *tour de force* with what triumphant ease he could turn from one dramatic method to another. But he had in reality a weightier motive. In a piece where enchantment was to be the dominant agency, he aimed at a wise economy in its display. The human mind finds it difficult to realize the supernatural, especially in its most exalted aspect of omnipotent power. In bringing it in this form upon the stage Shakspere sought to give it plausibility by confining its operation to a single spot and to the briefest period of time.

Similar had been his treatment of magical influences in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and, as in this early play, he does not plunge us straightway into an enchanted atmosphere. The drama opens with a realistic scene of storm and shipwreck which transports us from the outer, every-day world, into the mystic domain where natural law is shut out. It is a desert island, set in a lonely sea, whither by accident most strange at rare intervals ships are drifted by ocean currents or unruly winds. The only dwelling is a cell weather-fended by trees; the food is the simplest that nature yields—fresh-brook muscles, 'crabs' and pignuts, clustering filberts, and 'young scamels from the rock.' Its scenery is richly varied. It has 'hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,' meadows with 'lush and lusty' grass, jungles of 'toothed briers, sharp furzes, picking goss and thorns.' The atmosphere is of a 'subtle, tender, and delicate temperance, and there float through it mystic melodies, lulling those who hear them into dreamy repose.'

> 'The isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
> That if I then had waked after long sleep
> Will make me sleep again.'

Haunting every inch of the enchanted ground, though not to be seen of mortal eye, are fairy forms, footing it featly on the yellow sands, or treading by moonlight the greenward into magic ringlets. These are the sole aboriginal denizens of the island, and of their kin is the dainty Ariel. As his name tells, he is a spirit of the air, though he has affinity too with the element of fire. 'Like air and fire he can

penetrate everywhere, treading the ooze of the salt deep, running upon the sharp wings of the north, doing business in the veins of earth when it is baked with frost. His natural speech is music or waves of air. His ideas are the ideas associated with the atmosphere —liberty and omnipresence: to be "free as mountain winds," to fly on the bat's back merrily, couch in the cowslip's bell, live under the blossom that hangs on the bough[1].'

But the island had been invaded by spirits of another sort. The blue-eyed hag, Sycorax, banished from Argier for 'sorceries terrible,' had been abandoned by sailors on the desert shore, and there had borne a 'freckled whelp,' with the devil for sire. Ariel she had made her servant, but because he was 'a spirit too delicate' to act her abhorred commands, she had imprisoned him within a cloven pine. Ere his release she died, leaving her son Caliban lord of the island. This monster, 'not honoured with a human shape,' is the complete antithesis to the Being of air and fire. He is connected with the lower elements of earth and water, as is shown by the terms in which he is addressed. But if he thus typifies the grosser natural forces, he also represents (by a curious anticipation of modern theories already foreshadowed in *Lear* and *Timon*) primitive humanity only risen an inch above the brute stage, and made to all appearance more animal than the beasts of the field by the gift of faculties which enlarge its scope for evil. Caliban is doubtless an anagram for Cannibal; and with his merciless derision of visionary Arcadian fancies, Shakspere was probably substituting this uncouth sketch of barbarism in its natural colours, for the idealized pictures of the 'noble savage' which were being palmed off then, as later, upon a too confiding public.

For a time this creature, half-monster, half-man, had ruled the island, and been as he proudly claims 'his own king.' But the dynasty of the savage had been overthrown—and in Shakspere's time there were abundant instances of this East and West—by the advent of civilized man. He too had come in the form of a refugee. Prospero, Duke of Milan, 'rapt in secret studies,' had throne all the cares of government upon his brother Antonio. For this neglect of his duties he had paid a heavy penalty. Antonio, covetous of the ducal title as well as power, had done homage to the King of Naples, and with his aid had thrust Prospero from the royal seat. Hurried through the gates of Milan at dead of night, the deposed ruler, with his infant child Miranda, had been stowed in the rotten carcass of

1 Moulton, *Shakspere as a Dramatic Artist*, p. 257.

a butt' and left to the mercy of wind and wave. They had been drifted to the shores of the desert island, and there Prospero had begun life anew. He had learnt the sharp lesson of adversity, and henceforth he shows himself a master of circumstances, swift to act and inflexible of will. Still possessed, through Gonzalo's friendly offices, of his precious books, he had learnt their inmost secret, and attained to supernatural dominion over the forces of earth and sky. But, unlike Marlowe's Faustus, he had not used his power for personal ends. He had worked a beneficent revolution in the island, freeing Ariel from his captivity, and seeking to educate Caliban to a higher level. The history of the intercourse between the civilized man and the savage in most epochs is epitomized in the relations of Prospero and the son of Sycorax. It had begun with an interchange of benefits; as Caliban declares:

> 'When thou camest first,
> Thou strok'dst me and mad'st much of me, wouldst give me
> Water with berries in 't; and teach me how
> To name the bigger light, and how the less,
> That burn by day and night: and then I lov'd thee
> And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
> The fresh springs brine-pits, barren place, and fertile':

But his further progress in education had given far from satisfactory results. The 'native' is always apt to be demoralized in the transition from his instinctive barbarism to a civilization he imperfectly comprehends. So it had been with Caliban. His 'profit' from learning language is that he knows how to curse, and his gratitude for Prospero's care of him is shown in an attack upon Miranda's honour. Thereupon follows his degradation to slavery. In dread of stripes and torture he performs menial offices, and his last state is undeniably worse than his first.

Such has been the 'ancient history' of the island, unfolded to us in the second scene of the play, which serves the purpose of a classical prologue. Even this remote spot, we thus realize, is not an uneventful Arcadia; it has had its rise and fall of dynasties, it has known conflict, passion, and crime. And now another momentous crisis is at hand. By accident most strange, Prospero's enemies, on their return from the marriage of Alonso's daughter to the King of Tunis, have been drifted close to the island, and the storm with which the play opens is no natural outburst of elemental fury, but the product of enchantment, a device of the great magician for bringing his foes within the immediate circle of his power. That power has no limits; and thus in *The Tempest* we miss one main source of dramatic

interest, the struggle between man and circumstance. But we get rich compensation. Prospero, without Satanic aid, has realized Faustus' aspiration; he is the 'sound magician' who by virtue of his art is a 'mighty god.' Thus he can order events at will; and in his actions we see Shakspere's conception of a divine being's attitude towards the mortals under his sway. For the shipwrecked company contains varied types of humanity, from youthful innocence to the most hardened villany, and Prospero, holding them in the hollow of his hand, metes out to each, as he thinks due, punishment, reward, or pardon.

In Ferdinand, son of the King of Naples, his infallible insight detects a prince of truly noble strain, graced alike in form and soul. Such a one, grown to peerless manhood among the corrupting influences of his father's court, merits a peerless guerdon, and Prospero deems him worthy of his daughter, a 'thrid' of his own life. It is an unparalleled tribute, for Miranda is 'created of every creature's best'; she is the wonder-child of the enchanted island, wellnigh too ethereal to be mated to any of the sons of men. Reared among the 'untrodden ways' she has drawn into her blood the influences of this tropical solitude; she might have inspired the modern poet's vision of a maiden moulded into grace by 'the silent sympathy' of elemental things:

> 'The stars of midnight shall be dear
> To her; and she shall lean her ear
> In many a secret place
> Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
> And beauty born of murmuring sound
> Shall pass into her face.'

Save her father, and the half-brute Caliban, whom she fears to look on, she has known no human creature, and her character is without the complexity bred by artificial surroundings. The primal instincts of womanhood, as Shakspere conceived them, tenderness, modesty, simple faith in good, alone stir her breast. So unlearned is she in worldly experience that when Ariel's music draws Ferdinand to her father's cell she takes him for a spirit, 'a thing divine.' The prince, in equal amaze, salutes her as 'the goddess on whom these airs attend.' Thus 'at the first sight,' as Prospero whispers, 'they have changed eyes'; but even on the desert island Shakspere will not permit a purely idyllic courtship. The enchanter, lest too light winning make the prize light, puts Ferdinand's mettle to the test; he has to give more solid proof of his loyalty than amorous vows and

sighs. Spite of Miranda's pleading, he is imprisoned in the cell, and set to the rough task of log-piling. But confinement and drudgery are blithely borne for his sweet mistress' sake; and, though sore wearied, he gallantly forgoes the help she tenderly proffers him in his toil. He knows that the truest freedom can only be found in bonds—the bonds of self-sacrificing love:

> 'Hear my soul speak:
> The very instant that I saw you did
> My heart fly to your service; there resides,
> To make me slave to it; for your sake
> Am I this patient log-man.'

