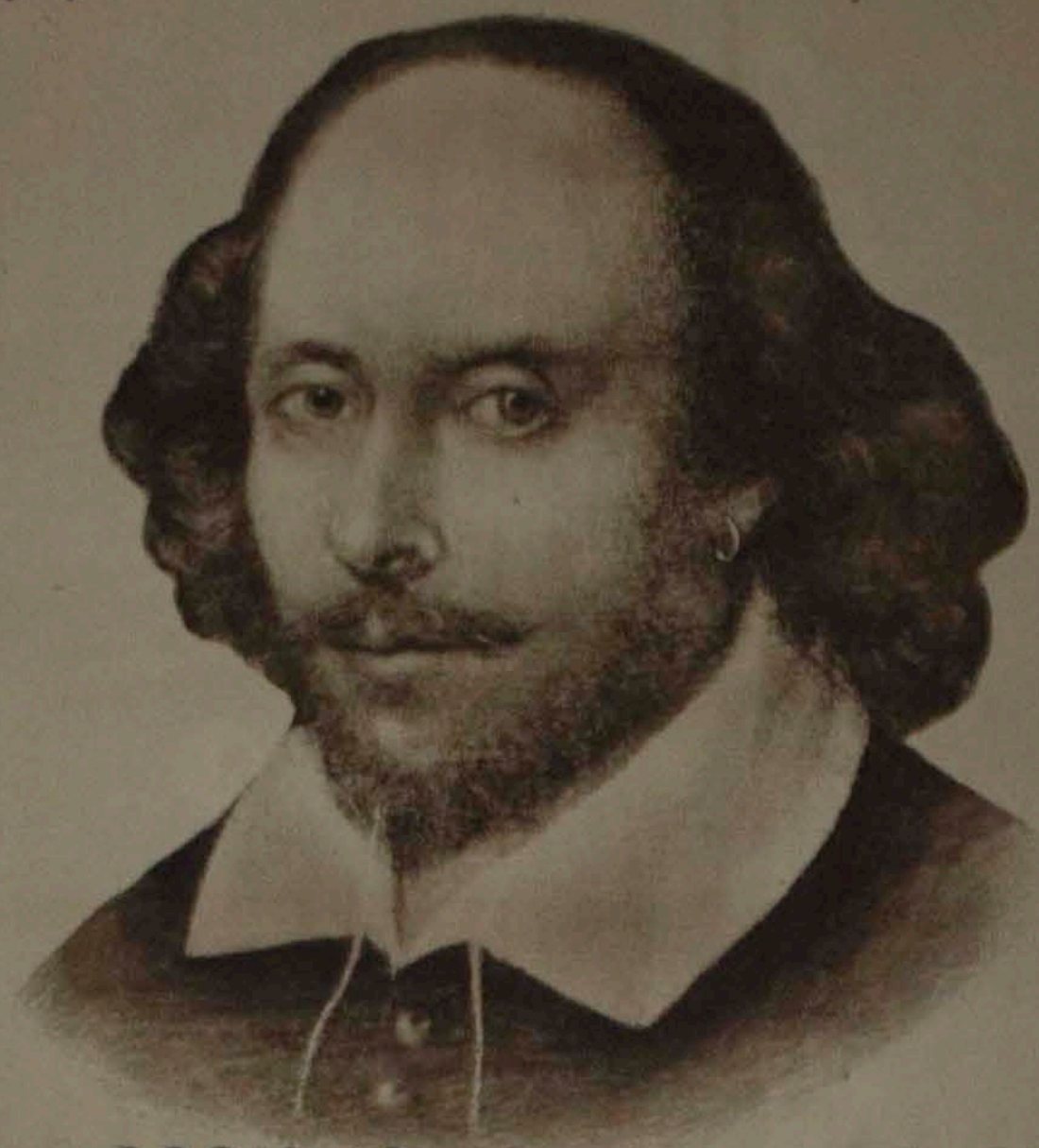


Ten Special Supplements of The New York Times

Shakespeare Tercentenary Announcement



Beginning Today, February 20

Commemorating the 300th Anniversary of Shakespeare's Death

To stimulate public interest in the Shakespeare revival that is being led by lovers of the best in English literature, and in the numerous Shakespeare tercentenary celebrations that are being organized throughout the United States, The New York Times will issue a series of special Shakespeare supplements with its Sunday editions, to begin on Feb. 20 and appear for ten successive Sundays.

The series is to be of broad scope and will contain much valuable comment and opinion that is new, and much that is essential to a thorough appreciation of the greatest of poets.

In practically every large city of the country there are to be during this year community plays, masques, festivals, pageants, tableaux, and other forms of celebration in honor of the great poet whose fame has grown constantly during the three centuries since his death. Into the smaller cities and towns the celebration is also to be carried, in the form of special study courses, club programs calling for essays on Shakespeare, and in many other ways. The New York Times Shakespeare Series is planned to be not only of interest to the average cultured individual, but of great help to the groups participating in these celebrations, and particularly to university, college, and high school classes studying Shakespeare and his works and influence.

As a large scale compendium alone, containing the best obtainable information on subjects usually treated individually and without reference to one another, the series will present a harmonious whole peculiarly adapted to class and group study. But this general feature of its comprehensiveness will be equalled if not exceeded in value to the serious-minded student by each of the features that go to make up the series, and each feature alone will make careful study a real pleasure and well worth while.

Some of the Subjects.

The general topics upon which well-known writers are preparing articles for the Tercentenary Series include:

An analysis of the beginning and permanence of Shakespeare's fame as the first name in English literature, the recognition of him at the beginning with the curious blindness to his greatness shown in some stages of it, and the reasons for his early and constant ascendancy.

A discussion of Shakespeare in the twentieth century, the irrepressible conflict with the conditions under which the audience of the time is trained.

An article on Shakespeare's tragedy.

An expounding of Shakespeare's personality as shown from the clues and hints gathered since his death.

An analysis of the way in which Shakespeare is taught.

The sources from which Shakespeare drew his plots.

Different ways of presenting Shakespearean characters.

Shakespeare and the masque.

The theatre of Shakespeare's day.

Vicissitudes of Shakespeare on the stage; the atrocities committed on him through many years; only in the nineteenth century was he properly understood.

The humanness of Shakespeare's women.

Shakespeare's heroines in literature and on the stage.

Shakespeare on the stage from his own times to ours.

Present-Day Opinion.

Contemporaneous opinions, comments, and discussions of Shakespeare, his modern influence, his place in literature from the days of Queen Elizabeth to the present—of every aspect of the greatest poet and his work as viewed through modern eyes—will be presented.

These articles are by the foremost scholars, by renowned authorities on Shakespeare, critics, and the most noted interpreters of Shakespearean rôles.

Famous Commentaries.

Under the heading of "Famous Commentaries" will be an anthology of Shakespearean criticism entirely unique—all the most famous writers on Shakespeare grouped together in these ten supplements; most of the noteworthy things that have been said about Shakespeare for centuries, in many languages, gathered together and published during the ten weeks in which the series will run.

They will make a comprehensive library of Shakespearean criticism; will deal with different phases—Shakespeare the man, his genius, and particular plays. They will range from Samuel Johnson's famous preface to Swinburne's essays, and will include French, German and Russian conceptions of the plays as a whole, and of individual plays.

So much has been said and written about Shakespeare and his works—more than has been written about most nations—that it can safely be said that no one has read all of it. Outstanding for their greatly superior merit in all of this, however, are found a number of critical works which are to the Shakespearean scholar what the English common law is to the lawyer. In all of the maze of material on the varied subjects pertaining to Shakespeare and his works, these have created for their authors a little Shakespearean Hall of Fame of their own. Coleridge, De Quincey, Lamb, Hazlitt, Carlyle, Swinburne, Taine, Campbell—these are a few of the names that may be selected at random. There are dozens of others. With these pre-eminent commentators separated, and each to be found only between his own book covers, the reading public, and even many college and university students, are unfamiliar with a number of them.

In other languages than English, too, there are equally noteworthy and illuminating comments and criticisms of Shakespeare's works, in which may be found especial interest because of their foreign viewpoint. A random few are the comments of Tolstoy, Voltaire, Goethe, Stendhal, Coquelin, von Herder, Sarrazin.

Shakespeare and the Stage.

Shakespeare and the stage—from his own time to the close of the eighteenth century—is to be a general topic of the series. An authority on the drama has been requested to consider the possibility of a genuine historic revival of Shakespeare's works in the future. Another writer will treat the question of whether or not Shakespeare's plays are continuously interesting in the twentieth century, whether they seem vital to present-day playgoers, or only precious antiques, and will devote himself in general to the modern aspect of Shakespearean drama.

Shakespeare and his comedies will be treated in another of the articles. The question of what new charm he lent to comedy is to be considered, together with the sources and plots of his comedies and the personages in them.

Interpreters of Roles.

Some of the most brilliant and pointed criticisms of Shakespeare's works have come from the pens of persons who, before writing, had won fame in their interpretations of Shakespearean rôles on the stage. The views and first-hand stories of experiences of the best-known living interpreters of these rôles will be preserved by the articles written for the series.

One of the genuinely delightful features of the series will be discussion of Shakespearean rôles from the feminine point of view by distinguished women interpreters of these rôles.

The personal views of the players of Shakespeare's heroines will enrich the articles and give them added charm. Up to the present time feminine commentators on Shakespeare's works have been relatively few.

Other writers of authority will consider Shakespeare's works and influence from their own particular point of view, making in all a rounded series of the contemporaneous articles in which the subjects will be treated from every important angle.

Important Translations.

A feature of the series comprises translations of comments on Shakespeare in other tongues. The works of Shakespeare themselves have been translated more frequently than any other known literary composition. Striking opinions and estimates of Shakespeare's works in other languages will be translated and presented in a form which gives a comprehensive idea of the world judgment of the greatest poet.

Distinctive Illustrations.

The study of the pictures and prints that have gathered about the subject of Shakespeare in three centuries is in itself a large and a most entertaining study. Real pleasure and educational profit may be found in the pictures alone.

There have been collected more than 250 pictures of the most famous actors as interpreters of Shakespearean parts, as well as illustrations of historic significance, and selections will be made from all of the great paintings, etchings, and photographs that 300 years have produced.

A New Method of Printing.

The printing of the Tercentenary Series will be as distinctive as its other features. Both the pictures reproduced and the body of the articles presented will be printed by the new off-set process.

The great outstanding points of difference between the printing by this process and the best newspaper printing that has been produced up to this time are the vastly superior softness of tone and the minuteness of detail with which pictures are brought out by the new process.

In the newspaper field The New York Times is pioneering in this use of the off-set process. The Tercentenary Series here outlined will be the first to be printed on the first rotary off-set presses ever built to print and fold a section of a newspaper. Later the presses, which are now installed in The Times Annex Building, will be used for printing the Magazine Section of The New York Sunday Times.

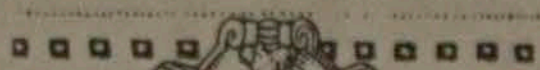
How to Get The Times.

