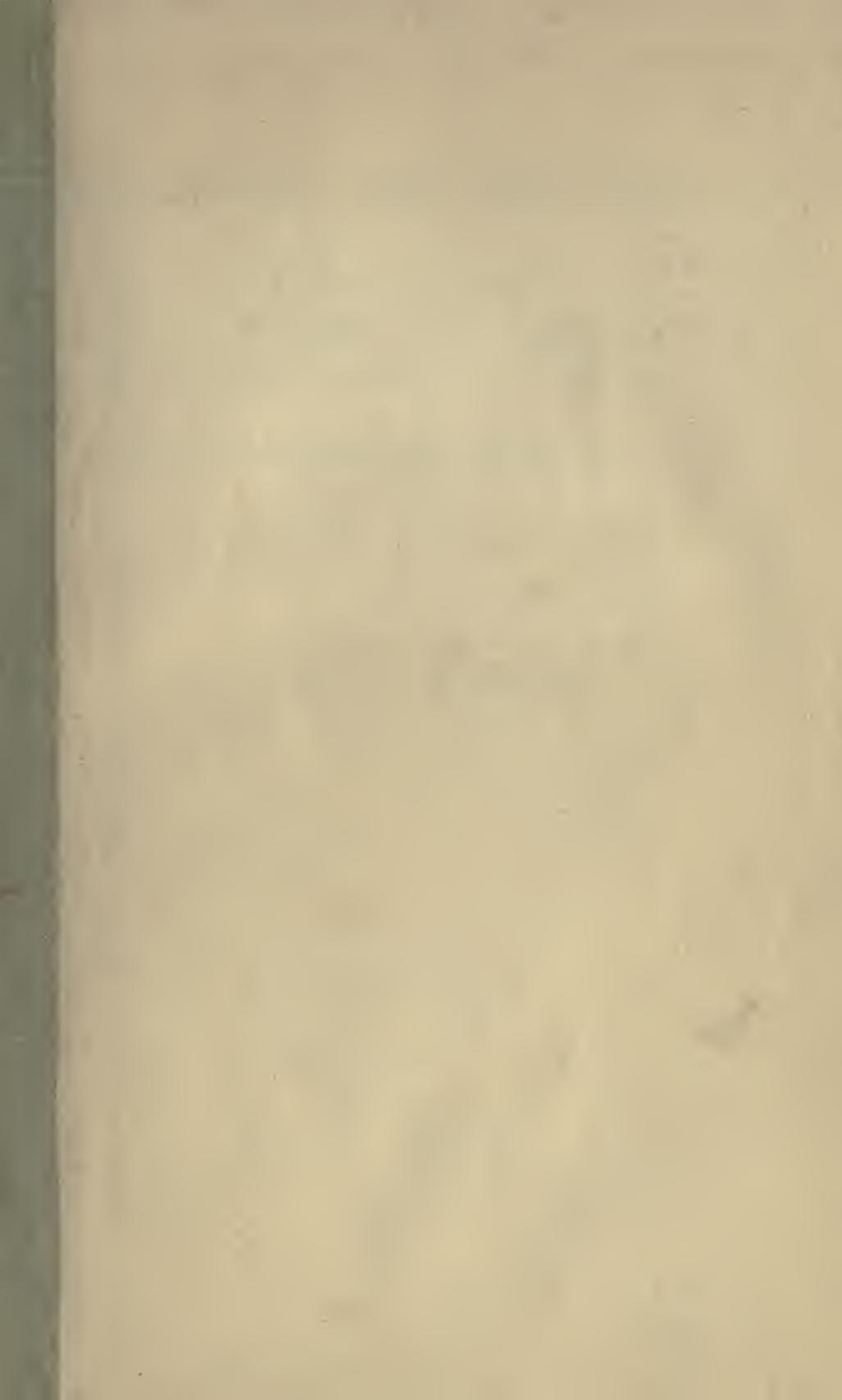


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Shakespeare and His Day

A STUDY OF THE
TOPICAL ELEMENT IN SHAKESPEARE
AND IN THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

Being the *Harness Prize Essay*, 1901

BY

J. A. DE ROTHSCHILD

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE



LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD

41 AND 43 MADDOX STREET, BOND STREET, W.

1906

GENERAL

R

TO THOSE OF MY FRIENDS
WHO WILL READ IT

I

DEDICATE
THIS BOOK

151814

‘When Shakespeare, Jonson, Fletcher, ruled the stage,
They took so bold a freedom with the age,
That there was scarce a knave or fool in town
Of any note but had his picture down.’

SIR CHARLES SCROPE *before 1680.*

‘Many of our Shakespeare’s plays, you know, are
founded upon authenticated facts.’

STERNE, *Tristram Shandy.*

FOREWORD

IN writing the following pages an attempt has been made to extract from the Elizabethan drama something of Elizabethan life. There is no field perhaps that could offer a wealthier fund of Elizabethan remains than the contemporary drama. Grey piles stand here and there to remind one of the past ; but more eloquent than masonry is the literature of that time, and the spirit it enshrines is, after all, the finest link with those days.

What has been done will doubtless partake of the limitations of an essay on a set subject ; and yet it is hoped that the result will neither be devoid of interest, nor without its uses for purposes of study. The treatment is obviously far from exhaustive on a subject which opens up so many

vistas and ranges over so long a period. If but some few nooks and corners of the Elizabethan background have been lit up in the process, it is felt that the undertaking will in some measure have justified itself.

The scheme of the work is briefly this : in the first place, to shadow forth some of the Elizabethan personalities and events ; and, secondly, to evolve something of the general colours and forms of Shakespeare's times. The creator of Falstaff has therefore been taken as the main subject of investigation ; his fellow-dramatists have merely supplied subsidiary detail.

It is believed that the picture produced by these allusions massed together represents work of an independent character ; but for some of the particular points, dealing with definite personages or events, indebtedness must be acknowledged to Dr. Ward's *History of English Dramatic Literature*, to a paper by Mr. Sidney Lee in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1880, as well as to certain of the contributions made to the *Transactions* of

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the New Shakespeare Society. The opportunity of so doing is here gladly taken, as also of thanking a friend, who wishes to remain nameless, for his kindness in reading the proofs and in suggesting certain valuable alterations.

LONDON, *April* 1906.

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CHAPTER I

ON THE PRESENCE OF A TOPICAL ELEMENT IN THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

'Whatever is truly great and affecting must have on it the strong stamp of the native land.'—J. RUSKIN.

‘WITH Plato and Aristophanes for our guides we can, to some extent, reconstruct the life of the Athenians.’¹ So wrote a modern critic well qualified to speak on the Art of ancient Greece. And this truth was no product of modern insight. It was one that was recognised as far back as Plato’s own day.

Dionysius of Syracuse once wrote to that cultured Athenian philosopher for enlightenment on Athenian politics, and in reply a papyrus of Aristophanes’ *Clouds* was sent. Plato recognised that this first great votary of the Comic Muse had found his inspiration not only in the imbroglia of farcical situation, but in the details of contemporary life as well ; and so the comedy was sent to supply the tyrant with what he wished. Had he possessed himself of more of the Aristo-

¹ See *Studies of the Greek Poets*, J. A. Symonds, ii. 194.

phanic papyrus he would have had his picture of Athens and of the things of Athens enlarged in no small degree, so unsparingly did those comedies reflect the life from which they sprang. He would have beheld the profligacy of the rising generation to whom the Sophists were more than their Homer. He would have caught an echo of the hateful litigation and baneful rhetoric which sounded so discordant in that home of the beautiful. He might have read of the time's social licence, its ambitions, its credulity; have caught glimpses of the Parthenon, the Pnyx, and the law-courts, or else have seen how people slept, and walked, and dressed, and dined, in those days at Athens. All this might the comedies of Aristophanes have done for him.

But the reflection of the age was not a monopoly that had been vested with one man or with one institution, with Aristophanes, or with the Comic Stage. The Athenian drama was a many-faceted jewel. Its rays sometimes were shot with comic gleams caught from the light of common day. But elsewhere they threw back the colours and shadows of the life that throbbed around, just as the Parthenon marbles took colour and shade from the blue above.

When the little Republic was heaving with pride over Salamis and its mighty deeds, Æschylus broke out in his *Persæ* into a long chant of praise

and thanksgiving. 'No monarch have they, few are they, but all men of might,' sang he who wrote the *Agamemnon*. And so was enshrined for all time, the mighty spirit that fought at Marathon and again at Salamis. Nor was this an isolated outburst of Attic patriotism. Moschion's *Themistocles* had swelled with the same chant, and scattered up and down through the Athenian drama lie numerous utterances of the same wild spirit. Thus did Tragedy preserve some scenes from the great Grecian gallery, just as Comedy had appropriated others. But Tragedy in its stately way could also embody the moral conscience of the Grecian race, and speak what Grecian hearts felt, both of Time and of 'the undiscovered country.' Tragedy no less than Comedy could shoot at flying Folly and hold up Grecian weakness. It could panegyrisé the Greek athlete. It could also condemn him. He was 'a beauty bright,' or else merely 'a town ornament,' 'one of the thousand ills that preyed on Hellas.'¹ Tragedy could commend in glowing words the Stoicism of the day. It could damn with equal fire the Hedonism that spent its days in feast and song. Together with Comedy it could reflect the softer aspect of the Attic soul, and gently touch the Graces into life. Both could pile up in words the statues they saw around.

¹ Cf. *Studies of the Greek Poets*, J. A. Symonds, *passim*.

Each could paint the Attic sylvan scene—the ivy-clad swallow haunt, the tangled violets beside quiet wells, and dreamy olives so dear to Grecian heart. They could paint every scene, and place them among the things that never die. Not even the poplar-trees with shivering tops, that lined the streets of Athens, were wanting in the great picture that came into being as the drama grew—the picture that gathered strength with every stroke of the dramatic pen. For an immense canvas the Grecian drama must needs be held to be. It was a picture worked out in detail, of all the forms and fashions of Greek life: here ruddy with lofty passion, there drab with the wearying commonplace; silver-soft with Attic loveliness, or rough and harsh with Spartan tones.

If then, with Plato and Aristophanes for guides, it is possible in some degree to reconstruct the life of the Athenians, with the help of the whole Attic stage a countless multitude of further details can be added, and a creation in part can thus be made a thing of more completeness.

How far can a parallel to all this be found in the case of the Elizabethan drama? With what degree of truth can it be said that with Shakespeare and his fellows for our guides, we can reconstruct the Elizabethan age? The conditions of the respective ages were not without their points of contact. Both were times of great national up-

lifting ; times when the gods above were filling the hearts and minds of men with Titanic fire and energy, and when, as it were, new civilisations, dawning on the world, were lighting it step by step along the road to its Olympic destiny.

But whatever the probability as to a parallel, one thing is certain. The Elizabethans themselves *knew* that, woven in the texture of the drama, were to be found many shreds drawn from the life around. Like Plato they saw that contemporary events and contemporary personalities were being constantly alluded to on the stage ; and this testimony from its very nature is the most weighty that could possibly be adduced.

‘Everie stage-plaier,’ wrote one Elizabethan, ‘made a jest of Martin Marprelate’ ; while quoth another, speaking of the same notoriety, ‘They made of him a very May-game on the stage.’¹ The Anglicans hit out at Martin, Martin at the Anglicans. It is not so wonderful that some of their dust kept falling on the stage. Nor indeed do the above remarks indicate any wonder on the part of contemporaries at the incidents when they happened. The facts are merely stated.

Spenser seems to have gone part of the way towards making the same assertion. In his *Tears of the Muses*, he wails over the degraded drama, and laments the ‘vaine toyes’ with which the

¹ See also Dr. Ward’s *English Dramatic Literature*, i. 465-6.

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vulgar were entertained. The lament is only general, it is true. But it would have been signally applicable to the actions of the players in mingling gossip and scandal with their Art, and in taking part in as rude a controversy as ever lowered the dignity of a literary tribe.

Nor were the authorities blind to the stage's activity in this direction ; least of all when it busied itself with matters of statecraft. Already in 1554 the bishops are reproached for vexing and troubling 'the poor minstrels and players of interludes,' who found no favour with the clergy, 'since they persuaded the people to worship the Lord aright'¹ and not on the lines of episcopalian dictation. In 1574 the Lord Mayor was under the necessity of petitioning for a Censorship of Plays. Fifteen years later plays were 'stayed,' doubtless as a result of censorship ; and if *The Tragedy of Gowrie*, stayed in 1604, be taken as a specimen, such plays were evidently forbidden, when their political tendencies were too pronounced, or when they discussed questions connected with the State. On the evidence therefore of the staying of the plays, and from the likelihood of their prohibition being caused by their topical tendencies, it must be inferred that, as early as 1590, some plays had overstepped the limits of topical licence, and had spoken too plainly on matters of contemporary interest.

¹ Epistle by Henry Stalbridge.

The Queen, who crushed prophesyings, also launched a decree forbidding plays to be acted 'wherein either matters of religion or governance of the State should be handled or treated.' But the 'stage-plaier' was hardly repressed, and Elizabeth had to speak in angrier tones, to forbid in plain terms 'the utterance of popular, busy, and seditious matter' on the stage.

Corroboration of this 'business' of the theatre comes, too, from sources less elevated. 'The players,' wrote one Calvert in a private letter of 1604, 'do not forbear to present upon the stage the whole course of the present time,' and he added that they spared neither 'the King, the State, or religion.' According to another contemporary,¹ they were wont to inveigh against the State and the Court, the Law, the City, and their Governments. And as if the intellectual grasp of the 'plaier' did not find 'the whole course of that present English time' a sufficient whetstone for his wit, evidence of his further activity was at hand from over the Channel. For about the same date, the French ambassador complains somewhat testily to the authorities at Paris, of the liberties taken by the English stage with certain notable events of contemporary French history. So that, apparently, nothing of contemporary note lay outside the dramatic range.

Perhaps more eloquent than all these complaints

¹ Cf. Heywood, *Apology for Actors* (1612).

and prohibitions, however, was the action of the Government in imprisoning three of the most popular playwrights for offence given by alluding on the stage to one of Scottish extraction, high in Royal esteem. Chapman and Marston had inserted in their comedy, *Eastward Hoe*, notices of public matter couched 'in wicked and libellous vein'; and for this they suffered, and Jonson with them. Further official action was taken against Jonson when he was called before the Council to answer for his *Sejanus*.¹ Sir John Yorke was also fined by the Star Chamber for having allowed a play to be acted in his house embodying 'many foul passages to the vilifying of our religion.' And later still, Middleton was imprisoned for his flagrantly topical *Game of Chesse*. So that the authorities were painfully convinced of the evidence of the topical element on the stage.

But at times such allusions found grace in the official eye. As a rule, those at the head of affairs disliked the holding up of matters of high import for the approval or disapproval of the 'many-headed.' Circumstances, however, could arise in which those who ought to have seen, would be diplomatically preoccupied, and would possess no eye for this class of delinquency. A case in point arose in 1592, when certain players were suffered to jest at Philip of Spain, 'in order to

¹ See Jonson's *Conversations with Drummond*.

make him odious unto the people.’¹ The law again winked conveniently when James of Scotland was known to be making overtures to the odious Philip. Unpleasant allusions were certainly made at this time to the Scottish monarch, whose faulty diplomacy had brought him under England’s frown ; for news came post-haste from Edinburgh of the displeasure with which James had heard of the personal topic employed at that time by the London comedians.²

To the Elizabethan mind, then, the abiding presence of allusive matter on the contemporary stage was beyond dispute. It had won alike the Royal frown and the Royal approval. It had been the subject of mild remark between mild correspondents. It had amused the groundlings, imprisoned dramatists, and stung foreign dignitaries into making protestations.

If further proof were needed that the Elizabethan age found its reflection on the contemporary stage, it would be visible in the statements of the dramatists themselves, in the titles of some of their plays, in the existence of certain allusions of a character beyond dispute, embedded here and there in these plays, and in certain other considerations to be mentioned hereafter.

¹ *Verstegen* (1592).

² Cf. Letter from John Chamberlaine to Winwood (18th Dec. 1604). Cam. Soc., 1861.

The dramatists were evidently of opinion that it lay within their province, that it was inevitably connected with their craft—this use of the topical device.

Shakespeare is explicit. The ‘purpose of playing’ was to show the time ‘his form and pressure.’¹ His actors were to be ‘the abstract or brief chronicles of the time.’² And these were principles which his plays illustrated, to a degree perhaps not altogether suspected by the great dramatist himself.

Lyly was consistently inexplicit; but he seems to hint at the same intention. He who lived in allegory and breathed Euphuism, had still to retain a touch of mystery even when he would be making a confidence. ‘There liveth none under the sun,’ he wrote in his Prologue to *Endymion*, ‘that knoweth what to make of the Man in the Moon.’ But apparently there lived those who thought they could; and who could, withal, only read an unpleasant interpretation into it. At all events, in the Epilogue to the same play he had already found it convenient to claim the Queen’s protection against ‘the malicious that sought to overthrow him with threats.’ The sound of cudgels seems to lurk behind the lines—the cudgels of offended personality. And it seems therefore to be no far-fetched conclusion, that

¹ *Hamlet*, III. ii. 21.

² *Ibid.*, II. ii. 530.

Lyly had shadowed forth in the play some domestic or political drama of the day, and that his careless chuckle in the Prologue was nothing less than a covert statement to his age of this underlying intention, of which he lived to repent him—as early as the Epilogue.

Of further significant utterances by the dramatists, there is one by Jonson. Nothing probably points more conclusively to a vogue than its caricature. And when the author of *Bartholomew Fair* sarcastically alludes in the Induction of that play to ‘the politic picklocks of the scene,’ who make it the business ‘to search out who was meant by the ginger-bread woman, the hobby-horse man, and the costard-monger,’ he lights up an excess, but he also does more. He proves the frequency with which his contemporaries were wont to look for such topical allusions in the plays which the age presented to them.

Besides these statements, more or less direct, of a topical intention, there is also certain evidence of a more indirect character, pointing however in the same direction. The titles themselves of some of the plays point conclusively to a contemporary appetite for such fare.

The Famous History of the Life and Death of Captain Thomas Stukely, and the *Battle of Alcazar*, would naturally attract those whose memories went back to the year 1578, or who could

recollect the stirring events of 1589 and Don Antonio. The *Massacre of Paris* would call up a fateful evening of 1572; *Bartholomew Fair*, that annual English scene of revelry, credulity, and vice. Plays like *Bussy d'Ambois* and the *Tragedy of Biron* would remind the English public of stormy scenes enacted in their own time beyond the narrow seas: while *John van Olden Barnaveldt* was a play whose subject came piping-hot from the Low Countries.

Sometimes the contemporary item would take a lowlier tone, as when some of the domestic tragedies that darken every age, crept on to the stage. *The most tragical and lamentable murder of Master George Saunders of London, merchant, nigh Shooters Hill: consented unto by his owne wife*, etc., was a typical example of the class. Episodes such as these would nowadays drift naturally into newspaper channels; but then it was the stage that caught them, and the *Yorkshire Tragedy*, *Arden of Feversham*, *The Woman killed with Kindness*, and *the Fair Maid of Bristol* (all turning on crimes of recent date), show with how keen a relish popular audiences were wont to witness the most lugubrious crimes of their day, represented again in their grimy detail.

Then again, the most casual reader of the dramatists is constantly alighting on words and phrases which are undoubted reminiscences of

Elizabethan life, and which stand out clearly in their context, unmistakable as they are significant. Brownists and Puritans, the Cotsols and Bermoothes, Moorditch with its melancholy, and St. Paul's with its walks, theatres and actors, justices and beadles, hobby-horses and loggats, village-greens and ale-houses,—with each and every one there lingers, as they lie embalmed in the pages of the dramatists, something of that glowing life which they were wont to breathe when Chelsea was yet a village, and but one bridge spanned a lovely Thames.

In addition, the great popularity of the Elizabethan plays in their own age, coupled with the great after-decline in that popularity, also seems to lend additional evidence as to the existence of this topical element. If the popularity of Shakespeare, for instance, in his own day simply rested upon an adequate appreciation of his poetical genius, the intellectual fibre of the people must have declined to an alarming extent in the generations immediately succeeding. For with his own age passed, for a time at least, much of his popularity. Even allowing that the Elizabethan atmosphere was conducive to poetical appreciation, the fact of his extraordinary popularity is not sufficiently accounted for. And unless the hypothesis of a decline in English intellectual stamina is accepted, the natural inference seems to

be, that to his contemporaries the plays of Shakespeare presented certain features which chained their interest, but which in a few decades became dead matter to the general. And there is nothing more likely to correspond to an influence of this description than that of topical matter.

The self-centred character of the age, too, lends additional probability as to the presence of such contemporary matter in the drama of the day. We are all better pleased at seeing our neighbours derided than at witnessing the comic distresses of some extraneous personages. Our compassion is more readily aroused at misfortunes which may to-morrow befall us, than at all the impossible woes of all the heroes and heroines since the days of Agamemnon. We are slow to discard the age from our thoughts. But a people brimming over with action and with newly-found life would still less willingly have left all politics and gossip outside the doors of the theatre. Such things were an integral part of life to them, and it would be difficult to think of a dramatist wooing such a generation for immediate success, by addressing himself as if to a dispassionate and disinterested posterity that was Hecuba to him. Something of that outside world would have to be conjured up on the stage, and the poet in his highest flights would have to remember, every now and then, to touch earth once again. In no

age probably did dramatic writers have to bow more scrupulously to contemporary feeling, for in no age had there existed a nation more wrapt up in self, more conscious of the pride of race and of its budding glories. 'Alas,' said Carlyle, 'Shakespeare had to write for the Globe play-house : his great soul had to crush itself as it could into that and no other mould.' The 'Globe' was England; the England of his day shaped his thoughts and chose his topics. No wonder, then, if much that interested his contemporaries could be read in his works.

There is yet one more consideration which points to the probability of the presence of such allusions in Elizabethan drama.

In the Middle Ages, the moralities which fostered the English drama 'on scaffolds hye' had exhibited the tendency, as it were, in embryo. In the tragic as in the comic vein, these rough presentations reflected the life that was led by the people; for the audiences that gaped on rude festival plays at Chester, and Coventry, and elsewhere, soon found their counterparts on those very stages. Artisan and cleric crept on to the scaffolding, and moralities became oftentimes accurate, if severe, portraits of notorious figureheads, such as the priest, the squire, and the pardoner. So that even at this early date it seemed that a popular stage had necessarily to reflect the popular life.

When university scholars tried to revive in England the classical school of drama, and to bring the Roman *cothurnus* on to the English stage, the sequel only proved the truth of this same principle. Their close imitation of Seneca caused their productions to be merely retrospective. Their plays wanted national interest, and the stage that chose to neglect the popular life soon collapsed in its own ruins. Its detachment from things of the day had completely alienated the sympathies of the people.

The popular drama, on the other hand, which had beheld the Senecan type both rise and fall, instinctively surrendered itself to the popular tendency. It reflected spontaneously contemporary personalities, current opinions, current events; and while the wooden puppets of the scholars were being consigned to an obscurity not altogether undeserved, the popular kind was already leaving its grub-stage and opening out into that golden creation which posterity has named the Elizabethan drama.

It is difficult to think that the English drama, arrived at maturity, would scorn those very principles which had successfully led it from Chester to the 'Globe,' and had endowed it with a surpassing truth and virility. Probability, in fact, points to a directly opposite assumption, and the intimate contact which the early stage pre-

served with real life, and which saved it from the fate of more scholarly and artificial efforts, was the deciding factor in the growth of the later drama, and the underlying principle on which the great creations were subsequently built.

There must have existed, then, a topical element in the Elizabethan drama. Not only do strong probabilities point that way, but definite evidence, external and internal, run in the same direction. And the existence of these allusions, so far from being unprecedented, can be regarded merely as the outcome of national circumstances, which had given rise to a similar phenomenon on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean two thousand years before.

But what sometimes makes the modern acceptance of the topical tendency difficult, as far as Elizabethan times are concerned, is the fact that the tendency is, generally speaking, absent from the serious stage of to-day. The 'Lyceum' does not shadow forth the day's politics of personalities as the 'Globe' is said to have done, and it is therefore somewhat difficult to allow that the alleged references to local and national events and personalities did actually exist in the earlier drama.

The absence of the topical, however, from the stage of to-day need supply no argument against its employment on the Elizabethan one. Its presence in the one case, as well as its absence from the other, is due to a difference of

contemporary conditions, a difference in the idea of what lies within the dramatic province. And this is due not to one cause alone.

In the first place, more than one institution has relieved the stage of what fell to its lot in the old days; among such institutions, journalism. Politics since then have fallen on to the more perfect platform of the newspaper, and if a convenient medium is now sought for the utterance of 'popular, busy, or seditious matter,' the journalist supplies the means. So it has come about that the militant statesman is now no longer hurried across the stage with hunted look and matted hair when his policy is not approved, nor is the man whose voice is raised in the street made 'a May-game of' on the stage. Both are, instead, guillotined by the newspapers.

Then again, modern Art is taken more gravely than in the breezy days of Drake and his Devonshire sea-dogs. Modern sensations are not willingly mingled; and art and polemics were never good playfellows. Hence the latter-day divorce between the drama and the topical, between the artistic and what must be often little more than jarring and commonplace.

The differing character of the respective audiences, too, goes for something. In Elizabethan times the topical allusion was a needed stimulant and attraction; for English art was yet in its

infancy, and it had to work out its own salvation cautiously, not forgetting the material tendency of the age. Art, pure and undefiled, would as yet have scarcely attracted sufficient patrons, and it was in response to the requirements of the time that the dramatic art became modified, by the injection of some of that very age into its composition. With the dawn of a greater sensibility, the topical stimulant became unnecessary, and the precept which made Art self-sufficient was born.

To our modern ways of thinking, moreover, there is something derogatory about the term,—topical element. A place is denied it in the Elizabethan drama, on the ground that Shakespeare and his fellows would not have stooped to employ such a device for recommending their art, as to mingle something of the age with it. But genius has never been wont to avoid the market-place. The Roman Terence held nothing that was human, alienate. And to state that Shakespeare for one readily adapted himself to the fashions of his day, is neither to indict his genius of being gravelled for lack of argument, nor to brand him as a charlatan who adulterated his wares for purposes of sale. When Tallis and Byrd made ‘music and sweet poetry agree’ in their exquisite chamber recitals, the dramatists followed suit by arranging for the marriage of music to words on the stage. And the vogue thus begun was afterwards respon-

sible for such things as the *Silvia* lyric and the *Tempest's* sea-dirge. There is no difficulty in conceiving the adoption of the one fashion. It should be no harder to imagine the adoption of that other, which concerned itself with the topical. All the more because the business faculties of the greatest of the dramatists have been placed beyond doubt. He who could prosecute a man at law for a trifling amount, even while his soul was groaning with the birth of a 'Lear,' was surely not one to refuse to adopt a contemporary fashion, in itself not inconsistent with artistic sensibility, and which seemed to be the one thing to confer upon his efforts that contemporary success, which, more than academic glory, was the aim and end of his writing.

To call the topical tendency a fashion of the age of Elizabeth, as far as the drama is concerned, is not to overstate the case, or to exaggerate things as they really were. It is true that what has hitherto been garnered of a topical nature from that great dramatic field is but fractional, and to some minds almost accidental, in the total output of dramatic matter. And, therefore, at first sight it seems quite out of proportion with what might reasonably have been expected from a general tendency of the time. But harvest results do not always represent the actual crop. Time with his sickle has been busy among the Elizabethan plays. As in other realms of production only the fittest

have survived, and as they were not always those plays in which contemporary allusions were most apparent or plentiful, such survivors are naturally limited in number. Often indeed, as might be expected, many purely topical plays lasted not a day longer than that which beheld them produced, and they passed away almost simultaneously with the events which called them into being. This is one reason why the evidence as to the existence of the topical tendency is more truncated than would be expected assuming the tendency to have been general.

Then, too, such allusions were but coyly put forth, and so would be often lost. Sometimes they avoided paper altogether; were, in fact, 'extemporally staged,' as Cleopatra predicted would be her fate at the hands of the quick comedians. At others, they were quite covert in their nature, like those which Master John Lyly so cunningly wrapped up in his *Endymion* Prologue. The pillory and the cropping of ears both conduced to this shyness of setting down plain allusions. But, for whatever reason, this reluctance did undoubtedly exist, and hosts of allusions which floated over the Elizabethan stage, recognised by all spectators, have been lost, either through want of place in the acting version, or through the ultra-ingenuity of the witty masters.

In many cases, of course, want of knowledge

on the part of the modern critic must also curtail the evidence. The lack of acquaintance with all the *minutiæ* of contemporary history must often prevent allusions being read, where they undoubtedly existed for the rudest and most unlettered Elizabethan: and until a more complete equation of history with the drama is obtained, these allusions will continue to be passed over.

So there is more than one reason why any collection of such allusions, in the present state of Elizabethan scholarship, could not assume to be representative of the actual output. And it is only reasonable to insist that, in deciding on the probability or otherwise of a prevalent topical tendency in the days of Elizabeth, the appraiser should remember the section which Time has submerged, and which ignorance passes over.

It has been said that many allusions have been undoubtedly lost through the lack of modern acquaintance with the sixteenth and seventeenth century conditions. But modern ingenuity has, in some instances, done its best to supply the deficiency, in a way, however, that can only add to the confusion. The loosest of bridles has often been given to Fancy as it galloped through the Elizabethan drama in search of allusions; with the sole result, however, of a ludicrous spoil, which the smallest ray of good sense has been able to dissolve. That amiable critic who read his

Tennyson at a time of inspiration and saw that the *In Memoriam*, with 'its touching lines, evidently came from the full heart of the widow of a military man,' unconsciously illustrated the dangers of accepting Fancy as a guide in literary, or indeed any, tracts. It is easy to transfer personal fancies and personal wishes into works of a designedly simple character. And this is a caution which needs to be borne in mind in deciding on allusions, lest results may be obtained of fabric as shadowy as ever Cowper saw in his fire at twilight.

The fact is that all possible allusions must be considered not from a fanciful, a personal, or a modern standpoint, but only and entirely from the Elizabethan one. The contemporary audience must be the touchstone. The stage must ever be viewed through those quaint horn spectacles which Elizabethans used, for the Elizabethan mind is the only key that can surely unlock the details of that topical feature of the drama which presented so many attractions to the age. And before this Elizabethanism can be attained it will be necessary to drench oneself thoroughly in the hopes, the aspirations, and temper of the time; not the hopes of the Queen and her counsellors alone, but of the commonalty as well. Local events and personalities must be known as well as those that played a national part, and when this historical *desideratum* has been obtained, which is certainly

not yet, then will the investigation of what is allusive proceed from an absolutely safe basis.

Besides insisting on the necessity for deciding the genuineness or otherwise of Elizabethan allusions solely from Elizabethan planes, there is yet another *caveat* to be mentioned, and it is one which one Phil Kynder, as far back as 1656, thought it wise to emphasise. The extraordinary must not be held to typify the ordinary, and the above writer was at pains to deprecate any future attempt at making 'all England in ages past a Bartholomew Fair,' or to draw 'the condition of all Elizabethan women out of Shækkespeare's Merry Wifes of Windsor.' Such an attempt will appear to many to stand self-condemned; but there must have been some cause for Kynder's statement in his own day, and it is a fault that has not always been avoided since, though the instances that have occurred were scarcely such flagrant breaches as he was pleased to instance.

It might be noticed in addition, however, that the same writer sees fit to laugh at the idea of recreating a past age from that age's literature. He considers it idle work, 'the moulding up a piece of antiquity'; and thinks it impossible to extract from the literature of a country 'the general character and customs of that country.' But this is the very question to which the present

chapter has attempted to give some reply. Not only do various strong probabilities go to confute what he says, but (and this seems more to the point) a goodly array of significant historical facts as well. The available data may be smaller in quantity than might be expected, but neither this nor any antecedent improbability as to the existence of such genuine data can furnish a negative of any strength. Just as it was possible to paint the picture of Athens from the Attic drama (on Plato's own showing), so can Shakespeare's England be recovered again from the Elizabethan plays. It only remains to appreciate the colouring and to catch the forms, for the full life of which these dramas are the silent witnesses to be restored again. The author of our most scholarly work on English dramatic literature held that the Elizabethan age would have remained isolated from its successors 'had not its dramatic literature, with a vividness beyond the reach of any other literary form, transmitted its own picture of itself to posterity.¹ And so adequate does this picture appear to be, that one would fain indulge the fancy that the sun, which smiled on the city and also into its roofless theatres, had caught the fashions from the streets, and thrown them on to the stage, for the amusement of that age and the enlightenment of posterity.

¹ See Dr. Ward's *English Dramatic Literature*, i, 269.

CHAPTER II

ON PARTICULAR ALLUSIONS OF THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

'I am always inclined to believe that Shakespeare has more allusions to particular facts and persons than his readers commonly suppose.'—
DR. JOHNSON.

IN entering upon the task of collecting material which shall throw light upon the age of Shakespeare, the first thing that strikes one is the fact that the material divides itself, roughly speaking, into two main classes—the one containing allusions of a *particular* kind, which connect themselves with definite events, personalities, and opinions; the other comprising more *general* allusions, which relate to no particular figures or events, but represent rather broad types and general characteristics.

The first section, the 'particular,' appear to be intentionally made. Their insertion seems to be nothing less than the dramatist's response to the age's craving for a topical stimulant. Those of a 'general' kind, on the other hand, seem to be more casually inserted. Often, indeed, their presence

seems merely due to an unconscious effort on the part of the dramatist. But they are, despite their seemingly casual insertion, inevitable in their appearance. They are, in reality, as necessary to the verisimilitude of the drama as shadow to sunlight, and are equally indispensable in filling up the age's picture.

The 'particular' allusions, as contrasted with the 'general,' appear at first sight to be the more important as a class, just as the deciphering of a hidden personality seems of more weight than the notice of a custom. The former, too, is the class over which labour and ingenuity have been the more abundantly spent, oftentimes to the almost entire neglect of the 'general' kind. Yet the latter is the class, which contains the essentials of the age. 'Particular' allusions often do little more than glance at the age, and present its accidents and idle excrescences. Both, however, are necessary. A particular incident may point to a widely spread custom. A general custom may light up an individual. So that if the picture of the age is to be adequate and complete, as far as the present-day scholarship permit, not only are the curious and occasional detail to be filled in, but the permanent background as well.

The intention of the present chapter concerns itself solely with direct references to personalities and events contained in the Elizabethan drama.

Such references will be seen to cover a large field, for there seems scarcely any department of Elizabethan life which is not represented.

It has been already seen that matters of high import were often dragged on to the English stage, in spite of Royal prohibitions. Elizabeth and her successor were often alluded to, sometimes from a desire to panegyrise, at other times in a spirit of hostile criticism. The poets and wits also came in for their share of notice, and just as in the case of the sovereigns, these notices are valuable inasmuch as they illustrate the temper of the age and the sentiments of the individual. Curious political shreds, too, were often appearing before the footlights, and these, pieced together, will give some notion of current opinion. Passing events in their flight would sometimes cast shadows upon the stage, and these have the virtue of occasionally corroborating, in the freshest of ways, historical records, when, indeed, they do not supplement them. Even news from beyond the seas found at times a publicity on this same English stage, and such narratives are scarcely ever without some significance as to the national attitude towards neighbouring peoples, or as to the success of national enterprise abroad.

The contemporary drama will, in this way, supply the key to much that was contemporary, and peculiar to the age. To bring out these

peculiarities is the utility from the modern standpoint of the 'particular' allusion.

In an age like the one under present discussion, when euphuistic flowers were strewed about in rich profusion, it would not unnaturally be expected that the same luxury of language would distinguish courtly allusions made in the drama. Dedications were invariably couched in honeyed superlatives, and a neat tongue at court availed more than a quick sword. But this notwithstanding, a splendid moderation characterises nearly every compliment paid on the stage to the reigning sovereign, and this is not unworthy of notice. It could not have been an obtuseness, a tardiness in nature, that led to this moderation on the part of the dramatists, for they were, when they willed, creators of kings who trod the boards with regal dignity. Nor could it have been an unwillingness to bend the pregnant hinges of the dramatic knees. Possibly it was because they were merely reproducing the tempered courtesy of the people towards the Crown, undazzled as they were by the glare of the Court. From whatever cause, however, sprang their moderation in tributes addressed to the throne, their allusions were marked in consequence by a saneness that makes them the more valuable as evidence.

The most familiar allusion to the *Virgin Queen* will occur to all. The famous allegory known as

Oberon's Vision in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* undoubtedly refers to the splendid revels of the Court held at Kenilworth early in the Queen's reign. There Leicester made a last desperate attempt to win the hand of his queenly votaress, wrapped in 'maiden meditation, fancy free.'¹ How the proud Earl, as 'Cupid all armed,' fluttered undecidedly between his love for the Queen ('the cold moon,' 'that fair vestal throned in the west') and the Countess of Sheffield ('the Earth'), and how Cupid's bolt fell at last upon the Countess of Essex (that 'little western flower, Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound')—all this is a tale which Scott has told in part, and is Shakespeare's most direct allusion to the Court life of the haughty Queen. It is a particular reference to a well-known incident, and it enshrines not only her love for Royal progresses, but also for the complimentary Masque.

The *Merry Wives of Windsor* contains another direct allusion, where Mrs. Anne Page invokes a blessing upon Windsor Castle.² But in generosity, this passage lags far behind the one in *Henry VIII.* where it is foretold that

'She shall be loved and feared: her own shall bless her.
Her foes shall shake like a field of beaten corn,

¹ See *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. ii. 98 ff.

² *Merry Wives of Windsor*, V. v. 60 ff.

And hang their heads with sorrow :

Many days shall see her,
And yet no day without a deed to crown it.’¹

In addition to these, in *Lochrine* she is complimented on having reigned for eight-and-thirty years ; in *Bussy d’Ambois*, Guise says of the English Court, that they make

‘ of their old Queen
An ever-young and most immortal goddess’ ;²

and Greene, in more conventional strain, had already issued another prophecy. ‘ Diana’s rose ’ should receive the homage of ‘ Apollo’s heliotrope, and Venus’ hyacinth, of Juno’s gilliflowers, and Pallas’ bay, and Ceres’ carnation.’³ Antiquity’s best and brightest were to pale before England’s future Queen.

Towards the end of her reign, however, tongues were beginning to wag on what was called the Queen’s decline in might and majesty. Then Jonson gallantly stood by her, and in his *Cynthia’s Revels* he makes her proudly say, ‘ We are no less Cynthia than we were,’⁴ and therein claims for her, her ancient greatness and power undiminished. The sympathies of the people for the Virgin Queen, even when death had claimed her, were certainly not buried with her. After her day

¹ *Henry VIII.*, v. iv. 30 ff.

² Chapman, *Bussy D’Ambois*, act 1.

³ *Friar Bacon*, *ad fin.*

⁴ *Cynthia’s Revels*, v. iii.

her early difficulties are related again in Heywood's *Troubles of Queen Elizabeth*.¹ The thorny path that had led her to the throne, is called to mind, and the triumphs of the dead Queen seemed only the greater for that happy perspective, in which the lapse of a few years had placed them.