Similar is the spirit that prompts Miranda when with 'the plain and holy innocence' befitting a child of nature she lays her whole allegiance at her lover's feet:

> 'I am your wife, if you will marry me;
> If not, I 'll die your maid; to be your fellow
> You may deny me; but I 'll be your servant
> Whether you will or no.'

Thus, in absolute self-surrender, the two young hearts find a higher, holier liberty than of old, and as Prospero gazes unseen at this fair encounter of two most 'rare affections,' his 'rejoicing at nothing can be more.' Ferdinand has nobly stood his probation, and the enchanter may now throw off the mask, and entrust Miranda to his tested loyalty. A pageant played by spirits celebrates 'this contract of true love,' and the marriage blessings invoked upon the twain had probably here, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, more than a purely dramatic significance.

Ferdinand in his new-found joy shows a surprising unconcern about the loss of his relatives, but they too, after different fashion, are experiencing the effects of Prospero's dispensation. Alonso, his brother Sebastian, and Antonio are 'three men of sin,' but there are degrees in their guilt, as is speedily shown. The King of Naples, heart-broken by the belief that his son is drowned, already feels prickings of conscience for past misdeeds, and would fain still them in slumber. 'I wish mine eyes would, with themselves, shut up my thoughts.' The strains of Ariel's music soon lull him and others of his company to sleep, but Antonio and Sebastian remain wide awake. It seems as if Prospero had deliberately created a situation to lure them on to display the full depth of their villany. For Antonio, as he sees Alonso at his mercy, and thinks of Ferdinand sunk be-

neath the waves, spies his opportunity for a deed of blood that will set Sebastian on the throne of Naples, and free Milan from the tribute that its new overlord will gratefully remit. He has just overcome the scruples of his less stalwart associate in crime, and their swords are already at their victim's breast, when Ariel's music awakes the sleepers, and the King's life is saved. But not 'for one repulse' will the twain forgo their purpose; they are resolute to 'take throughly' their next advantage at nightfall. Ere then, however, they learn that even in these solitudes there is an eye that watches guilt. The supernatural banquet to which the shipwrecked company, wearily exploring the island, find themselves bidden by strange shapes, suddenly vanishes amidst thunder and lightning; and to their bewilderment they are confronted instead by Ariel in harpy-form, denouncing their past misdeeds, and threatening them with 'lingering perdition worse than any death,' whence their only loop-hole of escape is 'heart-sorrow and a clear life ensuing.' Again we see the grades among the 'three men of sin.' Antonio and Sebastian, in a spirit of reckless defiance, rush eagerly with drawn swords after the vanishing 'fiend.' Alonso is stricken into an agony of remorse:

> 'O, it is monstrous! monstrous!
> Methought the billows spoke and told me of it;
> The winds did sing it to me; and the thunder,
> That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounced
> The name of Prosper: it did bass my trespass.
> Therefore my son i' the ooze is bedded; and
> I 'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded,
> And with him there lie mudded.'

But the wrongdoers are to 'taste' yet further the 'subtilties o' the isle.' Their power of action is suddenly suspended, and they are drawn by irresistible influence to the grove that 'weather-fends' Prospero's cell, where for a space they are left entranced.

Meanwhile another conspiracy has been on foot, for the island which Gonzalo innocently pictures as the seat of an Arcadian commonwealth seems to have a revolutionary infection in its air. Stephano and Trinculo, two rascally Neapolitans washed ashore from the wreck, fall in with Caliban, and one draught from the drunken butler's bottle is enough to make the 'moon-calf' his abject worshipper. Again Shakspere roughly brushes away any fancies concerning unsophisticated humanity. We see the savage, on whom the higher gifts of civilization had been vainly showered, welcoming rapturously its least desirable product. Prospero's lessons, moral and mental, had not consoled Caliban for the loss of sovereignty, but he

is eager to sell his birthright for a mouthful of 'celestial liquor':

'I 'll kiss thy foot; I 'll swear myself thy subject,
I 'll show thee the best springs, I 'll pluck thee berries;
I 'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough.
A plague upon the tyrant that I serve!
I 'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee,
Thou wondrous man.'

Thus the standard of revolt is raised against Prospero's rule, and to celebrate the event Caliban roars out a drunken Ode to liberty:

'No more dams I'll make for fish;
Nor fetch in firing
At requiring,
Nor scrape trencher, nor wash dish:
'Ban, 'Ban, Ca—Caliban,
Has a new master: get a new man.
Freedom, hey-day! hey-day, freedom! freedom! hey-day, freedom!'

The demi-brute cannot grasp the conception of true freedom consisting in service, which, as Dowden has suggested, is a thought running through the play. And a fit echo is provided in Stephano's chant, 'the *Marseillaise* of the enchanted island':

'Flout 'em and scout 'em
And scout 'em and flout 'em;
Thought is free.'

But the event proves unworthy of these opening heroics. A triple alliance based upon a bottle is shaky from the outset, and the high contracting parties are soon at cross purposes. The spell of Ariel's music leads them a dance through thorns and briers into a 'filthy-mantled pool,' whence they struggle out with the 'infinite loss' of their bond of union. Caliban has at least the merit of being firm to the original plan of campaign, but his partners are easily lured from it by the bait of some paltry plunder, and the conspiracy *pour rire* ends in fiasco at the mouth of Prospero's cell.

Thus the enchanter has the criminals, high and low, in his power awaiting sentence from his lips. A god in might, shall he not also prove a god in forgiveness?

'The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further.'

Prospero's is the divine justice, already held up for man's example in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure*, wherein mercy has the foremost place. Yet it is a mercy without weakness, for

though all sins are pardoned, the chief offender, Antonio, is sternly rebuked and bidden surrender the fruit of his misdeeds:

> 'For you most wicked sir, whom to call brother
> Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive
> Thy rankest fault: all of them; and require
> My dukedom of thee, which perforce, I know
> Thou must restore.'

The scene recalls in certain aspects the 'pageant' of the Last Judgement in the Miracle Cycles. Here as there an omnipotent being pronounces doom upon the creatures summoned before his bar, though, under Prospero's dispensation, mercy is not withheld even from the 'demi-devil' Caliban.

The parallel suggests a wider inference. The world has agreed to recognize in the enchanter's speech abjuring his 'rough magic' the farewell not only of Prospero to the wonderful island, but of Shakspere to the stage. And even though *The Tempest* be not strictly his last work, the popular instinct can scarcely be quite at fault:

> 'Graves at my command
> Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
> By my so potent art.'

What graves could let forth their sleepers, even at magic's command. in the unpeopled island? The sepulchres unclosed by the enchanter's spell are not to be sought there, but in 'the dark backward and abysm of time'; and the sleepers resummoned to the upper world are the bloodless phantoms of the past thrilled by the elixir of genius into a second, more splendid life. Theirs is an imperishable renewal of youth fed from the deepest sources of existence. For amidst the tumultuous riot of the Renaissance age Shakspere towers in massive strength, 'like Teneriffe or Atlas unremoved.' His hands are stretched to gather in the full heritage of the world's experiences, but his feet are planted, like the feet of his ancestors, firm on the pedestal of moral reality. He is at the core a true child of his race. His is the supreme type of the Anglo-Saxon organizing genius, employed in the imaginative not the material sphere. Others, of his own day, began the expansion of England over seas, but what appanage has ever been added to the British crown, so marvellously ordered throughout, or so inalienable, as the magnificent dominion shaped in twenty short years by the imperial faculty of the Stratford dramatist out of the seething elements of the 'new-birth'? With that dominion we could not part, were it to gain

> 'Another world
> Of one entire and perfect chrysolite.'