As The New York Times is not sold to newsdealers on speculation, (unsold copies not being returnable,) it is the custom of dealers to order only as many copies as they are sure of selling, and The Times is always sold out early. Therefore those who care to have the copies containing the Shakespeare articles will find it necessary to order them in advance.

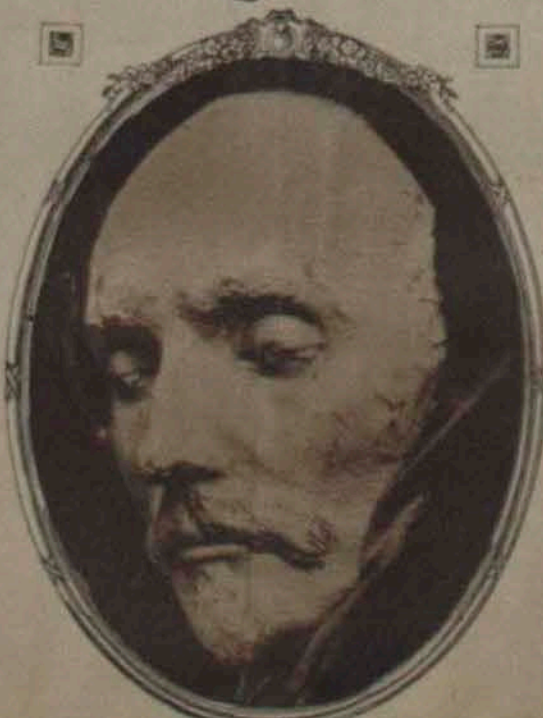
Those who have need of more than one copy of each issue, for class or other use, are requested to order as sparingly as they can, as they will doubtless appreciate that the sale at the regular price of The New York Sunday Times is not of itself a profitable transaction.

It is preferred that all orders be placed through newsdealers, but when this is not convenient persons not regular subscribers to The New York Times may procure all of the installments to the series by subscribing for the ten Sunday issues containing this series at the regular price of the complete Sunday Times, at 5 cents the issue, or 50 cents for the ten issues, postpaid.

Address: Shakespeare Department,
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SHAKESPEARE



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Shakespeare Tercentenary: 1616-1916

The New York Times

Part Six

February 20, 1916

Eight Pages



Falstaff,
GOWER
MONUMENT



Hamlet,
GOWER
MONUMENT



Edwin Booth
as Hamlet

PHOTO BY SARONY

The World Today Commemorates the
Great Life That Ended 300
Years Ago.

SHAKESPEARE died on April 23, 1616, either on or soon after his fifty-second birthday; and that date in 1916 is to mark the climax of an observance, which has already begun, of one of the great events of history. It will then be 300 years since there ended a life which has had an effect altogether incalculable not only upon the literature of the whole world, but upon the subsequent life and history of the world. His existence on this earth was one of the profound influences upon human development; and it is as such, not solely as a great poet, that the tercentenary of that existence is being commemorated everywhere.

THE NEW YORK TIMES will present to its readers each Sunday a Shakespeare section, of which this is the first number. There will be ten of these issues, coming out weekly, the last one on April 23. Each will contain articles on various phases of the subject, written by men and women who are qualified to speak with authority on the topics chosen by them; poets, essayists, teachers, critics, editors, actors, men who have made the study of Shakespeare a lifetime study professionally or as an avocation.

In addition there will be given each week carefully chosen selections from the great wealth of Shakespearean criticism. From the eighteenth century to our own time there has grown up a body of literature on this subject to which contributions have been made by men bearing the most eminent names in letters. Everybody knows of these works, but the general reader is not likely to have seen all or perhaps many of them. He has heard of Dr. Johnson's famous preface, of the adverse criticism of Voltaire, of the introduction of Shakespeare by Lessing and Herder to the Continent, but to get an idea of the whole he must spend many hours in libraries.

It is, of course, not possible to give more than a fraction of these criticisms in a newspaper; but THE TIMES has chosen such extracts as will give the general reader a comprehensive idea of Shakespearean literature by the time the ten numbers are completed. The series will, at any rate, constitute an anthology of Shakespearean criticism, containing not all, but the cream, of what has been said about his works. In making these selections care has been taken to choose them so as to cover many fields; essays on the tragedies have been taken from one writer, on the comedies from another, on the female characters from a third, and it may be said in general that this anthology is not a mere reiteration of praise of Shakespeare by great writers, but covers different phases of his work, so as to give, at the conclusion, a general and well-rounded view of his work from the most eminent authorities.

This number, the first, is an introductory one, devoted to the man himself and his genius, and does not deal with any set of plays or with any of the questions arising out of them. The first paper is one written for THE TIMES by William Lyon Phelps, Lampson Professor of English Literature at Yale and eminent as a Shakespearean authority. It deals with the subject of Shakespeare's overwhelming predominance in English literature, and traces the history of his recognition.

The second article, by John Corbin, well known as dramatic critic and author, treats of Shakespeare's personality. Mr. Corbin has made a special study of the subject, and there is no man better qualified to treat of it. He holds that Shakespeare's personality, so far from being vague, is as clear and definite as that of any man in history, and paints it as he sees it.

This has not been the view generally taken. That view is the one set forth so brilliantly in Emerson's essay on the poet, in which he declared that Shakespeare was his own and his only biographer—a view from which Mr. Corbin, in the light of modern investigation, dissents. Emerson's view of the subject, as set forth in his essay, is presented in this number as the first chapter in the anthology of Shakespearean criticism.

The second selection is from the famous preface by Dr. Johnson, for which the great Samuel has been so furiously belabored by most of the critics who came after him. Heine, to whom Johnson was John Bull personified, says derisively that Queen Mab must have cut many a caper on the Doctor's nose while he was laboriously undertaking to cope with the genius he did not understand. But Johnson did Shakespeare much service; for the hostile criticism of Voltaire, then an autocrat among men of letters, was being accepted as final, and it did, in fact, prevent a real appreciation of him in France, at least, for many years. When Johnson wrote, Shakespeare had not come to his full measure of appreciation; and if he did not wholly understand the great genius whom he tried—somewhat audaciously it seems now—to explain, he sincerely admired him. The Johnson preface, at any rate, is one of the landmarks of Shakespearean criticism.

The illustrations for this number have been chosen with a view to its general subject. They undertake to illustrate the man and his life, and we think none of them will be found more interesting than those which present the different conceptions of him in different lands which all pay tribute to his genius, but in which national temperaments conceive him in different ways.

SHAKESPEARE'S FAME STILL "IN ITS GREAT MORNING"

Famous and Popular at Thirty, His Name Has Grown to Overshadow the World of Letters

Written for THE NEW YORK TIMES by WILLIAM LYON PHILIPS, Lamson Professor of English Literature at Yale.

I HAVE never been able to discover the origin of the American colloquial phrase, "big four." Did it originate with the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railroad or with the famous baseball infield, Brouthers, Richardson, Rowe, and White, bought by the Detroit Club from Buffalo? In railway circles the appellation has acquired dignity, being printed on the formal stationery of the road it designates; but my inquiries, directed to high officials, have elicited only confessions of ignorance.

Be this as it may, and I shall be grateful for verifiable information on the subject. It is rather curious how often this phrase may be justly applied in the history of genius. In military annals there is an exclusive big four—Hannibal, Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon. True again in music—Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Wagner. (all Germans.) And true in poetry—Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe. Some forty years ago Edward Dowden remarked that Shakespeare's fame was in its great morning. It is a fact that his reputation was never greater than in this tercentenary year, and I suppose there are daily converts. He is, as he generally has been, a "best seller"; only where trashy novels sell by the thousand, he sells by the million. The popular vote which places him at the head of the noble army of poets has given him such a crushing majority that it might just as well be made unanimous. There was a time 200 years ago when it was comparatively safe to attack him, but now the recoil of that particular gun is so much greater than the discharge that both Tolstoy and Bernard Shaw found themselves in an attitude that made the skillful laugh and the judicious forget to grieve. Tolstoy complained petulantly that when he derided Shakespeare people would not listen to him: "I spoke bitterly," and Turgenev refused to argue; he merely turned away without a reply.

Shakespeare became a famous and popular writer before he was 30 years old; and there has never been a month from that time to 1916 when he was not well known among English-speaking people. In 1592, when he was 28, he had already begun to conquer London, as we learn from Robert Greene's envious death-bed gibe. One of Greene's accusations is obviously aimed at Shakespeare; but the publisher's apology for some of

nence both in tragedy and in comedy. Perhaps no man knew Shakespeare more intimately than his friend Ben Jonson; so early as 1598 Shakespeare had acted in Jonson's comedy, "Every Man in His Humour," and his name is mentioned high in the list of the cast. We can be absolutely certain that the picture in the First Folio looked like Shakespeare, because Jonson declared it to be an admirable portrait. And we are justified in holding an exalted opinion of Shakespeare's character, because he remarked, "I love the man and do honour his memory, on this side of Idleness, as much as any. He was, indeed, honest and of an open and free nature."

The greatness of Shakespeare's plays was not only recognized by his contemporaries, it was discriminatingly and intelligently appreciated. The distinguishing marks of his genius were clear enough. Modern literary critics cannot add much to Ben Jonson's splendid lines, published in 1623:

To the memory of my beloved, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare: and what he hath left us.

Soul of the age! The applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage! My Shakespeare, rise: I will not lodge thee by Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie. A little further, to make thee a room; Thou art a Monument without a tomb, And art alive still, while thy Book doth live. And we have wits to read, and praise to give. And tell how far thou didst our Lily outshine, Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line. And though thou hadst small Latin, and less Greek, From thence to honour thee, I would not seek For names; but call forth thund'ring Eschilus, Euripides, and Sophocles to us, . . . To life again, to hear thy Duskies tread, And Shake a Stage. Or, when thy Socks were on, Leave these alone, for the comparison Of all, that insolent Greece, or haughty Rome, Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come. Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show, To whom all Scenes of Europe homage owe. He was not of an age, but for all time! Nature herself was proud of his designs, And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines! The merry Greek tart Aristophanes, Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please, But antiquated, and deserted lie, As they were not of Nature's family. Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were To see thee in our waters yet appear, And make those flights upon the banks of Thames, That so did take Eliza and our James!



Shakespeare and his Creations



(The Davenant Bust, 1662)

From an early nineteenth century engraving

win Booth once defined a Christian as one who could rejoice in the superiority of a rival. When he penned these lines Ben Jonson was not far from the kingdom of God.

Eight years before Shakespeare's death the practical publisher of "Troilus and Cressida" said in the preface, "This author's comedies are so framed to the life that they serve for the most common commentaries of all actions of our lives." This single sentence sufficiently accounts for the popularity of Shakespeare in 1608, 1610, and—2108. The year that tribute was written a boy was born in London named John Milton; when he was 22 he wrote an epitaph on Shakespeare in which he called him "Dear son of memory, great heir of fame."