Other allusions to the same exalted personage have from time to time been suggested by modern readers of Elizabethan drama. It has been thought that in *Lady Macbeth*, Shakespeare intended the theatre-going audiences of James' reign to behold their former Queen lightly shadowed. This involves the supposition of a prevalent sentiment, contrary to that inferred from Heywood's play. But it is not impossible that the two sentiments may have been held by different sections of the community, and at all events, there is something to be said for this last suggestion. In *Lady Macbeth's* treatment of the kinsman who was both sovereign and guest, the dramatist designedly drew, to all appearance, a parallel to Elizabeth's behaviour towards the Scottish Mary. The parallelism is continued in the fact that the sovereignty in each instance passed to the son of the murdered monarch, and though this may seem nothing more than an unavoidable coincidence, the frequent additions made to the Chronicle account in building up the play, seem to point to

¹ Otherwise called *If you know not me*.

some such purpose in the play. The points of likeness may seem obscure at this point of time, but the probability is that they were more than sufficient to awaken the imagination of the audience at a time when the gossips had not yet left off talking about the release of Southampton, that ardent friend of Mary's. And if the popular imagination was capable of any response, it would probably soon arrive at Shakespeare's intentions, whether they connected themselves with Queen Elizabeth, or merely with the recital of a weird piece of northern history. Elsewhere, others have seen in Portia's review of her suitors¹ an allusive compliment to the much-wooded Queen. Others have held that it was the beautiful auburn hair of the Queen (usually displayed in an open Italian caul) that was praised when chestnut was declared to be 'ever the only colour.'² If these allusions seem far-fetched, they must yet not be lightly dismissed. What may have been to a contemporary a palpable hit may seem to-day wide of the mark, and it is in such cases as these that the Elizabethan equation is most necessary.

Besides these passing allusions to the Maiden Queen, her personality broods over plays where

¹ *Merchant of Venice*, I. ii.

² *As You Like It*, III. iv. 12; cf. also *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV. iv. 191.

her footsteps are not seen. Her reign, its polity and temper, to some extent permeate the Shakespearean histories, and allusions arise from the text like misty forms, somewhat vague but none the less coherent. The histories are, in fact, a mirror of the time. They reflect contemporary undercurrents, and in them the dramatist sings a chorus to his age.

There were numerous reasons why, in the days of Elizabeth, occasional sullen murmurs of discontent should have existed among the people: and it is some of these murmurs which rise at intervals from the Shakespearean history. The Queen never ran directly counter to what she knew to be the strongest wishes of her people. But points of difference were bound to arise from such causes as her fondness for favourites, or her approval of Burleigh's subterfuges for oppressing the country by unjust taxation. Her policy of expediency was heartless. It made her last word unstable, and as Camden said, 'it often caused her to knowingly abandon innocent persons under accusation.' She was her father's child, and there was not a little personal tyranny and jealousy in her dealings with the Queen of Scots, with Essex and Southampton. So that it must needs have been that the realm contained, among those who thought, some who complained, and it is something of this popular disquietude which is re-

vealed with fitting dignity in the allusive tone of these histories.

While the power of Leicester yet lived in the memory, and while 'grievous exactions' were being 'generally imposed upon the people,'¹ then does the dramatist throw off his studies of polity in *Henry VI.* and *Richard II.*, whereby he illustrated how weak sovereigns could be led to ruin by evil advisers and indulgence in unjust taxation. When the country suffered impatiently under the subterfuges of Burleigh, then comes the play of *Richard III.*, in which the scheming tyrant, furthered by corrupt nobles, is overthrown by righteous rebellion. When plots and machinations threatened to revive the days of Throgmorton and Babington; when the Papists held out their hands across the water to Philip of Spain and the Duke of Mayenne, then does the dramatist in *King John* and *Henry VI.* expose the miseries of foreign intervention even when supported by the justest of revolts. The play of *Henry V.* is partly a political placard for Essex and his friends, whose success Shakespeare would have viewed with such enthusiasm, but it also demonstrates how righteous and great achievement would overwhelm in the Elizabethan mind all outlying questions relating to succession. And in *Henry VIII.*, when his hopes for Essex were dashed, he draws a sombre

¹ Verstegan (1592).

picture of Royalty leaning on the support of extortionate lawyers and unscrupulous clerics.¹

But besides thus echoing definite contemporary complaints, these plays also sound notes of pride and patriotism, which in their intensity are almost peculiar to Elizabeth's reign. In *King John* the Protestant self-reliance is powerfully exhibited; in *Henry V.* and *Richard II.* Elizabethan patriotism is taken to divine heights. The majesty and dignity of old Gaunt's tribute to 'the precious stone set in the silver sea,'² the haughty defiance of Faulconbridge on behalf of the England that

'Never did, nor never shall
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror':³

these things represent only that fire which Elizabeth, with all her faults, had infused into the nation.

Incidentally, too, *Henry V.* enunciates a definite political plea which could not have been at that time confined to the dramatist's brain. It was a plea for unity: unity among the four English-speaking nationalities, and unity among the English themselves. The play has representatives of the four countries fighting side by side under one flag, and for the same end. The question of consolidation was in the air when the play was being written. Ireland, so it was thought, was

¹ Cf. R. Simpson, 'Politics of Shakespeare's Historical Plays' (*Shak. Soc. Trans.*, 1874).

² *Richard II.*, II. i. 46.

³ *King John*, v. vii. 112.

being pacified by Essex. Wales was already united, and the probability of union with Scotland had already become apparent from the consideration of James's claims to the English crown.

The need for national unity, on the other hand, had been obvious from the earlier years of Elizabeth's reign. But this need was a doctrine which required constant formulating on account of the many difficulties that presented themselves. The faith of some Englishmen seemed to beckon them to Spain, and a choice seemed to be offered between creed and country. Elizabeth must have often said, at least in effect, to her people: 'Be friends, you English fools, be friends: we have French quarrels enow, if you could tell how to reckon.'¹ And to the general acceptance of this counsel must be referred that unanimous closing up of English ranks for the great effort of '88. But such advice from the stage was not given only by Shakespeare. The writer of *Gorboduc*, too, had made his protest against discord. He had advised his hearers to choose the one for sovereign 'upon whose name the people rest,' whether it was 'by means of native line' or 'by the virtue of some former law.'

'Such one prefer and in no wise admit
The heavy yoke of foreign governaunce.'²

All this had a tremendous meaning before

¹ *Henry V.*, IV. i. 221.

² *Gorboduc*, v. 2.

Shakespeare was born. The Queen, then, was scarcely settled on her throne before foreign princes were suing for her hand, and nothing but national unity seemed to be able to save the country from confusion. Well might the modern critics say that *Gorboduc* had political intentions. And this, if true, would lend probability to similar readings in what Shakespeare wrote.

There will be noticed in these historical plays a frequent rearrangement of fact and alteration of motive in the history dealt with. And this lends undoubted colour to the supposition that Shakespeare had in some slight measure adapted them to his age, that he had rounded off the past to resemble his present.

In *Henry VI.* Suffolk is certainly made to approach Leicester in character to a degree not warranted by historical records. For Suffolk's enclosure of the common at Milford and his treatment of the petitioners¹ are events that cannot be otherwise than identified with Leicester's taking of 'whole forests, woods, and pastures' to himself, and then having the discontented claimants hung.² 'Enclosures . . . make fat Beasts and leane poore people,' wrote a contemporary, and this forms a comment on this very incident.³

In *King John* the historical quarrel against John

¹ Cf. 2 *Henry VI.*, 1. iii. ² *Leicester's Commonwealth*, pp. 61-72.

³ Cf. R. Simpson, 'Politics of Shakespeare's Historical Plays' (*Shak. Soc. Trans.*, 1874).

as a tyrant is changed into one against him as a usurper, doubtless to make the position coincide with that of Elizabeth; for, as is well known, interested foreign opinion, and to some extent native opinion, held her title to be defective.

John's wars are also abridged so as to typify Elizabeth's troubles. The first was represented as on behalf of his title; the second as against the Pope and his agents. It may have been dramatically advisable to abridge the wars, but it cannot be said that it was absolutely necessary so to abridge them as to make them fall exactly into line with the two main struggles of Elizabeth's reign.¹

Similarly, in the manipulation of the history connected with *Henry IV.*, three risings are reduced to two, and apparently for reasons similar to those already mentioned. The first war is again ascribed to secular motives; in the second, ecclesiastical influences are at work.²

So that, in this uniform treatment of historical fact, in these rearrangements of the past by Shakespeare, there were intended to be read, in all probability, portrayals of his present, definite pronouncements of his own, or at all events of the people, on current events and politics. Thus was the shadow of Elizabeth and her reign over the dramatist as he wrote.

To the great *Queen's successor* many allusions

¹ Cf. R. Simpson, 'Politics of Shakespeare's Historical Plays' (*Shak. Soc. Trans.*, 1874).

² *Ibid.*

were also made, from which something of his personality and policy can easily be gleaned.

The happy and fortunate union of the crowns of Scotland, England, and Ireland under James is hinted at, when the horrified Macbeth, in that witch-haunted cavern, beholds the slow procession of the line of kings, and among the descendants of 'blood-bolter'd Banquo' some 'that twofold balls and treble sceptres carry.'¹ This same union is also touched upon in *King Lear*, where the word English is supplanted by that of 'British' in the wording of the 'Childe Rolande' ballad.²

There can also be no doubt that the 'most miraculous work' of good King Edward the Confessor, as described in *Macbeth*, his curing of 'strangely-visited people, all swoln and ulcerous,'³ was meant as a tribute to the prince who boasted that the touching for the king's evil was the 'healing benediction' bequeathed to him by preceding royalty. Perhaps the King's ungracious behaviour towards the crowd which received him on his state entry into England is respectfully explained and touched with dignity, when in *Measure for Measure* the Duke professes to dislike staging himself before the people he loves. He did not relish 'their loud applause and Aves vehement,'⁴ and to him 'the obsequious fondness'

¹ *Macbeth*, IV. i. 121.

² *King Lear*, III. iv. 185.

³ *Macbeth*, IV. iii. 150.

⁴ *Measure for Measure*, I. i. 70.

of 'untaught love'¹ did appear offence. It has been suggested that the prototype of Prospero is to be found in this same King, imbued as he was with sorcerer's love. But this seems far-fetched; for between the puffy monarch who wrote a book on Demonology and the lonely wizard of that Mediterranean isle there lies a great way.

Like Elizabeth, however, James was glorified by prophecy after the event in *Henry VIII*. When Heaven had called England's Queen 'from this cloud of darkness,' then was to reign one who, 'like a mountain cedar,' should 'reach his branches to all the plains about him.'

'Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,
His honour and the greatness of his name
Shall be, and make new nations.'²

One of the first acts of James's reign had been the taking of the Lord Chamberlain's players into his own service as the King's players, so that somewhat happy relations probably existed between throne and stage. It must be confessed, however, that the picture above is overdrawn, unless indeed colonial enterprise is hinted at; but even then it flatters.

The stage, however, could also criticise the royal conduct,³ and in a play called *The Faithful*

¹ *Measure for Measure*, II. iv. 29.

² *Henry VIII.*, v. iv. 52.

³ See Beaumont and Fletcher, *Faithful Friends*, I. i.

Friends, the royal weakness for favourites is thrown on the screen. 'Alexander the Great,' says the dramatist, 'had his Hephaestion, Philip of Spain his Lerma,' and then adds cautiously but significantly :

'not to offend,
I could produce from Courts that I have seen
More royal precedents.' (I. i.)

James's lavish distribution of knightly honours in 1604 also comes in for frequent criticism, and, it may be added, ridicule. This throwing about of titles must have caused no little annoyance to those who laid store by such things; envy, too, to those who could not own to having been personally concerned. So that, allusions to this one among the kingly foibles were none the less powerful for being backed by general opinion.

'These knights will hack'¹ (*i.e.* become hackneyed), said Mrs. Ford, with no little confidence, in the *Merry Wives*; and she advises in consequence her good friend Mrs. Page not to alter her title of mere gentility.

In *Eastward Hoe* James's 'thirty pound knights' are more than once ridiculed in the character of Sir Petronel, 'knight adventurer'; and this is the play that contains the sneer which stung Sir James Murray so badly and caused the imprisonment of the dramatists concerned.²

¹ *Merry Wives*, II. i. 51.

² Drummond's *Conversations*, pp. 20 ff.

The invasion of northerners, which James tended to encourage, was a standing grievance with the English people, both high and low ; and when Seagull in this play describes the Scots as great friends to England 'when they are out on't,' he is no doubt echoing a general sentiment, and one is irresistibly reminded of the pungent satire for which England's great Doctor was afterwards responsible.

But if the King's domestic conduct was not exempt from dramatic comment, neither was his foreign polity. In Middleton's *Game of Chess*, 'a very scandalous comedy,' as one courtly writer¹ deemed it, will be found a more exact reflection of contemporary English diplomacy and the nation's comment on the same than will be found elsewhere in the whole range of the native drama.

This comedy, 'in which the person of his Majesty had been represented in a rude and dishonourable fashion,' according to the courtly one already mentioned—this comedy has been well described as approaching most nearly to the Aristophanic conception of the topical uses of comedy.² Although the veil of allegory was thrown over his sentiments by the playwright, the actors' forms are none the less visible underneath, and the allegorical device, like fine drapery,

¹ Secretary Conway in a letter to the Privy Council, 1624.

² Cf. Dr. Ward, *English Dramatic Literature*, ii. 536.

only accentuated and vivified the forms which lay below.

The comedy took the stage just after war had been declared against Spain, that is in 1624. It owed its being to the fact that the Spanish marriage—that scheme which James had nursed so zealously—had fallen through. Young Charles and Buckingham had visited Madrid to no purpose, greatly to the joy of the English people; and when Middleton openly rejoiced that the proposed alliance had fallen through, he knew that he voiced the nation.

In the *Game of Chess* James is the White King, and he is portrayed as completely under the influence of Count Gondomar, the Spanish emissary. Plain colours were everywhere in the play used by the dramatist. The White Knight is Prince Charles, the White Duke, Buckingham, the White King's Pawn, probably Sir Toby Matthew, who in 1623 had gone to Madrid as the Prince's adviser.

The invective, however, was mainly reserved for the black party, that of Spain, and above all for the minister Gondomar. The Fat Bishop was meant to hit off Antonio di Dominis, a notorious convert from Rome to Protestantism, who was after his conversion made Dean of Windsor by James. He is ridiculed as 'a greasy turncoat gormandising prelate.' From the picture of Gondomar no single effort was withheld. The

malady with which he was afflicted is mentioned. The very litter which his malady made necessary, too, is represented. He is made to allude to the English-Algerian expedition of 1620, which he had so cunningly brought about :

‘from the White Kingdom, to secure our coasts
Against the infidel pirate, under pretext
Of more necessitous expedition.’¹

He is also represented as glorying over the part he had played in inducing James to release the imprisoned Catholics of 1622, when he

‘made the jails fly open without miracle,
And let the locusts out, those dangerous flies,
Whose property is to burn corn without touching.’

With such faithfulness of detail were the figures drawn. The royal polity, moreover, was laid bare in so merciless a fashion, that were there no other available material for constructing the history of this epoch, it could easily be drawn in part from this single play of Middleton’s.²

Except with reference to the sovereigns, *Court-allusions* are not common in the Elizabethan drama. Though many men of title were of material assistance at different times to the actor and his craft, the homage in return for such help was paid elsewhere and by other means than in the drama.

The personality of Essex was the one which

¹ Cf. *Game of Chess*, III. i.

² Cf. Dr. Ward, *English Dramatic Literature*, ii. 524 ff.

attracted, on the whole, the greatest number of allusive notices. In the first place there is the somewhat affectionate allusion in Shakespeare's *Henry V.* to 'the general of our gracious Empress,' who might in good time be 'from Ireland coming, bringing rebellion broached on his sword.'¹ This was at the period when Essex stood in the sun. Later, when the shadows fell upon him, allusions to him became correspondingly sad and gloomy. He is called Actæon in *Cynthia's Revels*,² and the presumption which marked his dealings with the Queen, together with its doleful end, is pointed to.

In *Macbeth* the behaviour of the Thane of Cawdor corresponds in almost every circumstance with that of Essex, and it is not impossible that behind the dramatic personality the historical one is lightly shadowed. 'Treasons capital, confessed and proved,'³ overthrew Cawdor. The repentance of Essex, his confession and petition for forgiveness, form a parallel. Nothing in Cawdor's life 'became him like the leaving of it.' The end of Essex was one of noble dignity. Perhaps, too, it is Essex who is hinted at when Hero speaks to Margaret in *Much Ado About Nothing*, of

'favourites,
Made proud by princes, that advance their pride
Against that power that bred it.'⁴

¹ *Henry V.*, v. Chorus, 30.

² Cf. *Cynthia's Revels*, v. 3.

³ *Macbeth*, I. iii. 115.

⁴ *Much Ado About Nothing*, III. i. 9.

Perhaps, too, it is Elizabeth's ring to Essex on his departure for Cadiz which is alluded to in *All's Well*. Such an idea may well have crossed the minds of the audience who knew of the gift. On the other hand, the scorn poured on Puritanism in the play seems a little inconsistent with that assumption.¹

It would, however, almost seem as if the mind of Shakespeare found some strange attraction in the deeds and fate of the impetuous and unfortunate Earl. As far back as 1589, when Essex had been sent to France with 4000 English volunteers, the incident seemed to have given direction to the dramatist's workings; for soon afterwards he develops an interest in French politics, and writes his *Love's Labour's Lost*. In the outline sketch of that humane idealist Brutus, as we see him in *Julius Cæsar*, there also seems some added memories of Essex. Proud Essex had boasted of keeping his heart from baseness. He had questioned in a letter to Egerton whether 'an earthly power or authority' could be infinite: like Brutus, he knew 'no personal cause to spurn at the exacting and autocratic sovereign but for the general.'² Strangely akin was this Elizabethan in his singleness of mind and purity of motive to the lofty Stoic, who, like him, violated intimate ties of affec-

¹ See Fleay's *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 218.

² *Julius Cæsar*, II. i. 12.

tion for the public well-being. It seems hard to say that Shakespeare's Roman derived no single touch in his making from that Earl who was the cynosure of all English eyes at the time.¹

To that other noble figure which towered above its peers in the realms of Elizabeth, namely Leicester, the allusions are fewer, but scarcely less significant. The part he played at Kenilworth in bidding for the royal hand has already been touched upon. But Lyly had previously sketched a chapter out of Leicester's romance in his *Endymion*, a play which is really a glorified version of that Earl's restoration to royal favour, after his secret marriage with Lettice, Countess of Essex, and after his confinement in Greenwich Castle in consequence. Endymion (who of course is Leicester), after slumbering away forty years, is awakened by Cynthia's kiss (Cynthia being the Queen). He forthwith proceeds to relate his experiences; and after the recital, his marriage is condoned, and reconciliation with the Queen and goddess follows. This happy result had been brought about partly by the good offices of one Eumenides; and this latter personage has been identified with Sussex on no less an authority than that of Camden, 'lantern unto

¹ See also R. Simpson's paper, 'The Political use of the stage in Shakespeare's time,' for the political bearing of Thomas Heywood's *Royal King and Loyal Subject*, etc.

late succeeding age.' Leicester is also hinted at in unmistakable terms in the *Yorkshire Tragedy*, where it states that

'The surest way to charm a woman's tongue
Is—break her neck: a politician did it.' (Sc. v.)

This is undoubtedly an allusion to the fateful story of Amy Robsart, Leicester's first wife, at Cumnor Hall.

With somewhat less certainty has the figure of Burleigh been suggested as the original of the Polonius portrait. The 'wretched rash intruding fool,' with his trite maxims and pompous expressions, is indeed a comic and overcharged study. But there seems just a probability, notwithstanding, that he is a study of that antiquated politician whom the Lord High Admiral styled 'an old greybeard with a white head.' Burleigh's perpetual interference and euphuistic pomp of speech, which find a parallel in the Polonius portrait, were far from popular features in a minister; while the advice of the aged Dane to his son in the play—advice founded on the most utilitarian precepts—as well as his effete maxims, would have come with equal verisimilitude from the English statesman, for the fluctuating policy and economical tricks of the latter were prompted by similar motives. Even Burleigh's hostility to the stage and the stage's consequent hostility to him are hinted at, when Hamlet

recommends Polonius 'to see the players well bestowed,' and 'to let them be well used,' for fear of ill report during his life.¹

With regard to Southampton, whose figure looms large in that age of patronage, a possible reference seems to occur in Shakespeare's dedicatory notices to his two great narrative poems. In these dedications a note of honest affection can be heard sounding above all the ornate language with which the poet decorated his notice like so much fanciful arabesque. This liberal patron of arts and letters had shown the young playwright 'honourable disposition,' but it is doubtful whether he is to be considered as being the beautiful youth who lurks in the background of so many of the Sonnets. Indeed, it is doubtful whether any tribute to his patron ever left the poet's pen as it told of men and matters, though it has been suggested that a faint compliment to Southampton is intended, where the garrulous old nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* will not allow that Romeo's name begins with R. That letter she describes as the dog's name 'which burreth in the sound.'² It would be remembered that Southampton's family name was Wriothesley; so the nurse's certainty as to the initial letter being the more auspicious one may possibly have called up the

¹ *Hamlet*, II. ii. 528.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iv. 212. Cf. Johnson's *Grammar*.

Wriothesley, who was certainly at that time the poet's patron. The suggestion, perhaps, derives some faint increase of probability from the fact that to other critics the whole play seems to allude to the delays that hindered Elizabeth Vernon's marriage with this very Wriothesley.

What is perhaps the noblest figure of them all has yet to be noticed. It would be pleasant to think that Sidney, the courtier, the soldier, and the scholar, that purest of Elizabethan souls, who could dream Arcadias and adorn Death itself, was successful in finding an epitaph in the lines of the great bard. But here again the point is not certain. Though Ophelia's description of Hamlet as

‘The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form;
The observ'd of all observers,’¹

would be singularly applicable to this many-sided and cultured Sidney, no definite assertion can be made, though possibly that notable form was floating in the dramatist's mind as he wrote.

The prototype for another creation of Shakespeare's, however—that of Benedick—has been suggested in the person of Pembroke, another brilliant patron of letters. The witty fastidiousness and the rooted objection to marriage of the Elizabethan courtier find a true counterpart in

¹ *Hamlet*, III. i. 159.

the caustic wit and strange indifference of the young Paduan; and it is more than possible that the dramatist was sketching from life when he added this portrait to his gallery. The suggestion which has been made, that Sir Nicholas Bacon is represented in the immortal figure of Falstaff—because both were fat—can hardly be taken seriously.¹ It was Mr. Swinburne who satirically made out a case for seeing the hoary Burleigh under the disguise of Romeo!

Of more or less definite allusions to persons of rank, there remains yet one to be noticed, and that has reference to Arabella Stuart. This lady, descended from Margaret Tudor, and niece of Lord Darnley, towards the end of Elizabeth's reign was induced to allow her claims to the English crown to be asserted. Accordingly Jonson in his *Cynthia's Revels*² impeaches her as a 'swoln Niobe,' for presuming farther than did even Actæon (Essex). With this slight reference the allusions to Elizabethan dignitaries seem concluded. Flying references occur here and there, but they come 'scant of breath' and scarcely bear enumerating. Those which have been given are perhaps not always too clear in outline. But this one point cannot be doubted: that, underlying

¹ See *Notes and Queries*, 3rd Series, III. 83, 105; quoted by Mr. S. Lee.

² See *Cynthia's Revels*, v. 3.

the dramatic treatment of Shakespeare, of Lyly, and Jonson, to mention no others, there lies a tendency to reflect particulars of the age, particulars relating to court intrigues, and probably the characteristics of some of England's most favoured sons.

Allusions made by the dramatists to their own *brother wits* are not without significance as to the relations of the individuals of the literary tribe, one to another. Some of them are critical notices, some satirical and even abusive. Others spring from literary courtesy, and from that genuine admiration not always found among artists.

Shadowing the whole intercourse of the dramatists was a thinly disguised controversy which ran through a series of plays, chiefly through those of Jonson, Marston, and Dekker, but which, according to some, invaded the Shakespearean works as well. This controversy, like that which had affected religious parties a decade or so earlier (that of Marprelate), and like that earlier controversy between dramatists supposed to be hidden in the early English comedy, *Damon and Pithias*, advanced the cause of neither party of disputants, and otherwise resembled the earlier controversies in its extreme vigour and abandon.

The immediate cause of its outbreak may have been, perhaps, the absurd tragedy of Marston's called *Antonio and Mellida*, a thing of bombast and

vapourings. It may possibly have been, as others maintain, the much-vexed question of children-actors. But what is most probable is that it was the jeering character of Crysoganus in Marston's *Histriomastix*, which was obviously an attack on Jonson. And Jonson, moreover, is known to have written to Drummond to the effect that his quarrels with Marston arose from the latter's representation of him on the stage. But whichever may have been the real cause, the man who could handle Nature, even in her wintriest moods, so clumsily as to say, as Marston did, that

‘The rawish dank of clumsy winter ramps
The fluent summer's vein : and drizzling sleet
Chilleth the wan bleak cheek of the numb'd earth ;
Whilst snarling gusts nibble the juiceless leaves
From the nak'd shudd'ring branch :¹

such a man was in need of some intellectual attention. And this Ben Jonson took upon himself to give, executing private revenge in what appeared to be a public correction. His touch, however, was none of the lightest, nor was he one of the most tactful of men. ‘He was a great lover and praiser of himself,’ wrote a contemporary,² ‘a contemner and scorner of others ; given rather to losse a friend than a jest, and thought nothing well but what either he himself or some of his

¹ Marston's *Antonio and Mellida*, opening lines.

² See Drummond's *Conversations*.

friends . . . had said or done.' In his *Every Man out of His Humour* he had already embodied in Clove's fustian much of Marston's turgid vocabulary of *Histriomastix*, and so blow had been given for blow. But in his next play, *Cynthia's Revels*, though he is general in his satire, lashing as he did the general undercurrent of bad literary taste, he succeeded in obtaining both Marston's and Dekker's warmest reprehension. Marston must have felt conscious of the personal application of Jonson's indictment of having 'penuriously gleaned wit from laundress and hackneyman' and of having derived some of his graces 'with servile imitation from common stages, . . . as if his invention had lived wholly upon another man's trencher': for Marston was a plagiarist. The proper sweetness of the Muse, Jonson had significantly added, was in shunning 'the print of any beaten path' and in proving 'new ways to come to learned ears'—which had not been Marston's method.¹

This, then, was the first episode in this battle of the stage: Marston's *Histriomastix* or *Antonio and Mellida*, the *casus belli*, Jonson's *Every Man out of His Humour* and his *Cynthia's Revels*, two sturdy rejoinders.

The next was of Jonson's initiative. He apparently wished to so thoroughly trounce the

¹ See *Cynthia's Revels*, Induct.

tripping Marston that reply would be out of the question, and so his *Poetaster* was hastily put together in order to anticipate any response from him who had been medicined. It is possible that in the meantime Marston got in a faint counter-blow. That slight thing called *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, said to contain a satirical portrait of Jonson, was possibly of Marston's making. It seems to have been regarded by Jonson as a retort, for he evidently saw in it the red rag which prompted his next assault; and in the *Poetaster* the vocabulary of Crispinus resembles and satirises the vocabulary of this play in a marked degree.

In the *Poetaster*¹ Jonson modestly poses as Horace and installs Dekker, who by this time was Marston's champion, in the character of Demetrius, one 'hired to abuse,' while Marston is Crispinus the defaulting poet. Horace 'stands taxed of impudence, self-love, and arrogance by those who share no merit in themselves.' Demetrius is made to acknowledge that he had maligned Horace for no other reason than because 'Horace's writings had thrived better than his own, were better liked and graced.' The poetaster himself (Crispinus) is then purged, by Horace's pills, of his ventosity, is advised to shun some of the ancients but to read the best of them, not 'to hunt

¹ See v. i.

In sacred raptures flowing, will proclaim, not ——
 O me thy Priest inspire! ——
 For I to thee and thine immortal name
 In flowing numbers filled with sprite and flame.
 Good, good, in flowing numbers filled with sprite
 and flame.'

After this clever piece of satire, Jonson's vanity and sourness, his stubbornness and perversity, are all attacked. 'Thou hast such a villainous broad back,' said Dekker, 'that I warrant th'art able to bear away any man's jest in England.' And in accordance with the rules of the literary tourney of the day, the writer of the *Poetaster* has personalities flung at him, and, among others, the brick-layer episode of his life. Thus was Jonson 'untrussed.' He was attacked in his weak points, and this episode is interesting as witnessing to the contemporary ideas of Jonson's genius and to the methods of attack prevalent among the literary men of the day.

But this controversy to all appearances did not end here. Shakespeare is said to have been embroiled to a moderate degree, though it is easier to make this statement than to prove it.

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is a mysterious play. It offers many harsh disillusionings of what were one's preconceived notions of the great dramatist; and for this very reason, however paradoxical it may seem, the theory of his partici-

pation in the controversy is more tenable than would otherwise have been possible. He who was the soul of chivalry can scarcely be credited with wantonly trampling on the glories of Homer. It is equally hard to think of him, who gave life to Cordelia, fathering a Cressida. So that the play must represent the poet in no serious mood. It is known that it was intended at first for private circulation in MS. only. It was never intended to be 'clapper-claw'd with the hands of the vulgar' or 'sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude,'¹ as if the poet meant only those who could read between the lines to get possession of it. If this were true, it would explain in some measure the irresponsible treatment of the Homeric heroes, and would help one to accept the play as his contribution to the Jonson-Marston controversy, which raged during the few years succeeding 1599.

If this much be conceded, it is not altogether difficult to account for the choice of subject. Jonson and Dekker had both bandied words amid classical scenes, Jonson choosing no less distinguished an arena than Rome in its golden era. So that this play of Shakespeare's, in adopting classical scenes and characters, was only falling into line with the current convention.

¹ See Preface to Quarto II., published by Bonian and Walley 1609. This pirated edition caused the play to be produced on the stage almost immediately.

With regard to Shakespeare's part in the controversy it is more difficult to speak. It is hard to say how far he waded into the flood of correction, advice, and abuse: indeed it is hard to say which side he chose to support.

The figures of Jonson and Dekker stand out, in *Troilus and Cressida*, in their disguises as Ajax and Thersites respectively. Ajax is 'valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear, slow as the elephant.'¹ In him 'Nature had crowded her humours'—surely a plain hint of that contemporary who prided himself on being 'one in whom the humours and elements were peaceably met.'² Thersites, whenever he opened his 'mastic jaws,'³ was for ever seeking out the 'incontinent varlets,'⁴ cudgel in hand; and at the same time he gives full and ample description of all 'the odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl on the face of the earth.' And this is no bad picture of that writer (*viz.* Dekker), who was wont to take his note-book into the oddest of corners to obtain material for his *Bellman of London* or his *Gull's Hornbook*.

But if Shakespeare stages in the play certain of his brother playwrights, it by no means follows that he sides with one, or makes any definite

¹ *Troilus and Cressida*, I. ii. 20 ff.

² Cf. the description of Crites in Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, II. I.

³ *Troilus and Cressida*, I. iii. 73.

⁴ *Ibid.*, V. i. 102.

pronouncement on his contemporaries and their conduct. Apparently he nurses no one cause more than the other, nor does he belabour either. He exhibits a 'brainless Ajax' and an equally uncomplimentary Thersites.¹ But as he is known to have made no enemies by his travesty, this neutral position might have been expected; and the probability seems to be that in his 'brainless Ajax' he reflected not Jonson himself, but the Jonson of Dekker's *Satiromastix*; and similarly with Thersites, not Dekker himself but the Dekker of Jonson's splenetic play.

If the play be taken, then, as a placard on the theatrical controversy, the only possible inference seems to be that it was Shakespeare's intention to unfold the absurdities on both sides, to recall the combatants from their bitter sport, and to persuade them to take up serious work again. Just as the fatal attachment to perfidious women had emasculated the valour of Homer's heroes, so, Shakespeare hinted, the fruitless indulgence in angry invective would lower the dignity and sap the life of the English literary race.

The burlesque setting of a Homeric background has been already sufficiently accounted for. But the glamour of chivalry would have the further merit of throwing ridicule upon the grandiloquent manner in which the poets fought out their trivial

¹ *Troilus and Cressida*, I. iii. 380.

fight. And it would also burlesque, by the way, the Romantic adaptations of classical lore, so dear to the Renaissance scholar. It was not to burlesque the *Iliad* nor yet the *Fairy Queen*; only the extravagances to which these masterpieces gave rise under feeble pens.

If *Troilus and Cressida*, therefore, be considered a pendant to this controversy of the dramatists, these are the links by which it hangs. When the actor Kemp describes Shakespeare as having given 'that pestilent fellow Jonson . . . a purge that made him beray his credit,'¹ it is probable that he was thinking of the wholesome advice in *Troilus and Cressida*, and this is none the less probable since Shakespeare himself presents therein an 'Armed Prologue,' in reply to that prefixed by Jonson to his *Poetaster*.

Leaving now this atmosphere of controversy, it is intended to inquire into the actual relations which existed between Shakespeare and Jonson as far as it is possible to know them. There is always something of charm about a contemporary's estimate of a writer that must ever be wanting in that of posterity, even though the latter has the advantage of perspective. The good wine of a poet may reach posterity the mellower for its years, but there is a warm tint about growing grapes that passes with their day.

¹ *Return from Parnassus*, Part II. iv. v.

There is, however, conflicting evidence about the intimacy of these two dramatists which makes the question as difficult as it is interesting.

On the one hand it would seem scarcely doubtful that Jonson was jealous of Shakespeare. He seems to make opportunities of gibing at him and his methods. In *Every Man in His Humour* he invites his audience to witness with him a proper play, in which they would need no wafting over seas, nor would an army

‘with three rusty swords
And help of some few foot and half-foot words
Fight over York and Lancaster’s long jars.’¹

—evidently a sneer at Shakespeare’s large treatment of history.

He has a fling at Shakespeare’s Caliban and *Winter’s Tale* when he promises elsewhere to his audience that there should be no ‘servant monster’ in his play, and that he was loth to frighten nature in his plays like ‘those that beget tales, tempests, and such like drolleries.’² In several places, too, he turns to ridicule a line in *Julius Cæsar* that scarcely seems to deserve such treatment.³ In one place he deliberately says of Shakespeare that ‘he wanted art.’⁴ But in spite of all this, with

¹ *Every Man in His Humour*, Prologue 9.

² *Bartholomew Fair*, Introduction.

³ Cf. Jonson’s *Discoveries* ‘de Shakespeare nostrat.’

⁴ *Conversations with Drummond*.

the mermaid scene before one, and with Jonson's generous tribute to his great contemporary in those prefatory verses to the First Folio, it is hard to believe that any real jealousy sundered the two. It was a glorious wreath with which he adorned the memory of the departed, when he described him as 'Soul of the Age';¹ and his prophecy concerning Shakespeare's words, that they were 'not for an age but for all time,' throws a halo of dignity round prophet and poet. 'I loved the man,' he said elsewhere, 'and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions.'² These are not the words of a small-hearted, narrow-minded man.

Moreover, what appear to be sneers in his works may well be put down to bluntness of criticism. 'His wit was in his own power,' he said in reference to Shakespeare; 'would the rule of it had been so too. Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter.' This is his direct criticism, and it corresponds in tenor with the deprecatory remarks in his plays. But his admiration ever rose above all cavilling, and he acknowledges that this brother dramatist of his 'redeemed his vices with his virtues,' and that

¹ *Underwoods*, xii.

² See *Discoveries* 'de Shakespeare nostrat.'

‘there was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned.’

In addition to all this, there is a mass of testimony as to the ample recognition of Shakespeare’s worth on the part of other of his contemporaries.

Webster, a dramatist singularly happy in occasional phrase, commended him for ‘his right happy and copious industry.’¹ Another of those connected with the stage had seen ‘his demeanour no less civil than he (was) excellent in the quality he professed. Besides divers had reported his uprightness of dealing which argued his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that approved his art.’² Meres had praised him for his skill in tragedy and comedy, and placed him ‘among the most passionate . . . to bewail and bemoan the perplexities of Love.’ Camden included him among ‘the most pregnant wits’³ of his time, while Drayton, after he had severed his connection with the stage, wrote of him as having ‘as smooth a comick vaine . . . as strong conception, and as Cleere a rage as any one that trafiqu’d with the stage.’⁴ Spenser referred to him as Aetion,

‘Whose Muse, full of high thoughts invention,
Doth like himselfe heroically sound’;⁵

¹ Dedication to *Vittoria Corrombona*.

² Chettle, *Kind-Harte’s Dream*.

³ Camden, *Remains* (1604).

⁴ Drayton, Lines to Reynolds, *Of Poets and Poesie*.

⁵ See *Colin Clout’s come Home again*, ll. 444-7.

while Chettle, after Elizabeth's death, alluded to him as 'the silver-tongued Melicert,' and grieved that no 'sable tear' had dropped from his 'honied Muse' to bewail her loss. A shallower testimony perhaps than all these, but still of worth, was that of Gallio, the fashionable gallant in a well-known play.¹ He entreats the duncified world to esteem Spenser and Chaucer if they would. 'I'll worship,' said he, 'sweet Mr. Shakespeare, and to honour him will lay his *Venus and Adonis* under my pillow.'

But amidst all this chorus of praise there was naturally a note or two of discord. 'His sweeter verse contains hart-robbing life,'² wrote an unknown contemporary, but, possibly ignorant of the greatest works, he wishes that the subject of his praise could content himself with graver subjects and leave 'love's foolish languishment.' Of earlier and later jealousy, too, there can be no doubt. But Greene's well-known description of 'the upstart crow' and of the conceited 'Shakescene'³ reflects rather the temper of the writer than the character of his subject. Marston's allusion in his *Histriomastix* to

'When Troylus shakes his furious speare,'

as it stands in the context, also comes under the

¹ *Return from Parnassus*, Pt. I. iv. i. ² *Ibid.*, Pt. II. i. ii.

³ Greene, *Goatsworth of Wit*.

head of these discordant allusions. But, like that of Greene, it goes no further than the idle remark of a disappointed author.

There can be no doubt then of the contemporary high opinion of Shakespeare. The ravens croaked, as croak they will ; but justice was done to him in his lifetime, earnest of the fuller justice which awaited him in the centuries to come.

Some of the contemporary opinions concerning Ben Jonson came to light in the course of the controversy already discussed. He is complimentarily mentioned by Heywood as one 'whose learned pen was dipt in Castaly.'¹ There is admiration, too, in what Webster said of him and 'his laboured and understanding works.'² Of himself rare Ben said much, but he was scarcely a fair critic. Another remark is immoderate in the opposite direction. He was no 'mere empiric'³ as Ingenioso would have it, 'who got what he had by observation.' He was 'a slow inventor,' but it was not advisable for him to return to his old trade of brick-laying, as the same critic maliciously hinted.

To Marlowe a fleeting homage is paid by Shakespeare in a well-known passage ; and 'the dead shepherd' with his 'saw of might'⁴ is one of

¹ Heywood, *Hierarchy of Blessed Angels*.

² Dedication to *Vittoria Corrombona*.

³ Cf. *Return from Parnassus*, pt. II. I. ii.