The most patriotic of Roman poets, as he sang of the eternal city and her mission among men, claimed for her triumphs in war and government, but not in art:

> *'Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera;*
> *Credo equidem; vivos ducent de marmore vultus;*
> *Orabunt causas melius; coelique meatus*
> *Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent:*
> *Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento,*
> *Hae tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem*
> *Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.'*

With Shakspere for her own, England has to make no similar renunciation. To conquer and colonize is instinctive in the veins of the sea-kings' sons, but it was an unparalleled grace of fortune that predestined the mightiest Teutonic 'organizer of victory' to the creative, not the active sphere. The glories of the Armada and of Waterloo may be repeated, but whence shall be born a second *Hamlet* or *Othello*? How then take more fitting farewell of their creator than in his own words:

> 'Here was a Caesar! when comes such another?'

APPENDIX A

The relation of *Henry VI*, Parts II and III to *The First Parts of the Contention* and *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York.*

(This appendix is chiefly based on Miss J. Lee's paper on *Parts II and III of Henry VI and their originals* in the *Transactions of the New Shakspere Society*, 1875).

Parts II and III of *Henry VI* appeared for the first time in the Folio of 1623. They are recasts of two older quartos, *The First Part of the Contention*, published 1594, and *The Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York*, published 1595. Out of 3075 lines in *Henry VI*, Part II, some 520 were taken from *The Contention* without any change, and some 840 with but little alteration. In Part III, out of 2902 lines, about 1010 were transferred from *The True Tragedy*, besides 871 which were slightly altered. It has been asserted by some critics, of whom Mr. Fleay is the latest, that the quartos are merely imperfect transcripts of *Henry VI*, Parts II and III, instead of being earlier plays out of which the latter were developed. But there are conclusive reasons against this view: (1) The versification of *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy* belongs to the pre-Shaksperean era, and we should have to assume that the transcriber had mentally dropped back into the metrical style of an earlier period of dramatic poetry. (2) Particulars are related in *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy* of which there is no mention in *Henry VI*, Parts II and III, and which a transcriber would not have invented and inserted. (3) Some of the finest passages in *Henry VI*, Parts II and III are omitted in *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*, though inferior lines *occurring in the same speeches* are given at length. It is incredible that a transcriber should have left out material of high poetic value while accurately reproducing far inferior stuff. There can thus be no doubt that the quartos are not merely spurious copies of *Henry VI*, Parts II and III.

But the more difficult question follows: Who wrote the four plays? The answers that have been given fall into the following chief groups. (*a*) Theobald, Johnson, Steevens, Knight, Schlegel and Tieck, followed in more recent times by Ulrici and Delius, ascribe all four plays to Shakspere. (*b*) Halliwell-Phillips, Clark and Wright, Grant White, and Swinburne, consider that Shakspere wrote *Henry VI*, Parts II and III, and that he had a hand in the authorship of *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*. Grant White, who has supported this view with much ability, holds that Shakspere wrote *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy* in partnership with Marlowe, Greene, and possibly Peele, and that in taking passages and sometimes whole scenes from these plays for his *King Henry VI* he did little more than reclaim his own. (*c*) Malone, Hallam, Collier, Gervinus, and Kreyssig consider that Shakspere wrote *Henry VI*, Parts II and III, but had no part in *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*, which they ascribe to Marlowe or Greene. Miss J. Lee adopts a modified form of this view. She denies to Shakspere any share in *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*, which she looks upon as the work of Marlowe and Greene (with the possible help of Peele), and she claims for Marlowe a share with Shakspere in *Henry VI*, Parts II and III. Her reasons

for ascribing the authorship of the quartos solely to Marlowe and Greene are as follow: (1) *The True Tragedy* (and probably *The Contention*) were acted by Lord Pembroke's men, who produced none of Shakspere's plays. (2) They were published by Millington, and afterwards by Pavier, who printed none of Shakspere's undoubted works. (3) Neither the edition of 1594-95 nor of 1600 bore Shakspere's name, though none of his undoubted plays were issued anonymously after 1598. (4) Lord Pembroke's men performed plays by Greene and Marlowe. (5) Greene's attack upon Shakspere in the *Groatsworth of Wit* as 'the upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, with his *Tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide*,' implies that the younger man had appropriated work done by him and his friends. The italicized line is a parody of the line 'The tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide,' which occurs both in *The True Tragedy* and in *Henry VI*, Part III; and the most natural inference is that in the latter play and in *Henry VI*, Part II, Shakspere had adopted some of Greene's contributions to *The True Tragedy* and *The Contention*. It is probably to this that the writer of some lines entitled *Greene's Funeralls* refers, when he declares:

> 'Greene gave the ground to all that wrote upon him
> Nay more, the men that so eclipst his fame
> Purloined his plumes: can they deny the same?'

(6) The scanty proportion of rhyme in *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy* points to Marlowe as one of their authors. (7) In both plays there are a number of grammatical constructions and turns of phrase which are common with Greene and Marlowe, but are seldom or never found in Shakspere's writings. (8) A number of lines are reproduced with little or no alteration from Marlowe's works, and there are remote allusions and proverbial sayings which have their parallels in Greene.

On these grounds Miss Lee ascribes *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy* to Marlowe and Greene, and attempts a division of plays in which, speaking broadly, she assigns the characters of King Henry VI, Beaufort, York, Suffolk, Margaret, Richard, and the Cliffords to Marlowe, and Duke Humphrey, Eleanor, Clarence, Edward IV, Elizabeth and Jack Cade to Greene. She admits however that Cade has no prototype in Greene's undoubted works, and it is almost incredible that the creator of the Pinner of Wakefield should have given so unsympathetic a sketch of the representative of popular aspirations and grievances. The temper of the 'Cade' scenes is in complete harmony with Shakspere's treatment of mob-leaders, and if he had any hand in the old plays it is probably here that it is to be found.

That it was Shakspere who, out of these old plays, created *Henry VI* Parts II and III, cannot be doubted. Heminge and Condell would not have included them in the Folio of 1623 unless they knew for certain that Shakspere had written the chief portions of them; and moreover, in the Epilogue to *Henry V* the dramatist alludes to the events of Henry VI's reign—

> '*Which oft our stage hath shewn, and for their sake*
> In your fair minds let this acceptance take.'

He thus asks for favour to his play of *Henry V* because a drama dealing with Henry VI, and *evidently written by himself* had become popular. Internal evidence confirms the Shaksperean authorship of the plays. Many of the

epithets and phrases which occur in them can be paralleled from Shakspere's undoubted works. Dr. Furnivall has drawn attention to the extensive use of 'animal metaphors and similes' in the plays, and is inclined to question whether these are from Shakspere's hand. But other of the dramatist's early works, especially the *Lucrece*, present something of the same feature, which is due partly to recollections of Stratford life, and still more to the predominant influence of Euphuism, whose most peculiar note was the extravagant use of natural history for purposes of comparison.

But in the remodelling of *The Contention* and *True Tragedy* into *Henry VI*, Parts II and III, Shakspere almost certainly had the help of Marlowe, for a number of passages occur in the revised plays which bear his stamp. The lines for instance in Part II of *Henry VI* (iv. 1) beginning, 'The gaudy, blabbing, and remorseful day,' must have been written by him, or by some unusually successful imitator of his style. And the incorporation of so much of the older plays in the revised versions is more easily accounted for on the assumption that Marlowe, who had the chief share in *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*, contributed certain portions to *Henry VI*, Parts II and III.