The distinction between the art of Shakespeare and the art of Jonson was just as patent and just as well understood by the critics then as it is today. In "L'Allegro" Milton wrote:

Then to the well-trod stage anon, If Jonson's learned sock be on, Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child, Warble his native wood-notes wild. It has never been better summarized. Jonson's learned industry and Shakespeare's fine, careless rapture were stock subjects for literary comparison in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as Tennyson and

Browning were a godsend to sweet girl graduates in late Victorian days. Milton's statement of the poetic maturity of Shakespeare made a tremendous impression on the English Romantic School in the mid-eighteenth century; they never wearied of repeating it.

Dryden's attitude toward Shakespeare was like all his other attitudes—resembling a time-table in that it was subject to change without notice. But Dryden, who had a hospitable mind, steadily grew in appreciation of the ever-living poet. A study of the references to Shakespeare in Dryden's works, taking them in chronological order, brings out the fact that, after years of resistance, Dryden finally made an unconditional surrender.

In the eighteenth century the most conspicuous antagonist of Shakespeare was Voltaire, and there can be no doubt that his continued hostility did much to retard the growth of Shakespeare's reputation among French critics and readers. Even so late as 1760 he wrote in English to a British friend (and I am copying directly from his original manuscript): "Though I do not like the monstrous irregularities of Shakespeare; though I admire but some lively and masterly strokes in his performance, yet I am confident nobody in the world looks with a greater veneration on your good philosophers."

Nor was there ever a time between 1610 and 1916 in England when Shakespeare criticism contained more ludicrous curiosities than during the early years of the eighteenth century. In 1721 Dr. Atterbury

Curious Blindnesses of the Eighteenth Century—How Germany Came to Know Him

wrote to Pope: "I have found time to read some parts of Shakespeare which I was least acquainted with. I protest to you in a hundred places I cannot construe him. I do not understand him. The hardest part of Chaucer is more intelligible to me than some of those scenes, not merely through the faults of the edition, but the obscurity of the writer, for obscure he is, and a little (not a little) inclined now and then to bombast." That audacious faker, David Mallet, who stole the ballad of "William and Margaret" retaining the credit of its authorship for over a hundred and fifty years, wrote a verse-criticism of Shakespeare that for infelicitous illustration can hardly be paralleled:

Now eagle-wind'd, his heavenward flight he takes; The big stars thunders, and the soul awakes. Now, low on earth, a kindred reptile creeps; Sad Hamlet quibbles, and the hearer sleeps.

A contemporary of Mallet's, the poetaster William Hamilton, had more than Shavian audacity for he "versified" parts of "King Lear" and "Hamlet." Here is an example of his skill in transferring Hamlet's soliloquy to the popular metrical measure:

My anxious soul is torn with doubtful strife, And hangs suspended betwixt death and life; Life! Death! Dread objects of mankind's debate! Whether superior to the shocks of fate, To bear its fiercest ills with steadfast mind, To Nature's order pliantly resign'd, Or, with magnanimous and brave disdain, Return her back th' injurious gift again.

Horace Walpole said of "Midsummer Night's Dream" that it was "forty times more nonsensical than the worst translation of any Italian opera books."

The romantics loved and revered Shakespeare, nor had they any difficulty in seeing his enormous superiority to the Augustan deities. The most conspicuous leader in the Romantic revolt was of course Joseph Warton, who in 1740, when only 18 years old, wrote defiantly:

What are the lays of artful Addison, Coldly correct, to Shakespeare's warbling wild? The most solidly practical services rendered to Shakespeare in the

routed Voltaire; he proved that Shakespeare was a truer follower of Aristotle than the French dramatists; he made clear to all Europe the transcendent excellence of the Englishman. Since that time Shakespeare has been idolized in Germany. The German stage has treated him far more reverently than the theatres in England or in America, and the German people have ten times more opportunity to see masterpieces of Shakespeare than have the people in London or New York. Indeed, if one wishes to see the lesser plays of Shakespeare it is necessary to buy a ticket to Germany. In Berlin and in Munich I saw three dramas that to the best of my knowledge had never been given in any English-speaking country during my lifetime—"Measure for Measure," "Troilus and Cressida," and "Pericles."

Although the plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries survive to-day only as dramatic curiosities on the stage, played by societies and university students, Shakespeare himself is in the twentieth century as he was in the sixteenth the most popular playwright. When he is intelligently presented there is no modern dramatist half so interesting. Salvini, Edwin Booth, and Richard Mansfield knew how to make Shakespeare interesting and attractive; and in more recent years the New Theatre production of "The Winter's Tale," directed by that admirable actor, Louis Calvert, was simply thrilling. It is a fortunate thing for America that Mr. Calvert has decided to become an American citizen; and it is my hope that he will have many opportunities to produce the plays of Shakespeare in American cities.

Every lover of the ever-living poet should have within reach the new Life by Sir Sidney Lee, an accurate and judicious biography; he should also own every volume of the New Variorum edition, to which three generations of the Furness family have contributed. As a loyal American, I take pride in the fact that the most scholarly edition of Shakespeare that the world has ever seen comes from America; it is not only the best edition, it is indispensable. Is it not pleasant to reflect that the first thing done by any scholar in the world when he plans to print something about Shakespeare, is to consult the Furness volumes?

As a world conqueror, Shakespeare makes all military heroes seem insignificant. Napoleon left the boundaries of France smaller than he found them. All the results of warfare are trivial in comparison



An English Conception of Shakespeare From the Gower Monument at Stratford-on-Avon

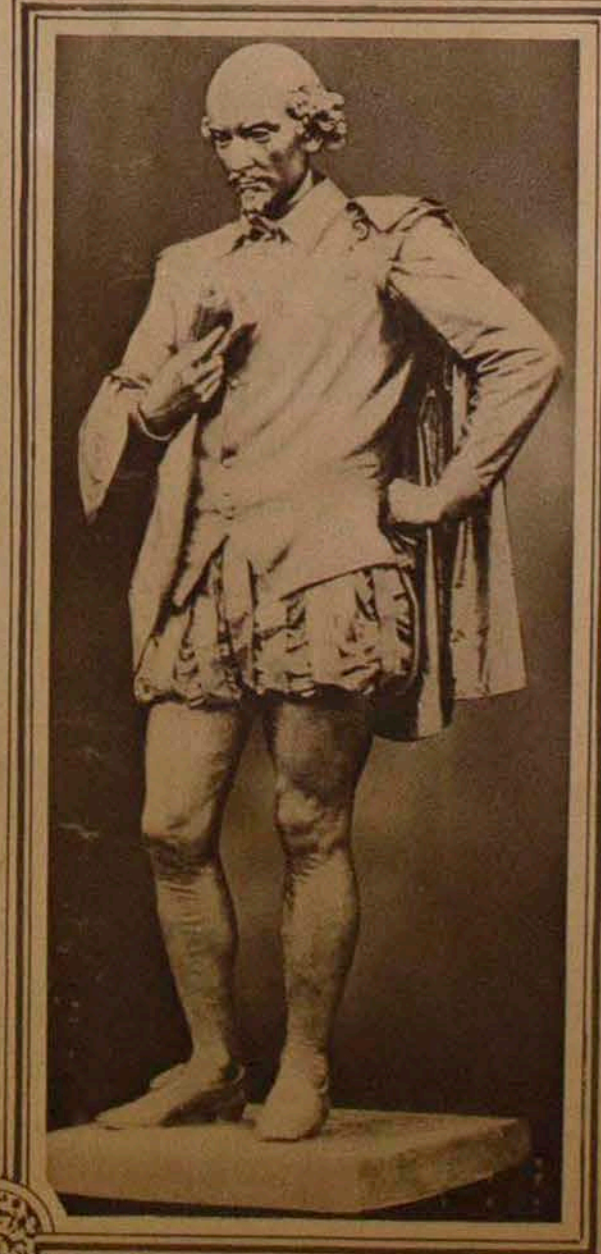
them cannot be proved to allude to our poet, though cited as fact in every biography of Shakespeare I have read. Chettie's apology is certainly handsome: "I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes." We cannot prove that Chettie had Shakespeare in mind.

In 1598, Francis Meres named Shakespeare as having won emi-

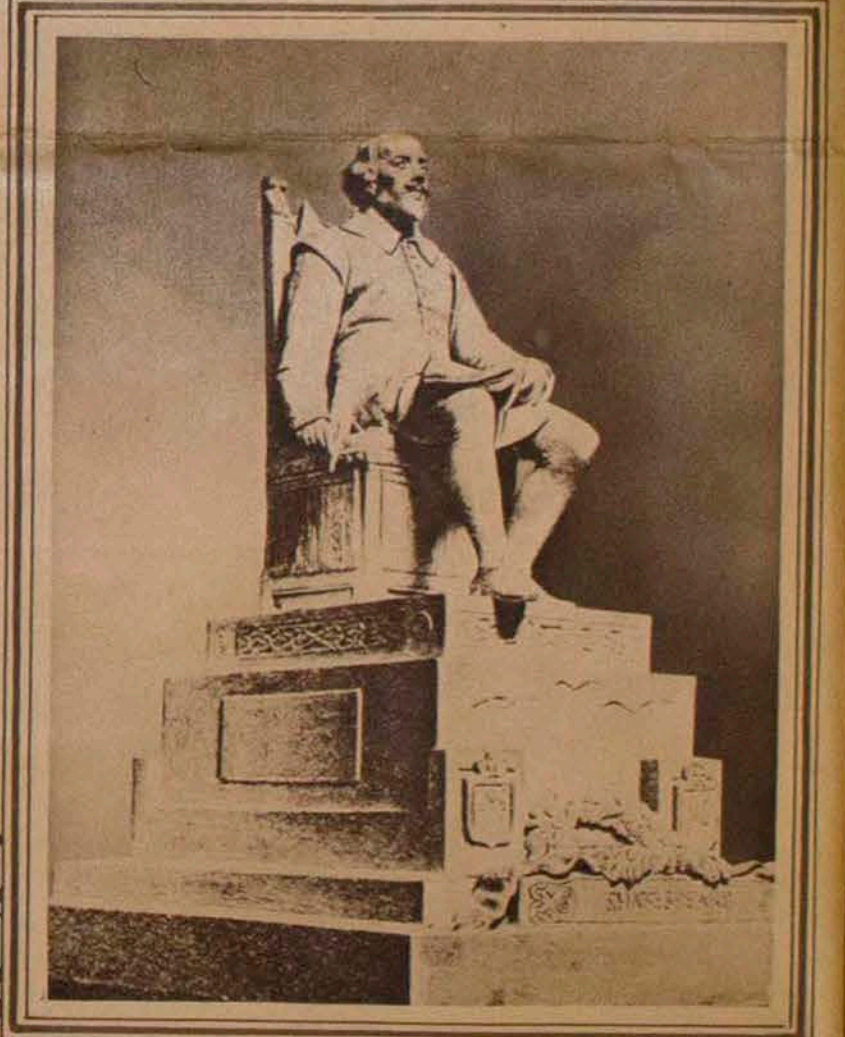
I can never read these lines without a lump in the throat, because they show such intense personal affection. They also exhibit an admiration so overwhelming—and admiration is not Ben's most notable characteristic—that the author was willing to place his friend above his revered classical gods. Such language, applied to any other poet would have seemed to Ben flagrant blasphemy. And the revelation of the writer's heart is beautiful. Ed-



A German View The statue by Otto Lessing at Weimar



An American view at Central Park The statue by J.Q.A. Ward



Shakespeare as seen in Hamlet's land - A statue in Denmark by L. Hasselruss

eighteenth century were by Theobald in 1734 and by Capell in 1768. Each of these men published a text of Shakespeare, which from the point of view of scholarly accuracy superseded previous editions.