⁴ *As You Like It*, III. v. 80.

the few to whom acknowledgments are made in the Shakespearean text. According to another contemporary, Marlowe was renowned for 'his rare art and wit.'¹ But the best epitaph comes from the unknown writer of the *Return from Parnassus*, and is couched in a singular happiness of phrase :—

' Marlowe was happy in his buskin Muse,
Alas, unhappy in his life and end,
Pity it is that wit so ill should dwell,
Wit lent from Heaven, but vices sent from Hell.'²

Greene is probably intended where allusion is made, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, to the ' thrice three Muses mourning for the death of Learning late deceas'd in beggary.'³ Shakespeare was probably thinking of that brother artist—at one time his bitter enemy and detractor, but to whom he also owed many a merry scene and 'pleasant quippe.' He had been described by another contemporary as having 'in both Academies ta'en degree of Master,'⁴ and this would connect Greene with the ' Learning ' so prominent in the description. The allusion, however, has also been thought to refer to Spenser, who died 'for lack of bread' in 1599. But in this case the allusion

¹ Heywood, *Hierarchy of Blessed Angels*.

² *Return from Parnassus*, Pt. II. 1. ii.

³ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. i. 52.

⁴ Heywood, *Hierarchy of Blessed Angels*.

would necessarily be a later interpolation, for the play in which it occurs cannot possibly be of so late a date. Greene's works must have declined in popularity as the sixteenth century closed. In *Every Man out of His Humour* Carlo recommends Greene as an author 'whence (one) may steal with more security';¹ obviously on account of the general want of acquaintance at that time with what he had written.

Lodge, who had 'his oare in every paper boat,'² is thus happily alluded to by one dramatist; the merit of the description lying, of course, in the fact that this versatile Elizabethan had ventured up every lane of literature when the description was penned, and was settling to his Galen and his medicines after a career as poet, playwright, satirist, pamphleteer, and novelist.

Spenser, like Shakespeare, found early recognition, though it was academic, not material success. He was described in the *Return from Parnassus* as

' A swifter swan than ever sang in Poe,
A shriller nightingale than ever blest
The prouder groves of self-admiring Rome.'³

Even Jonson, who disliked his *Shepherd's Calendar*, and could not help thinking that 'in affecting the ancients he writ no language,' yet

¹ See II. i. ² *Return from Parnassus*, Pt. II. I. ii. ³ *Ibid.*

wished him to be read for his matter, 'just as Vergil read Ennius.'¹ Critical as he was, Jonson was certainly alive to the merits of this poet, and it is with something like regret that he says elsewhere that 'if it were put to question of the water-rhymer's works against Spenser, no doubt the former would find more suffrages.'

In the sixth sonnet of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, Spenser, 'with his deep conceits,' is also mentioned, and Dowland, that rare musician, 'with his heavenly touch.'

Nash was 'a fellow . . . whose muse was armed with a gag tooth, and his pen possessed with Hercules furies.'² Yet, in spite of his Bohemian devilry, he won a softer touch from the contemporary dramatist, who was constrained to add :—

'His style was witty, though he had some gall,
Something he might have mended, so may all.'

Marston seems to have received blows from others than Jonson. In the *Return from Parnassus* he is called

'a ruffian in his style

(Who) quaffs a cup of Frenchman's Helicon,
Then royster-doysters in his oily terms,
Cuts, thrusts, and foins at whomso'er he meets.'³

The 'sweet, honey-dropping Daniel,' on the other

¹ Jonson's *Discoveries*.

² *Return from Parnassus*, Pt. II. i. ii.

³ *Ibid.*

hand, is lavishly complimented by the same writer when he is credited with waging war with that proud Italian who had melted his heart in sugared sonneting. But this only illustrates the often short-sighted character of contemporary criticism ; for Daniel could scarcely meet Petrarch on equal terms.

The venerable Holinshed, too, comes in for contemporary notice ; but the dramatic reference surely cannot have represented the average sentiment towards that 'painful' chronicler among whose stores Shakespeare found so many treasures. 'Dunce Hollingshed,' and the 'Englishman who wrote of shows and sheriffs,' are inadequate descriptions of so reverend a man, and something of impatience and intolerance clings to these statements of Fletcher's.

Concerning Fletcher himself and his relations with Beaumont, contemporary opinion was unable to make any assertion. They made 'one poet in a pair of friends.'¹

'As two voices in one song embrace,
Fletcher's keen treble and deep Beaumont's bass.'

And with this degree of discrimination the question remains unanswered.

There yet remains a literary eccentric of the

¹ Cf. Jasper Maine's lines, *On the Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*.

time upon whose character the drama throws some light. He had published an account of a journey of his under the quaint title of *Crudities hastily gobbled up in Five Months' Travel in France, Italy, etc.*, and more than one dramatist satirises him. Fletcher does so, and in the Onos of his *Queen of Corinth*, the heavy-witted weakling who has made the grand tour hits off in perfect fashion the eccentricities of Coryate; and to fix the allusion beyond all doubt, mention is made also of 'the fork-carving traveller,'¹ the point of which lies in that use of the fork, new to English ways, but ostentatiously practised by the enlightened Coryate after his stay in Italy.

Of the actors who were wont to interpret the dramas, we get but little actual information in the writings themselves. Perhaps 'poor Yorick,' to whom Hamlet paid a tribute in the Danish churchyard, was intended for Tarleton the comic actor, the fool of *King Lear*, and the jester of *Twelfth Night*, whose flashes of merriment, accompanied by pipe and tabor, were wont to 'set the table on a roar, . . . a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.'² 'The people began to laugh,' said Nash, 'when Tarleton first peept out his head'; and from Fuller's description it is gathered 'that the self-same words spoken by another would hardly move a merry man to smile,

¹ *Queen of Corinth*, IV. i.

² *Hamlet*, v. i. 191 ff.



which, uttered by him, would force a sad soul to laughter.'

To the famous trio, Lewin, Burbage, and Kempe, all certainty of reference seems lost in Shakespeare. Possibly it is Burbage who is alluded to when Hamlet is described as 'fat and scant of breath'; for Burbage took the part and was of corpulent build. Elsewhere, however, the fame of Burbage and Kempe is implied when it is stated that 'there's not a country wench that can dance Sellengers Round but can talke of Dick Burbage and Will Kempe.'¹

A few stage directions also, contained in the first editions of various plays, introduce us to several actors whom we hardly know otherwise. We find that John Wilson took the part of Balthazar in *Much Ado about Nothing*, and sang 'Sigh no more, ladies,' that Sincklo was a beadle in the drama of *Henry IV.*, a keeper in 3 *Henry VI.*, and one of the players in the Introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew*. Humphrey, or Humphrey Jeafes, is known to us in the same way. He took the character of the second keeper in *Henry VI.*, and in this drama also one Gabriel acted as messenger, and Nicke, probably Nicholas Tooley, likewise played a messenger's part in the *Taming of the Shrew*. The insertion of their names would perhaps seem to suggest that

¹ *Return from Parnassus*, Pt. II. iv. v.

Shakespeare was wont to associate in his mind certain rôles with certain actors, and would develop them accordingly.

Besides paying rare tributes of recognition to those who moved in the fierce light of the Court, and to those who, like themselves, lived by the pen, in some few instances the Elizabethan dramatists seem to have had *other contemporaries* in their mind while their characters were coming to the birth, and these characters in consequence were moulded on those personalities. Sometimes contemporaries were openly staged, as in the instance of Stukely, already mentioned. The play in which he is so treated is *The Battle of Alcazar*, named after the battlefield where he met his fate. He came of a Devonshire family, and was placed by some enthusiasts, along with great Charlemagne, as the type of chivalry and courage.

Perhaps one of the most certain identifications with regard to such characters is that of Shakespeare's Shylock. During the earlier years of the poet's life in London a Jewish doctor of Portuguese descent, called Roderigo Lopez, was holding a prominent position in the metropolis, and cannot have been otherwise than well known to the members of the theatrical profession. Most probably the personage was the original of much in the character of Shylock. It is a striking

coincidence that Antonio, the name of the Venetian merchant, was also the name of a former friend of Lopez, the Portuguese pretender, 'King Antonio,' who was ultimately the cause of Lopez's downfall. The physician was implicated in a plot to poison Elizabeth, and his trial and execution brought to a head the slumbering hatred of the people against men of his creed. So Shylock was painted in all the grim colours that the contemporary imagination had seen in Lopez. He became the permanent scapegoat at which might be hurled the execrations begun at Tyburn when Lopez was executed; and the treachery and malice of the historic personality lived on for the Elizabethans in the dramatic character which has excited the wonder and sometimes the pity of succeeding generations.

An equally certain identification seems possible in the very different instance of the easy-going Sir Hugh Evans, the Welsh schoolmaster of Windsor. The original in this case was also a Sir Hugh and a Welsh schoolmaster too. But he lived in Gloucestershire, was possessed of much quaintness, and his educational methods were sufficiently remarkable to attract, not only notice of a local kind, but also the attention of some among the contemporary writers. From one we learn that the historical Sir Hugh was accused before the Mayor of his town of teaching false

Latin, and moreover that his boys profited little or nothing by his teaching, whereupon 'hee told their fathers that they should play at Cat, or Spanne Counter, with all the boyes in the Countrey.'¹ Such was this Gloucestershire parson, and that he had something in common with the kindly pedagogue of Windsor will appear when the latter dismisses William Page, who has shown no very creditable acquaintance with Latin grammar, with the words, 'Go your ways and play: go.'²

Sir Francis Drake is undoubtedly eulogised in Dekker's play called *The Whore of Babylon*, where Titania (Elizabeth) is addressed as having sent forth a Drake:—

' Which from their rivers beat their water-fowl,
Tore silver feathers from their fairest swans
And plucked the Halcyons' wings that rove at sea,
And made their wild-ducks under water dive
So long, that some never came up alive.'

This is obviously a reference to the Armada defeat, and is one of the few instances in which direct mention is made of that event on the stage. In the same play the Armada's strength is detailed, but the medium is prosaic verse. Elsewhere a passing reference is made to the victory in a play

¹ *A Paradox in praise of a Dunce.* 1642.

² *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. i. 78.

called *If You know not Me*, where Elizabeth is represented as receiving the great news at Tilbury which had just come post-haste.

Whether Shakespeare meant the pompous Justice Shallow to be a bold sketch of Sir Thomas Lucy, has given rise to much discussion. There can, however, be hardly any doubt that in the fussy Gloucestershire magistrate one can see much that calls up the Knight of Stratford and neighbourhood. The well-known pun about 'a dozen white louses in an old coat'¹ is certainly a squib aimed at the Lucy family, whose arms, as Dugdale tells us, were 'three luces harrant en argent,' the luce or pike being very abundant in that part of the Avon which flowed through Stratford. When the page expresses thanks for certain venison, the Knight's meanness in ignoring the usual custom of sending in occasional gifts to the corporation is reviled. When Shallow threatens vengeance for the riot, there is a reminiscence of 'the ryot' made by thirty-five Stratford men 'upon Master Thomas Lucy, esquier.' So that it seems almost certain that the Stratford incident is consistently alluded to in this introductory scene of *The Merry Wives*; and if so, it must have left with the poet far from bitter memories. Falstaff treats with witty impertinence the injured Justice who wished to 'make a Star-Chamber matter'² of the

¹ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, i. i.

² *Ibid.*

offence, and here, perhaps, one listens again to some of the quips which young Shakespeare had exchanged with the grave Sir Thomas in the old days. It is, at any rate, significant, that of all Falstaff's delinquencies, the only one which that merry rascal is not punished for, is that of beating the Justice's men, killing his deer, and breaking open his lodge. The nature of the prank warrants one in assuming that the poet was here drawing on youthful memories. It was an excrescence rather than a regular growth of the original conception of that valiant knight, who was more often witnessing to his greatness in detected foibles than in successful lawlessness.

In *Love's Labour's Lost*,¹ Armado, 'the refined traveller'² from tawny Spain, is also clearly drawn from a contemporary figure. He was that 'phantasticall Monarcho,' subject of an epitaph by Churchyard, a familiar figure at the English Court, and truly 'a most illustrious wight.'³ He was one of those whom, according to Meres, 'popular applause doth nourish, who gape after no other thing but praise and glory.' According to another contemporary writer (Nash), he 'wore crowns in his shoes, quite renounced his natural

¹ See paper by Mr. Sidney Lee, 'A New Study of *Love's Labour's Lost*' (*Gent's Mag.* 1880); also Fleay and Halliwell-Phillips' Memoranda to *Love's Labour's Lost*.

² *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i. 162, 172.

³ *Ibid.*, I. i. 176.

English accents and wrested himself wholly to the Italian puntlios.' In Shakespeare this 'child of fancy,'¹ 'this fashion's own Knight,' was evidently named after the Spanish expedition of 1588, though Monarcho's own name is mentioned by Boyet in connection with his 'Phantasime.'² The surmise that Shakespeare intended Armado, 'a man of fire-new words,'³ to be John Lyly, Moth to be Nash, the curate Nathaniel the Rev. Robert Green, and the pedantic schoolmaster Holofernes to be the pamphleteer and pedagogue Cooper—all this must be dismissed as futile. The reasons advanced in its support are vague and conflicting. Holofernes, it might be added, has sometimes been identified with Florio, the distinguished Italian scholar and translator of Montaigne, who dogmatically assailed 'the plaies that they plaie in England.' But it seems far from likely that Shakespeare would have ridiculed one who had lived for some years in the pay and patronage of the Earl of Southampton, to whom the dramatist owed so much. It is also just as unlikely that the pedant is intended for the schoolmaster Richard Mulcaster, the great educationist of his day.

Other well-known personalities, however, that certainly rise out of the dramatic pages are the brother Shirleys—Sir Thomas, Sir Anthony, and

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i. 169 ff.

² *Ibid.*, IV. i. 99.

³ *Ibid.*, I. i. 177.

Mr. Robert. They have, in fact, a play¹ devoted to their travels, for which three dramatists, Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, were responsible. The experiences of these brothers were very varied. The eldest was a military man who, after some privateering, fell into Turkish hands and was with difficulty released. The others were connected with Eastern diplomatic missions, and were the first ambassadors at the Persian Court. They won the gratitude of the Sophy of Persia by advice in military matters, and received in return great honour. The play, which embraces all their travels, touches not only at the Persian Court but also Russia, Rome, Constantinople, Venice, and Madrid, and in this way forms a notable instance of the widening interests of the nation, while in the fact that

‘all Persia sings

The English brothers are coe-mates for kings,’

the audience would feel, no doubt, a touch of pride.

Sir Thomas Gresham is alluded to in a play called *If You know not Me*. The part he played in founding the royal Exchange is hinted at, and the College of the royal merchant too is mentioned, which has, however, since decayed.

Hobson, the famous Cambridge carrier, is

¹ *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers, Sir Thomas, Sir Anthony, and Mr. Robert Shirley.*

mentioned by Middleton where one of Hobson's porters is represented as taking a letter from young Tim Yellowhammer at Cambridge to his respected parents in London—the same Hobson, of course, who was wont to give such slender choice of hacks to undergraduate applicants, and whose familiar figure Milton honoured with a place in his mighty verse.

Garnet the Jesuit is alluded to by the Porter in that dreadful midnight scene at Macbeth's castle. This Jesuit was tried in 1606, and attempted to defend his doctrine of Equivocation, according to which 'a lie which deceived was not immoral if the speaker could mentally put a truthful sense on the words actually used,' and, on the authority of a great modern historian, 'the popular feeling against this doctrine found a voice in the words of the Porter.'

Banks the showman is also mentioned by Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost* in connection with his famous dancing-horse. It was credited with mysterious powers, and its position in the age can be gathered from the fact that Raleigh saw fit to mention it in his great *History of the World*.

The old woman of Brentford, whom Falstaff impersonated in the basket scene of the *Merry Wives*,¹ was also an historical figure. She was regarded as a witch, but was in reality the hostess

¹ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. ii. 164 ff.

of a tavern whose eccentricities earned for her notoriety.

For different reasons was 'Mistress Moll' still more notorious. Her real name was Mary Frith, and in the *Roaring Girl*, Middleton and Dekker made of her as Moll Cutpurse a pathetic principal. She was supposed to be the most notoriously bad woman of the day. She is said to have repented at St. Paul's Cross, but being apparently in liquor at the time, some allowance must be made for her after-conduct. Her case is viewed with charity in the play already mentioned, and the potentiality of virtue in things evil is the moral of the play. She is frequently alluded to by other dramatists, notably by Shakespeare,¹ and was evidently well fixed in the public eye.

In addition to this portrait-work in which the dramatists thus indulged, there are also to be found in their works occasional reflections of *striking incidents* that formed part of the life around them.

Nowhere does Shakespeare more successfully reflect the glitter of an aristocratic function than in his use of the masque to deck a certain courtly marriage. That *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was in the first instance a topical play of the kind seems more than probable. Theseus wooing Hippolyta 'with pomp, with triumph, and with

¹ *Twelfth Night*, I. iii. 125.

revelling' forms the subject of the masque, though one other incident at least is reflected. Into the main subject, however, as into a frame, is woven the anti-masque, which rests on the drolleries of the Athenian mechanics, softened by the sweet movement of the elvish fairies. Various suggestions have been made as to the particular wedding it was designed to celebrate. That of Essex in 1590, of Bedford in 1593, of Derby in 1595, of Southampton in 1598—all have been suggested. There is no external evidence to support the claims of any. The title-page of neither Quarto alludes to the court performance which must have been the original motive of the poet's fancy. Perhaps the supposition that the play was written for Derby's wedding festivities is most probable from the point of view of dates. For Bottom's suggestion that the lions in the play within the play,¹ might frighten the ladies unless reassuring words were inserted in the Prologue, refers unmistakably to an incident connected with the christening of Prince Henry of Scotland. This took place in 1594. A live lion was to have figured there, but a Moon was substituted, as being less dreadful for the spectators—an incident which must have touched Shakespeare's humour when his lungs were 'tickle o' the sere.'

Macbeth, the great Scottish tragedy, was doubt-

¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. i.

less written in homage to the prince who ascended the English throne in 1603 ; and in this play the plotting of the Thane of Cawdor is a distinct reminiscence of the Gowrie conspiracy, which dates about this time. In 1605 the dignities of Scone were forfeited by the Earl of Gowrie, and Sir James Murray was invested with them. (The uncivil allusion of Chapman and Marston to this personality in their *Eastward Hoe* has already been mentioned.) In just the same way as the historical forfeiture took place, so Duncan resolves that the Thane of Cawdor should no more deceive his 'bosom interest.' He therefore commissions Ross to bestow Cawdor's honours on Macbeth. The witches, too, play their part. They represent the poet's attempt to clothe with flattering dignity the unholy hags to whom the royal demonologist consecrated so many pages.

The innovation which took place about this time in dramatic circles, of creating whole companies of children-actors, finds, as might reasonably be expected, a reference on the stage. This new departure had been successful in causing a schism among the playwrights, and it seems highly probable that Shakespeare viewed such childish companies as that at the Chapel Royal with extreme disapproval. The laborious Ben Jonson would devote his time freely to instructing them in their parts of his *Cynthia's Revels*, or *The*

Poetaster ; to teaching this eyrie of children how to declaim his stilted verse, or to cry out his intricate gibes on the top of their falsetto. But Shakespeare no doubt felt that the youngsters who did so berattle the common stage were not fit to interpret the madness of his Lear, or the baleful ambition of a Macbeth. For in *Hamlet* the courtiers of Elsinore cast innuendoes on the triumph of the children-actors who, when my Lord Chamberlain's Company, in disgrace with royalty, betook themselves to travel, carried off 'Hercules and his load'¹ (in other words, the Globe Theatre) from Messrs. Burbage, Heming and Condell. The Prince of Denmark—and one takes him to be Shakespeare's mouthpiece in this instance—could foresee the harm which would befall the actor's profession in England from the furthering of this novelty, and he points out that when the children themselves become common players, they would assuredly blame their patrons for having made them, in their childhood, 'exclaim against their own succession.'²

Another notable event of the time was that voyage of Sir George Summers' to Virginia in 1609, when his fleet was dispersed in the Atlantic, and his own ship wrecked on the Bermudas. Fragments of these distant adventures found their way on to the stage at home, for during that

¹ *Hamlet*, II. ii. 366.

² *Ibid.*, 355.

calm period of his life when Shakespeare seemed to have retired to some shadowy island to weave romances, he still kept near to the movement of English life, and no doubt eagerly read all interesting details of foreign adventure. In his *Tempest* he obviously used hints of strange and marvellous doings, which he had gathered from a book by Silvestre Jourdain¹ relating to the events of this famous voyage. This writer had formed one of the crew, and his description of the Isle of Devils supplied much romantic material; and though Shakespeare, in his usual way, improved on his romance by creating the weird population of Prospero's island, and by drawing a strong line of contrast between man civilised and the savage treacherous, yet the basis of topical truth underlying its conception remains apparent, even to the mentioning of those 'still-vex'd Bermoothes.'²

Mention might also be made here of that picture of the Carib worshipping the sun in *Love's Labour's Lost*.³ But this is only one of other numerous instances where the dramatist speaks of strange lands and illustrates the lasting impression which the discovery of the New World and the opening-up of its wonders had made on his

¹ See *A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Ile of Devils*, by Sir Thos. Gates, Sir Geo. Summers, and Captayne Newport, and divers others, 1610.

² *Tempest*, I. ii. 229.

³ *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. ii. 202.

imagination. Raleigh's participation in colonial enterprise, however, was apparently overlooked, though there is one flying reference to 'Guiana, all gold and bounty,' in the *Merry Wives*,¹ an allusion which would doubtless appeal to the contemporary audience from the fact that Raleigh had only just returned; and another by Falstaff, who sees in Mistress Ford a veritable West Indian.

Besides using in this way much of the romance and awful wonders that kept pouring into England from over the seas, Shakespeare kept his ear agog for municipal tit-bits, which then, as now, were humour of the sort best described as aldermanic. The immortal colloquy between Dogberry and the Watch in *Much Aoo about Nothing*² is evidently the result of certain ponderous municipal efforts in the way of legislation, afterwards embodied in the 'Statute of the Streets' in the year 1595.

When the clown says to Olivia in *Twelfth Night*,³ that 'words are very rascals since bonds disgraced them,' there is possibly an allusion intended to the Privy Council's order of 1600-1, according to which all play-houses except the Globe and the Fortune were to be closed. It was an order that laid no light bonds on the

¹ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. iii. 67.

² *Much Aoo about Nothing*, III. iii.

³ *Twelfth Night*, III. i.

dramatists. The special enactment for the relief of soldiers landing from over the seas is also referred to in *All's Well*, where Lafeu turns away from Parolles, 'the man whom Fortune had cruelly scratched,' with the words, 'There's a cardecue for you! Let the Justices make you and Fortune friends: I am for other business.'¹ The Justices were called upon to give penniless soldiers a new start in civil life.

There is also an allusion to the famous Poor Law of 1601 in *Pericles*, though it is not altogether complimentary as to the success of its working; for when the fisherman drawing up his net calls 'Help, master, help!' he also somewhat loquaciously adds, 'Here's a fish hangs on the net like a poor man's right in the law, 'twill hardly come out.'²

In the play called *Sir Thomas More*, the rising against foreigners on that black May-day of 1517 has been thought to allude to the contemporary discontent which arose in the city some seventy years later; for the apprentices rose in 1586, while ten years later saw other and more general riots springing from the same cause.

The earthquake of 1580 is alluded to by Juliet's old nurse.³ It is for her a landmark of time. The 'late eclipses'⁴ of *King Lear* probably relate

¹ *All's Well that Ends Well*, v. ii. 35.

² *Pericles*, II. i. 116.

³ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iii. 23.

⁴ *King Lear*, I. ii. 106 ff.

to the sun's great eclipse of 1605, while the 'machinations, hollowness, and treachery' of the same passage allude to the Gunpowder Plot. The abundant harvest of 1606 is probably hinted at in *Macbeth*,¹ where a farmer is said to have 'hanged himself on the expectation of plenty.' And strangest of all, the stranding of a whale on the coast of Kent in the year '73 is probably commemorated in 2 *Henry IV.*, when the King advises Clarence to blunt not young Henry's love, but 'in his moods to give him line and scope till that his passions, like a whale on ground, confound themselves with working.'²

The invention of the movable topmast in Shakespeare's own time is hinted at in the *Tempest*, when the boatswain in the storm commands that spar to be lowered;³ while the map engraved for the English version of *Linschoten's Voyage* (in 1598), in which India, Ceylon and the East is more fully treated, is what is referred to in *Twelfth Night* when Malvolio is said to 'smile his face into more lines than are in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies.'⁴ The map already referred to was remarkable for its sets of lines. Also when Jonson remarks 'that carmen and chimney-sweeps are got into the yellow-starch,'⁵

¹ *Macbeth*, II. iii.

³ *Tempest*, I. i. 37.

⁵ Jonson, *Devil's an Ass*.

² 2 *Henry IV.*, IV. iv. 40.

⁴ *Twelfth Night*, III. ii. 78.

he is alluding to a passage of contemporary history. Yellow starch had been much used by fashionables for bands and ruffs. It had been invented by an infamous tire-woman called Turner, who being implicated in the Overbury murder, was hanged at Tyburn. She chose to die in a yellow ruff of her own invention, and yellow starch in consequence became so hateful that it ceased to be worn except by the lowest classes of society.

Besides these fleeting reflections of English contemporary life which were from time to time inserted in the Elizabethan drama, there are some which relate to *foreign events and personalities*, and carry the interest of the audience beyond the narrow seas.

Shakespeare's first undoubted play, *Love's Labour's Lost*, is filled with topical items of this kind. Contemporary French politics play the chief part, but Spain and even distant Russia are enlisted to supply interest to this strange dramatic medley of fact tricked out in Fancy's robes.¹

The cause of the 'matchless Navarre,'² at whose Court the scene of the play is laid, excited in England the keenest sympathy, and, in fact, four thousand volunteers under Essex had just swelled his forces when the play was written.³ The three courtiers who attend on Navarre in the play are

¹ See paper by Mr. Sidney Lee, 'A New Study of *Love's Labour's Lost*' (*Gent's Mag.* 1880).

² *Love's Labour's Lost*, II. i. 7.

³ *i.e.* 1589.

named after the three conspicuous leaders, the Mareschal de Biron, the Duc de Longueville, and the Duc de Mayenne (also called Du Maine). The last of these was in reality at the head of the League, and Shakespeare probably confused him with a supporter of the rival cause. Motte, the diplomatic page, that 'pigeon-egg of discretion,'¹ seems to have been a reminiscence of the Comte de la Motte, the popular French ambassador in London; while the mention of the 'Duke Alençon'² was perhaps a slight tribute to the French prince of that name, the public and persistent suitor for the hand of Elizabeth.

Of all the poet's intended identifications, however, that of Biron is one of the most complete and satisfactory. Its original was the gallant French marshal, and the portrait is pregnant with points of resemblance. His well-known 'rhodomontades, jactance et vanités,'³ are all re-echoed by Shakespeare in his hero's extravagant bravery, his 'brilliancy replete with mocks.'⁴ The relegation of the hero to the hospital at the end of the play may well be a remembrance of his own words: 'Je ne scay si je mourroi sur l'eschaffaut, mais je scay bien que je ne mourroi qu'à l'hospital.'

The romantic journey of the Princess of France has also an historic counterpart in the political

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. i. 72.

² *Ibid.*, II. i. 61.

³ Quoted as uttered by the King himself in *Biographie Universelle*, vol. iv., under Biron.

⁴ *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. ii. 833.

mission which in 1586 brought to St. Bris, Catherine de Medici, and her 'escadron volant' of seductive ladies, with the object of initiating a political alliance between the Bourbon prince and her son, the 'decrepit, sick'¹ representative of the House of Valois. The alliance took place actually in 1589.

Yet another scene in the play is the dramatising of an historic episode. The strained relations between the English and the Muscovite Courts at the time when the play was being written, awoke anew the interest in an event seven years past.² The Russians disguising in *Love's Labour's Lost* were suggested by an embassy from the Czar to Elizabeth in 1583, with a view to obtaining one of her kinswomen as a bride. The awkwardness with which the Russian envoy, Count Pissemsky, made his proposal, awoke the ridicule of the courtly spectators; and Lady Mary Hastings, whom Elizabeth had selected for the honour, as being of royal lineage, was known ever after at Court as the Empress of Muscovia, although she refused the imperial suitor. This is the historical incident which the poet introduced by way of interlude, though the masquerading of 'the Prince and his bookmates' as 'frozen Muscovites'³

¹ Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i. 139.

² Cf. Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth*.

³ *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. ii. 264.

is not a little whimsical, especially when it is purposed to gain the favour of the ladies thereby.

Other passing allusions to French events occurring at the time are met with, in both the *Comedy of Errors* and *The Merchant of Venice*. The former was written, in all probability, very soon after *Love's Labour's Lost*, and in it Dromio describes the contemporary condition of France as 'armed and reverted, making war against her (*i.e.* his mistress's) hair,'¹ alluding, of course, to the hostile and aggressive position taken up by the League against Henry of Navarre. In the *Merchant of Venice*, the reference is slighter; but 'the flourish when true subjects bow to a new-crowned monarch'² can probably be placed among these allusions and assigned to the final entry of the hero of Ivry into Paris as King of France.

In Lyly's *Sapho and Phao*, also, there occurs an allusion to the Duke of Anjou, who will be remembered as one of the Queen's suitors. His rejection is hinted at in the play, when Phao departs from Sicily, the Queen (Sapho) of which island he is deeply enamoured with. The departure of Anjou was quite recent when this play was written. There yet remain two plays, or double plays, which present in some ways the most direct reflec-

¹ *Comedy of Errors*, III. ii. 123.

² *Merchant of Venice*, III. ii. 49.

tion of French events which marked the English stage.

Chapman's *Bussy d'Ambois* and the *Revenge of Bussy* deal with actual historical personages, and with events which may well have been in the memory of some of the audience. The story is in itself a common one : ambition and love lead to over-confidence and intrigue, and cause the fall of a courageous adventurer. The fall of Bussy is avenged by his brother Clermont. But the interest arises not only from the intrigues depicted, but also from the characters of Henry III., Alençon, Anjou and Guise, which move to and fro on the stage.

In the Biron tragedies, the incidents would be of still more interest to the audience, as being yet more recent in date. The execution of Biron, Marshal of France, only took place in 1602 ; so that there was some reason for the displeasure of the French ambassador at having this tragedy of his Court set daily before gaping English audiences. The knowledge of Biron's conspiracy against his royal master was not confined to the French Court. Elizabeth is said to have significantly pointed to 'Essexii caput' when he visited her on an embassy ; and though this point is not in the drama, yet the whole event is generally well depicted, including Biron's stubbornness in refusing to comply with the generous conditions of Henry IV. for a confession.

The most interesting allusions to Spanish affairs come, on the other hand, from the plays of Lyly. Written as they were about the time of the great Armada, one would naturally expect in them some reference to so mighty an event. In his *Midas*, Philip is unmistakably depicted. His delay in despatching his fleet, long after the huge preparations were complete, is bitterly commented on by a disappointed son of Spain, who complains 'that now when he should execute, he begins to consult, and suffers the enemy to bid us good-morrow at our own doors, to whom we long since might have given the last good-night in their own beds'—the delay, of course, caused by the 'singeing of the King of Spain's beard.' After the overthrow of the great expedition, Philip, as 'Midas,' is represented as lamenting: 'Have not I made the sea to groan under the number of my ships: and have they not perished, that there was not two left to make a number?'¹ And throughout the play, England is glorified, sometimes by implication, elsewhere directly. It is proudly described as Lesbos which 'the gods have pitched out of the world, as not to be controlled by any in the world.'² This play of Lyly's gives what is perhaps the most accurate picture of the events of '88 which appeared on the stage. These are most definite allusions to the ambitious Spaniard, who according to Elizabeth herself wished to 'make himself

¹ *Midas*, III. i.

² *Ibid.*, v. iii.

king of the whole world.'¹ Less certainly, though still possibly, an allusion exists behind the figure of great Tamburlaine as drawn by Marlowe: that sacrilegious conqueror who fought for universal power and compelled vanquished monarchs to draw his chariot like 'pampered jades.'

It is remarkable how small a part the people who lived east of the Rhine played in English politics and literature at this time. Theirs was the soil in which grew to a fine ripeness the Faustus and Fortunatus legends; it was the starting-point of much black magic, and of many a most 'damnable historie,' but these were the sole points of contact, and a reference to the German people in Elizabethan times was nearly always in connection with these matters. In the course of Elizabeth's reign, however, there came from the Rhineland a Count of Mompelgard, paying a visit to the Court of Windsor. He had the splendid satisfaction of cozening all mine hosts of 'Readings,' of Maidenhead, and of Colebrook, of their horses and money; cozening them by a royal permit which left the honest fellows in a state of open-mouthed astonishment. There was much humour in the incident, viewed in a strictly disinterested light, and Shakespeare made use of it in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*.² The

¹ Elizabeth's words to the French ambassador, 1594.

² *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. v. 76.

result is that amusing scene where the loyal host of the 'Garter' is plunged into painful perplexity on account of the 'three cozen-germans' who had just left certain neighbouring hostelries in such a flutter. In the first Quarto the allusion is still more direct, the 'cozen-germans' there being rather audaciously called 'cozen-garmombles,' which obviously is but a thin disguise for the name of the noble adventurer.

Attempts have also been made to identify the County Palatine and the young German in the *Merchant of Venice* with a Polish Palatine and the Duke of Bavaria respectively. The former had visited England in Shakespeare's time, had been well entertained, but having contracted debts, had left the country hastily. The Duke of Bavaria, too, is known to have visited London about the same time, and to have been made a Knight of the Garter; all of which affords some evidence.

Of Dutch affairs Shakespeare has no mention, unless there be one in the *Twelfth Night*. Fabian there warns Sir Andrew Aguecheek that he has sailed into the north of his lady's opinion, where he would 'hang like an icicle on a Dutchman's beard,'¹ unless he redeemed his cause by some laudable attempt of valour or policy. In all

¹ *Twelfth Night*, III. ii. 26.

probability a contemporary reference lay concealed in these words, and Elizabethan eyes may well have seen in them an allusion to the two Dutchmen who sailed to the Arctic regions in 1596 and discovered Nova Zembla. Beaumont and Fletcher, however, devoted a play already mentioned to the fall of the great Advocate of Holland, Sir John van Olden Barnaveldt, in which a chapter of Dutch history is taken and displayed on the English stage. But this seems all. Elsewhere these same dramatists make passing allusions to continental matters such as the Cleves War and the murder of Maria de Medici's favourite minister Concini, but these events take the narrative beyond the age of Shakespeare, and so lie without the range of the present intention.

In now reviewing what has been gathered from Elizabethan plays, of a nature to help one in reconstructing a picture of the age that produced them, it will be seen, it is hoped, that material of undeniable value offers itself for the purpose. We can re-create the great Queen, proud yet beloved, crafty yet winning, who made for unity while claiming adulation; re-create, too, something of her treatment of Essex, her dealings with Leicester, and possibly catch glimpses of others at her Court. If the glimpses are not many, it is perhaps because the men who wrote, found no great pleasure in labouring in a field where it

was criminal to look beneath the surface, and where the places upon which the sun shone brightest concealed the rankest weeds. We can re-create James in all his royal weakness, as superstitious as vain, indulgent towards favourites, and halting in policy. We can learn the way of the dramatists with their kind: much plain-speaking, much heart-burning, with here and there kind statements of a man's true worth. We can re-create eccentrics like Monarcho and poor Mistress Moll; statelier forms like Drake and Shirley; contemporary incidents of domestic import, some dainty with courtly dignity, some breezy with travelling, some humorous and parochial; and incidents from the Continent also of intrigue or absurdity.

These figures would form an invaluable foreground to any picture. They touch on most of the main arteries of life, and collectively would go to restore, in no inadequate manner, the age from which they are taken.

CHAPTER III

ON THE GENERAL ALLUSIONS OF THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

'Shakespeare gives to all nations the customs of England and to all ages the manners of his own.'—DR. JOHNSON.

Now that a certain number of personal references and particular allusions have been seen to lie curiously entangled in the network of the Elizabethan drama, it remains to be shown that from the same plays can be also gleaned some general allusions which shall illustrate contemporary types and local customs, as contrasted with the distinct personalities and definite events of the particular kind.

It has already been explained that while the latter class owe their insertion to the definite intention of the dramatist, general allusions spring from no such cause, but are due to the silent workings of sympathy between the dramatist and his age. They are due to an unconscious assimilation of Elizabethan life — assimilation arising out of an untiring observation. And

herein does the dramatist obey that constant law emphasised by the most distinguished of modern critics that 'the greatest poets and historians live entirely in their own age.'¹ Ben Jonson, too, made in effect the same criticism when he transferred from Florence to London the scene of his *Every Man in His Humour*, and at the same time gave English names to his characters in place of Italian. He recognised that, whether he desired it or not, his characters would turn out to be English. He felt that he could only touch humanity through the medium of his own countrymen. 'Shakespeare's mind,' Ruskin said truly, 'was everlastingly concentrated on his own age'; and this was merely the first condition for the producing of the highest work. For human nature at its sources is one in all latitudes, and the province of Art lies in depicting this humanity truly and grandly, paying only a secondary heed to the frame in which the subject may present itself.

Had Shakespeare in his *Merchant of Venice* posed as a Venetian, introduced us to magnificoes on the Rialto, and led us among the gondolas shimmering in the sun-bathed marshes of the Adriatic; had he spoken their language, adopted their customs and donned their dress,

¹ Ruskin.

we should have had more geography but less art. If in his *Julius Cæsar* he had led us to Rome, and not shown us a dead Cæsar on the floor of the Capitol; had he conferred no mediæval guilds on the Roman citizens, nor represented the Triumvirs as meeting in Rome, we should have had better history but a feebler creation. Under the unerring guidance of his masterly genius he was persuaded that his mission lay in his own country, in his own age, in his own time. His characters do not change with the climate, for England colours all his creations. Galatea obtained the divine gift of life only when Pygmalion breathed part of his own breath of life into his creation, and with his breath that part of the age which he had absorbed into his being. So are the characters of the great Elizabethan dramatists always Elizabethan, their manners and dress those of the epoch, just as if the dramatists in giving them life had of necessity given them part of their own.

Their lovers are always the lovers of the day; their gallants, the gallants of 'the Queen's time'; their soldiers, the followers of the gipsy earl in the Netherlands; their rustics, the inmates of a Tudor village; their citizens, the burgesses of Tudor London; their fools, those motley jesters 'guarded with yellow,'¹ whose bells jangled in

¹ *Henry VIII.*, Prolog. 16.

sunlit quadrangles, or along gloomy cloisters of country mansions.

In their foreign plays the characters are still of the Elizabethan stamp. English exquisites parade the streets of Verona, English courtiers haunt the palace of Rousillon, English peasants bandy rough jests in the woods of Navarre. English carpenters ply their trade in Cæsar's Rome, English billiards and cards are played in Cleopatra's palace. Lancastrian England, with its mediæval feudalism, becomes in Shakespearean histories the awakened England of the Renaissance; and even in those plays which deal with a Britain yet dark, there is the same Elizabethan tone and colouring. Elizabethan nobles look on at the white-haired Lear's sufferings under the iron skies. It is Elizabethan splendour which decks the palace of Cymbeline.