APPENDIX B

PERICLES. HENRY VIII. THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

To Shakspere's last period belong certainly two, probably three, plays, of which he was only in part author. PERICLES was published in 1609 in quarto, with an elaborate title-page, naming Shakspere as the writer, and stating that the play had been acted by 'His Majesty's Servants at the Globe.' Other quartos followed in 1611, 1619, 1630, and 1635. The play is omitted in the first two folios, but is introduced into that of 1664, with six other dramas, none of which are by Shakspere. Its appearance in this suspicious company might well throw doubt on its genuineness, for which the name of Shakspere on the quarto editions is an insufficient guarantee, owing to the fraudulent practice in vogue of recommending plays or poems to the public, by ascribing them to some favourite writer. Still the presumption is that a drama, acted by Shakspere's company, and issued with his name during his lifetime, was at any rate in part by him, and we find it expressly ascribed to him by Shephard in 1646, Tatham in 1652, and Dryden in his prologue to Davenant's *Circe*, 1677. Dryden's words are remarkable, for they explicitly speak of *Pericles* as one of Shakspere's earliest productions:

> 'Your Ben and Fletcher, in their first young flight,
> Did no Volpone, nor no Arbaces write, . . .
> Shakspere's own Muse his Pericles first bore,
> The Prince of Tyre was elder than the Moor,
> 'Tis miracle to see a first good play:
> All hawthorns do not bloom on Christmas day.'

Yet when internal evidence is brought to bear upon the authorship of the play, we find that in so far as it supports Shakspere's claim, it proves the work to belong not to his first but his last period. The incidents of the birth of Marina at sea, her separation from her parents and ultimate recovery, and the restoration of Thaisa, as from the dead, to her husband's arms, are so strikingly similar to the events in *The Winter's Tale* that it is evident that the scenes in which they occur must have been written by the same author within the same period of his career. This is fully borne out by the metrical evidence; the language in these portions of *Pericles*, which include the greater part of Acts iii to v, has the elliptical pregnancy characteristic of Shakspere's final period; there are few rhyming lines, and the percentage of light and weak endings is 4.17. If, therefore, the play was an early production of the dramatist, the last three Acts must have been completely remodelled about 1608-9, just before the issue of the first quarto, and it would be in the first two Acts that we must look for the youthful Shakspere's handiwork. When we turn to them we find them indeed marked off from the rest of the play by a looser rhythm and by the frequent occurrence of rhymed lines in the dialogue. But the metrical effect is not akin to that of Shakspere's earlier plays; double endings are too frequent, and, as Delius has pointed out, the rhyming couplets are often introduced into the middle of

speeches in a manner unusual with Shakspere. Moreover, the incidents in these first two Acts, the visit of Pericles to the palace of the incestuous King Antiochus, his guessing of the riddle, his subsequent wanderings, his shipwreck near Pentapolis, and his achievements at the court of Simonides, have scarcely any connexion with the later events of the play. Had Shakspere been revising a youthful production of his own it seems improbable that he would have left us this dramatic hotch-potch as the result of his labours.

It is thus wellnigh certain that Acts i and ii are by another hand, and Fleay argues with great force that they must have been added *after* the Shaksperean scenes were written. But his and Delius' identification of this inferior *collaborateur* with George Wilkins is very doubtful. Wilkins in 1608 published a novel entitled '*The Painful Adventures of Pericles, Prince of Tyre, being the true history of the play of Pericles,* as it was lately presented by the worthy and ancient poet John Gower.' This novel, which, as the title sets forth, is directly founded on the play, is styled by Wilkins in his dedication 'a poore infant of my braine.' From this the critics mentioned have drawn the extremely hazardous inference that Wilkins was part-author of the original drama. But if he was, why did he not mention the fact in a less equivocal phrase, and why did he suppress all mention of his fellow-workers? Why should Wilkins, supposing he had written part of the play, have turned it into a novel at all? and do not his own words, if interpreted naturally, apply better to an original prose rendering of a story dramatically treated by *others* than to a recast of materials already handled in any way by himself?

Admitting then that Acts i and ii and the Gower chorus introducing Act iii are by a second writer, whom we cannot identify, we have still to inquire whether there are evidences of a third hand in the play. For the majority of Gower's speeches in Acts iv and v are in five-foot instead of four-foot measure, as in the preceding Acts, and their language is free from the studied use of antique phrases so noticeable in the earlier choruses. Moreover, the highly unpleasant scenes 3, 5, and 6 of Act iv, which there is a natural repugnance to ascribe to Shakspere, seem yet to be the product of a more powerful pen than that responsible for Acts i and ii. It is therefore possible that a third hand may have contributed these portions, but their Shaksperean authorship is not to be so decisively rejected as some critics assume. The most repellent features in the scenes mentioned may be paralled from *Measure for Measure,* and here, as there, they are not introduced from sheer love of foulness. They throw the virginal figure of Marina into brilliant relief, by exhibiting her untainted purity amidst the most contaminating surroundings. And in the dialogue there are touches worthy of the great dramatist, e.g. the sudden rise from prose to verse in Act iv. 6, when Marina appeals to Lysimachus in lines that have a true Shaksperean ring:

> 'If you were born to honour, show it now;
> If put upon you, make the judgement good
> That thought you worthy of it. . . .
> O! that the gods
> Would set me free from this unhallow'd place,
> Though they did change me to the meanest bird
> That flies i' the purer air.'

So too the opening chorus of Act v, describing her occupations after her

escape from captivity, contains distinctively Shaksperean expressions and ideas: e.g.

> 'Deep clerks she dumbs; and with her needl composes
> Nature's own shape, or bud, bird, branch, or berry,
> That even her art sisters the natural roses;
> Her inkle, silk, twin with the rubied cherry.'

Here the use of the word 'inkle' which occurs in *The Winter's Tale* and the description of Marina's needlework as counterfeiting nature to the life, both suggest the hand of Shakspere, who always adopts this realistic criterion of art.

Pericles is too much of a patchwork to offer much scope for aesthetic criticism. It contains, as Dowden has said, 'the motives of much that was worked out more fully in later dramas, and may be said to bear to the Romances somewhat of the same relation which *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* bears to the comedies of love which succeeded it in Shakspere's second dramatic period. Marina, like Perdita, is a child lost by her parents, and, like Perdita, we see her flower-like with her flowers—only these flowers of Marina are not for a merrymaking, but a grave. The melancholy of Pericles is a clear-obscure of sadness, not a gloom of cloudy remorse like that of Leontes. His meeting with his lost Marina is like an anticipation of the scene in which Cymbeline recovers his sons and daughter; but the scene in Pericles is filled with a rarer, keener passion of joy. And again, the marvellous meeting between Leontes and Hermione is anticipated by the union of Pericles and his Thaisa.'

KING HENRY VIII may be assigned with practical certainty to 1612-1613. A letter of Thomas Lorkin to Sir T. Puckering, on June 30, 1613, mentions the burning of the Globe Theatre during a performance of the play 'No longer since than yesterday, while Burbage and his company were acting at the Globe the play of *Henry VIII*, and there shooting of certain chambers in way of triumph, the fire catched it.' From another contemporary letter, of Sir Henry Wotton, we learn that the piece was of recent date: 'I will entertain you at the present with what happened this week at the Bankside. The King's players had a new play called *All is True*, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty. . . . Now King Henry making a masque at the Cardinal Wolsey's house, and certain cannons being shot off at his entry, some of the paper or other stuff wherewith one of them was stopped did light on the thatch where . . . it kindled inwardly, and ran round like a train, consuming, within less than an hour, the whole house to the very ground.' Wotton mentions the play by what evidently was its second title, explained by the repeated assertion in the Prologue that the audience are to witness a representation of 'chosen truth.' This explicit external evidence is confirmed by metrical tests, which place *Henry VIII* among Shakspere's very latest works. Setting aside the scenes which, as will be shown, are beyond reasonable doubt from another hand, we find that the proportion of double endings is 1 to 3, of unstopt lines 1 to 2.03, the percentage of light and weak endings together 7.16, and the number of rhymed lines 6. In face of such a conclusive combination of external and internal evidence no weight can be attached to Elze's theory, in his *Essays on Shakspere*, that the play 'with its apology for Henry, its glorification

of Anne Boleyn, and its apotheosis of Elizabeth' must have been written to commemorate some festive occasion towards the end of the maiden queen's reign, probably the seventieth anniversary of her mother's wedding, April 12, 1603. The death of Elizabeth on March 24 prevented, according to Elze's view, the play being used for its original purpose, but in 1613 it was produced in remodelled form, with the part of Katharine considerably 'written up,' and with the complimentary references to King James inserted for the occasion.