In the history of Shakespearean criticism no foreign writer deserves more credit than Lessing, perhaps the greatest literary critic who ever lived. In his extraordinary papers on the Hamburg Theatre, which began to appear in 1767, Lessing absolutely

with the irresistible advance of Art. Goethe and Beethoven infinitely greater conquerors than Frederick or Moltke; Hindenburg's victories are not so important, so complete, or so lasting as Hauptmann's. Shakespeare has the whole world at his feet; men and women of all nations are proud to do him homage; one cannot even conceive of any future state of civilization where he will not reign. For, in Browning's noble phrase, his soul is in men's hearts.

Milton's "Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, W. Shakespeare."

WHAT needs my Shakespeare for his honour'd bones, The labor of an age in pitted stones? Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid Under a star-y pointing pyramid? Dear son of memory, great heir of fame, What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name? Thou in our wonder and astonishment Has built thyself a live-long monument. For whilst to th' shame of slow-enduring art Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart Hath from the leaves of this unvalued book Those Delphic lines with deep impression took, Then thou our fancy of itself bereaving, Dost make us marble with too much conceiving; And so sepulch'rd in such pomp dost lie, That Kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

William Basse's Poem, to Which Ben Jonson Replied

RENOWNED SPENSER, lie a thought more nigh To learned Chaucer; and, rare Beaumont, lie A little nearer Spenser, to make room For Shakespeare in your threefold, fourfold tomb. To lodge all four in one bed make a shift. For until doomsday hardly will a fifth, Betwixt this day and that, by fates be slain, For whom your curtains need be drawn again. But if precedence in death doth bar A fourth place in your sacred sepulchre, Under this sable marble of thine own, Sleep, rare tragedian, Shakespeare, sleep alone! Thy unmolested peace, in an unshared cave, Poorest as lord, not tenant of thy grave. That unto us, and others, it may be Honour hereafter to be laid by thee.

TWO GREAT TRAGEDIES—A GREAT TRAGEDIENNE



HAMLET, Act I, Scene IV.

Hamlet. Still am I call'd,—unhand me, gentlemen; (breaking from them.)
 By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me;—
 I say, away.—Go on,—I'll follow thee.



MRS. SIDMONS AS THE TRAGIC MUSE. Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds.
 Sarah Siddons, (1755-1814,) doubtless the greatest of Shakespearean actresses, and especially famous as Lady Macbeth and Queen Katherine. Dr. Johnson wrote his name on her skirt in this picture, and said, "I would not lose the honor this opportunity afforded me for my name going down to posterity on the hem of your garment."



KING LEAR, Act V., Scene III. The Death of Cordelia.

Lear. I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever.
 Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little.

THE MAN HIMSELF: BEING A CHARACTER SKETCH

"Handsome, Well-Shapt," a Wit and Good Fellow.

WRITTEN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES BY JOHN COBBIN.

It is the fate of most of the great ones of history to become heroes of legend—the centre of picturesque tales that simply aren't so. The world insists upon knowing more about them than is to be known. Homer as a blind singer, George Washington as a boy who, though a very bad boy at times, told the truth and took his spanking, are more vivid in the popular imagination than their merely historical personalities. Shakespeare reverses the rule. He is, indeed, the centre of a myth; but the myth is that we know nothing at all about him. Supreme and unapproached in his genius, no fact in his biography has impressed the world as in the least interesting, or even credible.

This is not merely a prejudice of the crowd. It is rather a myth of the greatest minds—an almost willfully fostered myth, it sometimes seems. "All that is known with any degree of certainty," writes Steevens—and he has often since been quoted with approval—is that he was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, married and had children there, went to London where he commenced acting and wrote poems and plays, returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried." Said Emerson: "Shakespeare is the only biographer of Shakespeare; and even he can tell nothing, except to the Shakespeare in us." Matthew Arnold wrote:

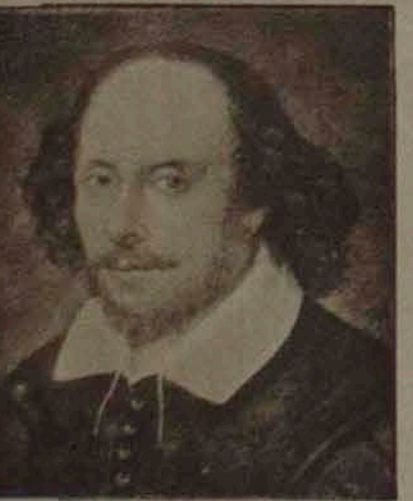
Others abide our question. Thou art free. We ask, and ask: Thou smilest, and art still. Out-topping knowledge.

When Wordsworth ventured to suggest that Shakespeare's Sonnets are self-revealing:

With this key Shakespeare unlocked his heart— Browning brought him up with a round turn, exclaiming: "Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he."

In short, the world has made a god of its greatest poet, a god illimitable, inscrutable. In so doing the world has stultified itself, and wrought great injury to Shakespeare. There is a French saying that may be paraphrased thus: "To understand is to love." If we do not love Shakespeare—and, with all our obsequious reverence for his name, I am very much afraid we don't—it is because we have so abjectly refused to know him "in his habit as he lived."

Few people capable of judging have nowadays any doubt that the sonnets are, in a large measure, self-revealing. The love story they tell is perhaps the strangest and most illuminating in the whole scope of literary biography. Read in the light of the sonnets, moreover, the greatest comedies and the greatest tragedies of the world has yet produced become in turn documents in the biography of their creator's soul. But with Shakespeare's love story, and with his un-



The Chandos Portrait

fold as a dramatic artist, we have not now to do. First let us know what we can of his outward personality—the manner of man he was to his neighbors of Stratford, to his fellow-players of the Globe Theatre, and to his companion wits of the Mermaid Tavern.

The record they have left us is clear, unmistakable—in spite of Steevens's denial. In 1592 Robert Greene, on his deathbed, wrote a letter to certain playwrights, friends of his, warning them against the practices of actors—"buckram gentlemen, painted monsters, puppets who speak from their mouths, antics garbed with our colors." These creatures, it appears, had the presumption to revise the work of the playwrights.

Against one actor-author he especially warned his fellows. "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 bust out on a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes factotum, in his own conceit, the only Shakespeare in the country."

It is a little men of such rare wits [as Greene's fellow playwrights] should be subject to the diseases of such rude grooms. There is no doubt that the attack is on Shakespeare. The three parts of "Henry VI." were first written by several collaborators, of whom Greene was one. They were revised by Shakespeare, then a young man of some 27 years. One of the most vigorous passages contains the line, "Oh, Tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide," apparently a contribution of Shakespeare's, which Greene travestied. From other sources we have the statement that Shakespeare was first employed about the theatres as a "groome," to hold the horses of spectators.

"Shakespeare" is a manifest pun on his name. Greene and his fellows were scholars and gentlemen of the universities, and they found their profession, their fame, and their profits diminished by the competition of a "buckram gentleman," a "groome" of much humbler birth and education.

Greene presently died a pauper, the victim of a riotous life. Almost immediately his publisher, Henry Chettle, who himself wrote plays,



Shakespeare performing before Queen Elizabeth and her Court

printed an apology for giving currency to Greene's attack. "I am sorry as if the original fault had been his [Shakespeare's] demerit no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes, [that is, as an actor]; besides, diverse of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that approves his art." Again and again, throughout his life, Shakespeare's fellows testify to his gentlemanly bearing, his honesty, his wit and grace in conversation, and his facile skill as a poet.

Of Shakespeare as master of vast and profound tragic power, as the purveyor of the deep passions of the human soul, nothing is said. At this time, to be sure, he had written at most his first and comparatively crude draft of "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Othello" were still a decade or more in the future. But to the end of his life the kindly, free, and honest traits which Chettle emphasizes were those which mainly, almost exclusively, impressed his contemporaries.

The lighter side of his temperament was emphasized in the following year, 1593, by the publication of "Venus and Adonis," and again in 1594 by "The Rape of Lucrece." These were the first of his works to be printed, and, with the public of readers, remained apparently the most popular of all. The magic sweetness of the verse, the limpid flow of the narrative, and the vivid color of the imagery were clearly recognized by the discerning. William Covell, a Cambridge don, gave, in 1594, "all praise" to "sweet Shakespeare"; and Edmund Spenser in the same year wrote:

A gentler shepherd may no where be found.

Others called him "honey-tongued Shakespeare," and praised his "honey-flowing vein." But the great success of the poems seems clearly to have been due to what the modern magazine editor calls sex-appeal. This popular impression of the poet seems to have been intensified, not corrected, by the tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet." Shakespeare, in short, appeared first as the Robert W. Chambers of his time.

This is clearly evident in the Parnassus trilogy of comedies, written and performed at St. John's College, Cambridge, in the years 1597-1601. Gullio, a pretended gallant and an ignorant and empty aspirer to poetic taste, is rapturous in Shakespeare's praise; lays his sentences with quotations from the poems, and from the amorous phraseology of "Romeo and Juliet"; resolves to sleep with "Venus and Adonis" under his pillow, and exclaims, "Sweet Mr. Shakespeare! 'I have his picture in my study at the court.'" The height of this Gullio's gullibility was that he cried: "Let this dusty world esteem of Spenser and Chaucer. He worshipp sweet Mr. Shakespeare!" The play also suggests that, like Robert Greene, the university playwright looked down on Shakespeare for his lack of education, and in general regarded him as an upstart who had succeeded not so much by real merit as by a rather low appeal to the purulent. In the third play of the trilogy, one Judicio renders a fairer judgment, but still with the air of moral and academic disapproval.

Who loves not Adon's love, or Lucrece rape? His sweeter verse contains heart-throbbing lines. Could but a graver subject him content Without love's foolish, lazy languishment.

The only anecdote of Shakespeare that is positively known to have been recorded in his lifetime indicates even more clearly his reputation for levity. A citizen's wife who had been deeply impressed with Richard Burbage's impersonation of Richard III, made an appointment to meet him after the performance. Shakespeare heard of this, and was already there when Burbage arrived, he shut Burbage out of the house, saying that William the Conqueror came before Richard III. The anecdote bears the



The Droeshout Original Portrait (From Joan Corbin's "New Portrait," John Lane)

familiar marks of popular invention, but for that very reason is the more significant as to Shakespeare's contemporary reputation. The dignity of the poet's mind, its exquisite sensibility, its passionate love of truth and purity, were less evident to his contemporaries than the light good-fellowship of the man.