'For what vestige of Egyptian character is there in Cleopatra? of Athenian in Theseus or Timon? of Old English in Imogen or Cordelia? of old Scottish in Macbeth?—Shakespeare painted honestly and completely from the men around him,'¹ and therein lies the explanation both for him and his fellows.

To this extent, then, did the Elizabethan world of incident first exorcise the dramatists, and then creep into absolute possession of their working

¹ Ruskin.

hours. The Elizabethan colouring was the only condition on which the Romeos and the Hamlets were to leave the seclusion of the studio, and move about in the world outside as actual creations. The creator of Hamlet became universal in his reach because he remained, under all circumstances and at all times, an Elizabethan.

So then it must follow that these contemporary allusions of a general kind are not to be regarded as unmeaning excrescences or sheer accidents in the drama of the time. They are rather natural growths, signs of the dramatists' absorption of the spirit of their age, and indispensable accompaniments of human efforts to define the spirit of permanent truth, as far as it lies in humanity. So that although Shakespeare's psychological studies apply to the race, although he was 'not of an age but for all time,' he was yet without inconsistency, or rather, one should say, he was of necessity, a constant Elizabethan; and so with his fellows without exception.

It was of Sophocles that Matthew Arnold said, he 'saw life steadily and saw it whole,' but this is, in even a greater degree, true of Shakespeare. It is only natural to infer, therefore, that in his works will run threads of all colours, taken from all parts of the tapestry of life. His plays, if they reflect faithfully the mind that wove them, will depict scenes of country life and town life,

the professions and trades, Elizabethan homes and amusements, the contemporary religion and superstition, and whatever else a myriad-sided life affords to the beholder. Details of such appear not only in Shakespeare, but in all the other dramatists to a greater or less degree. As they were Elizabethan, so the scenes and the atmosphere of their plays are pure Elizabethan.

Here then will be an immensity of detail for giving a background to the proposed picture of the contemporary life.

Country life, in the first place, enters largely into the scenes conjured up on the Elizabethan stage. In the case of Shakespeare the treatment is lavish, far more so than with any of his brother playwrights. Shakespeare was a grown man when he arrived in London first, nor had he had a university varnish set on his original rusticity. Throughout his life, moreover, he kept in touch with his native town, as we know from his dealings in real property. It is more than probable that he would often leave his abode in dingy Southwark or Aldersgate Street, and seek the repose of the country, when he could spare the time in the 'Deade Terme,' or when outbreaks of the plague would close the theatres.¹ He would ride down to his Tusculanum at Stratford where his twin-children were growing up, and spend 'a

¹ *Tempest*, I. ii. 364; *Timon of Athens*, IV. i. 21, etc.

July's day short as December'¹ amid their fondlings and chattering gambols.

The attitude which he preserves towards rustic life is consistently one of complete and humorous sympathy. His studies of lower rustic life are many-sided and vivid, and are couched as well in a most kindly vein. He must often have stood in the village ale-house, 'a chiel amang them takin' notes,' while the humours that floated around good people like old John Naps would be quietly drenching him through and through. All the blown dignity of village officialdom, all the monkey antics of the youthful villagers, came under his eye and pen. He seems to have garnered from all sorts of places technical knowledge which many a farmer was wont to air on market-days. Sports of all kinds he knew and touched upon with all the faithfulness of detail that the most zealous devotees would desire. Their influence had penetrated deeply into his being, for they are to him a never-failing source of the richest metaphor. Festival days in the country gave him rich memories of rustic revels on Warwickshire greens, of punch-bowls cheerfully steaming away the discontent of a wintry night. And these things never fail to glow again at his will. He succeeds in hitting upon the picturesque side of country life, just as Theo-

¹ *Winter's Tale*, I. ii. 169.

critus did, whose peasants move for ever in a simple glory of Nature's own. There are times when he sees that the country frowns on man. There are days when

‘Dick the shepherd blows his nail

 And milk comes frozen home in pail,

 When coughing drowns the parson's saw

 And Marion's nose looks red and raw.’

But the ways are not always foul. There are seasons

‘When daisies white and violets blue,
 And lady-smocks all silver white,
 And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,
 Do paint the meadows with delight.’¹

And the days when ‘maidens bleach their summer frocks’ give the real aspect of the country, he seems to say, for one who hath the true philosophy in him; the country with its ‘marigolds that go to bed wi’ the sun,’² its ‘daffodils that come before the swallow dares,’³ and its pale primroses and bold oxlips, its ‘violets dim, but sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes.’ It was certainly the one which lit up Shakespeare's town

¹ See song, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *ad fin.*

² *Winter's Tale*, IV. iii. 105.

³ *Ibid.*, IV. iii. 118 ff.

life with joyful anticipation of future repose. It was undoubtedly the one which gladdened that rascally Autolycus as he went humming with that light heart of his over country stiles.

The vicissitudes which influenced the life of the countrymen and farmers seem to have affected the poet far more than the innumerable political incidents which elicited such interest from every Londoner. To Shakespeare, an earthquake, a flood,¹ a great frost,² an eclipse³ are things which his memory marks with a red letter, just as Mistress Quickly clings, woman-wise, to the summer when the Court rested at Windsor instead of at Greenwich.⁴

Of the squire and his 'moated grange,' of the feudal lord, still a sovereign in his 'manor house,'⁵ and who would roam for miles in his 'pleasant chase,' we are told but little. The only type of the landed gentry, Justice Shallow, Armiger—identified over and over again with the owner of Charlecote as already has been said—has been presented to us only as a petty squireen, who no doubt would have 'a hundred milch-kine to the

¹ *King John*, III. ii. 3 and v. iv. 53; also *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iii. 23, and Churchyard's *Charitie* (pub. 1595). There were great floods in 1594.

² *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. i. 24.

³ *King Lear*, I. ii. 106.

⁴ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. ii. 60 (viz. 1603).

⁵ *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i. 204.

pail,' and 'six score fat oxen standing in the stall.' Shakespeare's satire is directed against the man's character, and does not throw much light on the life he led. Yet we can imagine him aping those 'manly exercises'¹ for which England has always been renowned, exercises which Orlando claims as becoming to a gentleman and which Hamlet forgoes only when he 'loses all his mirth and it goes heavily with his disposition.'² We can see him at his table, 'sprinkled over with all manner of cheap salads, sliced beef, giblets, and pettitoes, to fill up room,'³ discoursing on the 'couple of short-legged hens,' the joint of mutton, and the 'pretty little tiny kickshaws' that William cook has concocted.⁴ From other sources we may glean that he loved hawk and greyhound more than any mortal creature. 'Were but a feather of his hawk's train dispraised he would writhe his mouth'; while a compliment on his horse would make him a bondslave.⁵ He would 'disdaine trafficke, thinking it to abase gentry.'⁶ He would keep a chaplain to say prayers twice a day.⁷ But the chaplain's return would be small; twenty marks and board would be good allowance.

¹ *As You Like It*, I. i. 72.

² Cf. *Hamlet*, II. ii. 301.

³ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Woman Hater*, I. ii.

⁴ *Henry IV.*, v. i. 27 ff.

⁵ Cf. *Return from Parnassus*, Pt. II. II. vi.

⁶ Morryson, *Itinerary*.

⁷ Lupton, *London and the Country Carbonadoed*, p. 8.

Living around would perhaps be some 'upstart country knight' who, through paternal industry, had acquired his land. He would doff the name of clown, but the look not so easily. His face 'would still bear the relish of churn-milk.' Such a one would be 'guarded with more gold lace than all the gentlemen of the country . . . and yet would remain but the clod of his own earth.'¹

In spite of scattered hints, however, no figure of a Squire Western or of a Sir Roger glances anywhere through the Elizabethan pages. They seem lost to perception, though such typical Englishmen must certainly have existed. But perhaps it was because tenants and labourers were more the friends of that dramatist, who loved the country, than were the 'neighbouring gentlemen.'² By 'tenants and labourers' must be understood not those who would 'take warning a quarter of a yeare,' and who had 'always to bring security' wherever they intended to stay;³ nor those worthless peasants that 'bargained for their wives as market-men for oxen,'⁴ but rather pleasant day-women⁵ like trim Jacquenetta; 'the sunburnt sicklemen of August weary,'⁶ the

¹ Earle, *Microcosmography*, p. 17.

² 1 *Henry IV.*, III. i. 90.

³ Lupton, *London and the Country Carbonadoed*, p. 5.

⁴ 1 *Henry VI.*, v. v. 53.

⁵ *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. ii. 129.

⁶ *Tempest*, I. iv. 134.

trudging pedlar with his ballads in 'print o' life,' his silken treasury and 'many laces,'¹ the market folks that sold their corn; 'the knitters in the sun'; 'the free maids that wove their threads with bones';² and the prattling butterwomen whose long Indian file wound itself at an amble into Stratford market.³ A plain country fellow would be a man of no great education. He would be one 'whose hand guided the plough and the plough his thoughts.' His habitation would be 'some poor thatched roof, distinguished from his barn by the loopholes that let out the smoke.' He would be 'a terrible fastener on beef.' His religion would be part of his copyhold which he took from his landlord. He would go to church in his best clothes, but when there 'would be capable only of two prayers,' one for rain, the other for fair weather.⁴

But more direct recollections than these are recorded in Shakespeare's works—recollections of the hamlets where in childhood he had passed many a morning playing at All-hid,⁵ Cherry-pit,⁶ Push-pin,⁷ Span-counter,⁸ Whipping a gig,⁹

¹ *Winter's Tale*, iv. iii. 260 and 354; ² *Henry VI.*, iv. ii. 48.

² *Twelfth Night*, ii. iv. 45.

³ *As You Like It*, iii. ii. 98; *All's Well that Ends Well*, iv. i. 47

⁴ Earle, *Microcosmography*, p. 28 ff.

⁵ *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. iii. 78.

⁶ *Twelfth Night*, iii. iv. 129.

⁷ *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. iii. 166.

⁸ *2 Henry VI.*, iv. ii. 161.

⁹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. iii. 164 (a top).

riding 'the wild mare with the boys,'¹ winning youthful ladies at 'Leap-frog,'² or in winter erecting painfully 'a mockery king of snow'³ around

'dirty Greton, dingy Greet,
Beggary Winchcomb, Sudely Sweet,'⁴

these would be his childhood's games played in company with Kit Sly, 'old Sly's son of Burton-heath,'⁵ with Peter Turf and Henry Pimpernell. Later on in his teens, no doubt, he would slip round, after some keen contest at the butts, to Marian Hackett's ale-house in Wincot⁶ and drain a cup of the renowned small beer.⁷ The 'great oes in chalke'⁸ that stood behind the door would show up many a villager more than 'fourteenpence on the score for sheer ale,'⁹ while the 'History of Judith or Susanna, Dives or Lazarus,' painted on the wall, would touch him to laughter as he thought of the muddled pates

¹ *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 250 (see-saw).

² *Henry V.*, v. ii. 138.

³ *Richard II.*, IV. i. 260.

⁴ Initial lines of a local rhyme enumerating the chief points of interest in that part of Warwickshire. The country folk of the immediate neighbourhood still credit the author of *Hamlet* with its composition.

⁵ *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, ii. 19; Burton-on-the-Heath, the home of Shakespeare's aunt, Mrs. Lambert; *Ibid.*, i. 96.

⁶ Wilnecote.

⁷ Cf. Sir Aston Cokain's letter (1658).

⁸ Rolands, *Greenes Ghost*, p. 22.

⁹ *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, ii. 23.

that were nightly wont to lean thereon. Old John Naps of Greece,¹ with his very chequered career, would there be gossiping with the fat ale-wife, Marian Hacket, and twenty more such men as he listening, all men of colossal thirsts. There they would lean in various attitudes of social good-humour, with a 'stone-jug' or 'seal'd quart'² at their sides. They would peer at all comers, and greet their friends 'with a good thump on the back,' accompanied by a 'blunt curse their common salutation.'³ On the doorstep perhaps would be lounging no less a person than Antony Dull, the village constable, 'a man of good repute, carriage, bearing, and estimation,'⁴ one with whom 'the ale-house had best hold correspondence,' for he had 'command of four places of note, the stockes, the cage, the whipping-post, and the cucking-stool.'⁵ On parting with such a one, the hostess or her daughter 'would kiss him handsomely,'⁶ to draw him hither again the sooner.

From his early youth Shakespeare's wonderful power of observing and apprehending must have applied itself to surrounding details. No poet has ever brought together such a marvellous variety

¹ Perhaps 'Dingy Greet.'

² *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, ii. 90.

³ Earle, *Microcosmography*. ⁴ *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i. 262.

⁵ Lupton, *London and the Country Carbonadoed*, p. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

of sketches and pictures, metaphors and allusions drawn direct from Nature's workshop, or from the most diverse forms of man's industry and toil. Nowhere is he found repeating those classical similes and images which are the common property of merely talented authors.

The tod of wool from every 'leven wether' that 'yields pound and odd shilling,'¹ the compost on the weeds,² the gardener's dibble,³ and the grinding quern,⁴ have as few secrets for him as the technique of hawking, hunting, angling, coursing, manège-riding, or archery.

Hawking was the national sport of the age, and technical terms with regard to that particular branch, as well as those relating to the chase, were considered as a necessary part of the vocabulary of every well-bred Englishman. 'Why, you know,' said Ben Jonson, 'an a man have not the skill in the hawking and hunting languages nowadays, I'll not give a rush for him.'⁵ Shakespeare's illustrations in this field were more frequent and accurate than those of any other playwright. Petruchio likens his wilful mistress to those kites 'that bate and beat and will not be

¹ *Winter's Tale*, IV. ii. 32.

² *Hamlet*, III. iv. 151.

³ *Winter's Tale*, IV. iii. 100.

⁴ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 36.

⁵ *Every Man in His Humour*, I. i. 47.

obedient.’¹ Love-sick Juliet sighs for a falconer’s voice to lure her tassel-gentle back again.² And when Othello under Iago’s subtle pressure begins to doubt his Desdemona, the words of his maddened anger are:—

‘If I do prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,
I’d whistle her off, and let her down the wind,
To prey at fortune.’³

An allusion to the common way of controlling fractious hawks. That ‘horn and hound’ exercised their stirring attraction on the poet there can be no doubt. Theseus’ Spartan breed—

‘With ears that sweep away the morning dew,
Crook-knee’d and dew-lapp’d like Thessalian bulls,
Slow in pursuit but match’d in mouth like bells’⁴—

are those same hounds which the sportsmen of the day followed, two successive days, over ditch and hedge, across hill and vale—hounds of which now the nearest approach in type is the ‘deep-mouthed’ basset.⁵ Silver and Bellman and Echo would be among ‘the cry,’⁵ picking out the dullest scent, careful only not to ‘overtop’ the

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. i. 191.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, II. ii. 160.

³ *Othello*, III. iii. 260.

⁴ *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, IV. i. 125 ff.

⁵ Cf. *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, i. 20 ff.

chase. They would be out as soon as the cheery 'Hunt's up'¹ had rippled through the morning air and made the huntsmen spring from their sleep 'with a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino.'²

In his woodland plays, Shakespeare gives a host of the 'divers and sundry tearms of art' used by those who worshipped at Diana's shrine in his day—such as a buck of the first head, a pricket, a sorell, a bracket, and a lean rascal. Of fox and hare the country squire would know enough 'to furnish fifteen meales with long discourse in the adventures of each.'³ Oftentimes the sportsman would get near his prey under cover of 'a stalking horse,' while when ladies wished 'to play the murderer,' buildings, concealed by bushes, would be raised in parks whence they might shoot with their cross-bow at the deer as they raced by. Much of the knowledge would be gained by the dramatist in those 'bosky acres'⁴ of Charlecote, where he had often struck a doe with the help of his curt-tailed dog, and 'borne her cleanly by the keeper's nose.'⁵ His array of woodland knowledge cannot do otherwise than call up the darling practice of another Midland poet, who in his

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, III. v. 34. Cf. Douce, *Illustrations of Shakespeare*. 'Hunt's up' was the tune to awake the huntsmen.

² *As You Like It*, v. iii. 18.

³ Stephen's *Essays*, Bk. ii. 6.

⁴ *Tempest*, IV. i. 81.

⁵ *Titus Andronicus*, II. i. 94.

Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knight wrote so vividly and accurately of the chase as he knew it.

At a time when the Thames would still yield salmon and pike, angling was a widespread sport; and it is clearly one of the angling contests between keen fishermen of the various British rivers, that Shakespeare has in mind when he makes Cleopatra wager on her angling, and Charmian twit the Egyptian Queen with the same.¹

The 'fawning greyhound in the leash' formed another notable feature of country life under the Tudors. We find in Shakespeare, not only would the sportsmen start 'the timorous flying hare,'² with a loud and wild 'So ho!'³ and course her down to where they had 'pitched a toil';⁴ but on Cotsall they would have matches, and bets as to the merits of the various famous dogs.⁵ Page's fallow greyhound would be sometimes unexpectedly outrun by some dog 'as swift as breathed stag,'⁶ and perhaps bred by little John Doit of Staffordshire, or Will Squele the 'Cots-ol'-man.'⁷

Similarly, innumerable instances might be deduced from Shakespeare's plays showing his

¹ *Antony and Cleopatra*, II. v. 16.

² *Venus and Adonis*, 674. ³ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III. i. 189.

⁴ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. 2.

⁵ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. i. 90.

⁶ *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, ii. 49.

⁷ *2 Henry IV.*, III. ii. 23. The Cotswold Games were revived by Captain Dover, having been instituted at an earlier date.

complete and ready acquaintance with all the details of horsemanship and horse-breeding. But that particular branch of equestrian art, the manège, which was so popular with all the best families of the time, since the knowledge of it went to make 'a compleat gentleman,'¹ attracts from him but scant attention. Orlando, it is true, has a word about it as an enviable but unnecessary accomplishment. But when we know that all the lusty youths of the country would revel in making 'the great horse' gallop the galliard, do the capreole, the chambretta, and dance the curvette,² it is curious, perhaps, but significant also, that the poet should have dwelt so slightly on the 'bound and high curvet of Mars's fiery steed.'³

A subject more congenial to him was that of archery. It elicited, it will be remembered, a whole treatise from the solid wit of Roger Ascham, schoolmaster. The use of the bow and arrow was intimately connected with birding and fowling, and many an hour did the boys of Warwickshire spend on the watch for the painted wings of the pheasant hidden in the brake, in order to 'thump' him on his appearance with their short thick 'bird-bolts.'⁴ On his return the successful fowler would be 'clapped on the shoulder and called

¹ Cf. Gervase Markham, *The Compleat Gentleman*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *All's Well that Ends Well*, II. iii. 282.

⁴ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. 22.

Adam'¹ after Adam Bell, the famous outlaw of the old days. The youth 'that shot so trim'² would no doubt develop into a skilful archer whose 'loosed arrows'³ would seldom 'miss the clout,'⁴ but 'cleave the very pin.'⁵ While drawing he would shout his warning to all to 'stand wide of the bow-hand,'⁶ and near the butts would be stationed a marker who 'gave aim,'⁷ that is, showed where the arrow alighted. Wide must have been Shakespeare's experience in this field. Indeed, under the influence of Ascham's *Toxophilus*, the old English practice, which the goodly scholar describes not only as an honest pastime and wholesome exercise, but also as a branch of military exercise, this practice had regained some of its pristine greatness. So it comes about that the poet's allusions to this branch of country diversions are more plentiful than to any other subject. In the plays of Dekker and Middleton, and most of all in those of Beaumont and Fletcher, terms of archery often occur, yet none of Shakespeare's contemporaries seem to have been so much impressed as he was himself by the renascent sport.

¹ *Much Ado about Nothing*, I. i. 251.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, II. i. 13.

³ *Henry V.*, I. ii. 207.

⁴ *How a man may choose a good wife from a bad* (Dodsley, *Old English Plays*, vol. ix. p. 23).

⁵ *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iv. 15.

⁶ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. i. 134.

⁷ *The City Gallant*.

The labours of the rustic and the sports of the lusty yeomen in Elizabeth's reign are not the only reminiscences to be found in Shakespeare's works of the life which his compatriots led at the wane of the sixteenth century. A welcome rest would come for them now and again with one of the many festivals and 'gaudy nights'¹ — the remains of Popish sway over the old Catholic England. There would be New Year's Day with its gifts² of oranges stuck with cloves, and with its wassail scenes, 'when roasted crabs hissed in the bowl.'³ Then Shrove-Monday with its sweet collops,⁴ and Shrove-Tuesday with ever-tasty pancakes.⁵ Then sheep-shearing,⁶ when lamb-ale would turn many a merry man's head, and children would stuff their cheeks with 'warden pies, and mace, and dates, and prunes, and a race or two of ginger.'⁷ After this would come May-day with its masquerade of morris-dancers around the painted pole : and the Whitsun Pastorals⁸ with their old-fashioned show of mysteries. Later on, Michaelmas⁹ and the harvest-home, with the merry music which accompanied the last load of corn ;

¹ *Antony and Cleopatra*, III. xi. 183.

² *Merry Wives of Windsor*, III. v. 8.

³ *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. ii. 915 ; crab apples.

⁴ *Winter's Tale*, I. ii. 137.

⁵ *All's Well that Ends Well*, II. ii. 23.

⁶ *Winter's Tale*, IV. ii. 37.

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 48 ff.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁹ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. i. 200.

and later still, on the eve of cold November, Hallowe'en with its puling beggars.¹ Then at Martlemas a dim ray of sunshine would light up 'St. Martin's summer, halcyon days,'² and at last, Christmas carols and Yule-tide's 'pious chansons'³ would bring every one back again to 'shoeing the mare, hoodman blind, hot cockles,'⁴ flapdragons,⁵ the wassail-candle,⁶ and the punch-bowl which had inaugurated the year.

All these festivals and a few more beside, such as Lammas-tide, Holyrood-day, and Easter-tide, are mentioned by Shakespeare. But none is dealt with in such loving detail as the merry-making which took place in summer when every little village had 'her batchilers and damosels tripping deftly about May-pols.'⁷ Bells⁸ and ribbons, rings and napkins, were gaily flaunted as their owners moved :⁹ while a nosegay pinned on his hat and a good suit of Lincoln green on his back made every yokel feel in lordly vein. Then was the hour for Tib and Tim to tread a gay measure and to indulge in a 'gallimaufry of gambols'¹⁰ on

¹ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II. i. 23.

² 1 *Henry VI.*, I. ii. 131.

³ *Hamlet*, II. ii. 423.

⁴ Middleton, *Father Hubbard's Tales*, p. 81.

⁵ *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. i. 45.

⁶ 2 *Henry IV.*, I. ii. 157.

⁷ Dekker, *Dead Terme*, p. 22.

⁸ *Return from Parnassus*, III. ii. (Dodsley, *O. E. P.*, IX. 164.)

⁹ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Women Pleas'd*, IV. i.

¹⁰ *Winter's Tale*, IV. iii. 333.

the green to the strains of the 'Three-man songmen';¹ and swiftly past the shocked Precisians would they sweep, who coldly sang 'psalms to their hornpipes.'² So with the blowing of horns, with mumming and flower-strewing and with riding of hobby-horses³ would the revel proceed—a sight of Merry England which ever grew fainter as the Puritans grew stronger; for a time was coming 'when the hobby-horse was forgot.'⁴

Farther down the green would meanwhile be standing a knot of spectators applauding 'the delightful ostentation'⁵ as a whole, or else admiring the pageantry of 'the Nine Worthies.'⁶ Another bunch of heads would be gathered around a quintain⁷ post, or around the rustic's game of draughts called the nine men's morris, played by the yokels on ground-cut squares. Elsewhere they would be crowding round wiry William Visor of Wincot as he 'turned his girdle,' and challenged sturdy Clement Perkes of the Hill⁸ to settle their dispute in a friendly wrestling match. Such impressions of 'the very May-morn of his youth,'⁹ Shakespeare never forgot, and as late a

¹ *Winter's Tale*, IV. ii. 45.

² *Ibid.*, 47.

³ Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of His Humour*, II. i.

⁴ Cf. *Hamlet*, III. ii. 143.

⁵ *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. i. 108.

⁶ *Ibid.*, V. i. 149.

⁷ *As You Like It*, I. ii. 246.

⁸ *Henry IV.*, V. i. 42.

⁹ *Henry V.*, I. ii. 120.

play as *The Winter's Tale* contains lively reminiscences of Jacob and Phillip's smiling feast.¹

The poor pelting villages, the sheep-cotes and mills, the vineyards and fallows, the meads and hedges, which lay outside the towns, are never described in detail; neither are those 'bosky acres and unshrubbed downs,'² more picturesque than useful. The high-roads were wont to be but rarely repaired. Travelling was a hardship owing to 'the foule and cumbersome' ways. Bridges were often little more than planks, and poor Tom might well feel proud of heart at riding on 'a bay trotting horse over four-inched bridges.'³ Over these highways, however, would go the packet-carrier, always a man of many letters. From post-house to post-house would he pursue his tedious way, but quickening the pulse of the countryside as he went; and if he ever sought 'horseway or footpath,'⁴ all the greater need for caution against the highwayman's 'Lay-by.'⁵ He would meet very often those poor heart-broken creatures who went from door to door with their clack-dish or alms-dish, those sordid beggars who but seldom 'upon entreaty have a present alms,' and whose horn, that alms-drink

¹ Cf. also *Measure for Measure*, III. ii. 203. St. Philip and St. James were the patron saints of the 1st of May.

² *Tempest*, IV. i. 81.

³ *King Lear*, III. iv. 56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, IV. i. 56.

⁵ *1 Henry IV.*, I. ii. 36.

ought to fill, was most often dry. He would know those hapless vagrants upon whom the vigorous Tudor rule pressed hard; the beggar bearing her brat upon her shoulders, and many other such cases of misery undiluted. Sometimes English gipsies would cross his path and hasten his pace with their scowl. For they were 'red-ochre rascals umbered with soot and bacon, who were wont 'to lie in ambuscade for a rope of onions, as if they were Welsh freebooters.'¹ And sometimes he, no doubt, would overtake the pedlar with his 'silken treasures,' humming gaily as he crept by the hedges, and having accompanied him to the next village, would listen awhile to him wheedling the rustics with his enticing

'Come, buy of me, come : come buy, come buy ;
Buy, lads, or else your lasses cry.'²

This then is something of the rustic England of Shakespeare's day. These were some of the passing reflections which he contrived to catch amid scenes where Nature was most bountiful. It was a gallant picture, but its golden visions were doomed to fade before the dour looks and heavy sword of Cromwell when he came.

Perhaps these very May-games which have just been mentioned, with their songs full of buoyancy

¹ Middleton and Rowley, *Spanish Gypsy*.

² *Winter's Tale*, IV. iii. 230.

and their boisterous masqueradings, helped to arouse in the youthful Shakespeare the impetuosity of his poetic feeling, and prompted him to carry the wanderer's staff 'through London gates'¹ to where on a wider stage he could evolve golden dreams of humour and philosophy. The year 1585 or 1586 is generally supposed to have been the time of Shakespeare's hegira, when he left the reposeful country life for the hurry of the town, and commenced his work under the new conditions of *London life*. London and its ways are well reflected in his works. If he can write as a native of England's Midland county, he is also able to feel himself one of London's adopted sons. To him London proved, as to Spenser, 'a most kindly nurse'; and the whirling metropolis, in which he spent so many of his best years, won from him not a little of that affection it is yet wont to receive from those who live within hearing of its tireless hum. He never felt it incumbent upon him to rail at the city's 'riot, pride, and sumptuous cheer,' or to warn it to 'spend less at board and spare not at the door.' It is true he never goes out of his way to mention any places, neither does he handle the familiar place-names of the city with the same fondness as Lamb at a later date betrayed. But his attachment is evidenced, nevertheless, on the numerous occasions

¹ 2 *Henry VI.*, IV. viii. 24.

on which he brings into his dramas vivid one-word descriptions of well-known localities. He brings his *Vanity Fair* before the footlights in his own way, and paints glowing pictures of tavern life, with its orgies and its brawls. He sketches dainty gallants and their mincing mistresses with unfaltering and unerring touch. Buckram rogues and shady rascals in great plenty and variety come sneaking by on his stage. He sketches their absurdities, and to all the queer characters who thronged the city pavements he is for ever holding up faithful mirrors wherein they may see their own unhappy contortions. With the numerous shades of Elizabethan purple he is as familiar as a fashionable tailor, and he consistently displays an expert's acquaintance with all the details of ladies' wardrobes. He knows all the follies of gilded youth. No quaintness of bearing was too absurd, no grandiose utterance too empty, for his pen to touch with a lively humour. The gaunt author of *Piers the Plowman* must often have stalked up the Cornhill, eyeing with subdued indignation the well-furred and the sleek. Shakespeare, without doubt, trod the same beat for the whetting of his wit and for the indulgence of the secret Puck that was harboured within him.

Other Elizabethan dramatists also add strokes innumerable to the picture of London life. Scarcely one but takes off a gallant or describes a

custom, for all lived in London, and from London drew their characters.

Shakespeare was barely past twenty when he left the quiet Warwickshire lanes; yet the contrast between the thronged streets and his old haunts appears not to have made much impression on his mind.

‘In every street,’ said Dekker, ‘carts and coaches make such a thundering as if the world ran on wheels; at every corner men, women, and children meet in such shoals that posts are set up on purpose to strengthen the houses, lest with jostling one another they should shoulder them down.’¹

But whereas nearly all the writers of the age have a word of surprised sarcasm or censure for the noise and turmoil throughout the metropolis,² the ragged mob that haunts the Forum after Cæsar’s death, is the only instance in which Shakespeare has actually represented the maddening strife of the city.

London itself and its various quarters are only mentioned incidentally, so far as they come to the poet’s mind in connection with an event or point of his dramas. Like all other sides of his knowledge, his acquaintance with the town and its inhabitants is only shown piecemeal, here and there. Nowhere is there a direct presentation of the English capital during the reign of the last

¹ Dekker, *Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 50. ² e.g. Stubbes, Gosson, etc.

Tudor sovereign. Glimpses, however, are caught of St. Paul's,¹ with its gallants and its serving men; of the truncheoning and Tribulation of Tower Hill;² of the druggist's 'needy shop' at Bucklersbury³ 'smelling sweet in simple time';⁴ of Haliwell, near Shoreditch, with its consecrated Fount;⁵ of Pie-corner and its sadlers,⁶ and its poor 'taking in their meal of steam from cooks' stalls';⁷ of Smithfield and its jades;¹ of Holborn and its strawberries;⁸ of the melancholy Moor-ditch⁹ and the low haunts of Turnbull St.;¹⁰ of Clement's Inn,¹¹ with its mad students; the shady quarters of Picket-hatch in Clerkenwell;¹² the warlike Mile-end, the exercise ground for city soldiers; Finsbury, the resort of citizen archers;¹³ the fashionable Strand,¹⁴ with Eastcheap,¹⁵ old Jewry,¹⁶ the City Mills¹⁷ and Cheapside.¹⁸

These are some of the most familiar place-names that occur.

¹ 2 *Henry IV.*, I. ii. 52.

² *Henry VIII.*, v. iii. 52 and 61.

³ *Romeo and Juliet*, v. i. 42.

⁴ Cf. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, III. iii. 70.

⁵ *Measure for Measure*, IV. iii. 98.

⁶ 2 *Henry IV.*, II. i. 28.

⁷ *Alchemist*, I. i.

⁸ *Richard III.*, III. iv. 32.

⁹ 1 *Henry IV.*, I. ii. 82.

¹⁰ 2 *Henry IV.*, III. ii. 311. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹² Beaumont and Fletcher, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, v. i.

¹³ *Every Man in His Humour*, I. i.

¹⁴ *Henry VIII.*, v. iii. 55. Cf. Middleton, *Father Hubbard's Tales*,

p. 77.

¹⁵ 1 *Henry IV.*, I. ii. 135.

¹⁶ *Every Man in His Humour*, I. ii.

¹⁷ *Coriolanus*, I. x. 31.

¹⁸ 2 *Henry VI.*, IV. ii. 74.

What struck the poet more was apparently the gulf that separated the rustic simplicity of manners, dress, and speech from the studied affected whims and denizenized wit that pervaded equally the Court, the city, and the camp.

With the quaint manners of London society as they came before him time after time, he must have been astounded. Those young gentlemen, 'who would be sad as night, only for wantonness,'¹ sad, moreover, 'with a too odd, as it were, too peregrinate,'² melancholy, must have excited in him a healthy laugh. And he would doubtless laugh at such ideas as that 'true melancholy would breed your perfect wit'; or that your man in melancholy could 'overflow' into 'half a score of sonnets at a sitting.' He would know that a traveller's talk was a choice after-dinner entertainment at the houses of the great, while the knightly host would suck his teeth and catechise 'my picked man of countries.'³ But he must often have wondered why such travellers felt it incumbent upon them 'to lisp and swear strange suits';⁴ to place such faith 'in tennis and tall stockings';⁵ and to exhibit as the main trophies of their travels 'Spanish blocks, French compliments, and German

¹ *King John*, IV. i. 16.

² *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. i. 15.

³ *King John*, I. i. 193.

⁴ *As You Like It*, IV. i. 37.

⁵ *Henry VIII.*, I. iii. 30.

healths.’¹ He makes Touchstone and Rosalind laugh heartily at such perverted exquisites in the Forest of Arden; and elsewhere and by other hands ‘these new tuners of accents’² are held up to scorn. Their absolute trust in these ‘trim vanities’ and in the virtue of travelling was everywhere a common cause of laughter. They are described as doing little more in life than ‘enhancing the daily price of tooth-picks and making sharp beards and little breeches, deities.’³ Lying, too, was the mark of the seasoned traveller, and Fletcher makes one of his characters confessedly lie in order to prove his qualifications for that distinction.⁴ The apish nation of Englishmen ‘limped in base imitation after the report of fashions in proud Italy,’ and were constantly being censured for it by the wiser of their fellows. ‘An Italianate Englishman is an incarnate devil,’ wrote Ascham, and Bishop Hall in his *Quo Vadis* supports the charge.

The ‘pretty fellows’ of the time would give plays and suppers and issue loud invitations to acquaintances out of their windows as they rode by in coaches. Sir Amorous La-Foole⁵ had a lodging in the Strand for this very purpose. He would

¹ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Faithful Friend*, I. i.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iv. 30.

³ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Queen of Corinth*, II. iv.

⁴ Fletcher, *Fair Maid of the Inn*, II. ii.

⁵ Cf. Jonson, *Silent Woman*, I. i.

watch when ladies were gone to the china houses so that he might meet them by chance and give them presents—to be laughed at. Such picked gentlemen would ‘tell their ladies stories, usher them to their coaches, lie at their feet at masques, and applaud what they found laughter in.’¹ They would learn ‘the tricks to make my lady laugh, when she’s disposed’;² they would be ever prone to ‘make a leg,’ put off their caps, kiss their hands, and say nothing.³ When they were wooing they would follow after Truewit.⁴ If the lady loved wit, they would give her verses—borrowed from a friend. If valour, they would talk of their swords. If activity, they would often be visible on their barbaries, or leaping over stools for the credit of their backs. If she loved good clothes, their coats would be their dearest acquaintances, and they would take more thought for the ornament than for the safety of their heads. They would admire her every fashion, would be ever comparing her to some deity, and would invent dreams to flatter her. If she were great, they would always perform second to her; like what she liked, and praise what she praised: and would take it for the greatest favour if she would

¹ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Queen of Corinth*, I. ii.

² *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, V. ii. 466.

³ Cf. *All’s Well that Ends Well*, II. ii. 10.

⁴ Cf. Jonson, *Silent Woman*, IV. i., Truewit to Clerimont.

vouchsafe to leave her civet-box or her sweet gloves behind her. For 'a wench to please a man comes not down dropping from the ceiling as he lies on his back droning a tobacco pipe.'¹

When not in feminine society they would flower their little knowledge with 'sweet damn-me's,' and betray their lack of wit by replying to jests, 'ever good i' faith,'² or if of a personal nature, 'bitter i' verity, bitter.'³ They would pray to be shielded from the sin of blushing, would 'undo' many tailors, seek many quarrels and go near to fighting one,⁴ and would laud foreigners at the expense of their compatriots. 'We are famous,' said Chapman, 'for dejecting our own countrymen.'⁵

A fashionable host would protest much in conversation, and affect melancholy after the French fashion.⁶ He would 'not smile beyond a point,' lest he should 'unstarch his look,' and his guests on their departure would receive but feeble handshakes. If he were literary, he would, like Sir John Daw,⁷ dismiss the literature of the world in a few well-chosen phrases. Plutarch and Seneca might be to him 'grave asses; a few loose sentences; that's all'; Aristotle, 'a mere commonplace fellow'; Tacitus might be 'an entire knot';

¹ Ben Jonson, *Silent Woman*, IV. i., Truewit to Sir Dauphine.

² Chapman, *Mons. D'Olive*.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *As You Like It*, V. iv. 47.

⁵ Chapman, *The Ball*, III.

⁶ Cf. Beaumont and Fletcher, *Queen of Corinth*.

⁷ Ben Jonson, *Silent Woman*, II. ii.

Homer, 'an old, tedious, prolix ass that talked of curriers and chines of beef'; Virgil, 'of the dunging of land, and bees.'

If he had been a courtier he would pride himself on having trod a measure, flattered a lady, been politic with his friend and smooth with his enemy.¹ He would be of the tribe of gallants and 'dapper Jacks' made in the schools of fashion. But Nature, when she was pleased, made him otherwise. 'I cannot make you gentlemen,' said Beaumont, 'that's a work raised from your own deservings; merit, manners, and inborn virtue does it.'²

The country knight would often travel to London in his roomy caroch,³ or in his quiet ambler, 'to learn the fashion,'⁴ and would straightway set about emulating the feats of the town exquisites. He would learn how to walk before a lady, and how to bear her fan with dignity, how to kiss his hand⁵ with effect, how to catechise,⁶ or with a good starched face to pick his teeth when he could not speak.⁷ He would learn how to walk the streets 'his humours to disclose.'⁸ He would have to

¹ *As You Like It*, v. iv. 42. ² Beaumont, *Nice Valour*, v. iii.

³ Cf. Ben Jonson, *Devil is an Ass*, iv. ii.

⁴ Dekker, *Gull's Horn Book*, p. 259.

⁵ *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. i. 145.

⁶ *King John*, i. i. 192.

⁷ Cf. Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of His Humour*, i. i.

⁸ Rowlands, *Letting of Humours Blood in the Head-vayne*.

bestow some 'time in the tongues,'¹ and study for many a painful hour the art and science of neat quotation, and how, with well-placed words, to dissolve my lady's riddles.² Unless he were content to remain a carpet knight,³ he would have to acquaint himself with 'Saviolo his art and phrases,' and would have to front 'passes and stoccadoes,'⁴ like a true sword-and-buckler man.⁵ He would repair with this intention to some Low Country soldier⁶ and see him foin and traverse;⁷ pass the punto, stock, reverse, and montant;⁸ and learn the rules by which to give and take the lie. He would learn to take an insult when one 'familiarily disliked his yellow starch,' said that 'his doublet was not exactly Frenchified, or drew his sword and said it was ill-mounted.'⁹ Then honour would lead him on—according to Saviolo. He would also have to acquire the nimble galliard,¹⁰ lavoltas high and the swift corantos,¹¹ the lively canary and Spanish pavin,¹² the French brawl,¹³ the

¹ *Twelfth Night*, I. iii. 92.