A fatal objection to this theory is that no part of the play bears the slightest trace of Shakspere's earlier manner. But, on the other hand, eleven out of the seventeen scenes into which *Henry VIII* is divided have metrical characteristics which do not appear in any of Shakspere's works. Most prominent among these is the extraordinary frequency of double endings, which in these scenes is 1 to 1·7. This is a peculiarity of Fletcher's versification, and in the general structure of language and in rhythm these portions of the play have the unequivocal stamp of the younger dramatist's style. This was first pointed out by Spedding in his paper on *Henry VIII* in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1850, reprinted in *New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1874. His conclusions were immediately confirmed in No. 43 of *Notes and Queries* by Hickson, who had arrived independently at exactly similar results. According to both these writers, whose views have been endorsed by all later English critics, Shakspere is the author of Act i, Scenes 1, 2; Act ii. Scenes 3 and 4; Act iii. Scene 2 (to the exit of the King); and Act v. Scene 1; the rest of the play is from the hand of Fletcher.

This joint authorship goes far towards explaining the weak impression made by the play as a whole. 'The interest,' as Spedding has said, 'instead of rising towards the end, falls away utterly, and leaves us in the last Act among persons whom we scarcely know and events for which we do not care. Our sympathy is for the grief and goodness of Queen Katharine, while the course of the action requires us to entertain as a theme of joy and compensatory satisfaction the coronation of Anne Bullen and the birth of her daughter; which are in fact a part of Katharine's injury, and amount to little less than the ultimate triumph of wrong. . . . This main defect is sufficient of itself to mar the effect of the play as a whole. But there is another, which though less vital, is not less unaccountable. The greater part of the fifth Act, in which the interest ought to be gathering to a head, is occupied with matters in which we have not been prepared to take any interest by what went before, and on which no interest is reflected by what comes after. The scenes in the gallery and council-chamber . . . are utterly irrelevant to the business of the play; for what have we to do with the quarrel between Gardiner and Cranmer?' And what possible relation has this to the fate of Wolsey or of Katharine, with which we have been hitherto concerned?

The question follows, on what plan did Shakspere and Fletcher conduct their joint labours, for the outcome to be so unsatisfactory? Spedding's hypothesis is as follows: 'It was not unusual in those days when a play was wanted in a hurry, to set two or three, or even four, hands upon it; and the occasion of the Princess Elizabeth's marriage (Feb. 1612-13) may very likely have suggested the production of a play representing the marriage of Henry VIII and Anne Bullen.... Since it is by Shakspere that all the principal matters and characters are *introduced*, it is not likely that the general design of the piece would be laid out by another. I should rather conjecture that he had con-

ceived the idea of a great historical drama on the subject of Henry VIII, which would have included the divorce of Katharine, the fall of Wolsey, the rise of Cranmer, the coronation of Anne Bullen, and the final separation of the English from the Romish Church, which being the one great historical event of the reign, would naturally be chosen as the focus of poetic interest; that he had proceeded in the execution of this idea as far perhaps as the third Act, which might have included the establishment of Cranmer in the seat of highest ecclesiastical authority (the council-chamber scene in the fifth being designed as an introduction to that); when, finding that his fellows of the Globe were in distress for a new play to honour the marriage of the Lady Elizabeth with, he thought that his half-finished work might help them, and accordingly handed them his manuscript to make what they could of it; that they put it into the hands of Fletcher (already in high repute as a popular and expeditious playwright), who, finding the original design not very suitable to the occasion, and utterly beyond his capacity, expanded the three Acts into five, by interspersing scenes of show and magnificence, and passages of description and long poetical conversations, in which his strength lay; dropped all allusion to the great ecclesiastical revolution, which he could not manage and for which he had no materials supplied him; converted what should have been the middle into the end; and so turned out a splendid "historical masque, or shew-play," which was no doubt very popular then, as it has been ever since.'

From the fragments of Shakspere's work in *Henry VIII* no very definite conclusions can be drawn, except that if the dramatist had returned in his old age to the composition of historical plays the language would have been close-packed and elliptical, thus contrasting strongly with the diffuse rhetoric of *Richard III* and *John*, or the even, musical flow of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. Of the characters, Queen Katharine alone makes an entirely consistent impression. Her unmerited sufferings, and the fortitude with which she meets them, her quiet dignity, befitting the wife and daughter of a king, united to her whole-hearted charity and power of forgiveness, make her akin to Hermione, though she lacks something of the statuesque self-repression of the heroine of *The Winter's Tale*. It is evident that if Shakspere meant the play originally to turn on the separation of the English from the Roman Church, the adherents of the latter would at least have had no cause to complain of the picture drawn of one of its representative figures. Wolsey appears in a much more equivocal light. In the 'o'er-great cardinal' Shakspere had the opportunity of drawing a type which in earlier days he had handled with masterly skill in the Pandulph of *King John*. But Wolsey does not stand out in as firm portraiture as his predecessor. The main design of his character is that of an ambitious, covetous prelate, with worldly instead of spiritual aims, arrogant towards the old nobility, and an oppressor of the poor. Yet his summary arrest of the Duke of Buckingham is proved to be fully justified, and in the matter of the divorce the king entirely supports his assertion that he is innocent of having broached the business to him, or having spoken a word to the prejudice of Katharine. We are, therefore, quite unprepared for his precipitate fall in the next Act, owing to Henry's accidental discovery of an inventory of his vast wealth and the miscarriage of his letter to the Pope begging him to stay the judgement. But it is to Fletcher, not Shakspere, that is due the final reaction of sympathy towards him evoked by the beautiful

lines in which he bids a long farewell to all his greatness, and counsels the faithful Cromwell to mark his fall and fling away ambition. Henry, as he appears in the play, is a less interesting figure than either his queen or his minister. His faults are tenderly handled, and he is represented as a masterful but law-abiding and conscientious ruler. He remits the excessive taxation imposed by Wolsey, and grants to Buckingham, who has threatened his life, a fair trial. He acknowledges readily the 'rare qualities' of Katharine, 'the queen of earthly queens,' and, presses for a divorce purely from religious scruples and zeal for his kingdom's safety. Even his victims, Buckingham, Katharine, and Wolsey, pray, after their fall, for blessings on him, though it is noticeable that in all three cases the speeches are due to Fletcher, and are doubtless inspired in part by the Stuart doctrine that the king can do no wrong.

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN was printed in 1634, and according to the title-page, it had been 'presented at the Blackfriers by the King's Majesty's servants with great applause,' and was 'written by the memorable worthies of their time, Mr. John Fletcher and Mr. William Shakspeare, Gent.' This is the only piece of external evidence connecting Shakspere with the authorship of the work. It is omitted in the folios, and did not, like *Pericles*, appear during his life in quarto form. Hence we are thrown back upon internal evidence for the decision whether Shakspere had in reality a share in the work, and, if so, what parts are to be assigned to him. The problem thus raised has produced some of the most original and suggestive Shaksperean criticism of this century. As early as 1811 Coleridge maintained that there is 'the clearest internal evidence that Shakspere importantly aided Fletcher' in the composition of the play, and in 1833 he declared that he had 'no doubt whatever that the first Act and the first scene of the second Act' are by him. In the same year the first systematic study of the subject was made by Professor Spalding in an elaborate letter (reprinted in the *New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1876, with 'Forewords' by Furnivall). Spalding discusses at length the respective characteristics of Fletcher's and Shakspere's (later) style. He points out that Fletcher's verse is sweet and flowing, with end-stopped and double-ending lines; that he is diffuse both in his leading thoughts and in his illustrations, and, while poor in metaphor, excels in picturesque and romantic descriptions. Shakspere's versification, on the other hand, is broken and full of pauses, with a much more sparing use of double endings; his style is marked by energy, obscurity, and abruptness; it is metaphorical to excess, but avoids similes and elaborate narrative detail. These and other contrasts appear in various parts of the play, and guided by them Spalding assigned to Shakspere Act i, Act iii. 1, and Act v except Scene 2, the rest of the work being Fletcher's. The choice of the main plot, taken from Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, he attributed to Shakspere on the ground that, unlike Fletcher, he dramatized familiar stories, and that *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Pericles* are, like *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, classical tales in mediaeval garb, while there is no other instance of a similar theme in Fletcher's writings. The underplot, on the other hand, Spalding assigned entirely to Fletcher, partly because the madness of the principal character, the jailer's daughter, seemed to him a weak imitation of the madness of Ophelia.