To the end the high passions of the tragedies and their sombre, deep imagination seem not to have been associated with Shakespeare's personality. The favorite adjective for his muse was "sweet" and for himself "gentle." Even Milton, who of all men might be expected to appreciate the sombre, tragic words of his great predecessor, sang:

Sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child, Warbles his native woodnote wild.

Milton was a boy of 8 when Shakespeare died, and wrote these lines some eighteen years after his death. Of Shakespeare's wit and good-fellowship there is abundant testimony; and it is probably significant that it appears at his best in encounters with Ben Jonson, who, though a staunch friend and in the main a just and generous critic, "esteemed himself," as Emerson puts it, "out of all question the better poet of the two," and especially prided himself on the superiority of his classical education. "Many were the wit combats," wrote Fuller in his "Worthies," 1662, "betwixt him and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performance; Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention."

Only a few years after Shakespeare's death an instance was recorded on the authority of John Donne, poet and Dean of St. Paul's. It should perhaps be explained that "latten" was a metal, resembling brass, of which cheap spoons were made. "Shakespeare was godfather to one of Ben Jonson's children, and after the christening, being in a deep study, Jonson came to cheer him up and asked him why he was so melancholy. 'No, faith, Ben,' says he, 'not I; but I have been considering a great while what should be the fittest gift for me to bestow upon my godchild, and I have resolved at last.' 'I prithee, what?' says he. 'I faith, Ben, I'll e'en give him a dozen good Latten spoons, and thou shalt translate them.'"

Volumes of controversy have not indicated more clearly the relations that existed between the two—intimate comradeship of two good fellows who respected each other, even while one deprecated the half-negligent facility of his friend and suffered in return a noble satire that was half a compliment.

The first critical estimate of Shakespeare which to our thinking is in any way adequate was made in 1598 by Francis Meres, a divine and schoolmaster, graduate of Cambridge. In his "Palladis Tamia" Meres undertakes "a comparative discourse

of our English poets with the Greek, Latin, and Italian poets." Like his contemporaries, it is true, he is most eloquent about the poems. "As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet wittie soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare, witness his 'Venus and Adonis,' his 'Lucrece,' his sugared sonnets among his private friends."

Yet very soberly he expresses the opinion of Gullio—that Shakespeare was the foremost man of letters of the day: "The muses would speak Shakespeare's fine filled phrase, if they could speak English." Among the English he is most excellent in both kinds for the stage, rivaling the fame of Seneca in the one kind and of Plautus in the other.

The tragedies on which Meres bases his claim of rivalry with Seneca are "Richard II.," "Richard III.," "Henry IV.," "King John," "Titus and Andronicus," and "Romeo and Juliet"; and the passage is of interest as indicating how far Shakespeare's tragic genius had unfolded at the age of 34. It indicates also the critical standards of the time. To the early Elizabethan Seneca was the great tragic poet. Today he is in disrepute, and Plautus is of interest mainly in the fact that he borrowed so much from the Greek comedian Menander, whose work but for these borrowings would have been lost. To us the classical rivals of Shakespeare are Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes. Yet the fact remains that Meres said all that a rather dull Elizabethan could in praise of his great contemporary.

The fact was that the author of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and of "Romeo and Juliet" had injected into the spirit of this old world a thing which was wholly new and very far from easy to appreciate fully. "As You Like It" and "Hamlet," "The Winter's Tale" and "Lear," "The Tempest" and "Othello" intensified and developed the phenomenon. This new spirit we now call romantic, as opposed to classical, and on the whole we value it more highly. The Elizabethan enjoyed it, applauded it, instinctively felt its greatness, but was rather at a loss to value it. By far the most formidable, critical apparatus of the time was in the bullet skull of Ben Jonson. Let us see what he made of the new spirit of romanticism! He was the big gun of his time, and though his contemporaries delighted to poke fun at his seriousness—it was not he who first regarded his plays as works—they found no appeal from his pronouncements.

All his life he had measured the utterances of the muses by his classical yardstick. Now he had to use it to appraise the value of an aery vapor, the glinting of a Winter moon, the mad sweep of a whirlwind, the raging of cosmic passions set free. No wonder it seemed to him that Shakespeare "lacked art." The actors at the Globe reported of their playwright that "whatsoever he penned he never blotted out (that is, struck out,) a line." Ben Jonson answered, "Would he had blotted thousands," and gave instances of what seemed to him loose phrasing.

Many were his strictures upon Shakespeare's fantastic inventions. The "Induction" to his "Bartholomew's Fair" glances at the servant Caliban of "The Tempest" and the dance of satyrs—"Antics"—in "The Winter's Tale." "If there be never a servant-monster in the Fair [Jonson's play] who can help it? . . . nor a nest of Anticks? He [that is, the author, Ben Jonson] is loath to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beate Talcs, Tempests, and such like Drorleries."

There were those who accused "honest Ben" of envying his comrade, Even today Sir Sidney Lee



Mask taken from the Stratford Bust (In the possession of Princeton University)

attributes to him in his attitude toward Shakespeare a surly, difficult and jealous disposition. To do so is, I think, to fall wholly in understanding the critical temperament. Jonson was a classicist, and took himself very seriously as a critic. He had to speak the truth as he saw it. After Shakespeare's death, as if in answer to this charge of envy, he wrote: "I loved the man and do honor his memory on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature." When the Folio was published, (1623,) he wrote the first tribute to Shakespeare's genius that surpassed the verdict of Francis Meres in insight and in admiration.

He begins with a vigorous disclaimer on the one hand of any attempt at malicious overpraise, and on the other hand of ignorance or merely friendly superlatives. If he is extreme in eulogy, it is simply because "I confess thy writings to be such as neither man, nor Muse, can praise too much."

In what he goes on to say, however, he evinces the keenest discrimination. Shakespeare is, to begin with, the greatest of all English poets.

My Shakespeare, rise; I will not lodge thee by Chaucer or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie a little further, to make thee a room; Thou art a Monument without a tombe, And art alive still, while thy booke doth live. And we have wits to read, and praise to give.

And though thou hadst small Latine, From thence to honour thee, I would not seek For names; but call forth thundering Aeschilus, Euripides and Sophocles to us.

As for comedy—"when thy Sockes were on," as the quaint phrase ran—Jonson would

Leave thee alone, for the comparison Of all, that insolent Greece, or haughty Rome Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come. Triumph, my Britaine, thou hast one To whom all Scenes of Europe homage owe. He was not of an age, but for all time.

Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit. As since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit.

The Greek tragic poets Jonson had "called forth" merely to live again and witness the work of a rival. The comic poets he regards as quite dead in the comparison.

The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes, Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please. But antiquated, and deserted lies. As they were not of Nature's family.

Jonson will not, however, attribute everything to Shakespeare's "nature." He had often criticized the abandonment of his friend's style, but he now renders justice to his diligence and skill as an artist.

Thy Art, My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part. The poet "sweat, and struck the second heat upon the Muses' anvill." And, indeed, we know that he re-wrote and re-re-wrote his plays.

For a good poet's made, as well as born, And such wert thou. Look how the raine Lives in his issue. Even so, the race Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines In his well-torned, and true-filled lines.

In Jonson's conception, the romantic, as compared to the classical, drama was "nature" triumphing in defiance, or neglect, of the methods of antiquity. But he clearly saw that it had an "art" of its own, and that, in its way, it was as truly poetry and drama.

These lines were written, of course, some seven years after Shakespeare's death. But there is reason to believe that the verdict they so finely voice was current in the crude in the poet's lifetime. The Globe was by far the most successful of the Bankside theatres, and the plays of Shakespeare were the chief part of its repertory. The company enjoyed the patronage of Elizabeth and James, who regularly called Shakespeare and his fellows to play the leading pieces in its stock at Court. It attained the very height of fame and fortune. Jonson could brandish the critical big stick, but his plays were far less popular and he was often in straits for money. In his early strictures on his friend there was probably more of the spirit of an unsuccessful, though "correct," playwright than of the condemnation of an acknowledged superior.

In Shakespearean demeanor toward Jonson we see him only as a loyal friend. When his company rejected Jonson's first comedy he inter-vened and had it produced. When Jonson was imprisoned for killing his man in a duel, Shakespeare helped to have him set free. But to all this critical rumbering he answered nothing, as far as we know, beyond the careless, amiable jest already cited—certainly he printed no retort. That he had a critical mind of very high order is evident. Hamlet's advice to the players is the subtlest as well as the earliest critique in the language on the art of the actor. His revisions of his plays bespeak severe self-criticism, and from play to play can be observed a development in technique that can scarcely have been unconscious. But on the art of the dramatist, as far as we know, he uttered not one word.

The fact seems to be that he took himself far less seriously than others took him. I have spoken of his plays as something quite new in the world, and from our point of view they were. Yet they were in the popular fashion of the time, and it was a fashion which others created, not Shakespeare. Almost every element in the romantic drama he took over from his predecessors. Lily, Kyd, Greene, Peele, Marlowe, and Fletcher all contributed to swell the tide on which he rode supreme. With two exceptions out of thirty-seven, his very plots were borrowed. The fact that Greene had black-guarded him did not prevent him from appropriating a novel of his to make, "The Winter's Tale," There are probably thousands of

lines in the Folio from other pens. To him what he wrote were popular plays—not works. His two poems he published and proofread; but not one of his dramas received the like attention. He left the theatre, retired to Stratford and died, without making any provision for the publication of the dramas that have placed him supreme and unchallenged above all mankind. His certainly, was the genius that is unself-conscious. He was as modest as he was amiable, and otherwise gentlemanly.

Popular, Friendly, and Unspoiled by Admiration.

One reason may be given for not publishing the plays, and we have seen to think it was of a kind to appeal to Shakespeare. There was no copyright, and to publish the plays was to lessen their financial value to his company. This "gentle Will," this "sweetest Shakespeare," this "Svan of Avon" was an admirable man of business. If we had only the records of the law courts, in fact, we might not be able to think so very well of him. He had a keenness for litigation which he seems to have inherited from his father. As a taxpayer he was slow, if not positively evasive. He was apparently negligent of a debt contracted by his wife. Like many men of property he evaded the restrictions against brewing malt liquor for his private use—being in his wits moonshiner.

Liberal in giving aid and lending money to his friends in need, he was strict in collecting debts. At about the time he wrote the final version of "Hamlet" he sued the village apothecary at Stratford to recover a small loan, and while he was at work on the world tragedy of "Antony and Cleopatra" he engaged in litigation that brought him in conflict with the village blacksmith—a state of affairs that Emerson relates with something akin to horror. He conspired with his father to secure from the conniving Herald's College a shady coat of arms and the right to subscribe himself "Gent.," and, while apparently not actively aiding an attempt to inclose Stratford common lands, in defiance of the rights of the people, he at best remained strictly neutral toward the project.