² Cf. Beaumont and Fletcher, *Elder Brother*, III. v. ; and *Queen of Corinth*, I. ii. ³ *Twelfth Night*, III. iv. 242.

⁴ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. i. 217.

⁵ *1 Henry IV.*, I. iii. 230.

⁶ Lupton, *London and the Country Carbonadoed*.

⁷ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. iii. 24.

⁸ *Ibid.*, II. iii. 26.

⁹ Fletcher, *Queen of Corinth*.

¹⁰ *Henry V.*, I. ii. 252 ; *Twelfth Night*, I. iii. 139.

¹¹ *Henry V.*, III. v. 33.

¹² Middleton, *Blurt, Master-Constable*, IV. ii.

¹³ *Love's Labour's Lost*, III. i. 9.

quick capers of a cinque-pace,¹ and all the subtle games of the English dancing school, which were Sir Christopher Hatton's first steps to the Wool-sack, and 'to which the Grecians are most prompt and pregnant.'² Besides these 'lofty lavoltos and tricks of intemperance,' he would see other measures and 'dances of order and comeliness.'³ At the end of a galliard the gallants would fetch two or three fine capers aloft in taking leave of their mistresses;⁴ and he, like many others disliking such passages, would probably prefer the 'passy-measures'⁵ of French innovation. All, however, were highly prized at Elizabeth's Court, and therefore would be worth learning even though they seem to mean with Shakespeare not much more than the pale delight of an Aguecheek.

Though Shakespeare never definitely draws the picture of a pretty gentleman,⁶ who wore out six fashions in four terms, yet he has plainly studied all the dress details of such a one. The ruff,⁷ adjusted so carefully with poking sticks⁸ of steel,

¹ *Much Ado about Nothing*, II. i. 74.

² *Troilus and Cressida*, IV. iv. 86.

³ *Two Wise Men and all the rest Fools*, VI. i.

⁴ Chapman, *A Humorous Day's Mirth*.

⁵ *Twelfth Night*, V. i. 206. Corruption of the Italian 'passo-mezzo.'

⁶ Fletcher, *Elder Brother*, III. v.

⁷ *Pericles*, IV. iii. 105.

⁸ Cf. Marston, *Malcontent*; *Winter's Tale*, IV. iii. 226.

the doublet of changeable taffeta,¹ the short satin cloak,² the damask-coloured stock,³ and yellow stockings and cross-garters,⁴ the new ribbons to his pumps,⁵ the two Provincial roses on his razed shoes,⁶ his side sleeves, his hose and slops⁷ are all introduced at different times. The gallant's daily visit⁸—his debt to society—would ever be made in a new suit. His breath with sweetmeats would be tainted, his face adorned with black velvet patches variously cut.⁹ With civet¹⁰ would he perfume his hands, with Neapolitan scent sweeten his person, and beautify the beautiful by the wearing of a nosegay.¹¹ His collar would rise up 'so high and sharp as if it would have cut his throat.'¹² His spurs would be gilt, his boots embroidered, while his points and jetting plumes would eloquently announce his high distinction. His chevril gloves¹³ would be dressed on either side. His short Italian hooded cloak might be 'larded with pearls'; in his Tuscan cap might shine a jewel; his bombast lining would ensure

¹ *Twelfth Night*, II. iv. 74.

² *2 Henry IV.*, I. ii. 30.

³ *Twelfth Night*, I. iii. 133.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II. v. 170.

⁵ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV. ii. 34.

⁶ *Hamlet*, III. ii. 279.

⁷ Dekker, *Gull's Horn Book*; *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. 59.

⁸ Fletcher, *Elder Brother*, III. v.

⁹ *All's Well that Ends Well*, IV. v. 96.

¹⁰ *As You Like It*, III. ii. 63.

¹¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, I. i. 34.

¹² Middleton, *Father Hubbard's Tale* (vol. v.).

¹³ *Twelfth Night*, III. i. 13.

his bulk and consequently his importance. His noblesse compelled him to wear garters of gold or silver, for 'men of mean rank wore garter and shoe roses worth more than five pounds.' His pouncet-box he would hold tenderly 'twixt his finger and his thumb, which ever and anon he would give his nose.¹ Prudence might hang small balls of pomander around his neck, to protect his person in time of plague; but he would jauntily display a dancing rapier² and make a brave show as he advanced to his hostess, after dismissing his link-boy at the door.

He would be barbered many times a day.³ His hair would be well frounst with the curling-iron.⁴ He might affect the 'mowchatowes' turned up like two horns towards the forehead.⁵ His beard might be in form 'a spade or bodkin, a pent-house on the upper lip, or an alley on the chin.'⁶ It could curl like a ball or have dangling locks like a spaniel. The moustache would be sharp at ends, but it could hang down to the mouth like goat's flakes. But to wear a bushy beard was to be an outcast. His beard might be dyed straw-colour, orange-tawny, or purple-in-grain,⁷ but it was well, at all costs, to be bearded; and, if Nature

¹ *Henry IV.*, I. iii. 38.

² *Titus Andronicus*, II. i. 39.

³ *Antony and Cleopatra*, II. ii. 229.

⁴ Greene, *Quips for an Upstart Courtier* (1592).

⁵ Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*.

⁶ Lyly, *Midas*.

⁷ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, I. ii. 89.

had denied him, the barber would supply him. Such a picked fellow would have not a hair nor an ornament but what it had its due place and perfect appointment. He would 'draw out his pocket-glass thrice in a walk, and would more admire the good wrinkle of a boot, the curious crinkling of a silk stocking, than all the wit in the world.'¹

French fashion-mongers were wont to 'sweat out their brains' devising new fashions for such. It was thus that they made 'the giddy-pated Englishman' consume his revenues. The block for the gallant's head-gear altered in form faster than the felt-maker could fit him; and 'for this reason,' quoth Dekker, 'are we called in scorn blockheads.' A passing craze was that of earrings.² It was a custom, however, that did not last; and love-locks on the forehead tied with ribbons³ were scarcely more lasting. These trim gallants were, in short, things whose souls were 'specially employed in knowing where best gloves, best stockings, and waistcoats curiously wrought'⁴ were sold. Their favourite haunts were milliners' shops; the art of shopping their chief accomplishment; and 'for these womanly parts,' quoth a contemporary, 'they are esteemed with gentlemen.' These were typical gallants. The 'humor-

¹ *Return from Parnassus*, Pt. II. III. iv.

² Fletcher, *Woman Hater*.

³ Fletcher, *Cupid's Revenge*. *i.e.* a favourite lock of hair brought before and tied with ribbon. Against this fashion Prynne wrote *The Unloveliness of Love-locks*.

⁴ Chapman, *All Fools*.

ous' gallant could be more unsightly still. 'A rook' would think to affect an humour by wearing a pyed feather, a cabled hat-band, or a three-piled ruff, a yard of shoe-tye, a Switzer's knot on his French garters, which would be 'more than most ridiculous.'¹ He would, in short, do anything and think it adequately accounted for, by stating that it was his humour.

In speech the gallants would be 'drawling, affecting rogues'² when, indeed, they could be induced to throw off their nighted colour of melancholy. They would be 'lisping, affecting fantasticoes,'³ who would stand much on form and sometimes 'affect the letter'⁴ to attract attention. Their dress, gaudy in colour, fantastic in style, found its counterpart intellectually in the craze for Gongorism which existed in fashionable circles. A 'rare, compleat, sweet, nittie youth'⁵ would cherish, 'odd quirks and remnants'⁶ of the wit of a Lyly or a Harington, and would lard his conversation with their borrowed brilliance. Odd lines from the classics would be recklessly handled, for many such exquisites had 'a learned tendency,' and though 'they spoke no Greek'⁷ they would 'love the sound on't.' To 'talk of stones and stars,

¹ Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of His Humour*, Prol.

² *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. i. 140.

³ *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iv. 29. ⁴ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. ii. 56.

⁵ Marston, *Satire 3* (1598).

⁶ *Much Ado about Nothing*, II. iii. 237.

⁷ Fletcher, *Elder Brother*, II. i.

planets, fishes, and flies'; to play with words and idle similes, and all on the least provocation, was evidence certain of a fertile wit and cultured mind. Euphuism in itself was used by the scholars, and rightly used, produced passages of striking beauty. Shakespeare laughs at the mode in his 'camomile' passage, aimed at the degenerate Gongorism in the person of Armado. With such 'paper bullets of the brain' and with such faded humour did these gallants bolster up their barren wit. To speak as Nature gave them utterance would have been more than plebeian, and therefore when in love they would, like Lyly's Sir Tophas, 'feel all Ovid *de arte amandi*,' and would expand to a page what required no more than a brace of words.

The vagaries of these 'strange flies, these *pardonnez-mois*' who stood so much on the new form that they could not sit at ease on the old bench,¹ were, in their turn, taken up by their mistresses. That fine lady, whose health he would drink kneeling, and for whom he would drink off 'candles' ends for flap-dragons,² too, aimed at gallantry and bravery of dress. 'If men got up French standing collars,' said Dekker,³ 'the women would have (them) too; if doublets with little thick skirts—women's foreparts are thick-skirted too.' Ladies' raiments and fads were no

¹ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Coxcomb*, I. v. Cf. *Henry IV.*, v. iii.

² *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 249.

³ *Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 59.

less gorgeous and innumerable than those of the gay youngers who buzzed around the Queen. The various parts of costume and dress mentioned by Shakespeare would suffice to have robed in fashionable apparel the Queen herself; though during a prolonged stay of the Scotch envoy, Sir John Melville, at her Court, she produced every day a dress of some different country, and her wardrobe contained over two thousand gowns, with all things answerable.¹ And culling from the poet's works we should find ample material to adorn her

‘ With silken coats, and caps, and golden rings,
With ruffs, and cuffs, and farthingales, and things ;
With scarfs, and fans, and double change of bravery,
With amber bracelets, beads, and all this knavery ’²

from the ‘ tailor’s ruffling treasure.’

The details pertaining to ladies, such as their golden quoifs and stomachers, the new sits for their ruffs, and their odd tires or headdresses of ‘ Venetian admittance,’ their ivory-handled fans and

‘ Lawn, as white as driven snow ;
Cyprus, black as e’er was crow ;
Gloves, as sweet as damask roses ;
Masks for faces, and for noses ’;³

these things are frequently found with the creator

¹ Chamberlaine’s Epistolary Notices in Harington’s *Nugæ Antiquæ*, ed. Park, vol. i. p. 118.

² *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. iii. 55 ff. ³ *Winter’s Tale*, IV. iii. 220 ff.



of Juliet, Portia, and coquettish Beatrice. But all their artful kickshawes,¹ their brooches and owches,² their intertissued robes of gold and pearl, their pinked porringers³ and high chopines,⁴ their false hair ravished from the dead,⁵ their pomanders and table-books,⁶ the perfumes on their breath,⁷ their aglet-babies⁸ and pet monkeys,⁹ their squirrels, and their parrots,—these are hardly ever described by Shakespeare, much less ridiculed. Other contemporaries might laugh at their ‘little crowne hats’ so blown about, their great deep ruffs, their farthingales ‘which so like breeches stood about them,’¹⁰ the great sleeves and bombasted shoulders. They only appear in Shakespeare as illustrating some feature of a heroine, or characterising in precise terms the appearance of a meaner personage, some maid-in-waiting or companion, who, with other authors, would have been but a dim and lifeless shadow. Such feminine garniture as ‘the velvet cambricke silken feather’d toy,’¹¹ the head-gear and mantles, ‘the coronets and tires of several fashions, the girdles, spangles, rebatoes and tiffanies,’¹² the carnation ribbon,¹³

¹ *Twelfth Night*, I. iii. 214.

² *2 Henry IV.*, II. iv. 48.

³ *Henry VIII.*, v. iii. 47.

⁴ *Hamlet*, II. ii. 434.

⁵ *Merchant of Venice*, III. ii. 98.

⁶ *Winter's Tale*, IV. iii. 603.

⁷ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iv. 76.

⁸ *Taming of the Shrew*, I. ii. 79.

⁹ *Merchant of Venice*, III. i. 120.

¹⁰ Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*.

¹¹ Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 8th ed., fol., p. 294.

¹² Rowlands, *Look to It, or I 'le stabbe Ye*.

¹³ *Love's Labour's Lost*, III. i. 146.

the 'muffs, falling bands, and periwigs¹' as well as 'the glittering caules of golden plait'² were daily railed at from pulpit and from stage. One Member of Parliament feelingly protested to the House 'that women carried manors and thousands of oak-trees on their backs,' and every husband knew that each Royal Progress inaugurated a new fashion. But however much Shakespeare rated the male frivolity of his day, he always speaks indulgently, when he speaks at all, of the sumptuous trifles with which the noble ladies would array themselves. Perhaps it was the dark lady of the sonnets, Mary Fitton, if such indeed were her name, who conveyed to her poet-lover the secret that, under a vain Queen the ladies of the Court must needs be ever beautiful, and, if necessary, beautified; and also that to them 'the diamond of a most praised water,'³ and 'coral clasps and amber studs'⁴ were as natural appendages as tawdry lace and a thrummed hat⁵ to the shepherdess Audrey, or lockram to the kitchen malkin.⁶

As to the manners of these dames of 'high admittance,' they were the outcome of the same age as produced their sumptuous dress. The lady, 'full of comparisons and wounding flouts,'⁷

¹ Rowlands, *Look to It, or I'le stabbe Ye.* ² *Restituta*, vol. iii. p. 256.

³ *Pericles*, III. ii. 102.

⁴ *Passionate Pilgrim*, 366.

⁵ Cf. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. ii. 76. ⁶ *Coriolanus*, II. i. 222.

⁷ *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. ii. 834.

would 'carve'¹ or make signs of favour with the hand to the gallant she wished to encourage. She would use good mouth-filling oaths, for they well became her. Feeble exclamations would be left to 'comfit-makers' wives' and 'rascally year-forsooth knaves.'² She used no paint, as a rule, to bedaub and falsify herself, as did the ladies of Italy, but would rejoice if her hair were fair; for raven locks were out of favour at the Court of the Virgin Queen. She would hack the Queen's English right well in conversation with a gallant, and would keep pace with him in all his excursions into regions of florid absurdity. A mask of rich taffeta would conceal her identity in a place of public resort, and the conceal use of a mask was a fine point in coquetry. Those of her kind would throw their 'sun-expelling masks' away, however, and

'Commit the war of white and damask, in
Their nicely-gawded cheeks, to the wanton spoil
Of Phœbus' burning kisses,'³

when processions thronged the streets to honour warriors returning from abroad.

In the wake of these Court ladies followed a crowd of unworthy parasites who vainly tried to move at the same pace, and who, clad in garments of silk and satin, tried to mould their manners after

¹ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. iii. 43.

² 1 *Henry IV.*, III. i. 250; 2 *Henry IV.*, I. ii. 36.

³ *Coriolanus*, II. i. 229 ff.

those of their betters. The would-be fashionable among city dames would 'line a grogram gown clean through with velvet,'¹ eat cherries only at an angel a pound, and thereby arouse the envy of her neighbours, the scorn of the well-born. But with her 'mincing niceties, her durance pettitoes and silver bodkins,' all patience would be lost, and the tongues of all her more stay-at-home sisters would thereupon be loosed to express their disgust and give vent to their feelings.

Separated from all these by impassable barriers of class distinction came the lower ranks of society. There were the rogues in buckram and camlet suits and clouted shoon;² the more respectable, but scarcely more cleanly, wearers of greasy aprons, dowlas shirts³ and buff jerkins.⁴ There were the Sunday citizens with their velvet guards⁵ and plain statute-caps,⁶—the hard-working tradesmen of those times, who, together with their hopeful apprentices, had but one ambition, and that was the Alderman's thumb-ring.⁷ They could only snatch a passing hour occasionally to play at bowls,⁸ or loggats, to bet at tray-trip¹⁰ with

¹ Chapman, *Eastward Hoe!* I. iv.

² 1 *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 201; *Henry VIII.*, V. iii. 88; 2 *Henry VI.*, IV. ii. 189.

³ *Antony and Cleopatra*, V. ii. 210; 1 *Henry IV.*, III. iii. 71.

⁴ 1 *Henry IV.*, I. ii. 48.

⁵ *Ibid.*, III. i. 261.

⁶ *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. ii. 281.

⁷ 1 *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 342.

⁸ *Cymbeline*, II. i. 54.

⁹ *Hamlet*, V. i. 94.

¹⁰ *Twelfth Night*, II. v. 197.

costermongers, or to stake their Edward shovel-boards.¹ Sometimes the elders would go and cry aim to the Finsbury archers² as loyal citizens should, or watch 'Arthur's show'³ at Mile-End Green, while the rowdies of the apprentices would go hack at a football.⁴ Gallants like Bassanio and Benedick, gay and reckless, were ever at liberty to pursue pleasure. They could always spend an hour in bowling-alleys trying to make 'bias and thwart'⁵ answer their aim in spite of all rubs. There they would be liable to meet with 'attendant rooks,' who would prove their betters and win with advantage. On the bowling-green would be seen a variety of postures. Some would wring the neck or lift the shoulders after they had set the bowl rolling; others would clap the hands or lie down on one side, while others again would run after the bowl or make long dutiful scrapes and legs, as if entreating it to flee.⁶ But men of such standing as Bassanio and Benedick would never seek the base football-players.⁷ It was a game in which tripping and

¹ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. i. 155 (= Broad shillings particularly used in playing the game of shovel-board).

² Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humour*, I. i.

³ *2 Henry IV.*, III. ii. 284. Justice Shallow was Sir Dagonet in that society of fifty-eight citizens known as 'The Fellowship of Arthur.'

⁴ *King Lear*, I. iv. 87.

⁵ *Troilus and Cressida*, I. iii. 15. Cf. J. Taylor, *Wit and Mirth*, Works, part ii. p. 193.

⁶ Cf. J. Taylor, *Wit and Mirth*.

⁷ *King Lear*, I. iv. 87.

hacking were fine points of play, and the challenge of yokels to one another at country sports would often contain among other items the offer to 'try it out at football by the shinnes.' They could, however, play in more fashionable company at tennis, gleek, or primero.¹ They could, in still higher circles, break a lance or practise tilts and tournaments,² or they might perform on the viol-de-gamboys³ at a mistress's feet, or amuse themselves with the cithern in a barber's shop. They would have Spanish jennets to ride⁴ and coaches⁵ in which they might loll, flanked by running footmen—three-suited knaves⁶ who wore the badge of service⁷ and trotted by the wheel.⁸ In quieter mood they might visit a friend and indulge in the 'holly hearbe nicotion'⁹ as gallants were wont. They would draw out of 'a little hollow instrument of calcinated clay'¹⁰ the smoke of that new-found herb, from the Isle of Nicosia, wrapped up in rolls. The apothecary would have infused it with some 'pestiferous juice,'¹⁰ and the smoke therefrom, each idle smoker would either

¹ *Henry VIII.*, I. iii. 30; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. i. 150; *Henry VIII.*, V. i. 7. Cf. *Alchemist*, V. iv.

² *Henry VI.*, III. ii. 51; *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I. iii. 30.

³ *Twelfth Night*, I. iii. 26.

⁴ *Othello*, I. i. 113.

⁵ *Merchant of Venice*, III. iv. 82.

⁶ *King Lear*, II. ii. 16.

⁷ *Henry V.*, IV. vii. 100.

⁸ *Titus Andronicus*, V. ii. 55.

⁹ Lyly, *Woman in the Moon*, III. i. Tobacco not mentioned by Shakespeare.

¹⁰ Daniel, *Queen's Arcadia*.

convey out of his nose or 'down into his stomach with a whiff.' They would discuss perhaps with some non-smoking friends the merits and demerits of the 'filthy roguish tobacco,'¹ while all the time 'it would do a man good to see the fume come forth at their tonnels.' A travelled gallant among them would have seen it grow in the Indies, where Bobadil and a dozen more had lived on the 'fumes of the simple'¹ for twenty-one weeks. He would praise it as an antidote to the most deadly plant of Italy, and could speak, though he were no 'quack-salver,' of its virtues in expelling 'rheums, raw humours, crudities and obstructions.'¹ Another would explain that it was received 'in the courts of princes, the chambers of nobles, the bowers of sweet ladies, and the cabins of soldiers,'² and would dare his fellows to malign so sweet an herb. Unconvinced, the others would reply that the wicked drug was good for nothing but to 'choke a man and fill him full of smoke and embers.'¹ They would know of four deaths in one house, of recent date, caused by the herb; and would recollect, with one another's aid, that the 'bell went yesterday' for two more such cases. They might quote an instance where a man 'had voided a bushel of soot' and would in the end advocate

¹ *Every Man in His Humour*, III. ii.

² Chapman, *Mons. D'Olive*.

whipping for the crime of smoking ; ' for in the end it will stifle all, as many as use it.'

There were a few resorts at which people of all ranks and occupations would meet occasionally. There were the Paris Gardens in Southwark,¹ whither one would cross by boat and listen now to the waterman's cheery cry of Westward Ho ! at other times, to his magnificent abuse of a brother-waterman who obstructed his way. In the Gardens would be the old baboon ' drest up in a coate of changeable cullers '² and pursued ' with a couple of curs muzled,' a sight which elicited yells of delight from the colliers and carters of Southwark. To Shakespeare the ' angry ape which played such fantastic tricks before high heaven ' as made angels weep, suggested sadder thoughts. He saw in it a pitiful sight of

' Man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority.'³

There it was that Master Slender saw the famous bear, Sackerson,⁴ encompassed with dogs, stand and fight the course.⁵ An objectionable place it was ! The very noise of the surroundings put Dekker in mind of hell ; ' the bear showed fight like a black rugged soul that was damned . . . the dogs like so many devils in-

¹ *Henry VIII.*, v. iii. 2. ² Dekker, *Worke for Armourours*, pp. 97-8.

³ *Measure for Measure*, II. ii. 117.

⁴ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. i. 287.

⁵ *Macbeth*, v. vii. 2.

flicting torments upon it . . . but in the end they commonly were crushed, and were either carried away with ribs broken and skins torn (and hanging about their ears), or else . . . they stood whining and barking at their strong adversary when they durst not bite him.'¹ There was the Thames itself, where gallants in their barges would row in state by the boats of city merchants and their dames, and seek some safe retreat where they could sing their catches and display their polished wit before their honoured fair ones. Sometimes carousals would be held on ships moored to the bank before or after great events, as when Drake singed the Spanish beard. And sometimes too the Queen herself would gild the waters as she glided in her royal barge from Richmond to Whitehall amid a blaze of gaily attired courtiers and silken nymphs, just like another Cleopatra.

Then there was the annual Bartholomew Fair with its threadbare but nimble jugglers who deceived the eye² and loosened the purse-strings; with its troops of fortune-tellers,³ ape-bearers,⁴ teeth-drawers⁵ and tumblers,⁶ not to mention the gypsies playing their game of 'fast and loose' and Bankes' famous dancing horse.⁷ At the

¹ Dekker, *Worke for Armorours*, pp. 97-8.

² *Comedy of Errors*, I. iii. 98.

³ *Ibid.*, v. i. 240.

⁴ *Winter's Tale*, IV. ii. 96.

⁵ *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. i. 611.

⁶ *Ibid.*, III. i. 190.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I. ii. 54.

Fair, lords and ladies, citizens and 'prentices, would all crowd round the pig-dressers' booths,¹ call for 'little tidy boar-pigs piping hot!'² and would scarce be called away by the merriest of brawls. Pedlars would be quarrelling over right of station, cut-purses pursuing their busy trade, Puritans canting of sin and error, and besotted yeomen reeling here and there. However, none of these resorts were known as well as 'Paul's':³ 'the great Exchange of all discourse, . . . the Synod of all pates politicke, . . . the Theeves Sanctuary,⁴ the home of "villanous meetings, pernicious plots, and black humours."⁵ 'The noise in it was like that of bees,' said a contemporary; 'a strange humming or buzz, mixed of walking, tongues, and feet.'⁴ Here the merchants would walk twice a day, and with their ceaseless laughter imply that they were sound.⁶ Coney-catchers looked about for pigeons to pluck; stale knights and captains out of service, who lived upon mouldy stewed prunes and dried cakes,⁷ would feel 'Humphrey Hour'⁸ glide past and 'walk their dinner out'⁹ round

¹ Cf. Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*.

² Cf. 2 *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 234.

³ *Henry IV.*, I. ii. 52.

⁴ Earle, *Microcosmography*, p. 52 *passim*.

⁵ Middleton, *Black Book* (Works, vol. viii. p. 32).

⁶ Lupton, *London and the Country Carbonadoed*, p. 275.

⁷ 2 *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 146.

⁸ *Richard III.*, IV. i. 175.

⁹ *City Match* (Dodsley, ix. 335).

the good Duke's Tomb,'¹ while blush-coloured doublets ranging down the 'Mediterranean Ile,'² the Insula Paulina, would brush against the grey coats of cashiered mates in quest of a new master.³ 'What plots are there laid to furnish young gallants with ready money!' mused another contemporary. 'What swearing is there, yea, what swaggering, what facing and out-facing! What shuffling, what shouldering, what jeering, what biting of thumbs to beget quarrels, what holding up of fingers to remember drunken meetings!'⁴ Outside the building would be the churchyard through which were approached the bookbinders' shops. There would be gallants 'with big Italian look and Spanish face,' asking for books in Spanish and Italian. They would turn the books upside down, look at the titles, wrinkle their brows, and with their nails score the margins 'as though there were some notable conceit.' Lastly, they would throw the books away in a rage, swearing that they 'could never find books of a true print.'⁵

Amongst the motley crowd of idlers and busybodies moving under the fretted vault of the

¹ Those who had no means of procuring a dinner often loitered about Duke Humphrey's monument at St. Paul's. Humphrey of Gloucester was, contrary to general belief, really buried at St. Albans.

² The middle aisle of Paul's is called the 'Mediterranean Ile,' Dekker, *Gull's Horn Book*. ³ *Ram Alley* (Dodsley, x. 341).

⁴ Dekker, *Dead Terme*, pp. 49-51.

⁵ *Return from Parnassus*, Part II. II. iii. 3.

cathedral, Shakespeare may well have discovered his dashing Gratiano, his fantastic Lucio, his humorous Nym and shapely Ned Poyns; his Grumio, his Parolles, and Pistol parading patches on 'cudgelled scars'¹ begotten in Gallia wars. Thence also the poet may have gathered many features for the life-size portrait of the fat knight himself, who might well have strolled through the alleys of the cathedral after he had caudled his morning taste 'to cure his o'ernight's surfeit.'² In the wake of his huge spurs would, perhaps, be following some common gamester,³ some deep conceited cut-purse or cheating bowler⁴ or perhaps a devouring catchpole,⁵ for thieves did foot by day as well as night.⁶

But it is more especially with contemporary authors that we find such 'cogging caitiffs' haunting the church and the exchange. Shakespeare more often alludes to them in their more familiar domains around the dice-box where

'Gourd and fullam holds,
And high and low beguile the rich and poor.'⁷

All these 'cavaleroes about London'⁸ form, as it were, a background to the monumental figure

¹ *Henry V.*, v. i. 90.

² *Timon of Athens*, iv. iii. 226.

³ *All's Well that Ends Well*, v. iii. 187.

⁴ Middleton, *Black Book*, p. 31.

⁵ J. Taylor, *A Navy of Land Shippes*, p. 91 ff.

⁶ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. i. 122.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I. iii. 94 (names of false dice).

⁸ *Henry IV.*, v. iii. 62.

of the stout knight; they are the elements out of which the great creation arose. And this is true, whether Falstaff is taking his ease in his inn, with its quaintly-named rooms,¹ amid those Corinthians² of his, mostly in the third degree³ of drink and amid his court of drawers, tapsters, ostlers, voyders, and under-skinkers;⁴ or whether he is laying bare in thoughtful mood the philosophy of honour. In any case, around his comfortable figure Shakespeare has sketched a picture with background and foreground more widely and accurately topical than we find elsewhere in his whole gallery. His brother dramatists may dwell rather more than he does on the actual manners and customs of the time. But in those tavern scenes where Prince Hal carouses with his 'sweet creature of bombast'⁵ Shakespeare is supreme, not only in his own age, but in every age. That 'pottles of burnt sack with toast in it,'⁶ with lime and sugar too,⁷ that flagons of Rhenish,⁸ stoups of claret,⁹ canakins of sherris,¹⁰ or Malmsey,¹¹ and cups of Madeira¹² were quaffed by the guests

¹ Cf. 'Bunch of Grapes' (*Measure for Measure*, II. i. 128). Dolphin chamber (2 *Henry IV.*, II. i. 89). The Half Moon (1 *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 30).

² 1 *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 12.

⁴ 1 *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 26.

⁶ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. i. 208 and III. v. 3.

⁷ 1 *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 150.

⁹ 2 *Henry VI.*, IV. vi. 4.

¹¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. ii. 233.

³ *Twelfth Night*, I. v. 132.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II. iv. 338.

⁸ *Hamlet*, V. i. 186.

¹⁰ 2 *Henry IV.*, IV. iii. 111.

¹² 1 *Henry IV.*, I. ii. 119.

at Yaughan's¹ near the Globe, or by those at the Boar's Head,² the Elephant,³ the Porpentine,⁴ the Rose,⁵ the White Hart,⁶ the Pegasus,⁷ or the Mermaid⁸—all this we can gather from other authors. For beer and wine were taken at every meal, and, 'if sack and sugar be a fault, God help the wicked,' quoth Falstaff. But none of the several dramatists whose scenes are laid in such 'ordinaries,' convey to us an adequate notion of those small worlds behind the ivy-bush and red-lattice,⁹ where, outside, the picture of 'we three'¹⁰ swayed in the wind, and inside, on smirched worm-eaten tapestries,¹¹ Cain and Judas would bristle with beards of the dissembling colour;¹² Hercules would rest on his massy club,¹¹ or the 'story of the Prodigal, fresh and new,'¹³ and the German

¹ *Hamlet*, v. i. 61. Cf. Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of His Humour*, v. iv.; 'one Yohan.'

² *1 Henry IV.*, II. iii.

³ *Twelfth Night*, III. iii. 49.

⁴ *Comedy of Errors*, III. i. 116.

⁵ *Henry VIII.*, I. ii. 152.

⁶ *2 Henry VI.*, IV. viii. 25.

⁷ *Return from Parnassus*, Pt II.

⁸ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Wit without Money*, II. iv.

⁹ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. ii. 25.

¹⁰ *Twelfth Night*, II. iii. 17. A picture of two asses or fools, or wooden heads, inscribed with one of the scrolls 'We three' '*Nos Sumus*,' or 'We three loggerheads be,' was a common device on sign-boards.

¹¹ *Much Ado about Nothing*, III. iii. 135.

¹² Cf. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. iv. 23, and *As You Like It*, III. iv. 8. In remembrance of the mystery plays, red and yellow hair and beard were the recognised appendages of Judas and Cain respectively in pictorial representations.

¹³ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. v. 8.

hunting in water-work¹ would speak out their unheeded tales.

Other dramatists do not bring up so vividly the sea-coal fires,² the joint stools,³ the cosy lower chairs,⁴ my 'bully-rook'⁵ the host, the familiar tapster, the double-dealing customer, the brawler 'most potent in potting,' Sneak's music⁶ that fiddled to catches of Green Sleeves or Pega-Ramsey, the Ancient blurting out in swaggering vein rough scraps of Kyd and Peele;⁷ the Corporal whose zeal burned in his nose;⁸ those gay suppers with the buoyant 'bona roba'⁹ brimming over alternately with love and oaths; the voyder clearing the table for cards or dice amid the brawling of Proface! Proface!¹⁰ Reminiscences of even the Steelyard, that famous German hostelry in London, are associated with the mortal Knight. It is there that the 'swag-bellied Hollander'¹¹ could find his homely Dutch dish half stewed in grease;¹² and perhaps the 'swaggering upspring'¹³ reeled at Hamlet's Danish Court would unconsciously evoke memories of Teutonic merry-making, the 'Hupfauf' in which 'your

¹ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. v. 8, and *2 Henry IV.*, II. i. 148.

² *2 Henry IV.*, II. i. 90.

³ *Ibid.*, II. iv. 251; folding-chairs.

⁴ *Measure for Measure*, II. i. 127.

⁵ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. i. 188.

⁶ Cf. *2 Henry IV.*, II. iv. 12; = the band.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II. iv. 165.

⁸ *Ibid.*, II. iv. 335.

⁹ *Ibid.*, III. ii. 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, v. iii. 30.

¹¹ *Othello*, II. iii. 78.

¹² *Merry Wives of Windsor*, III. v. 113.

¹³ *Hamlet*, I. iv. 9.

German'¹ would indulge at this same Hanseatic Hall.

Many a company of 'merry Greeks'² and 'Ephesians of the old church'³ in those days would end their revels with the bursting of glasses—for 'glasses, glasses, is the only drinking,'⁴ and the three-hooped pot⁵ and covered goblet⁶ were then no longer in fashion. At many such a gathering a boon companion would place his weapon on the table, saying, 'God send me no need of thee,' who, 'by the operation of his second cup,' would draw it on the drawer, when indeed there was no need.⁷ And then would ensue one of those nightly brawls, when lights would be extinguished and swords unsheathed and Doll Tearsheet would draw her knife and threaten to thrust it into her neighbour's 'mouldy chops.' But, after all, this is but one side of the picture. Every 'red-lattice' did not run with blood; and it is probably only to bring Falstaff and the royal comrade of his bouts into stronger relief, that this aspect of the inns and their management is emphasised by Shakespeare. The desperate orgies which cost Marlowe his life may have left, with his young collaborator, tearful memories, but to

¹ *Othello*, II. iii. 77.

³ *2 Henry IV.*, II. ii. 150.

⁵ *2 Henry VI.*, IV. ii. 68.

⁷ *Romeo and Juliet*, III. i. 7.

² Middleton, *A Mad World*, I. ii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II. i. 146.

⁶ *As You Like It*, III. iv. 24.

drown this sorrow and redeem these scenes there came those glorious nights at the 'Mermaid' when words were exchanged

' So nimble and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whence they came,
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And then resolved to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life.' ¹

Moreover, the excellent name for hospitality which English inns even then bore, was widely known. Such 'ordinaries' were cleanly and well managed, and if they enclosed much rough humour, they also fostered much sparkling wit. They were the only rendezvous for 'the most ingenious, most travailed, and most phantastic gallants. They were the Exchange for newes out of all countries. They were the only booksellers' shops. And lastly, they were a school in which all were fellows of one form.' ²

If many of the usual surroundings of the ale-house are not touched upon, the picture which Shakespeare gives us is yet a tolerably full one, even to the ever-lurking sheriff and his 'blue-bottle'³ following, who appeared on the scene when the 'hue and cry'⁴ had followed certain individuals unto Mistress Quickly's house. Nowhere is the poet's touch so happy as when he concerns him-

¹ Beaumont writing to Jonson.

² Dekker.

³ *2 Henry IV.*, v. iv. 24.

⁴ *1 Henry IV.*, II. iv. 519.

self with such scenes. Langland's vivid ale-house sketches — full of the most exquisite humour, rough, simple, and direct,—leave in their way little to be desired. But Shakespeare advanced one step and more on Langland's achievement. The dramatist's scenes of devilry are just as broad and as naïve as those of the priest; but in point of detail, in warmth of colouring, and in sheer abandon there can be no real comparison.

From the tavern-life of London to its seamy side is no great leap. At times they overlap. And both find a clear reflection in the dramatist's pages. Many a scheming lawyer and criminal doctor, many a butterfly gallant and soldiering desperado would walk the way that led to Newgate¹ and to such other compulsory resorts as the Marshalsea² and the Fleet.³ Of such places there were several in London, and each had different wards for the accommodation of all. There was a 'knight's ward'⁴ for the fallen dignitaries, a 'twopenny ward'⁵ for the leaner kind. Whippings were frequent, fees were paid by the prisoners if Fortune ever liberated them, while criminals were taken to execution at the cart's tail, or dragged thither on a hurdle. These

¹ *Henry IV.*, III. iii. 95. ² *Henry VIII.*, v. iii. 85.

³ *Henry IV.*, v. v. 92. ⁴ Marston, *Eastward Hoe!* v. ii. 44.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

were the places where only to be out of elbows was in fashion, and where beggar and knight railed on Fortune together.¹ That much sad humour hung over such places cannot but be inferred from Shakespeare's descriptions; for scenes of pitiable plight are revealed again and again, but always through a never-failing diaphanous veil of humour. Behind the prison bars Master Rash,² the heyday amoroso of a brief hour, and Master Caper,³ in his frayed suit of peach-coloured satin, both unable to pay the gaoler's fees,⁴ would sigh and chafe amid the oaths rapped out by Master Forthright the tilter,⁵ together with Masters Copperspur, Deepvow, and Starve-lackey,⁶ 'men of long rapiers and breeches'⁷ all. 'Young Drop-heir that killed lusty Pudding,'⁸ and 'wild Half-can that stabbed Pots,' would, no doubt, be singing their swaggering snatches; while all alike would spend some part of their day begging at the grated windows, and appealing to the passers-by with their whining 'For the Lord's sake.'⁹ At times 'the fatal bellman'¹⁰ would bring the bitterness of death before them as he rang his handbell in front of

¹ Earle, *Microcosmography*, p. 58.

² *Measure for Measure*, IV. iii. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴ *Winter's Tale*, I. ii. 53.

⁵ *Measure for Measure*, IV. iii. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷ Earle, *Microcosmography*, p. 52.

⁸ *Measure for Measure*, IV. iii. 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁰ *Macbeth*, II. ii. 3.

the condemned cell, and exhorted the prisoner to repentance—an office which a pious Merchant Taylor had recently endowed. It is not without significance, however, that Shakespeare, in describing the inside of a prison, represents, out of four prisoners mentioned, four convicted for stabbing. This form of violence, towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, became more common than pleasant, and in the first year of her successor's reign a Statute of Stabbing was passed. But the wretches, thus 'fettered in base durance and contagious prison,' kept without food and tormented, were not of one pattern. Misfortune had placed some where crime had led the others. And the insolvent debtor,¹ deprived of his liberty, and the poor prisoner carried off by a cruel fever,² would evoke in Shakespeare a more pitying sentiment than did those whose sentence was the strappado,³ the rack,⁴ or the cart⁵ that toiled up Holborn Hill⁶ to the Thief's Gallows,⁷ or to the Murderer's Gibbet⁸ at Tyburn;⁹ while the memory of former religious

¹ Cf. *Cymbeline*, III. iii. 34.

² *Measure for Measure*, IV. iii. 70. Gaol fever, which raged throughout the prisons until the reign of George III.

³ *1 Henry IV.*, II. iv. 247.

⁴ *Measure for Measure*, V. i. 313.

⁵ *1 Henry IV.*, II. iv. 546.

⁶ Lupton, *London and the Country Carbonadoed*, p. 12.

⁷ *As You Like It*, III. ii. 325.

⁸ *Macbeth*, IV. i. 66.