At a later date Spalding wavered in his conviction of Shakspere's part-

authorship of the drama. Writing in the *Edinburgh Review*, July 1847, he declared: 'The question of Shakspere's share in this play is really insoluble. . . . There are reasons making it very difficult to believe that he can have any concern in it; particularly the heavy and undramatic construction of the piece, and the want of individuality in the characters.' Meanwhile, however, Hickson, in April 1847, in an essay reprinted in the *New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1874, had made a careful investigation of the whole problem. He supported the main conclusion of Spalding's 'Letter,' that Shakspere and Fletcher were the joint-authors of the work, but he assigned to the former a larger share of the play, and a more preponderating influence in its construction than the earlier critic had done. He claimed for Shakspere the design not only of the main-plot but also of the under-plot, and attributed to him Act ii. 1, Act iii. 2, Act iv. 3, which Spalding had assigned to Fletcher. His arguments are forcible, and the conclusions at which he arrives have been in the main supported by Littledale in his Introduction to his edition of the play, 1882. But Littledale detects revising touches by Fletcher in Act iii. 2 and Act iv. 3, as also in Act v. 3 and 4, which both Spalding and Hickson had assigned entirely to Shakspere.

The critics who thus, with differences in details, support the Shaksperean authorship of part of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, base their conclusions on those features of style and versification which bear the hall-mark of the master-dramatist. It is perfectly true that in other respects the work is unlike any of his undoubted writings. 'The heavy and undramatic construction of the piece and the want of individuality in the characters,' which gave even Spalding pause in later years, have been emphasized by many critics, e.g. Furnivall, Stack, and Ingram. But these considerations, however true in themselves, cannot overrule the argument founded on the style of numerous scenes. The co-operation too of Shakspere and Fletcher on *Henry VIII* lends plausibility to their similar co-operation on *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and had we fuller knowledge of their joint method of work, we might be able to account in some degree for the peculiarities of the piece. As things stand, Ingram's summing up of the matter (*New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1874, p. 454) cannot well be improved: 'In reading the (so-called) Shaksperean part of the play, I do not often feel myself in contact with a mind of the first order. Still, it is certain that there is much in it that is *like* Shakspere, and some things that are worthy of him at his best; that the manner, in general, is more that of Shakspere than of any other contemporary dramatist; and that the system of verse is one which we do not find in any other, whilst it is, in all essentials, that of Shakspere's last period. I cannot name any one else who could have written this portion of the play.'

INDEX

Adam (a Normal Play), 2.
Addison, 390.
Aeneid, 20, 48.
Aeschylus, 1, 19, 239.
Alleyn, 37.
All's Well that Ends Well, 289-298; 143, 307, 330.
Alphonsus, King of Arragon, 64, 65, 66.
Amphitruo, The, 140.
Antony and Cleopatra, 397-407; 49, 111.
Arcadia, 25.
Ariosto, his comedy
Gli Suppositi, 18, 56, 145;
his *Orlando Furioso*, 65, 252.
Aristotle, 19, 24.
Armada, 26.
Arnold, Mathew, 197, 398.
Arraignment of Paris, The, 61, 62.
As You Like It, 274-287; also 50, 61, 72, 108, 110, 432.
Ayrer, 252, 445.

Bacon, 33, 105, 208, 323.
Bandello, 165, 252, 263.
Barbour, *The Bruce*, 239.
Bartholomew Fair, 102, 114.
Bates, Miss, 5.
Battle of Alcazar, The, 63.
Baynes, Prof. Spencer, 82, 83, 85, 131.
Beaumont, 269, 297.
Belleforest, *Histoires Tragiques*, 322.
Benoît de Sainte More, 310.
Beowulf, 323, 342.
Berners, Lord, 56.
Boccaccio, his *Decameron*, 180, 426; the *Filostrato*, 311.
Boisteau, Pierre, 166.
Brooke, Arthur, 166, 167, 168, 169, 175, 178.
Browning, 16, 37, 74.
Burbage, Richard, 90, 102, 103.

Campaspe, 56, 57, 61.
Campbell, Lord, 86.
Castell of Perseverance, 9.
Cervantes, 248, 321.
Chambers, Mr. E. K., 322, 344.
Chapman, 99, 316.
Chaucer, 3, 8, 13, 16, 27, 133, 151, 311 315.
Chester Plays, 3, 5, 9.
Chronicle of Edward I, The, 62, 63.
Cicero, 390.
Cinthio, 299, 355.
Cobham, Lord, 217.
Cohn, A., 92.
Coleridge, 260, 294, 300, 368, 377, 397.
Collins, Mr. Churton, 18,32.
Colonna, Guido, 311.
Comedy of Errors, The, 139-142; also 84, 109, 113, 143, 152, 154, 164, 262, 263.
Condell, 98, 103, 109, 114, 117, 456.
Confessio Amantis, 180.
Contention, The, First Part of, 455-457; 119.
Coriolanus, 407-416; also 61, 422.
Council of Vienne, 3.
Coventry Plays, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 15, 81, 89.
Cunliffe, Mr. J. W., 19, 22.
Cursor Mundi, 5, 179.
Cymbeline, 426-435.
Cynthia's Revels, 101.

Dante, 50, 397.
David and Bethsabe, 63.
Decameron, The, 180, 426.
Defence of Poesy, 24, 25.
Dekker, 101, 309.
Delius, 94, 124, 157, 458.
De Quincey, 345.
De Regimine Principum, 197.
Devil (in Miracle and Morality Plays), 7, 9, 11, 274.
Diana, by George of Montemayor, 158, 276.
Dickens, 270.
Dido, Queen of Carthage, 48-49.
Digges, Leonard, 269, 381, 384.
Doctor Faustus, 37-41; also 25, 48, 448.
Dowden, Prof., 74, 95, 109, 111, 157, 165, 197, 245, 286, 298, 372, 397, 442, 460.
Drake, Sir F., 26, 98, 403.
Drayton, 56, 80, 105.
Dryden, 458.
Dyce, 62.

Edward II, 43-47; also 62, 119.
Elizabeth, Queen, the centre of national Life, 26; patron of the drama, 27-28; relations with Shakspere, 101; complimented by Peele, 62; by Lyly, 58-60; by Shakspere, 151.
Elze, Karl, 77, 85, 86, 91, 92, 98, 106, 109, 152, 157, 180, 182, 194, 290, 295, 445, 460.

Endimion, 56, 57, 58, 61, 152.
Euphues and Euphuism, 55-57, 61, 115, 228, 277, 443.
Euripides, 1, 21, 22, 25.
Everyman, 11.
Every Man in his Humour, 91, 101.
Every Man out of his Humour, 101.

Faerie Queene, The (see Spenser, Edmund).
Faust, 25, 37.
Field, Richard, 91.
Fielding, 270.
Filostrato, 311.
Fischer, Rudolf, 19, 52.
Fleay, Mr., 23, 28, 98, 101, 109 110, 145, 344, 455, 459.
Fletcher, John, 161, 269, 297; his share in *Henry VIII*, 458-463; share in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, 463-464.
Fletcher, Laurence, 345.
Forman, Dr., 208, 343, 426.
Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, 66, 68, 71, 72.
Furnivall, Dr., 95, 110, 111, 457.