Careless as he seems to have been, as to his fame as a dramatist, he was in business by no means above current standards of conduct. On matters that the chief interest of his later years was to live at ease as a gentleman and provide well for his family. It is related on pretty good authority that he died of "a fever" after "a merry meeting" at Stratford with his old friend Ben Jonson and the poet Drayton. But it is not unlikely that the true cause of his fever was not drink, but the insalubrious condition of the street in which he lived.

Aubrey, Shakespeare's earliest biographer, records that he was "a handsome, well-shapt man." Rowe records a legend that he played the Ghost in "Hamlet." If so he must



The Ely Palace Painting (From Joan Corbin's "New Portrait of Shakespeare," John Lane)

have had an imposing figure and a voice of no common impressiveness. The only other part with which he can be clearly associated is old Adam in "As You Like It," in which his brother, Gilbert, when an old man with failing memory, said he had seen him in his youth. He was clearly not a great actor, but he seems to have performed more or less regularly until he quit London.

Of the dozens of reputed portraits only two are known to have been acknowledged by Shakespeare's contemporaries, and both were executed after his death. The bust over his grave was presumably placed there by his family before 1623. It is the work, not of a sculptor, but of a "maker of tombs," and the nose seems to have been very early broken and remodeled, leaving the feature shorter and the upper lip longer than they would otherwise have been. It has been frequently repaired and repainted. Yet the fact remains that it was accepted by his family as an likeness, and no doubt gives a rough impression of the genial, well-living dramatist who was content to die a provincial gentleman.

The print by Martin Droeshout, prefixed to the folio of 1623, seven years after his death, is almost as crude artistically. A remark of our friend Gullio suggests that portraits of Shakespeare were current in his lifetime, and the print was perhaps executed from one of these. Ben Jonson's poetic note on it has been generally misunderstood, even by Sir Sidney Lee. Jonson says, it is true, that the "graver" has "hit" the poet's "face," but the contact shows that he refers merely to the dead external forms of the features. The lines that follow say explicitly that Shakespeare's "wit" (that is, his mental powers) are not adequately rendered; that for any idea of it one must read the plays. The complaint about the graver's "strife" was a hackneyed locution which meant, in plain prose, that the graver did what he could in a difficult undertaking. It is asserted that he strove—not that he conquered!

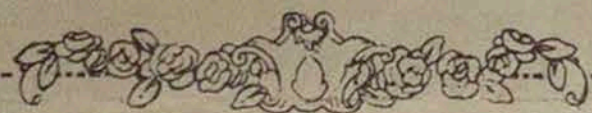
LANDSEER'S FAIRY REVEL—FALSTAFF'S TROUBLES



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, Act IV., Scene I.

Titania. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

Painted by Sir Edwin Landseer.



HENRY IV., Act V., Scene IV

Falstaff's Ruse at the Battle of Shrewsbury.

"Blood, 'twas time to counterfeit, or that hot termagant Scot had paid me scot and lot too.
The better part of valor is discretion; in the which better part I have saved my life."

(Copyright 1888, Gebbie & Co.)



MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR, Act III., Scene III.

The Merry Wives Hiding the Frightened Knight.

Mrs. Ford. He's too big to go in there. What shall I do?

(Copyright 1888, Gebbie & Co.)

SHAKESPEARE HIS ONLY BIOGRAPHER, SAID EMERSON



The Kesselstadt Mask. COPYRIGHT, 1892, BY HARPER & BROS.

Shakespeare and His Friends (Sylvester, Selden, Beaumont, Sackville, the Earl of Dorset, Camden, Fletcher, Bacon, Ben Jonson, Daniel, Donne, Raleigh, the Earl of Southampton, Sir Robert Cotton, and Dekker). By John Faed.

How He Set Forth the View That Nothing Is Known of the Poet Except as Revealed in His Works.

From "Representative Men," by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

There is something touching in the madness with which the passing age mischooses the object on which all candles shine and all eyes are turned; the care with which it registers every trifle touching Queen Elizabeth and King James, and the Essexes, Lecesters, Burleighs, and Buckingham, and lets pass without a single valuable note the founder of another dynasty which alone will cause the Tudor dynasty to be remembered—the man who carries the Saxon race in him by the inspiration which feeds him, and on whose thoughts the foremost people of the world are now for some ages to be nourished and minds to receive this and not another bias. A popular player—nobody suspected he was the poet of the human race; and the secret was kept as faithfully from poets and intellectual men as from courtiers and frivolous people. Bacon, who took the inventory of the human understanding for his times, never mentioned his name. Ben Jonson, though we have strained his few words of regard and panegyric, had no suspicion of the elastic fame whose first vibrations he was attempting. He no doubt thought the praise he had conceded to him generous, and returned himself, out of all question, the better poet of the two.

If it need wit to know wit, according to the proverb, Shakespeare's time should be capable of recognizing it. Sir Henry Wotton was born four years after Shakespeare, and died twenty-three years after him; and I find among his correspondents and acquaintances the following persons: Theodore Beza, Isaac Casaubon, Sir Philip Sidney, Earl of Essex, Lord Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, John Milton, Sir Henry Vane, Isaac Walton, Dr. Donne, Abraham Cowley, Belzoni, Charles Cotton, John Pym, John Hale, Kepler, Vieta, Albertus Gentilis, Paul Sarpi, Arminius, with all of whom exists some token of his having communicated, without enumerating many others, whom doubtless he saw—Shakespeare, Spenser, Jonson, Beaumont, Massinger, two Herberts, Marlowe, Chapman, and the rest. Since the constellation of great men who appeared in Greece in the time of Pericles there was never any such society, yet their genius failed them to find out the best head in the universe.

Our poet's mask was impenetrable. You cannot see the mountain near. It took a century to make it suspected, and not until two centuries had passed after his death did any criticism which we think adequate begin to appear. It was not possible to write the history of Shakespeare till now; for he is the father of German literature; it was with the introduction of Shakespeare into Germany, by Lessing, and the translation of his works by Wieland and Schlegel, that the rapid burst of German literature was most intimately connected.

It was not until the nineteenth century, whose speculative genius is a sort of living Hamlet, that the tragedy of "Hamlet" could find such wondering readers. Now, literature, philosophy, and thought are Shakespeareanized. His mind is the horizon beyond which at present we do not see. Our ears are educated to music by his rhythm. Coleridge and Goethe are the only critics who have expressed our convictions with any adequate fidelity, but there is in all cultivated minds a silent appreciation of his superlative power and beauty, which, like Christianity, qualifies the people.

The Shakespeare Society have inquired in all directions advertised the missing facts, offered money for any information that will lead to proof, and with what results? Besides some important illustration of the history of the English stage, to which I have adverted, they have gleaned a few facts touching the property, and dealings in regard to property, of the poet. It appears that, from year to year, he owned a large share in the Blackfriars Theatre; its wardrobe and other appur-

tenances were his; that he bought an estate in his native village with his earnings as writer and shareholder; that he lived in the best house in Stratford; was intrusted by his neighbors with their commissions in London, as of borrowing money and the like; that he was a veritable farmer.

About the time when he was writing "Macbeth" he sued Philip Rogers in the borough court of Stratford for 25 shillings 10 pence for corn delivered to him at different times; and, in all

the tragedian had no part; simply Hamlet's question to the ghost: "What may this mean. That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel Revolt'st thus the glimpses of the moon?"

That imagination which dilates the closest he writes in to the world's dimension, crowds it with agents in rank and order, as quickly reduces the big reality to be the glimpses of the moon. These tricks of his magic spell for us the illusions of the green-room.

which, if we were about to meet the man and deal with him, would most import us to know. We have his recorded convictions on those questions which knock for answer at every heart—on life and death, on love, on wealth and poverty, on the prizes of life, and the ways whereby we come at them; on the characters of men, and the influences, occult and open, which affect their fortunes; and on those mysterious and demoniacal powers which defy our science, and which yet interweave their malice and their gift in our brightest hours.

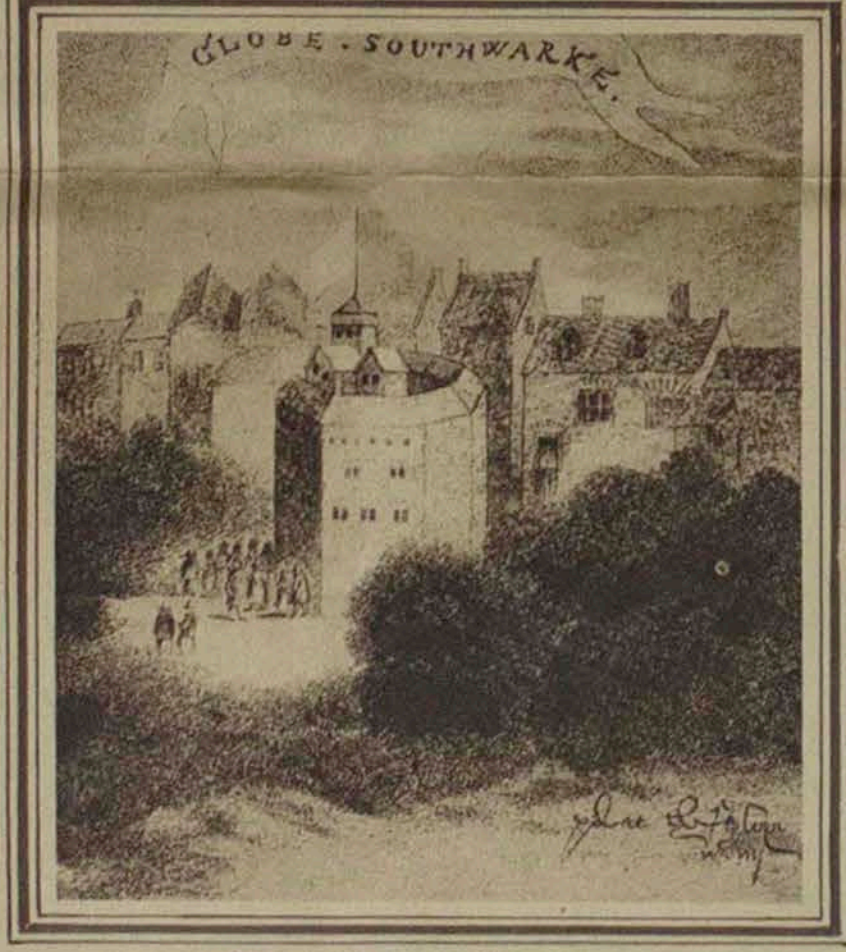
Who ever read the volume of the Sonnets without finding that the poet had there revealed, under masks that are no masks to the intelligent, the lore of friendship and of love; the confusion of sentiments in the most susceptible, and, at the same time, the most intellectual of men? What trail of his private mind has he hidden in his dramas? One can discern, in his simple pictures of the gentleman and the King, what forms and humanities pleased him; his delight in troops of friends, in large hospitality, in cheerful living. Let Timon, let Warwick, let Antonio the merchant answer for his great heart.