⁹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. 51.

persecutions, which had dragged many a victim to the stake, drew from him the scathing lines:—

‘It is an heretic that makes the fire,
Not she that burns in ’t.’¹

Leaving these fever-stricken haunts, where honest hearts were daily broken, and vice was duly punished, we find yet a few more shades of sordid London life reflected in the works of the great bard. In a sickly death-march of metaphor and comparison, there wander across the stage the whole army of the lost and friendless in London: the blind man who strikes round him and beats the post, when ’twas the boy that stole his meat;² the beggar woman who steals children;³ the beggars married under a bush⁴ with a rush on their forefingers;⁵ the foolish beggars

‘Who, sitting in the stocks, refuge their shame,
That many have, and others must sit there’;⁶

the punks, the death’s-heads⁷ or procuresses; and lastly, the Bedlamites. These last, with their faces grimed with filth, with blankets upon their loins, their hair all elfed in knots, step into the

¹ *Winter’s Tale*, II. iii. 115. ² *Much Ado about Nothing*, II. i. 195.

³ *Henry VI.*, IV. ii. 145. ⁴ *As You Like It*, III. iii. 82.

⁵ *All’s Well that Ends Well*, II. ii. 23.

⁶ *Richard II.*, v. v. 25.

⁷ *Henry IV.*, III. iii. 35. So called from the ring with a *memento mori* on it worn by these women.

foreground of the canvas when Edgar assumes the rôle of 'poor Tom.' All their canting invocations, their erratic babblings and gestures are employed, though, leavened by the very fact of the disguise, they are not without a touch of the glamour that poetry always gives.

To one section of the unfortunate, however, Shakespeare's unbounded pity went out. Those 'indigent faint souls, past corporal toil,'¹ those suffering, honest paupers in the almshouse² and the Spital,³

'Who twice a day their wither'd hands hold up
Towards Heaven,'⁴

praying God to 'save the foundation,'⁵ were tearfully touched by the great dramatist; and the sighing jest of forlorn, wandering Imogen seems to breathe the poet's serious wish that those havens of refuge for toil-worn souls might never 'fly the wretched.'⁶ And who does not recall in this connection the bent figure of a brave old warrior, who was, later on, to utter his 'adsum' for the last time within one such God-sent shelter?

The ineffectual efforts to suppress 'ingenious,

¹ *Henry V.*, I. i. 17.

² *Ibid.*, 16.

³ *Timon of Athens*, IV. iii. 39.

⁴ *Henry V.*, IV. i. 316.

⁵ *Much Ado about Nothing*, V. i. 324. Some commentators take these words to be the formula of thanksgiving uttered by those who received alms at religious houses.

⁶ *Cymbeline*, III. vi. 7.

foolish, rascally knaves'¹—such vagabonds as Abram men, dummerars, counterfeit cranks,² and the like—by shackling their heels in the stocks,³ or by castigating them at the high-cross,⁴ do not escape the poet's gentle smile. For rogues could evade the famished correctioner,⁵ and the unlettered scoffer in the play exclaims, 'If all your beggars were whipped, I would wish no better office than to be a beadle.'⁶

Of those 'blue-bottle rogues,'⁷ the bealdes, whose business it was to track rascals and whip beggars, there is much rich satire in the dramatists, as also of their brother officers, the Watch. The well-meant attempts at citizen government lent themselves easily to burlesque from their ponderous assumption and their futile results. The town-crier,⁸ the whiffler,⁹ who cleared the way for processions,⁹ the sexton, who whipped out the dogs, and the bellman¹⁰ as well, went clad in the dignity befitting such limbs of the law; and they find in consequence a fitting place in Shakespeare's metaphors and similes. When

¹ *All's Well that Ends Well*, v. ii. 25.

² Dekker, *Bellman of London*. Madmen of the type of Tom o' Bedlam, feigned mutes, and men who pretended to have 'the falling sickness'—epileptic fits.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁴ *Taming of the Shrew*, I. i. 132.

⁵ *2 Henry IV.*, v. iv. 23.

⁶ *Pericles*, II. i. 92.

⁷ *2 Henry IV.*, v. iv. 22.

⁸ *Hamlet*, III. ii. 4.

⁹ *Henry V.*, Prol. 12.

¹⁰ *Macbeth*, II. ii. 3.

Dogberry's companion gives instructions to the Watch to silence crying babies, Shakespeare is laughing at that Statute of the Streets, 1595,¹ which forbade a man to whistle after the hour of nine, or 'any artificer making great sound' to work after that time. It also forbade sudden outcries of any kind in the night, whether they arose from 'affrays, or the beating of wives or servants, or singing, or revelling.' But backed up as it was by an antiquated and timid Watch, the statute was but little enforced, and the breach of the statute added a glow and an excitement to neighbourly life which previously had not been altogether wanting. 'Quiet hurly-burlies'² would continue to be fought, and fought for hours, amongst those, of whom not one was 'so impertinent as to ask the reason why.' For the Watch would be 'drawing in diligent ale, and singing catches,'³ and Master Constable would be 'contriving the toast,'³ while danger was threatening the city's peace. When brawls would arise, the citizens themselves took the law into their own hands. They kept their weapons in readiness, as did the apprentices, and at the cry for 'bats and clubs,'⁴ they would follow the scent, and lay about them to overawe the combatants, despite head-

¹ Cf. *Much Ado about Nothing*, III. iii. 64. See also p. 87.

² *Love's Pilgrimage*. ³ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Coxcomb*, II. iii.

⁴ Cf. *Coriolanus*, I. i. 161; and *Romeo and Juliet*, I. i. 80.

borough¹ or tharborough,² or any such officer. Shrove Tuesday was the day on which apprentices were specially busy. They made it their business to storm places of evil repute; the law would limp behind, but it was not uncommon to hang a 'pewterer's prentice on a Shrove Tuesday's riot.'³

The Watch were not discerning in their judgments. They would put the wrong man in the stocks, and depart their ways with mutual injunctions to remember their respective duties, and 'go sleep in the fear of God.'⁴ They were charged to 'comprehend all vagrom men,' and 'to bid any man stand, in the prince's name.'⁵ If he refused to stand, they had this consolation—they were 'rid of a knave.'⁶ They were to make no noise in the streets, but sleeping would not offend; they were only to have a care lest their bills were stolen. If they met a thief, they were to suspect him, but to let him show his true character by stealing out of their company; 'twere best so, for peace sake. There can be no wonder that 'boxing the Watch' was long after a midnight amusement for gallant blood, and that the contemporary young gentleman fleshed his sword in merry moments on these

¹ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Faithful Friends*, I. ii.

² *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i. 183. ³ Jonson, *Silent Woman*, I. i.

⁴ Marston, *Dutch Courtesan*.

⁵ *Much Ado about Nothing*, III. iii. 25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 30 ff.

sleepy guardians of the public safety. The magistrates were oftentimes scarcely more intelligent, and the logic of the bench is reflected in more than one place. 'Peace, varlet, dost chop with me?' exclaimed one incompetent magistrate to an innocent man brought before him. 'I say it is imagined thou hast murdered Lysander. How it will be proved I know not. Thou shalt therefore presently be led to execution.'¹

Leaving now some of the manifold phenomena of London life, as they appear reflected in dramatic creations, we have to look out for a similar treatment of the contemporary *professional life*, together with the trades and humbler occupations.

It is clear from the first, that Shakespeare's sympathies lay almost entirely with those who followed professions rather than trades. Physicians and surgeons, lawyers, schoolmasters and soldiers, all had some attraction for him, and they are treated in his pages with the respect that befitted their respective callings. To the many toilers, however, his attitude was different. Their roughness and uncouthness had for him the virtue of humour, but the necessity which compelled them to be 'garlic-eaters' and to wear 'greasy aprons,' seems to have set up an effectual barrier of reserve between them and him.²

¹ Chapman, *Widow's Tears*.

² Leo, *Shakespeare Das Volk und die Narren* (*Shak. Jahrbuch*, vol. xv. 1880).

With regard to medical matters, he exhibits a wide acquaintance, but the methods of treatment he occasionally reflects would probably have flattered the age, as for instance in the music prescribed to soothe the 'untuned and jarring senses' of that 'child-changed father,' Lear. For the remedies of contemporary medicoes savoured all of Galen's prescriptions, which were but 'empiricitic.'¹ It seems indeed as if 'the spells and medicines bought of mountebanks'² did not greatly differ from the drugs of the master doctors of the day. Balsamum,³ aquavitæ,⁴ bitter pills⁵ of coloquintida,⁶ or rhubarb,⁷ eisel⁸ (or vinegar) against strong infection, infusions that dwelt in 'vegetives'⁹ which had 'won their virtue under the moon,' and 'many simples operative' whose power would close the eye of anguish,¹⁰ all formed part of the average pharmacopœia. For aching bones¹¹ there would be cataplasms; patches would be used for cudgelled scars;¹² plaster and salve for aching soles,¹³ and plaintain leaves¹⁴ for broken shins. 'Rose-cheeked youth' was often brought down to the fasting-

¹ Cf. *Coriolanus*, II. 1. 122.

³ *Comedy of Errors*, IV. i. 89.

⁵ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II. iv. 147.

⁷ *Macbeth*, v. iii. 55.

⁹ *Pericles*, III. ii. 36.

¹¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, II. v. 65.

¹³ *King John*, v. ii. 13.

² *Othello*, I. iii. 62.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Othello*, I. iii. 350.

⁸ *Sonnets*, cxi. 10.

¹⁰ *King Lear*, IV. iv. 14.

¹² *Henry V.*, II. ii. 116.

¹⁴ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. ii. 52.

diet¹ by the barber-surgeon, who also might discipline his patients in tubs 'heated smoking hot.'² Diseases in the body and fever in the blood were cured by incision³ or leeches.⁴ But all seasons were not favourable, and medical almanacs would infallibly name the right months for bleeding.⁵ The quacks were often but thieves in disguise. When 'the highways grew thin with travellers' they would settle at inns and cozen the guileless while talking of cures.

Master Doctor Caius was possibly an overdrawn portrait of the 'renowned French physician'⁶ of the day. The original may have been Elizabeth's medical adviser, Dr. Julio, or Dr. Mayerne-Turquet; for the latter was a well-known professor of medicine whose long flowing periwig and black velvet Parisian pourpoint became associated in English minds with a foreign doctor. An apothecary would often be one 'in tattered weeds with overwhelming brows.'⁷ His 'needy shop' would be stocked with such things as tortoises, stuffed alligators and fish of various kinds, while his shelves would hold 'a beggarly account of empty boxes,' earthen pots, and musty

¹ *Timon of Athens*, iv. iii. 87.

² Beaumont and Fletcher, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

³ *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. iii. 95.

⁴ *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. i. 36.

⁵ Cf. *Richard II.*, i. i. 157.

⁶ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, III. i. 61.

⁷ *Romeo and Juliet*, v. i. 40 ff.

seeds, remnants of pack-threads and old cakes of roses—all 'thinly scattered to make up a show.'

Many common complaints were named then as now; but the 'web and pin'¹ was an ailment of the eye, hysteria was best known as 'mother,'² while nervous complaints were vaguely attributed to the wilful ways of 'nimble spirits in the arteries.'³ Experiments on living animals were not unknown at that day. When the Queen in *Cymbeline* would try her drugs, she suggests 'such creatures as we count not worth the hanging'⁴ for the experiment; and the physician's caution to her, that from the practice she would but make hard⁴ her heart, probably represented more than a solitary opinion on the still-vexed question of vivisection.

The lawyer, in the next place, was a familiar figure in Elizabethan life, with his quiddities and his quilllets, his cases, his tenures and his tricks;⁵ and the attorney who clutched ten groats as his fee,⁶ the notary with his inkhorn,⁷ the judge, and jury who 'may in the sworn twelve have a thief or two guiltier than him they try,'⁸ the bailiff or nuthook,⁹ the crowner,¹⁰ and scrivener,¹¹

¹ *King Lear*, III. iv. 118.

² *Ibid.*, II. iv. 56.

³ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. 303.

⁴ *Cymbeline*, I. vi. 20.

⁵ *Hamlet*, V. i. 107 ff.

⁶ *All's Well that Ends Well*, II. ii. 21.

⁷ *Merchant of Venice*, I. iii. 145.

⁸ *Measure for Measure*, II. i. 20.

⁹ *Winter's Tale*, IV. ii. 97; also 2 *Henry IV.*, V. iv. 8.

¹⁰ *Hamlet*, V. i. 24.

¹¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. iv. 59.

all represent that section of the Elizabethan world to which, more than to any other, Shakespeare owed a number of figurative details. Frequent are the allusions made to the profession; and those made to its deeds and scripts, its covenants¹ and tenements,² actions of battery³ and actions of slander,⁴ fines, recoveries,⁵ and contempt of court,⁶ fee-simple⁷ and fee-farm,⁸ customary rights,⁹ bonds,¹⁰ manual-seal¹¹ and recognizances,¹² are a few samples gathered indifferently from an exuberance of technicality, and witness to a detailed knowledge which would have done no discredit to one with a legal training.

As a sign of legal dignity the sheriff would have a stout post¹³ erected before his door, upon which proclamations would be set up, to be read by the people bareheaded. There would be civic gatherings which he would adorn, and when he, no doubt, would feel the importance and dignity of his office.

Nor was a lawyer's life made up solely of dry-as-dust days. In the vacation he would be notoriously idle, and leave what little work there was to his man, who, like Master Woolfe, would

¹ *Hamlet*, I. i. 94.

³ *Measure for Measure*, II. i. 177.

⁵ *Comedy of Errors*, II. ii. 75.

⁷ *All's Well that Ends Well*, IV. iii. 275.

⁸ *Troilus and Cressida*, III. ii. 50.

¹⁰ *Timon of Athens*, II. i. 34.

¹² *Hamlet*, V. i. 108.

² *Henry VIII.*, III. ii. 343.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁶ *Winter's Tale*, IV. iii. 740.

⁹ *Richard II.*, II. i. 196.

¹¹ *Richard II.*, IV. i. 25.

¹³ *Twelfth Night*, I. v. 147.

hold that 'theirs was the best religion' who paid their fees best ; the consciences of such were never examined. The more settled of the lawyers would sleep between term and term, and dream of their days at Clement's Inn, when a clique of swashbucklers did what they liked, and 'did it soundly too.' At other Inns of Court as well, it was a roystering life that the students led, and many of them spent years in the lawyer's Bohemia, before they could settle as citizens doing their duty by Church and State.¹

The information collected from the dramatic writings with regard to the teachers of the day and their methods, is also by no means insignificant. Of the renowned erudites and masters who played a conspicuous part in this era of Humanities and new-born Science, no reminiscence is found, though perhaps there is some hint of the movement generally in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. Their dogmatic ways are perhaps aimed at in a careless manner when he throws his darts at the 'little Academe,'² where the King and his fellow-scholars endeavoured to consort in 'leaden contemplation.'³ The ushering parson, Sir Hugh Evans of Windsor, has been identified

¹ Cf. Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Induction.

² *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i. 13. Perhaps Shakespeare was also aiming at the Earl of Northumberland's 'Philosophical Academy, plainly enough satirised by Lodge and Greene.

³ *Ibid.*, IV. iii. 318.

with a distinct personality, as was explained in the preceding chapter,¹ but he was, no doubt, in some degree representative of the lowlier kind of tutor of that day. There were also braggart pedagogues who, like Holofernes, had 'been at a great feast of language and stolen the scraps':² pedants that kept school in the church,³ or in the room over the church-porch; also ladies' schoolmasters 'well seen in music.'⁴ These are the types of this honourable profession upon which the dramatic fancy mainly rested.

The boy who attended the grammar-school of the time would have much to do with the Usher, who was himself but 'a great schoolboy, with a little beard and black clothes.'⁵ Such a one would know better 'how to whip a scholar than to learn him, for if he had been fit for anything in the University he had not left her so soon.' Education implied tears then. It was often more stern than effective. 'For whereas they make one scholar, they mar ten,' said a contemporary;⁶ and one country pedagogue would whip his boys on a cold winter's morning 'to get himself into a heat.'

With all these burrs of trial and tribulation clinging thickly to him, the whining schoolboy

¹ See p. 75.

² *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. i. 37.

³ *Twelfth Night*, III. ii. 81.

⁴ *Taming of the Shrew*, I. ii. 133.

⁵ Lupton, *London and the Country Carbonadoed*.

⁶ Peacham.

would first learn to answer the 'absey book,'¹ to read from the 'horn-book,'² and write from the texts in the copy-books³ set before him. After this, Robert Recorde's *Arithmetic*,⁴ persuasively called *The Whetstone of the Wit*, would make him a man of figures, while Lilly's *Accidence*⁵ would initiate him into the mysteries of the cases, the numbers and genders.⁶ Later on, the 'sententiae pueriles,' beloved of Sir Nathaniel, would teach him the grammar of Latin: after which Æsop would be put before him, with his 'currish riddles,'⁷ then Tully's *Orator*,⁸ Ovidius Naso's flowers of fancy,⁹ and the medieval poetry of 'good old Mantuan.'¹⁰

After these had refined him he would be set grappling with the verses of Horace,¹¹ and perhaps selections from Seneca and the Latin dramatists¹² would complete his discomfiture. Such would be the schoolboy's course; and such the books that filled his satchel, weighed on his soul and damped his shining morning face. Small wonder that the unlettered Elizabethan viewed such courses

¹ *King John*, I. i. 196.

² *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. i. 49.

³ *Ibid.*, v. ii. 42.

⁴ Cf. a paper by Spencer Baynes, 'What Shakespeare learnt at School,' based on educational pamphlets of the seventeenth century.

⁵ Cf. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. i. 16.

⁶ *Ibid.*, IV. i. 70.

⁷ *3 Henry VI.*, v. v. 26.

⁸ *Titus Andronicus*, IV. i. 14.

⁹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. ii. 120.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, IV. ii. 92.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, IV. ii. 99.

¹² *Hamlet*, II. ii. 407.

askance, or that the erection of a grammar-school to such was nothing short of a 'traitorous corruption of youth!'¹

Of the more regal seats of learning—the Universities—and of their *alumni*, much can be gathered from the dramatists.

The Oxford colleges were 'richly seated near the river-side,' the town 'gorgeous with high-built colleges':—

'And scholars seemly in their grave attire
Learnèd in searching principles of art.'²

But though 'lordly' were the dwellings, 'spacious the rooms, and full of pleasant walks,' the doctors were but 'meanly learned,'² and not in keeping with such a fount of learning. At Cambridge, 'merry (but abusive) comedies' were frequently acted within College walls, until James I. forbade such 'publick shews' within five miles of the University. The average undergraduate at the end of his career would be able to say that he had matriculated in the University, worn out six gowns there, seen some fools and some scholars, that he had gone bareheaded over the quadrangle, eaten his 'commons with a good stomach,' and 'done many sleights and tricks to maintain his wits in use.'³ In 'statu pupillari' he would have

¹ Cf. *2 Henry VI.*, iv. vii. 33. This was Jack Cade's comment on the educational facilities. It is an indictment, however, of no widespread application.

² Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. ³ *The Puritan*, i. ii.

been subject to whipping, but as a graduate he would be able to laugh soundly at the idea.¹ He would have many a recollection of indisposition after 'whiffing tobacco and drinking healths,'² on which occasions he had 'been enticed out to take the air.' He would have swum at 'freshmans heat, at paradise, in Barnewell poole, at Chery hinton, Hogmagog hills, and at Batts ffolie.'³ In his vacations he would have been often pointed to as a member of the University, for, like young Easy, he would have worn University manners in the country; and, in wishing 'Good-morning,' would have saluted with 'Vim, vitam, spemque, salutem!'

The 'meere scholler' at the University was an 'animall scabiosum.'³ He was a creature that could 'strike fire in the morning at his tinder-box, put on a paire of lined slippers, sit rewming until dinner, and then goe to his meate when the Bell rang.' He would be one that had 'a peculiar gift in a cough and a licence to spit.' He would be one that could not 'make a good legge' nor 'eat a messe of broth cleanly,' one that could not 'ride a horse without spur-galling,' nor 'salute a woman.'³ He would be the man for whom the College provided, just as 'Fortune provides for all mortality's ruins, your hos-

¹ Cf. Middleton, *Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, III. ii.

² Day, *Peregrinatio Scholastica* (Tractate xx.).

³ *Return from Parnassus* (Part II.), II. vi.

pital for your lame-creeping soldier, your open house for your beggar, and your widow for your gentleman.’¹

He would ever raise his hands in wonder at those ‘amorettoes’ who spent their time in ‘combing of their tangled hair,’ and would renounce the fairer sex, not having been trained to women’s company—a want in University education, allowed by contemporaries to be ‘the spoil of youth.’¹ While away from his College he would be pointed to as ‘piping hot from the University,’ for ‘he smells of buttered loaves yet’; he would be allowed to be perhaps ‘an excellent scholar but the arrantest ass.’²

Of war and of ‘hairbreadth ’scapes i’ the imminent deadly breach’ there are many pictures in the dramatists; but they are generally drawn with a free hand, and the details, though accurate, can scarcely always be described as strictly Elizabethan. Their armies contained ancients, corporals, lieutenants,³ master-gunners,⁴ espials,⁵ and discoverers.⁶ Their weapons might be curtlexes,⁷ brown bills,⁸ or steel-pikes.⁹ They might use brass cannon,¹⁰ culverins,¹¹ mortar-pieces,¹² or

¹ Middleton, *Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, I. ii., III. ii.

² Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, II. i. ³ *1 Henry IV.*, IV. ii. 26.

⁴ *1 Henry VI.*, I. iv. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IV. iii. 6.

⁶ *2 Henry IV.*, IV. i. 3.

⁷ *As You Like It*, I. iii. 115.

⁸ *2 Henry VI.*, IV. x. 13.

⁹ *Henry V.*, IV. i. 40. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, III. i. 11.

¹¹ *1 Henry IV.*, II. iii. 53.

¹² *Henry VIII.*, v. iii. 45.

calivers,¹ as well as smoky muskets,² petars,³ and villainous saltpetre.⁴ The men-at-arms would be 'lapped in proof'⁵ with 'libbard's head on knee.'⁶ They would wear scaly gauntlets⁷ and cuisses,⁸ beavers⁹ and bucklers,¹⁰ breastplates¹¹ and burgonets,¹² vantbraces¹³ and riveted armour.¹⁴ To the sound of the shrill trump, the 'spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,'¹⁵ would they follow their leader and 'his banners sable, trimmed with rich expense.'¹⁶ It was long after Elizabeth's reign that a radical change took place in the accoutrement of English armies, notably in the days of Marlborough, so that although some of the martial detail mentioned was already obsolete, yet in general 'the plumed troops and the big wars' were drawn from contemporary models. The kerns and gallowglasses,¹⁷ who fought with rebellious Macdonald against Macbeth, would call up to an Elizabethan audience those troops

¹ 1 *Henry IV.*, IV. ii. 19.

² *All's Well that Ends Well*, III. ii. 111.

³ *Hamlet*, III. iv. 207.

⁴ 1 *Henry IV.*, I. iii. 60.

⁵ *Macbeth*, I. ii. 54.

⁶ *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. ii. 545.

⁷ 2 *Henry IV.*, I. i. 146.

⁸ 1 *Henry IV.*, IV. i. 105.

⁹ 2 *Henry IV.*, IV. i. 120.

¹⁰ *Much Ado about Nothing*, V. ii. 17.

¹¹ Cf. 2 *Henry VI.*, III. ii. 232.

¹² *Ibid.*, V. i. 204.

¹³ *Troilus and Cressida*, I. iii. 296.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, V. vi. 29.

¹⁵ *Othello*, III. iii. 353.

¹⁶ *Pericles*, V. Prol. 19.

¹⁷ *Macbeth*, I. ii. 13.

which followed the wild O'Neile from the Western Isle to London, and caused such excitement in the metropolis.

The extensive use of pressgangs and the malversations of press-money,¹ which prevailed during the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, find their replica in the scenes in which Falstaff, on royal service, has ragged Thomas Wart pricked down on the roll together with Francis Feeble, Ralph Mouldy, and Simon Shadow,² whilst he sees in his mind's eye a number of other 'shadows to fill up the muster-book.'³ In an ordinary way, an officer thus commissioned would press good yeomen's sons, 'contracted bachelors, who would as lieve hear the devil as a drum.' Such would buy themselves off from service, and in the ranks would be left none but 'discarded, unjust serving-men,' 'younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters, and ostlers trade-fallen, the cankers of a calm world and a long peace.' Doubtless, too, some would enlist and try to forget their past disgrace when they were drummed out of their old regiments by John Drum's entertainment.⁴ And so the rabble rout would come

¹ *King Lear*, IV. vi. 87.

² Bogus names entered on the list by the recruiting officer, and for which pay was drawn by him.

³ *2 Henry IV.*, III. ii. 135.

⁴ Cf. *All's Well that Ends Well*, III. vi. 38, and J. Taylor, *Laugh and be Fat*, fol. ii. 78.

together, and as they marched, would 'find linen enough on every hedge.'

The professional soldier would have a fitting notion of the dignity of his calling. He would be 'full of strange oaths, . . . jealous in honour,' and 'sudden and quick in quarrel.'¹ A gentleman and a soldier would never 'change words' with those who had 'not so much as a good phrase in their bellies';² barely would he touch them with his sword. Among his equals, however, he would ever have a 'trick or two to kill.'² The counterfeit man of war would deny any 'rare and un-in-one-breath-utterable skill' in the stoccata and passada, but might own to some rudiments in the science, announcing the same in a tone of haughty significance. His dreams would be of 'breaches, ambuscades, Spanish blades, and healths five fathom deep.' He was one who would rather 'die with silence than live with shame,'³ but on occasion could talk of beleaguering, where 'resolute gentlemen as any were in Europe' were struck down in the breach, and how he had escaped, with such resolution had he advanced. He would have at his command tales of wars in 'Bohemia, Hungary, Dalmatia, Poland, and where not'; of services of his by land and by sea

¹ *As You Like It*, II. vii. 150.

² Cf. Ben Jonson's 'Bobadil,' *Every Man in His Humour*, I. i.

³ Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humour*, I. ii.

under the best commanders in Christendom. He would narrate how he was 'twice shot at the taking of Aleppo, once at the relief of Vienna':¹ how he had been 'a gentleman-slave in the gallies,' and had escaped badly maimed, with nothing but his scars, to which he would point as 'the noted marks of his resolution.'¹ He would also be a mine of military knowledge; and in fighting his battles over again he would instruct his hearers how to fortify their men 'with the quinque-angle formation in champion ground, because the corners there would fall flat.' Such would be the military figures of Elizabethan times: some, impostors, but also some whom no sea could deter nor enterprise daunt.

In addition to the professions already touched upon—the more regular professions—there were other channels into which the energies of England's best sons were directed, and in which many of them found fame. None of these was more popular or more honourable than that of Adventurer, embodying, as it did, the united glory of soldier and sailor, and often the profit of a merchant. Indeed, these adventurers were oftentimes but merchants of enterprise, and their original motive is still visible in the title of 'Merchant Adventurers.' Those hardy sailors who rounded the Horn and burst on the Pacific, represented a class of rest-

¹ Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humour*, 1. ii.

less spirits to whom modern England owes the foundation of her colonial wealth, while to their age they gave a never-failing supply of wonders. These would be the men who would set out as merchants 'venturing madly on desperate marts':—

'Some, to the wars, to try their fortunes there,
Some, to discover islands far away.'¹

Before venturing forth many of them would, as was the custom, insure their safe return.² Puntarvolo, by laying out £5000, would receive five times as much on his return from the Turk's Court at Constantinople.² So each 'putter-out of five for one' would start with a light heart, and drift his ways, whether his path lay through the bottomless bay of Portugal,³ the roughness of the swelling Adriatic,⁴ or across those frozen ridges of the Alps⁵ to drug-damned Italy⁶—'the Alps which spat and voided their rheum upon those low-seated vassals, the valleys.' Some would brave a Poland winter,⁷ or go and dwell with 'the swag-bellied Hollander';⁸ while others would seek the perfumes of Arabia,⁹ or visit the land

¹ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I. iii. 10.

² Cf. *Tempest*, III. iii. 48; cf. also *Every Man out of His Humour*.

³ *As You Like It*, IV. i. 206.

⁴ *Taming of the Shrew*, I. ii. 74.

⁵ *Richard II.*, I. i. 64.

⁶ *Cymbeline*, III. iv. 15.

⁷ *Comedy of Errors*, III. ii. 100.

⁸ *Othello*, II. iii. 80.

⁹ *Macbeth*, V. i. 57.

of Prester John.¹ If they went west, they went for conquest and colonisation ; and no tale was too strange if only it had crossed the high seas. They would bring home as trophies Indians and monsters.² They would be able to tell of uninhabited islands ; ‘strangely-named deities’ like Setebos ; wonder-workers like Sycorax ; races, savage and mysterious, composed of men ‘whose heads stood in their breast.’ The colonial gold-fever was then in the early stages of its development. ‘Gold is more plentiful there,’ an enthusiast would say, ‘than copper is with us. All their dripping-pans are pure gold ; all the chains with which they chain up their streets are massy gold ; and for rubies and diamonds they go forth on holidays and gather ’em by the seashore to hang on their children’s coats and stick in their children’s caps.’³ Then would be formed small colonies, like that of Virginia, which was peopled by ‘a few industrious Scots, who indeed are dispersed over the face of the whole earth.’⁴ They would give people at home an opportunity of raising questions of the ethical relation to be observed between the invader and native, and would leave the same authorities to deal with the social institutions and government of such communities. The savage might say to them, ‘You taught me lan-

¹ *Much Ado about Nothing*, II. i. 262.

² *Tempest*, II. ii. 34 ff.

³ *East-ward Hoe*.

⁴ Seagull’s description of Virginia.

guage; and my profit on't is, I know how to curse.' But such problems would be too hard for the adventurer himself. The men at home would fashion their commonwealths and weave their Utopias. The adventurers would be England's official pirates as far as Spanish treasure-ships were concerned; but to meaner and unofficial pirates the law would show no mercy. Such offenders would be hung on the shore at low-water mark, and lie drowning till three tides had washed over them.¹ Matters of foreign travel and adventure, then, were household topics in the days of Elizabeth, and the adventurers themselves were most valuable assets of the country which had produced them. Scarcely professional men, and yet not tradesmen, were the projectors, the usurers, and newsvenders of the day. Then as now, many were the lines of life taken in the hope that they would point the royal roads to fortune. Some, like Fitzdottrel, would long to become 'Duke of Drownlands'² by joining in a scheme for draining the marshes of England; others would float schemes for making large sums by new ways of 'dressing dogskins,' or of 'bottling ale'; while others would undertake to find a way of 'serving the whole state with toothpicks.' The usurers, with their gold chains about their necks, would drain poor men with their system of

¹ *Tempest*, I. i. 61.

² Ben Jonson, *Devil is an Ass*, ii. 1.

commodities. They would increase their profits by making loans, partly in such useless commodities as 'brown paper and old ginger.' For such a loan was Master Rash imprisoned ;¹ and it was this iniquitous system which Bacon proposed to legislate against in 1623.

It is Jonson who throws light on the wholesale knavery which existed among the newsvenders of the time.² News was gathered from four main centres in London : the Court, Paul's, the Exchange, and Westminster Hall. There would be barbers' news, tailors' news, 'authentical news,' and apocryphal news. Wonderful strange news from Amsterdam and Libtzig would be much valued, and due notice would be given of such events as that of 'the landing of a colony of cooks on the coast of America for the conversion of cannibals and making them good eating Christians.' At the office to which such news gravitated those anxious for news would go, like the butterwoman who called for a groat'sworth of news to carry to her vicar. But the real value of such information was well known by the better classes. '*The Currantoes, or Weekly News,*' wrote a contemporary, 'are all conceites ordinarily which idle brains and busy fancies invented.' 'And,' he also added, 'they have used the trade so long that now every one can say it is even

¹ *Measure for Measure*, iv. iii. 5.

² See his *Staple of News*.

as true as a currantoe, meaning that it is false.'

More lowly, more stable, and more honest were the tradesmen of the time. We hear in Shakespeare of the chandler whose wares were dear;¹ of the cutler whose knives were with poetry graven;² of one Sampson Stockfish, fruiterer;³ and of the 'fleshmonger working in his shirt,'⁴ with his venom-mouthed cur at his side, ill-treated, without a doubt, and often sworn at: for 'butchers and tinkers were the greatest fighters and most profound swearers'⁴ of the day. There was the glover with his paring-knife;⁵ Master Three-pile, the mercer;⁶ Master Smooth, the silkman;⁷ the pewterer, with the rapid motion of his hammer;⁸ the potter, in company with his wheel; carpenters with leathern aprons; brokers with their pawns and treasures; colliers who 'carry coals';⁹ and 'dyers, with their hands subdued in nature to what they worked in';¹⁰ and the clock-setter, who puts together the 'hundred pieces' of those German clocks, 'still a-repairing, ever out of frame.'¹¹ There was Tom Snout, the

¹ 1 *Henry IV.*, III. iii. 48.

² *Merchant of Venice*, v. i. 149.

³ 2 *Henry IV.*, III. ii. 32.

⁴ Dekker, *The Dead Terme*, p. 13; 2 *Henry VI.*, IV. vii. 52.

⁵ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. iv. 21.

⁶ *Measure for Measure*, IV. iii. 11.

⁷ 2 *Henry IV.*, II. i. 31.

⁸ *Ibid.*, III. ii. 268.

⁹ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. i. 2.

¹⁰ *A Mad World* (Dodsley, *Old English Plays*), v. p. 366.

¹¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, III. i. 192.

tinker ; Snug, the joiner ;¹ Francis Flute, 'bellows-mender.'² There were botchers³ and haberdashers ;⁴ women's tailors,⁵ and perfumed men's milliners ;⁶ early carriers,⁷ whistling carmen,⁸ singing masons,⁹ poor mechanic porters,¹⁰ black chimney-sweeps,¹¹ hardy washerwomen,¹² rank flax-wenches ;¹³ sailors without their sea-gowns,¹⁴ posset sellers, orange-wives, and oyster-wenches. The 'low-capped tradesman'¹⁵ would ever be urging the 'flat-capped' ones in their employ to shout 'What is 't ye lack ?' in a louder tone, while the latter would stand with 'bare pates and dropping noses,' under wooden penthouses, indulging in dreams of 'clubs and bats,' or interjecting quotations from the popular plays, as was their wont.

The most frequented of such shops, at least by the gallants, would be the tobacconist's and the barber's. The latter would have chairs that fitted all comers,¹⁶ and perforated censers used for fumigation.¹⁷ There would be a cithern, or some

¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, I. ii. 63.

² *Ibid.*, IV. i. 206.

³ *Twelfth Night*, I. v. 44.

⁴ *Henry VIII.*, v. iii. 45.

⁵ *2 Henry IV.*, III. ii. 160.

⁶ *1 Henry IV.*, I. iii. 36.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II. i. 36.

⁸ *2 Henry IV.*, III. ii. 322.

⁹ *Henry V.*, I. ii. 198.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. 262.

¹² Cf. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. ii. 5.

¹³ *Winter's Tale*, I. ii. 277.

¹⁴ *Hamlet*, v. ii. 13.

¹⁵ Marston, *Eastward Hoe*, I. i. 162 ff.

¹⁶ *All's Well that Ends Well*, II. ii. 17.

¹⁷ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. iii. 91.

other instrument, for customers to play on; and sometimes a list of forfeits¹ or fines would hang on one of the walls, to be imposed for bad behaviour, naturally with the intention of keeping up the standard of conduct in a place of such public resort.

A tobacconist's shop would be primarily an apothecary's. If the owner of the establishment were popular he would receive pupils whom he would initiate into the mysteries of the smoking art, and instruct them in particular as to the way of blowing rings. Such a man would be careful, like Drugger, not to 'sophisticate' his tobacco with 'sack-lees or oil';² nor would he 'wash it in muscadel and grains': nor 'bury it underground wrapped up in greasy leather.' He would, however, keep it in 'fine lily pots' that, when opened, smelt like 'conserve of roses.' At such a fashionable place there would be a maple-block and silver tongs, Winchester pipes and fire of Juniper, all ready for the passing customer. And doubtless such an apothecary would have a great chance of obtaining a competency and of being 'remembered with Lady Ramsey and grave Gresham.'³ This would be an ambition of thrifty business men. For the acts of such would 'be-

¹ *Measure for Measure*, v. i. 320. Cf. *Rules for Seemly Behaviour*, adduced by Dr. Kenric, but rejected by some critics as spurious.

² Ben Jonson, *Alchemist*, i. 1.

³ Chapman and Marston, *Eastward Hoe*.

come posies for hospitals,' their 'names would be written on conduits,' and their deeds played in their lifetime by the best companies of actors. Such was the dream of many an Elizabethan tradesman which buoyed him up in his hours of business strain and stress.

Turning now to the *Home-life* of the Elizabethans, their house-appointments and style of life, we can obtain from the dramatists a number of details which shall set up in their light and shade many of the splendours of the mansion of the time, with its 'bay-windows transparent as barricadoes,'¹ its quadrangles² and turrets,³ its jutty, frieze, and buttress,⁴ and its 'cloud-capped towers.'⁵

There can be but little doubt that Shakespeare gained admittance now and again to some of those stately palaces which Thorpe, or Adams, or Jansen, among other famous architects, erected amid the lovely scenery of England. For in such places masques or entertainments were often given in honour of some Tudor Mæcenas by my Lord Chamberlain's servants.

In his plays we can accompany the poet past the steward, 'in the chain of gold,'⁶ past the pages and foot-boys,⁷ kissing their hands and

¹ *Twelfth Night*, IV. ii. 37.

² *Henry VI.*, I. iii. 154.

³ *Henry VI.*, I. iv. 26. ⁴ *Macbeth*, I. vi. 6. ⁵ *Tempest*, IV. i. 152.

⁶ Middleton, *A Mad World*, II. i.

⁷ *Henry VIII.*, V. ii. 25.

curtseying with their left legs :¹ on into the house trimmed by the serving-men¹ in their blue coats and ribbons, their white stockings and silver badges—Nicholas, Philip, Walter, Sugarsop¹ and the rest. We can partake of the tempting Elizabethan greeting with its hospitable kisses and smiles,² and then tread ‘the senseless rushes,’³ as green as summer,⁴ strewed on the floor, as we step into the perfumed chambers⁵ that await us. We can peer, as we go, through the curtains at couches, soft and sweet, with their ‘valance of Venice gold in needlework,’⁶ and their downy pillows.⁷ We can gaze in wonder at the coloured sunlight streaming through the coats of arms annealed on lofty windows ; and in the parlour we can hear the conference by the fire,⁸ read the chimney-posies, study the painted cloth⁹ with the mottoes worked on it, admire the ‘China dishes,’¹⁰ or, when silence comes, listen to the tender music of the virginal.

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. i. 87 ff.

² Cf. *Winter's Tale*, I. ii.

³ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iv. 36.

⁴ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Valentinian*, p. 24.

⁵ *2 Henry IV.*, III. i. 12.

⁶ *Taming of the Shrew*, II. i. 346.

⁷ *Cymbeline*, III. vi. 35.

⁸ *Taming of the Shrew*, v. ii. 103.

⁹ *Troilus and Cressida*, v. x. 4. Cf. Perlin, *Description d'Angleterre*, 1552, p. 11: ‘Des toilles pinctes, qui sont bien faictes aux quelles y a force et magnifiques roses, couronees ou il y a fleurs de Liz et Lions.’