Gallathea, 56, 57.
Gammer Gurton's Needle, 18.
Garnier's *Cornelia*, 52.
Gascoigne, George, *Supposes*, 18, 21, 56, 145.
Geoffrey (Abbot of St. Alban's), 2.
George-a-Greene, 66, 69, 71, 72.
Gervinus, 98, 218, 245, 293, 323, 369, 427, 435, 442.
Gesta Romanorum, 179.
Gilbert, Humphrey, 26, 33.
Goethe, 37, 40, 113, 324.
Gorboduc, 20-21, 32, 55.
Gosson, 23, 24, 180, 383, 425.
Gower, 180, 209; introduced as chorus in *Pericles*, 459.
Greene, Robert, his dramatic works, 64-73; his wild career, 29, 30, 76; attack on Shakspere, 90; probable share in *Henry VI*, 119, 455-457; his novel *Pandosto* the source of *The Winter's Tale*, 436-437, 440-443.
Grenville, 33.

Hakluyt, 27, 262.
Hales, Prof., 84, 157, 209, 345.
Hallam, 29, 95.
Halliwell, Phillipps, Mr., 74, 86, 94, 98.
Halpin, 59, 152.
Hamlet (old play), 52, 322.
Hamlet, 322-343; also 7, 14, 25, 30, 52, 54, 84, 91, 106, 108, 134, 289, 299, 384.
Hathaway, Anne, 86.
Hazlitt, 245, 369.
Heminge, 98, 103, 109, 114, 117, 456.
Henry IV, 216-234; also 69, 88, 109, 196, 197; its relation to *Merry Wives of Windsor*, 244-248.
Henry V, 234-243; also 100, 196, 232, 297.
Henry VI, 117-124; authorship of, 455-457, 90, 196.
Henry VII, 27.
Henry VIII, 460-463.
Henslowe, 90, 114, 179, 181, 309.
Herbert, William, Earl of Pembroke, 98-99.
Hero and Leander, 50; also 110, 132, 274.
Hertzberg, 110, 114, 143, 157, 289, 295.
Heywood, John, 13-14, 17.
Heywood, Thomas, 132, 134.
Hickson, Mr., 110, 461, 464.
Hilarius, 2.
Historia de Excidio Trojae, 310.
Historie of Error, The, 140.
Hobbes, 286.
Holinshed, the Chronicler, 8, 27, 43, 124, 197, 208, 227, 241, 345, 368, 381.
Homer, 50, 310, 316.
Horace, 83, 102.
Hroswitha, 1.
Hughes, Thomas, 21, 22.
Humanum Genus, 10.
Hycke-Scorner, 12.

Ingram, Prof., 110, 464.

Jaggard, William, 134.
James I, 343.
James IV, 66, 67.
Jameson, Mrs., 203, 261, 438.
Jeronimo, First Part of, 52, 114.
Jew, The, 180.
Jew of Malta, The, 41, 180, 181.
Jocasta, 21.
Johnson, Dr., 89, 426.
Jonson, Ben, refers to the *Vice*, 11; satirises *Tamburlaine*, 32; his additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*, 53; references to Shakspere, 82, 100-102, 106, 108, 114, 407, 445; his satire of the Puritans, 269.
Julius Caesar, 383-397; also 116, 381, 426.

Keats, 35, 50.
Kempe, 92, 102.
King Horn, 322.
King John, 198-208; 109.
King Lear, 367-380; also 20, 25, 55, 61, 66, 71, 109, 110, 370, 416, 426, 427.
Kirkman, Mr., 370.
Knight's Tale, 151, 463.
Kreyssig, 98, 114, 171, 175, 182, 215, 245, 259, 285, 323, 380, 435, 444.
Kurz, H, 91.

Kyd, Thomas, his writings, 52-55, 73, 113, 115 ; probable author of the pre-Shaksperean *Hamlet*, 52.

Lamb, Charles, 47, 270, 369.
Landmann, 139.
Langland, 73, 81, 209.
Lee, Miss J., 455.
Lee, Mr. S. L., 77, 104, 136, 180.
Leicester, Earl of, procures royal patent for his company of players, 27 ; relations with Elizabeth, 58, 59, 152 ; death, 105, 288.
Liturgical Plays, 2.
Lloyd, Mr. Watkiss, 300.
Lodge, Thomas, writes part of *A Looking Glasse for London*, 70-71 ; his novel *Rosalind*, the source of *As You Like It*, 274-287 ; refers to old play of *Hamlet*, 52, 322.
Lover's Complaint, A, 135.
Love's Labour 's Lost, 135-139 ; also 75, 83, 89, 94, 145, 156, 157, 252.
Love's Labour 's Won, 109, 143, 289.
Love's Metamorphosis, 57.
Lucrece, 133-134 ; also 83, 94, 98, 317, 430.
Lucy, Sir Thomas, 87, 88.
Lusty Juventus, 11.
Lydgate, 133.
Lyly, John, his *Euphues* and its influence, 55-56, 277, 443 ; his comedies, 57-60 ; influence on Shakspere, 61.

Macbeth, 343-354 ; also 7, 36, 110, 111, 164.
Machiavelli, 16, 30, 68, 125, 413.
Malone, 89, 110, 157, 262, 299.
Manningham, 262.
Marlowe, Christopher, his life and writings, 29-51 ; probable share in *Henry VI*, 119-124, 455-457 ; 55, 62, 63, 64, 72, 106, 113, 124, 132, 143, 174, 180, 181, 188, 208, 274, 343, 448.
Massacre at Paris, The, 47, 48.
Measure for Measure, 298-309 ; also 23, 87, 151, 288, 289.
Menaechmi, 84, 140, 141.
Merchant of Venice, The, 178-195 ; also 43, 65, 71, 92, 179, 252, 308, 331, 355, 356.
Meres, Francis, his allusions to Shakspere, 94, 97, 109.
Merry Wives of Windsor, The, 244-252 ; also 17, 72, 75, 83, 88, 101.
Midas, 56, 57, 59, 60.
Middleton, 60, 344.
Midsummer Night's Dream, A, 151-157 ; also 7, 61, 101, 143, 178, 278, 282, 336, 417.
Miles Gloriosus, 8, 17, 59, 297.
Milton, 63, 225, 424.
Miracle Plays, 2-9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 27, 63, 453.
Mirror for Magistrates, The, 166.
Misfortunes of Arthur, The, 21.
Montaigne's Essays, 110.
Moral Interludes, 11-13.
Moralities, 6, 9-13, 14, 22, 23, 27, 274.
More, Sir Thomas, 33, 124.
Morgan, Maurice, 228.
Morley, Prof. H., 62.
Mother Bombie, 60.
Moulton, Prof., 127, 186, 352, 447.
Much Ado about Nothing, 252-262 ; also 71, 263, 274, 275.
Mysteries, 2.

Nash, Thomas, his satire on *Tamburlaine*, 31 ; writes part of *Dido*, 48-49 ; satire of Kyd, 52, 322 ; alludes to *Henry VI*, Part I, 90, 118.
Nature of the Four Elements, The, 12.
North, Sir T., 151, 381.
Norton, Thomas, 20.

Occleve, 197.
Old Wives' Tale, The, 63.
Orlando Furioso, 65, 66, 252.
Othello, 354-367 ; also 369, 437.
Ovid, 29, 83, 94, 102, 117, 131, 133, 151

Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, 23, 166, 289.
Passionate Pilgrim, The, 94, 97, 134.
Pater, Mr. Walter, 307.
Peele, George, his dramatic works, 61-63 ; 29, 119, 455.
Pericles, 458-460.
Philaster, 269.
Phillips, Augustine, 208.
Phoenix and the Turtle, The, 135.
Piers Penniless, 90.
Plautus, 1, 17, 18, 83, 84, 94, 140, 141, 262, 309.
Plutarch, his relation to Shakspere, 381-383 ; also 8, 83, 151, 390, 397, 400, 404, 408, 415.
Poetaster, The, 101 102.
Pollard, Mr. A. W., 2, 11.
Promos and Cassandra, 23, 299.
Puritans, 269.

Raleigh, Sir W., 26, 105.
Ralph Roister Doister, 17, 18, 59.
Redford, John, 12.
Return from Parnassus, The, 93, 101.
Richard II, 208-216 ; also 47, 62, 101, 196.
Richard III, 124-130 ; also 109, 208, 326, 354.
Robin Hood, 275.
Rogers, Archdeacon, 4.
Roman de Troie, Le, 310.
Romano, Julio, 437.