So far from Shakespeare being the least known, he is the one person, in all modern history, known to us. What point of morals, of manners, of economy, of philosophy, of religion, of taste, of the conduct of life has he not settled? What mystery has he not signified his knowledge of? What office or function, or district of man's work, has he not remembered? What King has he not taught state, as Talma taught Napoleon? What maiden has he not found finer than his own? What lover has he not outloved? What sage has he not outseen? What gentleman has he not instructed in the rudeness of his behavior?

Some able and appreciating critics think no criticism on Shakespeare valuable that does not rest purely on the dramatic merit; that he is falsely judged as poet and philosopher. I think as highly as these critics of his dramatic merit, but still think it secondary. He was a full man, who liked to talk; a brain exhaling thoughts and images, which, seeking vent, found the drama near at hand. Had he been less, we should have had to consider how well he filled his place, how good a dramatist he was—and he is the best in the world. But it were out that what he has to say is of that weight as to withdraw some attention from the vehicle; and he is like some saint whose history is to be rendered into all languages, into verse and prose, into songs and pictures, and cut up into proverbs; so that the occasions which gave the saint's meaning the form of a conversation, or of a prayer, or of a code of laws, is immaterial compared with the universality of its application.

So it fares with the wise Shakespeare and his book of life. He wrote the airs for all our modern music; he wrote the text of modern life, the text of manners; he drew the man of Europe, the father of the man in America; he drew the man and described the day, and what is done in it; he read the hearts of men and women, their prohty, and their second thought and wiles, the wiles of innocence, and the transitions by which virtues and vices slide into their contraries; he could divide the mother's part from the father's part in the face of the child, or draw the fine demarcations of freedom and of fate; he knew the laws of repression which make the police of nature; and all the sweets and all the terrors of human lot lay in his mind as truly but as softly as the landscape lies on the eye. And the importance of this wisdom of life sinks the form, as of Drama or Epic, out of notice. This like making a question concerning the paper on which a King's message is written.

Shakespeare is as much out of the category of eminent authors as he is out of the crowd. He is inconceivably wise; the others, conceivably, a good reader can, in a sort, nestle into Plato's brain, and think from



The Globe Theatre From an old Print

respects, appears as a good husband, with no reputation for eccentricity or excess. He was a good-natured sort of man, an actor and shareholder in the theatre, not in any striking manner distinguished from other actors and managers. I admit the importance of this information. It was well worth the pains that have been taken to procure it.

But whatever scraps of information concerning his condition these researchers may have rescued, they can shed no light upon that infinite invention which is the concealed magnet of his attraction for us. We are very clumsy writers of history. We tell the chronicle of parentage, birth, birthplace, schooling, schoolmates, earning of money, marriage, publication of books, celebrity, death; and when we have come to an end of this gossip, no ray of relation appears between it and the goddess-horn; and it seems as if, had we dipped at random into the "Modern Plutarch" and read any other life there, it would have fitted the poems as well.

It is the essence of poetry to spring, like the rainbow daughter of Wonder, from the invisible, to abolish the past, and refuse all history. Malone, Warburton, Dyce, and Collier have wasted their oil. The famed theatres, Covent Garden, Drury Lane, the Park, and Tremont have vainly assailed. Betterton, Garrick, Kemble, Kenon, and Macready dedicate their lives to this genius; him they crown, elucidate, obey, and express. The genius knows them not. The recitation begins; one golden word leaps out immortal from all this painted pedantry, and sweetly torments us with invitations to its own inaccessible homes.

I remember I went once to see the Hamlet of a famed performer, the pride of the English stage; and all I then heard, and all I now remember of the tragedian, was that in which



Stothard's painting of Shakespeare's interview with Queen Elizabeth

thence, but not into Shakespeare's. We are still out of doors.

For executive faculty, for creation, Shakespeare is unique. No man can imagine it better. He was the furthest reach of subtlety compatible with an individual self—the subtlest of authors, and only just within the possibility of authorship. With this wisdom of life is the equal endowment of imaginative and of lyric power. He clothed the creatures of his legend with form and sentiments, as if they were people who had lived under his roof; and few real men have left such distinct characters as these fictions. And they spoke in language as sweet as it was fit.

Yet his talents never seduced him into an ostentation, nor did he harp on one string. An omnipresent humanity co-ordinates all his faculties. Give a man of talents a story to tell, and his partiality will presently appear. He has certain observations, opinions, topics, which have some accidental prominence, and which he disposes all to exhibit. He crams this part and starves that other part, consulting not the fitness of the thing, but his fitness and strength. But Shakespeare has no peculiarity, no importunate topic; but all is duly given; no veins, no curiosities; no cow painter; no bird fancier, no man-nerist is he; he has no discoverable egotism; the great he tells greatly; the small, subordinately.

He is wise without emphasis or assertion; he is strong, as nature is strong, who lifts the land into mountain slopes without effort, and by the same rule as she floats a bubble in the air, and likes as well to do the one as the other. This makes that equality of power in farce, tragedy, narrative, and love-songs; a merit so incessant, that each reader is incredulous of the perception of other readers.

This power of expression, or of transferring the inmost truth of things into music and verse, makes him the type of the poet, and has added a new problem to metaphysics. This is that which led him into natural history, as a main production of the globe, and as announcing new eras and ameliorations. Things were mirrored in his poetry without loss or blur; he could paint the fine with precision, the great with compass, the tragic and the comic indifferently and without any distortion of favor. He carried his powerful execution into minute details, to a hair point; finishes an eyelash or a dimple as firmly as he draws a mountain, and yet these, like nature's, will bear the scrutiny of the solar microscope.

And now, how stands the account of man with this bard and benefactor, when in solitude, shutting our ears to the reverberations of his fame, we seek to strike the balance? Solitude has austere lessons; it can teach us to spare both heroes and poets; and it weighs Shakespeare also, and finds him to share the half-ness and imperfection of humanity.

Shakespeare, Homer, Dante, Chaucer saw the splendor of meaning that plays over the visible world; knew that a tree had another use than for apples, and corn another than for meal, and the ball of the earth, than for tillage and roads; that these things bore a second and finer harvest to the mind, being emblems of its thoughts, and conveying in all their natural history a certain mute commentary on human life. Shakespeare employed them as colors to compose his picture. He rested in their beauty, and never took the step which seemed inevitable to such genius, namely, to explore the virtue which resides in these symbols, and imparts this power—what is that which they themselves say? He converted the elements, which waited on his command, into entertainments. He was master of the revels to mankind.

Is it not as if one should have, through majestic powers of science, the comets given into his hand, or the planets and their moons, and should draw them from their orbits to glare with the municipal fireworks on a holiday night, and advertise in all towns, "very superior pyrotechny this evening!" Are the agents of nature worth no more to understand, than a street serenade, or the breath of a cigar? One remembers again the trumpet-text in the Koran—"The heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, think ye we have created them in jest?"

As long as the question is of talent and mental power the world of men has not his equal to show. But when the question is to life, and its materials, and its auxiliaries, how does he profit me? What does it signify? It is but a Twelfth Night, or Midsummer Night's Dream, or a Winter Evening's Tale; what signifies another picture more or less?

The Egyptian verdict of the Shakespeare Societies come to mind, that he was a jovial actor and manager. I cannot marry this fact to his verse. Other admirable men have led lives in some sort of keeping with their thought; but this man, in wide contrast. Had he been less, had he reached only the common measure of great authors, of Bacon, Milton, Tasso, Cervantes, we might leave the fact in the twilight of human fate; but that this man of men, he who gave to the science of mind a new and larger subject than had ever existed, and planted the standard of humanity some furlongs forward into Chaos—that he should not be wise for himself—it must even go into the world's history that the best poet led an obscure and profane life, using his genius for the public amusement.

Well, other men, priest and prophet, Israelite, German, and Swede, beheld the same objects; they also saw through them that which was contained. And to what purpose? The beauty straightway vanishes; they read commandments, all-excluding mountainous duty and obligation; a sadness, as of piled mountains, fell on them, and life became ghastly, joyless, a pilgrim's progress, a probation, beleaguered round with doleful histories of Adam's fall and curse, behind us; with doomsday and purgatorial and penal fires before us; and the heart of the seer and the heart of the listener sank in them.

It must be conceded that these are half virtues of half men. The world still wants its poet-priest, a reconciler, who shall not trifle with Shakespeare the player, nor shall grope in graves with Swedenborg the mourner; but who shall see, speak, and act with equal inspiration. For knowledge will brighten the sunshine; right is more beautiful than private affection, and love is compatible with universal wisdom.



An old print of Anne Hathaway's Cottage

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON ON SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST



Daniel Webster at the Tomb of Shakespeare

The Much Discussed Criticism in His Famous Preface.

His adherence to general nature has exposed him to the censure of critics, who form their judgments upon narrower principles. Dennis and Rhymer think his Romans not sufficiently Roman; and Voltaire censures his Kings as not completely royal. Dennis is offended, that Menenius, a Senator of Rome, should play the buffoon; and Voltaire perhaps thinks decency violated when the Danish usurper is represented as a drunkard. But Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident; and if he preserves the essential character, is not very careful of distinctions superinduced and adventitious. His story requires Romans or Kings, but he thinks only on men. He knew that Rome, like every other city, had men of all dispositions; and wanting a buffoon, he went into the Senate house for that which the Senate house would certainly have afforded him. He was inclined to show an usurper and a murderer not only odious but despicable; he therefore added drunkenness to his other qualities, knowing that Kings love wine like other men, and that wine exerts its natural power upon Kings. These are the petty cavils of petty minds; a poet overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition, as a painter, satisfied with the figure, neglects the drapery.

The censure which he has incurred by mixing comic and tragic scenes, as it extends to all his works, deserves more consideration.

Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous or critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublimity nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveler is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolic of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

Out of the chaos of mingled purposes and causes the ancient poets, according to the laws which custom had prescribed, selected some the crimes of men, and some their absurdities; some the momentous vicissitudes of life, and some the lighter occurrences; some the terrors of distress, and some the gaieties of prosperity. Thus rose the two modes of imitation, known by the names of tragedy and comedy, compositions intended to promote different ends by contrary means, and considered as so little allied that I do not recollect among the Greeks or Romans a single writer who attempted both.

Shakespeare has united the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind but in one composition. Almost all his plays are divided between serious and ludicrous characters, and, in the successive evolutions of the design, sometimes produce seriousness and sorrow, and sometimes levity and laughter.

That this is a practice contrary to the rules of criticism will be readily allowed, but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature. The end of writing is to instruct; the



Shakespeare charged with poaching before Sir Thomas Lucy

quiet expectation, in tranquillity without indifference.

When Shakespeare's plan is understood, most of the criticisms of Rhymer and Voltaire vanish away. The play of "Hamlet" is opened, without impropriety, by two sentences: Iago bellows at Brabantio's window, without injury to the scheme of the play, though in terms which a modern audience would not easily endure; the character of Polonius is reasonable and useful, and the grave-diggers themselves may be heard with applause.