¹⁰ *Measure for Measure*, II. i. 97.

There are galleries we may wander in, galleries with curtained pictures;¹ or, an it please us, curious - knotted gardens,² circummured with brick.³ In the state sleeping-rooms we can see old-fashioned oak bedsteads of enormous size, richly carved and hung with tapestry, like the Bed of Ware which has lived to be famous; while in smaller rooms are 'standing beds'⁴ for those of rank, truckle beds for the servants. In an outhouse would be a coach, held by neighbouring rustics to be a crabshell brought out of China. In the garret would be an armourer scouring coats of steel;⁵ in the pantry a bread-chipper;⁶ in the kitchen the sewers who tasted the dishes; and cooks as well, who killed 'fowls of season,'⁷ and roasted them with the aid of their 'turnspit dog bound to the wheel.'⁸ All would be ranked among the retainers and would be subject to those instructions and lessons of morality which the mistress of the house hung up below-stairs for the benefit of her servants.

One of the most important demesnes that Shakespeare might have seen was that of Nonesuch in Surrey. If he ever paid a visit to this particular mansion, there he would have revelled

¹ *Twelfth Night*, I. v. 232.

² *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i. 244.

³ *Measure for Measure*, IV. i. 28.

⁴ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. v. 7.

⁵ *2 Henry VI.*, I. iii. 191.

⁶ *2 Henry IV.*, II. iv. 242.

⁷ *Measure for Measure*, II. ii. 84.

⁸ Marston, *Eastward Hoe*, II. iii. 282.

in 'hangings all of Tyrian tapestry,'¹ in 'Turkey cushions bossed with pearl,'² in plate of rare device,³ in figured goblets⁴ and in jewels of rich and exquisite form.⁵ There he would have found quaint court-cupboards,⁶ ivory coffers, cypress chests, arras and counterpoints.⁷ And there, while 'brave attendants' waited on the guests with 'diapers of fine linen,' the latter would cool their hands with silver basins 'full of rose-water and bestrewed with flowers.'⁸ There on the terrace, planted around with orange-trees and laurels, might he have listened sadly to strains of music floating outwards from the hall, and have dreamt of 'such a night' as that on which Lorenzo distilled his love to willing Jessica.⁹

But what makes it more than likely that Shakespeare actually viewed these royal halls of None-such is the fact that he mirrors in enthusiastic poetry several of the artistic masterpieces of classical myth, which stood within the palace or its grounds.

When Iachimo leads the way to the bed-chamber of Imogen, and describes the cutter's delicate work—'Chaste Dian bathing'¹⁰—he de-

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, II. i. 342.

³ *Cymbeline*, I. vii. 189.

⁵ *Cymbeline*, I. vii. 190.

⁷ *Taming of the Shrew*, II. i. 344.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Induction, i. 56.

⁹ Cf. *Merchant of Venice*, v. i. 69.

² *Ibid.*, II. i. 346.

⁴ *Richard II.*, III. iii. 150.

⁶ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. v. 8.

¹⁰ *Cymbeline*, II. iv. 82.

picts the very carving of the goddess which adorned a grove in Nonesuch Park. When the poet describes Sir Actæon, with the hounds, 'driving upon his new-transformed limbs,'¹ might it not have been suggested by the representation of Dian's ill-fated lover which stood, too, within the same princely grounds? Perhaps we might even conjecture that the tapestry displaying proud Cleopatra when she met her Roman;² the andirons moulded as 'two winking Cupids of silver';² the golden cherubs fretted on the ceiling of Imogen's room,² and all the 'wanton pictures' of Daphne roaming through the thorny wood, or

'Adonis, painted by a running brook;
And Cytherea all in sedges hid,'³

pictures which poor Christopher Sly awoke to find his own,—that all these paintings and designs were reminiscences of sculptures and paintings at Nonesuch.⁴

It seems probable, too, that it was in the palaces of the new nobility, whither so many treasures of Italian and Dutch art found their way, that Shakespeare became acquainted with the gems of foreign workmanship which he so delicately introduces into his writings. For this

¹ *Titus Andronicus*, II. iii. 64; cf. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. i. 118.

² *Cymbeline*, II. iv. 70 and 90. ³ *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, ii.

⁴ Cf. article in *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1837, quoting Houfnagle and Hentzner.

is far more probable than to assume that they were suggested to him by continental travel. Io, beguiled and surprised,¹ was a subject that appealed to many artists of the Renaissance ; and it is only natural that the great dramatist should have included the picture of Jupiter's wandering love amongst those scenes which, with music making 'a dulcet and heavenly sound,'² were set to trick the Protean tinker. It is true that the Io of Coreggio was then on view at Milan and was the admiration of travellers. But, on the other hand, a picture of Io and Jupiter graced the gallery of the Duke of Buckingham at this very time—a picture attributed to Holbein on Horace Walpole's authority.³ So that Shakespeare was probably indebted to a native source for his picture of Io. Neither is it remarkable that in the *Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare represents 'that rare Italian master, Julio Romano,'⁴ as executing the statue of Hermione. Romano was that pupil of Raphael who most strikingly blended the idealism of his master with the realistic strength of Michael Angelo. His style appealed intimately to the British mind, and although he was better known as a painter than a sculptor, the poet selects him solely on account of the artistic power ascribed

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, ii. 54.

² *Ibid.*, i. 54.

³ Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting*, vol. i. p. 148.

⁴ *Winter's Tale*, v. ii. 96.

to him in the play—the power of putting breath into his work and tricking Nature of her custom. Moreover, in order to make more expressive the scene where Hermione comes back into the world as a breathing statue, the supposed figure had to be clothed and painted in life-like colours. And this combination of the brush and chisel would have appeared not impossible to any Elizabethan who was acquainted with the city statues, ‘painted,’ as Ben Jonson said, ‘in most orient colours.’¹

Of the vast profusion in Elizabethan feasts and meals, essentially in keeping with the magnificence of portly mansions, there is but small evidence in Shakespeare. His references to the customs of the table are but few and scattered.

The churlish philosopher in *Timon of Athens* gives an example of the manner in which grace was often said ‘in metre’;² and Gratiano’s scoffing wit has a word of mockery for those ‘well-studied in a sad ostent,’³ those who were wont to hood their eyes with their hat at the ‘thanksgiving before meat.’⁴ Breakfast⁵ and dinner,⁶

¹ Ben Jonson, *Magnetic Lady*, v. iv.

² Cf. also *Measure for Measure*, I. ii. 22.

³ *Merchant of Venice*, II. iii. 190. From this it appears that hats were worn at meals and only removed when grace was said.

⁴ *Measure for Measure*, I. ii. 16.

⁵ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, III. iii. 246.

⁶ *Much Ado about Nothing*, II. iii. 212.

supper¹ and after-supper² are all incidentally mentioned. Occasionally the carpet³ is laid for a convivial feast, for a wedding dinner,⁴ after which the bride's elder sisters, still unmarried, 'danced barefoot ;⁵ or for a sad burial feast,⁶ with its 'funeral baked meats.'⁷ At most great tables the company was usually arranged in fours. Biron said, not without significance, that his three companions lacked him as a fourth 'to complete the mess.'⁸ At times a banquet would he made 'ready in the privy chamber,'⁹ or again, sporting gallants might hastily partake of that collation known as the 'running banquet.'

After dinner or supper, the domestic fool—that chartered jester—would appear. He would be distinguished by his calf-skin coat, buttoned down the back ; or else he might wear 'a garded coat,' with 'a great dagger.'¹⁰ His head would be closely shaven. He would jest in season and out of season, but only a capricious master would have him 'whipped for taxation.'¹¹ His privileges, as a rule, were very great, as also was the affection he would win from those of the household, not only by his good-humoured fun, but

¹ *Merchant of Venice*, II. ii. 122.

² *Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. i. 34.

³ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. i. 52.

⁴ *Ibid.*, III. ii. 218.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II. i. 33.

⁶ *Romeo and Juliet*, IV. v. 87.

⁷ *Hamlet*, I. ii. 179.

⁸ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. 204.

⁹ *Henry VIII.*, I. iv. 98.

¹⁰ Fletcher, *Noble Gentleman*, V. i.

¹¹ *As You Like It*, I. ii. 81.

also by the pathos which continually enfolded him. In Holbein's picture of Sir Thomas More's family this fact would appear, for Patison, the Fool, is the only servant represented in the picture; and the endearment with which he was regarded by the family becomes evident. The entertainment of the Fool, however, was, in Shakespeare's time, already dying out. It was not easy to find men capable of playing the part. And since the little wit that fools had was grown silent, 'the little folly that wise men' had, made 'the greater show.'¹ At public entertainments the city fool would still be retained. But the humour expected of him would be of a grosser kind than would please the great houses. He would have to jump into a large, deep custard, and so 'set on a quantity of barren spectators to laugh.' In earlier times the Fools had tickled the laughter delicately, as the wine warmed the heart. They 'that had good wits, had much to answer for'; like Touchstone, they would be flouting; they could not hold.²

Shakespeare does not dwell on the material side of things when he depicts the home-life of his contemporaries. Details which a Petronius would have revelled in setting out, find but small description in his pages. The few details which he gives seem to be given mainly for a comic effect, and are connected chiefly with those whose

¹ *As You Like It*, I. ii. 84.

Ibid., v. i. 16.

humour moved along homely grooves, like Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who put down his damaged wit to his beef-eating propensity. Such good honest souls, redolent with 'brown bread and garlic,'¹ might occasionally season their sallies with allusions to those necessaries of life in which their *dura ilia* delighted. It is therefore in connection with them that we hear of Tewkesbury mustard² and soft Banbury cheese,³ of pippins⁴ and neat's foot,⁵ of neat's tongue dried,⁶ and stuffed rabbit,⁷ of an old hoar hare⁸ for a Lenten pie,⁹ of capons burned, and pigs fallen from the spit,¹⁰ of soused gurnet¹¹ and stock fishes,¹² old apple John and shotten herrings,¹³ and humble warden pies coloured with saffron.¹⁴ With those who ate such dainties no 'kissing comfits'¹⁴ were needed to sweeten the breath.

No stress, however, is laid by Shakespeare on those chines of beef¹⁵ which loaded the dresser in the manorial hall, bustling with trencher-knight, and server.¹⁶ He does not linger much with carved

¹ *Measure for Measure*, III. ii. 185.

² *2 Henry IV.*, II. iv. 244.

³ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. i. 130.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I. ii. 13.

⁵ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. iii. 17.

⁶ *1 Henry IV.*, II. iv. 255.

⁷ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. iv. 101.

⁸ *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iv. 135.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁰ *Comedy of Errors*, I. ii. 44.

¹¹ *1 Henry IV.*, IV. ii. 11.

¹² *Measure for Measure*, III. ii. 111.

¹³ *1 Henry IV.*, III. iii. 5; *ibid.*, II. iv. 134.

¹⁴ *Winter's Tale*, IV. ii. 48; *Merry Wives of Windsor*, V. v. 22.

¹⁵ *Henry V.*, III. vii. 164.

¹⁶ *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. ii. 464.

pasties,¹ flavoured with dates and quinces ;² nor with those delectable junkets,³ rising in crenelated turrets from the well-laden table ; nor again with those more delicate viands which were 'caviare to the general.'⁴ We can only catch a passing glimpse of the immutable distinction so emphatically proclaimed by other Elizabethan writers between the 'salt-butter rogue'⁵ to whom 'conserves of beef'⁶ were as luscious as locusts, and the well-derived gentleman, on the other hand, who would relish a hot venison pasty,⁷ and would taste in his arbour after supper, and before his posset,⁸ a last year's pippin, with a dish of caraways.⁹

Jonson, however, could work up more enthusiasm over the culinary art, and he describes in detail how a good cook would be a professor, an engineer, and a mathematician all in one. For the tables of the great he would design and draw, paint and carve, and build citadels of curious fowl and fish. Sometimes he would dig ditches and arrange moats of broth ; or again cut fifty-angled custards, rear bulwark pies, and for

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. iii. 89.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, IV. iv. 2.

³ *Taming of the Shrew*, III. ii. 247.

⁴ *Hamlet*, II. ii. 457.

⁵ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. ii. 274.

⁶ *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, ii. 7.

⁷ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. i. 191.

⁸ *Ibid.*, V. v. 180.

⁹ *2 Henry IV.*, V. iii. 3.

his outer works raise ramparts of immortal crusts.

From other contemporaries, too, we can gather something more about the various tables kept, and the methods of serving. At the table of a mean Country Justice, besides the 'cheap salads, sliced beef, giblets, and "pettitoes,"' sometimes at the lower end there would be great, cumbersome, uncut-up pies, filled with moss and stones, partly to make a show with, and partly 'to keep the lower mess from eating.' The gentlemen at the table would carouse in wine with which many would take sugar; the clowns would 'use large drinking of beere or ale.'¹

Things would be served up differently in different places. At city feasts the meat would 'come sneaking in, one dish a quarter of an hour after another,'¹ at hunting-breakfasts, all the dishes at once¹; while with the old-fashioned, the courses would be brought in by 'a score of bleer-eyed serving-men in long blue coats,'¹ bringing old memories in their train. But at public and private feasts alike, drinking excesses were the rule. According to a contemporary, 'In some gentlemen's houses, with some captains and soldiers, with also the vulgar sort of citizens and artisans, large and intemperate drinking is used.'²

¹ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Woman Hater*, 1. ii.

² Moryson, *Itinerary*, p. 3.

But he also adds that 'the greater and better part of the English hold all excess blameworthy, and drunkenness a reproachful vice.' However true this may be, the keeping of the wassail was a custom firmly fixed in Shakespeare's time, although it may have been one 'more honoured in the breach than in the observance.' The English of his time were 'stubborn drinkers.' 'Than an Englishman,' said another playwright, 'not a leak at sea can suck more liquor. You shall have their children christened in mulled sack, and at five years old, able to knock a Dane down.'¹

The description of the Christmas festivities of 1604-5 by a contemporary also will probably in this connection be recalled. How, at the revels, Hope, Faith, and Charity appeared in rich dresses before the King, and 'Hope did essay to speak, but wine rendered her endeavour so feeble that she withdrew, and hoped the King would excuse her brevity. Faith was then all alone, for I am certain she was not joined with good works, and left the Court in a staggering condition. Charity then came to the King's feet, and seemed to cover the multitude of sins her sisters had committed. . . . I ne'er did see such lack of good order, discretion, and sobriety.' The stigma which rested on the country was certainly not

¹ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Captain*, III. ii.

without foundation, and drinking bouts must have made many a manor resound with cries, which, to its dishonour, had been caught from the Court.

A more interesting side of Elizabethan life, however, is that of its public amusements. Some of these have already been mentioned, either in connection with the country or else with the metropolis. The greatest and most general of such amusements has yet to be touched upon, for it was in their *theatres* that the English people found their most lasting pleasure. It was the theatre that nourished their complex natures, fed their enthusiasms, and stirred their feelings.

There is in Shakespeare's dramas much that had characterised the English stage when but in embryo; and in addition to such survivals of the past, they also contain flashes caught from the pageantry of the time.

The poet's first acquaintance with the stage must have been made when companies of strolling players came to Stratford, or when he met them trudging with their carts along country roads towards Kenilworth or Warwick. Perhaps the moralities represented on so many a village scaffold were among the first forms in which he saw any histrionic representation at all. In any case, much that characterised this old crude acting finds an echo in his plays, and also in some of his contemporaries.

The 'formal vice' ¹ of Shakespeare's youth,

'Who with dagger of lath,
In his rage and his wrath,
Cried "Ah, ha!" to the devil,' ²

stepped into the Elizabethan drama as the clown; and in this way the memory of the 'grey Iniquity' ³ of the moral plays was successfully kept green. The grave-diggers in *Hamlet*, too, are surely remembrances of the Antic who sat in the 'motion' by the puppet Vanity, ⁴ 'scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp.' ⁵

The pageants of the Trade Guilds (into whose hands the drama came after the old miracle plays, and who exhibited regularly at London, Coventry, York, and Chester) are also represented in Shakespeare's works, when he carefully distinguishes Quince as a carpenter; Smug as a joiner; Bottom, a weaver; Snout, a tinker; and Starveling, a tailor. This characteristic of his *Midsummer Night's Dream* is obviously a laughing recollection of those old guild players, 'hard-handed men,' who had 'never laboured in their minds' till then. For in those earlier days the audience would behold their friends, the baker, the tanner, the carpenter, and the cook, all on the

¹ *Richard III.*, III. i. 82.

² *Twelfth Night*, IV. ii. 129 ff.

³ *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 500.

⁴ *King Lear*, II. ii. 36.

⁵ *Richard II.*, III. ii. 162.

scaffolding, impersonating patriarchs, devils, or angels to the best of their ability.

When the player recites 'Æneas' tale to Dido' before the Danish prince, he is unconsciously burlesquing the windy bombast of the popular stage when a sword would be called 'a blade, a bloody, blameful blade,'¹ while rebels might have the style of 'vaporous villeins with venim vulnerate,' or 'prating parenticides, plexious to pinnositee.' The 'Pyramus and Thisbe' story, as handled by the Athenian artisans in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, seems, moreover, to be a skit on the classical dramas of the day, characterised as they were by an absence of dignity and an extravagance of style, with the jingling doggerel of their prologues in 'eight and six,' and with their far-fetched fancies embedded in grotesque invocations. There are, in fact, in Shakespeare alone, many fossil remains of the earlier stage; and his plays afford not a few hints of the various phases the drama had gone through within his memory, as it sped on its way from Chester's Morality to the *Hamlet* of the Globe.

But the same cause which prompted him to trace occasionally those primitive shows which had delighted town and country, also induced him to look upon the stage at large as a fruitful tree from which to pluck metaphors and similes.

¹ A poem of 1537.

He would draw on the popular sports freely for such things, but the drama was even nearer to the people, and his debt to the latter is consequently still greater. Thus he forcibly likens the orator courting his audience's favour, to the player whom the 'tag-rag'¹ people alternately clap and hiss; the exiled statesman to the dull actor who has forgotten his part;² and the derided king to the tedious prattler who tries to entertain 'after the well-graced actor leaves the stage.'³ In his eyes the scheming politician is but one who does

'Counterfeit the deep tragedian,
Speak, and look back, and pry on every side,
Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,
Intending deep suspicion.'⁴

Life is 'but a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more,'⁵ while the world is a 'great stage of fools,'⁶ a theatre 'to feed contention in a lingering act.'⁷

The fact that such metaphors were among the most pregnant employed by the dramatist, would suffice to show how close the stage lay to the heart of the people, even if the persistent inveighings against the flocking to the theatres,⁸ against 'pre-

¹ *Julius Cæsar*, I. ii. 260.

³ *Richard II.*, v. ii. 24.

⁵ *Macbeth*, v. v. 25.

⁷ 2 *Henry IV.*, I. i. 156.

⁸ Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), p. 90.

² *Coriolanus*, v. iii. 40.

⁴ *Richard III.*, III. v. 6.

⁶ *King Lear*, IV. vi. 182.

sentments clothed in vocal sound,'¹ had not led to the same conclusion. The glow of the play-house reached out far and lit up all classes, from the courtier at Greenwich, who would gracefully listen to 'an excellent conceited comedie,' to the bargee on the Thames, who accompanied the splash of his oars with monologues of Tamburlaine.

Concerning the actor and his bearing, the stage and its surroundings, much can also be gathered from the Shakespearean drama; for the Roscian art as he knew it, found in him a keen critic.

There were several points in connection with the actor's conception of his art which Shakespeare could not approve of. The extemporisation already mentioned, so frequent on the Elizabethan stage, was in the first place greatly to be deplored. And when Shakespeare exclaims that the clowns ought 'to speak no more than is set down for them,'² he is inveighing against an evil which was wont to corrode much of the finest metal in the dramatic output. The clown's commonplace would inevitably have a false jarring note in a play of poetic tendency.

Then some clowns would laugh, to spread the contagion, neglecting for a time the course of the play. This slight could not but earn the resentment of the greatest of dramatists. It showed, moreover, 'a most pitiful ambition in the fool'

¹ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Prophetess*, IV. i. ² *Hamlet*, III. ii. 41.

who used it, the grossest ignorance of the end of comedy.

There also were ranting, 'robustious, periwig-pated fellows,' who would mouth their speeches and 'tear a passion to tatters.'¹ Such actors would be the offspring of the bearded Herods of the old mystery plays, the speech of which crude figures had been like 'a chime a-mending.'² They had been wont to strut across the scene, to

'Think it rich
To hear the wooden dialogue and sound
'Twixt their stretch'd footing and the scaffoldage.'²

But the best actors of Shakespeare's day would avoid this out-heroding of Herod and 'speak their speeches trippingly on the tongue.' Those who would strut and bellow had 'neither the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man.'

It must, however, be remembered that this 'o'erdoing Termagant'³ was also to some extent the result of existing conditions on the English stage. It was 1660 before a woman appeared in any *rôle*, and it is hard to see how the contrast between the strength of an Othello and the clinging tenderness of a Desdemona could possibly be exhibited, if the same quality of masculine notes gave utterance

¹ *Hamlet*, III. ii. 9.

² *Troilus and Cressida*, I. iii. 155 ff.

³ *Hamlet*, III. ii. 15.

to the bride's tearful love-words and to the virile wrath of the Moor. This absence of woman from womanly parts was undoubtedly another grave disability under which Shakespeare's stage laboured, and one which seriously crippled the actor's possibilities. It not only helped to keep up the ranting traditions, but it added to the discord which, from other causes, was associated with the stage. The extent of the evil can be gathered from a statement of the Restoration days,¹ lamenting the fact that girls of fifteen were represented on the stage by men of fifty, who, with their awkward size and lack of sensibility, suggested giants rather than maids. Even when the parts were taken by children, there was a complete want of verisimilitude in the shrill treble of the young 'eyases' who cried 'out on the top of question,'² when it was remembered that low-speaking maidens were being represented. Possibly more than one contemporary was longing for a more fitting treatment of those womanly parts which were the glory of their age of the drama.

¹ Cf. the Prologue written by Thomas Jordan for the revival of *Othello*, when for the first time the part of Desdemona was taken by a woman, Mrs. Hughes (December 8, 1660):

' For to speak truth, men act, that are between
Forty or fifty, wenches of fifteen,
With bone so large and nerve so uncompliant :
When you call "Desdemona," enter giant.'

² *Hamlet*, II. ii. 344.

Of Shakespeare's own wish there can be no question.

When Rosalind in the Epilogue to *As You Like It* promised to kiss as many men as pleased her if she were a woman, the usual method of female representation is merely implied, though there is a tinge of regret in the avowal. The same custom is also merely hinted at when Julia,¹ disguised as a youth, playfully boasts of having taken the part of Ariadne at the Pentecost pageant. But it is in the mouth of Cleopatra, the most passionate, the most sensitive of all his women characters, that a definite protest is placed by the poet. On her downfall she moans that the love-ties between Antony and herself will be desecrated at a later day by 'some squeaking Cleopatra boy,'² intended to stage her greatness. The poet who created a Juliet, a Beatrice, an Imogen, cannot but have wished for his creatures to be interpreted on the boards with that passion and coy emotion which only a woman's genius was capable of imparting.

In the course of the Elizabethan drama, there becomes manifest, too, certain features of the relationship which existed between the stage and its audience. Then, as now, the audience would be mixed in character. Some would have come 'to

¹ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV. iv. 160 ff.

² *Antony and Cleopatra*, V. ii. 218.

take their ease and sleep an act or two . . . others to hear the city abused extremely, and to cry, "That's witty."'¹ There would be Lord's rooms for the grandees, which corresponded most nearly with the modern stage-boxes. But the fashionable young gallants would have stools on the stage² where they would be attended by impudent boys who saw to their pipes, fetched their ale, and begged for money. These young bucks³ would hie to the theatre after their dinner, and a well-known character would cause a murmur on entering the house. His companions in greatness would salute him on the stage; he would choose his comrade, take his seat, and start his quizzing. In the audience, besides, there might be ladies, but they wore black masks, for more reasons than one, and kept aloof from the stage and the pit alike. In the latter place would surge the groundlings,⁴ who were of varying degrees of worthlessness. There would be the critics with their pocket-books or 'writing-tables';⁵ those also whose living was dishonestly made by industrious pirating of plays. There would be 'your sinful sixpenny mechanic' and

¹ *Henry VIII.*, Epilogue.

² Cf. Webster's Introduction to Marston's *Malcontent*, vol. i. p. 199.

³ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Woman Hater*, I. iii.

⁴ *Hamlet*, III. ii. 12. ⁵ Marston, *Malcontent*, Induction, 18; and Jonson, *Every Man out of his Humour*, IV. ii.

those 'who buy their sport by the penny.'¹ There would be the youths who thundered at a playhouse and fought for bitten apples,² youths who relished 'only a jig or a tale of bawdry'³ and who for the most part were 'capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise'⁴ — 'clapping, hissing, swearing, stamping, smiling, applauding, scorning, liking, and reviling.'⁵

During the play, a gallant might rise to vex the players or to snub the poet.⁶ He might have gone merely to exhibit a 'cloke'; when he would 'sit in the view, salute his acquaintances, rise up between the acts and let fall his "cloke."'⁷ Shakespeare does not recognise these gallants, but they affected his fellow-dramatists possibly to a greater degree than they did him; for they are frequently alluded to in other than Shakespearean plays, and the allusions always take the form of protests. But the behaviour of these vapid dilettantes would often be far preferable to that of the groundlings. According to a contemporary, if a looked-for appearance did not come about, they would cry angrily 'how they were coney-catched and cheated.' Some laughed,

¹ Dekker, *Gull's Hornbook*, p. 247.

² *Henry VIII.*, v. iii. 63.

³ *Hamlet*, II. ii. 506.

⁴ *Ibid.*, III. ii. 14.

⁵ Cf. Taylor's *Revenge*, fol., pt. ii. p. 145.

⁶ Ben Jonson, *Devil is an Ass*, III. i. 248.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I. iii.

some swore, some stamped and cursed. They would pelt clay about, or stones and wood. One would 'madly sit like bottle-ale and hiss': another 'madly would pluck off the tiles'; while some might run 'to the door to get again their coin.'¹

But in spite of all their freely-vented humours, Shakespeare's audiences must have shown a marked appreciation of the poetic side of the drama, and have pieced out the scenic imperfections with their thoughts.² For the limitations of the contemporary stage for representing life's realities were of the narrowest. It could only give the faintest hint—one that in its utter inadequacy often bordered on the ridiculous—of such great historical events as Bosworth,³ or Cade's rebellion,⁴ or of such glimpses into Fairyland as the flight of Oberon with Titania. It could not have been an easy task for spectators to see 'three ladies walke to gather flowers,'⁵ and straightway take the stage for a garden; or to 'heare newes of a shipwreck in the same place' and immediately accept it for a rock; or, again, to realise that two armies were rolling to battle when 'four swordes and bucklers' were seen. It must often have been felt that it was a most faulty representation of

¹ Cf. Taylor's *Revenge* (Works, fol., Part II. p. 145).

² *Henry V.*, I. Chorus, 23.

³ *Richard III.*

⁴ 2 *Henry VI.*

⁵ Sidney, *Apologie for Poetrie.*

‘majestical affairs’ when the smallest rearrangement of the stage had to stand for a most extensive change of place. But despite the apparent diminution of the difficulty which the classical play had obtained in its obedience to the unities, the English Romantic play kept on its even way and attained a glory which any crippling restrictions of time and play in its action would only have decreased. A contemporary might condemn the Englishman ‘in the quality’ as ‘most vain, indiscrete and out of order’; inasmuch as he grounded his work on improbabilities. For ‘in three hours he would run through the world, marry, get children, make children men, bring gods from heaven and devils from hell.’¹ But these ‘indiscretions’ were not unintentionally made by the dramatists. If the action of a play demanded a shift from the English shores ‘athwart the sea’² to the ‘vasty fields of France,’ or from the atmosphere of spirits to the haunts of hempen homespuns, these demands were candidly made by the poet and readily met by the public. They would project their felicitous fancy to the scenes, as the poet asked, and within the wooden O—the globe—they would see

‘The very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt,’³

¹ Cf. also Ben Jonson, *Every Man in his Humour*, Prologue.

² *Henry V.*, Prologue.

³ *Ibid.*, 14.

or, in the name of Time, use wings. There seems to be something very much like a hint to this effect in that farcical 'abridgement,' already mentioned, which Bottom the weaver and his companions gave of Pyramus and his love. The poet seems to smile at the necessity for it, but also to claim the indulgence of the audience's fancy when he there depicts the absurd make-shifts by which the stage was trying to face the question of realistic art. For though the lantern carried by the 'hardhanded Athenian' could never suggest 'the horny moon,' nor could his hand, with fingers wide apart, suggest a crannied wall wherethrough lovers might tell their 'compleynt of love,' yet 'the best in this kind are but as shadows'; and Shakespeare's opinion of scenical shortcomings would seem to be that

'Never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it;' ¹

while imagination would amend the worst.

This suggestion gathers considerable point from the fact that the 'properties' of Bottom and his methods of illusion were in truth but very slightly different from those which were in use on the best stages of the day. There would often appear 'on the black stage for tragedies and murders fell' ² a Prologue armed, ³ ushered in

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. i. 82-3. ² *Lucrece*, vii. 66.

³ *Troilus and Cressida*, Prologue, 23.

by the Trumpeter¹ who was always a Prologue's prologue. And in this way would the deficiencies of the dumb stage be made good, and necessary explanations of time and place be given.

In addition to scenical deficiencies, however, there existed more than one cause of complaint which the true dramatic artist of the time had against the stage. The 'jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits' had passed away with the earliest of the dramatists. But 'the conceits,' which 'clownage kept in pay,' were still wont to dance across the stage. The clown would come 'leaping in,' then 'laugh and grin and frame his mimic face.'² He would be 'cozened in the cloth quarter,' a rogue would leap out upon him and a 'substantial watch steal in upon them and take them away with mistaking words.'³ This was the tendency in stage-practice—a continual pantomime—which must have been most irksome to those who viewed the drama seriously, and saw in the clownage but 'a noise of targets and a fellow in a long motley cloak guarded with yellow.'⁴

Another abuse of the stage lay in its continual dedication of itself to bitter controversial uses.

¹ Earle, *Microcosmography*, p. 48.

² Hall, *Satires*.

³ Ben Jonson, Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, speaking of Tarleton.

⁴ *Henry VIII.*, Prologue, 15-16.

This has been already mentioned. The gibes and taunts, which so often filled the theatres, could not but detract from artistic aims, and these continual aspersions soon grew as hateful, save to those closely interested, as the empty bubbles which clownage was for ever blowing.

Less widespread and less injurious was that dramatic weakness which invaded the stage of the early seventeenth century, for feeding the pride which London citizens felt on account of their civic militarism.¹ A grocer's apprentice would prove his valour in the face of giants, according to a dramatist who wished to burlesque the craze. He would be chosen city-captain at Mile-End, would make a brave end, and in falling would utter some memorable words to perpetuate his nobility. These were the main abuses of the stage. It was, however, a day when 'manners, now called humours,'² fed the stage. A peculiar quality would so possess a man as to warp his being and make his powers and spirits all run one way ;³ and such unnatural characters would be often staged. But though unnatural they were not unreal, for, as Jonson said :—

'No country's mirth is better than our own,
No clime breeds better matter for your whore,
Bawd, squire, impostor, many persons more.'²

¹ Cf. Beaumont and Fletcher, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

² Jonson, *Alchemist*, Prologue.

³ Cf. Jonson, *Every Man out of his Humour*, Prologue.

The plays at the universities were scarcely in as good a way as those in town. 'Few of the university,' wrote a contemporary, 'pen plaies well; they smell too much of that writer Ovid and that writer Metamorphosis, and talke too much of Proserpina and Juppiter.'¹

The main failing of the English stage then, as viewed by contemporaries, was that 'indiscretion' which was indissolubly connected with the advance of their Romantic drama. As compared with foreign stages, our English one stood high. For the Italian was 'so lascivious in his comedies that honest hearers'² were grieved. The Frenchman and the Spaniard also followed the Italian humour. But the German was 'too holy,' for he would 'present on every common stage' what was fit for the pulpit. There was much good sentiment and noble expression on the English stage.

The people who found a livelihood in the drama were of various classes, but all were, more or less, dwellers in Bohemia. There were strolling-players and players under noble patronage, who would kneel on the stage at the end of their play and pray for their patron.³ But patronised and unpatronised alike had to put up with an insulting public and with the companionship of

¹ *Return from Parnassus*, Part II. iv. v.

² Dedication of Whetstone's *Prometheus and Cassandra*.

³ Cf. Middleton, *A Mad World*, v. ii.

oftentimes rough fellow-actors. Shakespeare felt all this, and he also felt the contempt which was ever being heaped upon the profession he had chosen. The children-actors, in Hamlet's opinion, would only continue their life on the stage as a last resort, 'if their means were no better.'¹ In his *Sonnets* the great dramatist even claims pity for 'his nature subdued to what it works in,' for had he not gone hither and thither and made himself a motley to the view?

Nor did the poets themselves always add dignity to their calling, for the 'true note' of such was often 'to swagger it well in a tavern or domineer in a pot-house.'²

But lowest of all was the status of the actor in the country. In the town he would play on a well-known stage; his intention to play would be announced on posts³ in the neighbourhood of the theatre, while the flag on the roof would denote a performance in progress.⁴ Travelling players, however, would have humbly to 'offer service' at the manor gates to the lord of the house. They would ask him to accept their duty 'an't pleased him.'⁵ Shakespeare himself more than once may have chafed under this servile necessity and under the welcome 'given in the buttery'⁶ to those

¹ *Hamlet*, II. ii. 352.

² *Return from Parnassus*, II.

³ Marston, *Scourge of Villainy*, vol. iii. p. 303.

⁴ Cf. Middleton, *A Mad World*, III. iii.

⁵ *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, i. 77.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

who took the parts of kings and mobled queens, of world-wide conquerors and mystic scholars. It was but for a brief hour that the actors of that day, throned in 'Olymp,' would rule empires or sell their souls grandly for universal knowledge.

Seasons of want would assail all alike, especially the travellers. But even in town there would be the dead season when 'knights would leave it, taverns grow dead,' and not a feather would be waving nor a spur jingling anywhere. Then would the players be 'at a stand,' and unless many 'get-pennies' had come to their aid in the season past and given them the opportunity of increasing their income, they would be destitute and would anxiously await the reopening of the Globe or the Curtain.

With regard to the *Religion* of Shakespeare's generation there is much to be gathered from the dramatic writings. But from no other dramatist can the many-sided character of the Elizabethan religion be better obtained than from Shakespeare; the reason obviously being that he was a partisan of no one creed, while freely handling all. He seems to have regarded the conflicting dogmas of his time with tolerance and in silence. But religious ceremonies frequently occur as perfunctory details, though they are never marked with his approval or disapproval. A christening would have its gossips,¹

¹ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III. i. 269.

its bearing cloths,¹ and apostle's spoons.² Maidens would be buried with virgin crants and strewments;³ suicides would have burial in cross-ways and floods;⁴ the marriage service would consist of the vicar's interrogatives answered by the contracting parties;⁵ while the sexton would see to the 'quaffing of muscadel'⁶ at the church door after the ceremony. Excommunications would be made by bell, book, and candle;⁷ Ave-Marias, and beads,⁸ psalms,⁹ hymns,¹⁰ and dirges¹¹ would all form part of the ordinary service; there would be good honest priests who walked in the ways of Sir Oliver Martext or Friar Lorenzo; and ambitious clerics who mingled politics with religion. The Moor would deride all Popish tricks and ceremonies.¹² The Papist would laugh at the Brownist¹³ and Puritan.¹⁴ Antonio would taunt Shylock,¹⁵ and Shylock in return would swathe him in sarcasm.¹⁶ All these reflected religious classes in Elizabethan England, though of course the most numerous were the orthodox Catholics and fervid Pro-

¹ 1 *Henry VI.*, I. iii. 42.

² *Henry VIII.*, v. iii. 168.

³ *Hamlet*, v. i. 240.

⁴ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. ii. 382.

⁵ *Taming of the Shrew*, III. ii. 160.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁷ *King John*, III. iii. 12.

⁸ 2 *Henry VI.*, I. iii. 56.

⁹ *Winter's Tale*, IV. ii. 47.

¹⁰ *Romeo and Juliet*, IV. v. 88.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Titus Andronicus*, v. i. 76.

¹³ *Twelfth Night*, III. ii. 30.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II. iii. 148.

¹⁵ Cf. *Merchant of Venice*, I. iii. 111.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, III. i. 72.

testants. Some again there were who questioned all religion, following in the steps of Montaigne and Bacon; and unless Shakespeare were alone, some there would be who, with a rare knowledge of Scripture and a reverence for humanity, cultivated a lofty religion dominated by no creed, the tenets of which were distinct alike from Puritan doctrine and from Papal dogma.

The Puritans who broke away from the Established Church on questions of ritual were among the most picturesque figures of a picturesque age. In Shakespeare, however, they are not highly coloured. It is to the contemporary dramatists that one has to look for a detailed picture of the foibles and fancies which made these men of religion so often ridiculous.

One of the questions on which they had separated was that of ritual, and in a play¹ of the time allusion is made to the Puritan dislike of surplices, by mentioning such a one who on seeing a surplice had straightway hung himself in the bell-ropes of the church. 'Puritans,' according to another contemporary, 'were blown out of the church with the loud voice of the organ: their zealous spirits could not endure the music.'² Their attitude towards festivals would be one of unbending hostility. They would boast of keeping no holy days nor fasts, but

¹ *Hollander.*

² Lupton, *London and Country Carbonadoed.*

'of eating most flesh on Fridays.'¹ To more worldly things they would be equally hostile. Like Hope-on-high Barnby,² they would follow not the 'painted pipes of worldly pleasures'; they would spit on the hobby-horse as the 'beast that signified destruction.' Towards 'sweet poetry' they would turn as 'venom-bearing spiders'³ and would succeed in finding poison, whence others, like bees, drew the finest honey. Little and diminutive would be the Puritan ruff. They would live in charity, but would 'give small alms to such as were not of the right sect.'⁴ They would say 'inspired graces' which were 'able to starve a wicked man with their length.' They would worship in seclusion, and seek, if need be, lonely woods, and 'obscure holes.' To such, bells would be profane, though a tune might be religious.⁵ They of the separation would hope that all 'Canaanites' might be converted and stand up for 'the beauteous discipline'⁶ against the iniquitous Rome. For those 'seeds of sulphur, the wicked,' they would seek at fairs and merry-makings, and Tribulation Wholesome, and numerous others of the brethren would denounce with holy rage Spanish slops, idolatrous breeches, and ruffs of pride. The

¹ Middleton, *Familie of Love*, III. iii.

² Fletcher, *Woman Pleas'd*, IV. i.

³ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Triumph of Honour*, *ad fin.*

⁴ Middleton, *Familie of Love*.

⁵ Jonson, *Alchemist*, III. ii.

⁶ *Ibid.*, III. i.

more worldly members would rail against plays in general to please the Alderman whose 'daily custard'¹ they devoured; while others like Zeal-of-the-land Busy would enrich themselves by cozening heirs with whose inheritances they had been intrusted.² In spite of all, their tenets advanced and their influence was felt, for Jonson ridiculed the city magistrates for showing their religion by 'pulling down a superstitious cross and advancing a Venus in place of it.'³ If there were more Puritans like Mr. Mulligrub, whose last words breathed forgiveness to all his creditors,⁴ there would be some warrant for attaching to the Puritan discipline more humour than at present the sect has credit for.