Romeo and Juliet, 164-178 ; also 53, 92, 158, 201, 312, 398.
Rowe, Nicholas, 76, 82, 86, 87, 88, 101.

Sackville, Thomas, 20.
Sapho and Phao, 56, 57, 58.
Sarrazin, 52, 322.
Satirical Interludes, 13.
Satiromastix, 101.
Saxo Grammaticus, 322.
Schlegel, 171, 196, 197.
School of Abuse, The, 21, 180.
Sejanus, 91, 102.
Seneca, his influence on English Tragedy, 19-21 ; 24, 31, 55, 84, 94.
Sidney, Sir P., his advocacy of Classical dramatic methods in his *Defense of Poesy*, 24-25 ; 26, 28, 198 ; *Sonnets*, 95 ; *Arcadia*, 276, 368 ; death, 26, 288.
Simrock, 182, 194.
Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes, 62.
Skeat, Prof. W. W., 275.
Sollman and Perseda, 52.
Sonnets, Shakspere's, 93-101 ; also 107, 135, 288, 326.
Sophocles, 1, 19.
Spalding, Prof., 463.
Spanish Tragedy, The, 53-55 ; also 52, 115.
Spedding, Mr., 110, 124, 461.
Spenser, Edmund, his *Faerie Queene*, 26, 224, 252, 312, 368, 432 ; *The Shepherd's Calendar*, 27, 277 ; *Sonnets*, 95 ; *Complaints*, 288 ; *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, 323.
Still, John, 18.
Stow, 27, 43.
Stratford-on-Avon, history of, 77-80 ; Shakspere's life there, 81-88, 103-105, 424.
Surrey, Earl of, 20, 166.
Swift, 321.
Swinburne, Mr., 95.
Sylvester Jourdan, 444.

Tale of Gamelyn, 275.
Tamburlaine, 31-36 ; also 25, 41, 48, 49, 52, 62, 64, 65, 217.
Taming of a Shrew, The, 143, 144, 180.
Taming of the Shrew, The, 142-150 ; also 18, 83, 164, 252, 254, 290.
Tancred and Gismunda, 21.
Tasso, 16, 276,
Tempest, The, 444-454; also 61, 113, 426.
Ten Brinck, 5, 6, 369.
Tennyson's *Princess*, 138.
Terence, 1, 17, 18, 83, 91, 309.
Theocritus, 276.
Thorpe, Thomas, 95, 98.
Timon of Athens, 416-423 ; 447.
Titus Andronicus, 114-117 ; also 83, 377.
Toulmin-Smith, Miss, 5, 179.
Towneley Plays, 4, 5, 7, 9.
Troilus and Cressida, 309-321 ; also 134, 288, 289, 398.
Troublesome Raigne of King John, 199.
True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of York, The, 455-457 ; 119.
Twelfth Night, 262-274 ; also, 87, 251.
Two Gentlemen of Verona, 157-164 ; also 89, 146, 179, 263.
Two Noble Kinsmen, The, 463-464.
Tyler, Mr., 95.

Udall, Nicholas, 17.
Ulrici, 114, 151, 182, 455.

Venus and Adonis 131-133 ; also 83, 91, 94, 133.
Vice, the, 11, 18, 68, 274.
Virgil, 83, 276.

Wakefield, 5.
Ward, Professor A. W., 18, 73, 105.
Webster, 364.
Werner, 323.
Whetstone, George, 23, 299.
White, Mr. Great, 455.
Wilhelm Meister, 324.
Wilkins, George, 459.
Wilson, Professor, 355.
Winter's Tale The, 436-444 ; also 16, 92, 425, 458.
Witch, The, 344.
Woman in the Moon, The, 56, 57.
Wordsworth, 73, 95.
World and the Child, The, 10.
Wright, Mr. Aldis, 322.
Wyt and Science, 12.

York Plays, 3, 4, 7.

Rupa Publications

LITERATURE

KEY TO MODERN POETRY

by LAWRENCE DURRELL

Contains extremely interesting lectures delivered to an audience of graduate teachers of English in Argentina under the auspices of the British Council. Price Rs. 5.00

MODERN WRITER AND HIS WORLD

by G. S. FRASER

It is an informal history of English literature since 1880, taking in general idea of modernity in literature, and applying it in turn to the drama, the novel, poetry and criticism. Price Rs. 5.00

SECOND THOUGHTS

by FRANCOIS MAURIAC

Nobel Prize Winner 1952

Francois Mauriac, recognized as one of the world's most distinguished novelists and critics, has selected from his literary journals these penetrating and deeply moving essays on our society and its literature. Second thoughts are always trustworthy. Price Rs. 2.50

THE MEANING OF CULTURE

by JOHN COWPER POWYS

"In *The Meaning of Culture* is the man himself, open-hearted and clear through the protecting distance of print, telling us what we so long wanted to know—what he *feels* about the world and man, about the earth and love; expounding that subtles and least phraseable of things, an artist's philosophy, all the profounder, so much the closer to the innate contrariness of life, because it has no system, offers no syllogisms, and surmounts every category of more thought; all in all so rare and refined a vision of outward and inward reality as one reader has not found elsewhere, by eye or ear, in contemporary letters."

—WILL DURANT

Price Rs. 4.25

Literature *(Contd.)*

VAGABONDS, a novel
by KNUT HAMSUN, Nobel Prize Winner 1920 — Rs. 8.00

POEMS AND EPIGRAMS
by EMILY POLK — Rs. 12.00

THE RANEE OF JHANSI
by D. V. TAHMANKAR — Rs. 6.00

ART BOOKS

INDIAN TEMPLE SCULPTURE
With an Introduction by JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
Text by K. M. MUNSHI
141 Plates, 14 × 10 in. — Rs. 36.00

INDIAN TERRACOTTA ART
With an Introduction and Text by O. C. GANGOLY
Photographs by AMIYA TARAFDAR
Edited, Surveyed & Compiled by A. GOSWAMI
50 Plates, 14 × 10 in. — Rs. 32.00

THE ART OF THE PALLAVAS
Text and Descriptive Notes by O. C. GANGOLY
Compiled and Edited by A. GOSWAMI
46 Plates, 2 in colour, 14 × 10 in. — Rs. 32.00

CRICKET BOOKS

END OF AN INNINGS
by DENIS COMPTON — Rs. 6.00

CRICKET CROSSFIRE
by KEITH MILLER — Rs. 6.00

PAPER-BACKS

NOVELS

The Prodigy by Hermann Hesse Nobel Prize Winner 1946	Rs. 3.00
Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse	Rs. 2.00
The Transposed Heads & The Black Swan by Thomas Mann, Nobel Prize Winner 1929	Rs. 3.50
Growth of the Soil by Knut Hamsun Nobel Prize Winner 1920	Rs. 3.50
Hunger by Hamsun	Rs. 2.50
Pan by Hamsun	Rs. 2.50
The Happy Warriors by Halldor Laxness Nobel Prize Winner 1955	Rs. 3.00
Kindred by Choice by Goethe	Rs. 4.00
The Sufferings of Young Werther by Goethe	Rs. 2.50
All Or Nothing by John Cowper Powys	Rs. 3.00
The Setting Sun by Osamu Dazai	Rs. 2.75
Betwixt Dream & Reality by Bonophul	Rs. 2.50
Children of the Albatross and **The Four-Chambered Heart** (in one volume) by Anais Nin	Rs. 4.50
A Spy in the House of Love and **Under a Glass Bell and other Stories** by Anais Nin	Rs. 3.50
Climates of Love by Andre Maurois	Rs. 2.50
The Great Hunger by Johan Bojer	Rs. 3.00
Someone will Die Tonight in the Caribbean by Rene Puissesseau	Rs. 2.50

SHORT STORIES

Notes from Underground and **the Double** by Dostoevsky	Rs. 3.75

ANTHROPOLOGY

On Being Human by Ashley Montagu	Rs. 3.00

MEMOIRS

Tagore by Fireside by Maitraye Devi	Rs. 4.00

SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL

The Secrets of Soviet Science by Lucien Barnier	Rs. 3.00