Shakespeare engaged in dramatic poetry with the world open before him; the rules of the ancients were yet known to few; the public judgment was unformed; he had no example of such fame as might force him upon imitation, nor critics of such authority as might restrain his extravagance. He therefore indulged his natural disposition, and his disposition, as Rhymer has remarked, led him to comedy. In tragedy he often writes with great appearance of toil and study what is written at last with little felicity; but in his comic scenes he seems to produce without labor what no labor can improve. In tragedy he is always struggling after some occasion to be comic, but in comedy he seems to repose, or to luxuriate, as in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature. In his tragic scenes there is always something wanting, but his comedy often surpasses expectation or desire. His comedy pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy for the greater part by incident and action. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.

The force of his comic scenes has suffered little diminution from the changes made by a century and a half, in manners or in words. As his personages act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures and vexations are communicable to all times and to all places; they are natural, and therefore durable, and adventitious peculiarities of personal habits are only superficial dyes, bright and pleasing for a little while, yet soon fading to a dim tint, without any remains of former lustre; but the discriminations of true passions are the colors of nature; they pervade the whole mass and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental compositions of heterogeneous modes are dissolved by the chance which combined them, but the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities neither admits increase nor suffers decay. The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare.

If there be, what I believe there is, in every nation a style which never becomes obsolete, a certain mode of phraseology so consonant and congenial to the analogy and principles of its respective language as to remain settled and unaltered—this style is probably to be sought in the common intercourse of life, among those who speak only to be understood, without ambition of elegance. The polite are always catching modish innovations, and the learned depart from established forms of speech in hope of finding or making better; those who wish for distinction forsake the vulgar when the vulgar is right; but there is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides, and where this poet seems to have gathered his comic dialogue. He is, therefore, more accessible to the ears of the present age than any other author equally remote, and among his other excellencies deserves to be studied as one of the original masters of our language.

These observations are to be considered not as unexceptionably constant, but as containing general and predominate truth. Shakespeare's

familiar dialogue is affirmed to be smooth and clear, yet not wholly without ruggedness or difficulty, as a country may be eminently fruitful, though it has spots unfit for cultivation. His characters are praised as natural, though their sentiments are sometimes forced, and their notions improbable; as the earth upon the whole is spherical, though its surface is varied with protuberances and cavities.

Shakespeare with his excellencies has likewise faults, and faults sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit. I shall show them in the proportion in which they appear to me, without envious malignity or superstitious veneration. No question can be more innocently discussed than a dead poet's pretensions to renown and little regard is due to that bigotry which sets candor higher than truth.

His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings, indeed, a system of social duty may

be deduced, but it is not his province to give to one age or nation, without scruple, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another, at the expense not only of likelihood, but of possibility. These faults Pope has endeavored, with more zeal than judgment, to transfer to his imagined interpolators. We need not wonder to find Hector quoting Aristotle when we see the lovers of Theseus and Hippolyta combined with the Gothic mythology of faeries. Shakespeare, indeed, was not the only violator of chronology, for in the same age Sidney, who wanted not the advantages of learning, has, in his "Arcadia," confounded the pastoral with the feudal times, the days of innocence, quiet and security with those of turbulence, violence, and adventure.

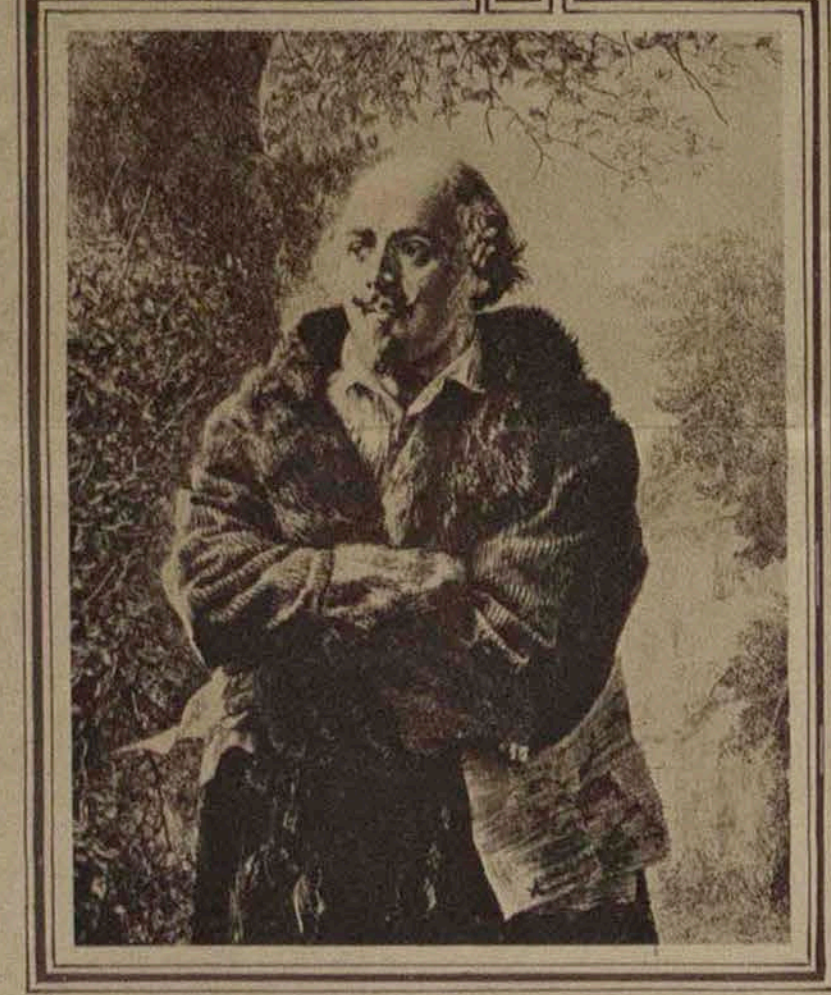
In his comic scenes he is seldom very successful when he engages his characters in recitations of smartness and contest of sarcasm; their jests are commonly gross, and their pleasantry licentious; neither his gentlemen nor his ladies have much delicacy, nor are sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any

are commonly cold and weak, for his power was the power of nature; when he endeavored, like other tragic writers, to catch opportunities of amplification, and instead of inquiring what the occasion demanded, to show how much his stores of knowledge could supply, he seldom escapes without the pity or resentment of his reader.

It is incident to him to be now and then entangled with an unwieldy sentiment, which he cannot well express, and will not reject; he struggles with it a while, and if it continues stubbornly comprises it in words such as occur and leaves it to be disentangled and solved by those who have more leisure to bestow upon it.

Not that always where the language is intricate the thought is subtle or the image always great where the line is bulky; the equality of words to things is very often neglected, and trivial sentiments and vulgar ideas disappoint the attention, to which they are recommended by sonorous epithets and swelling figures.

But the admirers of this great poet have never less reason to indulge



Shakespeare as conceived by the German artist Adolph Menzel

end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. That the mingled drama may convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy cannot be denied, because it includes both in its alterations of exhibition, and approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life by showing how great machinations and slender designs may promote or obviate one another, and the high and the low co-operate in the general system by unavoidable concatenation.

It is objected, that by this change of scenes the passions are interrupted in their progression, and that the principal event, being not advanced by a due gradation of preparatory incidents, wants at last the power to move, which constitutes the perfection of dramatic poetry. This reasoning is so specious that it is received as true even by those who in daily experience feel it to be false. The interchanges of mingled scenes seldom fail to produce the intended vicissitudes of passion. Fiction can-

not move so much but that the attention may be easily transferred; and though it must be allowed that pleasing melancholy be sometimes interrupted by unwelcome levity, yet let it be considered likewise, that melancholy is often not pleasing, and that the disturbance of one man may be the relief of another; that different auditors have different habits; and that, upon the whole, all pleasure consists in variety.

The players, who in their edition divided our author's works into comedies, histories, and tragedies, seem not to have distinguished the three kinds by any very exact or definite ideas.

An action which ended happily to the principal persons, however serious or distressful through its intermediate incidents, in their opinion constituted a comedy. This idea of a comedy continued long among us, and plays were written which, by changing the catastrophe, were tragedies today and comedies tomorrow.

Tragedy was not in those times a poem of more general dignity or elevation than comedy; it required only a calamitous conclusion, with which the common criticism of that age was satisfied, whatever lighter pleasure it afforded in its progress.

History was a series of actions, with no other than chronological succession, independent of each other, and without any tendency to introduce or regulate the conclusion. It is not always very nicely distinguished from tragedy. There is not much nearer approach to unity of action in the tragedy of "Antony and Cleopatra," than in the history of "Richard II." But a history might be continued through many plays; as it had no plan, it had no limits.

Through all these denominations of the drama, Shakespeare's mode of composition is the same: an interchange of seriousness and merriment, by which the mind is softened at one time and exhilarated at another. But whatever be his purpose, whether to gladden or depress, or to conduct the story, without vehemence or emotion, through tracts of easy and familiar dialogue, he never fails to attain his purpose; as he commands us, we laugh or mourn, or sit silent with



The Garrick Jubilee passing Shakespeare's birthplace

be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is he always careful to show in the virtuous disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate, for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent of time or place.

The plots are often so loosely formed that a very slight consideration may improve them, and so carelessly pursued that he seems not always fully to comprehend his own design. He omits opportunities of instructing or delighting which the train of his story seems to force upon him, and apparently rejects those exhibitions which would be more affecting for the sake of those which are more easy.

It may be observed that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work, and in view of his reward, he shortened the labor, to snatch the profit. He, therefore, remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented.

appearance of refined manners. Whether he represented the real conversation of his time is not easy to determine; the reign of Elizabeth is commonly supposed to have been a time of stateliness, formality, and reserve, yet perhaps the relaxations of that severity were not very elegant. There must, however, have been always some modes of gaiety preferable to others, and a writer ought to choose the best.

In tragedy his performance seems constantly to be worse, as his labor is more. The effusions of passion which exigence forces out are for the most part striking and energetic; but whenever he solicits his invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumor, meanness, tediousness, and obscurity.

In narration he affects a disproportionate pomp of diction and a wearisome train of circumlocution, and tells the incident imperfectly in many words, which might have been more plainly delivered in few. Narration in dramatic poetry is naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action; it should therefore always be rapid, and enlivened by frequent interruption. Shakespeare found it an incumbrance, and instead of lightening it by brevity, endeavored to recommend it by dignity and splendor.

His declamations or set speeches

their hopes of supreme excellence than when he seems fully resolved to sink them in dejection and mollify them with tender emotions by the fall of greatness, the danger of innocence, or the crosses of love. He is not long soft and pathetic without some idle conceit, or contemptible equivocation. He no sooner begins to move than he counteracts himself; and terror and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are shackled and blasted by sudden frigidity.

A quibble is to Shakespeare what luminous vapors are to the traveler; he follows it at all adventures, it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to enrage him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible.

Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchanting it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight that he was content to purchase it by the sacrifice of reason, propriety, and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.



The house in which Shakespeare was born. This picture was drawn on stone before the building had been restored.