Besides the creeds, the questions of royalty and princely right gave rise at the time to many a dispute; and on these monarchical institutions Shakespeare has bestowed some attention in his works, and to them has given repeated praise. After the break-up of feudalism, the Crown began to proclaim the Divine Right in tones stentorian: and King James found a style for himself in 'His Most Sacred Majesty.' But this view of the King was not in absolute agreement with the idea entertained in general by his people on the subject. The broader minds would remember 'what infinite heart's ease must

¹ Jonson, *Alchemist*, III. ii.

² Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*.

³ *Cynthia's Revels*, I. i.

⁴ *The Puritan*.



kings neglect that private men enjoy';¹ but in that cause for gratitude, might find no reason for the admission of a Divine prerogative. Many an Elizabethan would doubtless say 'the king is but a man as I am,' . . . his ceremonies laid by,² and would find increased difficulty in subscribing to that divinity which was said to hedge about a king. Those popular opinions which in the reign of James's successor were destined to inflict so severe a blow on the Crown, were already gathering strength. 'What's a Prince?' rhetorically asked a character in Chapman's *Gentleman Usher*, ten years before Shakespeare's death.

'Had all been virtuous men,
There never had been Prince upon the earth,
And so no subject: all men had been Princes:
A virtuous man is subject to no Prince,
But to his soul and honour.'³

To the people of the time, unscrupulous policies and Machiavellian scheming, however firmly they might seat a monarch on the throne, could never confer the least pretence to Divine Right. And these opinions were not unshared by Shakespeare. The unscrupulous policy of the throne, the intemperate abuse of royal power, and the evils accruing to each, were unmistakably

¹ *Henry V.*, IV. i. 234.

² *Ibid.*, IV. i. 100.

³ Act v.

shadowed in his great historical plays. And Bolingbroke, when a century later he evolved his theory of the 'Patriot King,' might have found the leading points of his subject laid down in these same works of Shakespeare.

Towards superstition, that remnant of the dark ages, which was still potent in the Jacobean era, Shakespeare's attitude was very much akin to that of Jonson and Middleton. All the authors whose plays were acted on the London stage were free from mystical prejudices. They had no belief in the fanciful deceptions of medieval science, or medieval ignorance. But they did not spurn the use of the same for stage effects, while occasionally they staged the dark fancies merely to deride them for the comfort of the credulous. Shakespeare, who repeatedly introduced the air of magic and the sorcerer's craft into his many dramas, seems, like his fellows, to have rejected the chimeras so elaborately asserted by the 'black creeds' which flourished at the time, and hailed from 'Lapland'¹ and Germany.

In the *Tempest*, unicorns and the Arabian phoenix are jestingly touched upon as delusions born of the travellers' coloured tales.² The lines of the hand, the chiromantical signs, are scoffed at by the clownish Launcelot Gobbo in the

¹ *Comedy of Errors*, IV. iii. 11.

² *Tempest*, III. iii. 22.

Venetian comedy,¹ while the interpretation of dreams is brought in later as a laughable detail.²

When, again, Owen Glendower, boasting of supernatural wiles, narrates how at his birth

‘The frame and huge foundation of the earth
Shaked like a coward,’³

and how the heavens were all on fire, Hotspur’s blunt common-sense humorously suggests that the earth shook to see the heavens on fire; and he petulantly rails at the Welsh sorcerer’s ‘skimble-skamble’ tales,

‘Of the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies,
And of a dragon and a finless fish,
A clip-winged griffin and a moulted raven.’⁴

But the age was susceptible in no small degree to omen. After a local murder the gossips would recollect having heard ‘lamenting in the air, strange screams of death,’ such as had racked the ear before the murder of Duncan. They would have noticed that times of national stress had been duly heralded by portentous meteors, which did ‘fright the fixed stars of heaven,’ and by ‘lean-looked prophets,’ who did ‘whisper fearful change.’⁵

Legends would be jealously hoarded: how Queen Eleanor had sunk at Charing Cross, and

¹ *Merchant of Venice*, II. ii. 151.

² *Ibid.*, II. v. 18.

³ *1 Henry IV.*, III. i. 17 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 150 ff.

⁵ *Richard II.*, II. iv. 11.

had risen again at Queenhithe ;¹ how the owl that hooted was a baker's daughter who had churlishly refused a loaf to the suffering Christ.²

By almanacs³ they would think to 'choose good days and shun the critical.' To odd numbers was attached a strange divinity.⁴ An image of wax melted before a fire would bring slow sickness on the person represented ;⁵ moles and harelips⁶ were 'scars prodigious.' There would be planets of good luck,⁷ and planets adverse ;⁸ dancing stars,⁹ and stars that poured down plagues.¹⁰ Some would make guilty of their disasters 'the sun, the moon, and the stars,'¹¹ as if they were 'villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves and treachers by spherical predominance.' But Shakespeare condemned all this as 'the excellent foppery of the world,' and Fletcher took up the same attitude when one of his clowns, who stood in fear of a conjurer and his whirlwinds, was urged by way of comfort 'not to believe there is any fetch in astrology.'¹²

The people who were, however, wedded to the

¹ Middleton, *Witch*, I. i.

² *Hamlet*, IV. v. 41.

³ Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, I. ii. 154.

⁴ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, v. i. 4.

⁵ *King John*, v. iv. 23.

⁶ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. ii. 42.

⁷ *Richard III.*, IV. iv. 403.

⁸ *1 Henry VI.*, I. i. 54.

⁹ *Much Ado about Nothing*, II. i. 328.

¹⁰ *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. ii. 394.

¹¹ *King Lear* I. ii. 121 ff.

¹² *Fair Maid of the Inn*.

mysteries of astrology would also find an awfulness surrounding witches and their craft. A book had been written by Scott, 'discovering' witches, and refuting their claims to supernatural power. But its good sense was unheard in the general chorus of superstition; and in the year of the Armada a bishop flattered the 'craft' by appealing against its workers. In a subsequent crusade, seventy old women were burnt, having been collected from quite a small area; and the age became more than ever convinced that every beldam who did not sleep at night was a hag in character and a witch by profession. When James's bride met with bad weather on her way to Scotland,¹ that monarch unhesitatingly attributed it to the influence of witches. Before he entered England he had written a tract maintaining the reality of those evil spirits;² and after his accession to the English throne, a statute was passed against their baneful practices.³ 'Blasted heaths' and lonely dwellings were generally supposed to be the abodes of these malignant beings, while yew-trees and damp churchyards were also among their favourite haunts.⁴ The eerie creatures would love the foul 'taking airs'⁵ of midnight; would sail in a sieve⁶ through blizzard and thunder, or fondle their familiars, cats and toads, on windy

¹ 1589.² 1599, *Demonology*.³ 1604.⁴ Stephens, *Essays*, ii. 20.⁵ *King Lear*, II. iv. 164.⁶ *Macbeth*, I. iii. 8.

moors. Their presence in such places was often detected by terrified rustics on hearing 'the mew of the brinded cat,' or 'the whine of the hedgehog.'¹ If they dwelt in low cottages, 'the melancholy darkness would encourage the conjecture of infernals';² they would mumble wicked charms, and use spells and periapts.³ They could control the moon⁴ and assume at will the form of any animal, but always tailless.⁵ On Christmas night, however, their malignity left them,⁶ and all the hateful charms of even a Sycorax were then of no avail. To conjurers were attributed none of these malignant tendencies. They would sit publicly within a circle,⁷ summon up devils, and so prove their mastery over the prince of that tribe. Witches, on the other hand, were held to be his apprentices,⁸ the ready instruments of his evil designs.

The devil was no mere product of the fancy to the average Elizabethan. The 'lordly monarch of the North,'⁹ when he approached his victim, was supposed to put on pleasing forms, 'to suggest at first with heavenly shows,'¹⁰ or 'to haunt with voice of the nightingale.'¹¹ But the

¹ *Macbeth*, IV. i. 1.

² Stephens, *Essays*, ii. 20.

³ *Henry VI.*, v. iii. 2.

⁴ *Tempest*, v. i. 270.

⁵ *Macbeth*, I. iii. 9.

⁶ Cf. *Hamlet*, I. i. 160 ff.

⁷ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Woman Hater*, v. v.; also *Richard III.*, I. ii. 34.

⁸ *Fair Maid of the Inn*, II. i.; IV. ii.

⁹ *Henry VI.*, v. iii. 5.

¹⁰ *Othello*, II. iii. 349.

¹¹ *King Lear*, III. vi. 30.

credulous usually associated him with the person of a negro, or else of a Moor, for he was known to have assumed such shapes. He had 'cloven feet, black saucer eyes, and nostrils breathing fire,'¹ when he appeared in his awfulness; but on occasion he could instil his poison as a 'black, ill-favoured fly.'² The 'Edgar' of *King Lear*, with the demons which possess him, is merely a reproduction of a contemporary case of possession by the devil—one Richard Mainey, whose madness was dissected and described in detail by a learned cleric, called Harsnett, of the time. The poet's commentary on demonology here, however, is sufficiently plain. His treatment must have caused more than one credulous being to doubt the beadle, and to wonder whether every decrepit soul given to dreaming dreams was indeed possessed, and whether they deserved the ducking or the burning they received in consequence. But a wretch within whom Satan was thought to be housed might also be bound in some dark room, and have the devil whipped out, as Shakespeare's schoolmaster Pinch advised in an early play.³ It was a senseless treatment for any maniac; but it illustrates the hold which the ruthless creed of demonology possessed on the age.

¹ Massinger, *Christian Martyr*, III. iii.

² *Titus Andronicus*, III. ii. 66.

³ *Comedy of Errors*, IV. iv. 94; cf. also *As You Like It*, III. v. 394-

Other visitants from the spirit world with whom the Elizabethans were familiar were the ghosts, 'those extravagant and erring spirits,'¹ who at times would revisit 'the glimpses of the moon.' A 'spirit of health' would appear with charitable intention, and in his train would bring 'airs from heaven'; while a 'goblin damned' would come with evil, breathing on mortals 'blasts from hell.'² Such ghosts were best defied by Latin exorcisms; but at the cock's warning of the day's approach,³ when the glow-worm paled his uneffectual fire,⁴ each restless spirit would glide shrieking to the churchyard⁵ from whence it came. These would be the 'mortified spirits, doomed for a time to walk the night.' Other spectral visions might be mere creatures of feverish brains, embodied symbols of remorseful ambition or criminal activity; and when Shakespeare distinguishes between the two, as he does in *Hamlet*, and elsewhere, he is no doubt following a distinction maintained in his day.

Ostensibly in search of communication with the world of spirits were found the alchemists, who had for their aim the conversion of baser metals into gold and silver. Their frauds were notoriously great, but the native credulity greater.

¹ *Hamlet*, I. i. 155.

³ *Ibid.*, I. i. 150.

⁵ *Julius Cæsar*, II. ii. 24.

² *Ibid.*, I. iv. 40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I. v. 90.

The earliest of their kind were honest seekers for supernatural lore, but the Elizabethan representatives were knaves and rogues and successful quacks. Lyly had exposed them in his *Gallathea*. But their artifices were finally laid bare by the remorseless Jonson in his play of the *Alchemist*. They would cozen with 'hollow coles and dust scrapings,' and search for things lost with a sieve and shears. They would impose on the simple with their beech-coal and corsive waters, their crosslets and crucibles, their retorts and receivers, their pelicans and bolt-heads.¹ These would be their apparatus, and their operations would be conducted with a suggestive secrecy, and their results related in a terrifying jargon.

But the superstition which swayed king and peasant alike could also take attractive forms. The simple minds which recoiled before devil-lore and black magic could people their meadows and forests with fairies and elves, or indulge their fancies in that folklore which bound, and still binds, the past with the present. Every countryside would have its poetic myths, fancy-born and harmless, with which to enliven their many meetings and to invest with significance the common things of life. The toad would have a precious jewel² which would guard against poison; the purple

¹ Jonson, *Alchemist*, I. i.; IV. iii., etc.

² *As You Like It*, II. i. 13.

flower, love-in-idleness,¹ would have love in its gift; the turquoise² faded or brightened with the health of its wearer; the ruddock³ with charitable bill would strew graves with flowers; the knot-grass⁴ would hinder human growth; the fern-seed⁵ was a herb that would give invisibility; the eye of a cockatrice⁶ possessed death-darting powers; the mandrake's groan⁷ was ever a sign of death; while the chameleon⁸ was an animal that lived on air.

But the innate poetry, as well as the majesty and youthfulness of the Elizabethan mind, is nowhere more gloriously revealed than in its conception of that moonlit music-haunted world where fairies move; those banks they still trip along,

‘Where the wild thyme blows,
Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows;
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine.’⁹

There were black fairies and grey fairies, fairies green and fairies white,¹⁰ ‘elves of hills, brooks,

¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. ii. 169.

² Cf. Ben Jonson, *Sejanus*; and *Merchant of Venice*, III. i. 125.

³ *Cymbeline*, IV. ii. 224.

⁴ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. ii. 329.

⁵ *1 Henry IV.*, II. i. 93.

⁶ *Romeo and Juliet*, III. ii. 47.

⁷ *2 Henry VI.*, III. ii. 310.

⁸ *Hamlet*, III. ii. 95.

⁹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. ii. 190.

¹⁰ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, V. v. 41.

standing lakes, and groves,'¹ who would fly under the moon's cold light

' Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,'²

to keep their revel in the fairy ring, with other 'moonshine revellers' who hailed from far-off green or fountain clear. Queen Mab³ would be there—she who 'plats the manes of horses in the night.' No bigger than an agate stone, she would be drawn with her 'team of little atomies.' Her 'waggoner' would be a small grey-coated gnat, her chariot an empty hazelnut. She would come from driving through lovers' brains to give them dreams of love; or over courtiers' knees to make them dream of curtsies. Did she tickle a parson's nose as he lay asleep, he, good man, would straightway dream of benefices; a soldier touched, would dream of cutting foreign throats. Some would come from golden sands where they, all day, would chase 'the ebbing Neptune' with their printless feet, and fly in turn with breathless haste when he returned.⁴ Sea-nymphs, too, from ocean depths, where they would hourly ring their gloomy knells for those who had suffered a sea-

¹ *Tempest*, v. i. 33.

² *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 2 ff.

³ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iv. 50 ff.

⁴ *Tempest*, v. i. 34.

change.¹ Puck would be there, fresh from beguiling 'the fat and bean-fed horse'² by neighing like a foal, or from bobbing against a gossip's lips as she drank from her evening bowl. As Robin Goodfellow, he might have successfully frightened some village maids, and would relate with mirth to night-tripping fairies—their selves guilty of changeling tricks³—how he had 'bootless made the breathless housewife churn,'² or led astray 'night wanderers.'² Amidst the throng of elvish sprites would be goblins and owls, who were best obeyed by simple mortals, for they could 'suck out breath or pinch us blue'; while some outside the ring would be busily making 'green-sour ringlets'⁴ which the ewe could not bite; and others planting midnight mushrooms. The 'joiner squirrel'⁵ would be looking on; and the old grub, 'the fairies' coach-maker,' would leave his work to taste society. Within the ring the Fairy Queen would hold her court attended by her pensioners, the 'cowslips tall,'⁶ and the tiny Pease-Blossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard-Seed. Her loyal subjects would seek for dewdrops, then hang them as pearls on every cowslip's ear. They would kill the cankers

¹ *Tempest*, I. ii. 380.

² *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 45.

³ *Winter's Tale*, III. iii. 119.

⁴ *Tempest*, V. i. 37.

⁵ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iv. 69.

⁶ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 10.

in the musk-rose buds, 'war with rear-mice,' and with their leathern wings make coats for smaller elves.¹ For the queen's comfort they would keep back 'the clamorous owl that nightly hoots,' and, frightened themselves, would seek the acorns' cups. The dawn would disperse them. 'Following darkness like a dream' they would hasten to couch in cowslips' bells and wait once more for the moon to call.

Such was the 'Faerie' of Elizabethan England. It was an age in which a ray of moonshine was held to be a path along which delicate and unsubstantial creatures were tripping their aërial rounds. Just as a lurid glare was spread over moor and glen by Celtic imagination, lighting up witches and their magic, so over softer meadows shone that faint afterglow of medieval Fairyland, which daily fed the thoughts of peasants and the pens of poets.

¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. iii. 2 ff.

ENVOY

AN attempt has now been made to recall, from materials of the drama, something of England's aspect as Elizabeth and her successor knew it.

Allusions were found ranging from the monarch on the throne to persons of low degree; from the proudest and most upright courtier to the most evil notoriety; from events of national import to mere local incidents; from international politics to civic enactments.

But more important perhaps than all these were those permanent details of the life of that day which emerged, details connected with types and classes, customs and manners, which from their very nature fix the characteristics of that age and furnish what is most stable and essential.

The period from which these gleanings were made embraced for the most part the reigns of two monarchs, some seventy years in duration, and nothing more has been attempted, up to the present, than to draw in broad outline the general characteristics of that period as a whole.

It is, however, at once obvious that in so extended a period the national conditions were continually undergoing slow changes, which would not be without effect on the national character and customs. And just as it has been hitherto maintained that the features of the age lie imprinted on the drama, so by further discrimination it is possible to obtain from those topical reflections a finer appreciation of the national phases which began with Elizabeth and ended with James.

In Marlowe and Shakespeare we see the England of the latter half of the sixteenth century, young and vigorous, budding with hope, uncorrupted by luxury, not yet enervated by licence. Both dramatists reflect the high ideals which filled the air, the anxiety to grapple with mighty problems, the longing to discover new worlds; while in Marlowe English contact with Germany is also noticeable, inasmuch as he employs as one of his 'motives' that compact with the devil, which came with 'newes out of Germany.' In his 'high astounding terms' Marlowe embodies the vigour of his day, which made men push off from Devonshire shores, or wander to the Low Countries in search of blows. The 'pity and terror' of his *Edward II.* was only capable of being produced in an age when the nerves were highly strung, and when tragedy lay around.

Shakespeare took up Marlowe's pen and ranged still higher. He added fire to Marlowe's fire, and finer and chivalrous shades to Marlowe's heroics. The national worship of their great Queen found a counterpart in his wonderful picture-gallery of noble heroines. With Lyly he occasionally reflected the contemporary taste for euphuistic display, for Court pageantry and masques. He but lightly touched Puritan foibles, for they were to become more pronounced when he was dreaming his romances. Tobacco and its cult find no mention in his pages, nor did he choose to dwell on the base uses to which alchemy was growing, possibly because these things attained to excess after he had done with the world of comedy. Neither was the great English middle class, which was merging into being out of the wreck of feudalism, of sufficient strength to win his attention. He saw but a cultured class, whom he treated with dignity, and an uncultured rabble which tickled his humour, when it did not arouse his spleen. His atmosphere was pure. Evil was discord, as far as he was concerned; and his plays, like the earlier part of his age, found more charm in action and love than in gossip and intrigue.

With Jonson, who may, perhaps, be taken as representative of the earlier part of James's reign,

the atmosphere changes. London had been rapidly growing since Elizabeth's accession, and the march from the country had become more emphasised. Jonson's pictures are therefore more centralised. His main interest is London—its haunts and its characters. His great centre is 'Paul's,' with its gulls and its cozeners; and the country scenes and sea-breezes of Shakespeare are entirely wanting. The tension of the Armada year had lapsed into humours and excesses, which increased in absurdity day by day. The gallants who on occasion would rouse Shakespeare's satire, and the vulgar army of penniless rascals, became more pronounced than ever in their respective absurdities; for the age provided less action than formerly, and the mind grew vapid with very inertia. The Puritans were more assertive, more whining; and as they grew in strength, so did errors arise, and Jonson takes care to explain that the world was not always absent from the Puritan fold. The chivalry of Elizabeth's reign was waning already. It had been swallowed up in the empty affectations of gallant and lady. Affectation had also spread to city dames, to increase the confusion; and the return to feminine deification was farther off than ever.

Tobacco had become the fashion, and alchemists were flourishing in roguery and deceit.

Superstitions were still potent, and not the least abuse in a credulous age was the new institution of 'lying news-offices.' The youthful ebullitions, the hearty sincerity and breezy action of an earlier day had given way to studied manners and credulous fancies, which were hard to check.

In Beaumont and Fletcher also the decline of this period is clearly portrayed, for they drew what was around them in all its frailty. 'They seldom represent an honourable woman without something of Dol Common in her,' for it was a day when love-sick ladies would disguise as pages in the trains of their loves. The Court of James cared little for the dignity of woman. There was a falseness and insincerity in the relations between the sexes. It was, as the drama reflects, an age of shameless intrigue. Shakespearean virtues were entirely lost; while Jonsonian foibles were ever exaggerated. It was, as a scholarly critic has described, 'an age of tyrants and their favourites; of evil counsellors and evil counsels; of pandars and minions; of cloaked vices and bedizened grossness; of blatant theories and systems; of the decay of principles and beliefs.'¹

Even the warlike ardour which had repelled the Spanish was now a mere affectation. The

¹ A. W. Ward, *English Dramatic Literature*, ii. p. 763.

city train-bands were subject to hysterics, and old soldiers were commonly known to be rogues and knaves. The political embassies despatched abroad were no more dignified in character, as Middleton showed; and the frank criticism of the monarch, not only in foreign polity, but in his cherished realm of Divine right, illustrates that growing strength of the Commons, which in a couple of decades was to revise the constitution and modify the Government.

From this topical material can also be gathered certain information which, though it may bear but slightly on the age in general, possesses yet some interest in an incidental way.

From the works of Shakespeare, although they teem with allusions to professions and trades, nothing can be gathered to settle definitely the calling he must have followed at some time in his career. The deductions which have been made with a view to that discovery are so very numerous and reasonable withal, that the result is absurdity. For instance, the dramatist seems as familiar with drugs and salves as if he had spent years over Galen. But his law-terms are equally bewildering in the accuracy of their technicalities. In educational matters he seems quite practical and speaks with authority; while he also makes a brave show of military detail. So that, as leech or lawyer, usher or soldier, he

might reasonably be said to have passed some period ; but he cannot be said with any certainty to have been any single one. Others have tracked him to a printing establishment on account of his intelligence in typographical matters. But then he may, with equal reason, have served as boatswain of the *Tiger*, trafficking between places like London and Aleppo, so technical is his detail of mariners' craft. Or he might have been a gentle astringer in the falconry of some grandee, so close is his acquaintance with hawks and their ways. And so possibility follows possibility until a library has been formed, devoted to this single aspect of Shakespearean study ; a library affording with certainty but one conclusion, namely, that no amount of acuteness will enable a critic to lay a finger on any one profession and say that that was the one for which Shakespeare was intended or which he followed for any period of his life.

After all, it seems dwarfing the genius of this myriad-minded man to insist on the origin of these various technicalities as being necessarily personal experience and not observation. It is more than probable that his encyclopædic learning was picked up o' nights in the snug crowded rooms of the Mermaid or Boar's Head. For there he must often have listened to the wrangling of angry scriveners, the laments of practice-

seeking medicoes, and the swaggering tales of high-booted swashbucklers, late returned from Zutphen or from the high seas. With his power of discriminating and then assimilating, he would readily absorb the details of their prattle. He would make their technicalities his own, whilst, seemingly, he was paying but a passing regard to their flying and humorous sallies. The topical matter in Shakespeare, then, can give no aid on this question.

It can, on the other hand, afford some corroboration of what has been fixed upon as the probable chronological order of the Shakespearean plays. It would have been better to have said the absence of this topical matter corroborates the sequence ; for it is a curious fact that, as the dramatist advanced in life, he indulged less and less in those allusions which have been characterised as 'particular.' More curious still, in his latest years, when the 'particular' allusions have almost entirely disappeared, even the 'general' ones, which give the Elizabethan colouring, grow somewhat fainter. In this last period it would seem as if the dramatist were attempting to attain complete emancipation from the details of his age. But that necessary remnant of the spirit of the age which, it has been maintained, is never absent from the greatest work, this he could never throw off.

In his early plays, allusions are plentiful to country life and to life in the capital. The personalities are drawn from the people who surrounded him. Fresh from the glades of Warwickshire the young writer's efforts breathe of country lanes and forests, of yokels and village 'tharboroughs.' Dazzled by the brilliance of great London he gives a few vigorous sketches of conceited gallants¹ from Whitehall or Greenwich, and quibbling rogues spied out in Bucklersbury.² When he has drifted further into the vortex of London, he illustrates tavern life with its soldiering rascals like Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch, and cony-catching rogues like Nym and Bardolph. He sketches the manors of Picket-hatch³ with their harlots, whose cheeks were beautified 'with plastering art,'⁴ the bawds with their wickedness always before their eyes⁵—most commonly on their middle finger—their rings 'a death's head or *memento mori*.'⁶

Then, when the poet had risen in life, come his visions of stately houses, and he portrays as one familiar at Windsor, at Hampton, or at Nonesuch. His scenes are then the Courts of kings

¹ Valentine and Proteus.

² Speed and Lance.

³ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. ii. 19.

⁴ *Hamlet*, III. i. 51.

⁵ Marston, *Dutch Courtezan*.

⁶ *Henry IV.*, III. iii. 35.

like Elsinore and Glamis Castle ; his converse is of weightier mould, for he scorns the taffeta jests of Osric, the ways of the courtier fop, and his empty prattle about Barbary horses and French rapiers. He reflects on past history and handles life's problems. And later, ere he breaks his wand, he gradually discards that worldly phantasmagoria, and dreams awhile of fancy-land within that circle where 'none durst walk but he.' The Tudor framework on which his earlier characters were formed is now laid aside. They are still Elizabethan, but less distinctly so. It is as if his genius had felt dwarfed and narrowed by the bonds which tied him to the obvious realities of his age. So that in his romances there are no chronicles of fashion, no duels, no barbered gallants, no enfeebled watchman nor baubled clowns. By this time too the memories of the English Court and its pageants come but faintly ; they are now as distant echoes.

Further material for another such rough chronological test is furnished by the topical matter which deals with the gallant and his tricks of conversation.

Shakespeare at first was himself attracted by the general craze and the spruce charm of the poetic diction of the hour. His early productions are therefore tainted with a certain euphuistic glamour and they bristle with conceits. Their

personæ are 'antic' weaklings, 'the pink of courtesy,'¹ 'the apes of form.'² *Love's Labour's Lost* is in fact a satire, among other things, on the 'man of complements,'³ the trim gallant full of courtship and of state, 'who takes his oath upon his lady's pantofles that all excellence in madams does but zany hers.'⁴ Even Biron, who stands out in contrast to Boyet, has 'a trick of the old rage.'⁵ In the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* there is the same light banter which flies from Proteus to Valentine, and from Valentine to Silvia. It is clad in gallant phraseology, such as a frequenter at the Palace or a member of the Inns of Court would employ to dissolve my lady's riddles, to pen a sonnet or an acrostic;⁶ and the poet seems to love lingering with the extravagant lovers and their juggling quips. With Mercutio, Benvolio, and 'the furious Tybalt' in the greater Veronese play, the poet discarded quibbles and silken phrases to some extent. He indulges at this period in images of the daring 'princox' who would throw into a challenge all the grace of a lover's declaration, would fight 'as you sing prick-song,' and, wounded by some 'foining

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iv. 59.

² *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. ii. 325.

³ *Ibid.*, I. i. 167.

⁴ Beaumont and Fletcher, *Queen of Corinth*, I. ii.

⁵ *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. ii. 416.

⁶ Cf. Beaumont and Fletcher, *Elder Brother*, III. v.

traverse,' 'not so deep as a well nor so wide as a church door,'¹ would die with a last sarcasm for the 'scrimers' that fight by the book of arithmetic.² It is a less artificial diction, but one still tainted by the frailties of the hour.

Then comes the *Midsummer Night's Dream* with the splendid and gracious aristocrat Theseus, purged of all the foibles of the contemporary gallants, replete with all that is graceful, delicate, and pleasing. His noble thoughts are many, his diction is refined, while his imagination is not persistently occupied with efforts to dazzle by embellished wit. Sir Walter Raleigh, who bowed as he spread his gold-tinselled cloak for the royal foot, was a Biron or a Mercutio. Theseus wooing Hippolyta was an idealised Essex paying his court to Lady Frances Sidney.

In later plays, however, the poet's attitude towards these prevalent affectations takes a decided change. He begins now to laugh at those who 'climb o'er the house to unlock the little gate.'³ He ceases to approve or even to tolerate, and becomes directly hostile. Benedick's quick wit and 'queasy stomach'⁴ can no longer endure the idle nothings of a fashionable tongue. Jacques is an exposure of the man who had travelled and

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, III. i. 100 ff.

² *Ibid.*, III. i. 107.

³ *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i. 109.

⁴ *Much Ado about Nothing*, II. i. 399.

was affected in his language by his journeyings. From this time onwards in his plays the poet either entirely ignores the play of words and fantastic imagery, or else exemplifies them merely for purposes of ridicule, just as Hamlet shows a fine contempt for all the shrouded humour of the courtiers of Elsinore.

But these topical allusions, in addition to being useful as rough chronological tests, also possess intrinsic merits which give them a claim to a primary interest and render them objects which repay their study.

They convey, of course, the externals of Elizabethan life—their fashions, their furniture, their dress, and amusements. But they also transport into our own times the wit, the love, the passion, and the dreams of those who lived then. These things are of interest, not to historians merely, but to every thinking and feeling being 'that hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.' For the questions and the problems which underlie those passions are yet the same as those with which we ourselves are grappling. Even the passing and empty foibles of those courtiers around their Queen have a rich significance. They state historical facts and give the contemporary conditions. But they also do more. They are like the surface of the sea through which one must peer to behold the

depths. And Elizabethan foibles are open avenues to Elizabethan hearts. So that this topical element can claim the double merit of shedding light not only on the external, but also on the internal side of Elizabethan life.

And yet the topical is a field of Shakespearean study which has hitherto been most inadequately worked. There is no little truth in the saying that we admire by tradition. And when Ben Jonson described Shakespeare as being 'not of an age but for all time,'¹ he was unconsciously setting the fashion for generations of criticism which were to follow. The critics have never ceased to reiterate the universality of his genius and the universal application of his writings. But they have with almost equal consistency persisted in overlooking that side of Shakespeare's works which links him to his age. It is as if they had neglected the foundations on which that very universality was built, the attainment of a perfect harmony in subsidiary characteristics and incidental details. So that it has almost come about that they would have him stand as a detached spirit, whom patriotism, on no very clearly defined grounds, claims as an Englishman. So much has criticism confined its efforts to expounding his universality that one would almost incline to think that he must have come,

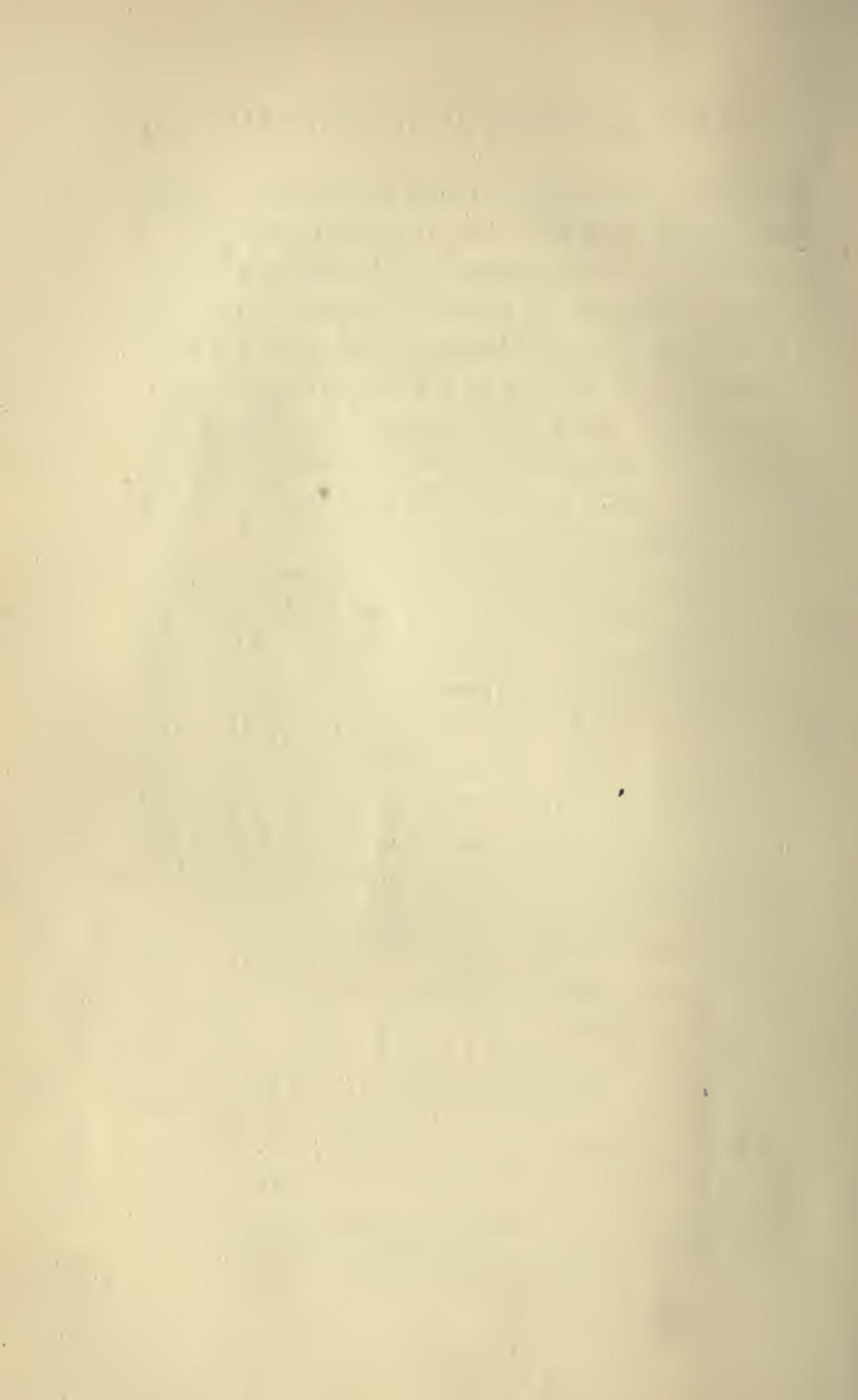
¹ *Underwoods*, p. 12.

and written, and departed this life without taking into himself anything of his surroundings, or breathing for a moment the Elizabethan atmosphere. And yet his very universality arises out of the virtue and the accuracy of these his topical allusions. He is true to all ages because he is true to one. And his greatness is perhaps but inadequately grasped until the details of Elizabethan life which exist in his dramas have been fully explored and appreciated.

Shakespeare discharged what Goethe held to be the function of the ideal poet¹ when he took up into his being the inharmonious facts of Nature and his age, and gave them forth in harmonious form. The world, and even Nature, is often monotonous, and sometimes discordant. But Shakespeare imparted to the whole a rhythmic movement and made them live. And this he did not without the aid of the topical device.

¹ Cf. Goethe, *Faust*, ll. 140-149.





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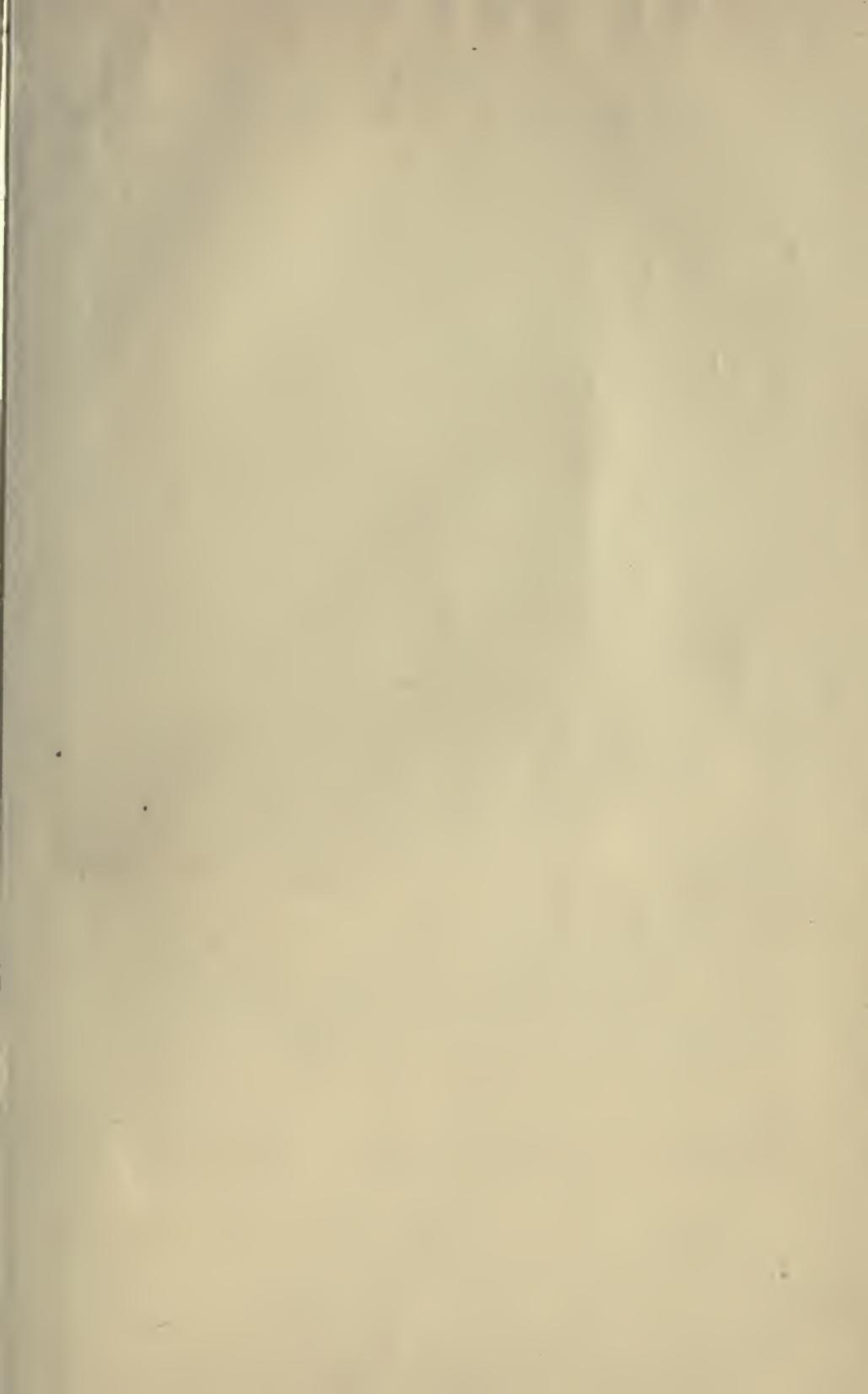
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REC'D LD
OCT 17 1959

20 Apr 61 LC

REC'D LD
JUN 1 1961

REC'D 68
DEC 14 1959 68
DEC 5 - '65 - 4 PM

LOAN DEPT.

JAN 15 1960 68
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JAN 21 '66 - 2 PM

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